



**The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County**  
**Teacher Study Group Grant Award**  
**2003-2004**

**FINAL REPORT**  
**DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES**

**STUDY GROUP TOPIC:** Realigning the Economics curriculum to include differentiated instruction, evaluation and be more focused on essential questions.

**GROUP MEMBERS:** Thomas Walls, Robert Carr

**The final report must be word-processed and submitted both in print and on disk using this form. Include information under each of the following headings.**

**Describe the initial goal of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.**

The initial goal was to create essential questions, differentiated instruction and differentiated evaluations on a unit-by-unit base for the economics curriculum at Vestal High School. As my partner and I have different techniques of instruction, this was also to be an opportunity to share ideas and replace lessons that we were not satisfied with. The adjustment that we made during the project was that we decided not to attempt to teach the same course, but rather implement the above goals in to our already formulated courses while “borrowing” lessons and ideas from each other. In short, we decided not to recreate the wheel, but rather to improve it by sharing from each other.

**Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.**

In order of process:

1. Develop an essential question for entire course
2. Develop an essential question for first unit
3. Develop differentiated instruction techniques for first unit
4. Develop differentiated evaluation for first unit.
5. Align differentiated instruction techniques to textbook reading to assure compliance with content standards.
6. Repeat process for units 2,3, and 4.

**Describe how the action plan was implemented.**

We met three times in one week for a total of ten hours. The initial process began with brainstorming of basic knowledge we wanted all students to have after taking our classes. We then worked backwards in designing essential questions that would force students to provide the basic knowledge as evidence to support their opinion to the essential question. Following this we shared lessons and techniques for common content in the first four units of the curriculum. We then developed differentiated evaluation options for each of the units including: written reports, multiple choice tests, oral presentations and visual metaphors where students would create a poster illustration of a metaphor for an aspect of the unit. Finally, we spent the last portion of the project aligning the textbook content to the differentiated instruction lessons to ensure the required material would be covered if the lesson failed.

**How has participating in this study group changed you as a teacher? Have any of your teaching practices changed?**

The concept of essential questions has had an enormous impact on my teaching. By introducing the essay question at the beginning of the unit and telling students that they will have to accumulate evidence to answer the question creates less of an “us vs. them” atmosphere. It is hoped that this will create a more cooperative environment where the instructor is the “guide by the side” rather than the “sage on the stage.” I think this facet of the project will make our jobs much easier and enjoyable.

**What evidence is there that student achievement is improving as a result of participating in this study group? What kind of differences are you observing in your students?**

Not applicable at this moment. However, the differentiated evaluations and the essential questions should allow for more students to be engaged in the learning process (differentiated evaluations) and the essential questions should focus student learning throughout each lesson and course.

**What evidence is there that the goals of the study group have/have not been met?**

The curriculum still has three units that have not been dealt with. We are hoping to devise a non-labor intensive process where we can complete them during the school year.

**Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?**

The biggest challenge we faced was getting together. Between graduate courses, family vacations and deaths in the family, the only time we could meet was in the final week before the report was due. Hence, the process seemed rushed, but it still has provided us with the unique opportunity of reflecting and modifying our classes without the pressure of the school day looming overhead.

**How can we make the study group program better?**

More time. Ten hours is not enough to complete an entire course overhaul, but then again ten hours seemed to be all that we could spare in the final week.