

#3 - Trying Out New Strategies

As we approach the middle of the term, I was hoping we finally got the hang of it. Well, due to the survey results, first we had to make sure we fix our mistakes before we went on. So, I was ready to start implementing some of our new strategies. There were two main things we had to concentrate on: getting our PowerPoint slides completed a lot earlier, so that we have time to make changes and consult our supervisors, and practicing the presentations a lot more, so that we are able to organize ourselves and get things cleared up beforehand, rather than during the seminar.

Soon after the previous journal, Donald and I began to practice the LSS for the second lab for the first time. We practiced in front of some of our friends. And what an embarrassing experience it was! I thought it was a pretty straightforward presentation, but we spent so much time trying to understand it ourselves and organize who would say what, that it felt like a big mess! Imagine we performed in this way at the actual seminar! I was glad we were trying it out early, so that we can become aware of what we were doing wrong and be able to coordinate ourselves. We were even able to get some feedback from our friends; it was clear to them that we were definitely not yet prepared. Through this, I was able to realize that it was very important not to take this position for granted. In order to deliver a proper presentation, I need to fully understand the material to be presented, and to truly know what I find unclear and what I need to review, I have to go through the slides carefully ahead of time. And so, after this, I made sure that I went through the all the slides in detail and understood exactly how to do the example problems I would go through during the presentation. I also made some notes, so that I can refer to them in case I forget anything important.

The next day, Donald and I practiced again. This time, we went through it twice: first, more slowly, so that we can assign who would be presenting each slide, and what exactly we would say or concentrate on for each one. The second time, we tried to go through it in the manner that we would actually present at the seminar. Natalia came to watch us and to pretend to ask potential questions that the students may ask. Soon after that, it was time for the actual seminar. Strangely, although we were definitely more prepared, I felt a bit less confident than before. Perhaps I was trying to be more cautious, now that I knew how some of the students felt. Like I planned, I thanked the students for participating on the survey, and encouraged them to let us know if at any point they found us confusing or unclear.

As we went through the presentation, I felt a bit better, because I could see that it was going a lot more smoothly, and we knew what we were doing. The students seemed to respond well, as they were able to answer some of the questions we were asking them, and we were able to answer theirs. After that, I felt a bit successful. Our plans seemed to be working! I decided that we needed to continue to practice like we did before, and make sure that we were as prepared as possible. I was determined that as long as we kept this up, we would become a lot more effective presenters!

With respect to preparing our next PowerPoint slides, Donald and I decided to start immediately. Even though Natalia and Taleen weren't around, we started getting some ideas down by adding slides with headings, and some pictures and main points, so we had some idea of what we would go through. Even though it was just a skeleton, we had something to work with. It made me feel a bit more responsible, since we were getting it done a lot earlier than the previous one. Before too long and after the others worked on it as well, it was practically all complete. After meeting with Wanda and Lana, we made some minor adjustments, and then it was ready! I was glad we got it over with, and I felt optimistic about continuing to improve in our placement.