The article College Readiness: Learning Collaboratively written by Ben Johnson describes the multi-disciplinary curriculum Johnson managed at the University of Texas in San Antonio. In the article, from day one of the program through to the results stage, the student’s ability to collaborate is highly transformed. Ben Johnson served as an administrator in large and small schools and at a charter school. He was the assistant superintendent of the Natalia Independent School District where he helped bring about major improvements in student learning. Two quotes from his article along with the link to the full article are enclosed:

“Preparing Students” - Wisely, the teachers and I anticipated the student lack of preparation for collaboration and decided to spend some time preparing students to function with other students collaboratively, in the inquiry format. The students were taught how to share ideas, brainstorm, feed off other ideas, explore in the box, out of the box, and under the box. In the first week of the program, we discovered that in their home schools not enough effort was placed on actually training students to think and behave collaboratively instead of just cooperatively.

“The Results” - If you had seen this group of students the first week, you would have now thought they were a different group entirely. In the final project they immediately attacked the problem, explored the limits of the problem, identified the parameters of success, and went to work finding possible solutions. In each of their groups respectively they researched what kinds of experiments can test plastics and then designed ways to effectively test tensile strength, pliability, chemical resistance, and shear forces. Their ability to collaborate, or in other words, as a group create something unique and wonderful, was amazing.

http://www.edutopia.org/blog/college-readiness-collaborative-learning-ben-johnson

Suggested resources


Use Game-Based Learning to Teach Civics

Game-Based Learning (GBL) is another great pedagogical model for engaging students, and the term is more expansive and complex than you might think. It can range from pencil and paper games to massive online games like *World of Warcraft* to everything in between. Overall, it's about balancing gameplay with the learning of important content. The focus is on retaining the information learned, and applying it. This application can take place within the game itself or outside of it.

Andrew Miller, a National Faculty member for the Buck Institute for Education, an organization that specializes in project-based curriculum, and collaborator with Abeo School Change, which is committed to making powerful learning a reality for every student, regularly posts his blogs on Edutopia. A few of his GBL comments are below along with the link to the full blog regarding GBL.

With game based learning Millers says,

“you might think …there are no defined learning outcomes.

On the contrary, every game has a specific objective designed for the gameplay. Whether it's collecting a certain item in a quest, defeating an enemy, or learning an important piece of information, games demand learning in order to succeed. In this case, the civics content needs to be at the forefront. The Center for Civics Education has specific standards that all teachers can use across all grade levels. Some of the questions to explore include, "What is government and what should it do?" and "What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?" Although specific to the U.S., they can be modified to meet civics education in all countries. Once you have the objective in mind, you can go in many directions.” (Miller)

Three levels exist for gameplay, so do not shy away from the GBL concept. In Miller's blog, he explains the different levels as well as the technological knowledge required for each level.

http://www.edutopia.org/blog/game-based-learning-civics-andrew-miller

Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG) is an education honor society which houses over 100,000 members in seventeen countries. In 1979, on DKG’s 50th birthday, the Golden Gift Fund was established.

Support provider, Daphne Cagle, of Alpha Eta Chapter will have the opportunity this summer to attend the Golden Gift Leadership Management Seminar in Austin at McCombs Business School on the campus of the University of Texas.

The opportunity to participate arrives every other year and out of all the applicants...only 31 are chosen.

Well done Daphne! The seminar will be held this July 2-14.
Differentiating Classroom Instruction Plays

Pivotal Role in Common Core

Differentiating classroom instruction plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the Common Core Standards. The Common Core Standards call for educators to prepare all students to further their education whether that is in college or in a career. Because all students learn differently, to begin, educators evaluate how their students learn and how they will demonstrate that learning.

The differentiated classroom centers on student learning with:

- Continuous teacher facilitation
- Monitoring
- Feedback
- Re-teaching
- Redirecting

Students will become engaged when strategies are used that provide choice, adjustability and flexibility. As students have learning choices—even small ones—they are exhilarated with the possibilities.

With the Common Core, educators can more clearly focus on what their students need to know and how he or she, as an individual teacher, can design the best lessons for the students he or she teaches.

Information from: Strategy of the Week - School Improvement Network — for more information contact: info@communication.schoolimprovement.com; Subject: Strategy of the Week: Differentiating Classroom Instruction Plays Pivotal Role with Common Core or visit the website: http://www.schoolimprovement.com/
Vision Statement
SCUSD’s BTSA Induction program will guide and support participating teachers by providing flexible individualized support, implementing a structured curriculum and offering guidance through induction specific standards; yet will remain flexible enough to address unique issues faced by beginning teachers.