Meaningful Activities to Generate Interesting Classrooms®

Course Description

Meaningful Activities to Generate Interesting Classrooms® is a PLS 3rd Learning course that instructs experienced and beginner educators in designing compelling learning activities that engage students more meaningfully in their own learning by helping them develop practical life skills, as well as critical thinking skills. Throughout the course, participants will learn to apply five sets of specific criteria (the SCORE model) that are characteristic of highly effective, brain-compatible activities. Participants will use these criteria continuously to analyze the activities in which they participate, as well as those they plan, ensuring that each includes relevant life skills, meets curriculum requirements, addresses organizational issues, plans ahead for desired results, and assesses effectiveness. With a focus on unlocking the creative potential of both teachers and their students, participants will learn how to infuse lessons from the entire learning process—introductory, informational, practice, review, and culminating—with the kind of highly active learning that transforms both student and subject matter, engaging each with the other in a way that yields both joy in learning and depth of understanding.

Digital vs. Printed Course Materials

Please note:

- There is a required $10 material fee that provides access to digital course materials.* (The digital materials are identical to the printed materials.)
- You have the option to purchase a printed manual (and other printed corresponding materials) for an additional $30.

*After you register and your class is confirmed, you will receive a confirmation letter outlining how to access digital materials. If you choose digital materials (no printed materials), there may be a small file of pages you will need to print and bring to class. You will also need to access these digital materials during the course, so be prepared to bring your own device (B.Y.O.D.) to each class. If you pre-ordered a printed manual, it will be provided to you on the first day of class.
Course Alignments
This PLS 3rd Learning course is aligned to Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*:
- Domain 1 – 1A, 1B, 1C, 1E, and 1F
- Domain 2 – 2A, 2B, and 2C
- Domain 3 – 3A, 3C, and 3D
- Domain 4 – 4A, 4E, and 4F

Course Outcomes
Upon completion of this class, the learner will be able to:
1. Discuss and apply current, validated research underlying the theory, principles, and practices of meaningful activities used to create interesting classrooms.
2. Explain the elements of the SCORE model (skills, curriculum, organization, results, evaluation) and the relevance of each element in creating meaningful classroom activities.
3. Demonstrate how and why creativity is an asset for educators faced with restrictive curricula, limited resources, and diverse student needs.
4. Identify and discuss the Skills of Life addressed in this course and how they help students become successful lifelong learners.
5. Apply the categories of the Questions for Life® model on a daily basis to help students develop critical-thinking skills that deepen learning.
6. Implement the various types of active-learning strategies (creativity building, simulations, games and races, brainteasers and logic problems, movement activities, skill-building activities, problem-solving, alternative assessments).
7. Identify and explain specific types of lessons in the instructional process (introductory, informational, practice, review, culminating).
8. Evaluate the appropriateness, effectiveness, and impact of activities in each of the lesson types (introductory, informational, practice, review, culminating).
9. Plan, implement, evaluate, and demonstrate an activity-oriented lesson using the SCORE criteria.
10. Adapt a game or race for increased effectiveness in a specific type of lesson by using the SCORE criteria to plan and evaluate it.
11. Plan, create, demonstrate, and evaluate a new activity for use in the classroom using the SCORE criteria.
12. Reflect on and continuously evaluate personal practice, and adjust accordingly.
13. Work collaboratively to share knowledge, skills, and experiences, refine understanding of content, give and receive feedback, and improve expertise.
14. Generalize this course content to reflect how diverse populations within classrooms have their needs met by the application of the skills, strategies, and knowledge gained in this course.
Institutional Outcomes
(To be listed here)

Required Text
Selected research articles, research summaries, and topical articles drawn from educational literature and the course manual.

Topical Outline

Creative Planning
Creating the right conditions, possibility thinking (ideas, options, possibilities, risks, opportunities, predictions, hypotheses, causes and effects), the SCORE model (Skills of Life—the continuum of life skills addressed in this course and why they are important in today’s classroom, the Questions for Life model, QFL cue words, creative problem-solving and critical thinking with QFL; curriculum—working “magic” within the confines of the existing curriculum; organization—maximizing successful activity outcomes through careful organization; results—planning for desired results using a ten-question filter; evaluation—evaluating learning effectiveness through assessment), creating worthwhile challenges, engaging student interest, resources for developing meaningful activities, characteristics of loose and tight rubrics, a rubric for evaluating creative products, an assessment rubric for the course portfolio, topics from the course research (hands-on, field-based activities, authentic learning, invented games, teaching for understanding, creativity, classroom games)

Unlocking Teacher and Student Creativity
Defining creativity, characteristics of creative learners, recognizing creativity, developing student creativity, “double learning” (engaging students in creating and running activities), using the Skills of Life and Questions for Life as frameworks for understanding how teachers can stimulate learning using varied creative processes (searching for alternatives, making comparisons, challenging assumptions, brainstorming, innovating, taking risks, being open to new ideas, stimulating the whole brain, engaging in creative problem-solving, and using metaphors and similes to make connections)
### Planning the Day to Include Activities

When to use activities, introductory activities (beginning a unit, beginning a class, setting targets to foster mind expansion, problem-based learning, discovery), informational activities (curriculum connections, simulations, cooperative learning), practice activities (setting up problem-solving situations, educational games, races; the power of follow-up discussion; understanding game strategy; metacognition), review activities (providing a second chance, analysis, synthesis), culminating activities (projects, reports, live events), planning activities to fit the class period.

### Movement and Hands-On Activities

Motivating students through activity-based hands-on learning, using easy-to-find materials, movement activities, six hands-on activities, getting students involved.

### Course Assessments and Links to Institutional Outcomes and Course Outcomes

Throughout the course, the learner will be assessed and evaluated on the completion of the following assessments. There are seven assessments in this course, for a total of 100 points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Correlations With Institutional Outcomes</th>
<th>Correlations With Course Outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reflection Journal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My “Top Ten” Lesson</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Games and Races</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Web Search</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>1, 12, 13, 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Create Two New Activities</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total 100**

Criteria specific to each assessment will be explained in conjunction with the instructional activities.
Instructional Materials
Instructors and learners will use instructor-generated materials, learner-generated materials, print resources, and Web-based resources to facilitate learning.

Instructional Methodology
The instructional methodology of this course focuses on developing, enhancing, and improving the instructional expertise and pedagogical knowledge base of practicing educators. Strategies include instructor presentation of new content through short lecturebursts, active construction of knowledge during hands-on practice and problem solving, collaborative group work, personal reflection, in-class presentations and demonstrations, ad hoc and structured small-group or whole class discussion, analysis of assigned reading, and application of course content and skills to each participant’s individual grade level, subject area, and classroom.

Evaluation
The evaluation of learner work will be based on the defined criteria for learner assessments, which will be processed with learners prior to their instructional activities and engagement with the student learning targets (outcomes). Grading is based solely on the evaluation of student learning targets and defined criteria for learner assessments.

Formative assessment of learning outcomes is conducted throughout the course, using a variety of means that include the following: completion of assessments; constructive contributions to class discussions (whole-class as well as small-group); sharing of valuable, pertinent, and/or applicable ideas and experiences; involvement in the inductive process; interactive journal entries with written instructor feedback; critical or reflective responses to assigned readings; oral discussions in a whole-class or small-group setting; active participation and general attentiveness to the instructor and others. It is expected that each student will contribute to the academic quality of the course.

Summative assessment includes the completion of a culminating assignment that requires the participant to synthesize class content, apply it to his or her specific teaching situation, and complete a reflective action plan for implementing the major components of content and skill acquired during the course.

Grading Policy
(To be listed here)

Absence and Tardy Policy
(To be listed)

PLS 3rd Learning’s Academic Integrity Policy
PLS 3rd Learning expects absolute academic honesty and integrity from every course participant. The specific Academic Integrity and Honor Code Policies of our partner colleges and universities are embraced and enforced by PLS 3rd Learning instructors. The following are considered to be serious violations:

- Plagiarism: the use of another’s ideas, data, or words without proper acknowledgement.
- Fabrication: the use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.
• Collusion: improper collaboration with another in preparing assignments or projects.
• Cheating: an act of deception by which a student misrepresents that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered.
• Academic Misconduct: tampering with grades, or taking part in obtaining or distributing any part of student work that is not his or her own.

Violation or suspected violation will be investigated and pursued according to specific college/university procedures.

**Identity Authentication**
The college/university, PLS 3rd Learning, and students share a joint responsibility to ensure that each student’s contribution in an online course activity comes from that student alone. For the student, this responsibility has two parts:

1. Students are responsible for positively ensuring that every contribution to an online course created with the students’ computer account is made by the student alone. Contributions covered under this policy include: written assignments; quiz and exam submissions; discussion forum postings; live participation in text-based chat sessions, phone conferences, and videoconferences. If a student allows another person to write or make any kind of submission to an online activity in the student’s name, then this constitutes cheating and will be treated as a violation of academic honesty.
2. Students are responsible for ensuring the integrity of their computer account security by following the actions required of them by the PLS 3rd Learning Acceptable Use Policy. These actions include keeping passcodes private, updating passcodes when required by PLS 3rd Learning, and reporting breaches of the security policy to the IT Helpdesk.

**Participant Professionalism Policy**
As a courtesy to other participants and to your instructor, please refrain from text messaging, checking e-mail, or answering your cell phone during class time. Breaks are provided throughout the course so you can attend to personal matters. Using your personal electronic devices during class time is distracting and disrupts instruction and participant communication and collaboration. If you have an emergency or justifiable reason to leave your cell phone turned on during class time, please make arrangements with the instructor prior to the beginning of class.
Alignments to Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*

Each PLS 3rd Learning course is aligned to the components in Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*. The alignments for this course are listed below.

**DOMAIN 1: PLANNING AND PREPARATION**
1A. Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy
1B. Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
1C. Setting Instructional Outcomes
1E. Designing Coherent Instruction
1F. Designing Student Assessments

**DOMAIN 2: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**
2A. Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
2B. Establishing a Culture for Learning
2C. Managing Classroom Procedures

**DOMAIN 3: INSTRUCTION**
3A. Communicating with Students
3C. Engaging Students in Learning
3D. Using Assessment in Instruction

**DOMAIN 4: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**
4A. Reflecting on Teaching
4E. Growing and Developing Professionally
4F. Showing Professionalism
Course Outcome Correlations With INTASC Standards for Teachers

Standard 1: Learner Development
The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

Standard 2: Learning Differences
The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

Standard 3: Learning Environments
The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation.

Standard 4: Content Knowledge
The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

Standard 5: Application of Content
The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

Standard 6: Assessment
The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making.
Standard 7: Planning for Instruction

The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

Standard 8: Instructional Strategies

The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Standard 9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

Standard 10: Leadership and Collaboration

The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and the Support for Consortium (InTASC) standards were developed by the Council of the Chief State School Officers and member states. Copies may be downloaded from the Council’s website at http://www.ccsso.org/intasc.


Course Outcome Correlations With National Board of Professional Teaching (NBPTS) Five Core Propositions

**Proposition 1: Teachers are Committed to Students and Their Learning.**

- NBCTs are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students. They believe all students can learn.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14

- They treat students equitably. They recognize the individual differences that distinguish their students from one another and they take account for these differences in their practice.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14

- NBCTs understand how students develop and learn.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 7

- They respect the cultural and family differences students bring to their classroom.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 14

- They are concerned with their students’ self-concept, their motivation and the effects of learning on peer relationships.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14

- NBCTs are also concerned with the development of character and civic responsibility.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4

**Proposition 2: Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Students.**

- NBCTs have mastery over the subject(s) they teach. They have a deep understanding of the history, structure and real-world applications of the subject.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11

- They have skill and experience in teaching it, and they are very familiar with the skills gaps and preconceptions students may bring to the subject.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 14

- They are able to use diverse instructional strategies to teach for understanding.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

**Proposition 3: Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning.**

- NBCTs deliver effective instruction. They move fluently through a range of instructional techniques, keeping students motivated, engaged and focused.  
  - Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
They know how to engage students to ensure a disciplined learning environment, and how to organize instruction to meet instructional goals.

NBCTs know how to assess the progress of individual students as well as the class as a whole.

They use multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding, and they can clearly explain student performance to parents.

**Proposition 4: Teachers Think Systematically about Their Practice and Learn from Experience.**

NBCTs model what it means to be an educated person – they read, they question, they create and they are willing to try new things.

They are familiar with learning theories and instructional strategies and stay abreast of current issues in American education.

They critically examine their practice on a regular basis to deepen knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills, and incorporate new findings into their practice.

**Proposition 5: Teachers are Members of Learning Communities.**

NBCTs collaborate with others to improve student learning.

They are leaders and actively know how to seek and build partnerships with community groups and businesses.

They work with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development.

They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of resources in order to meet state and local education objectives.

They know how to work collaboratively with parents to engage them productively in the work of the school.


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Bibliography


