Peace, Patience, and Remote Learning

An Origami Lesson

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Maddie with her origami

After a full year of remote education, most students have experienced some form of online or hybrid learning. Those who enrolled in Adjunct Lecturer Linda Diekman's Summer 2021 iSchool course (Information Books and Resources for Youth) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, were immersed in learning to locate, evaluate, and select factual print and nonprint materials for youth while being cognizant of the children's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical needs. Developing thoughtful and intentional lessons to better connect with and support each and every youth is imperative in lesson planning, especially during a world pandemic.

Diekman assigned a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) project certain to heighten higher regard for nonfiction. She invited students to engage in an activity that required strict adherence to step-by-step instructions. She instructed students to channel their inner child or recruit a child or children to help on this project.

Students could choose from DIY arts and crafts, recipes, or resources that presented directions along with the reward of completion. They were to journal their process, assess the results, and present a final critique, taking into consideration any circumstances that helped or hindered the process.

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Students were asked to take into account:

- What factors were considered? Which were omitted, ignored, or assumed?

- What was the target age group?

- Were the instructions and visuals age-appropriate or considerate of ability levels?

- Was the ability to acquire materials acknowledged?

- How did the lesson address backgrounds, interest levels, manual dexterity, patience, attention span, and special needs or accommodations?

For my project, I created origami with my eleven-year-old niece Maddie, and it was an absolute delight! I requested her assistance with my class, and she graciously agreed to participate.

Maddie asked thoughtful questions about assignment requirements and expectations. A year of remote learning allowed her insight into this activity. She wondered if we were to choose a project that presented challenges or gaps in the instructions. Were we to choose something simple that everyone could finish successfully?

Maddie's hybrid year of fifth grade enabled her to expertly explain how choosing a simple project might be a little bit boring, whereas choosing something more challenging could potentially have a number of glitches or omissions in the

directions and prove to be frustrating. She launched into a number of scenarios from her recent school year.

She shared the pros and cons of following all sorts of instructions, including written, visual, video, or in any combination, and told me that we were likely to experience some challenging frustrations. Maddie explained that following a video tutorial can often be frustrating and that the ability to pause or rewind may or may not be helpful.

She had also learned that videos use jump cuts to speed up the directions and often assume prior knowledge or ability. Some videos include distracting music or verbal instructions that don't match the visual. A well-planned video that uses highlighters for emphasis could make the experience enjoyable. Maddie was already anticipating the many glitches that could present themselves during our shared online DIY learning experience.

We agreed to do the project via Zoom. I offered to find appropriate projects and asked Maddie to share her insight. Maddie, however, wanted to search for her own DIY project. We decided on easy origami since it required simple supplies and did not make a mess.

Maddie chose one turtle and two sets of crane origami directions. I immediately discovered that she had previous origami experience. Maddie commented that even adults can find it challenging to follow origami instructions. She was up for the challenge!

The online origami instructions were colorful visuals with short written descriptions of each step. Maddie began with the turtle project, but before starting, she practiced reviewing folding an origami box that she had learned previously. While warming up, Maddie said she had made this project "over and over and over again."

During the process, we learned that we needed to turn our virtual backgrounds off. Maddie adjusted her webcam to better view her hands demonstrating the folding process. She started the origami turtle with its first two folds, held up her progress, and pointed out steps confirming that I was keeping pace with her. Maddie became dissatisfied with the turtle instructions and, after fifteen minutes, switched to the crane.

The instructions for the crane, however, were confusing to both of us. After approximately twenty minutes, Maddie deduced that the instructions were most likely translated from another language because of the awkward English. Maddie then demonstrated using Google Translate, pointing out its potential for inaccuracies.

Maddie shared that she was feeling frustrated with the crane directions. While she did not appear frustrated, she frequently commented that origami requires patience, something she felt she didn't possess. After a brief break, we lost our Internet connection and rescheduled to meet the next day.

On our second meeting, Maddie held up her project and reviewed the steps completed the previous day. She made sure that I was caught up to her. She was doing such a great job with following the directions that I asked her if she practiced finishing the project. Maddie promised me that she had not practiced folding a crane before our second meeting.

Both of us acknowledged that neither set of directions was independently sufficient to finish the crane.

Maddie proposed navigating between both sets of directions, since she had selected them anticipating their potential to fill gaps.

On one set of directions, the dash lines were quite faint and easy to miss. Maddie continuously compared both sets of directions. All three DIY directions required previous knowledge of paper folding, including creasing skills and familiarity with terms such as "reverse fold." Although Maddie expressed her frustration, she persevered, determined to complete a crane.

Maddie summarized her experiences after both sessions. She took a few minutes to quickly reflect on her process.

"I have found that when I was making a crane from origami paper, I found two direction papers for cranes, and I thought we could do both papers and find better or worse results having high hopes for both of the directions. Once we started, it went downhill. We tried one of the papers at the start, and there were twelve steps; when we got to step four, we were confused since the paper and visuals didn't make sense . . . I still had to figure out a few things by looking at the very faint creases on the photos and then even looking at the words and visuals I couldn't understand what the paper wanted me to do . . .

"I didn't do very well completing the origami with the instructions and was unhappy with the lack of important details. The lack of important details hindered the process, like when we were trying to find out how to get to one place, when the visuals and instructions were pointing us in the wrong direction . . . we had to have a lot of patience since some steps were frustrating and made no sense, and we only had to improvise a little bit." &

Bibliography

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