Creating Transparent, Equitable Learning Opportunities for All College Students in Tennessee

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The new incoming majority student population in US higher education is increasingly diverse, multi-generational and non-traditional, and faculty must provide equitable educational opportunities for a broad variety of learners in each college course. Inequities in students’ access and participation are intensified in the remote instructional conditions necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Transparent instruction can offer more equitable opportunities for all college students to succeed in college, whether online or on campus or both. Data from an AAC&U study of students' learning at seven Minority-Serving Institutions identifies transparent instruction (involving faculty/student discussion about the relevant knowledge, skills to be practiced, required tasks, expected criteria and examples before students begin working) as an equitable teaching intervention that significantly enhances students' success, with greater gains for historically underserved students [Winkelmes et al, Peer Review, Spring 2016]. Transparent instruction also enhances students’ persistence and retention rates [Gianoutsos and Winkelmes 2016; Winkelmes et al. 2019].

In this highly interactive workshop, participants will review the research findings, discuss example assignments before and after the transparency intervention, and practice applying the Transparency Framework to assignments and activities from their own courses.

AGENDA

PART 1)
11:00-11:50    How TILT works; and Examples You’ll Critique

break

PART II)
12:00-12:50: TILT Your Own Assignment with the Transparent Assignment Framework

MATERIALS    https://tinyurl.com/TILTTN
Bibliography:


Elbow, Peter. “High Stakes and Low Stakes in Assigning and Responding to Writing.” *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* no. 69, (Spring 1997).


Spitzer, Brian and Aronson, J. “Minding and Mending the Gap: Social Psychological Interventions to Reduce Educational Disparities.” *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 85/1 (March 2015).


Tanner, Kimberly B. “Promoting Student Metacognition.” *CBE Life Sciences Education* 11, 2 (June 4, 2012): 113-120.


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The Unwritten Rules:
Decode Your Assignments and
Decipher What’s Expected of You

Did you know?
- Researchers demonstrated in a national study that transparency around academic assignments enhances students’ success -- especially that of first-generation, low-income and underrepresented college students -- at statistically significant levels (with a medium-to-large sized magnitude of effect for underserved students). [Winkelmes et al., Peer Review 2016]
- When faculty make the purpose, tasks and criteria of an academic assignment clear before students begin to work on it, students are more likely to experience greater academic success with that assignment, developing the knowledge, disposition, and skills necessary to succeed both at school and in life (in comparison to when students experience less clarity around purpose, tasks and criteria for their academic work). [Winkelmes et al., Peer Review 2016]
- For University of Nevada Las Vegas students, benefits also included a significantly higher rate of returning to college the following two years. [Gianoutsos and Winkelmes, PADE Proceedings 2016; Winkelmes et al. 2019]
- An inclusive learning environment benefits all students and offers more equitable learning opportunities for underserved students. Research on student learning links college students’ academic confidence and sense of belonging with higher GPAs, persistence and retention rates [Walton and Cohen, Science, 18 March, 2011].
- College students increased their test scores when supported by a system that advocated the belief that intelligence is not fixed but rather malleable. A year later, these students were 80% less likely to drop out of college [Aronson et al, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 38, 2 (2002)].

WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO:

Before you begin working on an assignment or class activity, ask the instructor to help you understand the following. (Bring this document to help frame the conversation.)

**Purpose**
- Skills you’ll practice by doing this assignment
- Content knowledge you’ll gain from doing this assignment
- How you can use these in your life beyond the context of this course, in and beyond college

**Task**
- What to do
- How to do it (Are there recommended steps? What roadblocks/mistakes should you avoid?)

**Criteria**
- **Checklist** (Are you on the right track? How to know you’re doing what’s expected?)
- **Examples of real-world work in this field**
  (What’s good or lacking about these examples? Use the checklist to identify the successful parts.)

1. Select a professional in your prospective academic discipline and/or career field that is considered an expert in an area in which you are interested.

2. Secure an interview with the professional for a date and time that is convenient for both of you.

3. Prepare 8-10 questions to ask the professional about their knowledge of a particular academic discipline/career field.

4. Conduct a 20 – 30 minute, face-to-face interview to gather knowledge that will help you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering. You will want to audio/video record the interview with the interviewee’s permission.

5. Prepare a typed transcript of the questions and answers using the audio/video recording.

6. Write a 400 – 500 word reflection paper in which you address the following items:
   1. Who you selected and why?
   2. What you learned from them that is most interesting?
   3. What this assignment helped you learn about your major/career decision?
   4. What questions you still have?

7. Submit the typed transcript and reflection paper to your instructor.
Due dates:
- Sept 30 - Draft interview questions
- October 15 - Transcript of interviews
- November 17 - Report

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to help you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering.

Skills: This assignment will help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in school and professional life:
- Accessing and collecting information from appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Synthesizing information to develop informed views
- Composing a well-organized, clear, concise report to expand your knowledge on a subject in your major.

Knowledge: This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:
- Issues facing professionals in a field
- Scholarly research formats for documenting sources and creating reference pages (i.e., bibliographies).

Task: To complete this assignment you should:

1. Secure an interview with two professionals in your prospective academic discipline and/or career field who are considered experts.
2. Schedule the interviews with the professionals at a date and time that is convenient for both of you.
3. Prepare 8-10 questions to ask the professionals about their expertise in a particular academic or career field. The questions must be based on a review of the filed using 5 credible sources as defined by the librarian in our research module. Sources should be cited using APA formatting.
4. Conduct a 2 -3 minute, face-to-face interview with each professional to gather knowledge that will help you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering. You will want to audio/video record the interview with the interviewee’s permission.
5. Prepare a typed transcript of the interviews
6. Compare and contrast the information provided by both professionals in an 8-page (1.5 spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins) report that documents the advantages and disadvantages of a career in the selected field.

Criteria for success: Please see the attached rubric.
Exercise 3: Scientific Evidence

Read through your example scientific poster and answer the following questions.

Title of your example poster:

1. What is the ethical question that is being asked?

2. What pieces of evidence do they provide in support of and in opposition of their question?
   
   **In Opposition:**
   **In Support**

3. Are the pieces of evidence from peer-reviewed scientific sources (look at the references to be sure)?

4. How are the pieces of evidence presented (numbers, graphs, tables, figures)?

5. How are the pieces of evidence analyzed in the Discussion section?

6. What is the ethical conclusion?

7. Do the pieces of evidence support their conclusion? Why or why not?

8. Are you convinced by their evidence of their ethical conclusion? Why or why not?

9. What questions do you still have after reading this poster? What could they have done better?
Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to analyze a scientific poster to help you learn to research, design, and create your own effective poster with sufficient scientific evidence to support your conclusion.

Skills/Knowledge: As a result of completing this assignment, you'll be able to identify and judge the success of the important parts of a scientific poster:

- the sources of scientific information
- the interpretation of the results
- the scientific merit of the conclusion.

Task: Read through your example poster and answer the following questions. You will be graded based on how completely you address the following:

1. Identify the ethical question that is being asked.
2. List the evidence the authors provide in support of and in opposition to their question.
3. Examine the pieces of evidence listed in #2 above. Identify whether they are from popular (Pop), scientific peer-reviewed (SPR), or non-scientific peer-reviewed (NSPR) sources, and not each statement above as (Pop), (SPR), or (NSPR). Do you think there is enough scientific evidence from peer-reviewed articles? Why or why not?
4. Describe how the pieces of evidence are presented (e.g., numbers, graphs, tables, figures).
5. Explain how the pieces of evidence are analyzed in the Discussion section.
6. Identify the ethical conclusion.
7. After analyzing the content of the poster, do the pieces of evidence support their conclusion? Explain why or why not.
8. After assessing the scientific merit of their evidence, are you convinced of their ethical conclusion? Explain why or why not.
9. List the questions you still have after reading this poster. What could they have done better?

Criteria for success:

Your responses should be as complete as possible. After completing this assignment, you will have increased your understanding of how to identify the essential parts of a scientific poster and how to evaluate its use of evidence.
Transparent, Equitable
Learning Readiness Framework

At the beginning of the course, review your learning expectations with the instructor. This helps to identify and address inequitable conditions for learning so that all students may begin the course with same readiness for learning and success. (Bring this document to help frame the conversation with your instructor.)

Purpose
• What specific content knowledge will you gain from this course?
• What skills will you practice during the course?
• How you can use this knowledge and these skills in your life beyond the context of this course, and beyond college?

Tasks
• What learning behaviors or actions will you use during class meetings? Outside of class?
• Is there a sequence for these? (Are there recommended steps?)
• What roadblocks/mistakes can you avoid?
• What guidelines will you follow during class to check on your understanding and/or on your class collaborators’ understanding?
• How will you notify the teacher as soon as their assistance is needed to ensure that all students have a fair opportunity to learn effectively in this course during class and outside of class?

Criteria
• Checklist (How will you know you’re doing what’s expected in the course?)
• What is your own standard for your achievement in the course?
• How well must understand and be able to apply knowledge and skills gained in this course for you to succeed in the course?
ACTIVITY #1: Discuss Sample A, p. 4

1) What knowledge does the student gain?
2) Where is that located?
3) What skills does the student practice? (How many?)
4) Who can succeed on this assignment?
5) How does REVISED sample A differ?
6) How could REVISED sample A be more transparent/equitable?

ACTIVITY #2 Discuss Sample B, pp.6-8

1) How are the before and after versions different?
2) Who can succeed on the before version; the after?
3) How could the after version be improved?

ACTIVITY #3: Make your assignments more transparent

1) (45 sec) Teacher/staff describes a graded assignment/ work project
   (a) optional: 2nd colleague describes an assignment / project (45 sec)
2) (3 min) Listeners say & type the steps you would take (TASK) tinyurl.TILTTNnotes
3) (3 min) Listeners say & type: 5 years later: knowledge & skills? (PURPOSE)
   Teacher /Staff: Do not coach/guide your collaborators
4) (3 min) Group: What real-world examples will you offer (CRITERIA)
5) (3 min) Group: Reflect, choose insights and questions to share with all