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"Is This Something We Can Do?": Exploring the Possibilities of Faculty/Librarian Collaboration

Patrick Wohlmüt
Linfield College, pwohlmüt@linfield.edu

Kena Avila
Linfield College, kavila@linfield.edu

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“Is This Something We Can Do?”

Exploring the Possibilities of Faculty/Librarian Collaboration

**Patrick Wohlmutter & Kena Avila
Linfield College**

Context



Kena Avila

- Associate Professor in the Education Department
- Background in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and in collaboration between classroom teachers and English Language Development teachers.
- Covering a class for a colleague in Education who was on sabbatical for the Fall 2016 semester.

Context

Patrick Wohlmüt

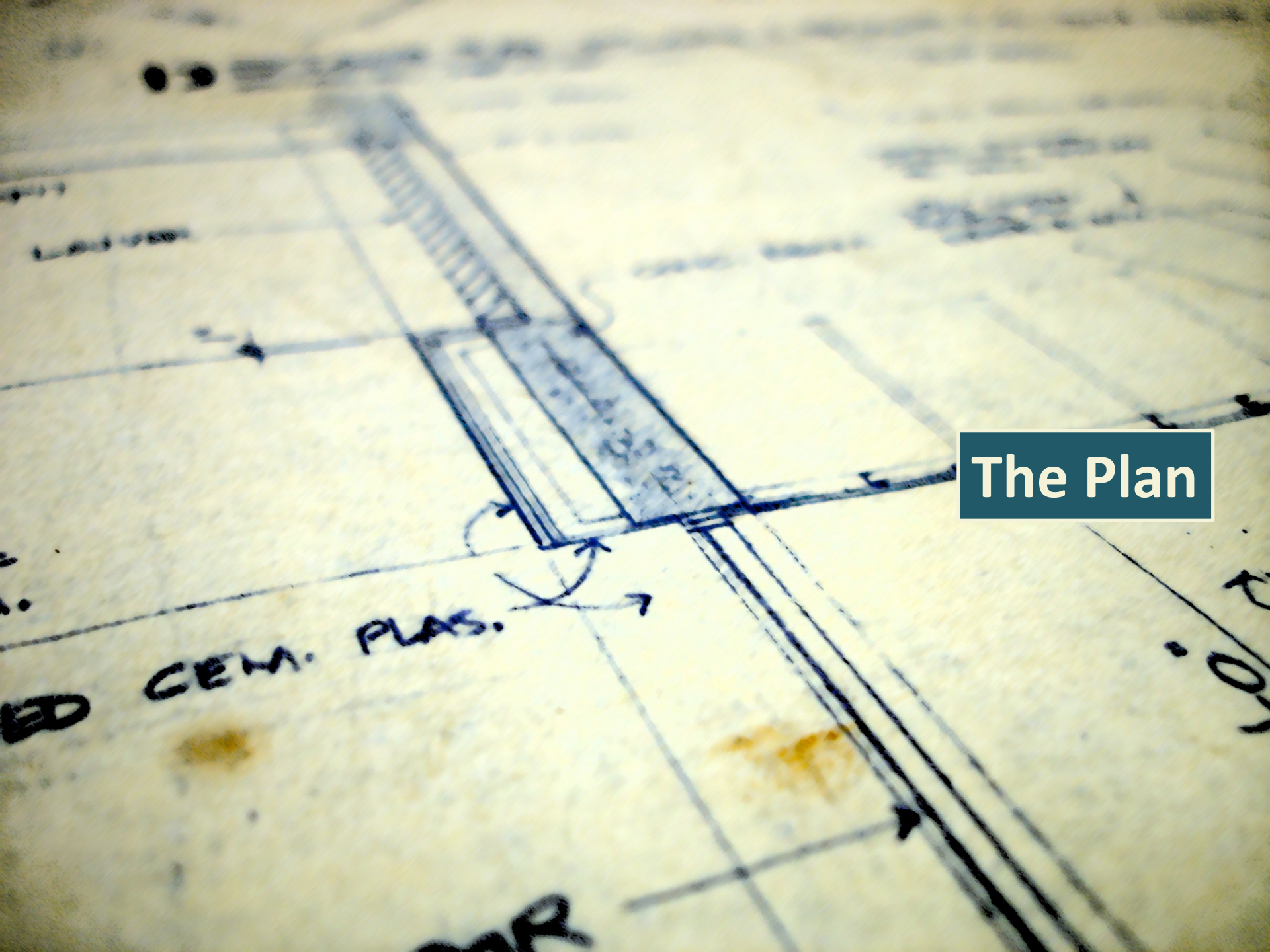
- Assistant Professor and Teaching and Research Librarian at Nicholson Library.
- Taught in public schools for eight years as an instructional assistant, doing small group and one-on-one learning interventions across the subject areas.
- Frequently collaborates with other faculty instructors as a teaching librarian.
- Had collaborated with the instructor who was on sabbatical in previous semesters.



Context

The Class

- EDUC 302: Diversity and Inclusion
- “A broad interdisciplinary examination of the school-society relationship in the United States and of the many issues embedded in this relationship including equal opportunity, students with special needs, human diversity, ideology, politics, and social change.” (Linfield 2015-16 Course Catalog)



The Plan

The (Initial) Plan

- Same structure that had worked in previous semesters with the other faculty member.
- Two library sessions, conducted mostly by Patrick

The (Initial) Plan

- First Session: Evaluating information resources, focusing on:
 - Identifying scholarly sources
 - Recognizing different types of peer-reviewed material within the Education field
 - Gauging for relevance and where one is in the research process



The (Initial) Plan

- Second Session: Using databases and search tools
 - Search strategies
 - Ways to narrow or broaden a search
 - Practical, logistically-based



The (Initial) Plan

- Both sessions included opportunities for students to practice what they learned.
- Completed the first session. Students were engaged, and completed the learning activity well.

...and then it all changed!



- Students completed a wiki assignment that was designed to gather and provide background research on a variety of topics germane to the class.
- The wiki scaffolded with the final project, which was to create a research proposal and paper that would address some element of diversity in education.
- Kena noticed that student research questions seemed...
 - Stale
 - Rehashed
 - Unoriginal
 - *Like they did not engage the interest level of the students*

The students needed

- instruction in how to develop better research questions,
 - based on their level of interest, and
 - applicable to their fields of teaching.
- mentoring and individualized feedback in the process of developing good research questions.

Kena approached Patrick before the second session and asked...

“Is this something we can do?”

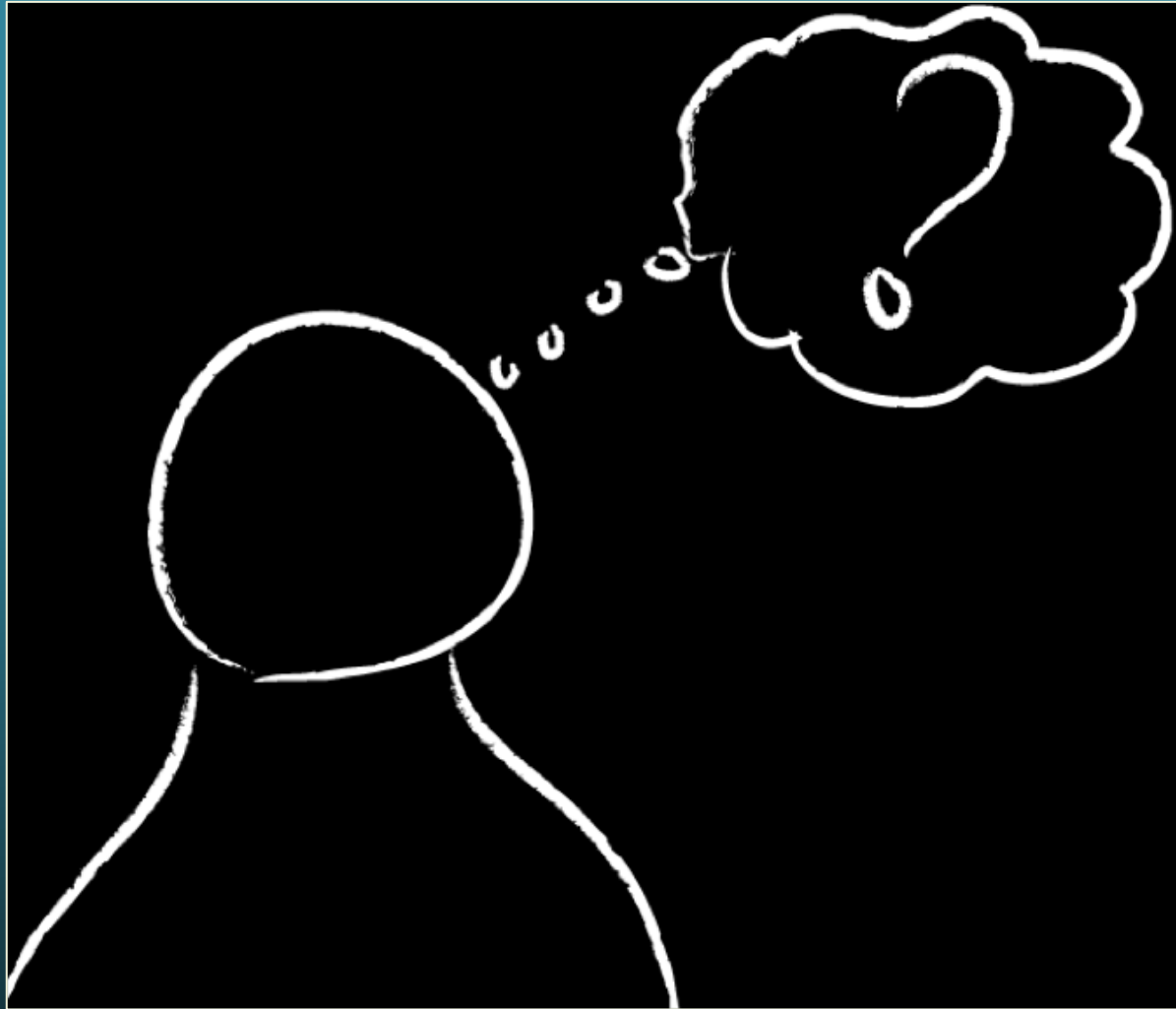
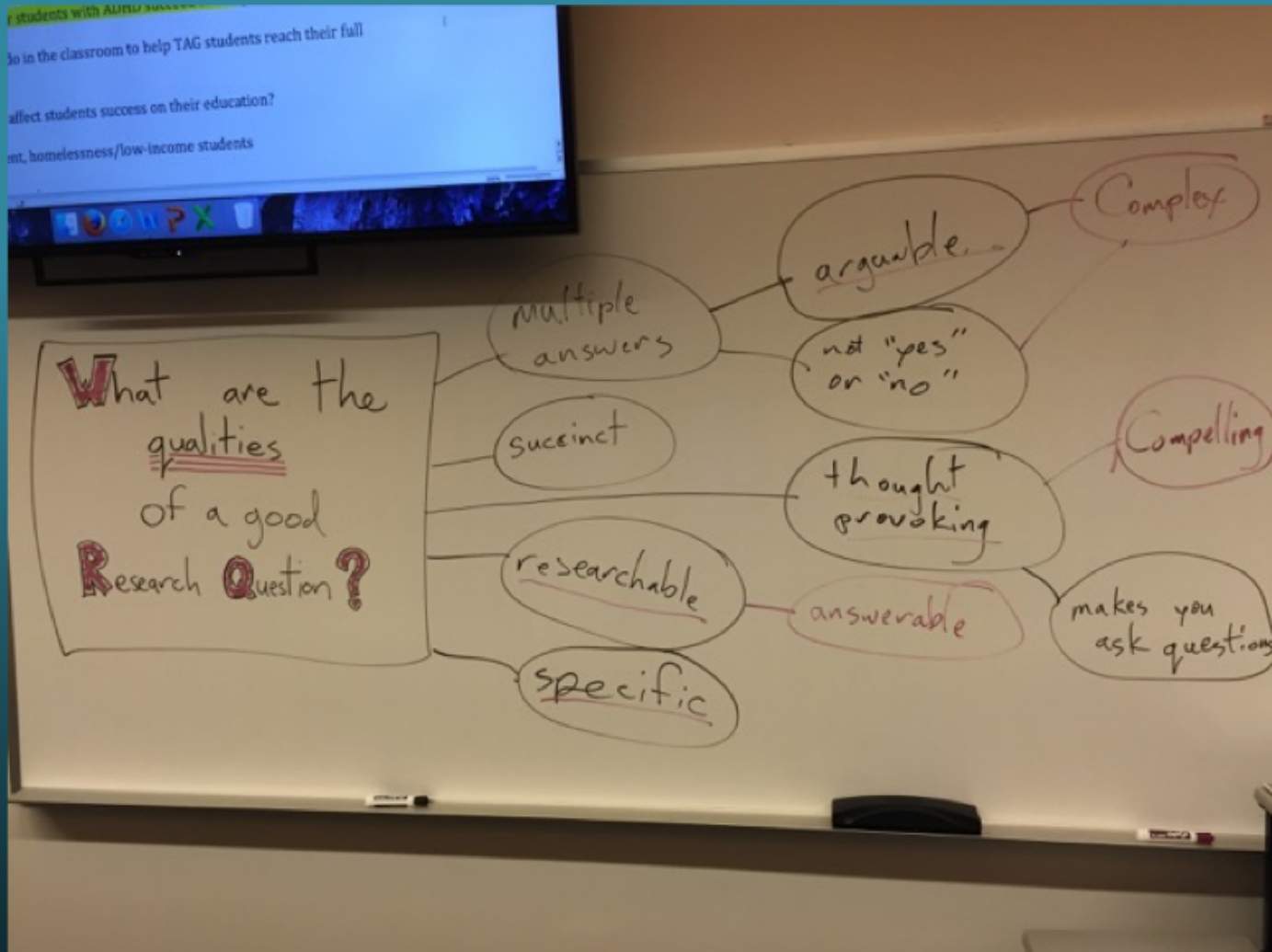


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Retrieved from <https://flic.kr/p/9s1Ka1>

Developing a Framework for Analyzing Research Questions



The (New) Plan

Patrick identified a framework of good research questions being

- compelling
- answerable
- specific
- and arguable

Kena also brought some ideas to the table, and together they created a checklist that students could use to evaluate their own questions (see handout).

The (New) Plan

The second session would now take the form of a research question workshop.

Kena would send students' developing questions to Patrick via email, and Patrick would send back feedback on their questions.

A third library session was added as a working day in the library for Patrick and Kena to address individual student needs.

“...all educators are finding that an increasing number of students come to school with any of a variety of problems that make them learners *at-risk*. Among the many ideas and options for meeting these diverse yet somehow related challenges, one that is receiving widespread attention is *co-teaching*.”

Drs. Lynne Cook & Marilyn Friend,
“Co-Teaching: Principles, Practices, and Pragmatics.”

2004

Two Methods of Co-Teaching

Team Teaching

- Second Session
- Kena and Patrick bounced back and forth, modelling the process of developing a research question from two different perspectives and answering student questions.
- The lesson was structured and conducted on a “To-With-By” model (I do it – We do it – You do it).
- Taught the same content together, at the same time, in the same space.

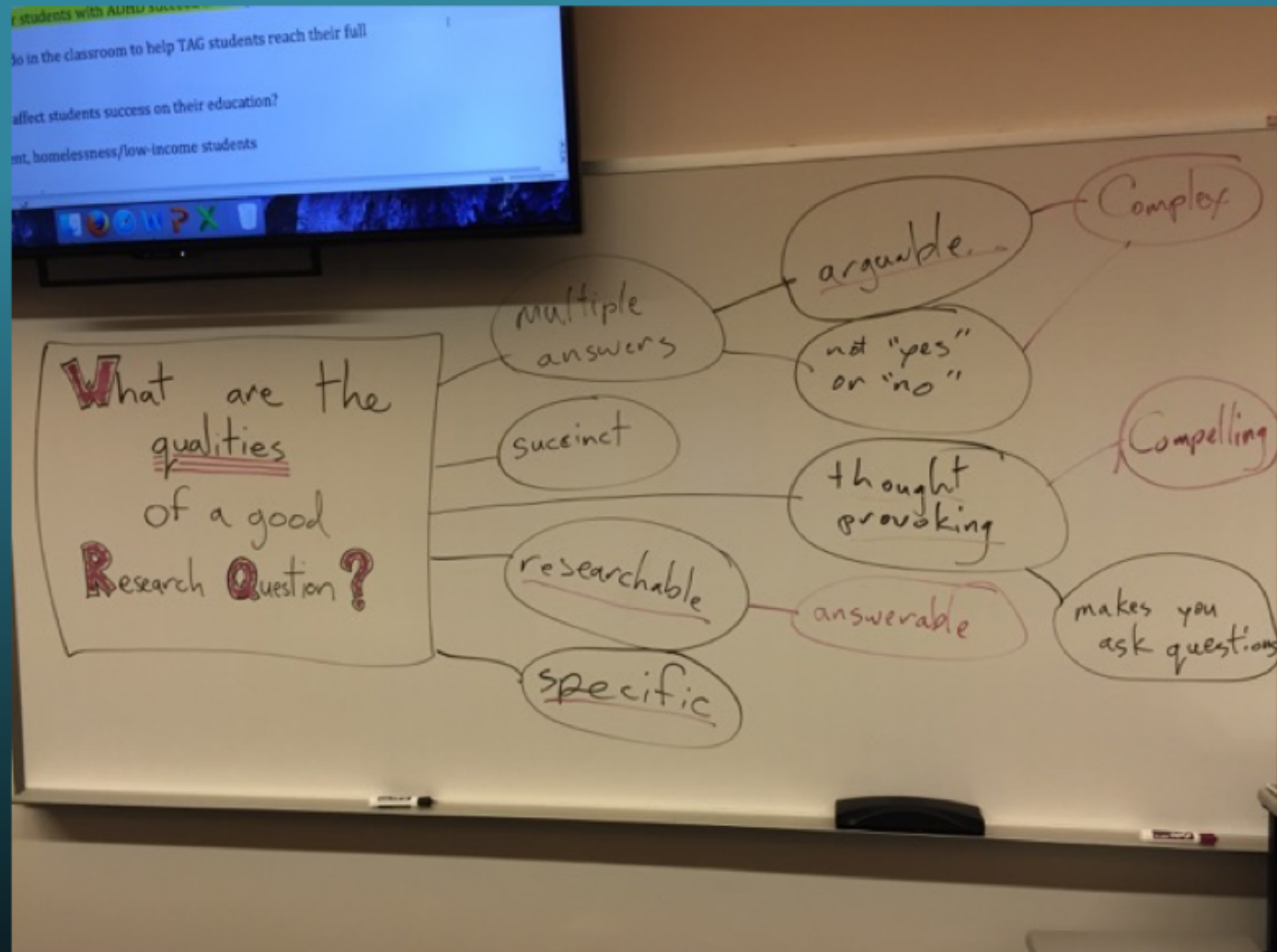
Parallel Teaching

- Third Session
- Kena and Patrick drifted as the students worked, offering them individualized feedback and instruction based on what they self-identified as their biggest need.
- The instruction was targeted (focusing on research questions, search techniques) but freeform and adaptive.
- Taught the same *kind of* content, but separately, in the same space.

Between the Second and Third Sessions

- Kena gathered developing research questions from the students and sent them to Patrick via email.
- Patrick gave feedback on those questions using the model he and Kena developed.
- Patrick sent the feedback to Kena, who distributed it to students.

Group Activity: Applying a Framework for Analyzing Research Questions



1. Student Question: *“1) What prevents/hinders teachers from teaching about social justice issues in the classroom?”*

“2) Do teachers fear teaching about social justice issues in the classroom because they may lose their job, may have upset parents, or may cause conflict and or issues among their fellow teachers or within their own schools?”

Student Question: *“1) What prevents/hinders teachers from teaching about social justice issues in the classroom?”*

“2) Do teachers fear teaching about social justice issues in the classroom because they may lose their job, may have upset parents, or may cause conflict and or issues among their fellow teachers or within their own schools?”

Feedback: *“Both of these questions are based on an assumption: that teachers are hindered from teaching about social justice issues in the classroom, or that they don’t do it. The first question I ask is, “Has this student actually identified this as a problem, or are they speaking from anecdotal experience?” If she has identified it, via other information sources, as a problem, then the first question is better framed, though still needs a little bit of specificity: what social justice issues does she wish to focus on? In what classrooms? The second question poses a few possibilities for what the nature of the hindrance may be, which isn’t bad, but it could be something else.”*

2. Student Question: *“Is Ritalin/Adderall actually beneficial for young, elementary aged children (K-6) with ADD/ADHD?”*

Student Question: *“Is Ritalin/Adderall actually beneficial for young, elementary aged children (K-6) with ADD/ADHD?”*

Feedback: *“This question is compelling, answerable, and specific. Unfortunately, it isn’t arguable. The question can be answered with a “yes,” “no,” “maybe,” or “I don’t know.” It lacks the complexity of a good research question, where you’re able to take a stand on one answer out of many potentially good ones, and defend it.”*

3. Student Question: *“How does bullying effect middle schools in a classroom?”*

Student Question: *“How does bullying effect middle schools in a classroom?”*

Feedback: *“This one is compelling, answerable, and arguable, but not specific enough. Is she asking how bullying affects middle schools, or middle school students? When she says “in the classroom,” does she mean what the academic effect of bullying is on students? If so, how is she proposing to measure that effect? Does bullying affect students academically, or are there other, equally important effects to consider?”*

4. Student Question: *“How does a heterosexual divorce affect students of low socioeconomic status and of color on their education in secondary education?”*

Student Question: *“How does a heterosexual divorce affect students of low socioeconomic status and of color on their education in secondary education?”*

Feedback: *“A lot of this may actually be too specific, which is a great problem to have. I’m not certain, for example, that she’s going to find much on the difference between the divorce of a heterosexual couple versus a divorce of a homosexual couple, for example – partly because the concept of a legal homosexual divorce is as new as the concept of a legal homosexual marriage. She may simply not find that terminology applied to homosexual couples in the academic literature. I do like that she names both students in poverty and students of color in the way that she does, because that opens up the possibility of finding different effects on each population. However, she also needs to specify what element of education she’s looking at: achievement, for example, or student retention, maybe.”*

5. Student Question: *“How does the administration of a school affect the school/learning environment?”*

Student Question: *“How does the administration of a school affect the school/learning environment?”*

Feedback: *“This is a good starting question. It needs a lot of specification: what level of administration? School-wide? District-wide? State-wide? What educational level? What environment: classroom? School? District? Rural or urban? It’s also not very arguable – it’s designed to yield a simple, black-or-white answer, instead of one that the student can take a stance on. Finally, there’s no problem to be addressed here, no compelling reason to answer this. He might consider looking at specific initiatives that have been instituted by administrations, at what those initiatives address, and whether any of them are more efficacious than the others. He might look at commonly reported examples of misadministration. There’s a wide range of possible directions he could still take.”*

Outcomes



Outcomes

Students began to see Patrick as a vital part of the course.

- Sought out his help on their own initiative, whether they had previously worked with him or not.
- Brought up him up in conversations with Kena as someone they should seek out for assistance.

Students were engaged in the material

- Tackled the task of developing their research questions, both in the classroom and outside it, with intensity and focus.

To-Do List

- Put Patrick's contact information in the syllabus.
- Get Patrick into the classroom earlier in the semester.
- Embed
 - Introduce Patrick as a research expert in, and vital part of, the course – establish parity between him and the instructor of record (Cook & Friend, 2004).
 - Break out of the library and conduct targeted sessions in the students' home classroom.
 - Encourage students to contact Patrick directly with questions about research and the research process.
- Establish the librarian, not as a guest lecturer, but as a *co-teacher*.

Questions/Sharing Out