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Streamlining Training & Professional Development for Student Workers

Hannah Engel

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Streamlining Training & Professional Development for Student Workers

Hannah Engel
WLA 2024

Overview: Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes

Attendees will be able to:

- Identify teaching principles that can enhance the student employee/adult learner learning experience
- Use pedagogical concepts to develop effective training procedures
- Collaborate with employees to support them in developing skills that are relevant to their interests and goals

Overview: Background

My Experience

- Writing center
- Teaching college composition
- 2020 pivot to online teaching
- Foley Library, Gonzaga University

Foley Library

- 30+ student employees
- One of the largest student employers on campus
- Number of tasks and complexity of workflows

Preliminary Considerations

- I will focus on broad teaching principles, not specific practices
  - can cross-apply to a variety of contexts
- I am speaking from an academic library perspective
  - *but* these concepts can apply to other situations
- I am still learning as I go! Come along with me!

Student Employee Training Goals

Equip student employees to:

- perform more complex tasks & projects
- develop a sense of ownership and initiative in their workspaces
- develop skills that can be used in a variety of professional contexts

Four teaching principles

Transparent Teaching: What?

- Communicating a learning framework to the learner
  - What will the learner be learning?
  - Why is it important for them to know this?
  - How will they build these skills?

- Emphasis on learner's *metacognition*
  - (thinking about thinking)

Transparent Teaching: Why?

- Learner becomes the expert on their own learning process and chooses the tools that are most likely to help them succeed

- Particularly helpful if the learner learns differently from the instructor: neurodivergence, cultural or language differences, etc.

Transparent Teaching: How?

Learning Objectives

- A good starting point to increase transparency

- Writing learning objectives:
  - "Student will be able to..."
  - Active verbs—avoid "know" or "understand"
  - What do you want the learner to be able to *do?*

- Why this works:
  - Helps clarify your own goals (makes a "to-do" list)
  - Communicates your goals to the learner
  - Gives the learner language to articulate their own skills

Learning Objectives Example

1. Basic Skills
    a. explain circulation policies to patrons using effective oral communication
        i. communicate respectfully with others
        ii. enforce policies with patrons including common scenarios such as noise levels, overdue items, and study rooms
    b. respond accurately to patron questions that are directional or related to basic reference skills
    c. differentiate between directional, reference, and research questions, and refer reference and research questions to the appropriate colleagues
    d. provide technical support for frequently-asked technology questions, such as using library printers

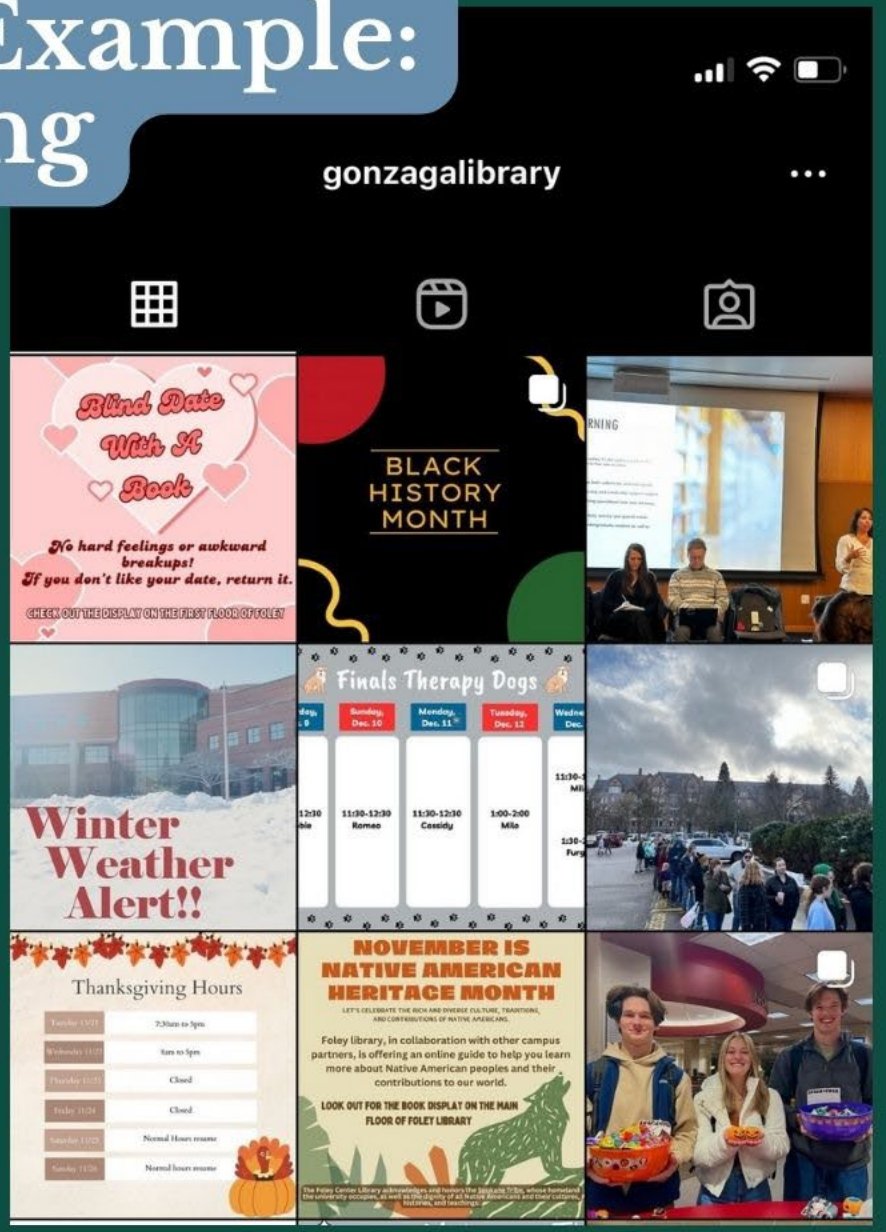
Project-Based Learning: What?

- Learning by doing
- Hands-on
- Self-directed
- Responding to a variety of needs & contexts

Project-Based Learning: Why?

- Apply learning to different contexts
- Learner takes on more complex projects, frees up staff time
- Learning from mistakes & failures
  - and learning to fail

Project-Based Learning Example: Design & Marketing



Project-Based Learning Example: Training Materials

Weekly Reminder 2/19/2024

Hello hello, student employees! Hope you all had a somewhat enjoyable weekend. Can't believe another week has already gone by. We're back with more reminders for you!

Recently we have noticed that when student workers are checking out study rooms to patrons on LibCal they are not going to the actual reservation and clicking "yes" when it says "User showed up?". It is important to check "yes" or "no" because it lets your co-workers know if the patrons showed up for their room. So before you hand the patron their key make sure you click "yes" in LibCal. Read the LibGuide for more details on study rooms.

There are a few important notes we want you to remember when it comes to the Lost and found. Call security immediately when you find "high-priority" items such as wallets and credit cards. Security will come to the library immediately to pick up high-priority items. Take Zagcards directly to Hemmingson; if you find a wallet with a Zagcard, this is considered high-priority, and you should call security. If you find a Zagcard after hours, call security. Everything else can be logged when a supervisor, lead, or Pixit-trained PRA has time for it.

Weekly Reminder Quiz for 2/19/2024

Take the quiz below!

1 1 point

What do you need to do when you're checking a patron into a study room?

- [ ] Click "yes" where it says "User showed up"
- [ ] Click "no" where it says "User showed up"
- [ ] You don't need to click anything
- [ ] Check out the study room key through Alma

2 1 point

Are you graduating in May? Or walking and planning to graduate in August/December?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

3 1 point

If you find a Zagcard, you can just put it on the shelf next to Hannah's desk.

- ( ) True
- ( ) False

Project-Based Learning: Guidelines

- Find the right amount of ambiguity for the particular learner
  - Don’t be afraid to trust the learner
- Support the learner in thinking through the project by asking open-ended questions
- Encourage & model exploration, mistakes, failures—and learning from these experiences

Asynchronous & Self-Directed Learning

- Another tool for your toolkit
- Helpful for logistical challenges
- Not always ideal, but can be done well

Asynchronous & Self-Directed Learning: Best Practices

- clear directions
- easy to tell where to click
- simple deliverables
- feedback
- choice of topics

Teaching for Transfer: What?

Transfer is “an individual’s ability to appropriately apply a concept, skill, or theory within a domain of knowledge to a new context”

Howard Gardner, cited by Michael McDowell
Teaching for Transfer: A guide for designing Learning with Real-World Application
2020, ProQuest Ebook Central

Teaching for Transfer: What?

"transfer learning requires a student to have:

- Problem-solving strategies to address a problem or meet a challenge
- Surface and deep knowledge and skills in an academic discipline
- Knowledge of the context or contexts in which content should be applied"

Michael McDowell
Teaching for Transfer: A guide for designing Learning with Real-World Application
2020, ProQuest Ebook Central

Teaching for Transfer: Why?

- Learners who can transfer their learning can:
  - Apply learned skills to future jobs
  - Articulate skills on resumés & other professional documents
  - Gain work experience
    - more accessible than unpaid internships

Teaching for Transfer: How?

- Reflection & Metacognition
  - Discussion boards
  - Reflection assignments
  - Formal & informal conversations with supervisors
- Teaching other learners
  - Encourages learners to consider the “big picture” and how to present relevant ideas

Thank you!

Questions?

Get in touch:
Hannah Engel
engelh@gonzaga.edu