

Transcript - Designing Assessments Through a Culturally Responsive Lens

4/12/2022

H. RAY HEITH: So again, good afternoon, colleagues. And welcome to our Operationalizing Equity, Social Justice, and Inclusion to Transform Teaching and Learning Webinar Series. This is the third part of our webinar series. And today, we'll be focusing on designing assessments through culturally responsive lens.

And I'm your moderator. I'm Ray Keith. I work with the Achieving the Dream organization. And I'm a Program Development Consultant there. And have had the pleasure of working with some amazing colleagues to present these webinars for you all.

And we've had some great turnout. And so looking forward to, again, us learning and growing together. And if you could just put your name in the chat and what institution you're with, we'll know who's here with us as well. Thank you.

So I want to move into an overview of what we're going to do today. We're going to be talking about assessment and thinking about how we can be more culturally responsive in the design of our assessments.

We know that traditional classroom assessments work for some students, but also lead to inequitable outcomes for students, and in some ways do not allow students to demonstrate learning in ways that are meaningful to them.

So we're going to think about, how do we measure learning and growth in ways that support student success? And then our panelists will be providing examples of successful, innovative, and digital assessment approaches that center the students and allow for their authentic and culturally responsive measurement of student learning.

And so I want to introduce our panelists. I'm sorry. Let's talk through our objectives first. As you all leave the webinar series, we want to make sure that you increased your knowledge, understanding, and abilities to recognize potential inequities in assessment techniques, tools, and practices to utilize a student-centered lens when creating course assessments, identifying innovative digital assessment tools that enhance student learning, and then feel empowered to design and implement assessments that take a culturally responsive and equity-minded approach to student learning.

And so our first panelist is Dr. Lydia CdeBaca-Cruz. Lydia is committed to closing persistent equity gaps in higher education through the decolonization of curriculum and engaging in faculty development. She earned her doctoral degree and master's degree in English and Mexican American studies and Native American, Indigenous Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

She currently serves as the program coordinator for the Mexican American studies program, where she teaches courses in English, humanities, and Mexican American studies, and facilitates a faculty development course in becoming an equity-minded instructor. Thank you for joining us, Lydia.

Next, I'd like to introduce Tasia VanderVegt. Tasia is a first-year ED student at the University of Wisconsin. She earned her master's in sociology from the New York School of Social Research in New York City.

She's dedicated to bringing inclusivity, equity, and student empowerment into the classroom by honoring the skills, experiences, talents, and dedication of every student. She currently works as a professional development educator and facilitator with the Association of College and University Educators, along with the Achieving the Dream organization. And she also worked in the community college system in Colorado.

And then we have Jason Leggett, who is an assistant professor at Kingsborough Community College, where he teaches legal studies. He earned his JD from Seattle University and a BA in political science from the University of Washington.

His research projects examine structural displacement due to the climate change crisis, global migration, and gentrification. Thank you all for joining us. And we're going to get started with our webinar.

And so we really want to think about the importance of implementing culturally responsive and equity-minded assessments, and thinking about the why and how our students' identities, their lived experiences, their cultures play a part in why we should be engaging in culturally responsive and equity-minded assessments.

And we're going to have our panelists share their aha moment and what led them to recognize the importance of developing and implementing these culturally responsive and culturally relevant assessments. And so we'll just have a group discussion. And just jump in panelist.

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: I can go ahead and kick us off. This is Lydia. So I guess for me, it occurred when I first started early in my teaching career. I had the opportunity to

attend some professional development at a prior institution. It was a full day all about assessment.

And the speaker said that you assess what you want to produce. And that resonated with me in a negative way and a positive way because on one hand, I was like, well, students are not our products, but rather seeing students as becoming, as education, as serving students to become what they seek to be.

And it was a revelation for me to realize that helping, facilitating students becoming who they want to be, becoming confident and empowered contributors to society, becoming confident contributors, even to their own families and communities, that that could be affected through assessments and through lessons that I designed, and that by developing assessments and assessment tools, that would help students to achieve their goals and achieve learning goals of the program that I was teaching in, or even the course that I was teaching, that I could have an impact, and that facilitating learning in that way could have an impact specifically through assessment. So I've pretty much been obsessed with assessment ever since then.

TASIA VANDERVEGT: Yeah, I'll jump in next with my kind of aha moment. And that definitely came for me in the process of learning about backwards design and hidden curriculum. And so backwards design is the process of connecting every assignment and activity and assessment in your class to the learning outcome for your course. And through that, I was able to see my own biases in which topics I spent a lot of time on and which ones I did more of a breeze over. In this process, I also learned about the hidden curriculum items, such as having very strict due dates and some technology barriers, and then any punitive policies around assignment submission or attendance policies.

And I realized that there were a lot of components of my grading policies that actually had nothing to do with the learning outcomes of the sociology classes that I was teaching. So what I mean by that is that I realized that it's my job to submit grades for students that reflect what extent they learned the content of the class.

But there's nothing in those learning outcomes that says they have to demonstrate that knowledge in a particular manner. There's nothing that says they have to demonstrate it on the first try or buy a certain point in the semester.

So I was careful in that process of making sure that that doesn't mean the class becomes a free-for-all. We still have a schedule. We still learn and practice APA. We still

use the LMS to submit work. But I'm working hard to reduce the negative impact that those kinds of hidden curriculum have on a student's grade, and instead, try to spend the most of my assessment energy on the connection that they make to the content and the learning outcomes.

H. RAY HEITH: Thanks, Tasia.

JASON M. LEGGETT: So I build on those two ideas of thinking about when-- my institution is Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York. And when I came 13 years ago, we had begun to implement a civic engagement requirement. And there's two central questions that came up, which is, what exactly is civic engagement? And then, how do we assess it?

Kingsborough, being an urban community college in Brooklyn, is incredibly diverse. Half of our students are foreign born. Nearly 85% of our students are on Pell. And we represent over 120 nationalities. And so civic engagement wasn't going to mean one thing to everyone. And it wasn't going to be a one-size-fits-all.

On top of that, I had learned participatory action research, which is what I brought to the community college and was interested in rights consciousness and legal mobilization with those particular students.

So I had a lot of things that I was trying to wrestle with. And PAR can be very difficult to assess and document the experience. And so I really wanted to try to find something that was practical and pragmatic, both for the students and then also for other faculty who might be interested.

We had an interesting moment a couple years later when I was working with students. And we were discussing Brown v. Board of Education. And it was shocking for a lot of students because they felt like they were in a diverse community, that we were in the most segregated school system in the country.

And so it was really difficult for students to then unpack this idea they had of law that was equal and applicable to all. And then unpacking this Supreme Court case that was being violated in New York City.

And so they started opening up about their lived experience. And that presented a unique opportunity for me to begin documenting that process of collecting their stories and then seeing how I would make the connection to the larger legal concepts that we're trying to get in the classroom. So that was my aha moment.

H. RAY HEITH: Thank you, panelists, for sharing that. And hopefully this will inform our participants in thinking about how they can begin to engage in this work as it relates to being equity-minded practitioners and really thinking about how they can take a culturally responsive approach to designing and developing a culturally responsive assessment.

And so in our next discussion point, our panelists are going to share approaches, practices, and processes that they've used to design course assessments that are student centered, equity-minded, and culturally responsive.

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: Yeah, thanks so much. So one of the things that I would add to my aha moment is just this, again, realization that assessment in the form of grades, but also formative assessment, getting feedback from students in just-in-time framework is indicative of ways in which that I can change and continuously improve the curriculum and strategies that I use in the classroom.

So thinking about it as a measure of how I facilitate teaching and learning as much as an assessment of students learning. So one of the bigger changes that I've made to my grading system recently is in shifting from a percentage grading scale, or 100-point grade scale, to a GPA grading scale, or a four-point grade scale.

And if you could just-- yeah, thank you. So this is a breakdown of how a GPA scale would look in terms of percentage ranges, which one of the things that I learned early on in this is if you're going to change the grade scale from 100-point system to any other point system in your learning management system, you have to know how it maps on to the percentage system.

So the impetus behind this actually came out of some professional learning that I had attended at Austin Community College, in which the point was raised that the percentage grading scale that we're also accustomed to actually skews towards students failure if you think about the fact that 70 of those 100 points are in the failing range. And only 30 of them are in the successful range.

By contrast, a GPA scale, which is what is used for college admissions and transfer and graduate school and a whole host of other things, even including financial aid, is actually skewed more toward success. As you can see, about 34% and higher is considered successful on the GPA grading scale.

So one of the challenges that I've faced with this in implementing this is not only are we as faculty and administrators really comfortable and accustomed to the 100-point scale, or the percentage scale, but students are too. If you could click the next image.

So this is a sidebar that I have in my syllabus. And I will put a link to this syllabus as a Google Doc in the chat there. And so I would have students saying, like, I'm working so hard. Why am I failing everything? I have 50s and 60s on everything.

And so I started putting this sidebar in my syllabus to say, if you're getting a 40% to 50%, that means that you actually have demonstrated competency and the skill or knowledge that you're learning, and that you should celebrate that you have achieved that.

And at the same time, look at my feedback to see how you can improve and get a higher percentage next time, if that's what your grade goal is. So overcoming some of that and doing a little bit of unlearning around the 100-point scale has been a challenge.

One of the successes that I found with this, if you'll hit the next image there, is that I've been able to map the GPA grading scale onto my rubrics so much more easily, so that I'm not spending a ton of time where before I would have ranges of like 90 to 100, 80 to 89, and so forth.

I'm not spending a lot of time thinking, like, oh, is this an 83, or is this an 87? I noticed also that it eliminates some equity challenges that, for example, I would tend-- when I had point ranges, I would tend to give higher points or skew higher on the point range for students that I connected with more, that I had more of a relationship with, that I had greater rapport with.

And so you can see how that would also exclude some students that I didn't necessarily have those relationships with, which very often were students that did not necessarily reflect my identity.

And so with the four-point system, it's an additive rubric, not punitive, not punishing or penalizing students for some of those hidden curricula things that Tasia was talking about, but rather recognizing that once students meet a milestone, they can't unmeet it.

So they get that credit. They get those full points. And on something like this with multiple criteria, they would have a total where 50% of the total would be-- or approximately 40% to 50% of the total would indicate competency of that particular skill or knowledge.

So on the whole for me, once overcoming some of the students questions, it has led to so much greater transparency. And in terms of outcomes, I've actually seen a lot of closing of gaps, particularly among men of color students.

H. RAY HEITH: Great. Thanks, Lydia. How did you address students adjusting to this new approach to your grading and your assessment practices?

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: So one thing I did was you'll see in the syllabus that I posted, I have a whole section that explains what is GPA grading, what does grade point average mean, what role does it play in your college life, how to calculate your GPA, and how I use GPA grading. And then that's something that I explicitly go over in the first week and just remind, remind, remind students all along the way.

I'd say about four is the threshold. After about four of those reminders or students coming to me and saying, Why am I failing at your class? and I'll say, you're not, you're doing great, you actually have a B, then it usually gets to the place where they feel comfortable, the students feel comfortable, and they start saying, oh my gosh, I like this system so much better. Because not only has it helped me to understand where I am in your class and skew towards my success, but also now I understand how my GPA is going to inform my next stage in my education.

H. RAY HEITH: Great. We have a question in the chat. If you have a grading scale set by your department, how have you received by using the GPA grading scale?

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: That is a great question. I have not had to encounter this. So I did run it by my department chair when I first started using it. And since it was proposed in college-wide professional learning setting, I think there's been some openness to experimenting with it.

I did report back to my department chair after the first experiment with it, some of the things that I would change, as well as some of the successes that I saw, especially around closing equity gaps with men of color students. And so they've been really supportive.

H. RAY HEITH: Thanks, Lydia. And now Tasia is going to share her experience with taking a culturally responsive approach to designing course assessments.

TASIA VANDERVEGT: This is actually Jason.

H. RAY HEITH: Oh, sorry, Jason.

TASIA VANDERVEGT: Go ahead, Jason.

JASON M. LEGGETT: OK. Thanks. So at our institution over the last year, we've been providing course-level and section-level data on specific performance from race, class, and gender, as well as Pell Grant status. Prior to that, we were looking at a very macro level and mostly focusing on entry level classes. And so because my legal studies classes were in a criminal justice program, I wasn't really getting much data.

So what I wanted to try to do once I got my data and I looked and compared it to the rest of the data on the campus, what struck out to me is that in the criminal justice program, we had higher passing rates and more equitable outcomes.

And so in conversation with the provost and some other teaching and learning folks, we started-- I guess the obvious question is, why is that? And so we started discussing with each other within the program, and then started really focusing on the micro level what was working in class and what obstacles were we creating, and tried to just pull our heads together there.

We had a pretty clear picture from the instructor point of view of what we were doing that was good and what was bad. But I was still curious about what was going on with particular groups of students and to try to identify any patterns.

And so I took two new approaches that I played with earlier through PAR. But I wanted to really do it in a much more meaningful way. And so I started doing Google Forms to do check-ins every couple of weeks and to explicitly ask students how they thought the class was going, what kind of support did they need? And then just a couple questions that got them to think critically about the material, but also in a way that would be open-ended, so I could read from those answers where they might be struggling.

And then I took that into the classroom, I guess I should say at City University of New York, we teach eight classes a year. And I teach in three different modalities. And so a lot of the stuff I do online, I also try to see what I can do in person and in the hybrid format.

So one of the things I did was took the qualitative interview approach that I was using in Google Forms and replicated those questions in focus groups in class to see where the dialogue went.

And oftentimes, students would share a lot more personal stories in those focus groups than they would online. Online, they tend to be quick and to the point. And in class, they tended to really talk about very particular situations they were having in other classes.

From that, I decided that I needed to think about moving away from prescriptive assessments. So my rubrics were still looking pretty prescriptive. They were defining what I thought students needed to learn. But I really wasn't seeing it in development framework.

And so I got curious about ways of documenting different ways of being and knowing and really starting to turn the corner towards the coproduction of knowledge and having students participate in a more formative assessment process. So they got to talk about what kind of assessment they thought was useful, and then also thinking about what would be good knowledge to produce about legal studies in general.

And so I think what was interesting was that once I started collecting stories, as you see in this quote here, most students talked about well-being and support from faculty as being linked.

And so I really saw that as this feedback process where I'd create feedback loops where if students weren't feeling supported, then I tried to go back and figure out, what had I done? What obstacles had I created that might make them feel that way? And then also, what could I do in the remaining time to better meet their needs?

And so I think those things then facilitated an opportunity for students to really focus on the coproduction of knowledge and not being worried about what they were doing wrong, but instead what they were able to offer to the class as a whole.

H. RAY HEITH: OK. Thank you, Jason.

TASIA VANDERVEGT: So I'm going to share some examples of assessment strategies from sociology of deviant behavior, which is a course that I taught and also built. And in that course, we cover a lot of foundational theorists, as well as topics relating to race, to gender, substance abuse, sexual deviance, suicide, mental health, physical disabilities, the spectrum of deviance topics.

Deviance in the sociological term is anything that goes against the norm. So it's not necessarily an act of crime, although we do talk about acts of crime as well. So as with many disciplines when it comes to discussing foundational theorists, we find ourselves reading white men. And I got to actually pick the textbook for this class. And so I spent a lot of time working to find a book that gave a stage to multiple voices, especially around race.

But ultimately, what I found is that the foundation readings in the book were still primarily texts from white male voices. So, for example, in this upper box, one of the

required readings is "The Life Course Perspective" by Robert Sampson and John Laub, who are two white men. So this set up a challenge for me. And the big question became, how can we read foundational theories while also engaging diverse voices?

And so in the process of trying to answer that question, I found an article by Nicole Shoenberger. And she wrote an article called "The Life Course Perspective Through the Lens of Race." And so her article is a critical analysis of the foundational theory that we're supposed to read.

And she wonders if the theory can be applied broadly to a whole society or if other considerations should be made across racial groups in a society. And so this article was perfect to address all of the things that I wanted to do. She has to lay out the foundation of the theory.

So we're still as a group getting that information, getting that content. But then we're also reading it with this critical lens. And we're getting not only the groundwork knowledge of the theory but then also the theory-- or the lens towards applying the theory to racially diverse societies.

And then we read this at the beginning of the term, of course, because it's foundations. And we're able to then keep referencing back to it of how we can apply these generalized theories to diverse communities in our society.

And so following that, another thing I realized in our course-- I'm moving to the purple square on the left here. Another thing I realized was that I needed to do better at sharing the diversity of the authors with the students.

I, of course, knew that the authors were diverse because I went through the process of finding the book and reading up on all of the authors. But I quickly realized that I wasn't sharing that in any meaningful way with students.

So what I started to do was I started including the author's bio, their photo, and a link to their web page. Whether they had a personal web page or if they were a professor somewhere, I would link to their school website.

And I included this on the handout that had the reflection questions, and then also in the learning management system, where they would access the questions to submit their answers. So then the links would be live, and they would have another opportunity to see the photo and the bio.

This did take a bit of time to put together. But I think it was really important for students to be able to read about the authors, to see the authors, perhaps see themselves in that author, or make a connection that they were from the same place or had a similar interest or something like that.

That brings me to the last course design example. This is the box on the right. This has, again, to do with diversifying readings. And I know a big concern that comes up with faculty and instructors and reworking courses to be more culturally responsive is the work that goes into creating and recreating new assignments and assessments.

And I know it can absolutely be time-consuming, but I also want to emphasize this way in which it can actually be load-reducing for instructors. So in the deviance class, at the halfway point and at the endpoint of the term, students had an opportunity to submit a reading reflection on a reading of their choice. And the only parameters I set for that was that it needed to be from a reliable source, and it needed to be related to deviance. And that was it. Those were the only rules about it.

The reflection questions gave them a spot to link where they found the article, so I could read it and access it. And then they reflected on what they learned, shared how it connected with the rest of the class, and discussed how they might apply it to their semester project.

So here in this box on the screen, I've listed a few of the titles of the articles that the students chose on their own for this assignment. And so you can see that these are serious research-based articles. They cover a wide spectrum of topics. They were all really interesting. I had a great time reading them.

And I know it's very unlikely I would have found them on my own, because these things represent the interests of the students. And it's not clouded by my bias of what I would have been looking for, where I would have looked for them, or what I would have thought was interesting.

A bonus of this assignment is that students get also an opportunity to start navigating where they want to find articles, whether that be academic through JSTOR. We were also regularly reading articles from places like Harper Magazine or The New York Times, these longer articles that do a deep dive into society.

So, again, the results here for me is that all I have to do is write the reflection questions, and then students submit dozens of articles related to our topic that then I get to read. And all I really have to do is then grade their reflections.

So flipping the classroom in this way, giving the students that agency, giving them a stake in what they're learning is a really simple revision to make, requires very little front-heavy work from the instructor, but as you can see from these titles of articles, yields really amazing returns.

H. RAY HEITH: Great. Thank you for sharing that, Tasia. I really appreciate your intentionality about being transparent with your students and really helping them understand that there are diverse folks with diverse perspectives and backgrounds and lived experiences that are contributing to the field of sociology. And the other piece is helping students begin to develop their research skills, and specifically those-- looking at those articles and research that's specific to their own lived experiences and their cultures. And so, again, as we think about culturally responsive assessment, how do we then engage our students in this process? And really bring in their prior knowledge but also the skills that they bring to the table as well. So thank you.

Over the last two years with the pandemic, we know that we've had to use digital tools and digital technologies in very different ways. And so we want to have a discussion about how we can use digital tools to assess students and use those tools in a culturally responsive way. And so our panelists are going to share what they've been doing in their classes over the last two years as it relates to this topic.

JASON M. LEGGETT: OK. I could talk for days and days and days about the social production of technology. With PAR, I've been able to do video games, documentaries, and a large ePortfolios with assessment built in. But for this presentation, I wanted to talk about something that is more common in departments, which is the department-level assessment of a particular skill set.

And so in the example-- in the three examples that I provide here, they're from three different classes. But the same departmental-level skill set of being able to argue using rhetoric and to provide evidence in support was the general assessment process. So on the lower left-hand corner, this is a thought bubble approach that I took to designing a rubric for students in a learning community that was focused on composition around a legal or political problem that they wanted to do further research, and then to write five-paragraph essay for their composition class that was also matched with the sociology class, where they were supposed to apply some of those sociology concepts.

So it was a very complicated process. And the first rubric I had, I think, had like 12 columns and five rows. And it was not clear to me or the students what was being asked of them. So I decided to try something. I think I saw it on Instagram, and so I thought, let me try a thought bubble approach and introduce each of the bubbles one week at a time where we could take a piece of writing that they'd done and look at just what was going on.

So what had happened in this process was I got a bunch of papers around week 3 where none of the students had followed the instructions that I had provided. They didn't identify a social problem. They didn't do any data collection. Some of them even talked about why they didn't want to find any data. And so I found this to be a counterproductive approach.

So one of the things that I did using Zoom is I decided I would have a Zoom session that would be a special topics disguised as a writing workshop. And when we went over the writing instructions for the assignment, which was, I thought, very cleverly titled "Letter to My Future Self," they all revealed that the reason why they didn't follow the instruction is they had no idea what they were supposed to do and how on Earth they would write a letter to their future selves.

And they also thought this wasn't a formal assignment. So basically, they hated the assignment. And I learned pretty quickly that I didn't blame them, that they were right. So I designed the second part of the thought bubble here to address the conversation we had once we started talking about what issues they were interested in-- because they were interested in quite a few of them-- what research they wanted to do, and how they would support their conclusions.

As what typically happens, this is a freshman course, and so they tend to overgeneralize what they think the solutions are. Many of them believe that releasing information on Instagram will solve the world's problems.

And they were rather disorganized, so I wanted to help them with that process. And so, along with the sociology professor, we talked about moving away from theory of mind, moving away from blaming individuals' motives and looking at larger structures and systems of inequality, and to start thinking about moving away from a monologue and start engaging with the kind of dialogue that I think Tasia was talking about, introducing multiple viewpoints and diverse backgrounds.

And so we wanted them to have that approach as well. And so the ultimate response that we were looking for for their five-paragraph essay, that would meet the sociology outcomes, the political science outcomes, and then also the composition, really required that there be a clear problem, reliable data, and that it was organized logically with the conclusion. And they addressed some counterfactuals. So that was a process that took the entire semester. But with all three of us working together, we were able to come up with a different approach. And I think students, from what I heard from them, is they really appreciated the thought bubble approach as opposed to that first gigantic rubric that I had shared with them because this was much more closer to their regular lives, their lived experience.

I thought it was also important that it was a moment where the rubric can serve as a accountability measure. And so I probably wouldn't have gotten the feedback about why they hated my assignment so much. If I hadn't taken this approach, I probably would have been doing the prescriptive model of assessment and would have missed that. The other two examples I give here are based in Google Forms. And so I had gone through and decolonized my syllabus years. Before, I was curious as to which articles, which resources, and which assignments students would like so I could start to get a better idea of what I was missing, and I could go back and look at what student papers, what topics they had written about and some more work that I could do.

And so I was very-- this was over just one semester in one class, where I was surprised that they chose these two JSTOR articles, but that were relevant to things that were going on, particularly in Brooklyn, but also across the country. And so I thought I should probably be trying to find more articles like this that provide larger context for some of the issues. So this semester, we were looking at an article that's critical of broken windows policing, for example. And students have really responded to that as well.

I had done mock trials in the past, and so what I wanted to do was create for the judiciary class, for the courts class, an assignment that would allow them to act like a judge and go through the different levels of the judiciary.

But I wasn't sure from the responses how students were experiencing that or whether they're enjoying it. So I was happy to see that they cited that as one of the largest-- or more students cited that as one of the things that they learned the most from.

I was surprised that the extra credit events were not things that they-- because so many of them participated in them. But they didn't see that as something that they were

learning as much from. I think I could do a better job, after seeing this, of linking the events to the course content, and then maybe talking with some of the people who run the events to see what else we could do to make it more engaging. I also had designed these in the spirit of the videos. I made YouTube videos that basically went over content and addressed many of the questions that were coming out through the Google Forms. So I was happy to see that students were thinking that those were helpful as well.

And then finally, I did something last semester that I had heard from Shawn Harper, who had said, it's good to just ask your students outright, do they think that the course is equitable? And so I've been using this more and more. And it gives me a snapshot at different parts of the semester.

So this example I gave you was at the end of the semester. But now I'm doing it at 3, 5, and 7 and 9, all throughout the semester to see how our particular subjects, or activities, or assignments, how are they affecting students' motivation? And what they think equity is in that experience.

And so what I think about this is in the Django Paris's concept of culturally sustaining pedagogies, is that I'm trying to develop a constant dialogue with students and to find out what I can do to meet the needs that they might not be thinking about on a regular basis. So I'm trying to remind them and get them into this process of letting me know what I can do to help them.

H. RAY HEITH: Thank you, Jason.

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: So as a digital tool, I'm going to talk about a website that I actually created with my students in an introduction to Mexican American studies course. And I very often use websites. At ACC, we use the Google Suite of products. So Google Sites is a tool that students already have access to through their EIDs and through their school Google accounts. But some students also in the past-- I've used websites for writing portfolios. And some students have used like the free versions of Wix or Weebly or some of those as well.

So I was thinking about-- as I was developing this course, I was thinking about, unlike in a composition course where students can develop an ePortfolio of their work and demonstrate their engagement with the writing process, I started thinking about, what is something-- what is a kind of assignment, like a capstone project, that students can do that is going to show them the relevance of Mexican American studies?

And so I started thinking about, well, what we do in Mexican American studies, and that one of the things that we strive to do, at least in Texas, is to interweave the ethnic studies and Mexican American Chicano studies in particular, throughout curricula, getting more Mexican American studies in schools.

So this website-- thank you, Eric, for dropping that in the chat-- is a repository of Design Your Own Lesson Cycles that students from this course developed. And I guided them through how to develop learning objectives and learning goals, how to develop study questions, how to pick foundational texts, work with the librarian as well, who created a research guide for the students to use for this specific project.

And then they developed-- for a final project for their lesson cycle, they developed either community engagement or project-based learning types of assignments. And so what we put on the website are the-- it has some information about my course and how my course is structured. But the heart of it really is the Design Your Own Lesson Cycles that are 100% student-developed.

And what I really like about-- if you have a chance to go through them, what I really like about it is that in the kinds of questions that they're asking, study questions, journal prompts that they're-- the kinds of questions that they're asking, you really get a glimpse at the level of academic challenge and the high expectations that students have for their own educational experience and what they want to see in education for their children or what they would have wanted to see in their own K-12 and college educations.

TASIA VANDERVEGT: So I'm going to share about the digital tool that is your learning management system. The one that I use is Desire2Learn. And in case I don't emphasize it in the run-through of this, everything here is done as a standard option in Desire2Learn, and so I imagine also in places like Canvas.

So I used to do regular test bank question reading quizzes. I hated it. Students hated it. But I had this mentality that it was a required thing, like you just had to do it in order to motivate students to read.

But at some point, I got really sick of quizzes. And I started doing some research to try to find a good excuse to get rid of them. I found zero evidence that that was a good idea, and so I had to switch gears into, how can I do it differently?

One option that I read about was doing group quizzing. I think that's a great option for culturally responsive teaching. I have not yet tried that myself. But the first switch I made was to multiple-chance quizzes instead.

So within the learning system, I just went in, and I changed the amount of attempts allowed to three. And then I set the change to send the average score to the grade book. And so that was it. That was the only change I had to make.

So students had an opportunity to take a quiz. They could take it again if they needed to. The key components was that they would get a new random set of 20 questions out of the test bank. At the end of the quiz, they got to see the questions they got wrong but not the answers. And so that was to help motivate, OK, here's the piece that needs some more review and some studying. Go find that. And then take the quiz again. And then that also motivated folks to still try to aim for their goal score on that first try so that they don't have to spend that time doing that. That, I think, worked out really well. I'm going to talk about some of the results about that here in a few minutes.

But what I actually end up using now is a method that I adopted from one of my dearest friends. It's called the double-entry journal. And this means for here, the number of questions varied. It would depend on-- based on the content of the chapter.

And they would get the key terms and then have two things to do with each key term. One was to be to define it in any way that they could find, and then use the citation. Maybe it was the textbook, it was a video, it was another reading. It didn't matter as long as they defined the term.

And then the second component was to reflect on it. And so that could mean how they see this item working in their life, how they see it connecting to the video we watched, how they want to use it in their final project. It didn't really matter, as long as they just dove into the topic to let me know that they understood it and they were connecting with it.

So it was a much more effective way for me to know which concepts were clicking and connecting, as opposed to a multiple choice quiz, which, for all I know, they guessed and got lucky on an answer. And I think that knowing that students are connecting the content outside of our space in the classroom is a goal that every instructor holds very dear. And this gave me a way to know that.

H. RAY HEITH: Thank you all for sharing that. I think it's really important that you all have been intentional about students being able to give authentic feedback, and then

using that information to inform how you have made adjustments within your courses to then center students in their own learning and in learning that's really meaningful to them.

So we're going to move into our successes and opportunities for operationalizing equitable and culturally responsive assessments. And our panelists are going to share some student success outcomes that really transform the student experience and lead to closing equity gaps within their courses.

JASON M. LEGGETT: So for me, it's strange to start off what was successful by looking at what didn't work. But that was because our institution is-- I don't want to say antiequity. It was having a very difficult time with equity.

And so we really needed to get down and figure out what was not working. And so I chose fall 2021 as my template to try to look at and see what was not working and very particular categories of students.

What I was able to do with that then was to reach out to other faculty members who were open to looking at equitable outcomes and starting a dialogue with them to try to see how we could influence the institutional norms, and to start having a conversation about what equity would look like.

I think the reason I want to call this a success is that now we have over 20 faculty who are now engaged in a community of practice, who are having conversations in context of race, class, and gender, whereas just two or three years ago, we weren't even talking about disaggregated data at all.

So the successes, I think, when we talk about assessment, is that this is now part of the larger conversation we're having at the institution about assessment. And so I think this is a success for us in this way. And I think providing a lot of different examples of what we can do and different approaches to assessment, like you've seen here, help the conversation and get people to start thinking about what they might be able to do.

TASIA VANDERVEGT: So I'm going to talk some more about that multiple-chance option. I'm seeing in the chat, obviously, if you're teaching a 200, 300, 400-person class, doing double-entry journals is probably not a reasonable expectation, though you could mix in some of those questions into a multiple-choice exam if you wanted.

So I want to just compare data across two classes. The first class in the spring did single-chance multiple choice, the second one in the fall did multiple-chance multiple

choice. And what I saw here is the average quiz score between the two courses, with the multiple chance, it went up by two points, which is the equivalent of two questions.

So it's a pretty good increase. I like to think of it loosely as students gaining an additional two points of knowledge from that quiz. Because they had that opportunity to go back, read some things again, and then come back and reassess their knowledge, over eight chapters. That's 16 additional points of knowledge for a group of students, as opposed to having that single chance.

You can also see the final exam score went up between the two classes, as did the overall final grade. So that increase in content retention is visible in the ultimate outcomes of the scores there.

And then just a side note, another thing that I learned-- and this data all came out of the learning management system-- is that students started taking their first attempt five hours earlier than in the single chance.

So the single-chance students were taking their first attempt the day it was due. The multiple-chance version, they were taking their first attempt the day before it was due, obviously, to give themselves some padding to do that studying and have a chance to take it again. So it had this side impact of managing and impacting students time management as well.

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: And as a success, I've just included a quote here from a student who is from the same course that I've been talking about, which is intro to Mexican American studies. And this is part of-- this is from a final reflective exit essay that the students did in this course.

And I included this because this is a student who told me early on in the course that it was a lot more challenging and a lot more demanding than he thought it was going to be, and that he had been told by an advisor that he should take this class because it would be easy, which is a myth about the ethnic studies that, I think, continues to be pervasive, that they're frivolous courses and not legitimate academic pursuits.

So it was really important for me to convey that legitimate academic pursuit aspect of the course. And so this student did struggle a little bit with the GPA grading system and meeting that competency level because he had low expectations of the course and of his performance in it at first.

But once we got on the same page in terms of the rubrics and the expectations of the course, he dove completely in. So you can see here, he says that one of the things that he found is that he finds himself being more ethnically sensitive, and that he realized that he himself was practicing passive resistance without even realizing it.

This is a student who is a veteran as well and who got to speak about his experience throughout the course. He says, "I have let go of previous knowledge, in favor of new knowledge, adopting the framework of nonlinear thinking, and being able to think more empirically and empathetically.

The field of Mexican-American studies has taught me that many of the troubles that plague Indigenous people, people of color, and minorities, are due to a lack of representation in government. It is this lack of representation that allows policy and legislation to be passed that does not address the needs of these marginalized groups." He goes on to say, "It is safe to say that this class has expanded my cultural awareness more than I thought possible from a class that is only three credit hours."

So having the opportunity for this student himself to share how he has met some of the learning objectives of the course, one of which is social responsibility, another one of which is personal responsibility, another one of which is written communication, but to do so in a way that is in his own words, represents a success for me of some of the various strategies and techniques that I've talked about throughout this webinar.

H. RAY HEITH: Thank you, all panelists, for sharing the student perspective. And so we have a few minutes for question and answer. And so if you could raise your hand or put your question in the chat, we have about three minutes where our panelists can answer questions that you've been-- and, Eric, I know that you've been keeping track of some questions as well.

ERIC: There were some questions earlier for Tasia after our second chunk of slides asking about what supports you integrated into the course, or are the referrals that you use when you're making that for the research process, when you're talking about the students doing their research and when you were building out those courses?

TASIA VANDERVEGT: Yes. So I think this is referencing how students know where to find good articles. And at that point, that's about the halfway point when we do that. And so we've read a whole bunch of articles by then. So they have a sense of what types of articles lend themselves well to what we're studying.

And again, that could be a JSTOR article. It could also be a piece out of-- a long journalism piece out of Harper's, or The Atlantic, or New York Times, or something like that. So we've set up the parameters of they can see what is useful for them.

At our school, we have access to all of the journals, and so it's linked for them in the instructions and also in our course main page. So they know exactly how to get to where they're setting that up.

And then they could pick an article that is going to work on their main project, but they may not. There may have been something else that pops up that they're interested in. So if it's going to connect to their main project, I'll help work with them to get that set up and how they're going to integrate it. But if they wanted to do something off the cuff that they hadn't read about before interested them, that's also fine. I hope that answered the question.

H. RAY HEITH: Other questions that you all might have?

Lydia, there was a question about the 50% completion. And can you just share out what that looks like in practice? I know folks had questions about students not maybe mastering the concepts.

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, thank you so much for the opportunity. So Dave actually synthesized it in a way that I felt that was much shorter than I can. But he basically said something along the lines of it's not that you're lowering standards, but you're just changing the number associated with competency level.

So no longer is competency level 70%, it's now 50%. But the standard remains the same. And in my response to him, I suggested that-- what I've found actually is that my competency level is actually more rigorous than it was under the 100-point scale.

Because when students can quibble for points and get extra credit and things like that, there's always that potential that they may be afforded points where mastery of the skill or competency, the competency hasn't been demonstrated.

H. RAY HEITH: Thank you for that because I know folks are wondering, are students proficient when they're learning your course to be able to move on? And what we find is when we delve into culturally responsive teaching and learning and becoming equity-minded practitioners, we really aren't lessening the rigor. We're actually increasing the rigor in those courses for students.

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: That's right.

H. RAY HEITH: Yeah. So I want to say thank you to everyone who's joined us. I want to also share that we do have some upcoming events.

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: Ray, you're on mute.

H. RAY HEITH: Oh, sorry about that. So thank you all for joining us. I do want to share our upcoming ATD events. We have our Teaching and Learning Institute, Being an Equity-Minded Educator. And that's a virtual conference that will take place April 20 through the 22nd.

And Eric has placed the registration link in the chat. And if you wouldn't mind putting that in the chat again. This is a great opportunity to engage with your colleagues, specifically faculty, and then really engaging in how we become equity-minded educators. And so we've got preconference, and then we've got lots of concurrent sessions that we'll be sharing.

And then we have our Operationalizing Equity, Democratizing Learning Environments, which will be the fourth and final session of this webinar series on May 4. And then we have our in-person conference for our K-12 partner institutes, Dual Enrollment, Early Colleges, and Equity. And that takes place June 28 through the 30th.

And so hopefully we will see you all and you will join us for our next upcoming events. Thank you for joining us. And thanks so much to our panelists for joining us today.

LYDIA CDEBACA-CRUZ: Thank you, Ray. Thanks, everyone.

TASIA VANDERVEGT: Thanks, everybody. Great conversation.