

Certification in College Teaching Institute, May 12-13, 2022, Michigan State University

Worksheet for Reflections and Applications for Teaching and Learning

Session: Creating Effective Learning Environments - Thursday

What skills and techniques did I learn that will help me become a better educator?

I learned that an inclusive, welcoming, environment is essential to creating an effective learning environment. Part of this is focusing on teaching in a way so that students will be able to take away information from the course to inform their future classes and careers in a valuable way, rather than “teaching to test” or “learning to test.”

In her lecture, Dr. Melanie Cooper discussed several concepts, including backwards design and evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning. Backward design was very interesting. Instead of starting with a set of learning activities or materials and then creating assessments to measure student learning, backward design emphasizes first determining desired learning outcomes. Once this has been developed, an instructor can then work backwards to determine the steps needed to achieve those outcomes. Dr. Cooper's phrasing of “what should students know, understand, and be able to do?” is an excellent way to start developing desired outcomes. You can then consider her next question, “how do you know students have met goals?”, to bring in evidence-based measures as a way to assess your teaching interventions.

Additionally, I thought that considering factors such as the world beyond the classroom and the physical and mental well-being of students were extremely relevant to the conversations surrounding effective learning environments.

What things am I still uncertain about regarding this topic that I need to investigate further in the future?

Although this session discussed the ideal learning environment, are there situations in which internal or external conditions alter the effectiveness of the ideal learning environment we discussed? Does context shift what is effective and what is not to a greater degree than other factors?

I was interested in understanding more about evidence-based teaching and learning, so I decided to read an [article](#) written by Dr. Cooper. In it, she highlights several key strategies, including conducting needs assessments, identifying and using high-quality instructional materials and resources, feedback and scaffolding assignments, and more.

How can I apply materials from this session to my own class to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning?

I think that the strategies Dr. Cooper outlined in her lecture and in the article above are relatively accessible to rising educators. One way I can apply the materials of this session to my own teaching is to have students respond to surveys/evaluations at the beginning and end of the course to see what their expectations and hopes for the course are. This would provide me with a better understanding of their ambitions as well as their backgrounds, which I could then use to create an effective environment for all.