Metacognitive Journaling in the Online Classroom

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Presentation of the Problem: Feedback in Online Courses

- The purpose of this study was to gather student perceptions of a **structured reflection** journaling assignment by collecting data about how this **metacognitive reflection process** affected their learning outcomes.

Potential Solution:
Promoting Student Metacognition
- the path to our thinking

Tanner, K. (2012). Promoting student metacognition. *Cell Biology Education*, *11*(2), 113-120. http://dx.doi.org/10.1187/cbe.12-03-0033

Potential Solutions: Promoting student Metacognition - the path to our thinking

"metacognition lies at the root of all learning"

"...self-knowledge, awareness of how and why we think as we do, and the ability to adapt and learn, are critical to our survival as individuals..."

- James Zull (2011) *From Brain to Mind: Using Neuroscience to Guide Change in Education*

Rubric for Response

- Each week students responded to the top three to five "big ideas" (prompts) for the week.

- These prompts were to be answered in 1-2 paragraphs each.

Week 1 Questions - Planning Prompts

1. What do I already know about **[course topic]** that can help me in this course?

2. Is the study of **[course topic]** important to me? Why/why not?

3. How much time will I allocate to this course every week, and how will I spend that time?

4. What do I most want to learn in this course?

5. What kind of feedback from the instructor do I want and/or expect?

Week 2 – 7 Questions - Monitoring Prompts

1. What was most confusing to me in this week's lecture, video, or reading?

2. What insights have I gained as a result of this week's activities?

3. How have I utilized the instructor's feedback to improve my understanding and performance in the course?

Week 8 Questions - Evaluating Prompts

1. What will I still remember 5 years from now that I learned in this course?

2. What advice would I give a friend about how to learn the most in this course?

3. Did your time allocation plan from week 1 (How much time will I allocate to this course every week, and how will I spend that time?) help you meet your goals in this course?

- *How did the "Big Idea" assignments affect your outcomes in this course?*

- *Would you recommend the "Big Ideas" assignment be included in the other courses you will take?*

Sample Size and Courses

Course	N
ECH461 Supervision in ECS	8
ECH435 Cross Cult Perspectives	15
ORG501 Found of Org Leadership	17
ORG501 Found of Org Leadership	22
ORG501 Found of Org Leadership	21
	83

Summary of Student Feedback –
Would you recommend the "Big Ideas" assignment be included in the other courses you will take?

Course	Number of students	Positive/Include	Do Not Include
ECH 461	8	7	1
ECH435	9	9	0
ORG501	16	16	0
ORG501	22	20	2
ORG501	21	14	9
n	**76**	**66**	**10**

Student Voices: Recommend

- *"I would recommend the big idea to be included in other course because I think it was a **positive and helpful way for students to provide the teacher with their own feedback about the course**. I think it is important for the professor to know what the **students are actually learning** and enjoying from the course and whether or not they are being helpful and supportive to the students throughout the course. This way if any changes need to be made the professor would have the chance to make them later in the course or for future courses."*

- **UG ECH Student**

Student Voices: Recommend

- *"Yes, I believe the "Big Idea" assignments were extremely helpful in this course. They **served a dual purpose for me—allowed me to reflect on my learning and allowed a personalized interaction with the instructor**. Each week I was able to **reflect on a take-away** as well as **what was the most confusing concept**. When I first enrolled in this program, I have to admit I was a bit hesitant about the 100% online learning environment when I am accustomed to classroom interaction. **After this first course, I think the program will be great for me** and the interaction with the instructor exceeded my expectations. Honestly, going forward in other courses I am not sure how other instructors will tailor feedback if they don't utilize the "Big Ideas" format."*

- **GRAD ORG Student**

Student Voices: Recommend

- *"I would definitely recommend this "Big Ideas" assignment be included in other courses because it **allows a dialogue between the student and professor to clear up any questions**. Since this is an online program, there might be certain things that are interpreted a bit differently depending on each person's individual experience. Having this assignment **allows for students to communicate any misconceptions about assignment or readings**. I think that it can be such a great addition to any course.*

- ***GRAD ORG Student***

Student Voices: Recommend

- *"I liked the big ideas. **It made me stop and think each week which is not something we always let ourselves do**. I love to self reflect, but **this made us reflect on a specific topic**. Weaving it into life, the class, and who we are as individuals is what I consider the most valuable aspect of this program. I think a small time to reflect on the week is a great idea and **will start using it even if it is not an assignment**."*

- ***GRAD ORG Student***

Conclusions

- 1) 87% of students surveyed supported the use of this strategy.

- 2) Students commented that the bi-directional quality of the feedback improved the relationship between the students and the faculty in these courses.

- 3) Both implementing faculty found that evaluations were higher than courses without the use of the "Big Ideas".

Benefits to Community College Students

Helps Student Accountability

Leverage their own previous knowledge/learning	Examine effectiveness of study habits	Evaluate Current Learning
What do I already know about [course topic] that can help me in this course?	How much time will I allocate to this course every week, and how will I spend that time?	What was most confusing to me in this week's lecture, video, or reading?
Is the study of [course topic] important to me? Why/why not?	What kind of feedback from the instructor do I want and/or expect?	What insights have I gained as a result of this week's activities?
What do I most want to learn in this course?		How have I utilized the instructor's feedback to improve my understanding and performance in the course?

Long-Term Student Benefits:
Helps Build Habits and Skills For Educational Success

- How to dialog with their instructors
  - How to explain what concepts they are struggling with.
- Facilitates perceived continuity in their education (how one class prepares them for the next)
- Helps them to see value in what they are learning and make connections
- Helps foster a positive mindset, which may help increase personal academic confidence, which may lead to greater perseverance
- Week 8 questions encourage students to modify their behaviors going forward based on their learned lessons.

Benefits to Instructors

- Early identification of students who may be struggling- in some cases may help identify potential ADA issues.

- Assist students in seeing the realistic time requirements of the course

- Facilitate ongoing dialog with the student which mitigates end-of-term student panic

- Student feedback and identification of potential issues with the course content, course shell, course materials

Recommendations

- Online instructors should consider using metacognitive reflection journaling as one way to support the success of their students.

- Further exploration is warranted on the use of metacognitive strategies in different content areas and course levels.

Questions & Comments

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