

GIFT:Neil Haave:Developing Learning Philosophies to Increase Student Engagement

Scribe Name:	Tanya Noel; updated May 25 by TKelly	
Title/topic of session:	Developing Learning Philosophies to Increase Student Engagement	
Date:	Wednesday	PM
Facilitator(s):	Neil Haave	
Session type:	GIFT	

Neil's slides are online: <http://aug.ualberta.ca/oCUBE2015LearnPhilos>

Notes during session:

- Increased engagement improves learning. One approach - develop student metacognition. Carried out F15 study to determine whether developing student learning philosophies would help develop metacognition.
- Neil noticed that students seemed to view education as a list of checkboxes - weren't putting things together. It had been noticed that students had difficulty articulating skills to potential employers, applying prior knowledge from previous courses. Students not integrating learning experiences into robust knowledge structure.
- Carried out ePortfolio pilot in 2012-2013. ePortfolios help students consider what/why/how of learning. Students can reflect on collected artifacts in this process. Neil found students were metacognitively engaged via development of learning philosophy, increasing integration.
- Neil will be undertaking a study: Does metacognition make a difference to learning biology?
- Neil will be teaching 2 sections of 1st year Bio (90 students in each) One section will have students developing learning philosophies, the other will have an alternative assessment. Neil will administer the "Learning Environment Preferences Survey" pre/post, and correlate to tiered Q on final exam (crossing Bloom's Taxonomy levels). Final course grades will also be used in the analysis. Neil would like to know: "Will having students think about how they learn impact their thinking like a biologist? Scientist?"
- Michelle suggested providing study tips (e.g., Leamson, 2002) rather than, say, summarizing a paper. Neil needs to avoid something explicitly relating to developing metacognition, but still topical (rather than just busy work).
- Neil showed summary of Perry scheme of intellectual development. (Begins at dualism, progresses through to highest development: commitment in relativism.) Figure is from: Finster, 1989.
- Neil asks oCUBE: "How do I develop students' learning philosophies without creating an undue grading burden on the instructor?"
- Clarification that the student learning philosophy will be the first page of a growing ePortfolio (prepared in Google Sites).
- Can the grading be simplified?
- Neil highlighted that he cares more about engaging students in the process than the final product.
- A participant put forward a request to clarify "learning philosophy". Neil suggests that a personal learning philosophy relates to what you're learning, how you're learning, etc. Do you have mastery goals or performance goals? Where do you want to be? Who do you want to be? How do you plan to get there? (Neil has had faculty tie their own learning philosophies with teaching philosophies.)
- Participant Q - How often would the learning philosophies be marked? What are the measures (and when will they be observed)?
- Neil says he's looking at change in the course: correlations of final grade, learning environment preferences survey score, level of intellectual development score on tiered question. Will compare results of the 2 sections.
- Tamara asks if sampling of group might work, rather than marking all students. Also suggests that it might be useful to do a more longitudinal study - student changes over time. Neil mentions funding only for one year, but would like to go beyond.
- ePortfolios are changing, ongoing records. Students could reflect on the previous year.

- Neil uses ePortfolios in 1st year and in his 4th year course. (Other professors may use them, but not necessarily.)
- Fiona asks what kind of feedback will be provided to students. (e.g., if a student says they are a "visual learner", would Neil let them know about the problems with "preferred learning styles"?) Neil says he'll ask guiding questions ("What makes you think you are a visual learner? Do you think that you could become an aural learner?").
- Christoph asks how much instruction is provided. Neil says he will give them the what/how/why type questions, get students to connect their learning to something personal.
- Tom suggests going over an actual ePortfolio in class, asking the student questions while working through it. Neil mentions previous students have agreed to come back and serve as resource people in future.
- Aarthi mentions it can take time to develop metacognition. How will this be handled? Neil is thinking of giving feedback on midterm and final, but the one on the final is the one that would count. Allows students time to change.
- Dennis says there will be mixture of students in first year, have only completed high school as previous experience.
- Neil says that he thinks that just asking students to do a learning philosophy will lead to huge change.
- Jade asks why the learning philosophies need to be scored. Neil points out that he has a hypothesis, but he doesn't know for sure, and this can help gather evidence. Could it be a "done" vs. "not done" (or "crap")? Neil is concerned that without a mark students won't take it seriously. Jade clarifies that a mark for completion might be enough, and several folks agreed.

Summary of Session:

Neil has had students develop learning philosophies (in ePortfolios) as a way of increasing metacognition. He's seeking input for an upcoming study - he's looking for ways of marking learning portfolios effectively (i.e. without undue burden). Interesting points were brought up in discussion, including the idea of marking for completion rather than quality.

Resources:

- Finster, FC. 1989. Developmental instruction: Part 1. Perry's model of intellectual development. Journal of Chemical Education 66(8): 659.
- Haave N. Developing learning philosophies to increase student engagement
<http://aug.ualberta.ca/oCUBE2015LearnPhilos>
- Leamnsn 2002. Learning (Your First Job)