Pedagogy: What & Why?

- **Pedagogy** is defined as the methods, strategies, and underlying epistemology of an approach to teaching.
- An instructor’s skills, training, and commitment are critical to the implementation of an effective online pedagogy.
- Our goal is to provide instructors with easy-to-understand, clear-cut guidelines for online course development, design, and delivery.
How is “online instruction” defined?

Any educational process in which Internet technology is used to facilitate a student’s ability to access and interact with course content and activities, and to communicate and interact with the instructor and other students.

Communication can take place asynchronously (not in real time, such as discussion boards, blogs, journals, etc.) or synchronously (in real time, such as online chats).

Constructivist Principles form the basis for the “Effective Online Teaching Practices” Guidelines...

1. Focus is on knowledge construction rather than knowledge reproduction; problem-solving, critical thinking are emphasized.
2. Encourage self-awareness of the knowledge construction process;
3. Encourage student ownership and voice in the learning process;
4. The learner's prior knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are taken into consideration;
5. Provide students with experience of multiple modes of representation, and multiple perspectives on problems or concepts;
6. Embed learning in realistic and relevant contexts;
7. Assessments are integrated with learning goals and activities;
8. Learning can take place individually as well as through social negotiation and collaboration experiences;
9. “Scaffolding” is built into course design to assist students in performing just beyond the limits of their current abilities.
10. Instructors move into a more facilitative role (the “guide on the side” rather than the “sage on the stage”).

*Adapted from “Characteristics of Constructivist Learning & Teaching” [http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/~elmurphy/emurphy/cle3.html] 5/10/08
...But constructivism is just ONE theory of how people learn!

- There is no one “right way” to design fully online courses, or courses that make use of online instructional tools (hybrid, web-enhanced classroom-based courses). The process should take into account:
  - The students’ prior knowledge and experiences.
    - For example, students with little prior knowledge in the domain might respond better to a more directive approach, whereas students with more experience in the discipline might learn more through a process of guided discovery or exploration.*
  - The applicability of research into cognition, memory, multimedia learning, and strategies from many other theories of learning and instructional design as they relate to that particular course.*
  - The instructor’s teaching style and preferences.
  - The requirements of the discipline, degree, or credentialing process.
  - Quality standards in place at the institution.


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**Designing Significant Learning Experiences**

1. **Identify situational factors**
2. **Identify primary (course) and secondary (module-specific) learning goals**
3. **Identify assessment methods** by which the achievement of learning goals will be determined, as well as supporting feedback strategies
4. **Identify the teaching and learning activities** that will enable students to successfully complete the assessments.
5. **Integrate** the goals, assessments, and activities within both the classroom and online learning environment, to facilitate navigation and comprehension by students.

*From “Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses”, by L. Dee Fink © 2003*
Some Situational Factors Impacting Course Design

• Number of students in class
• Prior knowledge of students; novice to expert learners?
• In-person versus online delivery or some mix of both (hybrid)
• Student abilities/experience as independent learners
• Required outcomes (for certifications, etc.)

Best Practices: Assessments & Feedback

• Assessments are clearly linked to primary (course) goals and secondary (module) goals.
• Assessments are clearly linked to preparatory practice activities.
• Assessments are more than just quizzes/tests; allow students to demonstrate understanding using various modes/methods.
• Clear grading criteria (such as rubrics) are provided.
• Self-assessment opportunities are available.
• Instructor feedback is more than a grade. The best feedback is:
  - Immediate
  - Specific and descriptive (based on clear criteria)
  - Constructive
  - Delivered by a patient coach
**Best Practices: Teaching & Learning Activities**

- Provide opportunities for the students to become actively engaged in the learning process and the topic/content
  - Help students discover how the topic is relevant for them, and address other motivational factors such as gaining attention, enhancing student confidence, and a student sense of satisfaction or achievement.
  - Ensure that learning activities are scaffolded, i.e. the instructor initially models the skills or assists students, then gradually transfers greater responsibility to the students as they gain confidence and expertise.
  - Provide students with the ability to make choices about course assignments or activities when possible (for example, students might choose what format to submit an assignment—as a presentation, a paper, a graphic, or a video).
  - Provide opportunities for social engagement, collaboration, and negotiation in learning activities, i.e., through peer review (in online discussions) and active reflection (journals).
  - Provide opportunities for deliberate practice through authentic, real-world tasks, scenarios, problem-solving, etc.

**Best Practices: Facilitating Interactions & Building Community**

- Provide students with the opportunity to become part of a community through group work, online discussions, and chat:
  - Provide unstructured, ungraded discussions and chat rooms for informal socialization, idea sharing, homework questions, online office hours, etc.
  - Though instructor should maintain a social presence in the class by posting to and facilitating discussions (or providing other impromptu information or guidance), the instructor does not necessarily have to lead the discussions — allow students to take on a facilitative role when possible.
  - If students are assigned to work in groups, provide each group with private chat and/or discussion areas.
Putting it all together: Does your course have a floor plan?

Best Practices of Course Design

- A “Getting started” module could provide links such as:
  - Expected knowledge/skill pre-requisites
  - Links to technology requirements and/or required downloads
  - Information on how to use Blackboard Vista
  - Course schedule, behavioral expectations, plagiarism policies, student/instructor contracts, other student resources, etc.
- Learning objectives are clearly stated and understandable to the student. (Goals, Syllabus tools)
- Assignments/assessments/activities are linked to stated objectives/learning outcomes (Goals tool)
- Communication tools (calendar, announcements, course FAQs) are used to help students stay informed and on task.
- Course content is well-organized (i.e., chunked and sequenced) and redundant, to aid intuitive navigation and easy access to resources. (Learning modules, folders, course content map)
- Course modules are consistently sequenced (i.e., module objectives, module overview, readings/presentations, practice activities, self-assessment activities, discussion, summary, etc.)
- Content files are uniformly named and formatted, and icons/links are labeled consistently to align with Syllabus.
- The course is ADA compliant.
Outline of the “Effective Teaching Practices” Guidelines Document

I. Course Design
   A. Course Objectives
   B. Pedagogical: Learning & Teaching Theory
   C. Class Management

II. Student Services
   A. Instructor informs students of available resources
   B. Instructor promotes ethical behavior

III. Technological Issues
   A. Student Use of Technology
   B. Course Management System (CMS) Tools
   C. Technological Support for Faculty
   D. Interface Design

References
Glossary of Terms


I. Course Design

A. Course Objectives

Each of the best practices has associated sub-practices...

- Learning objectives are clearly stated and understandable to the student
- A complete, clear course syllabus is available
- The course is organized in coherent, sequential manner
- Assignments are aligned with stated objectives/learning outcomes
- Meaningful Assessments are created and provided
  - Type and quality of student assessments are appropriate and tied to course objectives
  - Students are provided an opportunity for formative assessment and feedback
  - Instructor feedback is more than a grade
  - Clear grading criteria are defined
  - Consistent feedback is given
  - Student assessments are external to the online learning environment where appropriate
References/Readings

- Building Expertise: Cognitive Methods for Training and Performance Improvement
  Ruth Clark, Ed.D


- Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses
  L. Dee Fink

- Effective Teaching Practices for Web-Enhanced, Hybrid, and Online Classes
  CT Community Colleges Teaching and Learning Team, 2006

- Teaching Online
  Susan Ko, Steve Rossen

Questions?

For assistance with Blackboard Vista, or for local guidance, contact your colleges Distance Learning director.

For questions about this presentation, please contact:
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