

Transparency in Your Course and Assignments: Making the "Hidden Curriculum" Visible

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In this session, presenters shared their experiences with incorporating greater transparency into their program curriculum, courses and assignments. All three of the presentations centered around the question of how making the 'hidden curriculum' more visible can make higher education courses more inclusive and equitable for students.

The session began with an open-ended survey question for participants: "What do you associate with the term 'transparency' when it comes to your teaching? Responses included a range of strategies, from using grading rubrics to discussing the 'why' of an assignment.

The first presenter shared their experiences incorporating more transparency into curriculum design for their academic unit's degree program. In this particular program, many of the students are considered non-traditional learners. They may also be first generation university students, or are returning to college after years of work experience. One of the objectives of redesigning curriculum was to aid in better student retention. The presenter showed how a large, high-impact assignment that is required for graduation in this program was broken down into smaller steps. Ultimately, changes made to assignment design and explicit conversations about genre and discipline resulted in better outcomes for learners, and better retention in the program.

The second presentation focused on incorporating more transparency and enhance student engagement in a hybrid, writing-intensive course. The presenter shared syllabi, handouts, Blackboard modules, and rubrics used in the course that made assignment deadlines and expectations clearer for students. The presenter also discussed strategies for helping students engage more successfully with feedback on their work.

The third presentation shared the redesign of an assignment from a writing intensive course in Spanish. In this course, students not only need to learn how to write successfully in different genres, but also apply linguistic knowledge of the target language. The students in this course represent a diverse range of experiences with Spanish- from Heritage learners to students who have learned the language primarily in an academic setting. The presenter shared the redesign of a specific assignment, a descriptive essay, in order to make the instructions and expectations more transparent. One key tactic used was providing modelling in the target language.

After the three presentations, participants were invited to attend breakout sessions led by each one of the three presenters. Each breakout group was asked to redesign one assignment (volunteered by one of the participants). Participants shared summaries of their conversations in a collaborative document. The session ended with a general Q and A for the presenters.

Additional Resources:

- "Transparency in Learning and Teaching Project":
tilthighered.com/tiltexamplesandresources
- Thurston, Travis N. et al. *Resilient Pedagogy (ebook)*.
www.usu.edu/empowerteaching/publications/books/resilientpedagogy/