



# INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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## *The Great Cookbook Adventure*

Introducing the concept of diversity into a community college classroom in a rural setting is a challenge! Because of that, my approach to diversity has taken on a different perspective.

In addition to the traditional assessing of learning styles and discovering our right and left brains, I struggled to address diversity in an unconventional way. So in an attempt to *really know* more about my students, I was inspired to delve into their lives without being intrusive.

Why, you may ask. Through the years I have encountered scores of students, all of different ages and from various sections of the country and parts of the world. Each student brings distinguishing characteristics. Yet by having students in class just once a week, there is little for me or the students to know about one another. Looking at the class roster, the differences in individuals are only characterized by names.

As a result, noteworthy aspects of students' lives do not stand out. It is because of that dilemma that I realized I needed a method that would help us know more about one another without threatening our privacy.

Thus, *The Great Cookbook Adventure* was born and became our vehicle for accomplishing this awareness. Each semester, as part of the diversity chapter, I ask every student to turn in his or her family's favorite recipe. In addition, they are to write some information denoting their family's ethnicity and origins, and who in their family was responsible for the recipe. I request that these recipes be handed in via e-mail. In that way, even the most novice of computer users is assigned a hotmail account to accomplish this assignment. Thus, they wet their feet in cyberworld!

Then at the end of the semester, my office staff compiles the recipes into one giant book with all the recipes from every class section. Students who are "graduates" of the student success classes receive their own copy of the recipe book.

Over the past semesters, I have received many marvelous recipes, and the titles of the recipes tell something of the students' backgrounds. One young man offered a recipe from his grandmother who grew up in poverty in the 1920's in New York City. Poor

Man's Bread was made from dried bread crumbs, stale buns, and biscuits soaked in milk overnight. Added to that were raisins, cinnamon, butter, and eggs; and then all were cooked to make a new loaf of bread!

A student from Bosnia donated Cevapacici, an authentic Bosnian dish that combines veal and lamb. A student from North Carolina contributed a recipe that was a product of her background—Cherokee/Arapahoe Indian and African-American. Her contribution was homemade Dump Cake with an abundance of peaches and nuts.

Other recipe titles have included Popping John, Mocha Tort from England, Mom's Barbecue Sauce, Pig Pinwheels, Biscochitos, Caribbean Curried Bananas, and Christmas Stolen, a German recipe passed down from one student's family for 75 years. We also had Louisiana Gumbo from an African-American/Creole/Cherokee Indian background.

Those recipes and our talks in class about them have revealed more of the students than I used to see on our once-a-week, in-class encounters. The many recipes give me a window on all my students' lives and the rich heritage of their backgrounds. But by seeing the recipes, I can appreciate more fully the deep, notable, and outstanding characteristics that make my students the unique individuals they are. In turn, I find that I appreciate them even more!

By the way, each semester the recipe books make for a very hot commodity around campus. Martha Stewart and Julia Child might really be interested!

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## GED Bowl

Motivating students to register for a GED program is not a problem because they know the value of a high school diploma and its equivalency. They know they need the credentials to get jobs. The challenge is to motivate them to continue formal education after they have received the GED; maintaining enthusiasm and learning momentum is important.

At Wright College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago, we created a GED academic bowl to incorporate fun and creativity with learning, and to establish a way to recognize outstanding GED students and enhance the bridging of GED students to credit programs. It was the first academic bowl ever to be presented in Chicago for GED students.

The academic bowl, which emphasized knowledge and recall, was presented in a three-round game format and included prizes. Students who participated ranged in age from 17 to 50. All had indicated their interest in the academic bowl before they were designated as participants.

Players were selected by adult educators with the requirement that they be registered and active in advanced-level GED classes. Criteria for selection included regular class attendance, test scores, and the ability to be present for each of the three levels of the competition. Twenty-seven students were chosen to compete in nine teams comprised of three students each. Instructors served as coaches for their own students.

Questions were taken from the five subject areas covered on the GED test: writing, social studies, science, literature, and math. Questions were of the short-answer variety. Much of the material used came from the Advanced Contemporary GED text, as well as other published texts.

Two preliminary rounds took place on consecutive days at Wright College's Center for Lifelong Learning campus, where GED classes are offered. By holding these rounds on the GED students' home campus, an atmosphere of comfortable familiarity was provided as the competition began.

The final round took place on the third day in a theater on the school's credit class campus, a mile away. We chose that campus for the final round so that the students could become familiar with the place where they might continue their education. The school's theater provided an ideal setting because there was ample room for a large audience. Families, friends, and students filled the seating area to capacity. The two competing teams sat at facing tables on the stage,

which was decorated with school colors of blue and white. Sprays of blue and white balloons added a festive touch. The questioner's podium was in the middle. A scorekeeper was on the stage as well and kept the score on a large white board.

After a period of questions and correct answers, followed by cheers from the enthusiastic audience, a 17-year-old woman from Pakistan led her team to victory by correctly defining the theatrical tragedy. Her teammates were a 24-year-old woman from the former Czech Republic and a 21-year-old male native Chicagoan. The runner-up team was comprised of native Chicagoans—a 19-year-old woman and two men, aged 27 and 47.

We awarded each member of the winning team the \$100 prize immediately after they won, so parents and friends could witness the presentation. Each member of the runner-up team received a Wright College sweatshirt.

Wright's GED academic bowl was so successful it has become an annual event.

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