

Bonni: [00:00:00] On episode 91 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast I share about Choose Your Own Adventure assessment.

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Bonni: [00:00:20] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:48] When I was a child I used to love reading those Choose Your Own Adventure books. If you're not familiar with them you would go to the end of a page and it would say do you want to go to the right on the path down into the thicket by the stream or would you rather go to the left up into the hills.

Bonni: [00:01:06] And then depending on what you chose you've got to flip to those subsequent pages and the book could be different depending on the choices you made as you went well with my own teaching I decided to put the love I had for Choose Your Own Adventure into an experiment in my teaching and I started this last year in the spring of 2015 with my business ethics class.

Bonni: [00:01:32] And at first I called it. In fact I blogged about this so some of you may have heard about this before I called it Choose Your Own Adventure learning. But as I read consider that it's really Choose Your Own Adventure assessment and if you wanted to know more about Choose Your Own Adventure assessment you might do well to go and listen to the episode where I talk about Universal Design for Learning with Mark Hofer and just does a quick recap so that you get the difference between the two Universal Design for Learning as Mark Hofer shared with us gives students opportunities to learn about a particular learning objective a particular topic but they can do it in different ways.

Bonni: [00:02:19] Maybe they'd rather watch a video maybe they'd rather read an article maybe they'd rather engage in some other way by the way that was back on episode 58 and I'll put a link to that in the show notes you can discover a little bit more if you weren't listening back on episode 58. I really think it's inspirational and worth listening to.

Bonni: [00:02:37] So again even though I titled those blog posts Choose Your Own Adventure learning. The students in my class back in the spring of 2015 didn't have necessarily their individual choice on how they learned. They really had more choice on the way that they were assessed.

Bonni: [00:02:55] I did as a class allow them to really steer the conversation as far as would they like to have some movie nights at our home which they very much did like. To do that and really had a wonderful time inviting them into our home would they like to have more guest speakers.

Bonni: [00:03:11] They really did enjoy hearing from some exceptional guest speakers that semester. So as a group they got to collaborate on how they wanted to learn but individually they got to choose how they wanted to be assessed and my goals for doing this. I definitely wanted to offer them variety where they could play more to their strengths.

Bonni: [00:03:33] Although there was some limit to that I wanted to make sure that they were assessed in some consistent way on the vast majority of the learning objectives so they did at least have to take three of the possible five tests that were given and that meant that that spread them out among the modules.

Bonni: [00:03:53] There were four modules in the course and that fifth test was a comprehensive final exam. So that was one was just giving them a little bit of agency and allowing them to take responsibility for their learning.

Bonni: [00:04:08] Think of it less than a transactional way and more as a way where they really could. Here's what I want to do I want to demonstrate my learning in this way and what I did was I put together a little bit of a graphical element that said you can choose this many exams and I had the five exams three of them are already checked off because those are required but they get checked to more if they wanted to for 100 points apiece.

Bonni: [00:04:32] And this is a course out of a thousand points and then they could give presentations if they wanted to they could give up to two of them per 100 points and they could check those off and then case studies were worth 50 points each.

Bonni: [00:04:44] They could select up to 4 quizzes weekly quizzes 100 points something called sketch notes which is a way where they read the textbook and make it visual in some way through drawing and writing some elements down. We held a business ethics competition and if they competed in it they could get points.

Bonni: [00:05:02] They could decide if they wanted their attendance and participation to be assessed in terms of these points. And then lastly some type of service learning or research project and then the second document I did instead of just being points looked at chronologically so visually they could see how the different four modules broke out and then those assignments that were more comprehensive in nature and on my blog post which I'll link to in the show notes the show notes are going to be available at teachinginhighered.com/91.

Bonni: [00:05:36] You're welcome to go check out the blog post I wrote and you can actually see one of the videos that the students made which I'm really proud of. I think it went well.

Bonni: [00:05:44] There certainly are some things that I would change and in fact a question on that blog post which was how hard how much harder is it to do choose your own adventure assessment than your normal approach to teaching.

Bonni: [00:05:58] And I would say that still right now I'm now in the second usage. My second experiment with using Choose Your Own Adventure assessment and I would say that I don't feel like I have the grading communication down as well as I would in a normal class and to give an example some of the students want to take the quizzes because they want to be able to have access to those questions out of the question to review help them in their study and review process. But they don't want to be assessed.

Bonni: [00:06:29] They say sometimes they may not necessarily go and look it up in the textbook. They're just trying to gain some study tools almost as flashcards. But in this case flash questions that they can use and so that part of it is going to look like they earned very low scores on those quizzes in terms of our learning management system.

Bonni: [00:06:47] But those points aren't going to be factored in at all and I haven't figured out how. I don't even think it's possible on an individual basis to have some sort of a grade calculation and a learning management system.

Bonni: [00:06:59] I do know how to not use the lowest score on a particular category of grades and know how to make custom calculations but not on a student level only and a course by course level so that's where it is harder in the sense that I have to do a little bit of extra work.

Bonni: [00:07:17] This class has tended to be pretty small in terms of enrollments because it's a three hour evening class and sometimes that scares people away and it isn't required by any of the majors although our accounting majors to get their CPA license.

Bonni: [00:07:31] A lot of them take it in fact it's a made up majority of accounting students so I would say it's a little harder this semester I'm going to have them fill out a templated spreadsheet a couple of weeks before the semester ends so they can do some of the heavy lifting as far as projecting out what their grade will be with any blanks left in that spreadsheet for grades yet to come.

Bonni: [00:07:52] And then of course I will go in or have my teachers go in and just double check that the information is correct. But yeah it does get to be a little bit harder to do. I had some people ask the question about how do you handle exams when not all the students in the class will take the exam.

Bonni: [00:08:09] And what I do is I just schedule the exam at the end of whatever that 3 hour block was going to be and that tends to work out pretty well. In fact this particular semester that I'm teaching and the students asked if they could take all of the exams and then just use their three highest grades on the exams as their points.

Bonni: [00:08:27] And as I thought about it I really thought that that was actually a really good thing to do because it doesn't hurt. I mean yes I have to grade some extra exams but doesn't hurt anything and I think it takes away a little bit of the pressure of the exams and then the students really can earn whatever it is they're going to earn.

Bonni: [00:08:44] So I haven't had a problem with that and I think that's working well probably continue to do that and therefore because of that all of the students have taken all of the tests so far so that's worked out really well.

Bonni: [00:08:56] I mentioned that I'm in the second time through of experimenting with this and there are still a couple of weak areas I mentioned the weak area of the grade book issue inside the learning management system and I don't really know how to negate that other than the template spreadsheet that I plan on sending out and then having students email back to me.

Bonni: [00:09:16] There are a couple of other points where it gets a little interesting. One is in terms of my own strictness with the class policies I have mostly been strict in terms of keeping to them. But there was one individual the last semester who was about to graduate and had missed some things along the way but otherwise had excelled in the class.

Bonni: [00:09:38] I did allow him to go back and make up some of the quizzes he had missed and that went against what the class policy was. This did not seem to be to me like that thing that should hold him back from graduating that was just a choice that I made and probably would make again in terms of these are when they're seniors it just gets a little bit tricky as far as me.

Bonni: [00:10:00] Do I want to have the lesson of why didn't you take the quiz on the week when you took it be what keeps them from graduating and so far I have said no although who knows.

Bonni: [00:10:09] Maybe I'll maybe there will be other situations down the line where I think differently and then as far as tracking goes up front I still need to improve there because what I've been doing is I've been having the students fill out those two different forms that I talked about.

Bonni: [00:10:26] And again I'll link to in the show notes you can see samples of the forms that I've used and the one that's more based on the points that you earned and then the one that's more based on chronologically throughout the semester.

Bonni: [00:10:40] I think they might be good tools for you to adopt if you wanted to try something like this but I have them fill them out. Hard Copy actually winds up to be the second week of class because it is a lot for them to digest. They're

so not used to having this kind of autonomy and many of them just need time to process throughout that first week of the class.

Bonni: [00:11:00] After we've met for the first time and I still think I collected the hard copies I took pictures I have a scanning app on my phone that I use that's put out by Evernote called Scannable. That's with two n's S C A N N A B L E.

Bonni: [00:11:20] And it works great because you can scan a lot of things all at once say you have a whole stack of these papers that somebody turned in. You just get the app running on your phone and it focuses on that first document and shows that it pulled it in and then you don't even have to press any buttons Your phones are still going. It captured the first one you move that paper.

Bonni: [00:11:39] Now you've got the second one. It captures a second one. Again I'm not pushing any buttons on my phone. All I'm doing is flipping the pages as it captures them and it shows you once it gets into focus it shows you that it's captured that one and then you can pull up the next one.

Bonni: [00:11:53] Like I said move the paper that it just scanned over and grab the next one it's really a fast way to scan but so then I have a big PDF of all of these individual ways that people want to earn points but it can't analyze the information in any way so I couldn't go and say count how many people plan on giving presentations this semester or how many people plan and taking tests on a given night.

Bonni: [00:12:18] And I really do need to make this into more of a database some kind of a form that they fill out so that then I can analyze the data in something more meaningful and save myself the step of having to scan things as well I think I'll still use the hard copies for that first night of class because the students like seen it visually.

Bonni: [00:12:36] And they say it really helps that two different versions of it but I think in terms of my own capture and accountability for the students I need to get electronic in some way that would really approve thing improve things for me in the future.

Bonni: [00:12:50] This is the point in the show where I give a recommendation and what I'd like to recommend this week actually comes from a tweet from Peter Felton. If you're not familiar with Peter Felton, by the way Peter if you're listening expect an email from me soon because I'd love to have you on the show.

Bonni: [00:13:07] He's the director for the Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University. And I love his Twitter profile says running even reading writing, plus dance and Lego's- best combination ever. And he sent out a tweet this week saying great new scholarship of teaching and learning annotated literature database with dozens of topics already and more to come.

Bonni: [00:13:32] Plus you can contribute and we go over to the link. ResearchSOTL.WordPress.com which we will have a link to in the show notes at teachinginhighered.com/91. It is an annotated literature resource for the scholarship of teaching and learning. This is a phenomenal tool.

Bonni: [00:13:53] Over on the left are all of the topics and you have everything from research and annotated bibliography for social media in higher ed. The relationship between teaching and learning reflective practice peer mentoring flipped classroom blended learning and I am just listing some of them.

Bonni: [00:14:17] So a wonderful resource for us and it looks like it is just getting started because they say more is to come and we have an opportunity to contribute to that resource as well. And that is my recommendation that you go check it out and leverage it as a resource and consider contributing yourself. Thanks so much for listening in to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed.

Bonni: [00:14:37] I've got a number of great guests booked in the coming weeks I'm so excited to introduce you to or reintroduce you to some really good stuff to come. So looking forward to you continuing to listen and as you spread the word to colleagues about Teaching in Higher Ed.

Bonni: [00:14:52] I also hope you'll consider doing that in more of a digital way through leaving feedback on whatever services you use to listen to the show whether that Stitcher Radio or iTunes or whatever service you check it out on you can give it a number of stars through a radio. Or you can give it a review. Either way works great to help spread the news about the show.

Bonni: [00:15:16] Also if you have yet to subscribe to the weekly e-mail newsletter what that is is once a week no more than that you'll get a single email with the show notes with all the great articles and links that were talked about including this week.

Bonni: [00:15:30] The recommendation from Peter Felten of the research on the scholarship of teaching and learning blog. So you don't have to remember to

go check it out. It'll come right into your inbox along with an article most weeks on either teaching or productivity written by me.

Bonni: [00:15:46] I say most weeks because the last few weeks I was at the Lilly Conference as those of you who listened last week already now and I didn't do a lot of blogging kept the podcasting up but the blogging has suffered a bit. But I'll get back to it.

Bonni: [00:15:58] And you can expect to see future blogs and show notes coming into your inbox. You can subscribe at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe and as always I welcome your feedback and you can give feedback on the show. Lots of ways I'm on Twitter @Bonni208 and you can also go to teachinginhighered.com/feedback to give feedback for future topics or guests. Thanks so much for listening and I'll see you next time. We got a great guest next week and a whole bunch of ones scheduled in the future. See you soon.

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