**Dossier**

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# Evidence Provided by the Nominees

Our team teaching dossier includes our team teaching philosophy, definition of team teaching and learning, and evidence of high impact strategies that demonstrate excellence. We provide evidence through critical reflection, feedback from students and colleagues, and also the research of influential scholars. Specific phrases that illustrate how our signature pedagogies, philosophies, and strategies live in our team-teaching practice are highlighted in bold throughout this document.

## Team Teaching Philosophy

### Personal Context of Teaching

Our definition of teaching and learning would be difficult to achieve in a one-instructor classroom. Our team teaching approach ensures that we are **modelling what we wish to instruct our students**. We teach in a program titled Collaborative Creativity & Design Thinking for Innovation. As a teaching team, we have an opportunity to **use theory and research on collaboration to drive our collective decisions** as a teaching team, as “collaborative development is a foundational developmental strand in the ecology of creative development” (Kelly, 2016, p. 11). Creativity, collaboration, and design thinking require significant levels of risk from its practitioners. In collaborating and offering creative ideas in a group, individuals must offer ideas that could potentially be rejected, which tends to feel like a big risk for many. But these moments of risk often result in big rewards for those who take them, and in retrospect are often the moments of most significant learning. In order to foster a learning environment where risks may be taken, great care must be put into the design of this environment, fostering a place where “all ideas are valued and all participants can engage in collective innovation and invention without fear, anxiety, and corresponding resultant dissociation” (Kelly, 2016, p. 12).

We understand collaboration to be different than cooperation, and draw on insight from a video produced by Edutopia (2008) called *Pixar’s Randy Nelson on the Collaborative Age*. “Collaboration … means amplification. The amplification you get by connecting up a bunch of human beings who are listening to each other, interested in each other, bring separate depth to the problem, bring breadth that gives them interest in the entire solution, allows them to communicate on multiple different levels, verbally, in writing, in feeling, in acting, in pictures; and in all those ways, finding the most articulate way to get a high fidelity notion across to a broad range of people so they can each pull on the right lever.” We **collaborate to design a learning environment** that allows each of our graduate students to pull on the right lever. This begins with our team teaching relationship. In the same video, Nelson discusses a concept borrowed from improvisational theatre called “plussing” (Edutopia, 2008). Plussing means that instead of judging an idea that’s offered as good or bad, it is built upon, added to, and amplified. Our collaborative partnership is one where plussing is a strict norm. When building our course outline, learning tasks, teaching, and facilitating discussions and learning tasks, **we are always plussing one another**. We bring our unique life and professional experiences, expertise, and ideas to our shared table, and because of this norm, the resulting experiences are **much greater, more complex, more authentic** than they would be if we had not collaborated.

### Definition of Team Teaching and Learning

Our working definition of teaching and learning is centred on the concept that post-secondary learning in the field of education should push at the boundaries of what is possible, **with the goal of transforming learning for teachers**, which will, in turn, transform learning for their students in their K−12 settings. Much of our work is rooted in the overarching idea of shifting school culture through the shifting of pedagogy. We maintain that when teachers see themselves as designers, they are capable of being agents of change and thus, sharing this transformative vision with their students. For teachers to see themselves as designers, they must engage in design, both in the sense of designing something for others, but also as **co-designing their own learning experience** throughout the week with their instructors. This concept becomes a key piece of our view of learners, which we explore in detail below.

Research in effective professional learning for teachers reflects this approach: Timperley (2011) has studied teacher training extensively, and has found that what makes the biggest impact in classroom practice is “the knowledge and skills learned as a result of engagement in the activity or process” (p. 6). The need for teachers to engage in an experiential process to truly integrate new understanding into their theoretical teaching framework finds an easy partnership with concepts underlying creativity. Kelly (2012) asserts that the “creative development of the educator must be greater than that of the learner to enable an educational culture of creativity” (p.25). In order to lead students in creative work, their teachers must have engaged in creative work as well. Incorporating creativity into K−12 classrooms has the ability to transform learning, shifting from a traditional model of education focused on knowledge consumption, and moving towards an approach where “work students are asked to undertake is worthy of their time and attention” (Friesen, 2009, p. 5). In this vein, the design of our learning tasks asks our graduate students to **engage in creative work, where they engage as action researchers with their own creative development through these tasks, tracking their own growth**.

The kind of transformational learning that we engage our graduate students in is “about change—dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live” (“Transformational Learning,” 2007, para. 2). Experience is the beginning of this shift, but must also allow students to “critically self-examine the assumptions and beliefs that have structured how the experience has been interpreted” (“Transformational Learning,” 2007, para. 13). In our course, “Social Innovation, Human-Centred Design, and Entrepreneurship,” our graduate students engage in an **experiential task where they use the human-centred design process to explore and understand a social issue, and ideate solutions to the problem, ultimately designing one solution to prototype and test as a social entrepreneurship**. Every component of the course is intentionally designed to challenge learners to develop their **critical thinking and independent learning abilities in the midst of embodied collaboration**. Graduate students work together in groups during an intensive week-long experiential process, giving them first-hand experience with the design process and creative development. This ensures that teachers have direct experience in the kind of learning they wish to facilitate for their own learners. Throughout this process, our **graduate students are documenting their learning and reflecting on their significant learnings**. Our **assessment practices support the importance of this reflection**; a key assessment task is for students to curate their reflection and identify landmark moments of significant personal transformation.

While we have co-written many articles together that serve as a **convergence of our current work at a certain point in time**, one chapter published in the book *Canadian Curriculum Studies: a Metissage of Inspiration/Imagination/Interconnection* stands out as how reflexive reflection drives our collaborative practice. “Conversations in a Curriculum of Tension” (Bartlett & Quinn, 2018) describes the roots of how our long-term partnership is grounded in literature and situated within Ted Aoki’s (1987/2005) indwelling in the tension and space between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. He wrote that “to be alive is to be appropriately tensioned and ...to be tensionless, like a limp violin string is to be dead (Aoki, 1987/2005, p. 360). The process of writing this chapter led to our discovery that we seek tension in our practice. We wondered why the notion of tension was so uncomfortable for many and yet exhilarating and necessary for us. In describing our partnership, we wrote:

Ours is a story of relationship, discomfort, questioning, and messy joy. It is only through the combined text messages, conversation, writing as inquiry, and reading of curriculum studies theory that we have been able to arrive at the topic, and indeed find clarity in the question: Why do we seek tension in our practice? (p. 201).

As we think about school culture and teacher practice, we write about themes of time, community, collaboration, and empowering educators and learners as a critical reflection to deepen our teaching practice (see, for example, Quinn et al, 2018). We continue to impact the scholarly record in the areas of collaboration and team teaching. For example, we have submitted a proposal to an upcoming Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies conference with 5 students from our graduate class to present the work and learning emerging from this course. We aim to share stories of radical collaboration between instructors and students and how this impacts learning. This demonstrates our **commitment to advancing scholarly team teaching practices** not only for others in the Academy, but also for the benefit of our own students’ continued scholarship.

The concept of indwelling in the space between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived permeates the learning we design for our graduate students (Aoki, 1987/2005). We design learning tasks, such as the social innovation project, with careful intention, **scaffolding the design process** so our students can experience empathy, define the problem and understand it from the point of view of the people who experience it, ideate potential solutions, and prototype and test their solution with users. However, we leave this process open enough to allow for the unexpected that happens when planned curriculum encounters the contexts, experiences, and knowledge that learners bring. The design process and creativity demands its creators embrace ambiguity, which tends to create tension. We insist on making room for tension and ambiguity. For many, this ambiguity can feel uncomfortable. We recognize this, and understand one of our **key roles in the graduate classroom is to support our learners through this discomfort**. Because of our own experience in the creative process and design thinking, we know that this discomfort often brings the best learning with it. We **offer this support** to our students as they work through the design process in relation to their own topic. One of our key teaching strategies is small group facilitated learning. We sit together with small groups as they puzzle through a challenge that has no clear solution. We ask probing questions, suggest resources, and listen with heart. Many of our students have commented about this teaching strategy as one of the things that advanced their learning the most.

### View of the Learner

It is our expectation that each student will grow and progress, relative to their own previous work. In our own practice, **reflexive reflection has helped us to grow by reflecting back to determine next steps**. We have built the practice of reflection into the fabric of the course in the hopes that this will deepen learning and begin to shift pedagogy. As students uncover their learning through carefully chosen and curated “landmark moments,” we, as instructors, get a comprehensive understanding of the collective strength of the learning community, and are then able to make adjustments based on the needs of the learner. The **goal of this learning task is clearly communicated to students:** reflecting on their own creative growth over time, student progress is **assessed relative to their own previous experience**.

Educational philosopher Gert Biesta (2013) understands that “communication emerges as an encounter between subjects, not an exchange between objects—so that it comes with all the risk and unpredictability that is at stake in such encounters” (p. 35). It is within this risk and unpredictability that we articulate our understanding of the learner. We design experiences that **unfold from one to the other through intentionally ambiguous, real-life circumstances where students need to depend on the power of collaboration, and also to embrace risk in their teaching practice**. We build these scaffolded experiences so that our students can take this immersive learning back to their own contexts.

It is impossible to discuss the view of the learner in the context of a post-secondary program in a faculty of education without discussing the role of the teacher. Teaching and learning are so fundamentally intertwined that any changes in one will undoubtedly affect the other. Biesta (2013) helps us understand the relationship between teaching and learning: “Whether someone will be taught by what the teacher teaches lies beyond the control and power of the teacher…, which doesn’t mean, though, that it doesn’t matter what the teacher does.” (p. 54). With our combined experience across multiple settings, we understand that our view of teaching and learning goes beyond the parameters of traditional concepts of teaching and learning. The team teaching strategies we employ are designed precisely to increase the likelihood that the “gift of teaching is received” (Biesta, 2013, p. 54). Looking to the image of the gift, we use our **expertise in creativity and design to create the conditions for learners to experience this transformational learning together as co-designers**. For example, in the learning tasks we design, student voice and choice are at the centre of the design. In our social innovation project, students co-design this task with us as they bring their own unique interests, talents, and experiences in the form of ideas, connections, and possibilities. That is not to say that goals and expectations are not clear to students. The design thinking process provides students with a scaffolded process that provides **predictability within this ambiguity**.

## Team Teaching Strategies

Our concept of teaching strategies lies within an understanding that teaching strategies show up in our teaching philosophy as ways of being and knowing. These may not be immediately recognizable as teaching strategies, but they are **carefully and deliberately built into every learning task, activity, and assessment** we designed. Below, we explore three such ways of being: experiential learning, building relationships, and the beauty of the Venn diagram. In each section, we paint a picture using qualitative narrative description, indicated by italicized text.

### Experiential Learning

*On the afternoon of Day 5 of the five-day course Human-centred Design, Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, students trickled in to the room after an exciting morning. The groups had been out in the field, testing their prototype with real people in the communities where their social problem showed up. After having spent the morning immersed in conversation and in observation of humans interacting with their design, they were greeted with the sight of a table piled with paint and paintbrushes, X-acto knives, buckets of water, and oil pastels. An invitation was displayed on the screens around the room:*

*Give it what it needs.*

*Without constraints, add what’s needed next.*

*Reflect: What “stories [did] these experiences … leave behind?” (Barry, 2014, p. 159)*

*Throughout the week, our group engaged in the daily exercise of responding to a creative provocation and making something with cardboard within a specific set of constraints. This whole-group creative time set the tone each morning for a day filled with challenges, collaboration, struggles, and triumphs as each group progressed through the human-centred design process to create a social innovation project that impacted the community. On Day 5, we reversed the order, starting with their experience in the field, and returning to connect with the whole group in creation. For the final day, the cardboard sculptures they had created, reworked, and transformed through the week were given final limitless flair.*

*Discussion between classmates as they dipped their paintbrushes and sliced and diced pieces of cardboard created an energetic hum in the room. We circulated, visiting the organic groups that had formed, expressing delight at unexpected creations and surprise with unhindered creativity. When the energy in the room waned, we brought everyone together in circle and asked the students to reflect on the question on the board. Reflections were deep and impactful. Students shared the connections they made between these creative warm ups that we did each day and the experiences they had in interaction with community. They* ***remarked on the importance of building in time for experience****—that nothing replaces the kind of knowledge that is constructed when a person engages with a process, like the creative process or the design process.*

The incorporation of this active, creative, collaborative warm up was necessary for our students to have a deep foundational experience of living creative development. These warm ups provide a different context and contrast to the kinds of experiential learning students engage in when they design their social innovation. Both are very important in allowing diverse experiences so students can see how design lives in different contexts. We believe that a creative disposition and the process of human-centred design is active and requires practice. In a reference letter, Dr. Robert Kelly wrote that “the learning tasks Erin and Stephanie design are different from many other tasks many post-secondary students engage in, in that these tasks take them outside the walls of the classroom and into the world around them” (personal communication, January 2019, Dr. Robert Kelly). Our course helps to build muscle memory for educators to draw upon when they return to their busy classrooms and begin to experiment with their students. One student commented in the USRI survey that “this course has presented a new way of teaching and learning. This active process has allowed me to live the experience I hope to pass on to my students.” The experiential nature of the course allows students to **access much deeper learning than they would writing, or reading about design thinking in a book**.

This would have been far less impactful, if not impossible, without team teaching. The team teaching partnership allowed us to **take more risks and make choices within the vulnerability of the uncertainty of the situation**. We can take these risks because we can support each other in taking them. Our collective experience in design allows us to come to this course with the knowledge that trusting the process will end in positive results. This is a lesson that unexperienced designers do not understand. It is only through practice that people can understand this to be true. There was a running joke in our five day course that our ongoing motto was “trust the process!” Our students would smile when we repeated this phrase because it seemed like a meaningless cliché. Only after the week did students recognize and remark on how true this phrase is, with one student remarking in USRI comments that we “were so supportive and compassionate with the process, encouraging us to trust the process and know that we were supported, helping me to confront feelings of vulnerability and intensity and helped me grow as a learner.”

Our ultimate goal in our teaching is to offer another possibility of what education can be. Possibility is only hindered by the bounds of what we are able to imagine. Experience is the first step towards the imagining of what is possible. In Kelly (2016), John Cimino Jr. discusses educational philosopher Maxine Greene’s repeated maxim “imagination makes empathy possible” (p. 28). We designed several different ways our students could have experience with the design process, such as in the collaborative warm up, and in the interactions with community. It is **through these experiences that our students were able to gain empathy for other human beings, including their own students**.

Through our design, we carefully constructed opportunities for our students to use methods and processes to help them understand their chosen problem, the people who experienced it, and the solutions they might imagine. However, we had absolutely no idea what would occur. We did not know the experiences and perspectives our students would come with, what kinds of things they would discover when engaged in their active, community-based research, or what kinds of solutions they would imagine in response. What we did know was that **something good would come when our students experienced this process**. We knew this because of our own experiences in living the process of design and creative development, through many different contexts as students, teachers, facilitators, and instructors.

It is precisely the intersection of all these experiences, some of which were shared and some of which were independent, that allowed us to trust that this risk was worth taking. Our partnership is what allowed us to brainstorm the varied possibilities we designed for our students. We believe that for change to occur, we need to take risks to figure out how teaching and learning could look different. By setting the stage for students to take risks within a safe environment, we are, as Biesta (2013) writes, “keeping education open for the event of subjectivity to occur” (p.23). It is subjectivity that gives rise to new possibilities. This also demonstrates how our team teaching philosophy tightly connects our teaching to both literature of seminal scholars, and to living the process of creative development.

### Relations and Relationship

*We sat in our first of many sharing circles on Day 1 of the course, asking students to respond to the questions “Who am I? Where am I from? What do I care about?” Before beginning,* ***we explained that the circle asks everyone to listen with an open heart and open mind to each person who speaks****. The warm summer sunlight streamed in through the windows as one by one, students began to share a piece of themselves with the group. Some would laugh as they spoke, some would make eye contact with the group, others would hold the talking stone tightly in their hands without looking up as they shared their responses. An unspoken thread of trust began to weave the group together as they learned personal stories about each other. Connections were made between people and place as they discovered together that they were all deeply implicated by where they came from. The impact of this circle was far-reaching as students reflected that this felt different. We connected for a moment as team partners with a small look of understanding and appreciation for the feeling that the students couldn’t quite put into words...yet. This was our offering of how to learn the significance of Indigenous circle teachings and the impact that this can have on relationships in a group. Three months later in a different course, the group struggled to understand how to move forward in their next design challenge. One group member candidly pointed out that we were not in circle for this discussion, and that there wasn’t the same level of openness and trust dedicated towards finding a solution that we could all live with. Instructors and students nodded and looked around realizing that we should have moved our chairs into circle for this important conversation and hadn’t. This was a pivotal moment for the group as we vowed that all subsequent conversations would take place in circle.*

We shared the importance of circle teachings on the first day of the course. The circle offers an opportunity for sharing and consensus without hierarchy of student, teacher, or expert, allowing an open space for the wisdom and experience of each group member. Circle protocols help to **build the trust and deep listening** that is necessary both in the course content of learning the practice of human-centred design, creativity, and social innovation, and also the broader picture of teaching and learning. **In life, in research, and in teaching, we are relational.** Our way of thinking and being in the world needs to be acknowledged before building relationships with all our relations, with concepts, with ideas, and with knowledge (Wilson, 2008). Our work is participatory and transformative in nature to **honour the role of educators** **in helping empower students** who can become active agents of change in their communities and beyond. Indigenous epistemologies balance our work, locating it in place, with community and with all our relations. While we are both white settlers engaged in Indigenous work, we have worked extensively with Elders and knowledge keepers to learn Indigenous pedagogies and ways of knowing and being. We explicitly incorporate Indigenous wisdom and teachings wherever we can, and always with the guidance of the Indigenous community to maintain a respectful relationship.

*We had a discussion in circle on the morning of Day 3 to outline the flow of the day, where we connected the practice of design thinking to the course readings and offered two quotes to ground the work in the literature. We use this group time to* ***set clear goals and expectations for learning in courses and the learning activities, answering questions so that we can adjust our teaching to the needs of the students each day****. After having spent two days immersing themselves in understanding the problem that they wanted to solve, groups were getting ready to pitch their ideas to a group of entrepreneurs at the Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking. This was risky for students because it involved stepping out of the comfort zone of a typical educator, into a collision space where ideas are shared openly with community experts and* ***feedback is provided to further develop the project****. We could feel the energy in the room that morning. It was a mix of enthusiasm for their projects and their group members, anxiety for the ensuing presentation, and tentative trust in the creative process. We knew from experience that today would be what we refer to as a “roller coaster day” as students used the process of human-centred design as a guide to continue developing their projects, and wanted to both reassure and challenge groups to push past the familiar towards outcome unknown.*

We broadened the concept of collaboration from strictly a process to engage in as colleagues to one that considered **how connectivity with other people, places, and topics enriches an idea**. As our students shared their ideas with entrepreneurs from various startup and business contexts, they found great value **in connecting with people** whose life experiences are vastly different from their own. In reflection, many students remarked on how much this afternoon spent in conversation with business experts impacted their ideas for their social innovation. Students were surprised by the questions the entrepreneurs asked and the helpful **feedback they offered**. Collaborating with business experts gave them valuable lessons that they had no personal experience with, as these experts all had personal experience with the risk and reward related to launching a venture. Our students were surprised by how these conversations with entrepreneurs impacted their own concepts of their teaching practice. Several students remarked on this concept of understanding people as learning resources, and subsequently committed to making use more fully of community members in their own K−12 teaching settings. The collaboration with community has been noticed by both colleagues and students. Dr. Robert Kelly remarked, “Erin and Stephanie recognize the role that community plays in authentic and meaningful learning and make every effort to ensure that the learning that students undertake is connected with the world around them” (personal communication, January 2019, Dr. Robert Kelly). One student further explained in USRI comments that “getting into the community to conduct research was a very positive eye-opening experience for me. This action, participatory/exploratory type of research helped us to truly test our assumption/prototype. I feel empowered to continue through with our group project work, and I’m grateful for the framework and positive group work environment [our instructors have] helped establish for us.”

We leverage the concept of involving other people, community members, and places as a high impact team teaching strategy. In weaving in deliberate collision opportunities with diverse people, places, and ideas, we **create the conditions for the rich entanglement of people and ideas that creates fertile ground for innovation**.

### The Beauty of the Venn Diagram

*As instructors, we attuned ourselves to the vibe in the room, reading which groups needed us to offer them support, inspiration, understanding, and encouragement. As groups settled into their project nests, we had a quick chat to decide who we would visit first. Our approach was to immerse the whole group in the creative process, converge to* ***offer some high impact teaching connected to the literature as a whole group****, then spend large amounts of time visiting small groups to* ***observe, listen, and offer feedback*** *in the form of resources, stories, or questions, and then leave the group to consider on its own how to proceed. We visited all groups together and realized through critical reflection that we do this to maximize our team strength for the benefit of the group.*

*The groups were trying to make sense of the stories they told about the people they visited the day before, telling their groups about their moments of significant insight when conversing with people who were experiencing the social problem. One group was focusing on the homeless population in Calgary, and had just finished sharing stories about the people they had met at Alpha House, an organization that supports homeless people. They were confused by the theme that kept coming up again and again from people trying to end homelessness, which was a need for affordable housing. Sensing a need, we wheeled our chairs to join their circle. They expressed frustration at this insight, because they felt they did not have the resources to be able to address such a large issue as affordable housing. Erin posed the question, “What do you think is the thing that is preventing Calgarians from devoting the necessary resources to building affordable housing?” The group thought for a moment. One member shared an anecdote from a homeless person they had spoken to who felt misunderstood and invisible to most of society. “Empathy,” she offered. Stephanie responded, “So what you’re saying is that in order to end homelessness, it needs to become a personal issue to all of us.” With that spark, the group continued with an animated discussion about how we might make an issue that most of us do not have experience with something really and truly personal to every Calgarian, creating an imperative for action. Hearing this excited chatter, we wheeled our chairs away.*

As a teaching team, we come together fully recognizing that we have our own unique gifts and experiences, and yet, something happens when we talk and read our way through our partnership that would not happen if we worked on our own. As Biesta (2013) describes the role of the teacher, he talks about a different story to tell about teaching, saying that:

it is important that this story is being told and enacted—both within the school and within society...where teachers are not disposable and dispensable resources for learning, but where they have something to give, where they do not shy away from difficult questions and inconvenient truths, and where they work actively and consistently on the distinction between what is desired and what is desirable (p. 57).

Moving away from the idea of teacher as resource, we find that the **open communication and synergy** that is foundational to our partnership invites us to lean towards possible tensions and difficult questions, viewing them as possibilities for growth. Many team teaching partners simply divide and conquer, for the sake of efficiency, and yet we recognize that our learners benefit from our team teaching partnership as much as we do. We often colloquially refer to our partnership as “a beautiful Venn diagram,” meaning that we each bring our unique selves to the table, but where the overlap occurs is where really interesting things happen. As an ongoing part of our **critical reflection**, we continue to dig into the centre of our Venn diagram to figure out what makes it so strong, as well as to determine the benefits to both us, as teachers, and our learners.

We understand the centre of our Venn diagram as a place where **significant collaboration takes place**. Keith Sawyer (2007) focuses his research on collaboration as trying to understand the secrets of how moment-to-moment interactions are what makes a collaboration successful (p. 13). Sawyer (2007) explains these moments as a state when “members play off one another, each person’s contributions providing the spark for the next. Together, the improvisational team creates a novel, emergent product, one that’s more responsive to the changing environment and better than what anyone could have developed alone” (p. 14). This dynamic was observed by students, with one remarking that “the collaborative spirit of these two instructors permeated the class, helping us to further develop our strong connection to one another.” We intentionally visited each group together as a way of **modelling our plussing protocols**, and also to show how **active listening leads to sparks and ideas**, which can then be plussed by others. Each time that we had one of these moments with a small group, we could leave them to get back to work with the understanding that we had not just answered a question, or offered a solution, but that **collectively the instructors and the students had regained momentum together**.

Visiting each group together as a partnership formed a key teaching strategy during this course. In the design of the course, we maximized the time and space for small group discussion and instruction to occur, knowing that these conversations are what moved their work forward in the most impactful way. The **feedback we could offer students** in these small group conversations was powerful in moving learning forward. A former student wrote of the power of this formative feedback, noting “both instructors provided feedback with daily regularity. At no point during the summer did I ever feel as though I was unsure of what was expected.” Student comments in USRI surveys have reflected that the impact of these conversations meant that: “the instructors were there with us at every stage if needed to bounce ideas off of or collaborate with [and this] was extremely helpful.” Students recognized how **we became collaborators in their learning journey, co-constructing knowledge together**. They appreciated how attuned we were to the groups’ progress, noting that we were “always quick to identify when our group was struggling and knew when to come in and provide extra support.”

# Evidence Based on Students’ Perspectives

We use the data from USRI surveys as one way of improving our practice. We analyzed data from 53 student responses from 2017 and 2018. In overall section ratings, an improvement in nearly every category can be noted when comparing the data from 2017 to 2018, indicating growth over time. This growth can be attributed to our reflective practice. In teaching the course in 2017, we identified several areas of course design that prevented our students from fully engaging in the design process. For example, in 2017, we designed a learning task so groups were presenting to their peers partway through our week-long course, and comments in USRIs confirmed our suspicion that by doing so, we interrupted the flow of the design process. We **redesigned** this learning task in 2018, ensuring **feedback loops were present so groups could receive feedback throughout the design process**, rather than a formal interruption to do so halfway through. Twenty-seven students commented in open-ended USRI survey questions that this **ongoing feedback helped to push their learning forward**. For example, one commented that this ongoing assessment conversation was about “growth development, not just measurement,” **focusing on improving learning, rather than evaluating it.** Robert Kelly supports this evidence through his comment “as academic coordinator and instructor in conversation with students in the program, feedback about Stephanie and Erin’s team teaching strategies has been overwhelmingly positive” (personal communication, January 2019, Dr. Robert Kelly).

Student comments reinforce the intentions we set forth in our teaching philosophy. Several themes have emerged in analysis of the data. One significant theme that emerged was the experiential nature of our course design, with 30 students commenting favourably about this aspect. Students appreciated the ability to **construct their own understanding of the topic**, with one student commenting that “the hands-on immersive experience was vastly better than a simple content transfer course.” Most students understood the careful way we structured the course, with one noting that “we have had beautiful, scaffolded warm-ups that served as a metaphor for our work, **discussions to set goals for our groups**, check-ins, [and] freedom to do the work that matters to us. This was an extremely engaging environment.”

The experiential nature of the course design helped to **challenge students’ existing notions of teaching and learning**, with 27 students commenting on a shifting understanding of their own teaching philosophies and approaches. One student commented on the design of the learning tasks, allowing for lived experience in the process, and enhanced confidence to enact such learning with students: “This course has presented a new way of teaching and learning. This active process has allowed me to live the experience I hope to pass on to my students.”

Student comments confirmed they **understood how the teaching strategies we employed were designed to improve student learning**. The co-creation model we use to construct new learning, where students are **constantly in collaboration with each other and with us as instructors**, was noticed and appreciated by students. One student commented that “the instructors spent much time in dialogue with us, helping us through the process and **pushing our learning forward. This is a model for how grad classes (all/most classes) should be run.**”

The topic we teach requires vulnerability, and taking the risks needed to design truly innovative solutions can be very difficult. Many students spoke of embracing these challenges, one noting “I loved every minute of it—even the parts that were really challenging and had me questioning everything we were doing.” Predictably, however, some students struggled with the level of ambiguity needed by such learning. Tensions were evident through several student reflections, particularly from the 2017 data, since this was the first time we taught the course. The main area of tension was dealing with ambiguity, and challenging notions of long-held expectations of traditional school systems. Although we reiterated the assessment criteria, emphasizing the focus on the relative growth of the individual student’s creativity and reflection in relation to design process, and not the product, this concept is a difficult one to embrace. We appreciated the comments some students made about which areas of the course were most difficult and frustrating for them, and **used this feedback, along with our observations during the course, to help iterate future iterations of the course**. Noticing the need for more time in dialogue in small groups during the summer of 2017, for example, we adapted the instructional time, reducing the amount of time spent in large group and instead spent more time sitting with groups as they were working through their designs. This also gave us more time to **provide feedback as groups progressed**. One student remarked about how much this time was valued, noting that we “participated … by **setting goals and checked on goals, offering feedback, and wanted to hear from us, showing interest and care**.”

One theme that emerged from the data was the transformational nature of the course, both professionally and personally. Eighteen students referred to **significant personal and professional growth** and change throughout the week. One student remarked, “this course has been truly transformational. It questioned stereotypical notions about competition as opposed to collaboration.” Through the hands-on experience with the design process, and a focus on individual growth and development, students were amazed by their own growth in just one week: “I’ve grown considerably during our class time together and have no doubt that I will continue to grow and utilize much of this knowledge and experiences obtained through the week.” Personal growth and transformation has been a common theme in the data, such as when one student noticed that “this has changed the notions I had about myself and others and has made me question everything (in a good way.)” It is our belief that graduate school can be professionally and personally life-changing. We are humbled to know that with the scaffolded supportive environment we strove to create, **many of our students were able to engage deeply enough with their learning so as to be changed**.

## Team Teaching is a Gift

The creation of this teaching dossier invited us to humbly reflect on our teaching philosophy in relation to scholarly writing, and the evidence from URSI evaluations of what makes our team teaching practice innovative and impactful. The act of working together on this nomination package brings us to the realization that to team teach is a gift. Team teaching allows us time to **critically reflect on our practice together, and incorporate student feedback into our next iterations**. But not only does this reflective practice allow us to consistently improve learning for our students, but it leads us to become better teachers, and, in fact, better human beings. The act of constantly discussing, writing about, and reflecting on what we do and why we do it creates a dynamic where we are shifting, evolving, and growing our own pedagogy and our ability to articulate our teaching philosophies, and the impact these have on improving learning for our students and for our profession as a whole. We consciously and simultaneously accept this gift of time and reflection and offer it to our students so that they can, in turn, share this gift with their colleagues and students.

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