

Developer's Notebook - Entry #1

- Grade Level: 8<sup>th</sup>
- Subject: Science
- Curricular unit: Volcanoes (and potentially earthquakes, which both involve plate tectonics)
- What do you want your course to look like? What are your ideas/thoughts/dreams for class interaction for both teacher and students?

I would devise a course that is as interactive as possible, allowing students to benefit from both peer and teacher interaction. A message board for questions and comments between students (and their instructor) will provide an informal means of communication about the course. I also would have the students build a class wiki about the topic that they would be able to edit throughout the course. In the traditional classroom, students frequently use one another's knowledge to deepen their own understanding about a topic, and I think that a wiki is a great way to achieve a similar level of collaborative learning.

I would use a variety of different ways to deliver the material including movies, simulations, and live video lessons. In order for the students to be interested and engaged in the material, variety is important. Allowing students to access the information in different formats will also accommodate different learning styles so each student can be successful in the course.

Similar to the video lessons I imagine using, I would also hope to have the students record live video at times throughout the unit so that they can share with me certain hands-on experiments and models that they will be building. Not only will that help me get to know the students better, I can assess their learning and identify potential problem areas quickly as they talk through the assignment.
- How do you think you will assess students?

I would like to have a practical, hands-on component where students build a replica volcano and explain what type it is, how it formed, and what (scientifically) would make it erupt. This is something that would be shared via video so that I can assess the students' work as well as their explanations.

A final, comprehensive paper would likely be used, pulling in key components that were discussed throughout the unit. It will be composed of two sections, one for students to explain the information presented in the class, and one where students apply that knowledge to real-life situations in a problem solving type of assessment.

Finally, the students will also be assessed through their contributions to the classroom wiki. Similar to the comprehensive paper, I imagine that this wiki will help students solidify their thinking of the major ideas of the unit. However, the collaborative component will also be assessed to see how students are using one another's ideas and insights to deepen their own understanding.

- What are some of the social, ethical, legal, and human issues surrounding participation in your online course?

As with all classes (online as well as traditional), plagiarism is a concern. I hope to alleviate this somewhat by designing activities and assessments that students could not easily copy from another source.

I imagine that some parents may be wary about online learning, worried that it will not provide as well-rounded of an educational experience as that in a traditional classroom. Making myself available for parents, and explaining to them how the course will be organized and how the students will be evaluated may ease some of those concerns. The students themselves may even be apprehensive about the course if this is the first online class they have taken, and they will also benefit from clearly explained expectations.