**Using the 3-2-1 Approach for Journal Entries**

**Background:**

Dr. Geraldine Van Gyn, professor of *in the School of Exercise Science at the University of Victoria published an article titled* “[The Little Assignment with the Big Impact: Reading, Writing, Critical Reflection, and Meaningful Discussion](http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/instructional-design/the-little-assignment-with-the-big-impact-reading-writing-critical-reflection-and-meaningful-discussion/)” that appeared in the June 2013 newsletter of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. The article focuses on a short, simple [assignment](http://web.uri.edu/assessment/files/Purposeful-Reading-Report-11.pdf) designed to increase student engagement and participation—known as the “3-2-1 report.” You can also view the [instructions for an extended version](http://www.facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/images/Purposeful-Reading_The-Extended-321-Process.pdf) of Dr. Van Gyn’s assignment.

Dr. Van Gyn’s assignment is assessed using a [simple rubric](http://www.facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/images/Criteria-for-Purposeful-Reading-Assignment.pdf). While the assignment is short and simple, results collected by Dr. Van Gyn demonstrate that the approach is quite effective at engaging and empowering students to think, act, and respond more critically. It has been used in both undergraduate and graduate level courses.

**Adapting the 3-2-1 Approach for Engaged Courses:**

There are many ways that this assignment could be adapted to fit the context of courses that have community components. Here is one example for adjusting the three step process:

* 1. Read assignments. Choose and describe two aspects you found most important or interesting. Describe why these two aspects struck you as interesting or important. Then choose one additional aspect of the reading that confused you or that you did not understand. Explain to the best of your ability what is unclear or confusing about this aspect of the reading. Aspects might include concepts, theories, or examples.
  2. Identify two examples from your community experience that relate to the readings in some way. These might include or expand on the aspects discussed in step 1. Provide an explanation for how the experiences relate, such as by comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between the community situation and the theory in the reading.
  3. Pose a question either to the author of the reading or to your supervisor at the community partner site. The question can expand on one of the aspects above or focus on something new. It should reflect your curiosity to learn more about the topic or your ideas about the potential implications or applications of the reading’s content.

An adapted rubric could then be developed to fit this version of the assignment. The rubric should be shared with students to provide clear expectations.

**Facilitating the adapted assignment:**

This assignment provides considerable structure for students to integrate readings with the community component of the course. Now, consider the format that might make facilitation easiest and relate most closely to learning outcomes. A couple of ideas include:

* Blackboard’s Online Journaling: This allows students to determine if they prefer postings to be public or private and facilitates easy submission.
* VoiceThread: For courses that aim to develop collaborative skills or presentation skills, this option can facilitate reflection and promote these skills at the same time. The comments feature allows students to provide feedback to each other.