Beyond Engagement: Assessing Learning in Virtual Field Trips



Radow College of Social Sciences and Humanities
2026 Student Success Summit

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How do we move students from experiencing a virtual field trip to demonstrating meaningful learning?



Learning Outcomes

- Identify opportunities for VFTs to support authentic and applied learning.
- Align VFT activities with measurable learning outcomes.
- Select assessment strategies that demonstrate learning beyond engagement.

What do we mean by immersive learning?

A Digital Immersive Learning Experience (DILE) places students within a digitally mediated context, environment, or scenario where they actively engage, explore, or make decisions.

Virtual Field Trips

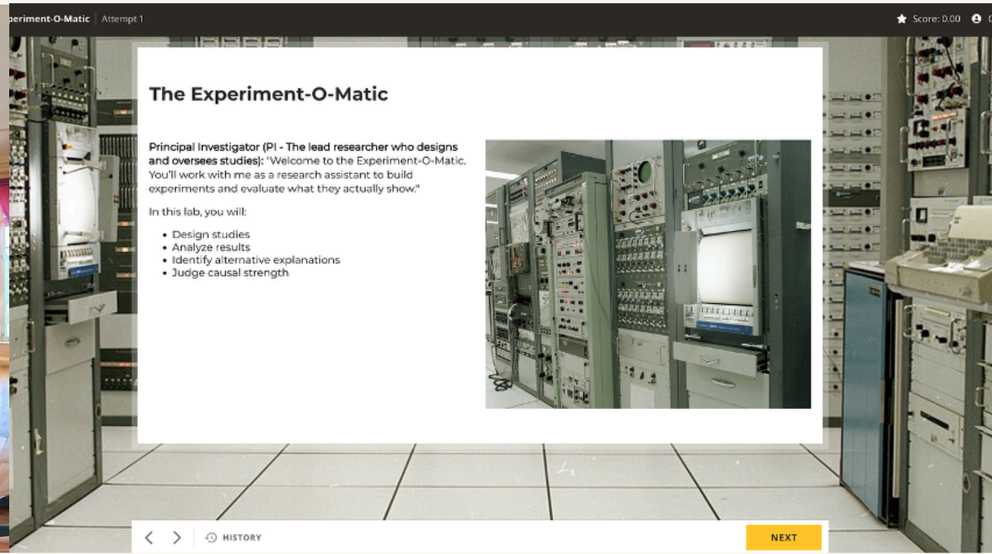
Virtual Tours

Interactive Simulations

...what else?







What does immersive learning make possible?



PLACE AND CONTEXT

Encounter environments, artifacts, and situations



EXPERIENCE

Explore, observe, interpret, and apply



ACCESS

Participate without the cost or logistics of travel

IMMERSIVE LEARNING CREATES OPPORTUNITY

But...

Immersive ≠ High-Impact

What Makes Them High-Impact?

Kuh & O'Donnell (2013) identify distinct features in HIPs' design and delivery:



Students are provided timely and frequent feedback



Students reflect on their learning



Students apply learning in real-world contexts



Students experience diversity or difference



Students have meaningful interactions with peers and faculty



Students devote considerable time and effort



Students are expected to perform at high levels



Students publicly demonstrate their competence

Kuh, G. D., & O'Donnell, K. (2013). Ensuring quality and taking high-impact practices to scale. *Peer Review*, 15(2), 32-33.

A HIP is only a HIP when it is done well

A learning activity isn't high-impact because of what we call it.

IT BECOMES HIGH-IMPACT BECAUSE OF HOW WE DESIGN IT.

Intentional Design

HIP Elements

Student Experience

Evidence of Impact

Outside View

Ever wondered how police know where to go — or how they get real-time info during a crisis? In this virtual field trip, you'll explore the high-tech hub that helps make it happen: the Cobb County Real Time Crime Center (RTCC). From live camera feeds to data dashboards, see how today's officers use cutting-edge tools to stay one step ahead and make fast, informed decisions that impact real lives. Click on the "Start Here" hotspot at the center of the building.

WELCOME

How to navigate in a 360° environment

To rotate the image: Click and drag your mouse or Drag your finger

Click on an icon to view content.

PROJECT INFO | DISCLAIMER | SUPPORT | REPORT ABUSE

Start with Backward Design

Before designing the immersive experience, define what students should learn.

Identify the learning goals.

What broader course or program goals should the experience support?

Write 2-3 measurable outcomes.

What should students analyze, apply, evaluate, create, connect, or reflect on?

Identify content needed.

What will students do or encounter to support that learning?

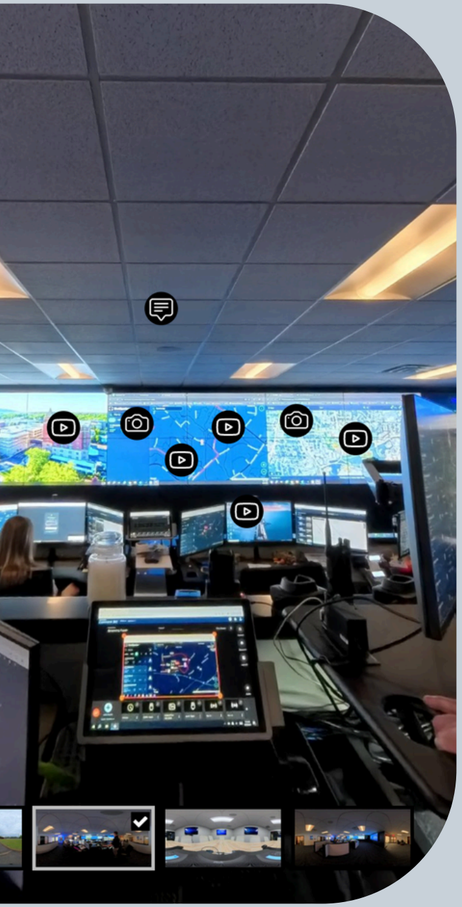
Keep it realistic and feasible.

Make sure it is specific, assessable, and appropriate to the experience.

Goals → Outcomes → Evidence → Experience

From the RTCC VFT to Learning Outcomes

One immersive environment. Different learning goals.



Understand Data & Technology

Identify how technology supports proactive policing and decision-making

Explore Professional Roles

Discuss career paths in law enforcement and public safety and the different roles within Real Time Crime Centers.

Analyze Decisions & Implications

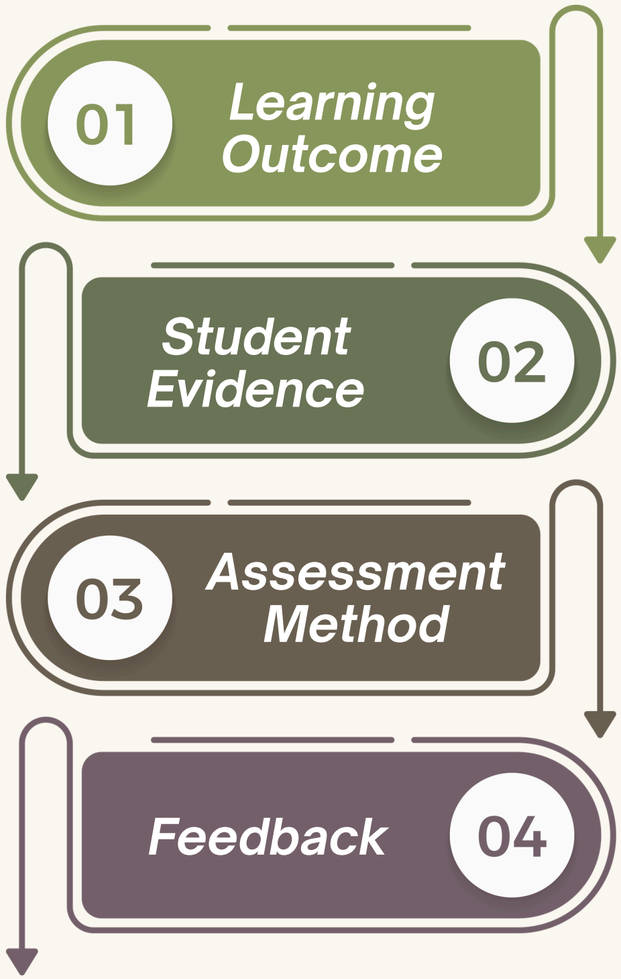
Evaluate the ethical and operational considerations of surveillance and intelligence systems.

Connect Learning to Career Pathways

Examine the integration of RTCCs with community policing efforts and interagency collaboration

Design the Assessment

What evidence will demonstrate the learning?



Ask...

- What will students do or produce?
- Does it actually demonstrate the outcome?
- How will it be assessed?
- Who will provide feedback?

Align the asssessment to the complexity of the outcome.

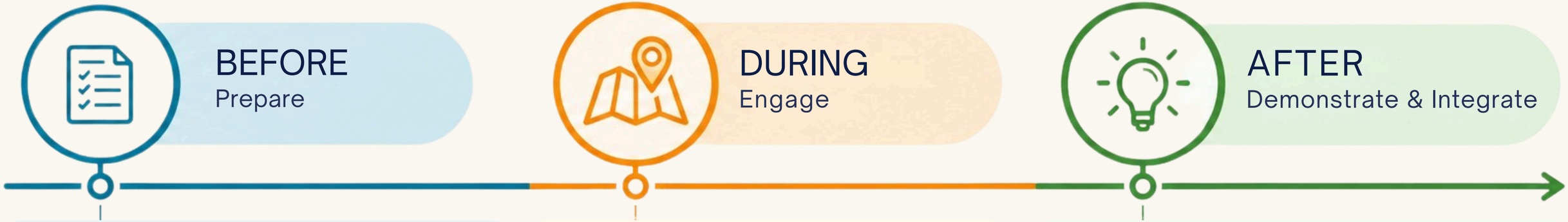
Evaluate ≠ recall
Analyze ≠ identify
Apply ≠ describe

What Would Count as Evidence?

Learning Focus	Examples of Evidence (Assessments)
Understand Data & Technology	• Knowledge checks (e.g., identify Cellhawk, Flock, ShotSpotter) • Short answer: explain how a data source is used in the RTCC
Explore Professional Roles	• Role analysis: describe the work, tools, and key skills of public safety and intelligence analysts • Comparison: evaluate similarities, differences, and contributions
Analyze Decisions & Implications	• Case analysis: explain how multiple data sources inform a decision • Critical analysis: evaluate limitations, privacy concerns, and safeguards
Connect Learning to Career Pathways	• Career exploration: outline education, training, and skills for RTCC roles • Reflection: assess personal fit and identify skills to develop

One Experience, Multiple Sources of Evidence

Assessment can be built throughout the immersive experience.



BEFORE
Prepare

- Readiness quiz (prior knowledge
- Pre-assessment of key concepts
- Set expectations and learning goals
- Gather baseline data
  (e.g., survey)

DURING
Engage

- Guided observations and note-taking template
- Embedded questions or checkpoints
- Peer interaction and discussion
- Evidence of engagement
  (e.g., polls, quick reflections)

AFTER
Demonstrate & Integrate

- Reflection
  (written, audio, or video)
- Analysis or application of learning
- Collaborative or peer discussion
- Authentic deliverable
  (e.g., infographic, policy brief, case analysis)
- Public demonstration
  (e.g., class gallery, digital showcase)
- Post-assessment of learning

Multiple, complementary sources of evidence provide a richer picture of both student learning and the high-impact experience.

Your Turn - Apply the Framework

Think of an activity you already use or would like to develop...



IDENTIFY → **What should students learn?**



DEVELOP → **What can should do/encounter to experience that learning?**



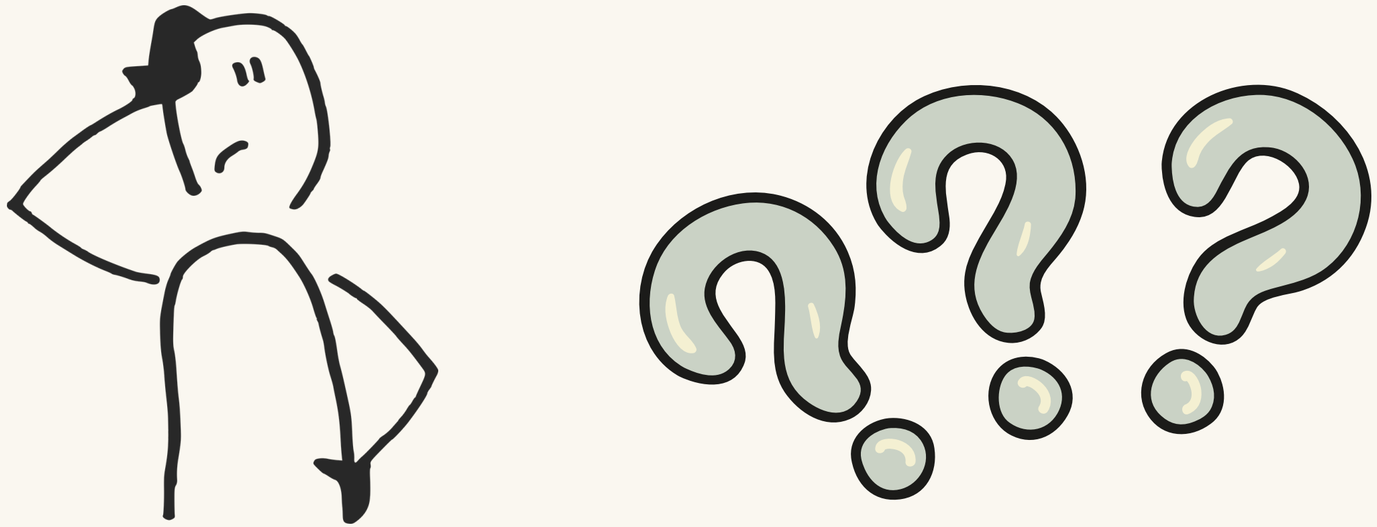
ASSESS → **What would demonstrate that learning?**

Beyond Engagement...



The goal isn't simply to create an engaging experience. It's to design an experience in which students can demonstrate meaningful learning.

Questions or Comments?



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