FACILITATING COLLABORATION IN ONLINE GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

Demonstrating the ability to collaborate effectively is essential for students moving into 21st century workplaces. Employers are expecting new hires to already possess group-work skills and will seek evidence of their ability to cooperate, collaborate, and complete projects with colleagues, including remotely or at a distance. Instructional activities and assignments that provide students with a variety of ways to engage each other have a direct and immediate effect on their academic performance. This paper shares the Facilitating Collaboration in Online Groups (FCOG) instructional planning strategy. The strategy is designed for faculty use and familiarizes students with the process and technology necessary to collaborate effectively in online classroom groups. The strategy utilizes proven teaching techniques to maximize student-student and student-content relationships. Each of the four (4) sequential phases in the FCOG instructional planning strategy are discussed: 1) Creating Groups, 2) Establishing Expectations, 3) Communication Tools, and 4) Assignments and Activities. The discussion also contains implementation suggestions as well as examples of instructional assignments and activities that provide students with a variety of ways to collaborate to reach the learning outcomes.

Keywords: distance education, collaborative strategies, online learning

INTRODUCTION

Online programs and courses are quickly becoming go-to options for students seeking postsecondary credentials and degrees. In the fall term of 2003, slightly more than 10 % of college and university students were enrolled in online courses; however, by the fall term of 2011, that rose to over 30 %. Also of note, Allen and Seaman (2014) reported that nearly all public institutions offer online courses and over 80 % offer complete online programs. They indicated the number of students seeking such options had tripled within the preceding decade (Allen & Seaman, 2013). More importantly, nearly 70 % of chief academic officers believe that "online education is critical to the long-term strategy of [their] institution" (Allen & Seaman, 2013, p. 16). With such interest, it is clear that online instruction has a growing role in higher education and is here to stay. However, in order to deliver the educational opportunities that students deserve, it is important for faculty to identify, examine, and explore instructional strategies for use in the online classroom, including group or team activities, assignments, and assessments that continuously move students towards the course's learning outcomes.

Academic success can be positively impacted by students' level of engagement with the content, their peers, and faculty (Astin, 1999; Handelsman, Briggs, & Sullivan, 2005; Kuh, 2003; Liu, Magjunka, Bonk, & Lee, 2007). Instructional activities and assignments that provide students with a variety of ways to engage with the course have a direct impact on their academic performance. Multiple communication channels, including student-student and instructor-student communication tools, also positively impact levels of student engagement (Dixson, 2010). Most successful instructors at the postsecondary level have learned to successfully engage with their students in the traditional

classroom, but facilitating engagement in online classrooms entails a different set of skills and knowledge.

This paper describes how instructors might further engage their students by implementing the four (4) sequential phases of the FCOG instructional planning strategy: 1) Creating Groups, 2) Establishing Expectations, 3) Communication Tools, and 4) Assignments and Activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Facilitating Collaboration in Online Groups (FCOG) Design Framework

The 21st century workplace is everywhere. It is not uncommon for teams to work on projects and assignments from different geographical locations using the internet and digital devices to communicate. Providing students with opportunities to enhance group-work skills—both interpersonal and those related to the necessary technology—is a cornerstone of the Facilitating Collaboration in Online Groups (FCOG) strategy. While the ideas presented here are not new, they echo the tradition of social constructivism. The theorists who championed social constructivism (Bandura, 1986; Bruner, 1966; Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978) were almost certainly talking about face-to-face interactions, but their ideas are no less applicable in the online environment.

In the FCOG strategy, peer collaboration is defined as students working jointly on the same assignment rather than individually on different components of the same assignments. Students equally share status and their collective instructional goal is to produce evidence they have moved beyond what they previously knew (Damon & Phelps, 1989; Roschelle & Teasley, 1995). Research supports the positive impact of peer collaboration, an aspect of social constructivism, on student learning (Chan, 2001; Webb & Farivar, 1999, Webb, Farivar, & Mastergeorge, 2002). Colbert, Campbell, and Bjorklund (2000) shared that collaboration can be used "to encourage students to work together as they apply course materials to answer questions, solve problems or create a product" (p. 61). Dillenbourg (1999) and McConnell (2006) suggested that peer interactions can enhance learning and stimulate an increase in knowledge comprehension and the acquisition of competent skills. Collaboration tasks that include group projects and assignments may also contribute to a feeling of community and connectedness (Ouzts, 2006; Rovai, 2002; Lao & Gonzales, 2005; Chapman, Romondt, & Smile, 2005).

Faculty also play a crucial role in students' knowledge construction, in part because they design and scaffold peer interactions and collaboration assignments and activities. The FCOG strategy incorporates the concepts of scaffolding instruction (Bruner, 1961) as a foundation. Scaffolding instruction is defined as "the systematic sequencing of prompted content, materials, tasks, and teacher and peer support to optimize learning" (Dickson, Chard, & Simmons, 1993, p. 12). Tallent-Runnels and colleagues' (2006) research shows that scaffolding the learning process for students is an effective instructional strategy. Instructors design activities and assignments that provide learners with an opportunity to learn through a social process where individual knowledge is built, supported, or constructed through interactions with others in the educational setting (van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010). Scaffolding instructional experiences has been identified in research as one way to positively influence student interactions in online collaborative learning communities (Kurabacak, 2005; Meyers, Davis, & Botti, 2002; Simpson, 2005; Tremblay, 2005; Wei & Chen, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Implementing the Facilitating Collaboration in Online Groups (FCOG) Strategy

There are four (4) sequenced phases in the FCOG strategy for planning instruction. Phase 1 entails creating a group set and themed groups using self-enrollment. Phase 2 provides instructors with suggestions on how to detail the operational and performance expectations for groups and the individual members within the groups. In Phase 3, instructors are provided with web-based communication tools and pedagogical suggestions to help students use them effectively. Finally, Phase 4 provides more examples and illustrations of assignments and activities that use the FCOG strategy.

Phase 1: Creating a FCOG group set and themed-groups.

The first phase of the FCOG strategy is for the online instructor to create formal groups of students

for collaboration purposes. The instructor will need to decide how many individual groups are needed and the maximum number of students within each group. The groups can be created one at a time or all at once using the multiple group creation template called Group Set. However, each group should allow a self-enrollment option for students to choose which group to join based upon their own interest.

The majority of Learning Management Systems (LMS) provide instructors with an option to create student groups with a self-enroll feature. The membership self-enrollment option helps to promote a sense of culture and identity among group members and knowledge sharing often proceeds informally and naturally when students are provided with this option (Hara & Hew, 2007). In addition, Cela, Sicilia, and Sánchez's (2015) research supports the idea that adult online learners will collaborate more with their peers if the topic preferences are of their own choosing (p. 295). In other words, much like in face-to-face environments, allowing for choice and accommodating interests tends to increase engagement.

Using default settings, the creation of the individual groups and/or group set is done automatically in most LMS systems and the system simply names each group sequentially (i.e., Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, etc.). However, instructors are able to change the default generic group names to something that relates to some aspect of the course's content. This naming convention, called themed-groups, further provides students an opportunity to align themselves with an area of personal interest.

The first step to creating themed-groups is for the instructor to edit the generic group names. For example, for an educational technology course, there might be themed-groups entitled: K-2 Interest; Elementary Interest; Middle School Interest; High School Interest; K-12 Music, Art & Physical Education Interest; and Special Education Interest. Figure 1 provides an illustration of a group set and its individual themed-groups. Next, the instructor may wish to add descriptions to each themed-group that shares the group's distinct attributes. The following is a description for the K-2 Interest group: "This Professional Learning Community, (PLC) K-2 Interest, is for students interested in learning more about the use of educational technology tools and mobile resources with students in Kindergarten through Second Grade." When students click on the themed-group name, the description appears. This information helps them to decide in which group they would like to self-enroll.

Although students are grouped, most LMS allow for monitoring and grading of group and individual activities, assignments, and assessments. For example, in the Blackboard LMS, instructors can choose to view all of one student's contributions at once or to view the interactions of all group members chronologically. In addition, in most LMS, instructors also have the option of activating collaboration features, such as Blogs, Wikis, and File Sharing, in addition to the Discussion Board, for group collaboration. These features can be added during the initial setup, but they can also be activated when or if the instructor determines if these instructional tools will be useful for an individual group or the entire group set.

Phase 2: Establishing FCOG expectations.

In addition to guiding students through how to self-enroll in one of the themed groups, the Facilitation Collaboration in Online Groups Expectations activity provides them with information related to the importance and benefits of working in groups to achieve collective goals. Most college students have worked in face-to-face groups to complete course assignments and projects. Some may even have had previous experience working with groups in other online courses. While group work is a frequently used instructional strategy in face-to-face instruction, the parameters of group work differ from course to course and there are no universally accepted parameters for optimizing collaboration in online groups. In order to establish uniform expectations and provide students with essential group-work skills, instructors should identify and share specific parameters for working with others as a member of an online community as a course activity.

There are several web-based resources that instructors may find useful when establishing expectations. For example, Fishman (2012) and Mazur (2015) discuss group projects from the student perspective and share techniques that students can employ to successfully work in groups. There are also brief videos available online that reinforce strategies for working effectively in groups, such as the Janux Youtube video (Janux, 2014). In addition, Rollag (2006) created an interactive webinar, the Group Project Survival Guide, which online students

and instructors may find extremely beneficial. It helps students identify roles and responsibilities within their group, helping them to avoid potential conflict later on.

In the FCOG strategy, to help ensure that all students have demonstrated they are familiar with the expectations, access to other course activities is prohibited until a score of 80 % or better is attained on a multiple choice exam of course expectations for group interaction. The adaptive release functionality of most LMS can be used to establish this temporary "road block," Figure 2 provides an illustration of the FCOG Expectation activity that takes students through the various resources that they need to read and view. It also describes the quiz they must pass before continuing on with the module and course. Although the exact resources selected will likely vary depending on course expectations, it should be noted that the resources should contain hyperlinks, opening in new browser windows, within the actual assignment. This allows students to move through materials in the order that the instructor intends and to easily revisit materials as needed. Alternatively, the instructor may wish to provide an audio file to accompany the written directions or create a video containing captions to accommodate universal design principles.

Using the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) group set example, another possible component of the self-enroll activity may require students to read articles related to the effectiveness of PLC teams and view videos related to PLC concepts. There are many YouTube videos produced by PLC teams that can be embedded within the activity. To further highlight the importance of PLCs, you may invite a local school principal to share views about the importance of PLC teams through a short video that relates directly to classroom instruction. Figure 3 contains an illustration of the directions for the Joining a Professional Learning Community activity, which is also a key component in the process of establishing FCOG expectations. Like the previous activity, the URLs for the videos referenced are hyperlinked and open in new browser windows when students click on them.

Even after completing these activities, there may be students who do not recognize or appreciate the benefits of working with others in learning groups (Keyton, 1994; Schullery & Gibson, 2001). If group work is a frequently used instructional strategy in the course, then students should be informed of this expectation through activities like those just described and they should be provided with an option to withdraw from the course without penalty should they choose. An announcement can be posted in the LMS and sent via email that might read as follows:

> *Important Notice: Not everyone welcomes collaborative experiences; however, group assignments and activities are used as an instructional strategy extensively in this online course. If you are truly apprehensive about online collaboration and would rather choose the face-to-face section of this course, the withdraw/add period extends through WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2016. You may withdraw from the online section(s) and add the face-to-face section without penalty on or before this date.*

Phase 3: FCOG communication tools.

Providing students with choices in communication tools is critical to successful group work. A segment at the beginning of the course should be devoted to providing them with options to communicate with group members both within and outside the LMS. Instructors might consider activities that use Discussion Board forums, a text-based LMS communication tool, to assess students' prior content knowledge and to help align students' expectations with course outcomes (Stephens, 2015). Also, Icebreakers, using the discussion board feature, can be used to familiarize students with each other and the discussion board as a communication tool. Icebreaker assignments can also provide students with opportunities to learn more about the academic interests and backgrounds of members of their groups. While instructors can certainly design their own icebreaker activities specific to course content, Rice and Stadt (n.d.) have compiled a set of icebreakers for use (as is or modified) with adults in the online classroom; each of the icebreakers contains a detailed lesson plan with everything needed to implement the activity.

While many instructors choose communication resources internal to the LMS for the sake of simplicity, there are many free, web-based group communication resources available for student groups. Popular applications include Skype, Group Chat using Google Hangout, ooVoo Video

Chat, and Anymeeting. Each offers a different functionality. A quick internet search engine will provide information, illustrations, and tutorials that can be incorporated into the online course for each of these tools. Instructors may consider creating a Bonus Points assignment to encourage students to try out the group communication tool(s) selected by the instructor without penalties associated with grades and scoring. It is beneficial to offer this option early in the course, because it will facilitate necessary communication early on and students tend to be more willing to make time to complete a Bonus Point assignment closer to the beginning of the course. If the Bonus Points activity follows the icebreaker activity, students will have something to talk about with their peers during the video group chat. Figure 4 provides an illustration of a Bonus Points assignment related to video chat technology. If logistically possible, instructors may wish to participate in the informal video group chat sessions. Instructor participation may help reinforce the importance of the video group chat function. It will also provide an opportunity for the instructor to interact with students as they explore using web-based resources in new instructional ways.

Phase 4: Assignments and activities.

Planning online group assignments and activities can be challenging tasks for instructors. A tenured faculty member shared her frustration with the design and development of online assignments and activities. She stated, "I decided to move that project into my online course. I immediately realized I had no idea how to translate such a face-to-face process to an online environment" (Moore, 2016, p. 238). Her feelings are not unusual. Most often, instructors start by modifying assignments which were successful in traditional classroom settings; however, such activities may not engage students with the content or with their peers to a similar degree when implemented in an online format. Phase 4 of the FCOG strategy shares suggestions and instructional techniques for online assignments and activities that engage students with the content and their peers.

Peer-to-peer interactions influence student success. Faulkner, Doamekpor, and Yeboah (2013) found that while online students may physically reside outside of the university community, they desire the opportunity to engage in personal learning experiences with their peers (p. 81). Thus, online instructors are encouraged to use a variety of teaching techniques in their instructional delivery programs, many of which differ from tried and true techniques used in face-to-face classrooms. To help build a foundation, there are several types of practical, simple online group assignments and activities that instructors can implement, such as those that involve:

1. Issues where there are no right answers: These types of assignments provide students with an opportunity to seek information to help them take and support a position. These assignments can also be easily fashioned as a debate in which students discuss pros and cons or benefits and pitfalls as a collaborative group project.
2. Multiple perspectives on a topic: These assignments may include further exploring current events or cultural comparisons or examining a case study from different points of view. Activities may include students individually and collectively preparing responses to be shared with other groups.
3. Creating authentic products: Student groups may use information inspired from the review of various artifacts, documented research, and other resources to create a product that illustrates their ability to integrate and apply their new skills or acquired knowledge. The product can be something created for a genuine communication purpose to be read, viewed, or listened to by interested others.

Phase 4 of the FCOG strategy also provides instructions, examples and illustrations for collaborative activities that include the integration of Blogs, Wikis, and Google Slides as assignment tools.

Blogs. "Blog" is a term that is short for "web log," which is an online diary or journal. The term can also be used as a verb: "I blog at the end of my class." Many LMS have blogging capabilities built into them; however, there are also many free web-based blogging resources available. WordPress.com and Blogger.com are free blog hosting web resources, both of which are easy to use and are highly rated by experienced blog users (Duffy, 2011).

Zinger and Sinclair (2013) share that blogs have instructional benefits, including that they are:

1. Cross-curricular and provide a forum for academic discourse and potentially provide additional opportunities for students to enhance their writing skills;
2. A useful network tool that allows for students to communicate with others within and outside of the online classroom; and
3. Communication platforms that may enhance student-to-content and student-to-student engagement.

Agosto, Copeland, and Zach (2013) also found strong support for using social technologies such as blogs as an instructional tool for peer-to-peer learning. They found that blogs are well-suited for sharing course-related knowledge and they help support collaboration and community building (p. 104). In addition, Ellison and Wu (2008) reported that students' own understanding of course concepts were increased when they compared their blog entries to the postings of their peers and when they reviewed peer-to-peer comments related to their own blog entries.

An example of a Group Blog assignment, related to the introduction of Adaptive Technologies, is described in Figure 5. In this assignment, each student within a themed-group posts their individual reflection on a series of readings and videos by a specific target date. This provides everyone within the group time to post their reflections and read the reflections of others within the group. Next, each group member is required to post a Comment to each group member's blog reflection. The comment must include a question that furthers the blog author's thought on some aspect of the topic or shares an example or illustration of a practical application of the blog author's reflection in a real world scenario.

Wikis. A wiki is a website that is designed to facilitate collaborative authoring and allows modifications to be made to the content and structure of its content. Wikis are widely used by virtual communities to share knowledge and to gather, collect, organize, and store information (Wei-Tsong & Zu-Hao, 2011). Many LMS have wiki functionality built within the platform; however, as with blogs, there are many online options that one might consider as well. Wikipedia.com is one of the best-known wikis and it is among the most popular on the internet, but there also are many others that can be created and authored by students, such as Dabbleboard.com, Wonderdukit.com, and Wikispaces.com. Wikispaces.com is one of the oldest wiki hosting sites and, more importantly, it is free to educators and their students.

Incorporating a wiki into instructional activities to support group projects is an effective strategy. Numerous studies have shown that wikis may improve group collaboration and work quality, and they may also enhance student interactions (Chu, Siu, Liang, Capio, & Wendy, 2013; Donne, 2012; Nicole, Littlejohn, & Grierson, 2005; Wei-Tsong & Zu-Hao, 2011). Chan Pandian, Joseph, and Ghazali, (2012) also reported that the teachers in their study of wiki use found that "students were motivated, self-directed, and acquired greater social skills as they learned to work collaboratively in Wiki groups" (p. 405). When designing an effective wiki assignment for groups of students, Reynard (2009) suggests that:

Students should not be able to complete the assignment without all group members actively participating.

The process to complete the project and the actual outcome should both require collaboration.

Participation should be required to move the work towards the possible outcome.

Figure 6 provides an example of a Wiki assignment, which includes students creating an ideal acceptable use policy based on their review of artifacts and readings and in collaboration with themed-group members. In this illustration, there are references to several videos, which help students work through the assignment. One of the related videos, the Model AUP PLC Wiki, contains an illustration of a "perfect" submission or Model Response. It provides the PLC group with a video walk through of the process that may be used to create the group wiki and shares an illustration of the expected completed product.

Google Slides. Google has many productivity tools to support online collaboration and Google Slides is one of them. Google Slides (google.com/slides) is the online presentation component of the Google suite of tools. It allows for members of groups to work on presentations simultaneously, even when they are not physically in the same location. It also includes the ability to integrate images and audio/video files. The resulting presentation can then be shared with other Google users and can be accessed from any digital device. Another bonus of the

application is that PowerPoint presentations can be uploaded into Google Drive and opened with Google Slides, allowing students to work on- and off-line and offering students the option to work with an application with which they may be more familiar. Brigham (2014) found that Google Slides has many of the same features of Microsoft Powerpoint but the advantage is that Google Slides users can easily publish and embed presentations into blogs or other websites.

Figure 7 provides an illustration of a Google Slides assignment that builds upon the Blog—Adaptive Technologies assignment. In the assignment, the PLC groups collaborate to create an online presentation that will be shared with the other PLC groups. The instructions are very general to allow for creativity. To provide a sense of structure to those who need it, there is also a link to a model response from a previous semester.

CONCLUSION

The extra effort exerted by online instructors to implement the FCOG strategy to familiarize students with the purpose and modes of online collaboration will benefit their students as they progress through the course. In addition, students have an opportunity to demonstrate their individual and collective abilities through authentic assessments on group assignments and activities and build upon feedback provided by their peers. While the examples and illustration provided here relate to an educational technology course, these same strategies can be used in teaching comprehension skills, classroom management, or pedagogical content knowledge or any other academic or industry content.

Given the prolific expansion of online communication within businesses, education, and social networks, instructors who provide students with an online learning environment where assignments require them to expand their ability to communicate with others remotely and may have the potential to affect all aspects of their lives. The FCOG strategy may help students develop proficient group work collaboration skills to prepare them for the expectations of 21st century workplaces, both in terms of interpersonal and technical skills.

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Webb, N. M., & Farivar, S. (1999). Developing productive group interaction in middle school mathematics. In A. M. O'Donnell & A. King (Eds.), Cognitive perspectives on peer learning (pp. 117–149). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

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Wei, F.-H., & Chen, G.-D. (2006). Collaborative mentor support in a learning context using a ubiquitous discussion forum to Facilitating knowledge sharing for lifelong learning. British Journal of Education Technology, 37, 917–935.

Wei-Tsong, W., & Zu-Hao, W. (2011). Knowledge sharing in Wiki communities: An empirical study. Online Information Review, 35(5), 799–820.

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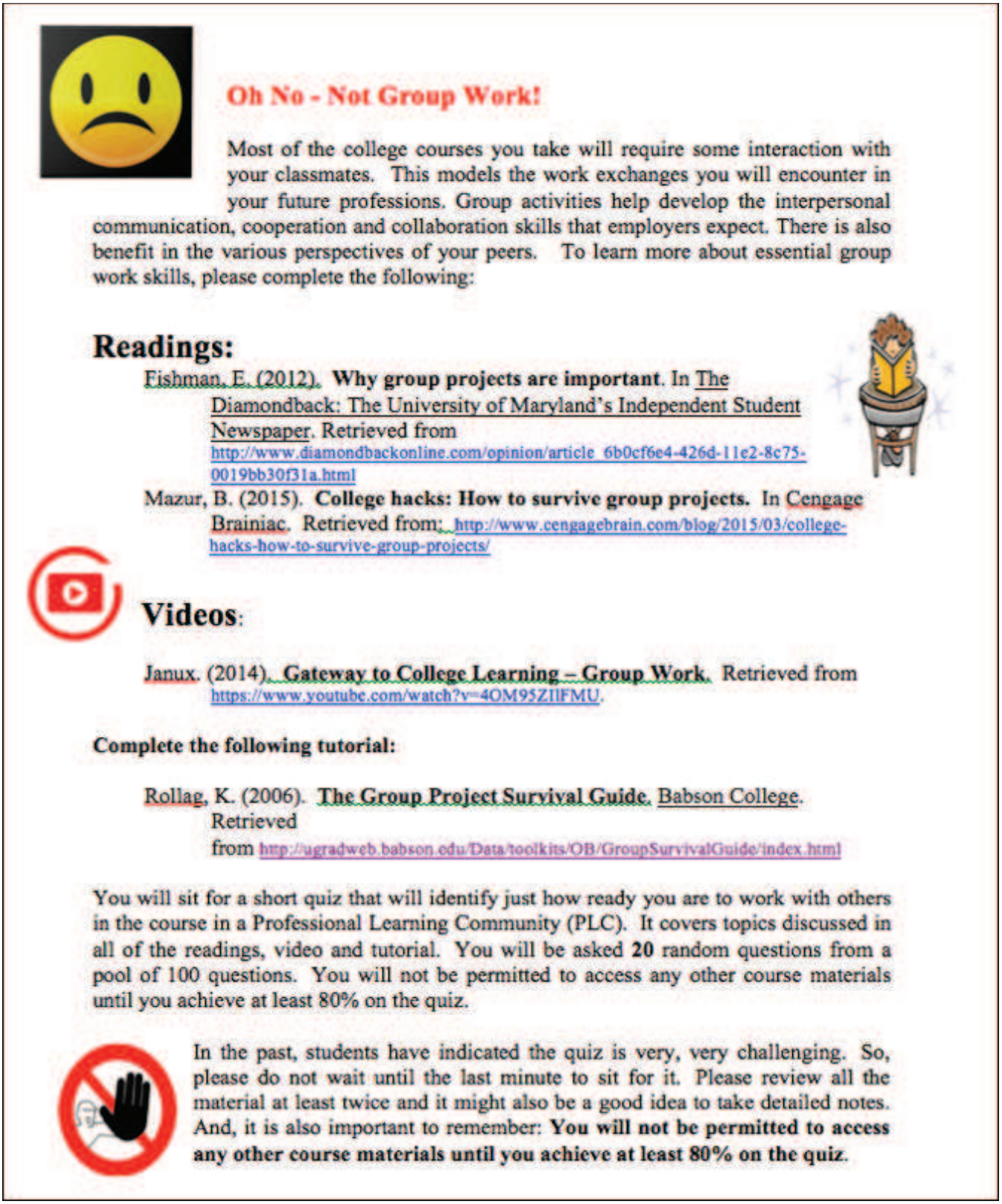
Figure 1. The PLC Group Set with Individual Themed-groups in the Blackboard LMS.

Themed Group	Group Set	Enrolled Members	Self-Enroll
(PLC) K-2 Interest	Professional Learning Communities (PLC)	0	Yes
(PLC) Elementary Interest	Professional Learning Communities (PLC)	0	Yes
(PLC) High School Interest	Professional Learning Communities (PLC)	0	Yes
(PLC) K-12 Music, Art & Physical Education Interest	Professional Learning Communities (PLC)	0	Yes
(PLC) Middle School Interest	Professional Learning Communities (PLC)	0	Yes
(PLC) Special Education Interest	Professional Learning Communities (PLC)	0	Yes

Figure 2. Illustration of the FCOG Expectation Activity.



Oh No - Not Group Work!

Most of the college courses you take will require some interaction with your classmates. This models the work exchanges you will encounter in your future professions. Group activities help develop the interpersonal communication, cooperation and collaboration skills that employers expect. There is also benefit in the various perspectives of your peers. To learn more about essential group work skills, please complete the following:

Readings:

Fishman, E. (2012). **Why group projects are important**. In The Diamondback: The University of Maryland's Independent Student Newspaper. Retrieved from http://www.diamondbackonline.com/opinion/article_6b0cf6e4-426d-11e2-8c75-0019bb30f31a.html

Mazur, B. (2015). **College hacks: How to survive group projects.** In Cengage Brainiac. Retrieved from: http://www.cengagebrain.com/blog/2015/03/college-hacks-how-to-survive-group-projects/

Videos:

Janux. (2014). **Gateway to College Learning – Group Work.** Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OM95ZIlFMU.

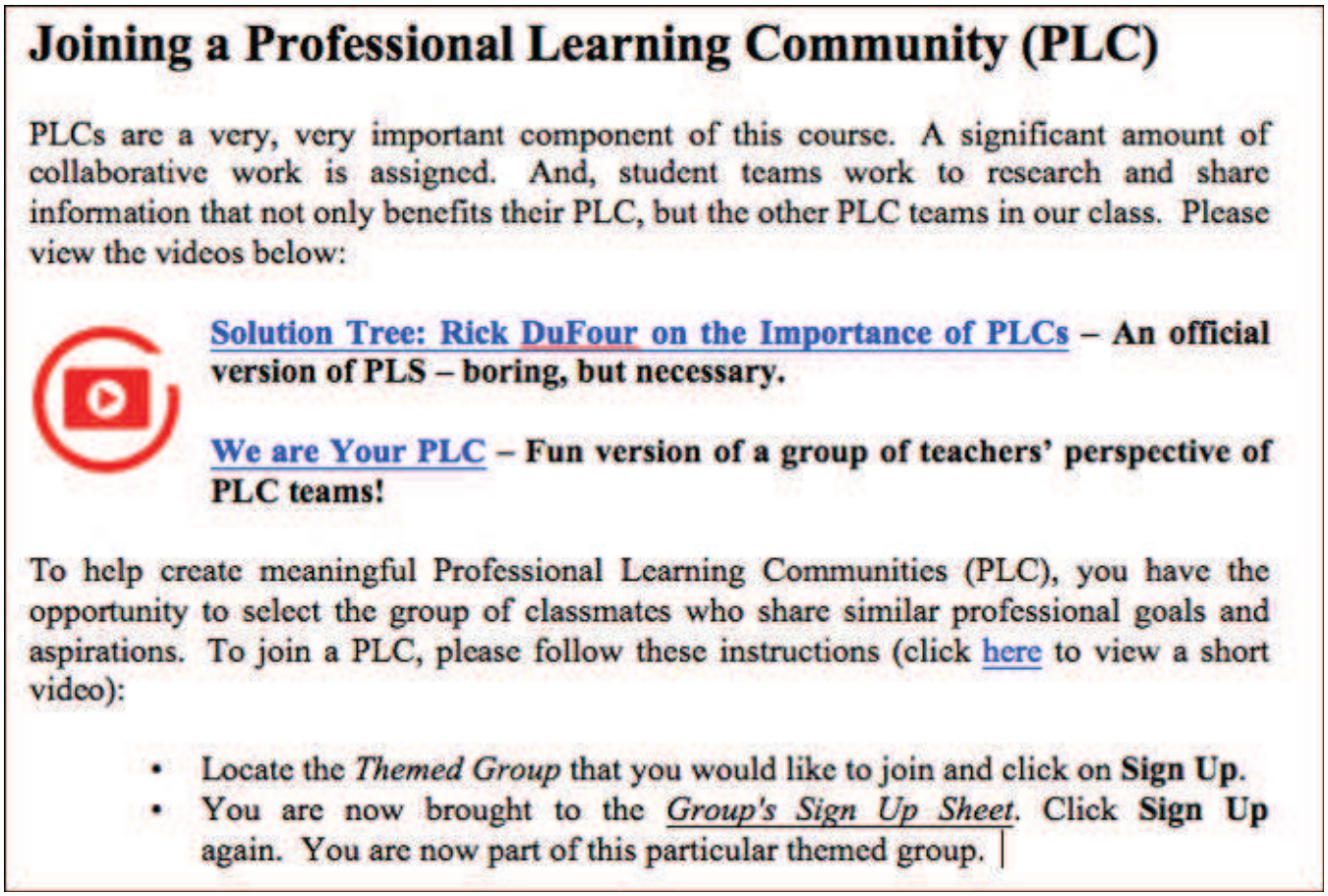
Complete the following tutorial:

Rollag, K. (2006). **The Group Project Survival Guide.** Babson College. Retrieved from http://ugradweb.babson.edu/Data/toolkits/OB/GroupSurvivalGuide/index.html

You will sit for a short quiz that will identify just how ready you are to work with others in the course in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). It covers topics discussed in all of the readings, video and tutorial. You will be asked **20** random questions from a pool of 100 questions. You will not be permitted to access any other course materials until you achieve at least 80% on the quiz.

In the past, students have indicated the quiz is very, very challenging. So, please do not wait until the last minute to sit for it. Please review all the material at least twice and it might also be a good idea to take detailed notes. And, it is also important to remember: **You will not be permitted to access any other course materials until you achieve at least 80% on the quiz.**

Figure 3. Illustration of the Joining a Professional Learning Community Activity.



Joining a Professional Learning Community (PLC)

PLCs are a very, very important component of this course. A significant amount of collaborative work is assigned. And, student teams work to research and share information that not only benefits their PLC, but the other PLC teams in our class. Please view the videos below:

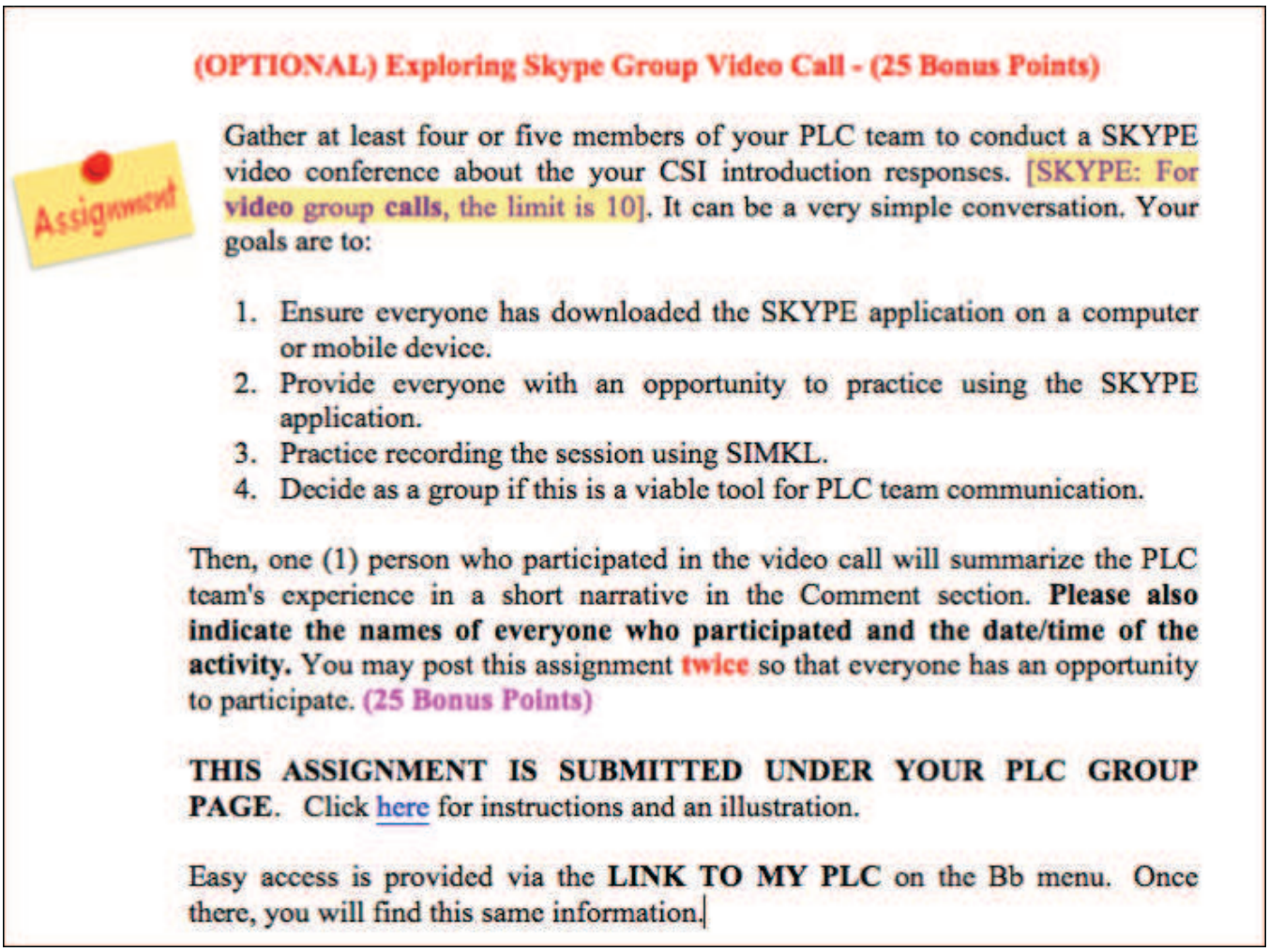
Solution Tree: Rick DuFour on the Importance of PLCs – An official version of PLS – boring, but necessary.

We are Your PLC – Fun version of a group of teachers' perspective of PLC teams!

To help create meaningful Professional Learning Communities (PLC), you have the opportunity to select the group of classmates who share similar professional goals and aspirations. To join a PLC, please follow these instructions (click here to view a short video):

- Locate the *Themed Group* that you would like to join and click on **Sign Up**.
- You are now brought to the *Group's Sign Up Sheet*. Click **Sign Up** again. You are now part of this particular themed group.

Figure 4. Illustration for the Video Chat Bonus Points Assignment.



(OPTIONAL) Exploring Skype Group Video Call - (25 Bonus Points)

Assignment

Gather at least four or five members of your PLC team to conduct a SKYPE video conference about the your CSI introduction responses. [SKYPE: For video group calls, the limit is 10]. It can be a very simple conversation. Your goals are to:

1. Ensure everyone has downloaded the SKYPE application on a computer or mobile device.
2. Provide everyone with an opportunity to practice using the SKYPE application.
3. Practice recording the session using SIMKL.
4. Decide as a group if this is a viable tool for PLC team communication.

Then, one (1) person who participated in the video call will summarize the PLC team's experience in a short narrative in the Comment section. **Please also indicate the names of everyone who participated and the date/time of the activity.** You may post this assignment **twice** so that everyone has an opportunity to participate. **(25 Bonus Points)**

THIS ASSIGNMENT IS SUBMITTED UNDER YOUR PLC GROUP PAGE. Click here for instructions and an illustration.

Easy access is provided via the **LINK TO MY PLC** on the Bb menu. Once there, you will find this same information.

Figure 5. Illustration of the Group Blog Assignment.

Blog Instructions

There are two activities in this assignment:

ACTIVITY ONE:

Each student will post a reflective blog entry, containing at least 200-words, articulating how these tools could be incorporated into instructional content lessons. Make sure you include a discussion about each of the following:

1. What you learned about **Adaptive Technology**
2. At least three (3) examples of how you might incorporate Assistive Technology into your lessons.
3. A minimum of two links to web-based resources that broadened your perspective. The source can be an article, video or web site. Please provide a detailed description of why you selected this resource.
4. Anything else you wish to share about Adaptive Technology and your ability to address the needs of your special needs learners.

All initial blog entries are due March 2, 2016. (50 Points)

ACTIVITY TWO:

Each PLC member will review at least three (3) of their peers postings and submit a **COMMENT** for each that includes a question to further the author's thoughts on some aspect of their reflection or provide an example or illustration of a practical application of the author's reflection in a real world scenario.

Peer comments are due March 9, 2016. (50 Points)

This activity has **100** individual points possible and may be needed later in this Seminar. Please click here to view the Blog Evaluation Rubric.

(All activities must be completed on or before: March 9, 2016) 100 Points

Figure 6. Illustration of the Group Wiki Assignment.

Wiki Instructions

Click the **PLAY** button for a brief overview of the assignment details video.
The PLC Wiki Assignment has two activities:

Activity One: The AUP Review

Each PLC member will review an **Acceptable Use Policy** (AUP) from a local district. (To locate the document, try conducting a google search. If you are unable to locate the AUP for your local school/district, then select another school/district to conduct your review.) Review the AUP and make notes on the following:

1. The district you selected for the review.
2. Make notes of the analysis of the AUP you reviewed using the criteria discussed in this section of Seminar A.
3. Include in your notes the pros and cons of each element of the AUP and any modifications and/or enhancements you would suggest.

Activity Two: Creating the PLC Wiki

Create a WIKI using the collective information gleaned from all of your PLC members' AUP reviews to design the **Ideal Acceptable Use Policy**. Ensure the WIKI includes information related to all of the required elements as outlined by the The National Education Association (NEA). These have been listed:

- a preamble,
- a definition section,
- a policy statement,
- an acceptable uses section,
- an unacceptable uses section, and
- a violations/sanctions section.

See more at: http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr093.shtml#sthash.95E3RI2I.dpuf

To begin this project, please view the HOW TO CREATE A WIKI video. Here is additional information that might help the PLC create a strong PLC wiki.

Group Management: Please refer to information in the Building a Foundation module for reminders about working effectively in groups.

Click here to view the MODEL AUP PLC WIKI video.

Do not start this assignment until you have had a PLC team meeting. It is critical that EVERYONE in the PLC is on the same page.

This PLC Group assignment is due on or before: February 22, 2016.

Figure 7. Illustration of the Group Google Slides Assignment.

INSTRUCTIONS: Teaching All Learners - Group Presentation Assignment

In this assignment your PLC group is required to create a Presentation using **Google Slides**. The presentation will describe key aspects of the PLC collective reflections in response to: "**What we learned about teaching ALL learners**."

The Specifics:

- As a member of your PLC group, help create a collaborative presentation using Google Slides. Please watch this video to learn more about creating collaborative presentations with **GoogleSlides.**
- Each PLC group's presentation must contain an Introduction slide and a Conclusion slide. Also, please include a slide containing all the members of the PLC team. However, there are no other content requirements and there are no maximum number of slides per presentation.
- Click here to view a **MODEL RESPONSE** as an example of the presentation YOUR PLC GROUP is creating.
- **Please Note**: Peer evaluations are factored as a component of individual scores on this assignment.

This assignment is due on or before: March 4, 2016