60-Second SoTL

Episode 32 – A Model of Collaborative Projects & Assignments

(Piano Music)

0:03

Jessie L. Moore:
How might project-based learning—as an example of a collaborative project—give students practice with transferable skills for future professional contexts? That's the focus of this week's 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. This episode is the seventh in an 8-part series hosted by Elon University Masters of Higher Education students who are exploring collaborative assignments and projects as a high-impact practice. Listen for future episodes in their series wherever you subscribe to 60-Second SoTL.

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(Piano Music)

0:34

Haley Turczynski:
I'm Haley Turczynski.

In "Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing: Using a Semester-Long Problem-Based Learning Project to Apply Small-Group Communication Principles", published in Communication Teacher, SoTL scholar Tiffany Cresswell-Yeager introduces a class model that uses small groups, problem-based learning, and project-based learning. The problem-based learning framework allows students to define their problems, research possible solutions, and share their findings with others as a group, which has been shown to help students integrate knowledge, problem-solve, work with others, and learn at a deeper level. Students used the problem-based learning framework to solve a real-world problem, and the inclusion of project-based learning means that students had to produce a tangible product at the end of the semester, which has been shown to help students develop a better understanding of what they learn.

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Before the course began, the professor coordinated with different organizations and prepared sample materials for the class. On top of their normal in-class group work, students had monthly group meetings with specific requirements designed to scaffold their project, along with things they did every month, like changing group roles, creating their next month's agenda, and writing a progress report.

Students also had to individually write two guided reflection essays and observe their group's organization for 5 hours. At the end of the course, groups wrote a case study narrative, a problem analysis, and a solution that their organization could implement, along with creating a PowerPoint they presented to the class. Students also completed a group member and self-assessment at the end of the course.

2:11

The reflection and assessment activities completed by each student allowed the professor to assess the students' learning. Students reported that the project improved their teamwork, communication, project management, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, students valued the project because it allowed them to connect class content to the real world. This article is an excellent model of collaborative projects and assignments because it explains the framework of the course in detail while also providing possible variations to make the framework more transferable. While this seems to be an effective model, future research could expand it by assessing the project more concretely. To learn more, see the full citation in our show notes.

2: 52

(Piano Music)

Jessie L. Moore:
Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning.** Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

(Piano Music)