**Reevaluating Research Strategies for 9-12th graders**

**English**

This lesson was a pause in an 11-12th grade senior project. Part of the project was to research their area of interest and write a 4,000+ word research paper. This senior project includes a performance product. They are to choose to learn something they are interested in but not well acquainted with, research it, study with a mentor, and learn how to do it. At this point in the project, they had picked their research topic, identified at least 7 academically viable resources, and were developing an outline.

Unfortunately, along the way, they had become disorganized and confused.

Objectives:

* Students will clearly identify their objectives for the research paper and justify those objectives in relationship to the whole project’s goals.
* Students will identify 3 zones of research for their study, and explain why those zones matched what they would need to learn to move forward with their overall goals.
* Students would help each other analyze and strategize to improve their research plans.

**Step 1:**

Present reflections from Julie Morgenstern’s *Organizing From the Inside Out* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004), the text from the Heritage Institute’s course by the same name.

In Julie Morgenstern’s *Organizing From the Inside Out,* she emphasized that organizational strategies to reorder one’s spaces are far more effective if the person himself/herself recognizes his/her normal organizational goals and existing interests first, for then the client can develop something he/she will relate to naturally and follow through. Julie asked her clients to pick “zones” to work in, and narrow their focus to an area wherein they could have success.

First, Julie asked her clients to record *why* they wanted to reorganize that zone, and to assess what their goals were. One woman was in constant conflict with her husband about where she put things. In one example, she focused on the zone of her bedroom. Normally, she left her shoes on the floor around the bed. Her husband hated climbing around the shoes to get in and out of bed. She herself got frustrated with having to crawl underneath the bed to retrieve partner shoes. They had put a good shoe rack in the closet across the room, but she never used it. Julie Morgenstern pointed out that the woman had a place she was interested in putting her shoes already—the area by her bed. Julie helped the woman find a great shoe stand she could place there, by her bed. From then on, her shoes were off the floor and neatly placed in their rack. Her husband no longer had to climb into bed over piles of shoes, and she no longer had to search under the bed for missing shoes. Julie helped the woman secure her motives, recognize her interests, and develop an improved plan that maximized both her motives and her interests and habits.

Explain to the students that they also needed to determine anew their goals for their papers, and to pick three affiliated zones as the focus of their learning, identifying their interests.

**Step 2:**

Each student writes his or her goals for the research paper at the bottom of the outline form, where it will be before them throughout their research.

**Step 3:**

That being done, they present to their peers their goals, and the three main zones of research they have decided as the focus of their research.

Since all the students know what the others are hoping to do in their senior projects, they need little prompting to understand what their peers are presenting.

This is the time for peer feedback along two main lines of discussion:

1. Did the presenting student word his/her goals effectively, matching his/her long-term project outcomes? How can that be worded more precisely and accurately to what the student himself wants to learn?

2. Did the student determine 3 zones of research that knit together to one outcome of learning? Do those topics match his/her goals and interests?

**Step 4:**

Each student identifies what he or she needs to do to improve in the wording of the goals and the selection of research “zones”. For homework, each one will correct his/her three main topics for research, and come to class with at least seven academically viable resources (written by or published by professionals in the field, or from publically reliable resources like government agencies), so they can complete the details of their outlines.

**Results:**

At first my students did not understand what Julie Morgenstern’s ideas had to do with their research papers. However, once they wrote their goals out and shared their goals and three “zones” or main topics of research for their papers, they quickly saw how they had been derailed from their desired goals by other people. Sometimes it was the emphasis of the authors of their resources. Sometimes it was ideas from peers, parents, or the teacher, trying to help them come up with ideas. Sometimes it was just fuzzy thinking. They had disconnected from their own interests.

However, as they discussed and worked together, they quickly recognized where they had lost track of their own goals and purposes. They were clear of mind, and eager to continue their projects after that class, working to reset their zones of research appropriately.