

Project: Case Study and Survey Regarding Student Expectations and Responsibility

Team Members:

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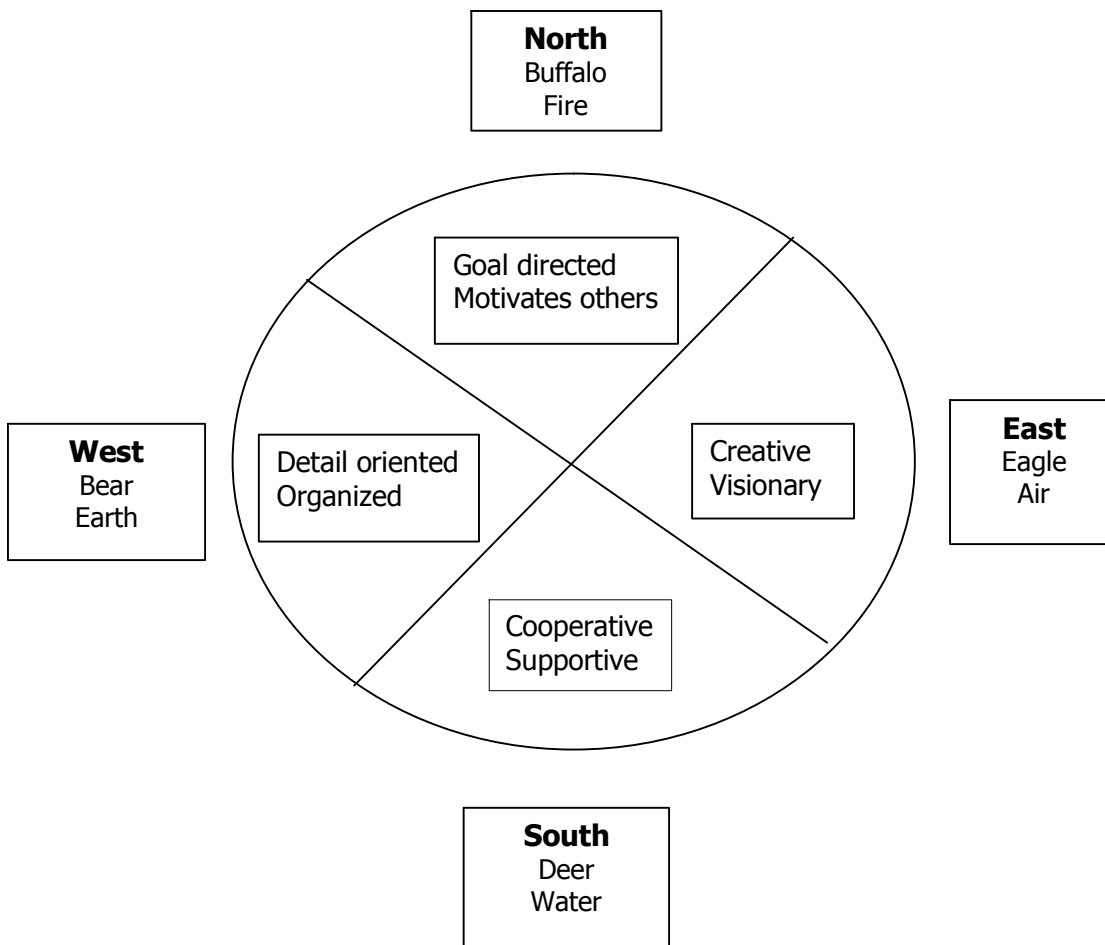
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Purpose:

Our project is developing case studies which help our students to learn. Our first case study describes a dysfunctional group whose job was to present ways to teach children fractions. Students in Maria's class first wrote about their experiences working in groups. Each group read the case study, answering questions about the characters afterwards. After the group presentations, each person in the class was asked if reading the case study affected their group work. Alan is going to analyze the assessments, which are very rough on this first round. Carolyn is designing a more advanced assessment questionnaire to administer to our students when we test out the case study she is writing about students' study and time management skills. Since we are from varied backgrounds (math, biology, and criminal justice), we decided helping students to work together and learn effective time and study skills are universal to any kind of teaching.

Case Study Introduction (Maria Blon):

Following is a case study that I wrote for my Foundations of Elementary School Math class. The story is based on some groups in my classes. The names have been changed to protect student identities. Each semester, my students participate in a group project in which they have to research and then present hands-on ways to teach children fractions and decimals. To introduce my students to working in a group, I put a circle on the board and divide it into 4 parts. I ask my students what group members need to do to create a productive group experience. I place their ideas in the categories of a Native American Medicine Wheel. There are a lot of varieties of medicine wheels. I use a version that was taught to me by a Pius XII Professional Development Team. The wheel looks like the following with many more descriptors in each category. I hope that this background will help you to understand the case study.



Group Project Case Study:

On the first day after Spring Break, Mr. Dickens introduces the Foundations of Elementary School Math class to the Group Teaching Project. He explains qualities needed of group members with the Native American Wheel of the Four Directions. He asks each person in the class to describe which direction they operate in the most when working in a group.

Mr. Dickens selects members for each group, attempting to include one of each of the four directions per group. The group that he took special care selecting was Marley's group. Following is a short description of each member:

- **Marley** has been a challenging student. She can be argumentative, and has personal troubles which she loudly discusses with her best friend Dora.
- **Oliver** is a serious student who works hard but sometimes has trouble understanding the math.
- **Nell** is bright and dependable yet laid back.
- **Tim** has not come to class consistently but is a positive person.

At their first group meeting, everyone introduced themselves and Marley directed everyone to exchange emails and phone numbers. The group then discussed what their topic is and what they will be required to do. Each group member was contributing to the discussion and Mr. Dickens overheard Marley say, "We will be teaching the class just as Mr. Dickens teaches us. We will not be teaching as if the class is a group of children." Mr. Dickens enjoyed hearing Marley explain so clearly how he hoped each group would teach and asked Marley to share this description at the next class meeting. Before class was dismissed, Marley gave each group member an assignment to look up a topic for the presentation. Everyone wrote down their assignment and agreed to bring information for the next class.

The next meeting found Marley asking the group, "What did you find out in your research?" Oliver said, "I think that we should use an idea from our textbook" but was cut off by Marley who said, "No, we need to think of original ideas that aren't in our book." Tim agreed and said, "We could ask some local teachers for ideas." Nell suggested looking on the internet. By the end of class, they were still debating where to get ideas from. Oliver became quiet and withdrew from discussions.....

As the week went on, Mr. Dickens was busy helping each of the groups with questions that they had and was pleased with the work all of the groups were doing. As the presentation date came closer, he overheard this discussion:

Marley: "I can't believe that my group members are not doing ANYTHING! This presentation is due next week and nobody has contributed"

Dora: "What is going on, Marley?"

Marley: "I told everyone to research their topic and nobody brought anything. 'I' then had to decide on what we would do and....."

Mr. Dickens left the classroom to go to his office hour, not wanting to have to deal with Marley in such a state of agitation.

After the next class, Oliver came to Mr. Dickens office complaining about Marley because she is bossy and not allowing anyone's input. Marley shot down any ideas that Oliver suggested, so Oliver decided to just concentrate on his portion of the project. Oliver said, "Marley organized a meeting outside of class time and told me to come a half hour earlier than their meeting time. By the time everyone arrived and started to work, we only had 15 minutes before I needed to leave for my class." Mr. Dickens agreed that Oliver wasn't being treated right and encouraged him to try to talk to the other group members.

The last meeting before the presentation, Marley and Tim were bustling around getting everything ready. Nell helped out when asked while Oliver worked on his own fixing up his presentation.

The day of the presentation, Marley introduced each presenter from the group. Oliver began to present to the class as if they were a group of children, without asking any questions to involve the class. Nell explained a hands-on way to teach children multiplication of decimals in a clear fashion. The main method was a creative quiz cube which was painted and decorated with glitter- very flashy. Tim gave the cubes to Marley while Marley explained the last minute inspiration to make the cubes and how they stayed up late making them. The class oooooed and aaaaawed at the hard work and flashy creation. The group finished below the minimum time requirement.

Each group member turned in their reflection papers discussing the project. Following is a summary of each member's reflections:

- **Nell** said that the group worked together really well and everyone helped out. She felt that their presentation was great and there wasn't anything that should be improved.
- **Tim** felt that he and Marley worked really hard to get the project done and that the other group members didn't help much. He thought that the presentation went well.
- **Oliver** was extremely upset with the whole project. He felt bullied by Marley and couldn't understand why he put so much pressure on everyone in the beginning to do research when they had a full two weeks to finish the project. Marley made them pay for the supplies for the silly Quiz Cube even though it wasn't necessary. He is discouraged about working with a group in the future and distraught that his presentation didn't go as well as it could have.
- **Marley** never liked working in groups and is extremely mad that she had to do most of the work. Her group members were lazy and that is why they went under the allotted time for the presentation. Only Tim came to the craft store to help buy the supplies for the Creative Quiz Cube and Marley was disgusted that her group members only grudgingly helped pay for some of the supplies. The paint and glitter were hers that she used from home. Marley thinks that the other group member's grades should all be lower than hers.

Although in the beginning, Mr. Dickens had great expectations for this group, in the end, he categorized them as the "Bleak House" group.

Questions:

1. Mr. Dickens deducted points from all of the reflection papers. Why do you think that he did that?
2. Where do you think each group member fits in the four directions?
3. If you were in the group with the characters in this case study, how would you have reacted?
4. What can be done if a group is not working together well?

Results:

Students range in ability and responsibility which are both directly correlated to success in any classroom. In our group we discovered that similar problems exist at high school and college levels. Students that belong to a Regents track curriculum are more often than not finding their first semester in college a stumbling block because the level of personal responsibility and time management necessary is not enforced and maintained throughout the primary levels of education. To discern which attributes specifically influence student progress through this difficult transition we designed a case study that highlights typical errors that students make which lead to failure. We hoped to find a significant discrepancy between a high school level of thought and a collegiate level of thought about the same situation.

Data:

Survey Question Topic

1. Your instructor has the right to be concerned about your progress.
2. Your instructor wants you to do well in his/her class.
3. Entering class late is a disruption to the entire class.
4. Showing up to class late and unprepared are characteristics of a responsible student.
5. Preparing an assignment the night before it is due shows good time management habits.

6. Students would benefit from time management training.
7. The standards of the instructor are a frequent cause of student failure.
8. Outside factors such as parking are frequently the cause of student failure.
9. Other students are justified in their anger when someone enters a classroom late.
10. When students are not doing well teachers should lower their standards.

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9	Question 10
3	3	3	1	1	3	1	1	3	1
3	4	4	0	0	4	1	0	4	0

Note: Row 1 is the average data from high school students
 Row 2: is the average data from college students

0 Strongly Disagree	1 Disagree	2 Neutral	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
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- Some interesting information to note based on the above data: Both high school and college students have a neutral belief that their instructors are concerned about their progress.
- Both disagreed that the instructors are the cause of student’s failure.
- Questions 3 and 9, high school students answered with a neutral feeling and college students agreed that their actions affect others.

Based on the data it seems the best way to elicit student’s transition from high school to college more smoothly might be:

1. Activities that promote more community involvement such as community service projects as a learning tool in the classroom. This would alleviate the fallacy that the behavior of an individual does not impact that whole.
2. Asking students to read and discuss the case study before going to college or during college orientation would help students understand the time management skills necessary to succeed.