

Engaging Students in an Asynchronous Learning Environment

Prepared by:
Thomas G. Sandridge, M.S., R.T.(R)
Northwestern Memorial Hospital
School of Radiography
Chicago, IL
tsandrid@nmh.org

I. Background:

- A. Computers & Internet access
- B. Generational issues
- C. Evolution of distance learning

III. The Instructor:

- A. Role
- B. Online Persona
- C. Starting off on the right foot

II. E-Learning:

- A. Why
- B. Approaches

IV. The Course:

- A. Key structural issues
- B. Instructor feedback
- C. Instructor involvement

Computer and Internet Access

Generations			
Generation	Born between:	Approx. Number:	Influences:
"Silent" Generation	1925 - 1942	63 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Depression • WW II • Golden age of radio & silver screen
"Baby Boomers"	1943 - 1961	77 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Television • Vietnam • The Cold War
"Generation X"	1962 - 1981	44 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers (emergence of) • Corporate Downsizing • AIDS
"Generation Y" aka. "Millennials"	1982 - 1998	70 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Savvy • E-learning • PDAs, cell phones (texting) • 9/11

"Typical" Student Profile

Fall 2011: **19.7 million** college students

- Age:
 - Average student age: **26**
- Gender:
 - Female: 11.2 million
 - Male: 8.5 million
- Employment
- Remediation
- Study Habits

Source: US DOE, NCES.

Engagement

- Achievement and satisfaction.
- **Millennials and Gen X learners**
- Quantity of postings vs. quality

- Participation
 - Disengaged students
 - Require a specified number of responses, graded.
- Well-constructed, open-ended questions
- Openness, trust, frequent interactions

7 Maxims for Effective Teaching

(McMahon, 2006)

1. Manageable workload ("chunks")
2. Avoid information overload
3. Clear understanding of requirements
 - Essential for continued engagement
4. Assignments promote higher order thinking and learning
5. Require active participation
6. Provide as much choice as possible (motivator)
7. "SMART" feedback

Constructivism

- Active, collaborative, co-constructed meaning
- Socio-cultural context

Connectivism

- Active engagement of people with resources in communication with others.
 - Engagement promotes learning.

"Distance" Education

19th Century:
Correspondence Courses

Radio, Television

1980's:
Universities develop asynchronous learning capacities

as of 2007:
12.2 million* students enrolled

* Source: US Department of Education, NCES

Why e-Learning?

- Flexible & convenient
- Increases access
- Additional resources
- Printed record
- Richer, equitable learning experience
- Variety of learning styles

Characteristics of Successful E-Learners

- Goal-driven, self-directed
 - Disciplined
 - Motivated
- Time-management skills
- Technology



- Proactive
- Resourceful
- Persistent
- Reading Comprehension



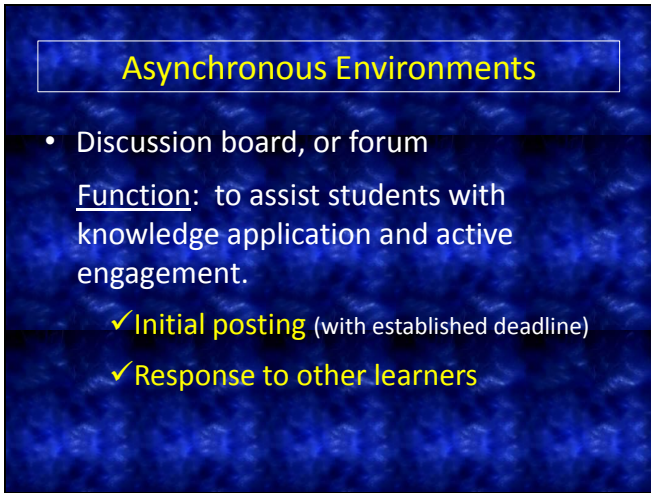
Synchronous

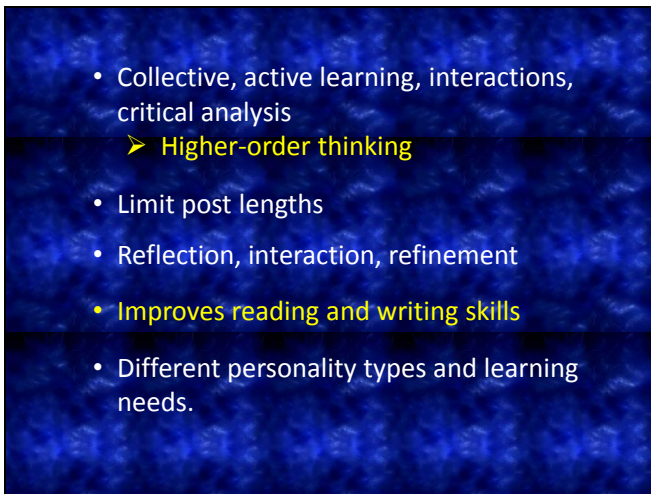
- Live chats
- Technological ability
- Typing abilities?
- Connection speed?

Asynchronous

- Time and place
- Convenient
- Self-paced
- Increase reflection
- All can participate







- Questions
- Personalized feedback and motivation / engagement
- Promotes research and investigation, consideration of different viewpoints.

- Additional Benefits**
- In-depth, thoughtful exploration of materials, critical thinking, cognitive processing.
 - “Equitable”
 - Academic performance
 - Encourages flexibility and creativity

- Revise before responding = *thoughtful refinement.*
- Learn from peers
 - Collaboration / teamwork skills
- Autonomy

A Few Drawbacks . . .

- Lack of immediate feedback
- Length of time
- Sense of isolation
- Checking in

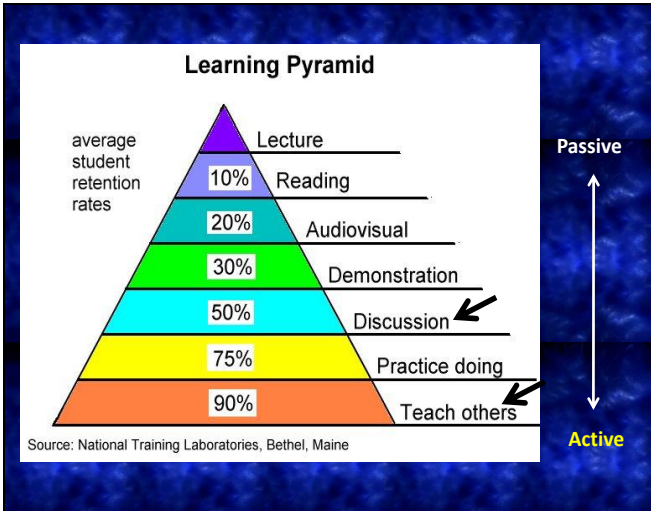
Common Barriers to Online Course Success

- Lack of motivation
- Learning preference mismatch
- Lack of time

Source: US DOE, NCES.

- Additional Barriers:
 - Coursework
 - Course design
 - Instructor expertise (online delivery)
 - Perceived level of support
 - Fell behind
 - Lack of social interaction

Source: US DOE, NCES.



- ### The Online Learning Environment
- E-classroom environment:
 - "Safe"
 - Supportive (learning community)
 - Inclusive
 - Equitable
 - Social component (connected)

- Promotes **active learning** and engagement.
 - Collaborative
 - Vibrant discussion
 - Require interaction
 - **Easy to navigate** *
-

The 3-R's of Effective Online Learning

Ukpokodu (2008)

1. **R**elationship
2. **R**igor
3. **R**elevance

Role of the Instructor

Traditional, Teacher-Centered

- "Sage on stage"
- Teacher is the source of knowledge
 - ✓ "Cover the material"
- **Passive**

Student-Centered

- "Guide on the side"
- Work collaboratively to construct knowledge
- Knowledge is **actively** acquired
- Teacher is "**facilitator**"

Instructor's "Online Persona" (Social Presence)

- Goal (3 A's) must be *deliberate*:
 - ✓ **A**vailable
 - ✓ **A**pproachable
 - ✓ **A**ctively Interested in student learning

7 Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

(Chickering & Erhmann, 1996)

1. Encourage contact
2. Develop **reciprocity and cooperation** among students
3. Encourage **active** learning
4. Prompt feedback
5. Time on task
6. Communicate **high expectations**
7. Respect **diverse** talents and ways of learning

Clarifying Expectations & Requirements

- *Redundancy**
- **Syllabus:**
 - Schedule
 - Tips
 - Learning objectives
 - Instructor contact information
 - Technical support

Faculty Expectations (see handout)

Sample Statement:

- *"It is important that you and your instructor share a common understanding of the expectations for this course.*
- *Read the faculty expectations message below and **respond** acknowledging your understanding of the expectations.*
 - *After you have completed this posting proceed to Unit 1 to begin your course."*

Instructor Feedback

- ✓ Prompt
- ✓ Frequent
- ✓ Clear, concise
- ✓ *"Announcements"* feature
- ✓ Help students understand their marks
- ✓ Advice on improvement
- ✓ Encourages / motivates

Beginning a new course:

- *Welcome message* in announcements
- *Preliminary Activities: "Start Here"*
- Icebreaker activity *

* Consider an *"Introduction Exercise"*

- Short bio
- Work and educational experience
- Ultimate career goals, etc.....
- *Prior online courses**

Focusing (or refocusing) Discussions

- Be as **specific** as possible in the initial topic.
 - ☑ Include: guidelines, reference readings, length, number of responses, etc.
 - ☑ Acknowledge students' contribution. (Need to feel "heard").
 - ☑ **Attach the discussion rubric**

- **Redirect divergent dialogue**
Cite / paraphrase other learners' remarks
- **Gently** question assumptions
- Ask **probing questions**
- Acknowledge, then ask for **elaboration**

- **Ambiguous / unclear postings:**
 - ✓ Elaboration
 - ✓ Examples
 - ✓ Connect posting to the readings

Rubrics

- **Grading more objective**
 1. Decide on important characteristics
 2. Develop descriptor categories
 3. Describe criteria for each

Rubric Creation Example:

Criteria:	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations
Timeliness			
Initiative			
Grammar / Spelling			
Insight			
Level of Effort			

Multiple samples included in the course handout (from multiple, internet sources)

- Consider creating *“Unit Checklists”*

Unit #3: Ethical Principles

Reading	Discussion	Assignment
Chapter 9, p. 189-216	u03d1 • Initial posting: by Wednesday, midnight (CST) • Follow-up responses by Sunday, midnight (CST)	U03a1: • Due by Saturday at midnight (CST)
Article: “Ethical Dimensions in Radiography”	u03d2 • Initial posting: by Wednesday, midnight (CST) • Follow-up responses by Sunday, midnight (CST)	

A few more ideas . . .

- Logging in at **different days / times** to maximize interactions
- **Management Style:**
 - Too much vs. Too Little
 - Cues from students

Consider a “wrap it up” posting

- *What was the most significant thing you learned in this course?*
- *How can this be applied to clinical practice?*

Closing Thoughts

tsandrid@nmh.org
