



## Case Study in Suburban Environment

Natalya Simon was asked to facilitate a hybrid Assessment in 21st Century Classrooms course for a local suburban school district. The 25 participants for the course were selected by principals based on their leadership at promoting student-centered instruction. These teachers receive college credit from a local liberal arts college with which the district has a longstanding relationship. They also receive a stipend of \$300 upon successful completion of the course and participate in a follow-up get-together later in the year. They are expected to share their learning with their peers formally and informally.

Natalya conducted the Orientation and Module 1 of the course in a Saturday morning face-to-face session at the district office. In her welcome e-mail message, she informed the teachers that they must bring their laptops.

After a large-group review of the Orientation module, Natalya was relieved to learn that, unlike other courses she had facilitated, this group picked up the course navigation easily and was ready to move on quickly.

To begin the course, Natalya asked the participants to work through Activity 1 of Lesson 1 in Module 1 with a small group of two or three. She encouraged them to discuss what they read and to complete the first Action Plan. As the group worked on this activity, Natalya took notes on the discussions she heard. She noticed that two high school teachers were working alone and seem rather unengaged in the course. She asked them some basic questions and suggested other secondary participants for them to work with.

She brought the large group together for a brief discussion and then asked them to continue to work through Lesson 1, concluding with the second Action Plan item. From the discussions she learned that many of the participants don't really have an idea about different types of assessment and have trouble identifying what they would like to change. She conducted a large-group discussion, asking prompting questions to give teachers who were struggling some ideas about changes they would like to make.

As the participants worked through the remainder of Module 1, Natalya circulated among the groups, taking notes on misconceptions, areas of interests, and level of engagement. She facilitated discussions after Lesson 2, Activity 3 and Lesson 3, Activity 1. The day's session ended with an explanation and a little practice with the discussion forum and wiki they would be using during the next module which they will take fully online. Natalya introduced the rubrics she will use to assess their Action Plans and online discussions. She also encouraged the participants to schedule at least one time when they can go through parts of Module 2 with a partner or small group like they did with Module 1.

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Over the next two weeks, Natalya frequently checked into the discussion forum, prompting conversations and asking questions. She concluded that in spite of the fact that the participants were chosen partly because of their commitment to student-centered instruction, many of them have deeply entrenched ideas that focus on how teachers must control the learning process. She brainstormed some ideas for how she could address this challenge in the next face-to-face session.

Since the college that was granting credit had specific requirements for work load and quality, Natalya required participants to share their Action Plans with a partner on the course wiki for feedback after they completed Module 2. She also reviewed the Action Plans and provided comments, using the Assessment Action Plan Rubric. She also asked participants to share a rubric they have modified on the wiki.

The second face-to-face session was held two weeks after the first one. Natalya reminded participants about the rubrics in the wiki and encouraged everyone to borrow any they might like to adapt. She also reviewed the online discussion using the rubric to explain why some highlighted responses were particularly effective. Natalya conducted a brief discussion about assessment in a student-centered classroom and showed some relevant screens from the Project-Based Approaches Elements course.

To help teachers hear some different perspectives on assessment and to integrate the teachers who participated minimally or not at all in the online activities, Natalya paired the participants up with new partners to work through Lesson 1 of Module 3. When everyone was finished, they discussed different assessment methods in small groups and then with the whole group.

The participants continued to work through the course with their partners, discussing topics that arose, completing the Action Plans as required, and participating in small and large group discussions. Natalya circulated among the teachers as they worked, asking questions and making notes about questions to bring up in the online discussion. She saw that the high school teachers seemed particularly concerned about finding time for formative assessment and made a note to find some resources to support secondary teachers who spend less time with their students than elementary teachers do. At the end of the session, Natalya gave the participants a quick preview of Module 4 and briefly reviewed the online discussion and Action Plan rubrics. They would meet for their final face-to-face session in two weeks where they will complete Module 5 and wrap up the course.

Natalya continued to participate in the online discussion by asking questions and highlighting provocative responses to generate more discussion. She also gave feedback on Action Plans and was pleased to notice that now that the activities deal more specifically with a teaching unit, the two reluctant participants have become much more engaged.

When the participants arrived for the last face-to-face session, they were familiar with the routine and easily settle in to the activities. An introductory discussion about their learning from Module 4 took longer than planned because teachers got involved in a lively discussion about teaching and assessing 21st century skills. Natalya was pleased with the discussion and felt it was a great lead-in to Module 5.

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For this last session, Natalya did not assign groups to work together but let the participants choose their partners or work alone if they preferred. They broke throughout the morning for small and large group discussions.

When everyone had completed Module 5, Natalya brought the group together for a final reflection. She reminded them that they had two more weeks to get their Action Plans finalized and submitted on the wiki. When all the work for the course was completed, they would receive their certificates and the school district would be notified.

Natalya also let them know that since some of the teachers had been really engaged in the online discussion, she would leave the discussion board up for three months. She encouraged the participants to continue using the discussion board and the wiki to share any assessments they created, along with challenges they were experiencing in moving toward 21st assessment practices. She let them know she would be checking in from time to time and adding resources or participating in discussions as long as the forum was active.

Completing the final survey wrapped up the course and all of the participants said the course had been beneficial although a few said they would have preferred to take the course entirely on their own online. The vast majority, however, said they felt they got much more out of the course by meeting face to face part of the time and would like to participate in another course in a similar format.