

Dan Reeve: Hi and welcome to another Applied Learning podcast. I'm your host, Dan Reeve. This time I sit down with Diane Gilliland of the School of Access. Diane talks about the steps in which Applied Learning places an important role in the program she teaches. I hope you listen and enjoy.

Diane Gilliland: So, in the School of Access, in Academic and Career Foundations Department I teach "Building Employment Success for Tomorrow". It's a career exploration program with five courses in it, and it runs in cohort structure for eight weeks, four times a year. So I have a cohort of students that I work through the career exploration program with for eight weeks.

Dan Reeve: Great.

Diane Gilliland: And from September to the end of April I have four different cohorts.

Dan Reeve: Okay. So, every two months, more or less. What are the values of teaching that inspire you to start, just in a general sense, doing that little bit of applied learning, that learning by doing?

Diane Gilliland: Yes, I think it's respecting differences in the classroom, different ways of learning that the students bring to their education, their learning experience: hands-on, musical, you know. Some people like to read, some people like to speak, exchange ideas, learn through social engagement with other people... all the different learning styles that come into the classroom.... learning with images and pictures and that.

Dan Reeve: Okay.

Diane Gilliland: I really have social justice values too, so, you know... the old structure of standing up in the front of the classroom and passing along information does not work. I really want to respect the diverse knowledge that students bring to the classroom. They have life experiences. I work with three generations in my classroom so I really believe, I value, the instruction of the whole group. Like, the whole group teaches all of us. We work to teach each other.

Dan Reeve: You've talked a little bit about the program. Can you talk about some of the ways in the program, just broadly now, that you use a hands-on approach. Like a technique, a tactic, a thing in that eight weeks that makes you think of applied learning.

Diane Gilliland: So we work in a - I'm not sure if you know, but we do a campus scavenger hunt tour where we have the students work in small groups, and they have a map of places to go and explore the college, and they take pictures of each other in their small groups in

the different locations. Every day we work with presenting a topic, having brainstorming their ideas about the topic.

Diane Gilliland: So, for example, transferrable skills and strengths. We talk about... we work a lot with their stories about... what life experience, like if you play video games... "Tell us a little bit about the games you're involved in and who else plays videos". We just collect stories about their engagement of video gaming. Then we look at it and say what skills and strengths were in that story. We bring out those skills and strengths. What other career areas could you transfer these skills and strengths to?

Dan Reeve: So there's definitely a strength-based approach.

Diane Gilliland: It's definitely a strength-based, hugely, yeah, strength-based approach. A circle approach anchored in stories, anchored in sharing knowledge, working to talk with other people in that social engagement way in either pairs or triads or fours, and then sometimes I do all voices activity. I mix it up with all voices. Everyone has the right to

Diane Gilliland: I've had our ombudsman work on this conflict resolution and it's been five years of honing this lesson plan, and I think it's just recently that I thought: "okay, this is it". For now, anyway. It really worked well. The students had positive feedback about it. You know, I hone it, hone it, hone it. Some lessons are easier than others.

And then, I'm working with [Zack 00:05:02] [inaudible 00:10:42] He brings his learning skills expertise to anything we do. We continue to modify, you know, adjust and modify.

Dan Reeve: How do you begin... like if you're thinking about... you said this is a five-year process...

Diane Gilliland: One, one...

Dan Reeve: One lesson plan. Yeah.

Diane Gilliland: As an example... [crosstalk 00:11:07] Other ones are way less time than that, cause I've inherited also a rich curriculum from a previous instructor who worked before me for 20 years.

Dan Reeve: How do you consider... think about when you're talking about... and it seems like your course is always very active, so I'm not just thinking about applied learning but all the methods you've talked about. How do you think about and consider logistics?

Diane Gilliland: There's a

Diane Gilliland: When you meet people you don't tell them "I want a job," you find out about them. You ask questions and show your interest in them, right? And then they always talk about teamwork skills. The guest speakers who are out there in the community are coming in and speaking to that authenticity.

Dan Reeve: Right. Okay. Let's change gears a little bit. Lots of instructors have various points, and it sounds like you do to, of reflection. Various points of reflection. So, what reflective questions or practices do you have students consider once they've completed part of the program or even the whole program and got their points, there are types of questions that you get them to see the change?

Diane Gilliland: We're asking questions that tap into their stories throughout the whole program, but there are particular types of stories that we're asking questions about. Like, tell us about a time you accomplished something for which you felt proud. Tell me about a time you solved a problem. Tell me about a time you, and they're all interview questions, right?

So we're getting them, throughout the term, reflecting on these and talking about them with each other and then, so that when, at the very end of the program, when we talk about interview questions, difficult interview questions, they're ready for that, right? Yeah.

The other points of reflection we're always talking about is just share some stories about your life experience and we draw out, "What are .4(c)2.7(1.36)2(1.66)3.6(5-t.4(q)16)2.6(ta)2.7 a pTh

Diane Gilliland: That's another key one cause it relates to teamwork. This is all about teamwork skills and strengths and it's, I acknowledge that it's just hard work to work to c 709.56e.3(6)4.96)9.6(10.6 d72

Diane Gilliland: Oh, how was it a little...? It was enriching. You know, it's more organization, especially the first run of something. So lots of emails back and forth, surveying the students. What kind of volunteering experience would they like to do? Getting commitment from the students, commitment from the organization, showing up. It was the first run for them. The mustard seed with this event in cooperation with the restaurant.

And then there was also a law firm that were giving free legal advice to the folks. So... and that was enriching because, you know, you take a risk and it turned out to be kind of cooler than I ever thought. Meeting new people, and the students had a good time, and... yeah.

Dan Reeve: Okay. If you're doing an activity and things don't go as planned, do you have a reset button or a reset technique or some practice that you kind of fall to when you're like, "oh, this isn't..."

Dan Reeve: Right.

Diane Gilliland: And because it's building employment success. And so I say: "it's like welding. You have to be here to see the weld, to hear about the weld, to see the weld and then to practice the weld yourself" Right?

That's how I introduce it at the beginning of the course. And so in terms of this I'm still struggling with attendance and articulation because I have students who are in recovery from mental health issues, mental health crises, in recovery from addictions who get... this past winter I've had students miss a couple weeks because of illness, you know? Yeah, I'm still uncertain about this one. How to manage this.

Dan Reeve: Right. And the flexibility you need to build around, because I'm sure there's a million stories for every...Some of them are... you know, someone gets sick and what are you going to do? Others are "you taking this seriously enough", you know, this is...

Diane Gilliland: Exactly. That's the - I don't really - it's maybe one student a year that I'll see one or maybe two at the outside. I haven't had one yet where I think they're blowing off the course. I think these are legitimate [inaudible 00:38:57]

Dan Reeve: Right, right. Mental health problems -

Diane Gilliland: Mental health, addiction stuff, and actual illness and depression.

Dan Reeve: So that causes a real challenge when you can only miss four days.

Diane Gilliland: So I just encourage them to keep coming and just come and pick up where we are and, yeah -

Dan Reeve: Okay.

Diane Gilliland: Sometimes I'll say to someone in the beginning of the term if they've missed a lot, I hate it when - hate's a strong word - I really dislike it when someone messes up group guidelines. I think I expect people to be there for that. But, um, sometimes I'll have, if a student's missed too much at the very beginning I'll just say, you know, why don't you withdraw and come back at another time. But then it's like "Oh, I really want to be here" so it's hard.

So the other piece is we do have assignments, like a vision board assignment, a vision board reflections, the listening field assignment... They have to write a three-point essay. They do an information interview with a family or friend member and hand in that.

They have to hand in an actual information interview they do with someone in the community that we've given them warm contacts for or they generated warm contacts themselves. So there are those assignments that go through, and it's basically, just mostly strength-based feedback like "This looks great," "Congratulations on

