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Youth Work Institute

Evaluation Matters: A Team Hybrid Course (or Have Your Cake and Eat it Too)

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As the Youth Work Institute moves more of its programs to distance delivery modes, it is important to identify what works with its unique target audiences—adult staff and volunteers from youth serving organizations. The purpose of this presentation is to lay out what we think was key to the success of the institute's first foray into distance teaching—one of which turned out to be face to face interaction within teams participating in our hybrid evaluation class.

Our learners

- Six teams with a total of 18 adults ranging in age from 22 to 60. They worked for a variety of agencies that all served youth in non-formal learning capacities (mentoring, after-school day care, service learning, etc.)
- Some came from rural areas where high-speed internet was relatively new and limited.
- Included learners who had difficulties with basic computer functions
- None had any experience with learning online.

Qualitative methods were used to assess the effectiveness of the synchronous and asynchronous aspects of the program including:

- Focus group interview. One purpose of the Evaluation Matters program is to teach and demonstrate evaluation methods. As part of one of the face-to-face sessions, the instructors demonstrated a focus group interview using the class itself as the topic. Participants gave frank feedback about their misgivings, frustrations and “elations” related to learning online.
- Observations. Instructors determined which participants had a grasp of technology and which ones struggled through observations of work posted on asynchronous sites.
- Personal contact. During personalized technical assistance time with each team, instructors were able to assess each team member's technical capabilities which ranged from very low to very high.

The success of the synchronous and asynchronous aspects of the program hinged on face-to-face contact among team members. Team members carried each other. Where a team member was short in on computer skills, the rest of the team could pick up the slack. Where an entire team was capable but reluctant to try, they encouraged and learned from each other.

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