THEMED LEARNING COMMUNITIES
IUPUI HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE TAXONOMY

Description

A themed learning community (TLC) at IUPUI is a first-year seminar and two discipline-based courses linked by a theme that a group of 25 freshmen enroll in as a cohort. Themed learning communities enhance student learning by cultivating interdisciplinary understanding and integrative learning. The theme of each learning community provides a foundation for curricular connections between disciplines, and out-of-classroom experiences enhance the academic experience. The faculty team collaborates to create an integrative, supportive, and challenging learning environment designed to support first-year students, furthering IUPUI's mission of undergraduate student learning and success and community engagement through collaboration across disciplines.

Purpose

This Themed Learning Communities High-Impact Practice Taxonomy seeks to clearly define what makes a themed learning community at IUPUI a different student and faculty experience than the same courses taken and taught individually. Additionally, the taxonomy aims to:

1. Provide guidance for themed learning community teams in planning, developing, implementing, and reflecting on their work;
2. Provide direction to the Themed Learning Communities program for faculty development; and
3. Provide a tool for encouraging program fidelity.

Definitions

Learning Communities: "Learning communities are a variety of curricular approaches that intentionally link or cluster two or more courses, often around an interdisciplinary theme or problem, and enroll a common cohort of students. This represents an intentional restructuring of students' time, credit, and learning experiences to build community, enhance learning, and foster connections among students, faculty, and disciplines" (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004).

Co-Curricular Events: "The purpose of co-curricular events is to extend learning community coursework, strengthen social ties, provide experiential learning opportunities, and broaden curricular themes of the academic program" (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004).

Bloom's Taxonomy: A widely-used way to organize levels of expertise, using a multi-tiered scale in an increasing order of complexity. Originally developed in 1956 and updated in 2001. More information can be found:
http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/goals-objectives/blooms-educational-objectives

Suggested Citation

IUPUI TLC Advisory Board (2016). Themed Learning Communities High-Impact Practice Taxonomy. Retrieved from scholarworks.iupui.edu/handle/1805/21503.

IUPUI HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE TAXONOMY

Taxonomy

ATTRIBUTES OF TLC	HIGH IMPACT TLC	HIGHER IMPACT TLC	HIGHEST IMPACT TLC
Interdisciplinary theme shapes each course's design.	• Each course includes TLC syllabus cover sheet that includes the theme, essential question, and learning outcome for the TLC. • Each course includes one assignment or activity at the *Apply* level of Bloom's taxonomy connected to the theme or essential question.	• Themed learning community design includes all elements from the HIGH-IMPACT column, and • *One or more courses includes one assignment or activity at the Analyze level of Bloom's taxonomy connected to the theme or essential question.*	• Themed learning community design includes all elements from the HIGH-IMPACT column, and • *Each course includes one assignment or activity at the Analyze level, and* • *One or more courses includes an assignment or activity at the Evaluate or Create level of Bloom's taxonomy connected to the theme or essential question.*
Integration of course content in each course is intentional; course design encourages integrative thinking in students.	• Each instructor shares with the team, a list of course concepts and terminology taught in their course connected to the theme, essential question, and learning outcome of the TLC. Shared concept and terminology lists lead to agreed-upon language for connecting one or more concepts across courses. • Each course includes one assignment or activity where students use concepts or terminology from another course, and make connections between course concepts and life experiences. • Through interrelated assignments or activities, students are exposed to differing theories, practices, and viewpoints.	• Themed learning community design includes all elements from the HIGH-IMPACT column, and • *One or more courses include a co-created assignment or activity where students connect course concepts across disciplines at the Analyze level of Bloom's taxonomy.*	• Themed learning community design includes all elements from the HIGH-IMPACT column, and • *One or more courses include a co-created assignment or activity where students connect course concepts across disciplines at the Evaluate or Create levels of Bloom's taxonomy, which is co-graded or evaluated.*
Out-of-class activities enhance academic content, integrative thinking, and interdisciplinary theme.	• The TLC instructors plan one out-of-class activity that enhances the content of the TLC, connecting the activity to one or more concepts in each course. • Each instructor is involved in either the planning, implementation, or meaning-making activity (e.g. discussion, reflection, assignment, etc.) that contributes to student understanding of the course content in the context of the activity.	• The TLC instructors plan *two* or more out-of-class activities that enhance the content of the TLC, connecting the activities to one or more concepts in each course. • *All instructors are involved in the planning of the activities, one or more instructors attend each activity, and all instructors engage in meaning-making activities (e.g. discussion, reflection, assignment, etc.) that contributes to students making connections between course concepts in the context of the activity.*	• The TLC instructors plan *three* or more out-of-class activities *or engage in an ongoing service learning project* that enhances the content of the TLC, connecting the activities to one or more concepts in each course. • All instructors are involved in the planning of the activities/*service learning, all instructors attend the activities, and all instructors engage in a meaning-making activity (e.g. discussion, reflection, assignment, etc.) that contributes to students making connections between course concepts in the context of the activity.* • *Students apply concepts from multiple courses to develop new understanding in the context of the activity. One or more courses assesses student learning of the concepts applied in the activities.*

ATTRIBUTES OF TLC	HIGH IMPACT TLC	HIGHER IMPACT TLC	HIGHEST IMPACT TLC
Active learning strategies are central to each course.	• Each instructor chooses from a palette of active learning strategies and pedagogies appropriate to their course and implements them intermittently during the semester. • Students engage in one or more simple collaborative activities during the semester in each course.	• Each instructor chooses from a palette of active learning strategies and pedagogies appropriate to their course and implements them *regularly* during the semester. • *Students engage in multiple simple collaborative activities during the semester in each course, with one or more course engaging in an extended collaborative project or assignment.*	• Each instructor chooses from a palette of active learning strategies and pedagogies appropriate to their course and implements them *frequently* during the semester. • Students engage in multiple simple collaborative activities during the semester in each course, *with one or more course engaging in a complex and extended collaborative project or assignment.*
Faculty collaboration fosters integrative approach, exploration of theme, out-of-class experiences, and student development.	• During the time between the TLC Retreat and the start of the semester, all instructors communicate/meet monthly to plan the TLC. • During the semester, each instructor communicates/meets monthly regarding the coordination of the TLC and student performance in their courses, utilizing the first-year seminar instructional team to address concerns. • The team provides one opportunity for students to interact with the full faculty team in or out of the classroom.	• During the time between the TLC Retreat and the start of the semester, all instructors communicate/meet monthly to plan the TLC. • During the semester, each instructor communicates/meets *twice a month regarding the coordination of the TLC; this meeting includes, discussion of the use of unified communication with students, and student performance in each course. Relevant concerns are addressed by each instructor and the first-year seminar instructional team.* • The team provides *two* opportunities for students to interact with the full faculty team in or out of the classroom.	• During the time between the TLC Retreat and the start of the semester, all instructors communicate/meet monthly or more and actively contribute to planning the TLC. • *During the semester, each instructor communicates/meets weekly regarding substantive matters related to coordination of the TLC, including team building, curricular connections, and student performance in each course.* • *Each instructor provides input and follow-up, and works with the first-year seminar instructional team to address concerns about students.* • The team provides *three or more* opportunities for students to interact with the full faculty team in or out of the classroom.

References

Anderson, L.W. (Ed.), Krathwohl, D.R. (Ed.), Airasian, P.W., Cruikshank, K.A., Mayer, R.E., Pintrich, P.R., Raths, J., & Wittrock, M.C. (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Complete edition). New York: Longman.

Brownell, J.E. & Swaner, L.E. 2010. *Five high-impact practices: Research on learning outcomes, completion, and quality.* Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Kuh, G.D., O'Donnell, K., Reed, S. 2013. *Ensuring quality and taking high-impact practices to scale.* Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Levine Laufgraben, J. & Shapiro, N.S. 2004. *Sustaining & Improving Learning Communities.* San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass.

Shapiro, N.S., & Levine, J.H. 1990. *Creating learning communities: A practical guide to winning support, organizing for change, and implementing programs*. San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass.

Smith, B.L., MacGregor, J., Matthews, R.S., & Gabelnick, F. 2004. *Learning communities: Reforming undergraduate education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.