Scholarship of Excellence in Teaching

Transformative Teaching through
Peer Connection &
The Transfer of Skills in ENGL101/011

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2023 cohort

Professors respond to genuine pressures in their support of students.

Acting with the best intentions, do we sometimes encourage passivity?

What is the cost of this approach?

Students read primarily for the "acquisition of information" (the "right answer") and do not, or even too often cannot, read texts in ways that engage the imagination "as an intellectual process," a way of reading that is at the heart of humanities disciplines (Ihara & Del Principe 6).

Issues of urgency in post-Covid education

ACCOUNTABILITY

1). Faculty must find ways to hold students accountable for work while honoring their struggles.

COMPASSION

2). Faculty must meet students where they are by choosing relevant and empowering subject matter that corrects directly with the lived experience of students.

Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation 2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

Loneliness and disconnection lead to diminished civic engagement

"When we are less invested in one another, we are more susceptible to polarization and less able to pull together to face the challenges that we cannot solve alone — from climate change and gun violence to economic inequality and future pandemics" (Murthy).

Loneliness decreases our power to shape a world we want to live in.

What if we work to connect these threads…?

Inspirational Challenge:

Faculty must design and rethink courses to help create *wicked students.* These are students "who move into the world as questioning, informed, and thoughtful agents of change" (p. 3).

This means helping students to develop the skills necessary to solve problems that are complex and that require **collaboration**.

Creating Wicked Students – Designing Courses for a Complex World

Paul Hanstedt (2018)

The Strategies:

1. Design a unit that requires students to **collaborate** with and support each other as readers, presenters and writers learning about the causes and physical and psychological impacts of loneliness, as well as about global efforts to combat loneliness.

2. Partner with MC's Writing, Reading and Language Centers to support reading of complex materials.

3. Create opportunities for connection at MC beyond the classroom.

Key Components:

WRLC Partnership:

- Tutors had the opportunity to buy in and to participate using specific prompts that focused on reading for understanding and on the development of big-picture thinking in response to readings.

- Every student attended a mandatory tutoring session prior to designing group presentations and writing papers required to integrate the words and ideas of others.

MC Library Collaboration:

- Students got to see a teaching partnership in action; they made another MC connection through a workshop that illustrated the dynamics of responding to a reading in meaningful ways.

Student Life Collaboration & Sidewalk Talk:

- Students participated in a real-life program designed to combat loneliness and isolation—topic of research became a real-life experience that was meaningful to them.

Sidewalk Talk, 2023

Listening is a magical and strange thing, a creative force…

"The sidewalk talk method has demonstrated to me that attentive listening may be a potent instrument for developing a more companionate and understanding world."

MC Office of Equity and Inclusion,
Diversity Dialogue, October 26, 2023

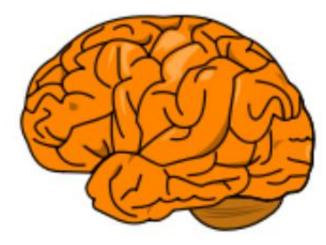**"Cultivating a Sense of Belonging for Everybody at MC"**

"The emphasis on listening was such an important reminder on how my values manifest in my interpersonal relationships. Hearing people and gaining understanding of how they are feeling is so incredibly valuable to me."
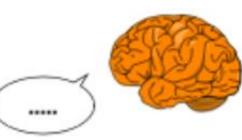
"I think I should embody this going forward anywhere I can, especially when I sense that someone does not feel heard."

Rose, Ari and Kim opened the event; Lorraine and Jessica were on Zoom.

Brain Dumping (or things I loved hearing from my students):

"I will take great care to make sure that my pronouns are clear on who or what they go to."

"I learned to not use clichés because its annoying and wordy."

"I am empowered because I figured out how to correct a confusing sentence!"

"I can fix misplaced modifiers and make sentences clearer!"

"A thesis can be direct and powerful."

"Sentences need to flow in the same direction."

"Today grounded me in the reality that I am not super-behind or awful at writing."

"I finally understand how I have unnecessarily been congesting my writing with big words."

"Today's activity made me realize that it is important to think outside of the box… you can include things you know and talk about real-word events in the media that tie in with what you are writing about."

OUTCOMES:

- **78 Writing Reading and Learning Center visits by 24 students!**

  Students reported that they were "excited," "relived" and "more confident" after initial meetings with tutors.

- Five students gained unique leadership experience through the opportunity to share a project they felt proud of.
- Sidewalk Talk deepened the relevance of our course topic; nine students will continue to participate in Sidewalk Talk this spring.
- Transfer of key course ideas to other areas of life & the larger world.
- Evidence of student metacognition—including increased self-awareness as writers and as learners.
- Same pass rate, but with higher grades (As & Bs).

This… not this.

Discourse community is a group of people with a set of common goals, language, and interests.

Thank you!

Works Cited

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