

Faculty Spotlight



Discussion Generated Action Journals

Arlyn Roffman, Professor
School of Education

Introduction

Arlyn Roffman was a "newbie" to online teaching and learning when she was asked to redesign her course for the Out of School Time Program. The course was reduced in length, so she needed to think differently about how to teach. She tried to think of ways she could incorporate some of the things she has students do in class into the new online course. The Action Journal came to mind as a way for students to collect ideas that they read on the discussion board, and organize them so that they could be used in the students' classrooms.

Timeline

Arlyn had used Action Journals in a face-to-face course in the past, but began using the idea online in the Summer of 2008.

- In the Fall of 2007, Arlyn enrolled in the Online Course Development Seminar through eLearning and Instructional Support.
- In the Spring of 2008, Arlyn developed her first fully online course.
- In the Summer of 2008, Arlyn taught her first fully online course.

Equipment

- myLesley Discussion Board
- MS Word or comparable word processing program

Process

In the online course, students are required to respond to stimulating questions posed by Arlyn each week. The students must draw from their

readings and assignments when composing these posts, and are responsible for responding to the posts of their classmates. While reading these posts, students often copy and paste useful ideas or "actions" into an open Word document to analyze later. Students must add at least one "action item" per module.

The students are not required to do this neatly or in an organized fashion; they can keep their notes in a bulleted list that is copied directly from the discussion board. They do not worry about grammar or spelling. Students are required to cite the person from whom they are taking the idea. There are no parameters set up around what is added to the journal, as long as the ideas can be applied to the classroom and are "future oriented." The students turn this journal in at the end of the semester.

Outcome

Students found the journal to be a wonderful resource for ideas to use in their own classrooms and programs. It encouraged the students to engage in their discussions on a deeper level, based on knowledge and experience, with a focus on real, useable ideas.

Next Steps...

A few weeks into the semester, Arlyn realized that some students were having difficulty understanding the assignment. She created a handout outlining how the assignment works, naming and clarifying what the students are to do. The handout really helped to clarify what was expected of the students. The next time she teaches, Arlyn will provide this handout up front to guide the students.

You Can Create an Action Journal Too!

- Get the step-by-step guide to set up your own discussion board at www.lesley.edu/elis
- Contact elis@lesley.edu for a special one-on-one training session

- Founding Director of the Threshold Program, a non-degree transition program for young adults with learning disabilities

- Author of *Guiding Teens with Learning Disabilities: Navigating the Transition from High School to Adulthood*

- Author of *Meeting the Challenge of Learning Disabilities in Adulthood*

- Author of *A Classroom Teacher's Guide to Mainstreaming*

- Licensed psychologist who maintains a private practice focusing on the adjustment of youth and adults with learning disabilities

Module 3 Cognitive Development

- I would like to do an activity with my students where they learn about Gardner's Multiple Intelligences so that they know in what ways they're "smart".
- Have students recognize their best and worst learning environments
- Hold a discussion asking the following questions: What is the best thinking based on noise, space, food time, company or solitude? What is your ideal learning situation?
- NANCY: "I remember learning about the color wheel in art class. My teacher would teach us the basic concept and give us the freedom to express it in whatever way we wanted to. I am not an artsy person and every time I tried to blend the colors together, it never quite worked out. Nevertheless, I loved the freedom of being able to express what she taught us in my own way."

eLearning
and
Instructional
Support