

Task Engagement in Higher Education



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What Is a Task?

A Task...

- Supports a clear goal
- Provides a process for meeting goals
- Provides a specific beginning and end

Activity

Any classroom event or action

What is Engagement?

Unengaged

Optimally engaged



Engagement is the level of involvement in a task, ranging from not involved at all to complete absorption.

This involvement can be behavioral, cognitive, and/or emotional.

Why Focus On Task Engagement?

1. Task engagement can decrease the effect of external variables on student outcomes.



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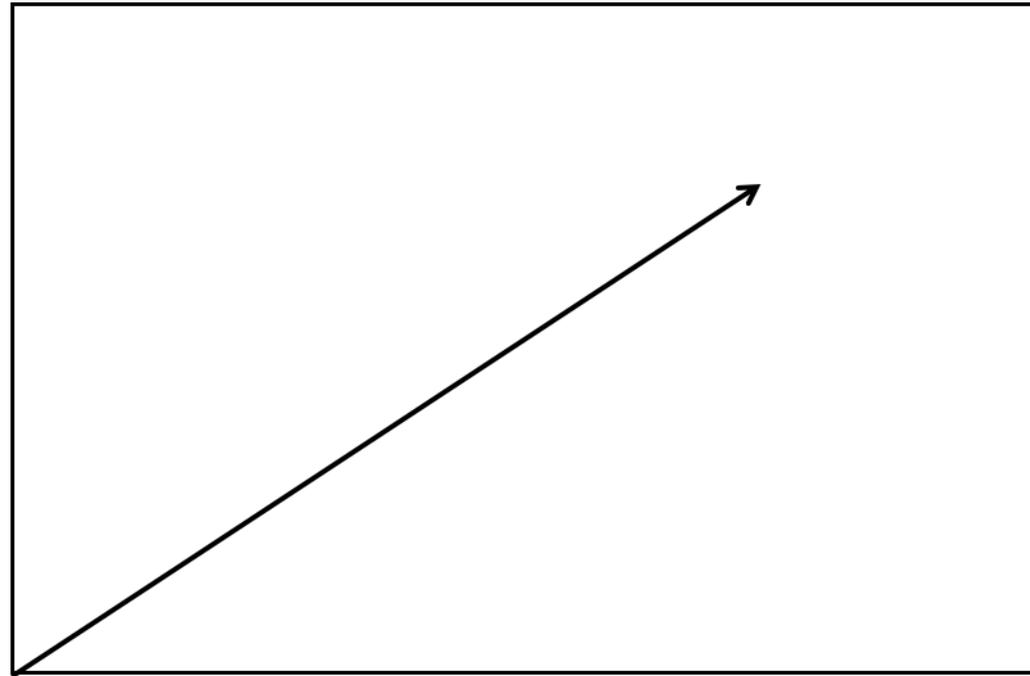
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(Christenson & Reschly, 2013; Fraser, 1986)

Why Focus On Task Engagement? (cont.)

2. Task engagement can lead to greater learner achievement.

Task
Engagement



Achievement

(Christenson & Reschly, 2013; Csikszentmihályi, 2014)

The Six Characteristics of Engaging Tasks

- Based on the literature
- Change according to student, task, and context
- Supported by technology



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Six Characteristics of Engaging Tasks

1. The task is **interesting**.
(excites curiosity, is appealing)
2. The task is **authentic** to learners.
(has real life value)
3. There are opportunities for **social interaction**.
(communication with other people)



Six Characteristics of Engaging Tasks (cont.)

4. There is a **challenge/skills balance**.
(the task is neither too difficult nor too easy)
5. **Autonomy and structure** are balanced.
(learners have as much freedom as they need; they can make choices)
6. **Support and feedback** are immediate and useful.
(include resources, peer and expert feedback)

Engaging Task Example: Green Screen Videos

Green screen technology allows teachers to use, or students to present, in fictional environments. Learners can use their tablets, phones, or a digital video camera to film.

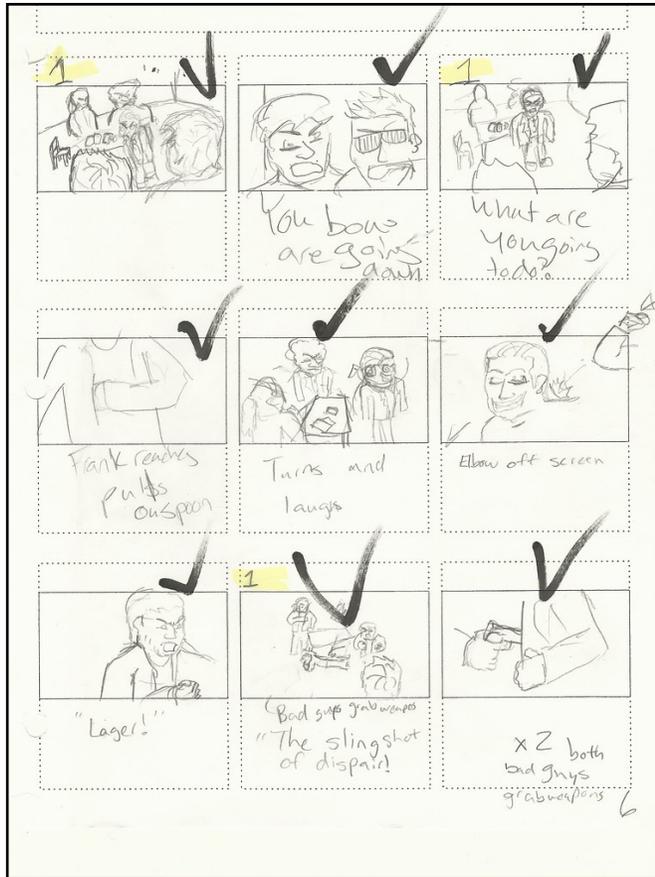
Three steps to Video Production:

Plan

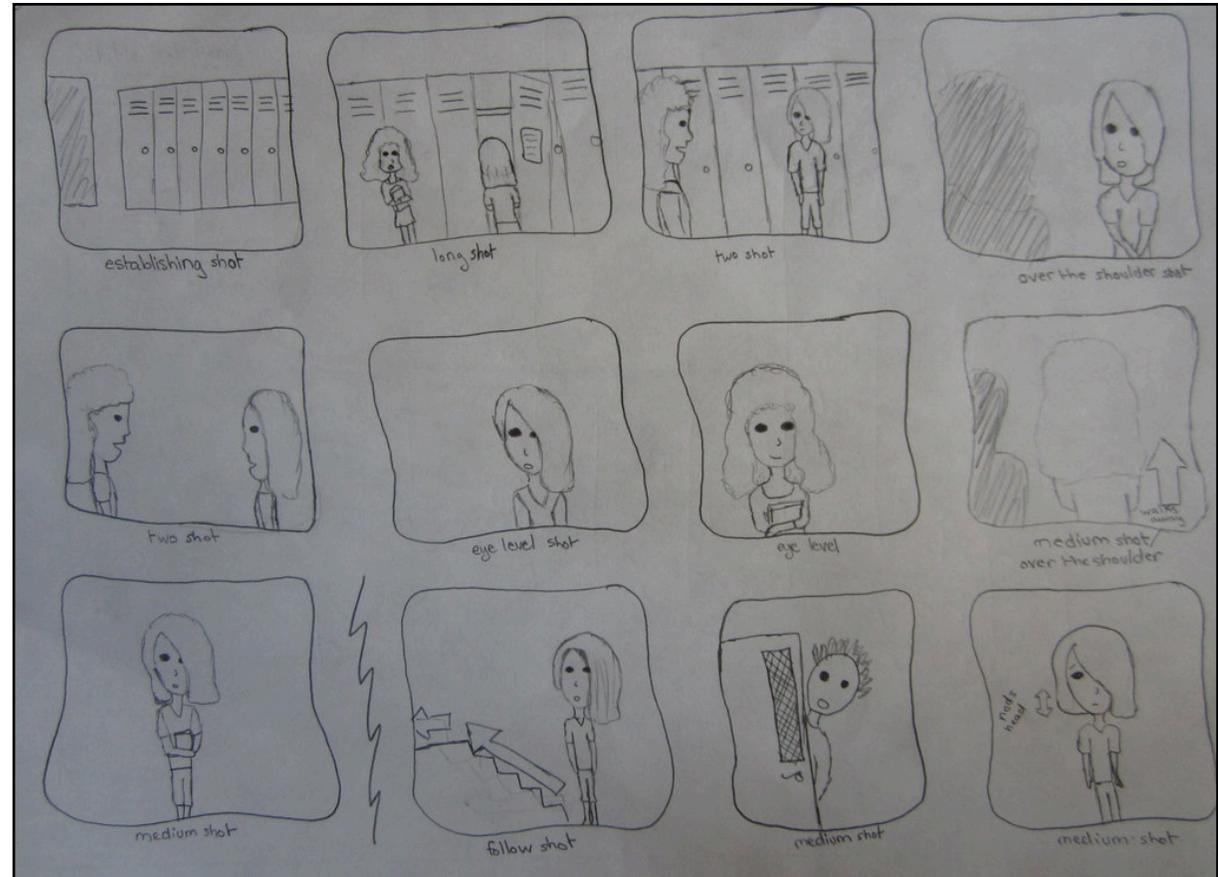
Create

Publish

Planning with Storyboards



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"Student Storyboard" by [mrmayo](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#)

Video Production: Edit in OpenShot

Students can use a green screen to add virtual backgrounds to the stories they are telling. They can then edit the video using OpenShot or some other free video edit software. Please visit [the OpenShot Quick Tutorial](#) for more details on this user-friendly editing software.



Publish

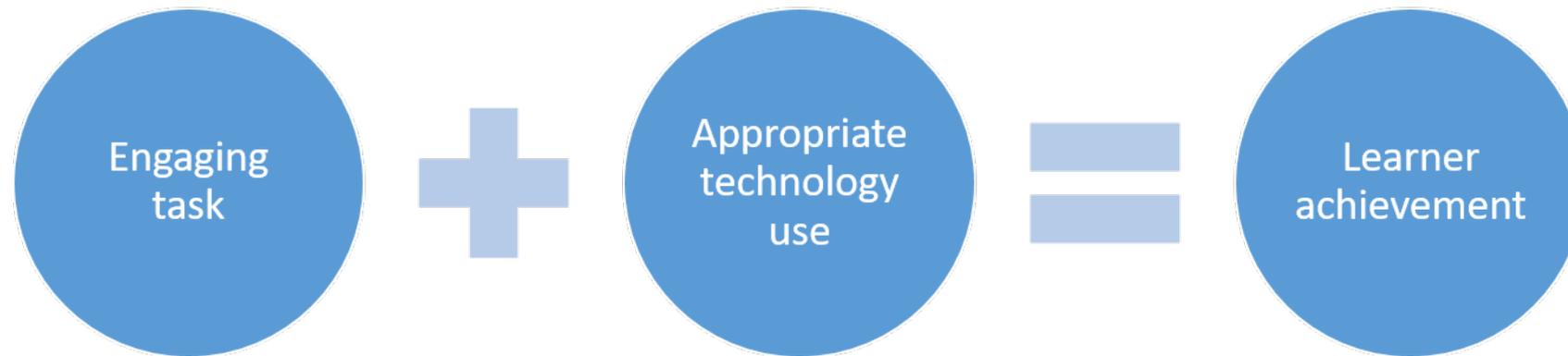
To view student projects that employed OpenShot Video Editor, please visit the following links:

- [Fall 2018 Tech Ed](#)
- [A Trip Around the Globe](#)



Big Picture

Characteristics of engaging tasks, integrated throughout the task and supported by appropriate technology use, can lead to learner achievement.



List of References

- Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of research on student engagement*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Csikszentmihályi, M. (2014). *Flow and the foundations of positive psychology*:
 - *The collected works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Fraser, B. (1986). *Classroom environment*. London: Croom Helm.

Course Design for Student Success

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To Do List

- What is UDL?
- Why is UDL important?
- Course Design
- UDL Principles
 - Representation
 - Engagement
 - Action and Expression
- Examples



UDL: At a Glance

- “Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps give all students an equal opportunity to succeed.
- This approach offers flexibility in the ways students access material, engage with it and show what they know.
- Developing lesson plans this way helps all [students] . . .”



(Morin, n.d.)

Why is UDL important?

The students in our classes . . .

- Have diverse social identities
 - Race/ethnicities, genders, religions, abilities, sexual orientations, ages, abilities, socioeconomic standing
- Prefer choice
 - Curriculum, content, instructional methods, study materials, class schedule
- Are digital natives
 - Social, tech-savvy
- Have constant need to be connected
 - Disruptive, arriving late and leaving early, not attending class at all



(Ouellett, 2004, p. 137; Dean, Lee-Post, & Hapke, 2017, p. 6.)

Course Design Blueprint

1. Identifying essential course components
2. Examine the learning environment
3. Identifying challenges to student success
4. Selecting and implementing diverse instructional methods





Identifying Essential Course Components

i.e., skills, knowledge, attitudes students must demonstrate

Key areas:

- Core content, principles, concepts, learning goals
- Academic skills
- Values or attitudes
- Level of proficiency students must demonstrate to complete the course

(Ouellett, 2004, p. 138)

Identify the Learning Goal

Re-write course outcomes/objectives using phrases that fit within the UDL framework.



- Read
- Listen
- Write
- Speak
- Manipulate Calculations
- Remember concepts
- Remember procedures
- Solve Problems
- Take in information
- Express information
- Demonstrate understanding of processes
- Demonstrate understanding of concepts and ideas
- Show what they know through personally accessible formats
- Create a representation of what they know



Examine the Learning Environment

- Curriculum expectations
- Social and behavioral expectations
- Interventions
- Technologies
- Assessment strategies
- Classroom layout

(Salend & Whittaker, 2017, p. 61)



STEP 3

Identifying Challenges to Student Success

- How is content, learning activities and materials, directions, and academic language presented?
- How do students demonstrate what they know and can do?
- How are students' attention, involvement, and motivation fostered and maintained?

(Salend & Whittaker, 2017, pp. 61-62)



Selecting and Implementing Diverse Instructional Methods

- Use research-based instructional practices, accommodations, technologies, and policies that offer appropriate supports and challenges to students
- Multiple means of
 - Representation
 - Action and expression
 - Engagement

(Salend & Whittaker, 2017, p. 62)

Representation

- Perception
 - visual and auditory information
- Language and symbols
 - vocabulary, symbols, syntax, structure, language
 - use multiple media
- Comprehension
 - patterns, big ideas, relationships, background knowledge

(CAST, 2018)

Representation (cont.)

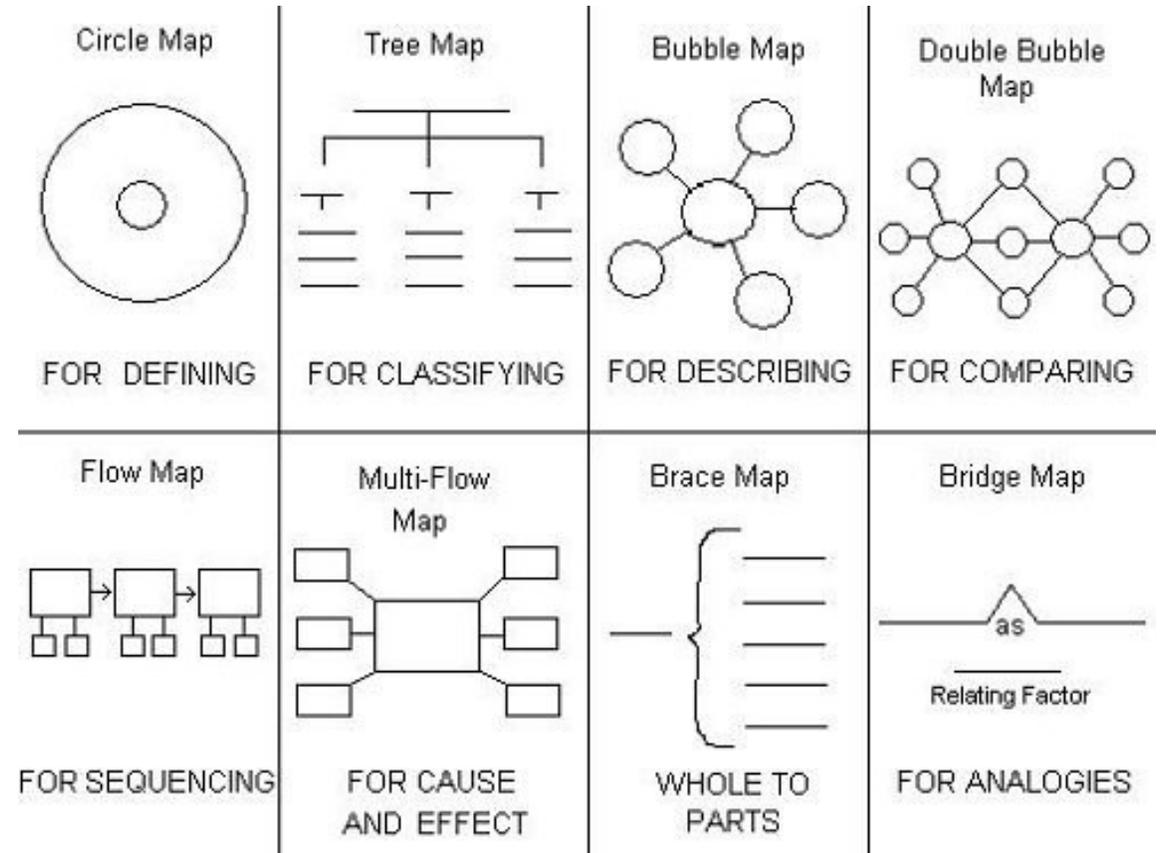


Engagement

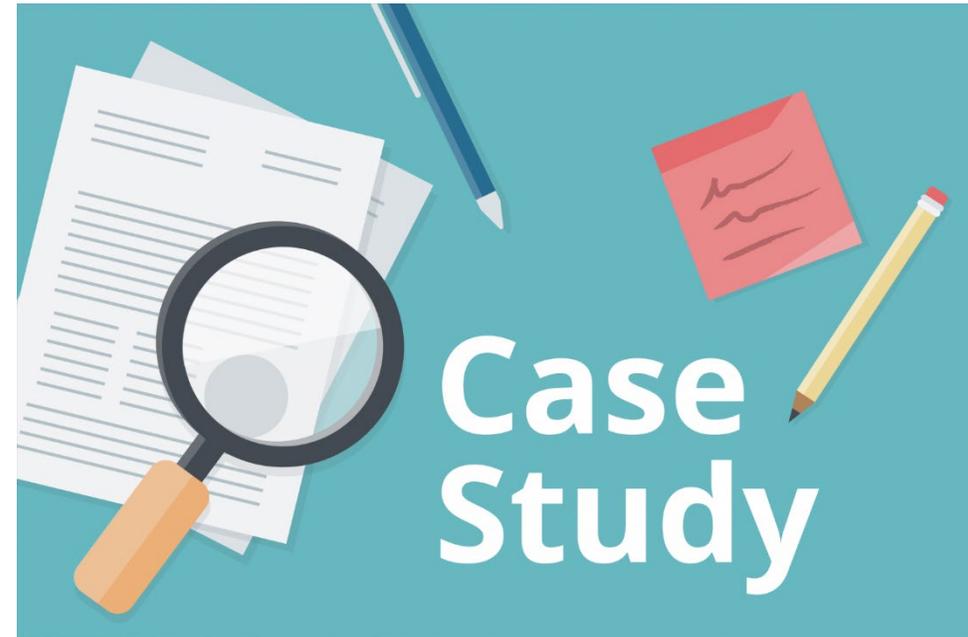
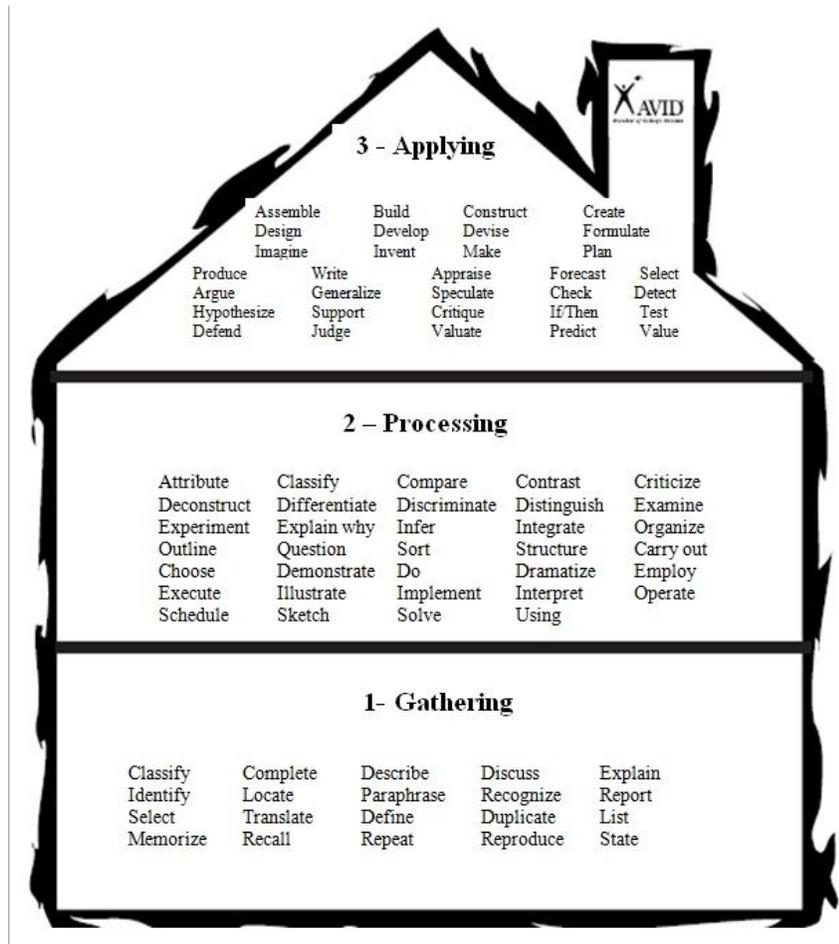
- Recruiting interest
 - Choice, autonomy, relevance
- Sustaining perception and persistence
 - Varied demands and resources (tools, degree of difficulty, scaffolds, emphasize process)
 - Collaboration and community
- Self regulation
 - Opportunities for self-reflection and goal setting

(CAST, 2018)

Ways to Engage Students



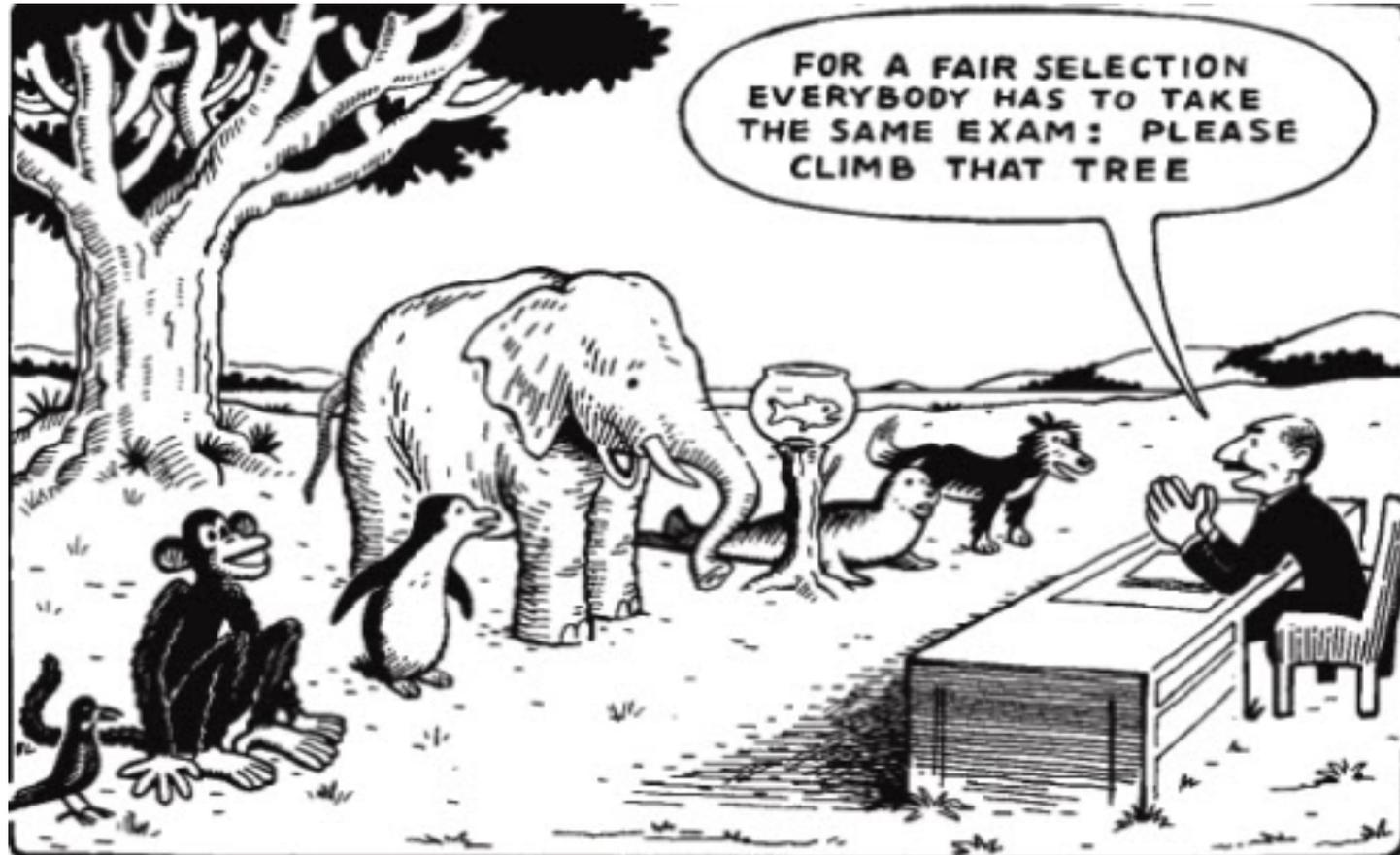
Ways to Engage Students (cont.)



More Ways to Engage Students



Cartoonist, James Stevenson: Fair Selection

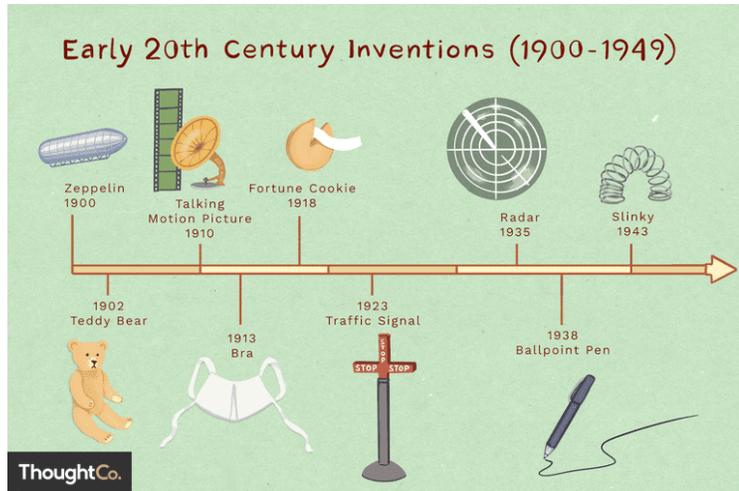


Action and Expression

- Physical action
 - Methods for response and navigation, access to tools and technology
- Expression and communication
 - Multiple media for communication (composing, physical manipulatives, social media and web tools)
 - Tools for composition and construction (spellcheck, prompts, text-to-speech, graphic organizers, sentence starters)
- Executive functions
 - Guide goal-setting, support planning

(CAST, 2018)

Student Actions and Expressions



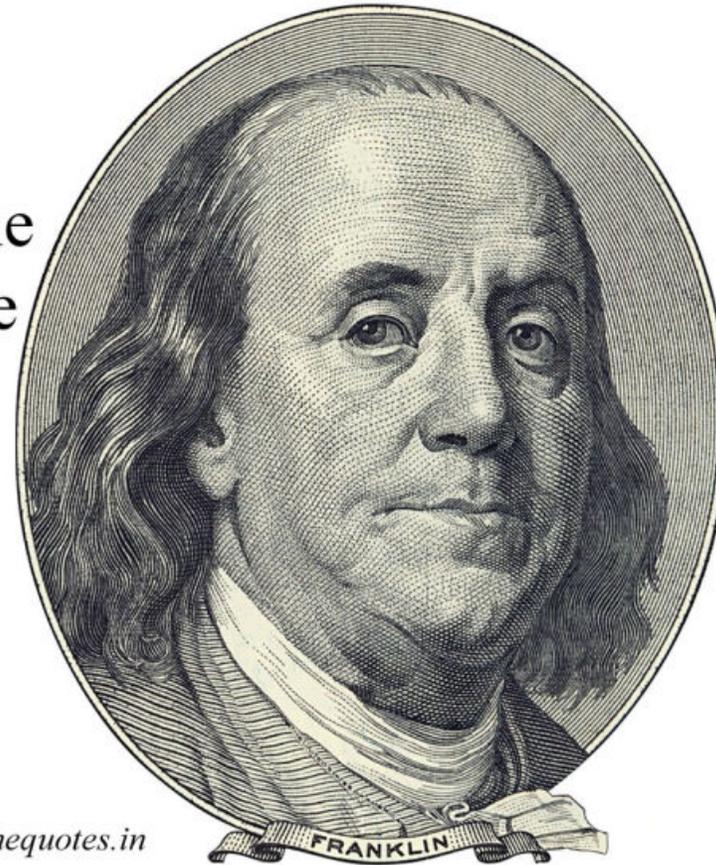
UDL Example in Higher Education

To see examples of how UDL can be implemented in a variety of courses visit [UDL ON CAMPUS: UDL Examples](#)

Benjamin Franklin on How To Educate

Tell me and I forget, teach me
and I may remember, involve
me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin



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- Salend, S.J., & Whittaker, C.R. (2017). *UDL: A blueprint for learning success. Educational Leadership, 72(7)*, pp. 59-63.
- UDL On Campus. (n.d.). *UDL examples: Examples in higher education.* To see where this information was retrieved from, please visit [UDL ON CAMPUS: UDL Examples](#).
- To view WSU Tri-Cities October 15, 2019 twitter post, please visit [WSU Tri-Cities on Twitter](#).

Motivating Students

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Expectancy Theory

To view the expectancy theory, please visit [Motivation Theories by Operational Excellence Consulting](#), slide twenty.

Students' Valence Questions

- Do I care about the outcomes/consequences? How big is the reward?
How harsh is the punishment?
 - Is this assignment/activity a significant portion of the grade?
 - Does my prof seem to care if I do it or not?
 - Do I need to know this for the exam or paper?
 - Will I need to know this in subsequent courses?
 - Is this subject something I can use in real life?

Students' Instrumentality Questions

Are there consequences for doing as I'm asked?

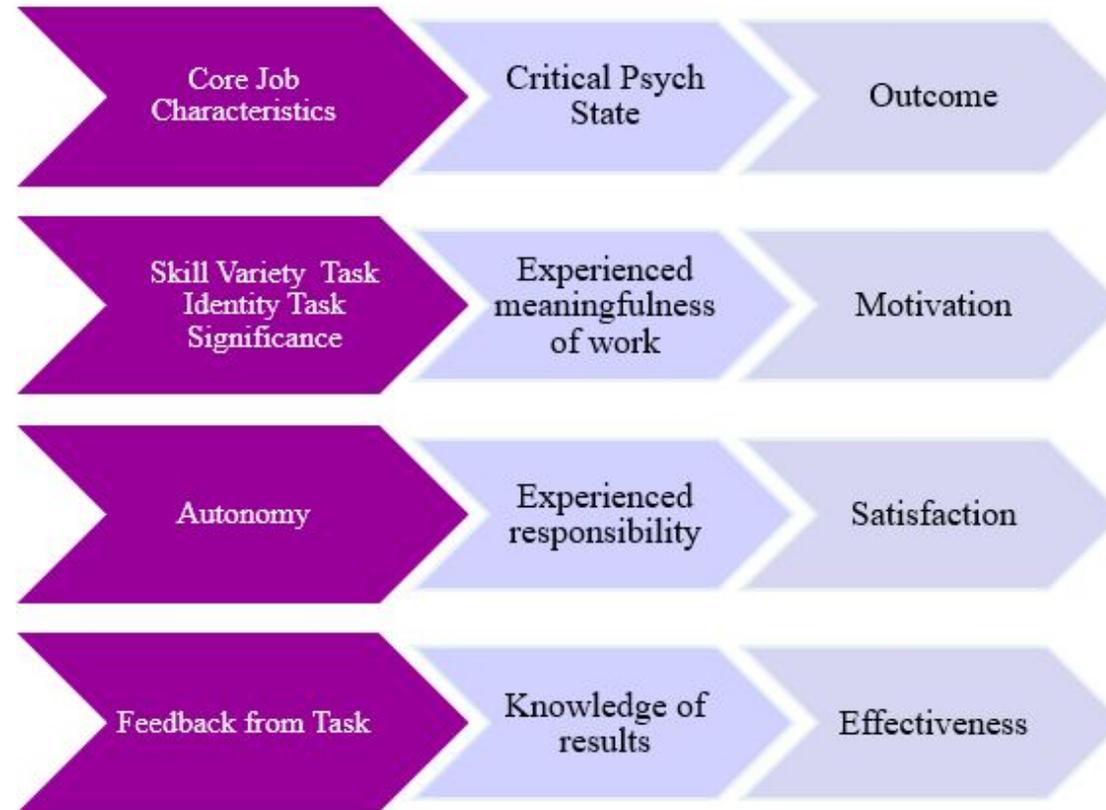
- If I succeed will I be rewarded?
 - If I score “good” on the rubrics, will my grade be higher? Or does everyone get A's (or C's)?
 - If I speak up in class (or even attend), will my grade be higher?
 - If I attend class, will lecture material be on the exam?
 - If I read the text, will it be on the exam?
 - If I don't read the text, will I not be able to follow lecture?
 - If I put in the extra effort to write well on the assignment, will the prof notice, grade it, or provide me feedback?
 - Is there added value for going to class?

Students' Instrumentality Questions (cont.)

Are there consequences for doing as I'm asked?

- If I fail/misbehave, will I be punished?
 - If nobody answers the prof's question, will we experience uncomfortable silence (or will prof answer own question)?
 - If I cheat, will I be caught? If I'm caught, will the prof actually grade me down, or report me?
 - If I don't show up to group meetings, will my group grade really be any different?

The Job Characteristics Model



How to Design a Course Based on JCM

- Increase Skill Variety
 - Go beyond one-way lectures and m-c exams; add exercises, role-plays, cases, discussion, videos, essays, projects
- Increase Task Significance
 - Sell the topic/skills to students as something they need in life
 - Have them apply topic to own life (e.g., personal case analysis)

How to Design a Course Based on JCM (cont.)

- Increase Task Identity & Autonomy both by:
 - Let students pick topic for assignment
 - Avoid group projects
- Provide Feedback
 - Turnaround graded work *quickly*
 - i.e., at least before next similar assignment is due
 - Mark up papers significantly
 - Show what correct exam answers are