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| **April 2019 TASSR Highlights** |

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| **Suzanne Etheridge, Associate Professor of Mathematics at Pellissippi State Community College, highlights the 2018 conference presentation, *Breaking the Classroom,*by Ashley Raburn, Mark Mcleod, Victoria Bryan and Matt Tolbert.** |

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| **Breaking the Classroom**The title intrigued me.  What exactly was breaking in this classroom?  Glass?  Desktops?  Computers?  At the 2018 Annual TASSR Conference in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, Ashley Raburn and his colleagues from Cleveland State Community College had a lot to explain in their concurrent session.Turns out Mr. Raburn, Mark McLeod, Victoria Bryan, and Matt Tolbert have a vision to move from a teaching environment to a learning environment.  They want to create a space for student-centered, active and collaborative learning.  It’s the instructor who creates the environment and facilitates the learning process, but they want to allow for learner-centric content creation.  The physical classroom is critical to creating this type of environment since, as Marshall McLuhan famously said, “the medium is the message.” |

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| Ashley Raburn is the Director of Dynamic Instruction at Cleveland State, and the faculty at Cleveland State now have a Dynamic Learning Lab.  They took an old classroom with minimal functionality that no one wanted to teach in, and they “broke” it.  They removed the mismatched tables, desks and metal chairs, the fixed whiteboard, and the single direction projector.  They filled the room instead with trapezoid-shaped tables and rolling chairs that can be moved into various arrangements, portable double-sided whiteboard easels, and Promethean boards.  The tables can easily be placed in pairs to form hexagons with room for six students to work together, or moved aside to give room for students to circle up in their chairs for a whole class discussion.  They painted the walls an inviting blue color. |

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| Mark McLeod is an Associate Professor of Art at Cleveland State.  In the past he’s shepherded many successful students in his art studio classes.  However, he wasn’t satisfied with the lower success rates in his lecture-based art history classes.  He volunteered to teach in the new Dynamic Learning Lab in an attempt to enhance the learning in art history.  To his surprise, it not only improved his students’ success rates, it forced Mr. McLeod to completely change how he teaches.  Now, instead of only lectures with a few videos thrown in, the class has space for more effective learning opportunities such as research and role-playing, student printmaking demonstrations, and small group discussions using the whiteboard easels to tackle complex topics like the Counter Reformation. |

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| The physical classroom environment needs to complement the instructional methods for optimal learning.  Faculty attempting to put into practice what educational research shows about active, student-centered, collaborative learning need the classroom space and furniture to match.  Of course, cost is an issue.  The Dynamic Learning Lab came in under $60,000.  However, another renovation of a psychology classroom into a dynamic classroom was only $10,000 due to less investment in technology. |

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| Dr. Victoria Bryan is the Honors Program Director at Cleveland State.  She helped “break” another undesirable classroom and turn it in to a room that works.  Along with painting vibrant green and dark blue feature walls, she furnished the room with small, movable, interlocking tables, node chairs, and even a set of personal whiteboards along with the white board easels and two Promethean boards.  Dr. Bryan noted that students feel comfortable moving the furniture to suit the day’s activities.  In fact, the students just plain feel comfortable in the room and even choose to meet there for small group study sessions outside of class time.In the words of Cleveland State students, “most of the classes I have been in require student discussions and hands-on learning which are difficult in traditional classrooms.”    The dynamic classrooms “make group work the center of the classroom” where “everyone can be involved.”  Classes in the new dynamic classrooms are “conducted as a discussion and helped me retain information better than had it just been spoken as normal.”  Sounds like Cleveland State is making an impact on student learning by actually fixing what was previously broken.  |

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