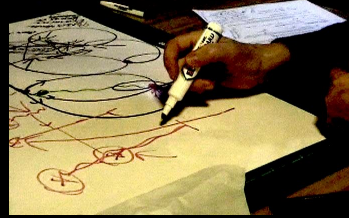




Joe Duggan
Cascadia College

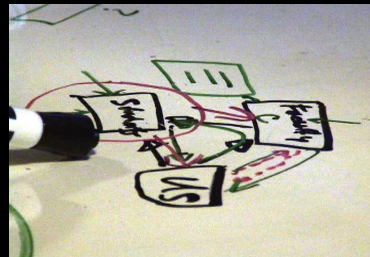


Christine Martin
Pierce College

State Assessment Liaisons



Klint Hull
Lower Columbia College

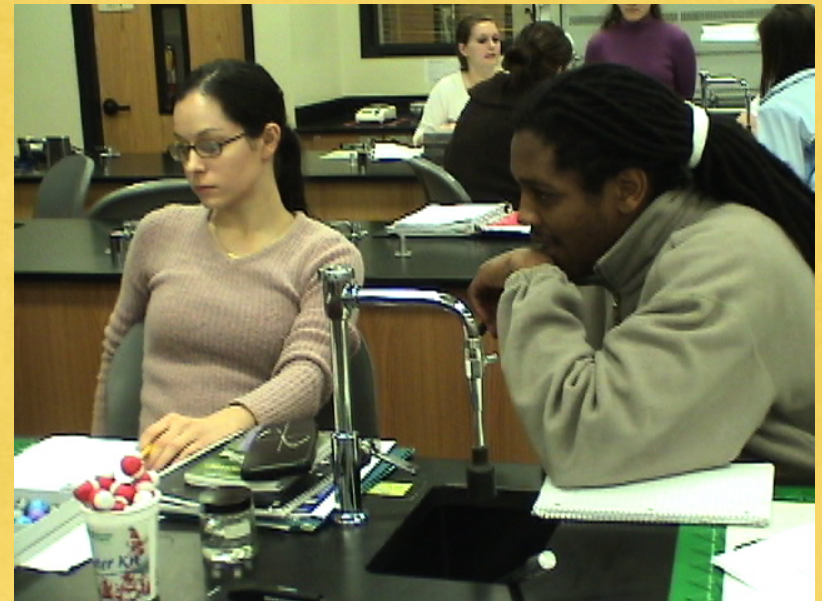
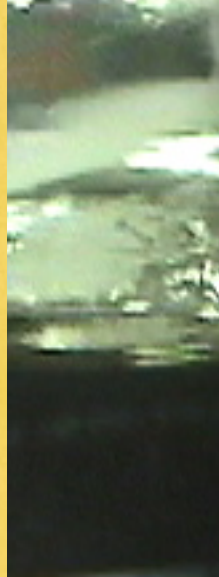


Robin Jeffers
Bellevue College

Representing Sodium Sulfate in Water

Dissociation

After Watching the Students





Joe: What I saw was people with knowledge of different parts of the problem just throwing things out, pretty much at random, having it shot back and reinterpreted until eventually they had the right answer.



Robin: Did they get the right answer?



Christine: So there is a problem and four students.



Klint: I am not sure that getting the right answer was important in this. We are seeing how they are learning.



Klint: If we were really interested in helping them find the right answers, we would look at how they are learning and where their thinking is being led astray. We would use this as a tool to look at how we set up our activities, so they can get to that point more effectively.



Klint: I do a lot of work with peer groups. If peer groups are really working well, then students take risks. They talk to each other, and they are OK with making mistakes in the service of getting to some learning experience.



Robin: Everyone seemed to be willing to say, “Let’s try this. Let’s try this.” But the teacher in me thinks about the fact that they are not secure in their knowledge at this point. They can easily be shot down.



Christine: I see it as this construction of knowledge. As each piece was being thrown in, people were considering it or not considering it. It was like a spiral, going up and coming around like this.



Christine: Their thinking was very visible.



Robin: They would build it out to a certain point and it wouldn't be working in the way they knew it was supposed to work. So they would back off and start building again.



Christine: It seems like as the instructor I would be able to know if there was a major concept that they had a misunderstanding about, so I could make an intervention there. I could also see how well prior teaching and learning worked.



Joe: The value of having four people is that it stops you from going off in the wrong direction for too long. What happens to me when I am working alone is I get a thought in my head and I follow it to the bitter end, and then I find it is wrong.



Robin: In the statewide college readiness discussions we have been talking about behaviors that good students need. We have been talking about persistence and being able to give up looking at something from one view and examine different options.



Robin: This group gives each other the courage to keep at it.



Klint: We are talking about getting students to know the basics and then have them move from there to learning advanced concepts. If we give them the basics, kind of like a shell...



Klint: ...then that shell does not have a lot of strength. It doesn't have permanency in their confidence in what they know.



Klint: If we allow them to build their understanding from within, from the center out, it reinforces this knowledge.



Klint: They make it their own. It is a social construction. They are building it together. So it might take them longer to get to that understanding, but it is a deeper understanding.



Klint: So when they go on to learn the advanced concepts they can understand them. They have a better foundation for work at an advanced level.



Christine: One thing I noticed was that the group dynamics were pretty sophisticated. There was security to venture into new things; they could be wrong and that was OK.



Christine: There was trust to experiment; they could disagree. There was inclusion; they got each other to be involved.



Christine: I thought, “Wow! That’s the kind of group dynamics that any teacher would be thrilled to see.” It doesn’t start there, of course.



Joe: They felt very safe.



Robin: And not rushed.



Klint: My thinking of what we are seeing here is evolving as we are having this discussion, too.



Robin: I watched this before, but did not have a chance to talk about it. In talking about it I have to force myself to articulate things I simply would not have bothered with before.



Joe: You can take something that you think you know, but until you can actually articulate it, it doesn't count.



Christine: It goes along with what you are saying, all of our schools have course outcomes. There are so many things they were doing that would appear on a course outcomes sheet or on the syllabus...



Robin: ...or the big ideas in chemistry.



Christine: Whether it was explaining or identifying or problem solving... I can just see all these verbs listed on a chemistry syllabus.



Klint: So we can take this, put it on a disk, and put it in an accreditation self-study report.



Christine: Absolutely.



Robin: You could put it in there, but they wouldn't look at it.

Klint: It could be a transcription. **Robin:** But they won't even look at that.



Robin: You could have cases filled with this kind of evidence and they are going to read the self-study.



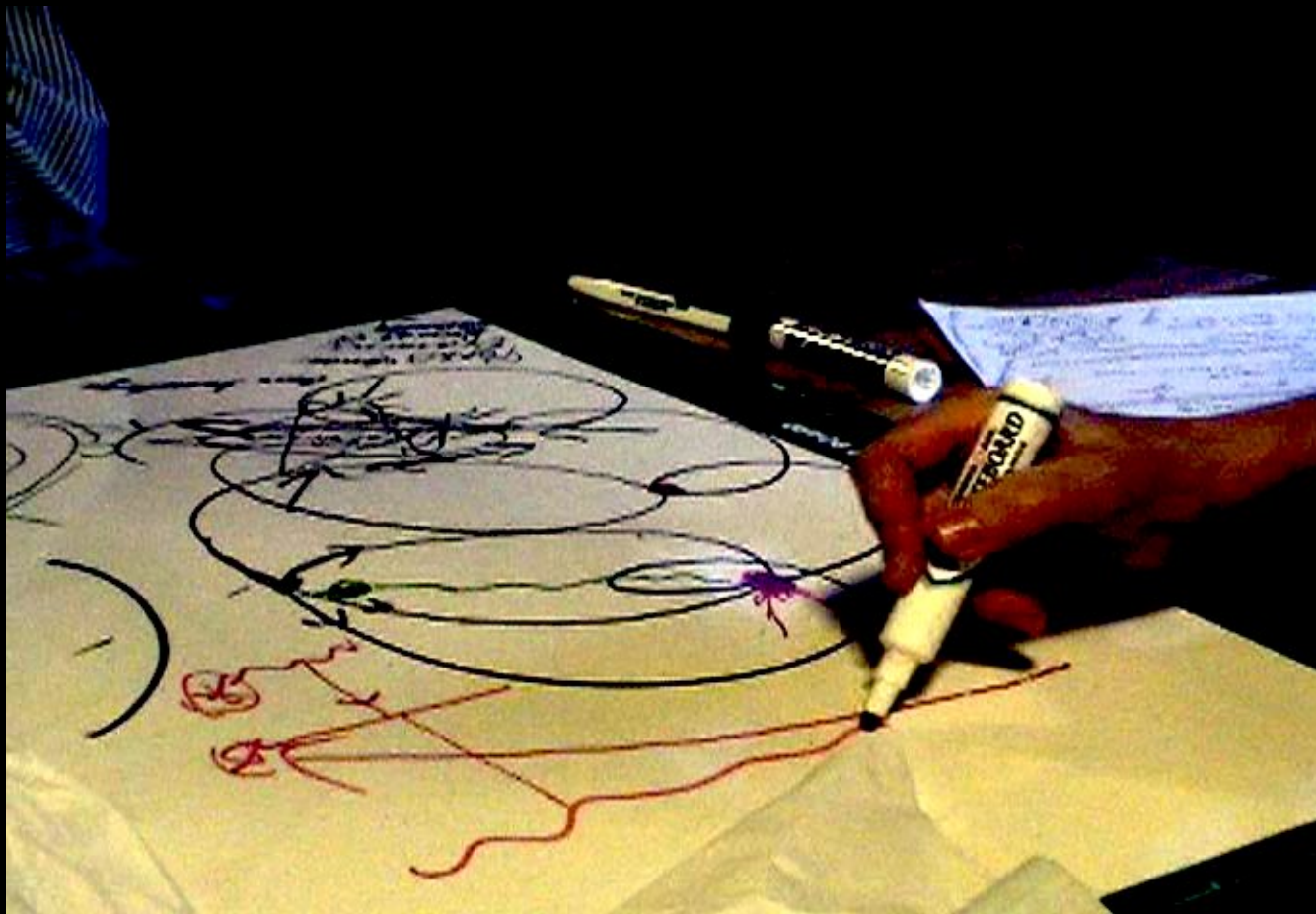
Robin: And maybe flip through a couple of things to make sure they are real.



Robin: That's that issue of “**evidence for whom of what**”. As far as we can tell as faculty, the stuff that we think has value, that helps us do better in the classroom, has to go through a series of digestions to get it to a point where the accreditation team is going to see it.



Robin: They want something going on in the classroom. They want something going on that involves larger groups...



Robin: ...and they might want to see something going on that involves the entire campus.



Christine: So these are the course, program, and institution levels? **Robin:** Right.

Christine: So this means it needs to be included in something bigger? **Robin:** Yes.



Robin: So the question becomes how do we take something like this and pull it up to the institution level so it has value in that exterior process?



Robin: At the classroom level this has value to faculty. At the program level you might be able to do something that has value to faculty. By the time it gets up here I am pretty sure it doesn't have value to faculty.



Klint: So the student's experience in the classroom and demonstrating different outcomes is something we are interested in at the classroom level.



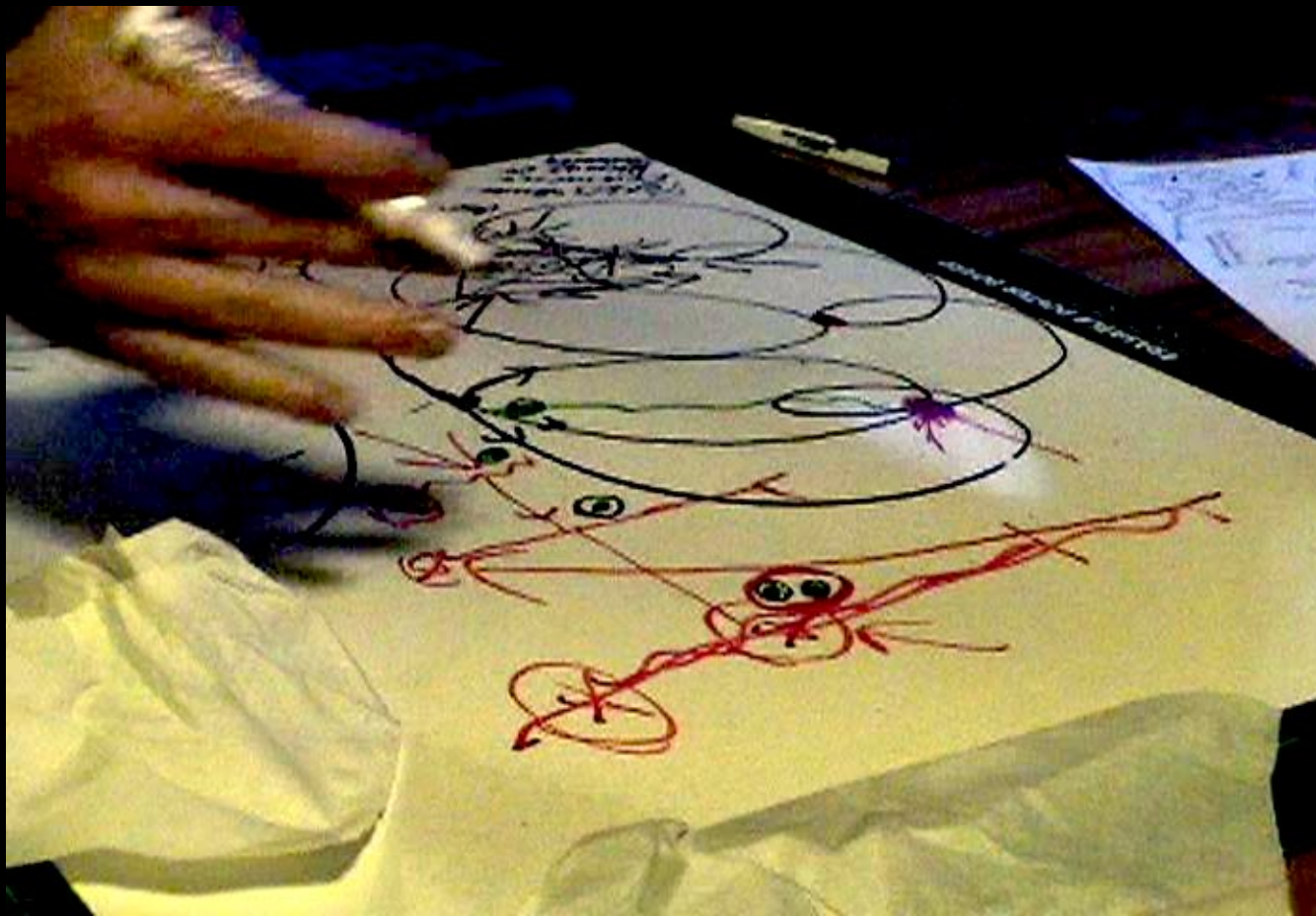
Klint: So we as faculty at the program level have this process of examining those experiences as faculty. That becomes a way to assess what we are doing in our courses, together, in a program way.



Klint: Here (pointing to the drawing) is an encapsulation, a reflective piece, like we are doing today.



Klint: Why couldn't it carry on up to the next level, where we have this student piece as one example?



Klint: We have these different examples coming from different programs. At the college level we are studying these, in the same sort of reflective way, looking at how we are doing at the program level.



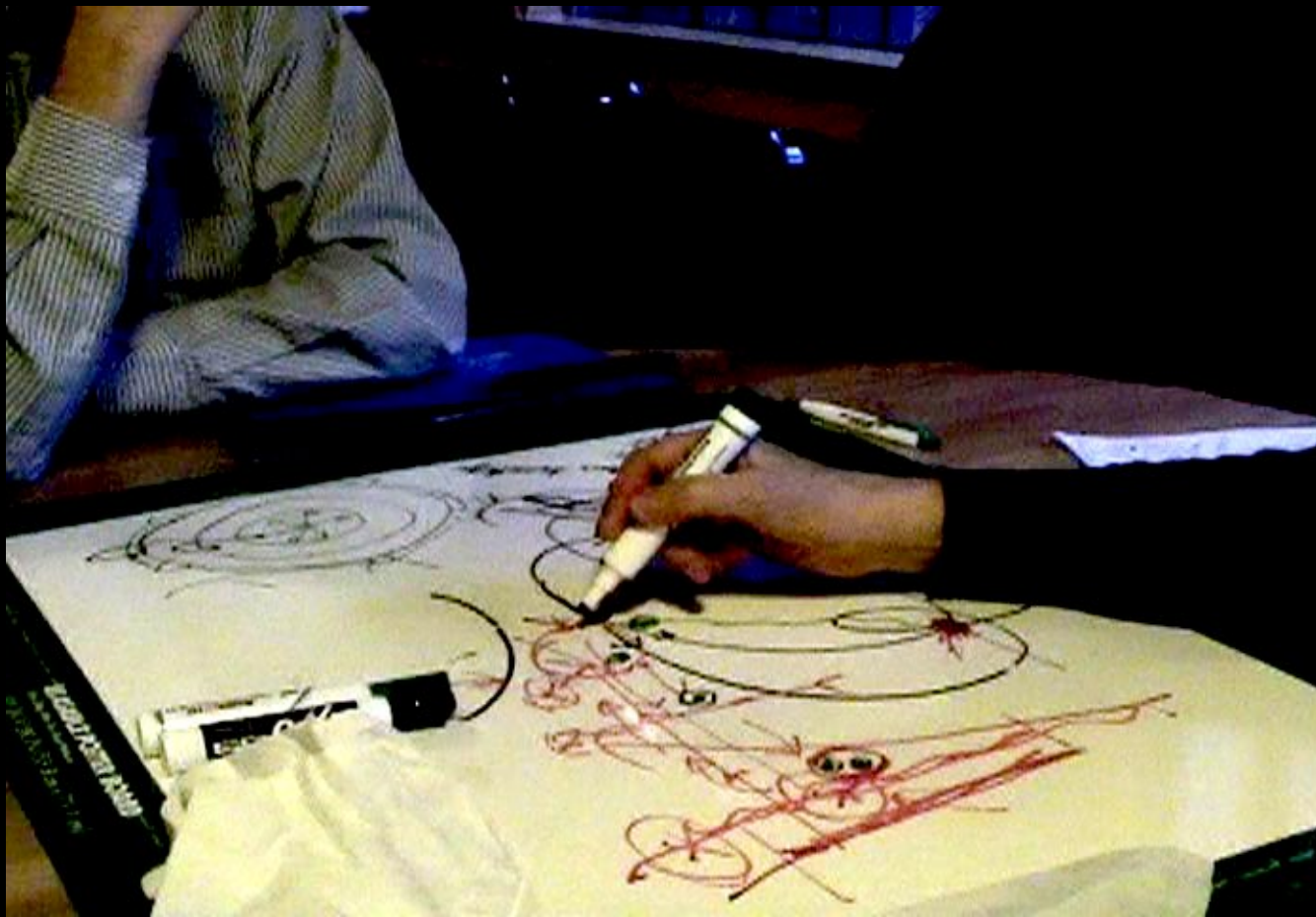
Klint: And that informs our self-study.



Robin: It's not going to have much impact upon what goes on in the classroom, but that is OK. It serves a different function.



Robin: So I am hoping that if we are doing a campus-wide assessment of a general education outcome, such as critical thinking, that work might show us something where we would drill down far enough into our own classes to do something about it.



Robin: This kind of study at the institutional level has value in raising questions that bring us down into the classroom to do some work on.



Joe: I am not sure I follow that line of reasoning. We start with the basics and work our way out. In my view this part would be the end “political” product, and the faculty just don’t care what happens up that way.



Klint: This is one of the questions we need to find better insight into, the multi-level process.



Christine: I want to add one thing before we stop. At Pierce we have done this work at each of the programs, and it became clear that reading skills were a huge issue across the board. Students were not prepared to read.



Christine: Enough of these people are saying this to those up here, so what should happen is that decisions are made about budget and resources...



Christine: ...that come back down here.

Klint: Yep. **Robin:** Yep. **Joe:** Yep.



Christine: This knowledge is 20 years old and it has never been responded to. Even now it is not responded to.



Klint: This is a political issue, because some folks want to leave these areas encapsulated rather than interconnecting them.

Christine: Yes. You are right.



Robin: Well, that was a neat conversation.

Christine: I was surprised how much we got to say.