

Transparency in Learning & Teaching: An Equity Imperative

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Transparent teaching/learning practices can advance equitable teaching and learning practices that reduce systemic inequities in higher education by making learning processes explicit while fostering students' metacognition, confidence, and their sense of belonging in college. A 2016 AAC&U study identifies transparent assignment design as a replicable teaching intervention that significantly enhances students' success, with greater gains for historically underserved students [Winkelmes et al, Peer Review, Spring 2016]. The book *Transparent Design in Higher Education Teaching and Learning* (2019) describes examples and contexts where the transparent framework is in use across the US. In this session, we will review the research findings, examine sample assignments, and consider contexts for implementation. Participants will leave with tools for designing and assessing equitable learning projects, and a concise set of strategies for promoting students' learning equitably.

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PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION:

- Understand how transparent instruction can offer equitable opportunities for all college students to succeed online/hybrid;
- Consider applications in your contexts

TASKS:

- (me) Review: summary of research findings
- (you) Apply: to sample assignments; to your own contexts

CRITERIA:

You'll leave with

- Understanding of how transparency promotes equity
- Tools to design and assess equitable learning
- Strategies to promote equitable learning

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TILT Workshop Activities

<p>Activity #1 (15 min)</p> <p>Discuss in groups</p>	<p>Sample A, p. 2</p>	<p>Discuss (10 min)</p> <p>Introduce yourselves to each other!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What knowledge does the student gain from this assignment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is that located (what numbered part)? 2) What skills does the student practice? 3) Who can succeed on this assignment?
	<p>Sample C, p. 3</p>	<p>Discuss (5 min)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How is Sample C different from / similar to Sample A? 2) How could Sample C be improved?
<p>Activity #2 (15 min)</p> <p>Paired Peer Review</p>	<p>Transparent Frameworks, pp. 4, 5</p>	<p>Peer Review (15 min)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) <u>2 min</u>: Describe your assignment/ activity/ project to your partner(s) b) <u>8 min</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student/Colleague(s) (role players): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GUESS the answers to the checklist ?s on p. 4 or p. 5 Advisor/Teacher/Leader: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Silently listen and mark down each detail that needs more clarification/resources for actual students/colleagues. - Do not explain to your partner(s). c) <u>5 min</u> Discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Switch roles. Repeat step c for the second assignment/activity.

Sample A

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.

Sample C

COLA100E, Interview Assignment
Used by permission of Katharine Johnson, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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 field 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.

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.)

Aronson, J., Fried, C., & Good, C. "Reducing the effects of stereotype threat on African American college students by shaping theories of intelligence." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 38 (2002): 113–125.

Gianoutsos, Daniel and Mary-Ann Winkelmes. "Navigating with Transparency." *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Association of Developmental Educators* (Spring, 2016)

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L.. "A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes among minority students." *Science* 331 (2011): 1447–51.

Winkelmes, Mary-Ann, Matthew Bernacki, Jeffrey Butler, Michelle Zochowski, Jennifer Golanics, Kati Harriss Weavil. "A Teaching Intervention that Increases Underserved College Students' Success." *Peer Review* (Winter/Spring 2016).

Winkelmes, et. al. *Transparent Design in Higher Education Teaching and Leadership*. Stylus, 2019.

Transparent Equitable Learning Framework for Students and Teachers

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

Purpose

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

Tasks

- What learning behaviors or actions will you use during 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 classmates' 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 during class?

Criteria

- Checklist (How will you know you're doing what's expected?)
- What is your own standard for your achievement during class? How well must you be able to understand the lesson and apply the learning activities for you to succeed in this class meeting?

Checklist for Designing a Transparent Assignment

PURPOSE:

Knowledge:

- Does your purpose statement specify content knowledge that students will gain from doing this assignment?
- Does your purpose statement link that particular knowledge to the larger context of:
 - recent topics of class sessions?
 - this part of the course?
 - the whole course?
 - the major?
 - the discipline?
 - your institution's main learning outcomes?
- Does your purpose statement indicate the relevance and/or usefulness of this knowledge to the students' lives:
 - beyond the course? beyond the major? beyond college?

Skills:

- Does your purpose statement specify a skill or skill set that students will practice while doing the assignment?
 - Does your purpose statement link that particular skill/skill set to examples/contexts where this skill was important in the context of:
 - recent class sessions?
 - this part of the course?
 - the whole course?
 - the major? the discipline? your institution's main learning outcomes?
 - Does your statement indicate the relevance and/or usefulness of this skill to the students' lives:
 - beyond the course? beyond the major? beyond college
- Would this assignment benefit from segmenting it into several assignments, each one focused on a discrete set of skills that should be mastered to insure students' successful completion of the next assignment in the sequence?

TASK:

- Does your description of the task:
 - Identify the very first thing students should do when they begin working on the assignment?
 - The very next thing they should do?
 - The next, etc.
- Does your description of the task help students to avoid wasting their time on unnecessary steps, unproductive time expenditure?
- Does your description help students to focus their time efficiently on producing the highest quality work possible in the time given?
- Would students benefit from some practice exercises (in the form of a pre-task) in class to prepare them to perform the task outside of class on the graded assignment?

CRITERIA:

- Can students use the criteria while they are working on the assignment to determine whether they are completing the assignment efficiently and effectively?
- Do the criteria take the form of a checklist students can use to evaluate the quality of their efforts while they are working on the assignment?
- Does the checklist specify characteristics of high quality work for this assignment?
- Can you help students apply the checklist to evaluating some sample work in class, so they understand how each criterion would look in practice?
- With your guidance, can the students collaboratively annotate several examples of work to indicate where/how the work satisfies the criteria? (These annotated examples may then be shared as a reference for students to use while they work on their own assignments.)
- Would a rubric ([AAC&U VALUE examples](#)) be helpful to students for this assignment?
- Does the rubric provide an amount of information that helps students at this phase in their learning?
- Does the rubric provide an overwhelming or counterproductive amount of information for students at this phase in their learning?
- Did you provide multiple examples of what the criteria look like in real-world practice, to encourage students' creativity and reduce their incentive to copy any one example too closely?
- Did you discuss with students in class, allowing them to evaluate the real-world work examples, to be sure students know how to apply the criteria to multiple examples of work, and eventually their own work?

Transparent Equitable Learning Readiness Assessment for Teachers

This framework can help you review your learning expectations and how you'll communicate them to students at the beginning of an upcoming class meeting. It may help to identify and address inequitable conditions for learning, so that all students can have the same readiness for learning before the lesson begins. (Provide students with the Transparent Equitable Learning Framework for Students and Teachers at the beginning of class as a framework for the conversation.)

PURPOSE:

Knowledge:

- How will you define the specific pieces of content knowledge that students will gain from the upcoming class meeting?
- How will you link this portion of course content knowledge to the larger context of:
 - recent topics of class sessions?
 - this unit of the course?
 - the whole course?
 - the major? the discipline?
 - your institution's main learning outcomes?
- How will you demonstrate the relevance and/or usefulness of the knowledge from this class meeting to the students' lives:
 - beyond the course? beyond the major? beyond college?

Skills:

- If students will practice a specific skill during the upcoming class meeting, how will you define that skill?
- How will you choose the way(s) that students will practice the skill in class? (See Weiman and Gilbert 2014, Tanner 2012, Tate 2012, for suggestions.)
- How will you link that particular skill to examples/contexts where this skill is important in the context of:
 - recent class sessions?
 - this part of the course?
 - the whole course?
 - the major? the discipline?
 - your institution's main learning outcomes?
- How will you demonstrate the relevance and/or usefulness of this skill to the students' lives:
 - beyond the course? beyond the major? beyond college

Will the knowledge that students gain and the skills student will practice in the upcoming class meeting benefit from segmentation into several in-class lessons and activities, each one focused on a discrete piece that should be mastered to ensure students' successful acquisition and mastery of the next piece in the sequence? (See Anderson and Krathwohl 2000 for a suggested sequence.)

TASKS:

- How will you describe the actions and behaviors you expect students to engage in during the upcoming class meeting?
 - Does your description identify a sequence of action?
 - Does your description help students to avoid wasting their time on unnecessary or unhelpful behaviors?
 - Does your description help students to focus their in-class time efficiently on understanding and applying what they are learning?
 - Can you suggest ways for students to indicate during class when they first notice any confusion, to help you clarify and explain in real time so that students can learn effectively during class?

CRITERIA:

- Can you offer students some useful criteria for their in-class understanding and in-class learning behaviors so they can know during class whether they are learning effectively? (See Nilson 2013 and Singer-Freeman et al. 2019 for suggestions.)
- Can you provide opportunities and guidelines for students to check their understanding with each other during class?
- What is your own standard for students' achievement during class? How well must all students understand and apply the lesson in the class meeting for you to succeed in teaching them the content and skills in this class meeting?