

To: Faculty Professional Development Center, Kent State University

Re: Faculty Learning Community Activity meetings for Improving Technical Report Writing

Date of Meeting: 3/5/08

Time: 2:06 to 2:55 PM

Meeting location: POL 134, The University of Akron

LC members present: Sue Ramlo, Jeff Schantz, Mike Johanyak, John Nicholas, Kelly Webb, Irina Chernikova

*Please describe the topics covered at the meeting or a summary of the event:*

Kelly brought up that we probably can't have students light candles in class. We discussed having students run this data collection activity at home, potentially in pairs, instead of in the classroom. {The University of Akron has a rule about not having open flames in buildings}.

For the carrot activity, Mike and Irina will have their Honors students run this activity and use only one of the measurements (length) with the "story" of having students working in a restaurant and wanting to present the best quality carrots (e.g. uniformity).

We decided that all of the activities can be setup as a quality control exercises. The students will calculate average (mean) and standard deviation for the quantitative activities. The goal will be to compare the standard deviations as a quality control process. Different activities might be more appropriate for different majors.

Jeff asked that we determine the "research" / theory associated with each activity. We came up with the following:

Paper towels – research the topic of absorbency and strength of materials and how paper towels are manufactured, how paper is a type of natural polymer...

Penny activity – research the cost of manufacturing a penny, how the cost has changed over time, how the cost of making a penny is more than 1-cent each.

Childrens' books – early childhood cognition, literacy, age appropriate books / readings (good for early childhood majors).

Carrot activity – how they manufacture the mini carrots from regular carrots, how they control the sizes, what they do with the "left overs" from manufacturing the carrots, etc.

Candle activity – safety issues with candles, differences in the wax types, manufacturing of candles, issues with candles from China, etc. (most appropriate for Fire Protection / Emergency Management majors).

Advertisements – research marketing, advertising theory, targeting the reader / audience, demographics, psychographics, costs for advertising, etc. (most appropriate for Business Tech majors).

Surveys – parking, election / issues, conceal carry, etc. Students could survey different groups and compare (e.g. compare views of students with different majors).

We discussed having a potato chip activity where students looked at quality of the chips, number of chips per bag, etc.

The carrot activity could be adapted for other measurement activities such as having construction students look at nails, quality of wood (compare Lowe's to Home Depot for knots, warped, etc), size of beams (length, width).

We could group students into majors to do the activities most appropriate for their field.

We discussed that if students were given an option, most would select the qualitative activities over the more quantitative activities because of their mathematics skills / perceptions.

The potential research topics and scenarios should be added to the activity sheets. That way faculty wouldn't run into problems if they couldn't come up with an appropriate research opportunity or scenario (although they could create their own).

We will ask faculty from other programs to come up with data activities too. In this way there could be maybe 30 activities to rotate through classes and /or allow students to choose from.

Jeff said that he has been using the capital expenditure activity in his online class. Students are having problems with specific costs and technical specifications. But they are doing well with the rationale for why they need it. Sue got a capital expenditure form from a company and will share it with the group.

We discussed the current textbook for TRW. They will keep it for another year but there are some issues, positive and negative. It is an inexpensive book but the author blends memo with business letter in his presentation. The author also presents examples of conclusions but they are really more summary in nature than real conclusions. We discussed the possibility of eventually having materials available through the DocuZip and eliminate the textbook.