

Making Space for Projects in Courses

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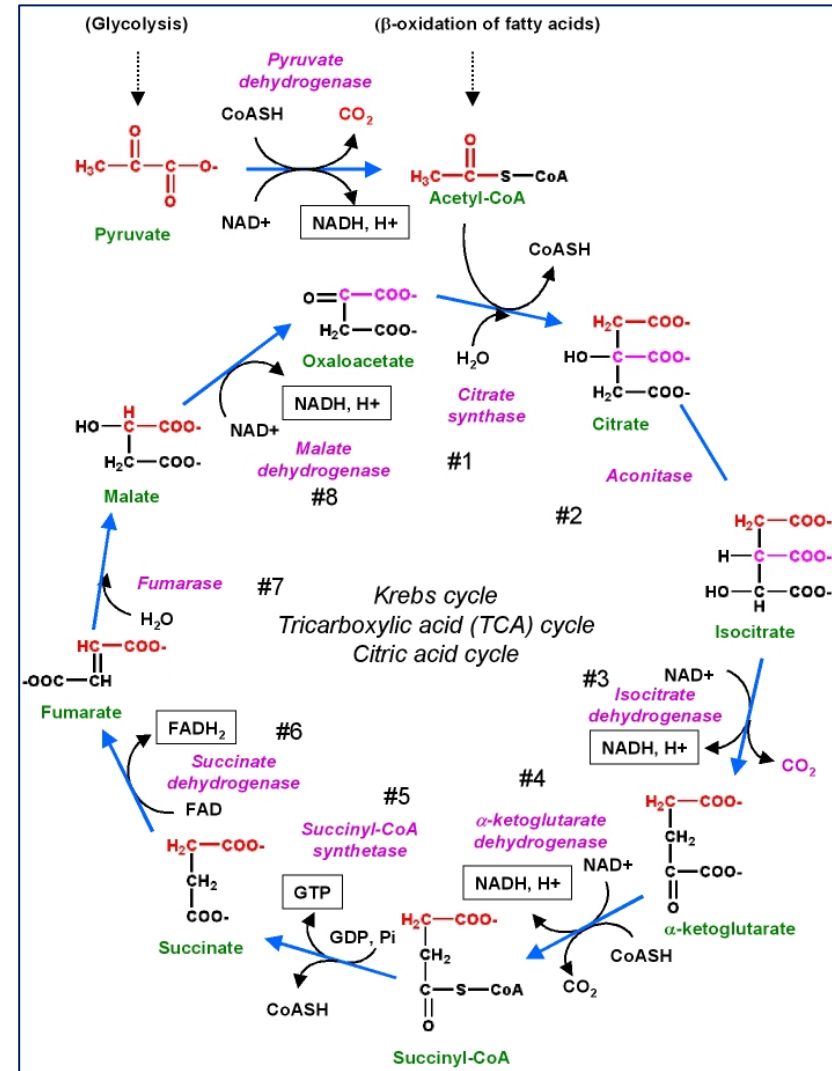
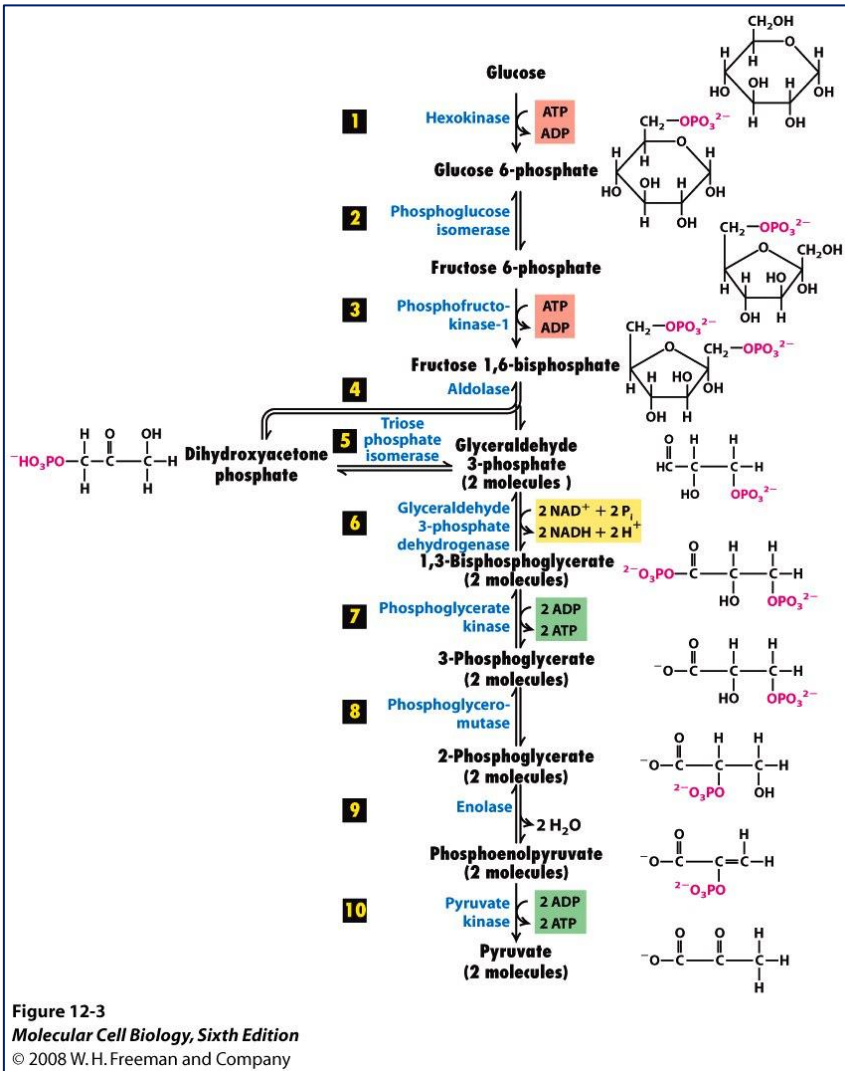
Common constraints

- Too much content to make space for a project
- Projects take time to develop, deliver, assess – I'm flat out!
- My students don't have time for projects
- My students aren't ready for projects
- Will classroom innovation negatively impact Faculty PTR/student eval results?
- Sequenced courses- need to make sure the students are ready for the next course

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Do I need all that content?



Right-sizing content



Who are my
students?

Majors?
Near majors?
Non-majors?



What will they
need?

For the next
course?
For productive
lives/careers?



What are the essential
frameworks, ways of thinking?
What is 'just information'?

Content + Project

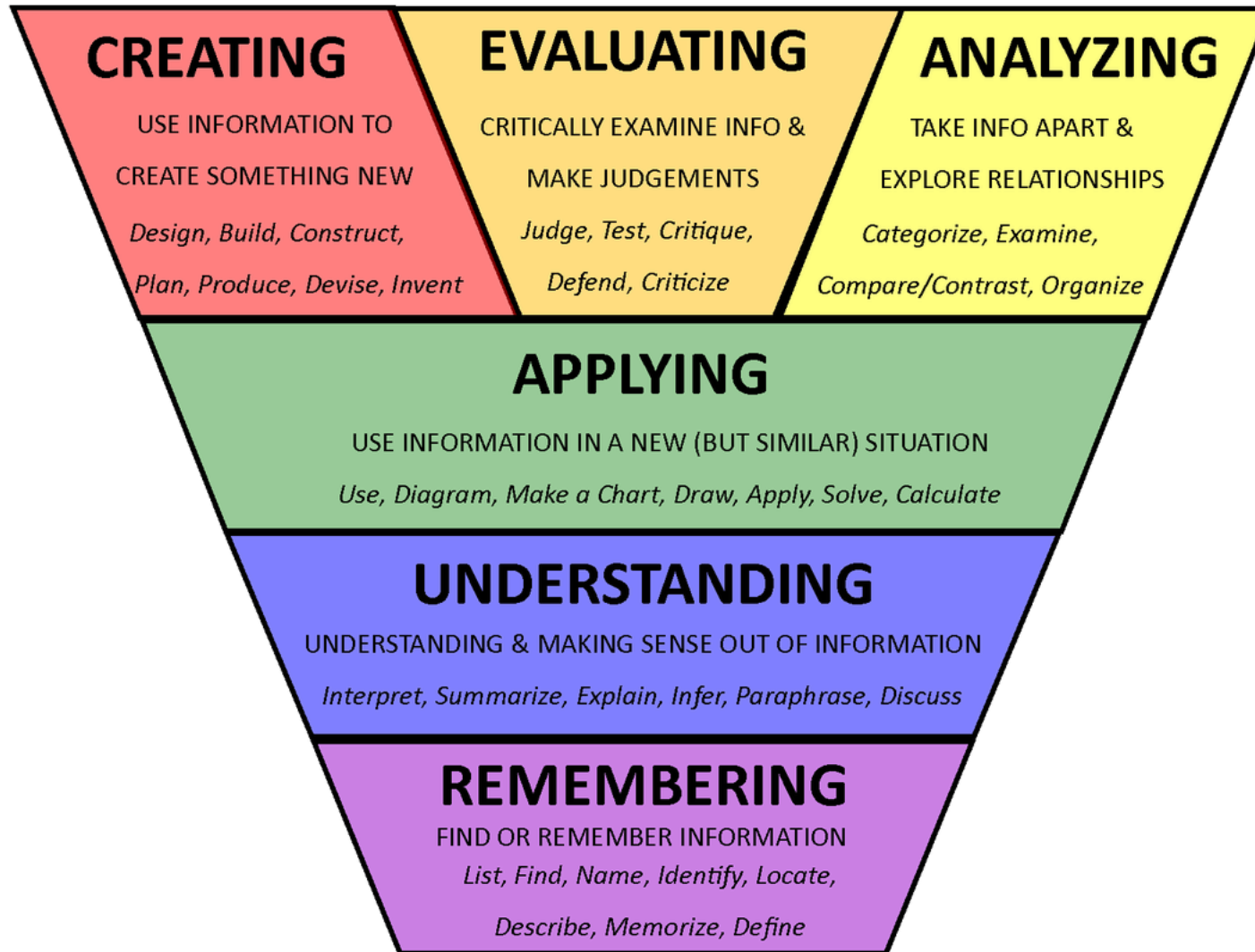
Student teams research different examples and teach the class

Projects hit multiple learning outcomes simultaneously

Project provides real-world application of theoretical content

Make sure what we are teaching is essential - not just my favorite content

Class develops content for the next class



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Addressing Faculty Time Constraints



Start small

Create a short (week-long? one class period?) project in one course



Consider team-based projects



Use example projects as starter ideas

<https://wp.wpi.edu/firstyearprojects/>



Use students for peer-review and feedback

Need specific guidance



Share with others teaching the same course/different sections



Ask students to come up with materials for next year's class

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Student Time Constraints

01

Use class time. Instead of lectures, assign videos or readings for out of class work.

02

Assign teams on the spot (mitigate attendance issues).

03

Use technology for sharing information, joint work - google docs, WhatsApp.

04

Use time available outside of class as one criterion for assigning teams.

05

[Rice University course workload estimator](#)

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Student (Un)Readiness

- Of course they are! Just need the right project, and the right scaffolding.
- Spend time (I know, this is hard) on helping them know how to work in teams.
- In class work designed to target issues needed in the project.
- Get feedback along the way about how the project is going.
- *Leads to increased engagement, increased retention (class-to-class).*

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Student (Dis)Satisfaction

- Make the students your co-conspirators
- Be super explicit about why you believe the project is important
- Get feedback from students – and be willing to make mid-course corrections
- Try to allow for student voice and choice
- Skills gained in projects are often professional skills

