

Kajiura, L., Fleisig, R., and Vrkljan, B. (2015). Implementing Meaningful Learning Experiences – The IMPACT (Interdisciplinary, Meaningful/Mentorship, Practice, Applied, Collaborative/Community, Transformative) Project Concurrent Session presented at the Western Conference on Science Education, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. July 7th -10th 2015.

The Western Conference on Science Education



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July 8th 2015, London, Ontario

IMPLEMENTING MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES: The IMPACT (Interdisciplinary, Meaningful/Mentorship, Practice, Applied, Collaborative/Community, Transformative) Project

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ABSTRACT

As educators, we strive to provide our students with meaningful learning experiences to assist in the development of the skills required for their future employment. We co-designed the IMPACT (Interdisciplinary, Meaningful / Mentorship, Practice, Applied, Collaborative / Community, Transformative) Project for undergraduate and graduate students from diverse fields of study (Biology, Engineering, Occupational Therapy) with the aim of offering learning opportunities that allow students to apply their knowledge and have positive impacts on those living in the local community. Throughout the project, students collaborate in teams by working on open-ended problems to explore, create, and assess ideas with the goal of discovering multiple ways to help real clients, who are physically challenged due to serious health conditions, such as strokes and arthritis. Students mobilize knowledge and hone research skills, critical thinking skills, teamwork skills, and display empathy. Our IMPACT Project model serves as a catalyst for implementation across several disciplines. It facilitates student creativity, innovation, and positive community engagement. During our presentation, we will elaborate upon the implementation of our model, educator/student activities, assessments, and administrative logistics. We will provide those in attendance with insights that will hopefully allow them to use our model for other interdisciplinary projects. We will engage active participation by challenging attendees to brainstorm and evaluate design ideas, which simulate elements of our students' collaborative activities.