



Mindquest Matters

The Mindquest Academy Newsletter

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Teachers Respond to Online Training Modules with Creative Comments and Ideas

The sixth training module will be online in the first week of June. An evaluation is provided for each module. We encourage you to send your evaluation to Greta. Your input will assist in the process of revision.

Those of us who read teachers' responses in the training module activities are stimulated by the interactive process between the teacher and ourselves around the activities. It is also gratifying to read the connections you are making to MQA and online instruction. A few gems are highlighted here:

Please comment on Dr. Twiggs' statement, 'I think that by simply bolting technology on to an existing structure, we're never going to make the changes needed'...What is the implication for us with Mindquest Academy courses?

"The main focus of MQ is based on technology. It is not just added on to a program that previously existed. The teacher and students are all trained and expectations are laid out from the beginning. Also, one must choose to do Mindquest; it is not a quick lesson tagged onto another class."

"We need to do things differently. We can't make Mindquest courses like regular classes and expect them to run the same way. Mindquest is different and that's the beauty of it."

Why does scaffolding make sense for many ABE students who are preparing for college?

"Scaffolding is necessary for our ABE students who are preparing for college...this allows them the support they need now, realizing that when they move out of ABE into college, those supports will not necessarily be there. So they can grow, reach, learn with our support and slowly we can remove those supports as they no longer need them."

Do you agree with Bruner's statement about learning [that a curriculum should revisit its basic ideas repeatedly, building upon them until the student has grasped all the information]?

"I do agree...Spiraling creates a hook or connection for adult learners. I think it is important to engage learners and activate their past learning while explicitly making a connection for them to the new learning before them. Spiraling also connects past and present learning with future learning and

we can teach learners to engage themselves in strategies that will help them to make these connections on their own."

If you are using a hybrid model, what is one method you might use to help students "give voice" to their learning?

"Encouraging students to express their thoughts as they carry out problem solving activities...the teacher can work with the student to help him articulate the thoughts going through his mind as he works on a particular assignment or project."

"I find that small group discussions and student journals give individuals opportunity to share their own voice. In the secure environment of the classroom, these two activities give learners an opportunity to reflect on their own thoughts and the thoughts of each other (and then their own thoughts on their classmates' comments) so as to engage in critical thinking."

Have you found any examples of [reflective thinking] in Mindquest Academy courses?

"Yes, MQA courses incorporate reflective learning practices. I've seen areas where we must "think back to..., or have you ever, or how will you incorporate." These statements all force students to relate their lives to what they're working on."

Do you think that MQA courses communicate high expectations?

"Students will live up to expectations set for them, and Mindquest Academy does set high expectations more than a traditional ABE study plan. Challenging students to become comfortable with online learning and managing their own time and motivating themselves to work outside of class is difficult, but good for them."

"I really do believe that the courses communicate high expectations. I tell my learners that they have to be high level readers and have technology skills. That sets the tone right away. I also think by having the ongoing dialog and revisions they feel more apt to try to perform at a higher level."

"Preparation Tips" Offered for College Readiness

A brochure "College Readiness: Understanding the Difference Between High School and College," published by the Minnesota Association for Developmental Education lists 5 Preparation Tips for high school students:

1. Take 4 years of high school math.
2. Take college preparatory, enriched, and honors courses.
3. Take elective courses that develop background knowledge such as sociology, psychology, geography, anthropology, philosophy, biology, chemistry, and physics.

4. Develop strong communication skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening.
5. Take college preparatory courses in critical reading and study skills.

(www.mnade.org)

Mindquest Academy courses provide a rich resource for ABE students to follow through on these preparation tips.

David Brooks Writes About Globalization, Jobs and the Cognitive Age

David Brooks writes a column for the *New York Times*. One of his columns was carried by the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on May 5, "Blaming globalization: easy - and inaccurate."

He states that globalization has turned out to be convenient for politicians, allowing them to blame globalization for our economic woes.

Nor, he says is the globalization paradigm accurate when applied to manufacturing. He believes that technological change is reshaping manufacturing, which has doubled over two decades. Employers now require fewer but more highly skilled workers.

He says. "The central process driving this is not globalization. It's the skills revolution. We're moving into a more demanding cognitive age. In order to thrive, people are compelled to become better at absorbing, processing and combining information. This is happening in localized globalized sectors, and it would be happening even if you tore up every free trade deal ever inked.

"The globalization paradigm emphasizes the fact that information can now travel 15,000 miles in an instant. But the most important part of information's journey is the last few inches - the space between a person's eyes or ears and the various regions of the brain. Does the individual have the capacity to understand the information? Does he or she have the training to exploit it? Are there cultural assumptions that distort the way it is perceived?"

College Prep Programs Grow as More Students Enroll

The two college prep programs at North Hennepin Community College in collaboration with Osseo ABE and at South Central College in collaboration with Mankato ABE will be continuing at approximately the same funding level in 2008-2009 as they had during the previous two years.

Both programs are increasing in enrollment. A second teacher has been added for evening classes at NHCC, one of our own trainees, Christine Garner.

Transitions Modules

Greta and I are interested in knowing if you are using the Transitions modules and what your response is to them. Please let us know:

- What ones you are using
- Your response to them
- Students' response
- How you are fitting them into your curriculum

- If you haven't used them yet, do you intend to in the coming year?

The transitions courses are available in the Teacher's Corner in FirstClass. We plan to get them transferred from their Word format onto the Web soon.

Teachers Promote Mindquest Academy

Two Metro North teachers are powerful advocates for offering Mindquest Academy in their instructional program and for the benefits it is giving their students.

Gail Stone gave a power point presentation to her District (Centennial) Board in March. She showed the need for skilled workers, jobs requiring post-secondary education and Minnesota's need for educated workers. She then moved into a description of MQA and its benefits for their learners. She highlighted the experience of three students in MQA courses.

Sandy Farder submitted an article for the district publication, *The Courier*, in January. Her article with a picture of one of the MQA students describes her enthusiasm for having the MQA online curriculum available in her program.

Continuing Connection: Building our MQA Community

We have more opportunities for community building during June: module 6 will be on the Web on June 3, teachers will be

finishing work on all the modules, and we will be awarding CEU's and online teacher certificates. Our next face to face seminar is scheduled for October. This seminar includes all teachers who are teaching with Mindquest Academy.

We want to develop a process for building our community of MQA teachers in addition to the seminars. Would a discussion board be a communication tool you would be interested in accessing to share information? Do you have other ideas? Email me with ideas.

From FirstClass to Moodle

Plans are underway for Mindquest Academy training modules and courses to be accessible through Moodle. This transfer will take some time, and we are unable to say now when this will be accomplished.

We will keep you informed when the change is made.

Check Out These Resources

The Minnesota Association for Developmental Education web site offers printable brochures regarding college readiness in our languages: English, Hmong, Spanish, and Somali.
(<http://www.mnade.org>)

The Lumina Foundation website contains a well-researched summary of issues around student access to post-secondary education.
<http://www.luminafoundation.org>

