



## TRESTLE SCHOLARS FACILITATOR REFLECTION SHEET

This reflection sheet is intended to capture your experience, feedback and advice as a facilitator of a Scholars group through the Transforming Education, Stimulating Teaching and Learning Excellence (TRESTLE) project. This report will be posted publicly as part of the group output, but you will have an option to make private comments. Please use complete sentences.

### **Semester and title of your TRESTLE Scholars group:**

Spring 2019, "How can we develop and use illuminating classroom assessments?"

**Your name:** Stephanie Chasteen and Erin Furtak

**Please describe how the group went and its' activities** (~ ½ page narrative. Please include: (1) the weekly list of topics, (2) how the meetings were structured, (3) any comments on the group process and how the group format was arrived at, and (4) list any products or outcomes from the group.

We have two google drives with materials: [Facilitators folder](#), and [Participants folder](#).

List of topics:

1. Jan 22: **Introduction**. What are we doing together this semester and what are your needs?
2. Jan 29: **The Assessment triangle and learning goals**. What are we trying to do when we're assessing student learning?
3. Feb 12. **Techniques**: What types of assessments can we design, use, or adapt to align with these goals?
4. Feb 26. **Exploring alignment** between assessments, course goals, and interpretive frameworks. What can I discover by analyzing one of my own assessments?
5. Mar 19. **Grading and feedback**. How can we efficiently give feedback to students which they actually use to further their learning?
6. Apr 9. **Data party!** What can we learn about student thinking, and how can we inform our own instruction, through careful and collaborative analysis of student work?
7. Apr 16. **Thinking about assessment as participatory**. What are the participatory structures I'm going to build to support student learning?
8. Apr 30. Wrap-up and next steps.

Products developed or used:

1. Questions for peer review: A protocol for giving feedback on others' assessments
2. Data party protocol: A protocol for a group activity interpreting student responses to data.

3. A folder of relevant readings
4. A group report

Meeting structure:

- Each week had a topic and a guiding question (see above).
- Participants were asked to keep a journal where they drafted their assessment task and kept some notes on their learnings.
- Participants were given a relevant reading in advance each week, and sometimes an activity to complete (such as writing an assessment, or collecting student work on an assessment).
- Each week had a Google Folder which includes the relevant readings and a meeting notes doc.
- The meeting notes doc includes an overview of the meeting activities, and then running notes from each discussion, and next week's homework.
- Each day's meeting was 90 minutes long, and usually included an introductory activity, discussion of the reading, a group activity (sometimes breaking into small groups), and wrapping up. Common discussion structures involved shifts between small groups, whole-group share out, and individual reflections.

This Scholars' group was a collaboration between a discipline-based education researcher and faculty professional developer (Stephanie) and a professor in the School of Education who is an expert in assessment and K12 teacher professional development (Erin). As such we brought very relevant, but often different, expertise to the meeting. Erin was the primary facilitator, with Stephanie providing some meeting activities but mostly acting in a supporting role (note-taking, planning).

Erin's expertise in facilitating professional development resulted in well-planned activities that were relevant for adult learners, using clear agendas and productive scaffolds and activities with clear purpose. Basically, Erin had many facilitation tricks up her sleeve, which served the group well. Her facilitation techniques promoted authentic, engaged discussion in the group, and she was able to attend to participants' ideas and thoughts in a very attentive manner; more so than many faculty who do not have professional development experience.

In some cases, the language differences between Education and STEM were challenging, and Stephanie and Erin often needed to decide on terminology, or Stephanie would indicate the more STEM-appropriate language or framing which would be more likely to speak to the group of STEM faculty. Stephanie was also able to bring in examples and topics that were likely to be able to address the faculty interests. Facilitators identified several areas where there were parallel literatures and terminologies between Education and STEM, as well as additional areas in which an available resource in one area was not available in the other. This collaboration worked well in this way. On the flip side, Stephanie noted that she was not as deeply engaged in the group as when she acted as primary facilitator, as she didn't completely "own" the agenda and its' content. Co-facilitation thus has both benefits, but also challenges in division of labor.

One thing that did not work well was the "running list of assessment ideas." This document was started early in the Scholars group as a place to put ideas and ideas learned. Stephanie was challenged to maintain this document, and the Scholars participants did not take it up as a group place to note ideas or practices that they wanted to hold on to. Similarly, the list of learning goals (in

a google doc) was not revised by many people, despite Stephanie's detailed comments on that document.

One thing that did work very well was to task a few people to bring an assessment or assessment data for comment. While we did have trouble having some people step up to share these materials, once we had the material to share (sometimes because we nominated someone), the conversation was very productive.

Another thing that worked well was the final day's activities, where we asked people to reflect on their learning, share a brief poster sketch, and write up their narrative reflection. The facilitators noted that the participants used the assessment triangle, which was used to organize and orient the course, in ways that were relevant to their own instructional practice.

**How did you create a sense of community, especially in the first few weeks of meetings?** (This information will be useful for future facilitators)

- We started each week with some sort of share-out.
- The first meeting started with people sharing a story or experience with assessment that says something about them as a teacher.
- We provided time for whole group and small group breakouts to facilitate discussion among participants.
- We attended to whether or not a more senior member of the group (e.g., faculty vs. instructor) were dominating, and tried to provide opportunity and invite less senior people to present first.

That said, Stephanie feels that the community in this group didn't really 'gel.' Perhaps Erin and Stephanie were too focused on content and did not attend adequately to community. Perhaps the participants were coming from too disparate backgrounds (senior vs. junior) and content areas (e.g, math, psychology, geology). There were a few deeply engaged participants and they seemed to work well together. Only 4 participants responded to the survey, out of 8, also indicating an engagement issue. On the other hand, on the post-Scholars survey, two of those participants indicated that connecting with other faculty and educators was the biggest benefit and the best part of the group. This is feedback that is often heard in TRESTLE Scholars.

**What "lessons learned" came out of this semester's Scholars Group? What recommendations would you make to another facilitator?**

- Having a co-facilitator is great for coming up with quality materials, and provides some accountability to stay on target, but does take time to co-plan.
- Talking across disciplines (Education/STEM) is incredibly valuable for injecting new ideas, but again does take some time and concentration to do well.
- It can be difficult to time topics within professional development on assessment, because different classes are delivering assessments at different times. There is a challenge of being both coherent *and* timely when participants have such different needs and interests depending on class schedules.

- It may be better to work with a small group of engaged people than a larger group. Stephanie tried to get good enrollment, but this may have resulted in getting individuals who weren't as engaged.
- Readings and resources are appreciated and useful supports for learning.
- Even if it doesn't seem like people are getting much and connecting with each other, there is often more learning and connection than is apparent.
- Participants often appreciate the whole-group discussions, as opposed to breakouts. Some commented that breakouts weren't always helpful, and one requested more one-on-one time with facilitators, suggesting they didn't get the same help from peers as from facilitators.

**What impacts did you observe on TRESTLE Scholars?** How did conversations shift, what sorts of ideas seemed most transformative for participants, what comments were made about changes in the classroom?

We observed participants learning to use the language of the assessment triangle, and referring to this during their discussion of assessment. In their reflections for their final report, it is clear that they found the readings and activities (such as data party) helpful, and many seeds were planted for the future as well.

Referring to the survey results, the main impacts cited were:

- new perspectives on formative assessments done as class activities
- Making connections with faculty from other departments and becoming aware that we all share similar challenges when incorporating innovative teaching methods in our respective fields.
- Connecting with like-minded educators, exploring assessment and getting individual feedback on how to make my assessments more in line with my course objectives. The assessment triangle was helpful too!
- It's refreshing to meet regularly with a group of people who care about teaching, and who care about teaching well.  
It was a good place to "think out loud" - to bounce ideas off colleagues and to get their feedback and perspective, as well as encouragement.  
It was good to see how other people approach their classes and their assessments, and to get ideas about ways to adapt these approaches to my classes.

And they plan to do the following things differently:

- more feedback to students and repeat exercises to assess learning gains as we go.
- I will incorporate short formative assessments to determine what students know about various topics. Clicker-style questions would be a good way to quickly gauge students' understanding and generate discussion.
- I will lay out what the learning objectives are for the course, link them to assessments, and tailor my teaching style to fit the needs of students. Student learning will be at the forefront of my course structure.

- I'll probably forever view my teaching through the assessment triangle, which was the cornerstone of all our meetings.

**What recommendations do you have for TRESTLE?** (Consider ways that TRESTLE could have better supported you and/or participants).