

## REFLECTION PAPER

### LEARNING TEAMS

During the past year 18 months I have taken a number of online classes and many of them required collaboration with other students. This collaboration usually meant being in a team situation with 3-5 other student members. From the very beginning I would always take the lead and try to get the team working on our project. Most of time the other team members appreciated one of us getting the ball rolling. I am not sure if I do this out of leadership or my desire to complete assignments ahead of time, or perhaps, a little of both. This is especially true of online courses, since it takes such discipline to finish the assignments on time, getting ahead in class can be a crucial element to success in this type of learning environment.

I was in Group 5 for this course with Douglas, Maggie, and Lora. As usual, I emailed my teammates as soon as the teams were established. They all replied and I hoped for a very fruitful project. Again, as usual, I contacted the other members two weeks prior to our team project due date with suggestions and a proposed schedule. I made it very clear that I was open to anything in regard to handling the project. I did point out that I was planning a trip and would like to have the project done early, if at all possible. I am sorry to admit that Doug was very slow in getting back to me(us). Although I did see his postings in the “main discussion board” he did not reply until about a week later when I sent the team an email asking if anyone knows about Doug and if he is still on our team. Admittedly, he did contribute to the project paper, but his contribution, in my opinion, fell short. Maggie was working on compiling the final paper and asked for our final approval. Doug sent his final comments to Maggie on the 18<sup>th</sup>, two days past the due date with a note that “he does not have a computer at home and it is not always easy to get to one.” Hopefully Maggie submitted the paper on time.

Although I do think it was clear that Doug was taking the online learning environment to the extreme regarding the issue of “asynchronous learning/teaching.” Most, if not all, online programs promote their programs with the study “anywhere” and “any time” statements. This simply is not true, particularly when students are required to collaborate. Anywhere might be appropriate, but not any time. When teams are required to work together, the closer the due date comes, the time factor becomes increasingly important. I believe many students enroll in online courses because they believe their work can be done “any time.” I also think this it might be the reason many students do not participate in chat room discussions. Enough said. Please do not get me wrong, I strongly believe in and support the new online learning environment whether asynchronous or synchronous 100%, I guess these are just a couple of my pet peeves☺

### EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY COMPETENCIES

Our program competencies closely follow those found in project management. Project management has evolved into a distinct discipline over the past 30 years. Educational Technology is similar. It has historically followed the development of technology where technology was developed then put into the classroom. But today we see a different scenario. Today, education is on the pull side of technology wherein educational technologists (and teachers) can create and develop their own technology and tell the engineers and scientists what

should and should not be in the classroom. Educational technology is experiencing a revolution, a very exciting revolution.

Educational Technology

**Planning/Design → Developing/Building → Implementation/Management/Evaluation**

Project Management

**Conception/Selection → Planning/Scheduling/monitoring/Controlling → Evaluation/termination**

It is the goal of our graduate program to gain the expertise necessary to integrate technology into the educational setting. This integration can be anything from simple software at the elementary level to a complex grant proposal submitted to a school board. Although we may seldom produce a product entirely from start to finish, we have the technological competence to do so and fully understand how the above-mentioned competencies interact among each other and the outside world.

#### WHAT I HAVE LEARNED AND WANT TO LEARN and ABOUT THE CLASS

I completed Enhancing Learning with Technology, Introduction to Web Development, and Diffusion of Innovations last semester, therefore parts of the course content seemed a bit redundant, including the text. Although, I must admit, for one who has not yet entered the daily profession of teaching it was excellent in that it reinforced many things that were a bit fuzzy for me last semester. One of those fuzzy things was the portfolio that each graduate student must present to the faculty committee for approval. I was so involved in my other studies I put that project on the back burner and actually forgot about it until I read the course syllabus. Wow! What an eye opener!

The importance of this course, especially the importance of taking this course “early in your program” cannot be overemphasized. I distinctly remember asking you if it might be okay to take other courses before the “Introduction” class and that is exactly what you said., “Barry, make sure you take it early in your program.” I am not sure whether it is my lack of a teaching background or whether I got too ahead of myself, course-sequence wise, but I would definitely encourage everyone thinking about a degree to take this course first. The course very succinctly puts the program requirements into perspective. Further, it emphasizes the importance of each such as the portfolio and the M-1 (S-1) forms that make the student think about what courses s/he plans to take to meet the competencies. It is also a good place to both clear and discover misunderstandings about the program requirements, policies, procedures, etc. This was evident from our early discussion board postings where some student may have been misled (not intentionally), some may have just misunderstood, and of course others just did not read or review the program materials very well! In brief, what this course did for me was to put the entire graduate program into a framework that was easy to follow and understand. All in all it was an excellent class with an excellent instructor! Most of all I especially appreciated your timely replies to my e-communications. The later is something that is lacking, more often than not, in many online instructors. As a student of numerous online classes, I can attest to that fact.  
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