Learning Activity
~ Problem-based Learning (PBL) Design Tool ~

Activity Title: Technical writing exercise

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Focus/Goals/Objectives:

1. Student will be able to compare literature to technical writing
2. Student will be able to list the four processes of technical writing
3. Student will be able to list the five considerations used in technical writing
4. Student will be able to give oral and written directions that are sequenced and detailed enough to complete a task.

What type of course(s) would this activity be best suited for: Best suited for Business English or school-to-career classes

What concepts could be incorporated from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math?

Science	Technology	Engineering	Math
	Basic knowledge of writing clear, succinct technical related directions to complete a task		

Pre-requisite Knowledge:

1. Knowledge of sequence
2. Knowledge of attention to detail
3. Knowledge of differences of literature and tech. writing
4. Knowledge of differences in intended audiences
5. Knowledge of Communication techniques

Time Required: 90 minutes

Materials:

1. Poster of five considerations on technical writing
2. Poster of four concepts needed for all technical writing
3. Example of poem, essay; example of one machine maintenance page from Airlite Plastics to compare
4. Review sheet for homework
5. Overhead transparency of incomplete outline of knowledge taught

Method:

1. Compare literature to technical writing; note tone, words, purpose
2. Teach considerations: target audience, pre-existing knowledge, experience with process, experience with SIMILAR processes, content needed to be explained, illustrated
3. Teach concepts: logical order of information; information to explain next step; information regarding what to expect when next step is taken; graphics or illustration to support text
4. "Making toast" experience. Two parts to this Assignment. Goal is to give technical directions as to how to make toast. One audience is teenagers in Brooklyn suburb; other audience is teenagers on a South Pacific island that are only vaguely familiar with electricity. Task will be to focus on the individual needs of each audience. Vastly different details must be given.
5. Students will work independently creating two written, technically correct guides for toast-making considering their audience. Directions will vary considerably.
6. Class will discuss the problems involved in putting themselves in the places of the reader and follower of these tech directions
7. How would you explain to your grandmother how to run your IPod??

(RTW) Business and Industry Connection(s) - Context: This experience is reality-based as it focuses on real life situations; the future technical writers will indeed be applying the four concepts and five considerations as they meet the companies' demand to information to run technology. Focusing on the complicated verbage used to operate an Oui or IPod will bring the problem to their level of understanding

Knowledge-Skills-Attitudes (KSA) of the PBL Activity:

Knowledge: Student will gain the following knowledge:

1. Comparison of literature and tech writing
2. Sequential order
3. Attention to detail
4. Ability to trouble-shoot and anticipate
5. Ability to match illustrations to text
6. Ability to assess a specific audience's needs

Skills: Student will be able to write clear direction succinctly; be able to gauge their writing to their audience; and be able to prepare for different levels of prior experience.

Attitudes:

Resources for the KSAs: Resources involve online sites for technical writing skills. I have also prepared the literature versus technical writing manual experience at the beginning of the class to promote understanding of the differences. I have prepared charts and posters illustrating the four concepts and five considerations of all technical writing.

Assessment Strategies: Students will write a journal entry assessing their personal skills as technical writers. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Students can also evaluate each other in the following activity: break into pairs; each kid is to orally direct their partner to Wal-mart from their desk. Second kid is to direct the kid at Wal-Mart to the Louis E May Museum. Prior knowledge and specific, sequenced directions will be evaluated. Kids will provide a critique for each other on their performance. A review sheet will be provided at the end in preparation for a quiz the following day

Reflection and Debriefing: Debriefing will occur as the kids critique each other on their oral direction to Wal-Mart and May Museum. Reflection will also be provided by the journal entry experience. The two posters of concerns/considerations will add focus to the classroom.

Evaluation of the Activity and the KSAs: An overhead learning activity will take place at the end. This will appear in outline form; the class will help fill in the missing links of the outline. Each student will also receive a review sheet of major concepts taught. A quiz the following day will provide feedback on retention.

References: Materials are gathered from the internet source**:** **www.techwritertoolkit.com/exercises** Literature teachers are also a source for comparing the two forms of writing.

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