

Project Based Learning and Engagement in a Pilot Graphic Media Course

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Eight years ago I was privileged to begin teaching a pilot class in Graphic Media. The class was designed as an Art III elective for junior and senior high school students. Since Graphic Media was a new course, I was in the unique position of developing my own curriculum. The newness of the course and software provided plenty of student motivation. As an educator, it was also important to me that my students have ownership, responsibility and initiative in all work products. Having a limited number of outdated computers (1 per 3 students) I was also obligated to utilize strategies that enabled my students to work collaboratively and in stages. The projects that resulted were frequently long term and engaging. In art, the process is just as important as the final product. Producing a work of art often involves problem solving and higher ordered thinking through every stage of the creative process. In Graphic Media, my students made many of the decisions regarding their final products and worked their way through every level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Project planning, developing prompts, and facilitating student learning also encourages teachers to use their higher ordered thinking skills. Listed below are three examples of student projects in Graphic Media. Tables have also been included to note the relationship of each project to the teaching and learning strategies described in *Chapter 2: Teaching and Learning Theories for Web-Enhanced Learning, Using the Internet for Active Teaching and Learning* (Mills, 2006).

Project I

Scan photograph into Photoshop and manipulate the image in multiple ways. Keep a list of the process for each image. Print and display ten versions of the original image in an attractive/professional presentation.

	Generative Learning	Authentic Assessment	Coaching and Mentoring	Scaffolding
Anchored Instruction				
Cased-Based Learning				
Collaborative Learning				
Inquiry Learning		X	X	X
Problem Based Learning				
Project Based Learning				

Bloom's Taxonomy

Knowledge: Basic components of scanner & possible functions available in Photoshop

Comprehension: Operate the photo scanner, save photo files, open photos in Photoshop, experiment with contrast adjustments, photo filters, manipulation of shape & size

Application: Manipulate images using a variety of tools available in Photoshop

Analysis: Compare images for variety and visual interest

Synthesis: Critique and judge images in progress

Evaluation: Print 10 quality images, design & present finished product

Project II

Use the internet to conduct research on a contemporary graphic artist. Generate a list of specific characteristics and common themes of the artist’s work. Present findings to the class and create one unique piece of art in the style of your chosen artist. Explain your approach and rationale.

	Generative Learning	Authentic Assessment	Coaching and Mentoring	Scaffolding
Anchored Instruction				
Cased-Based Learning				
Collaborative Learning				
Inquiry Learning	X	X		
Problem Based Learning				
Project Based Learning				

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Knowledge: Research and retrieval of information via internet and library research

Comprehension: Recognize an artist’s “style”

Application: List the characteristics, techniques, and themes that the artist implements in his/her artwork

Analysis: Compare multiple pieces of art to determine similarities/differences

Synthesis: Experiment with media to develop similar techniques and/or themes of chosen artist

Evaluation: Based on research, plan and create a unique work of art.

Project III

Research, design and create a prototype of a product to sell as a fund raiser for the art program. Present product to class. Group should suggest one product to manufacture. Research process for production, make all contacts and report findings. Develop and sell product. Reflect on the experience by journaling in your sketchbook. Drawings and plans should also be included in your sketchbook (in addition to your own drawings, you may also print images from the web, cut photos out of magazines, etc).

	Generative Learning	Authentic Assessment	Coaching and Mentoring	Scaffolding
Anchored Instruction				
Cased-Based Learning				
Collaborative Learning	X			
Inquiry Learning		X	X	
Problem Based Learning	X			
Project Based Learning	X			

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Knowledge: Research and retrieval of information via the Internet, advertisements and fundraisers

Comprehension: Compare and contrast various product ideas, discuss pros and cons for each

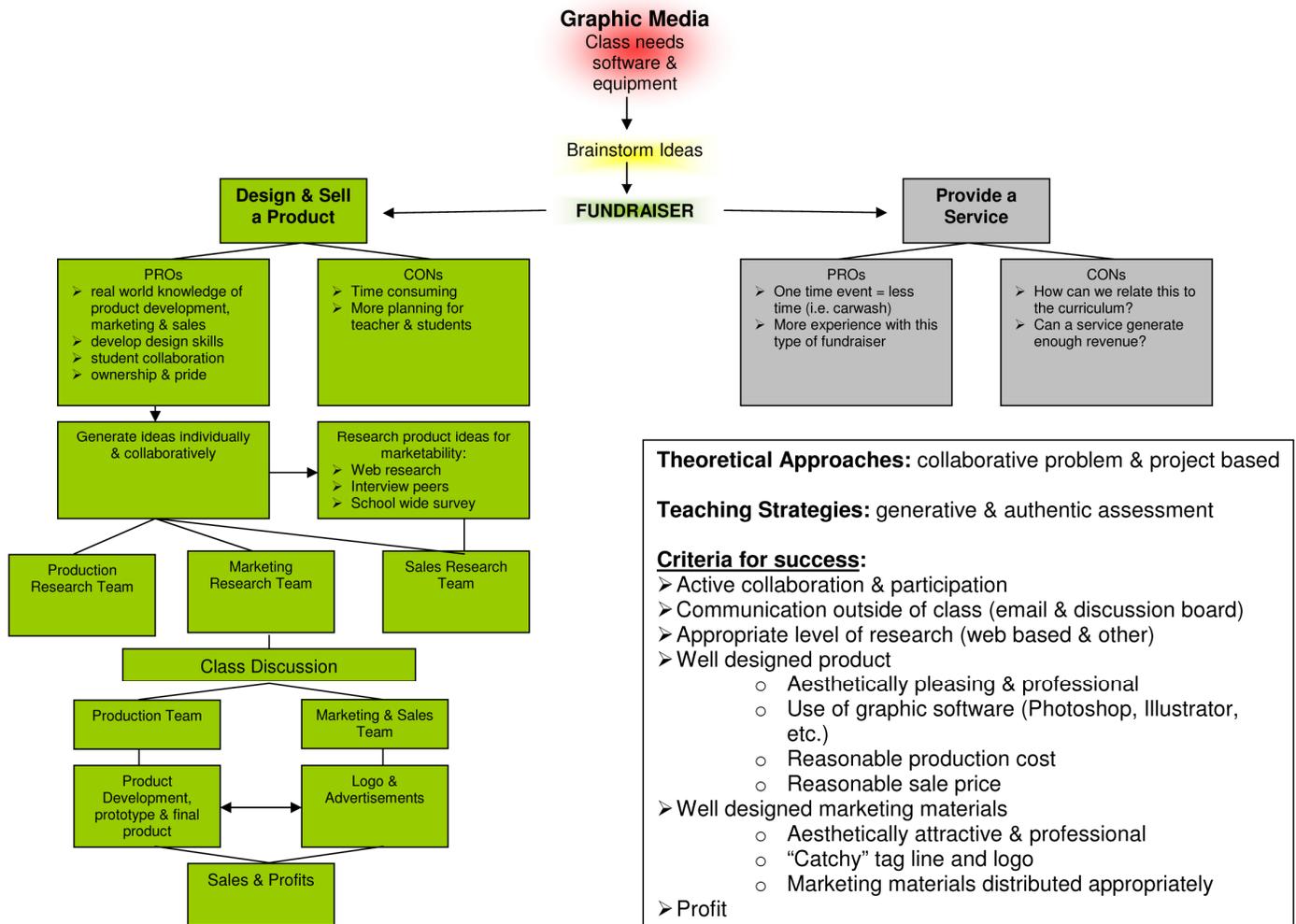
Application: Decide on a product & conduct additional research for production & sales

Analysis: Plan for production and advertisements

Synthesis/Evaluation: Using research to inform decisions, design product & logo, sell product

The Graphic Media Fundraiser project was quite involved and resulted in an authentic, engaging and problem based experience for my students. The chart below describes the process.

Problem & Project Based Learning



The advancement of available technologies and Internet research in the past eight years has been astounding. The availability of collaborative networks and resources geared specifically toward educators and their students provides more and more opportunities for students to seek out information, reorganize findings and communicate with each other and experts in order to generate meaning and develop products. Student engagement is further enhanced when students have opportunities to interact with others in meaningful work. As teachers provide students with collaborative problem and project based learning opportunities they promote student autonomy and encourage “communication, planning, management and social skills” (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999).

Resources

Kearsley, G., & Shneiderman, B. (1999). *Engagement theory: A framework for technology-based teaching and learning*. Retrieved June 14, 2008, from <http://home.sprynet.com/~gkearsley/engage.htm>

Clark, D. R. (2004). *Learning domains or bloom's taxonomy*. Retrieved June 13, 2008 from <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html>

Mills, S. C. (2006). *Using the internet for active teaching and learning*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.