Transparent Instruction: What, Why, and How?

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Transparent instruction involves direct communication among teachers and students about the methods of teaching and learning. Data from a national study by the AAC&U identified transparent instruction as an equitable teaching intervention that significantly enhances students' success, with greater gains for historically underserved students, including those who are the first in their families to attend college or from low-income or underrepresented racial or ethnic groups. Transparent instruction has also demonstrably enhanced students' confidence, metacognition, persistence and retention.

In this interactive meeting, participants will review the research findings; discuss an example assignment from the research study with peer instructors; and leave with a concise set of strategies and tools for incorporating greater transparency in their teaching or collaborative work.

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The Unwritten Rules:

Decode Your Assignments and Decipher What's Expected of You

Before **you begin working on an assignment or class activity, ask the instructor to help you understand the following.** (Bring this document to frame the conversation.)

Purpose
- Skills you'll practice by doing this assignment
- Content knowledge you'll gain from doing this assignment
- How you can use these in your life beyond the context of this course, in and beyond college

Task
- What to do
- How to do it (Is there a recommended process? Is the process intentionally unclear? What roadblocks or mistakes should you avoid?)

Criteria
- Checklist. (Are you on the right track? How will you know you're doing what's expected? How will you know you're doing high quality work?)
- Examples of real-world work in this field. What's good or lacking about these examples? Use the checklist to identify the successful parts.

Did you know?
- Researchers demonstrated in a national study that transparency around academic assignments enhances students' success -- especially that of first-generation, low-income and underrepresented college students -- at statistically significant levels (with a medium-to-large sized magnitude of effect for underserved students). [Winkelmes et al. 2016]
- When faculty make the purpose, tasks and criteria of an academic assignment clear before students begin to work on it, students are more likely to experience greater academic success with that assignment, developing the knowledge, disposition, and skills necessary to succeed both at school and in life (in comparison to when students experience less clarity around purpose, tasks and criteria for their academic work). [Winkelmes et al. 2016]
- For University of Nevada Las Vegas students, benefits included a significantly higher rate of returning to college the following two years. [Gianoutsos and Winkelmes 2016; Winkelmes et al, 2019].
- An inclusive learning environment benefits all students and offers more equitable learning opportunities for underserved students. Research on student learning links college students' academic confidence and sense of belonging with higher GPAs, persistence and retention rates [Walton and Cohen, 2011].
- College students increased their test scores when supported by a system that advocated the belief that intelligence is not fixed but rather malleable. A year later, these students were 80% less likely to drop out of college [Aronson et al, 2002].

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Transparent Equitable Learning Framework for Students

At the beginning of the class meeting, review your learning expectations with the instructor. This helps to identify and address inequitable conditions for learning so that all students may begin with same readiness for learning in this class meeting. (Bring this document to help frame the conversation with your instructor.)

Purpose:

- o What specific content knowledge will you gain from this class meeting?

- o What skills will you practice during class?

- o How you can use this knowledge and these skills in your life beyond the context of this class meeting, this course, and beyond college?

Tasks:

- What learning behaviors or actions will you use during class?
- Is there a sequence for these? (Are there recommended steps?)
- What roadblocks/mistakes can you avoid?
- What guidelines will you follow during class to check on your understanding and/or on your classmates' understanding?
- How will you notify the teacher as soon as their assistance is needed to ensure that all students have a fair opportunity to learn effectively during class?

Criteria:

- Checklist (How will you know you're doing what's expected?)
- What is your own standard for your achievement during class?
- How well must you be able to understand the lesson and apply the learning activities for you to succeed in this class meeting?

Sample A

Assignment from an Introductory Communications Course

1. Select a professional in your prospective academic discipline and/or career filed that is considered an expert in an area in which you are interested

2. Secure an interview with the professional for a date and time that is convenient for both of you.

3. Prepare 8-10 questions to ask the professional about their knowledge of a particular academic discipline/career field.

4. Conduct a 20-30 minute, face-to-face interview to gather knowledge that will help you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering. You will want to audio/video record the interview with the interviewee's permission

5. Prepare a typed transcript of the questions and answers using the audio/video recording

6. Write a 400-500 word reflection paper in which you address the following items:
   a. Who you selected and why?
   b. What you learned from them that is most interesting?
   c. What this assignment helped you learn about your major/career decision?

7. What questions you still have?

8. Submit the typed transcript and reflection paper to your instructor

Revised Sample A

COLA Communications 100E, Interview Assignment

Used by permission of Katharine Johnson, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Due dates:
- Sept 30 - Draft interview questions
- October 15 - Transcript of interviews
- November 17 - Report

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to help you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering.

> **Skills:** This assignment will help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in school and professional life:
> - Accessing and collecting information from appropriate primary and secondary sources
> - Synthesizing information to develop informed views
> - Composing a well-organized, clear, concise report to expand your knowledge on a subject in your major.

> **Knowledge:** This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:
> - Issues facing professionals in a field
> - Scholarly research formats for documenting sources and creating reference pages (i.e., bibliographies).

Task: To complete this assignment you should:
1. Secure an interview with two professionals in hour prospective academic discipline and/or career field who are considered experts.
2. Schedule the interviews with the professionals at a date and time that is convenient for both of you.
3. Prepare 8-10 questions to ask the professionals about their expertise in a particular academic or career field. The questions must be based on a review of the filed using 5 credible sources as defined by the librarian in our research module. Sources should be cited using APA formatting.
4. Conduct a 2 -3 -minute, face-to-face interview with each professional to gather knowledge that willhelp you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering. You will want to audio/video record the interview with the interviewee's permission.
5. Prepare a typed transcript of the interviews
6. Compare and contrast the information provided by both professionals in an 8-page (1.5 spaced, 12point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins) report that documents the advantages and disadvantages of a career in the selected field.

Criteria for success: Please see the attached rubric.

TILT Higher Ed
Transparency in Learning and Teaching

<u>ACTIVITIES</u>

<u>ACTIVITY 1</u>: Research Review

<u>ACTIVITY 2</u>: Identify the PURPOSE (groups of 6 colleagues discuss for 8 min)

    1)   What knowledge does the student gain by doing this assignment?

    2)   Where is that knowledge defined?   } relevance

    3)   What skills does the student practice?

<u>ACTIVITY 3</u>: Whole group discussion

    1)   What does it take to TILT *enough* to make a difference?

    2)   How could the revised assignment be more transparent, inclusive, equitable?

ACTIVITY 4: TILT your institution's GPA plan

<u>RESOURCES</u>

- Arrange a TILT Workshop or Consultation at your institution } contact Dr. Mary-Ann Winkelmes: wink@tilthighered.com

- Contribute to TILT Research, Join the TILT Research Team

- Request a TILT Survey and Confidential Individual Instructor Report

    https://tilthighered.com/participate/participate-signup

- See a sample Confidential Individual Instructor Report

    https://tilthighered.com/assets/pdffiles/TILTHigherEdSampleConfidential-InstructorReport-Fall2018.pdf

- TILT Examples & Resources (assignments, faculty publications, videos, slides, more)

    https://tilthighered.com/tiltexamplesandresources

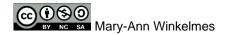# TILTing the Kentucky Graduate Profile (GPA) Project

Purpose:
- Increase student's competency in the 10 skills
- Help students to recognize the long-term value of 10 skills in daily life, and
- Help students identify examples of their work that demonstrate their mastery of the skills
- Ensure quality, equity, relevance

Tasks:
- Highlight 10 skills more explicitly
- Integrate 10 skills into existing programs, structures
- Add missing skills to existing/new structures
    - Students interact in work settings
    - Employer collaboration

Criteria: Meaningful change:
- 10 skills more visible in curriculum, services, and extracurriculars
- Communication with students around the 10 skills is transparent
- Students can recognize and demonstrate their competencies in the 10 skills for an academic audience and also for potential employers

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHEET

PURPOSE		TASKS		CRITERIA
Address Emerging Needs	Resources	Work & Timeline	Partners & Stakeholders	Assessment: Measures of Success
• • •	• •	• •	• •	• •