

Creating Meaningful & Culturally Affirming Assignments that Align with Industry Expectations

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Getting to Know You

Please introduce yourself in the chat. Include:

- Preferred name and pronouns
- What subject you teach
- What you are hoping to get from today's session



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Agenda

Positionality and Teaching

Quick Review of Backward Design and Defining Terms

Getting to Know Your Students

Choosing Type of Assignment

Giving Choice

Providing Structure

Encouraging Collaboration

Scaffolding

Action Steps

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Positionality

“How our identities, values, experiences, and beliefs influence us as instructors.”

([Tapia-Fuselier, 2020, para 3](#))

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What is Your Instructor Positionality?

Harrington (2022)

What groups—race, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, religion, ability and so on—do I identify with and how salient is each group membership to my identity and related actions as an instructor?

What roles—significant other, parent, sibling, child, friend, instructor, scholar, author—do I have and how do these impact my identity and related actions as an instructor?

What type of training and experiences do I have? How have they shaped who am I professionally today, and how might they positively or negatively impact marginalized populations in my classes today?

What beliefs or values and characteristics do I have, and how do they impact my identity and related actions as an instructor?

In what ways do my identities represent privilege or marginalization, and how might they compare to those of my students? How might I be engaging in actions that marginalize or discourage students? What actions do I take to promote student success for all the students in my classes?

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Positionality (Tapia-Fuselier, 2020, para 4)

What are my beliefs about assessing student learning (e.g., grading approaches)?

How should students feel in the classroom? Why?

How are equitable and inclusive learning environments created and sustained?

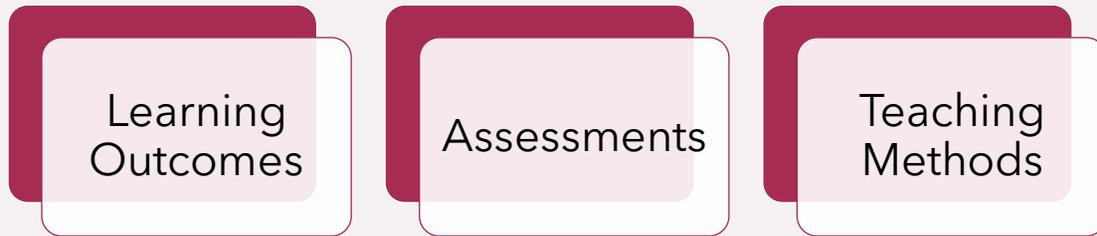
In what ways do my privileged identities take up space in the classroom? How can I account for this?

As an instructor, in what ways might I perpetuate existing structures of oppression in the classroom? How might I disrupt this?

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Backward Design

(Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)



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Defining Terms

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What makes an assignment meaningful?

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Meaningful Assignments Require Getting to Know Your Students and Ensuring Assignments have Real-world Value



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**What does
culturally affirming
mean?**

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Culturally Affirming

“Affirming education means that one’s background, culture and experiences are viewed with high regard and esteem. Moreover, the educational process is committed to the positive self-concept and racial identity development of students by honoring the legacy, and historical and contemporary contributions of their racial groups.”
(Allen et al., 2013, p. 124)

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Characteristics of Culturally Relevant Assessments Singer-Freeman et al. (2019)

Alignment	Clarity	Scaffolding	Assessment Environment	Inclusive Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong connection to learning outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment Details and Rubrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Assessments and Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotype Threat is Less Likely with Projects and Papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied Perspectives Represented

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What skills and knowledge are expected by industry partners?

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Need to Consider

Essential Skills
Needed in
Most Careers

Skills Needed
by Specific
Industries

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An Essential Skill: Information Literacy

Head (2012)

Employers Value

- Gather and evaluate information from a variety of sources including Internet, databases, and people

Recent Graduate Challenges

- Gathering information without much direction quickly
- Social nature of the process (gathering information from credible people)

Traditional Assignments

- Very structured
- May exclusively rely on library sources

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Sources for Academic Products

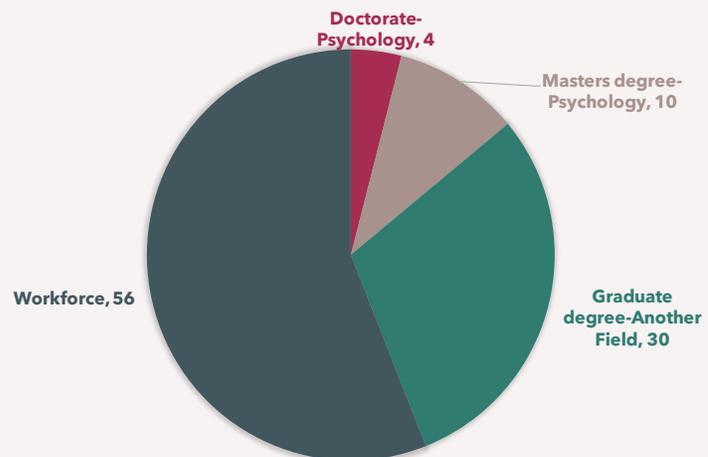


- Race, ethnicity, and gender not often collected by journals
- Limited data suggests most authors in scientific journals are White males (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/30/science/diversity-science-journals.html>)
- Only 5% of research in cognitive, developmental, and social psychology highlighted race and most authors and editors were White (Roberts et al., 2020)

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Where Do Graduates Go?

PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR GRADUATES



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Curriculum

- Research Papers using APA Style
- Statistical Analysis-SPSS

Workforce

- Brief Reports
- Excel Skills

Key Skills: Psychology

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Getting to Know Your Students

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Power of Relationships

Motivation

- Wilson et al. (2010)

Confidence

- Delfino (2019)

Learning

- Demir et al. (2018)

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"The first thing this professor had us do was create a nameplate and write on a notecard some personal information, like our name, major, minor, where we came from, what we wanted to do, a couple of fun facts about ourselves, why we were taking this class, and what we wanted to get out of it. Throughout the whole class, he kept high spirits and a smile on his face, giving us a little primer on what the class was going to be about. At the end of class, he took a picture of each of us holding our nameplates up and collected the notecards. He told us it was his goal by the next class to know each of our names. I thought for sure he was joking. I knew he had at least 100 students in all his classes. But sure enough, by the next class, he came up to me, called me by name, and asked about my second major (business) and we talked about the applications of psychology to business, as well as my involvement on the swim team (one of my fun facts)."

Getting to Know Me Rosalyn Stoa, University of Wisconsin

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Getting to Know You Pecha Kucha Shadiquah Hordge



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Food Reflection (Rosen et al., 2017)

- Social work class assignment:
- “Bring in food from any aspect of their life that is meaningful, as informed by personal or familial history, childhood experience, adult circumstances, family or personal tradition, or of personal meaning”
- “Why did you choose this food? and What memories does it evoke for you?” (p. 293)

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Food Reflection Results (Rosen et al., 2017)

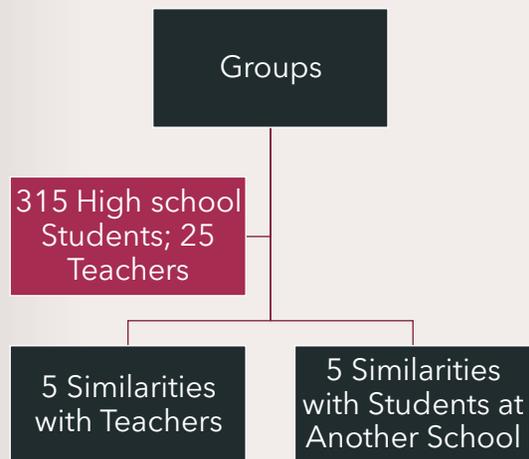
Increased understanding of the complexity of one’s own identity and similarities and differences among peers

- “What was relevant was learning about our peers’ culture, traditions, backgrounds, reasons for which they came into the social work field, their experiences and how those affect their outlook today. This assignment helped us understand each other on a different level, which we hope to do with the people we will one day serve.”
- “This self-awareness becomes important in social work because I am able to identify potential values and beliefs that may conflict with those held by clients.”

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Icebreakers: Focusing on Similarities

Gehlbach et al. (2016)



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Icebreakers: Focusing on Similarities Gehlbach et al. (2016)

Results:

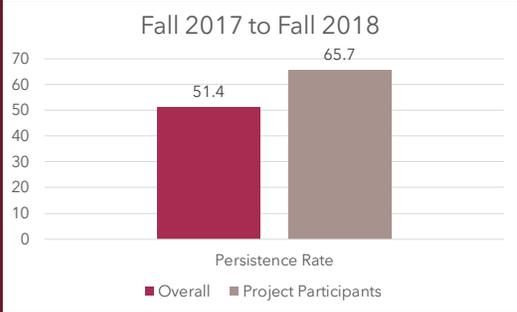
- Student-Teacher Similarity Group:
 - Better Relationships with Teachers
 - Higher Course Grades
 - Closed Equity Gap by 60%; Grade differences between Black and Latinx students and White and Asian students went from .6 to .2

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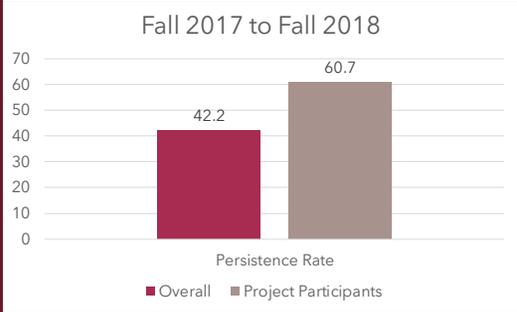
Getting to Know Students Outside of Class Persistence Project: The 15-minute Meeting

Oakton Community College, Chicago Supiano (2020)

Overall Program



Black Students



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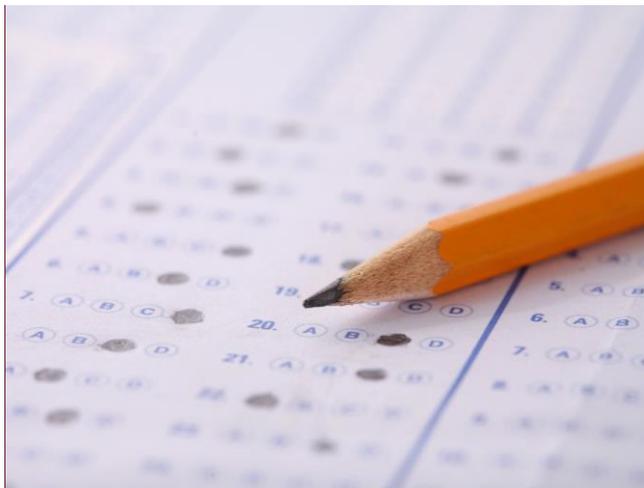


How do you get to know your students?

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Choosing Type of Assignment

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- Exams may not be accurately measuring performance
 - Stereotype threat
 - Test bias
- Exams are often not measuring knowledge and skills needed in careers

(Fuentes et al., 2020; Steele, 2011)

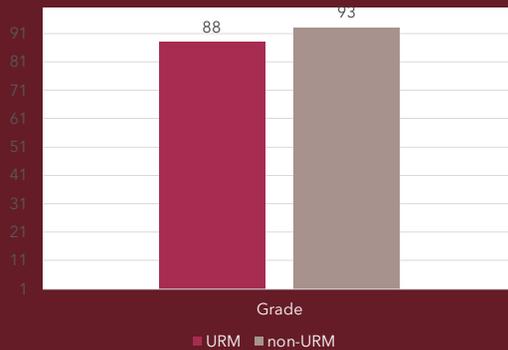
Consider Alternatives to the Exam

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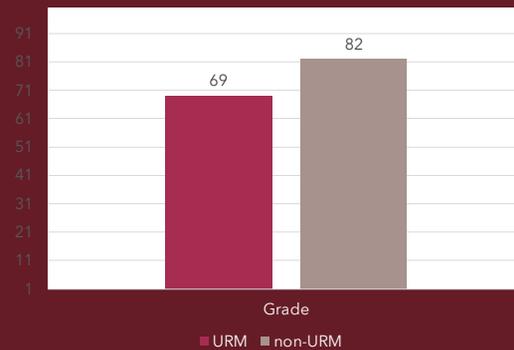
Key Findings: Theatre Appreciation

Singer-Freeman et al. (2019)

Inclusive Writing



Multiple Choice



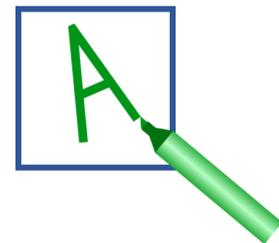
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Equity and Assignments

Hobb et al. 2021

- Reviewed 745 grades on 27 assignments in 8 classes
- Tests were most common type of assignment
- In every class, URM students had lower final grades than non-URM students, but these differences were only significant in one Sociology class
 - URM-70
 - non-URM-77

Final Grades



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Authentic Assignments

Fox et al. 2017

Increases engagement

Increases learning and skill development

- critical thinking
- team-work
- problem-solving
- effective communication
- reflective practice

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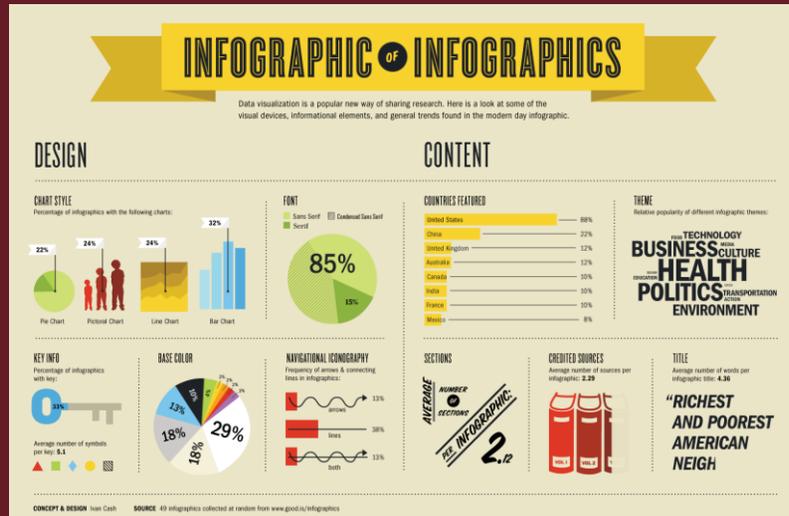
**Creating Sexual
Education
Curriculum,
Kaitlynn Ely,
Muhlenberg
College**



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Infographics

Dyjur et al., 2021; Stoerger, 2018; Toth, 2013



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What are some examples of alternatives to the exam that you use or may consider using?

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Giving Choice

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Choosing
Assignments,
Caleb Morris,
University of
South Carolina

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"In one of the first assignments, we had to introduce ourselves through a brief speech. When I introduced myself and included that I'm also Mexican, Native American, and a lesbian, Professor Hankins didn't even blink an eye throughout the entire speech. Instead, my introductory speech was met with smiles and enthusiasm for being so open and speaking in such an eloquent way. From introductory speeches to persuasive and informative ones, we had free reign to explore topics and pick something we were passionate about."

Finding My Voice

Kara Infelise, Gateway Technical College

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Choice: The Cafeteria Style Approach

Pinchot & Pullet (2021)

- Quizzes Required
- Choose Assignments
 - Discussion
 - Paper
 - Game
 - Presentation
 - Wiki
 - Critical thinking questions
 - Video presentation
 - Interview of professional
 - Project
 - Podcast
 - Video Critique

Average Course Grade: B

10 of 21 students completed more assignments than what was required

Comments:

- "I loved the a la carte type of assignments. Helped with learning and not being bored with the material. It also gave a sense of control."
- "I liked that I could pick assignments that fit how I like to learn. Creating games was fun, but creating podcasts was my favorite. Believe it or not, I actually learned more in this class than many other classes because I had a chance to teach."

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What are some examples of how you give choice?

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Providing Structure

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Structure and Success

Sathy and Hogan (2019)

- **“The more structure, the better for all students. ”**
- **“Too little structure leaves too many students behind. ”**

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“Every single assignment was laid out, the date of each topic being covered was clearly labeled, and the syllabus presented links to additional resources. Sharing clear expectations is key to engaging students on the first day. If a professor presents an incomplete and vague, unspecific syllabus on the first day of the class, they are destined to get a similar lack of effort from students in their assignments..”

Transparent, Clear Expectations in the Syllabus
Michael Daidone, College of the Holy Cross

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Transparent Assignments

Winkelman et al. 2016

Purpose- What is the relevance of learning the skills and knowledge?

Task- What do students need to do and how should they do it?

Criteria- What would excellence look like?

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Academic Confidence

Sense of Belonging

Mastery of Skills Employers Value

- For underserved students, some of the greatest increases:
 - Connecting and evaluating information from a variety of sources
 - Applying knowledge to different contexts
 - Writing effectively

1800 students, 35 faculty, 7 colleges and universities

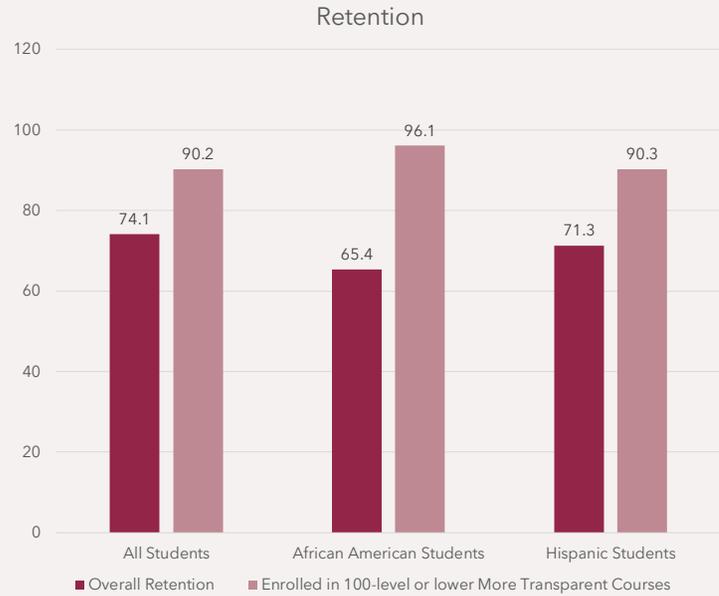
Transparency and Skill Development

Winkelman et al. 2016

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Transparency and Retention

Winkelman AACU and TILT



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Grading Criteria

McKinney 2021

Students

- Fewer questions
- Feedback was perceived as more helpful
- Positive comments
- Negative comments about assignment dropped

Faculty

- Increased satisfaction
- Reduced grading time by almost 6 ½ hours per week

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Encouraging Collaboration

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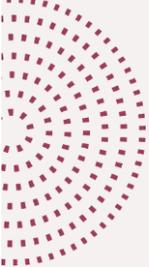
"In this class, the instructor assigned a group project that required students to research an organization. Before starting the project, the instructor asked students to share what type of career they wanted to pursue. Each student was then placed into a team based on their career interests. Students also had to complete modules to learn interpersonal skills that would be helpful for teamwork. After each team member completed the modules, each team was asked to elect a leader, assign roles to the remainder of the team members, and agree on rules for the project."

Online Group Project
Edwin S. Lee, San Jose State University

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Collaboration and Learning



- 
- Facilitates deeper levels of learning (Durham et al., 2018; Swanson et al., 2019)
 - But...
 - 68% of community college students who completed the SENSE survey reported they NEVER worked with a classmate outside of class
 - 22% reported NEVER working with other students during class

(Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2010)

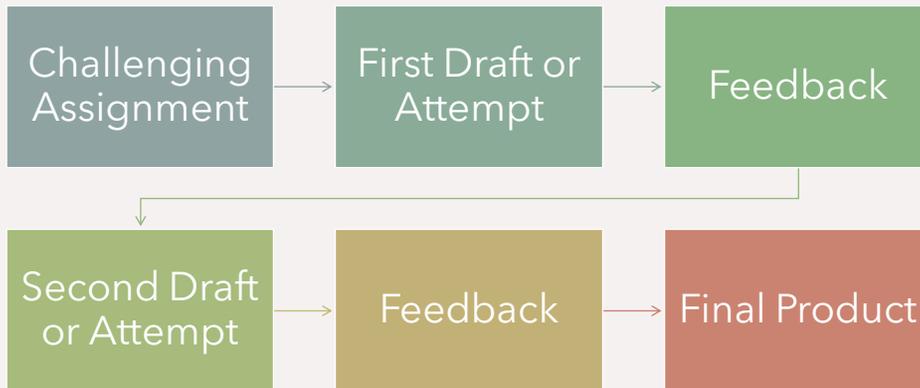
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Scaffolding



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Re-thinking Assignments: An Equity Issue (Taras, 2006)



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“My professor designed the final project to be completed throughout the semester by making pieces of it due on certain weeks leading up to the final date. This gave us the opportunity to complete the assignment one part at a time and receive feedback at each point. After the first assignment, she gave thorough feedback on what we could improve on for the next phase of the assignment. This approach really helps us gain confidence and skills.”

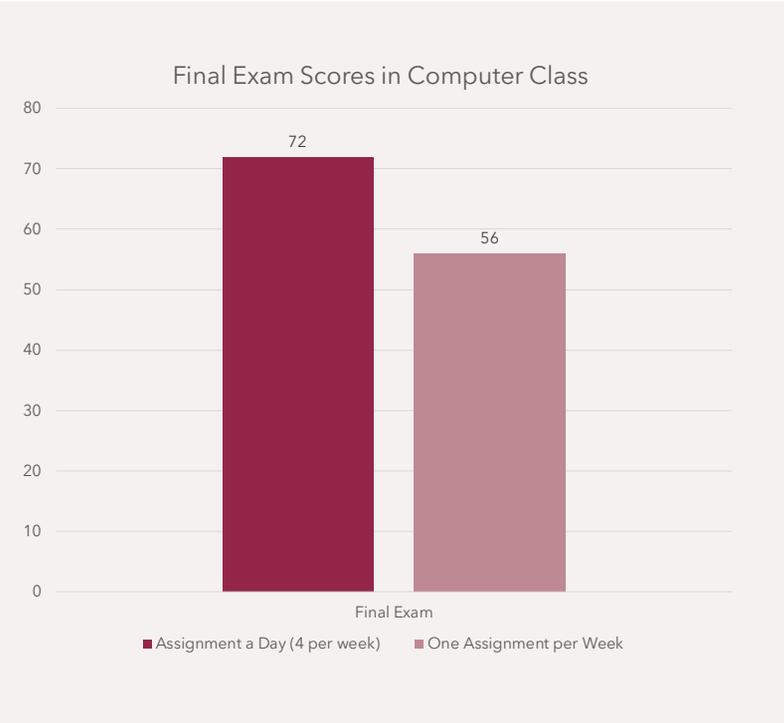
Breaking Down a Major Assignment

Kayla Jasper, Temple University

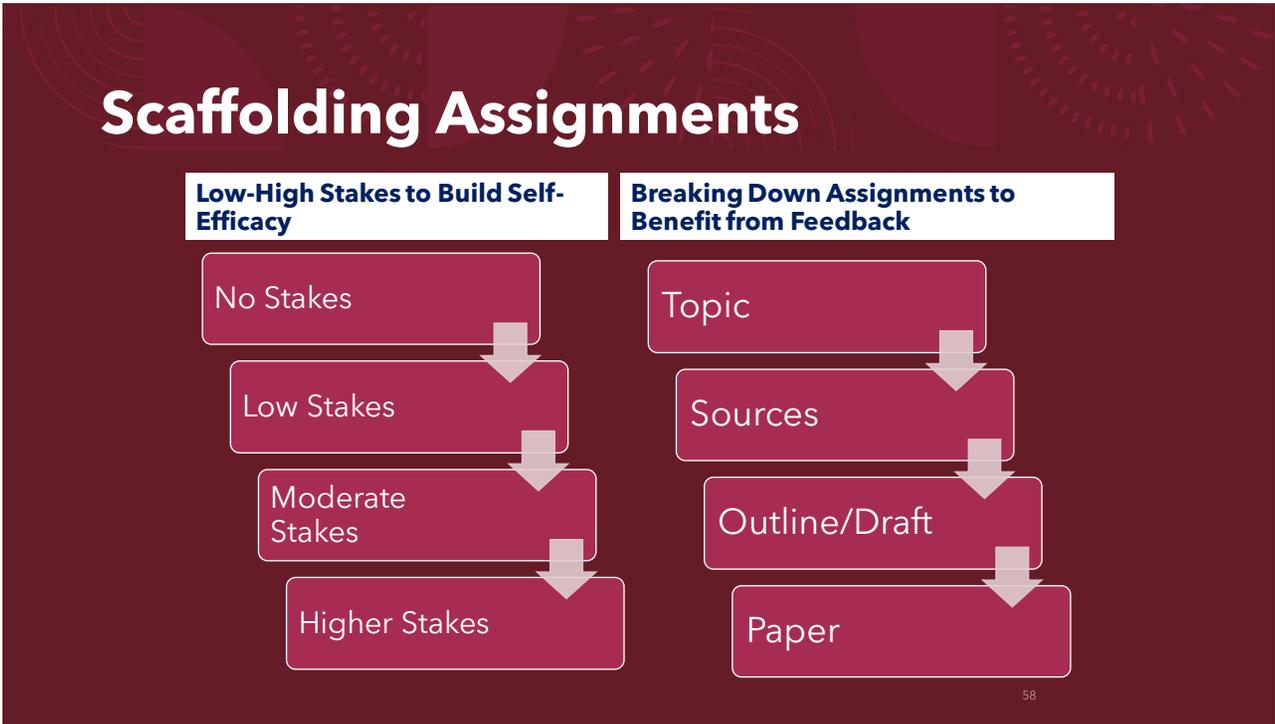
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An Assignment a Day

Dawar & Murphy, 2020

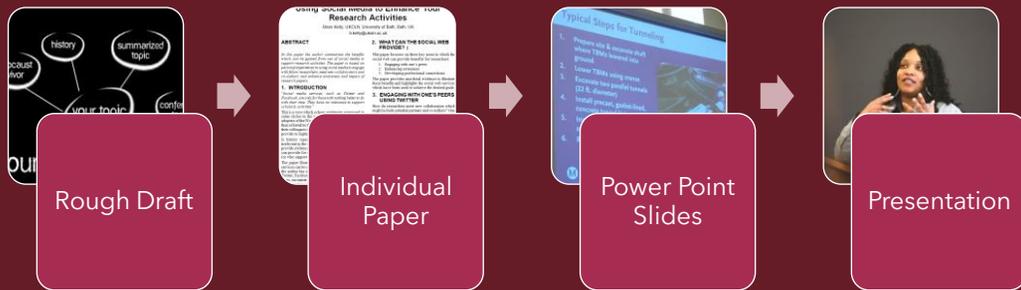


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Feedback: Linking Assignments?



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"In this course, one of the major assignments was a group project that included a presentation and a paper. About halfway through the semester, the paper portion of this project was due. The professor graded the papers by the following class, and when he returned the papers to each group, he explained how we would be spending the entire class reviewing our papers. The professor then spoke to the whole class describing the requirements of this revision assignment. He told us that we would be receiving a separate grade for this second, revised submission. Knowing that this assignment was going to be graded again, we immediately became more interested in the notes and feedback that the professor had written on the returned papers. The professor then went to each group and spent 5-10 minutes discussing that group's paper with the group members while the other groups were working on the presentation portion of the project."

Required Revisions
Ryan Harrington, Quinnipiac University

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Developing a
Growth Mindset



**Foster Growth
Mindset by
Emphasizing
Effort and
Strategies**

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**Reinforcing
Strengths,
Christina
Christodoulou
Drew University**

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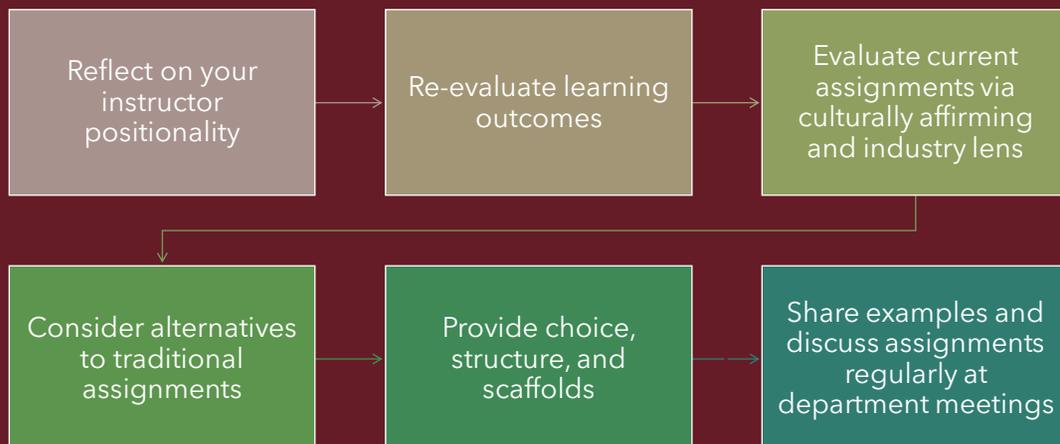
Discussion Time

Share an example of an assignment you use that you believe is culturally affirming, engaging, and aligned with industry expectations, or one that you might modify or develop.



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Call to Action

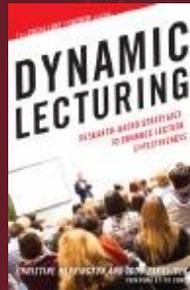
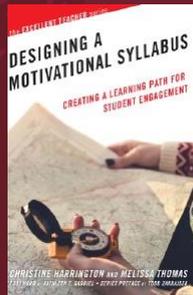
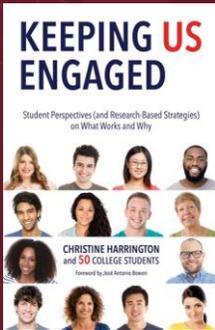


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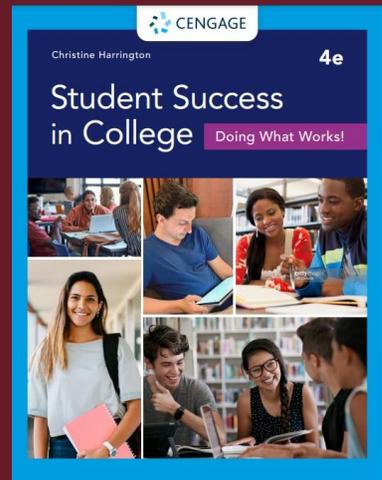
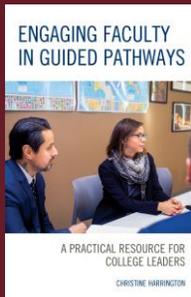
What is a key take-away from today's session? What is one action you plan to take?



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Questions?
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