

Meaningful Activities to Generate Interesting Classrooms®

Meaningful Activities to Generate Interesting Classrooms focuses on developing teachers' creativity in designing highly-motivating hands-on lessons that generate student participation and active learning.

To the right are the key areas of focus for the 45-hour course. For more information, refer to the syllabus, which provides a detailed outline of the course material as well as a bibliography of research on which the course is based.

In this course, participants will

- ▶ Discover how to develop the creative process both in their students and in themselves.
- ▶ Reinforce instructional effectiveness and creativity by generating student involvement in the development of learning activities.
- ▶ Design activities that teach the life skills of critical thinking and problem solving.
- ▶ Identify criteria for organizing and preparing activities that develop active student engagement in learning.
- ▶ Develop the critical overview needed to integrate a balanced blend of social skills and expanded cognition in all activities while implementing curricular requirements.
- ▶ Evaluate activities and games to plan their appropriate placement to generate student learning and motivation.

Meaningful Activities to Generate Interesting Classrooms®

Course Description

Meaningful Activities to Generate Interesting Classrooms is a Performance Learning Systems® 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.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this class, the learner is expected to 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

Topical Outline List of Concepts

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.

		Points	Correlations With Institutional Outcomes	Correlations With Course Outcomes
Assessment No. 1:	Reflection Journal	8		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14
Assessment No. 2:	Research Review	10		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 14
Assessment No. 3:	Article Reflection	10		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14
Assessment No. 4:	My “Top Ten” Lesson	14		1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13
Assessment No. 5:	Games and Races	14		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Assessment No. 6:	Web Search	10		1, 12, 13, 14
Assessment No. 7:	Create Two New Activities	34		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
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 here)

Performance Learning Systems' Academic Integrity Policy

Performance Learning Systems 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 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, Performance Learning Systems (PLS), 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 Acceptable Use Policy. These actions include keeping passcodes private, updating passcodes when required by Performance Learning Systems, 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.

Course Outcome Correlations With INTASC Standards for Teachers

	Course Outcomes
Standard 1: Subject Matter The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14
Standard 2: Student Learning The teacher understands how children and youth learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
Standard 3: Diverse Learners The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
Standard 4: Instructional Strategies The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
Standard 5: Learning Environment The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
Standard 6: Communication The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14
Standard 7: Planning Instruction The teacher plans and manages instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
Standard 8: Assessment The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14
Standard 9: Reflection and Professional Development The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of her/his choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.	1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14
Standard 10: Collaboration, Ethics, and Relationships The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.	3, 6, 12, 13, 14

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>.
© Council of Chief State School Officers. (1992) Model standards for beginning teacher licensing, assessment, and development: A resource for state dialogue. Washington, DC: Author. <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/corestrd.pdf>.

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

Proposition 1: Teachers are Committed to Students and Their Learning.	Course Outcomes
NBCTs are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students. They believe all students can learn.	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.	1 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
NBCTs understand how students develop and learn.	1, 2, 3, 7
They respect the cultural and family differences students bring to their classroom.	1, 2, 3, 14
They are concerned with their students' self-concept, their motivation and the effects of learning on peer relationships.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14
NBCTs are also concerned with the development of character and civic responsibility.	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.	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.	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 14
They are able to use diverse instructional strategies to teach for understanding.	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.	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.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14
NBCTs know how to assess the progress of individual students as well as the class as a whole.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14
They use multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding, and they can clearly explain student performance to parents.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
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.	1, 2, 3, 13
They are familiar with learning theories and instructional strategies and stay abreast of current issues in American education.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14
They critically examine their practice on a regular basis to deepen knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills, and incorporate new findings into their practice.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 12
Proposition 5: Teachers are Members of Learning Communities.	
NBCTs collaborate with others to improve student learning.	1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

They are leaders and actively know how to seek and build partnerships with community groups and businesses.	1, 2, 4, 12, 13, 14
They work with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of resources in order to meet state and local education objectives.	1, 2, 8, 12, 13, 14
They know how to work collaboratively with parents to engage them productively in the work of the school.	1, 2, 4, 9, 12, 13, 14

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