Analyzing a co-teaching experience with two instructional frameworks: Improving teacher skills and increasing student learning
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The **ENGAGING** Framework

Excerpted from “**ENGAGING Teens in Their Own Learning: 8 Keys to Student Success**”
Paul J. Vermette 2009 Eye on Education Inc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E</th>
<th>ENTICE EFFORT AND BUILD COMMUNITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>NEGOTIATE MEANING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>GROUP FOR COLLABORATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>ACTIVE LEARNING AND AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>INTELLIGENCE INTERVENTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>NOTE MAKING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>GRADE WISELY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seven Principles For Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

by Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson

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Apathetic students, illiterate graduates, incompetent teaching, impersonal campuses-so rolls the drum-fire of criticism of higher education. More than two years of reports have spelled out the problems. States have been quick to respond by holding out carrots and beating with sticks.

There are neither enough carrots nor enough sticks to improve undergraduate education without the commitment and action of students and faculty members. They are the precious resources on whom the improvement of undergraduate education depends.

But how can students and faculty members improve undergraduate education? Many campuses around the country are asking this question. To provide a focus for their work, we offer seven principles based on research on good teaching and learning in colleges and universities.

Good practice in undergraduate education:

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.
5. Emphasizes time on task.
6. Communicates high expectations.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

We can do it ourselves-with a little bit of help.. .
A Focus for Improvement

These seven principles are not ten commandments shrunk to a 20th century attention span. They are intended as guidelines for faculty members, students, and administrators—with support from state agencies and trustees—to improve teaching and learning. These principles seem like good common sense, and they are -- because many teachers and students have experienced them and because research supports them. They rest on 50 years of research on the way teachers teach and students learn, how students work and play with one another, and how students and faculty talk to each other.

While each practice can stand on its own, when all are present their effects multiply. Together, they employ six powerful forces in education:
Activity
Expectations
Cooperation
Interaction
Diversity
Responsibility

Good practices hold as much meaning for professional programs as for the liberal arts. They work for many different kinds of students-white, black, Hispanic, Asian, rich, poor, older, younger, male, female, well-prepared, underprepared.

But the ways different institutions implement good practice depends very much on their students and their circumstances. In what follows, we describe several different approaches to good practice that have been used in different kinds of settings in the last few years. In addition, the powerful implications of these principles for the way states fund and govern higher education and for the way institutions are run are discussed briefly at the end.

As faculty members, academic administrators, and student personnel staff, we have spent most of our working lives trying to understand our students, our colleagues, our institutions and ourselves. We have conducted research on higher education with dedicated colleagues in a wide range of schools in this country. We draw the implications of this research for practice, hoping to help us all do better.

We address the teacher’s how, not the subject-matter what, of good practice in undergraduate education. We recognize that content and pedagogy interact in complex ways. We are also aware that there is much healthy ferment within and among the disciplines. What is taught, after all, is at least as important as how it is taught. In contrast to the long history of research in teaching and learning, there is little research on the college curriculum. We cannot, therefore, make responsible recommendations about the content of good undergraduate education. That work is yet to be done.
This much we can say: An undergraduate education should prepare students to understand and deal intelligently with modern life. What better place to start but in the classroom and on our campuses? What better time than now?

**Seven Principles of Good Practice**

1. **Encourages Contact Between Students and Faculty**
   Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students’ intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

   **Some examples:** Freshman seminars on important topics, taught by senior faculty members, establish an early connection between students and faculty in many colleges and universities.

   In the Saint Joseph’s College core curriculum, faculty members who lead discussion groups in courses outside their fields of specialization model for students what it means to be a learner. In the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, three out of four undergraduates have joined three-quarters of the faculty as junior research colleagues in recent years. At Sinclair Community College, students in the “College Without Walls” program have pursued studies through learning contracts. Each student has created a “resource group,” which includes a faculty member, a student peer, and two “community resource” faculty members. This group then provides support and assures quality.

2. **Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students**
   Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one’s own ideas and responding to others’ reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.

   **Some examples:** Even in large lecture classes, students can learn from one another. Learning groups are a common practice, in which five to seven students meet regularly during class throughout the term to solve problems set by the instructor. Many colleges use peer tutors for students who need special help.

   Learning communities are another popular way of getting students to work together. Students involved in SUNY at Stony Brook’s Federated Learning Communities can take several courses together. The courses, on topics related to a common theme like science, technology, and human values, are from different disciplines. Faculty teaching the courses coordinate their activities while another faculty member, called a "master learner," takes the courses with the students. Under the direction of the master learner, students run a seminar which helps them integrate ideas from the separate courses.
3. **Encourages Active Learning**

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

*Some examples:* Active learning is encouraged in classes that use structured exercises, challenging discussions, team projects, and peer critiques. Active learning can also occur outside the classroom. There are thousands of internships, independent study, and cooperative job programs across the country in all kinds of colleges and universities, in all kinds of fields, for all kinds of students. Students also can help design and teach courses or parts of courses. At Brown University, faculty members and students have designed new courses on contemporary issues and universal themes; the students then help the professors as teaching assistants. At the State University of New York at Cortland, beginning students in a general chemistry lab have worked in small groups to design lab procedures rather than repeat prestructured exercises. At the University of Michigan’s Residential College, teams of students periodically work with faculty members on a long-term original research project in the social sciences.

4. **Gives Prompt Feedback**

Knowing what you know and don’t know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. When getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

*Some examples:* No feedback can occur without assessment. But assessment without timely feedback contributes little to learning.

Colleges assess entering students as they enter to guide them in planning their studies. In addition to the feedback they receive from course instructors, students in many colleges and universities receive counseling periodically on their progress and future plans. At Bronx Community College, students with poor academic preparation have been carefully tested and given special tutorials to prepare them to take introductory courses. They are then advised about the introductory courses to take, given the level of their academic skills.

Adults can receive assessment of their work and other life experiences at many colleges and universities through portfolios of their work or through standardized tests; these provide the basis for sessions with advisors.

Alverno College requires that students develop high levels of performance in eight general abilities such as analytic and communication skills. Performance is assessed and then discussed with students at each level for each ability in a variety of ways and by a variety of assessors.
In writing courses across the country, students are learning, through detailed feedback from instructors and fellow students, to revise and rewrite drafts. They learn, in the process, that feedback is central to learning and improving performance.

5. Emphasizes Time on Task
Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one’s time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis for high performance for all.

Some examples: Mastery learning, contract learning, and computer-assisted instruction require that students spend adequate amounts of time on learning. Extended periods of preparation for college also give students more time on task. Matteo Ricci College is known for its efforts to guide high school students from the ninth grade to a B.A. through a curriculum taught jointly by faculty at Seattle Preparatory school and Seattle University. Providing students with opportunities to integrate their studies into the rest of their lives helps them use time well.

Workshops, intensive residential programs, combinations of televised instruction, correspondence study, and learning centers are all being used in a variety of institutions, especially those with many part-time students. Weekend colleges and summer residential programs, courses offered at work sites and community centers, clusters of courses on related topics taught in the same time block, and double-credit courses make more time for learning. At Empire State College, for example, students design degree programs organized in manageable time blocks; students may take courses at nearby institutions, pursue independent study, or work with faculty and other students at Empire State learning centers.

6. Communicates High Expectations
Expect more and you will get more. High expectations are important for everyone—for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations of themselves and make extra efforts.

Some examples: In many colleges and universities, students with poor past records or test scores do extraordinary work. Sometimes they outperform students with good preparation. The University of Wisconsin-Parkside has communicated high expectations for underprepared high school students by bringing them to the university for workshops in academic subjects, study skills, test taking, and time management. In order to reinforce high expectations, the program involves parents and high school counselors.

The University of California, Berkeley introduced an honors program in the sciences for under-prepared minority students; a growing number of community colleges are
establishing general honors programs for minorities. Special programs like these help. But most important are the day-to-day, week-in and week-out expectations students and faculty hold for themselves and for each other in all their classes.

7. Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learning in new ways that do not come so easily.

Some examples: Individualized degree programs recognize different interests
Personalized systems of instruction and mastery learning let students work at their own pace. Contract learning helps students define their own objectives, determine their learning activities, and define the criteria and methods of evaluation. At the College of Public and Community Service, a college for older working adults at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, incoming students have taken an orientation course that encourages them to reflect on their learning styles Rockland Community College has offered a life-career-educational planning course. At the University of California, Irvine, introductory physics students may choose between a lecture-and-textbook course, a computer-based version of the lecture-and-textbook course, or a computer-based course based on notes developed by the faculty that allow students to program the computer. In both computer-based courses, students work on their own and must pass mastery exams.

Whose Responsibility Is It?

Teachers and students hold the main responsibility for improving undergraduate education. But they need a lot of help. College and university leaders, state and federal officials, and accrediting associations have the power to shape an environment that is favorable to good practice in higher education. What qualities must this environment have?

- A strong sense of shared purposes.
- Concrete support from administrators and faculty leaders for those purposes.
- Adequate funding appropriate for the purposes.
- Policies and procedures consistent with the purposes.
- Continuing examination of how well the purposes are being achieved.

There is good evidence that such an environment can be created. When this happens, faculty members and administrators think of themselves as educators. Adequate resources are put into creating opportunities for faculty members, administrators, and students to celebrate and reflect on their shared purposes. Faculty members receive support and release time for appropriate professional development activities. Criteria for hiring and promoting faculty members, administrators, and staff support the institution’s purposes. Advising is considered important. Departments, programs, and classes are small enough to allow faculty members and students to have a sense of community, to experience the value of their contributions, and to confront the consequences of their failures.
States, the federal government, and accrediting associations affect the kind of environment that can develop on campuses in a variety of ways. The most important is through the allocation of financial support. States also influence good practice by encouraging sound planning, setting priorities, mandating standards, and reviewing and approving programs. Regional and professional accrediting associations require self-study and peer review in making their judgments about programs and institutions.

These sources of support and influence can encourage environments for good practice in undergraduate education by:

- Setting policies that are consistent with good practice in undergraduate education.
- Holding high expectations for institutional performance.
- Keeping bureaucratic regulations to a minimum that is compatible with public accountability.
- Allocating adequate funds for new undergraduate programs and the professional development of faculty members, administrators, and staff.
- Encouraging employment of under-represented groups among administrators, faculty members, and student services professionals.
- Providing the support for programs, facilities, and financial aid necessary for good practice in undergraduate education.

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In late-December, Dr. V, a distinguished faculty member in the College of Education at a small private liberal arts university who teaches methods of teaching to pre-service teachers was chatting with, Prof. M, a colleague about his upcoming spring course. Dr. V expressed the need to include technology tools and a few lessons on technology in the classroom in the course. He also shared his limited abilities to make technology work for himself (a day when the document camera worked was a major success). This led him to be very skeptical of whether he would be able to infuse technology into his course and challenge the students to use it. Prof. M shared some of the techniques she uses in her online Public Speaking course to hopefully spark an idea or two for Dr. V. It surely did spark an idea... Dr. V, recognizing the technical abilities of Prof. M, asked her to co-teach his secondary methods course in the spring to bring technology into his classroom in a very intentional way. Prof. M, recognizing Dr. V’s deep knowledge of teaching pedagogy and endless energy to learn new things, agreed to be a co-teacher.

As the two began to plan they realized they should use this experience to conduct a little research. The pair decided to use two frameworks to analyze their teaching strategy and their effectiveness when working together as co-teachers. The first framework they decided to use was Chickering and Gamson’s 1987 article, Seven Principles of Good Practice. This framework is widely known and would be a good gage of whether the pair could employ good practice as co-teachers. They wanted more though, more than teacher centered good practice. They wanted to know if their students were engaged. For this task the pair used Vermette’s 2009 ENGAGING book. This framework would really help the co-teachers to know if they were incorporating meaningful tasks for the students and through student reflection, if the tasks were engaging students with the material in meaningful ways.

As planning continued and the course began, the frameworks guided the decisions the pair made when deciding the types of activities, the amount of work students did independently and collaboratively, as well as the way they, as professors, engaged with the students. Feedback and multiple opportunities for the students to work with the material became a theme in the course plan.

A few of the technology changes that were incorporated into the class were found to be appreciated by the students. The after class reflections were moved to the journal section of the learning management system. Each time the student reflected post-class, both professors could read and respond to the reflection. It kept the number of direct emails down in Dr. V’s email inbox because some of the communication had been moved to the online forum. There was an open forum where students could post interesting websites and links to the class. This was use periodically throughout the semester by a core group of students and appreciated by all. The in class lessons the students taught had always included a requirement to use technology for one of the lessons. The inclusion of some exploratory lessons taught by Prof. M helped students to incorporate new types of technology into their lessons. It became more than a computer and a video. Students invited cell phone use for research, polling apps for interactive polling, and explored the internet to find activities that were good fits for their lessons.

At the end of the course, the pair administered a non-official course survey. The survey was open ended asking students to reflect on their experience participating in a co-taught class. The students were encouraged to share the aspect they thought was the largest benefit, and the one recommendation they would make for the future. The students overwhelmingly were in favor of the collaborative efforts because of the expertise each of the co-teachers brought to the classroom. The consistent recommendation was to be more organized. This is a common recommendation from students each year so the co-teachers do not think this feedback directly relates to the co-teaching model. The course, teaching secondary methods, is inherently messy and a bit unstructured because the students need to lead the learning process. The students, as pre-service teachers, need to work on accepting the fact that the learning process is not always simple or structured and that the activities we selected were intended to meet the specific needs of the students we had.

The co-teachers agreed with the student feedback. The pair found the experience to be enriching and a wonderful learning experience. The collaborative efforts also made the teaching of the class very fun.
Essential questions:

(1) How does Higher Ed. deal with all of the challenges being faced at this point of time?

(2) Technology growth is inevitable: how can it be harnessed to IMPROVE instruction?

(3) Building collaborative relationships across diverse/ global context: hype or hope?

It might take volumes to do justice to the three essential questions listed above, but the program designed by Moore and Vermette were built along the lines of moving toward resolution of each of them.

Moore, a young, bright and polished TECH wizard/Faculty Developer (with some formal instructional background) ‘coupled” with Vermette, a very senior (old) Education professor who has a record of scholarship on “learning from teaching” (with absolutely no technological skill) to explore these issues. It was plausible that they could tear down “silos”, share insights and resources, find ‘common ground”, and advance the “cause” of successful higher education. They wondered, in effect, working together might help BOTH of them AND the institution they serve.

The details of every action taken, of every miss-step examined, of every conversation would create an unreadable case study. They, now WE, wish to use Lilly to share some of our experiences and to engage others in rich dialogue about the prospects for managing and scaffolding CHANGE productively as we have learned to do. Moreover, the ‘common ground” that we did find through our conversation is that we (and the institution) CARE passionately about good teaching...and that there was hardly any consensus on what good teaching “looks like” in both face-to-face and virtual environments. Chickering and Gamson (1987) was recognized by “everybody” but (a) seemed dated (b) failed to integrate ALL the research over 30 years and (c) was not intended as a planning tool but as a guideline. With that we began our collaborative investigation.

Eventually, we focused on classroom teaching as our focus and on the ENGAGING framework from (Vermette, 2009) as our “theoretical: structure. Over several semesters, they co-taught Vermette’s course, with Moore bringing in (a) tech practices aligned with scholarly research on learning (see Carey, 2014; Willingham, 2009; Roedigger (2014), (b) a questioning and challenging perspective and (c) a completely different set of professional experiences (prior knowledge and experience).

As you will experience and understand from the session, several things developed from this three year investigation. The most important “finding” (better said “realization”) was that Moore is now the model (prototype) of what the future of INSTRUCTION could/she be in higher ed. She teaches only in on-line situations, and does so in ways that utilize important learning concepts and practices, and she also collaborates with University faculty who seek to develop their own integrations of these skills and knowledge. Vermette, by the way, has come to understand the possibilities inherent in the adaptation of technology for effective teaching. Beyond the untapped potential of MOOCS and the on-line availability of Power Points, tech-based instruction can become an interactive, conceptually challenging, personally meaningful, reflective and collaborative enterprise...in every discipline.
In closing, here are my answers to the three essential questions. These are my “findings” from our work.

(1) Higher ed. MUST make effective instruction a high priority or it simply is not needed. (We have think tanks and foundations to do research and information is available 24-7, 365 at the touch of a finger)

Making “knowledge available” is not enough: libraries and the internet can do that. Students must learn from teaching or no one will invest in the process.

(2) Technology CAN be integrated into sound conceptual instructional frameworks but that is a highly unusual act. Two areas of knowledge must be joined, as they have in some theoretical work on face-to-face teaching (see Bain, 2004 and anything written by Mary Ellen Weimer). Currently, there is a literature base developing about effective virtual teaching but it has to be good and it has to proliferate and be USED by faculty.

(3) No two people are more different than Moore and Vermette; today they are ‘friends AND colleagues”. But this contemporary connection is an OUTPUT, a result of working together respectfully over many experiences, not an INPUT (Vermette and Kline, 2016). Successful collaboration requires vision, persistence, mutual respect (beyond tolerance) common goals and a commitment to invest energy and time in each other’s “lives”.

The hype about collaboration undersells the process supporting success: the hope of collaboration is that human beings can commit to long-term interaction for HUGE gain.