



Engaging the Community in a Problem-Based Model of English Language Learning

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Abstract

This presentation focuses on actively engaging community members incorporating a problem-based learning (PBL) model to strengthen English language acquisition. This transformational learning strategy is based on three elements; achieving success in English language learning (ELL) through innovative pedagogy, creating hands-on PBL real world activities to empower students, and supporting learning by building community partnerships and fostering collaboration. Community members actively engaged in robust ELL contribute economic, societal and cultural benefits and create new avenues to inspire creativity and enthusiasm for learning. By utilizing PBL methods that empower critical thinking and incorporate real world experiences and community interaction, ELL becomes a collaborative effort rewarded by communication with community leaders who will challenge students and strengthen learning. Implementation of this innovative PBL multi-dimensional model engages and motivates all students, including those from underserved populations, and provides the opportunity to build relationships and connect with community members in ways that they never thought possible. Integrated technologies can also be utilized to improve ELL instruction and build workplace skills across the spectrum of community responsibilities. This presentation and paper will provide examples of ways to leverage a variety of community resources and professionals to transform ELL. This approach can also be expanded to myriad contexts and disciplines incorporating content across the curriculum. The pedagogical potential including meaningful research opportunities and analytics, as well as strategies for ELL educators to frame best practices focused on the diverse learning needs of the students will be discussed. When ELL students and educators leverage stimulating and dynamic PBL student-centered experiences sustained by community engagement, achievement and performance is increased. This model can be replicated for the specific needs and abilities of all ages and levels of learning. We found that community members welcome the collaborative opportunity to become involved, interface with students, build relationships and make positive contributions to ELL performance and outcomes. This positive interaction provides rich and high quality experiences for community members and students adding value to learning and setting the stage for future accomplishments and success.