Plan for a SoTL Project

by replace with your name, institution

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| **Research Question**  *What are you curious about?*  *What would you like to know about strategies that might hinder and/or help students to learn, in your course?*  *Do you want to know if an activity, assignment, or teaching strategy “works?”*  *Do you have a question about how to help your students learn a particular skill?*  How do we increase productive class engagement and participation to better support learning? |
| **Identify challenge/outcome related to learning that is related to your question.**  *Describe the learning in a way that suggests how you might measure it using either qualitative or quantitative methods.*  Challenges:   1. online learning can be a challenge and makes it difficult for learners to get to know one another and collaborate with one another. 2. Learners are often adult learners and may be juggling jobs, home responsibilities, etc 3. As predominantly adult learners, they may struggle with school in general as they’ve been out of it for so long. This can create a sense of isolationism, shame, etc that makes it harder for learners to outwardly engage with the material or participate in class discussion   Outcome:   1. Learners feel more comfortable participating in class   Qualitative or quantitative methods to measure success:   1. Assess using student surveys, at the mid and end point, to see how learners felt about their own engagement and participation 2. Implement self-reflections instead of grade-point assessment, to allow learners to show their own learning in a way that makes sense to them. This may also reduce some of the pressure to ‘perform’ or perform well, as you would need to for a grade. Instead learners can focus on self-improvement and learning rather than acquiring an arbitrary number or letter. |
| **Describe the instructional activity, assignment, or teaching strategy that will promote student learning on the outcome you identified.**  *SoTL projects might investigate the impact of a modification to an existing strategy or assignment. Describe how the new approach differs from the old approach and why this modification might change student learning on this outcome.*   1. Use self-reflections as a grading model so that students will assess themselves; this will make them more comfortable and reduce pressure to ‘perform’. 2. Provide opportunities for learners to post their answers in chat, rather than verbally, to give them the opportunity to ease in to class engagement 3. Implement a circle, so that each learner participates in some way or another, as little or as much as they want. If everyone is participating, and if you know where you are in the circle, you have time to prepare your answer and you can build off of your peers’ ideas. If everyone is participating, it reduces the pressure of being ‘in the spotlight’ |
| **Describe the evidence that would persuade an external audience that the new or modified teaching strategy improves student learning on the targeted learning outcome.**  Describe the evidence you would need to collect to answer questions about the impact or value of this teaching strategy. How would you convince others that this approach is better than other approaches? What comparisons should you make? Examine students; skill before and after the assignment? Compare students who complete the learning activity to another group of students – what comparisons would be meaningful?   1. Qualitatively, you’ll be able to see if there is an increase in participation. 2. Surveys will provide evidence of students’ comfort-level if you ask in the survey how they felt about the changes and whether it worked to increase their comfort 3. Compare before and after implementing this change: did participation increase? Are learners more willing to engage? |
| **How and where would you publish, present, or disseminate this work?**  Share with fellow instructors at the institution.  Update:  I would disseminate this work first by creating a presentation deck that could be shared widely. The deck would explain what the project was, what its intent was, what I did, and the results from surveys and student comments. I would share this with my colleagues and also send it to the Centre of Teaching and Learning so they can disseminate it as needed. |

**Ethical Considerations:**

* Using surveys – need to have clear and consistent rules around how the information is being used and in what ways; need to ensure anonymity of the student participants; be clear with the students about the information’s use and have a way to share it back with them
* Circle work – must ensure protocols are explained at the beginning, including some discussion of respectful contribution



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Adapted from: C. J. Stanny, E. M. El-Sheikh, & H-M. Chung (2009) ***Getting Started with a SoTL Project***

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