



Examples of Agile in Education

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We've been talking about and experimenting with agile in education since 2014-2015. In Summer 2016 we wrote the first sample lesson for this publication, intending to collect examples from other teachers interested in agile education. We didn't get submissions like we hoped for, so the project rested forgotten somewhere in the back of Google drive.

Almost forgotten. We've found the folder and the files and are dusting them off. This time we're pursuing this project more, well, agilely. We'll write this short article for our research center's website. And then we'll share it with you, a teacher interested in agility, who is perhaps experimenting with kanban, scrum, or an agile mindset. And then we'll iterate.

One of the earliest to apply agility in school, John Miller ([Agile Classrooms](#)) began experimenting with scrum in 2009. In 2011, Steve Peha shared a presentation at Yahoo called [Agile Schools - How Technology Saves Education](#) (Peha, 2011). In the presentation he rather correctly pointed out how initiatives like No Child Left Behind have failed in the US, and how agility, applied to education, may be a much more productive route.

In 2012, Willy Wijnands of Ashram College in the Netherlands, along with his colleagues, began translating scrum into [eduScrum](#). Jeff Sutherland, co-creator of scrum and proponent for its application beyond the software world, referenced eduScrum in his book, *Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time*.

It's Sutherland's mention of eduScrum that brought us in contact with both John Miller and Willy Wijnands in October 2014. Since that time both John and Willy have been on our campus more than once and we have, on separate occasions, visited Willy at Ashram College in December 2018 and June 2019. During those years, from 2014 until now, we've experimented with scrum, kanban, an agile toolkit for teachers, and agility in general in middle school, high school, and university classes, as well as in faculty meetings and for long term projects like curriculum review and school accreditation. We've also trained and published about agility.



Writing and talking about agility in education is rewarding, if only because it feels so right. Over time, though, we realized that we could share and teach better if we had a collection of solid examples of what you might call agility in education. Perhaps because our own focus was largely on the agile mindset, and not a fixed process, explaining exactly what we meant when we said agile this, agile that, wasn't always easy. We also may have felt a bit uncomfortable in our own clothes at some points when colleagues mentioned that "they did agile" or when agility was mistaken simply for flexibility, and so on.

At any rate, we determined that a set of short classroom examples from a variety of contexts would support the conversation around agility very well. We created a few prototypes in Summer 2016, following some promising exercises in a graduate class, and then asked others to share their examples.

The additional examples didn't come and instead of scaling down the project, which would have led to its completion, at least in an MVP type of way, we let the project drop. Beware the big plan! Luckily, a push by the Scrum Alliance in Fall 2019 to create a specific certification for educators (the Agile Certified Educator) rekindled our interest, and now, with the proper scope for a first iteration, we are underway again.

Below we present two sample lessons, following a simple template, to show what we are interesting in collecting from others for a larger publication: instances of teaching and learning, at the classroom level, that are informed by the agile mindset and have the goal of creating a learning environment infused with values related to agility: self-determination, small bets, feedback, learning through iterative work, and so on.

If you are interested in contributing lessons to this collection, please see the template in the appendix and write to us at pmagnuson@las.ch and ncosgrove@las.ch.

Peer Review of Academic Papers

Agile concepts

- Kanban board
- Timeboxing
- Iterations



Learning & Teaching

In a week-long summer graduate course, four students wrote an academic paper of approximately 15 pages on a change process that they could implement in their own school setting.

The paper had a number of required sections, including abstract, introduction, background, problem statement, literature review, change framework, conclusion, references, and appendices. Students shared their papers, as a Google doc, with each other and the instructor to facilitate peer review.

The students each created a personal kanban board with four columns:

To write	Writing	Ready for peer review	Just reviewed

On Monday the students made a sticky note for each section of their paper and placed them in the “To write” column.

By Wednesday the students were ready to begin the process of critique and revision. This was their process:

1. Students updated their personal kanban boards. It was easy to see at a glance that all students now had some sections of their paper in the “Ready for peer review” column.
2. We agreed on a time-box of forty minutes. Students and the instructor, as peer reviewers, selected a section (a sticky note, which they initialed) to critique.
3. When a review of a particular section was finished, the reviewer moved the sticky note to the “Just reviewed” column and chose a new section, either from the same or a different scrum board.
4. Nearly all sections had been critiqued and reviewed when the time-box expired. Using a thumbs up, thumbs down (Roman) vote, students either decided to finish the remaining few sections or leave them for the evening outside of class time.
5. On Thursday, students reset their kanban boards, according to their progress from the evening before, and we redid the process.



Source

From a course taught for Endicott College, Prague, 2016

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Reviewing and tracking work completed

Agile concepts

- Kanban board
- Iterations
- Collaborative planning

Learning & Teaching

Students in a middle school class had been working closely on using a kanban board in class and had good control over it and how it worked for them. They enjoyed making the plans for each lesson, which led me to introduce an end-of-lesson planning sheet. After each class, we left five minutes for planning time, which meant that students could suggest what they wanted to work on next class, based on what they had actually completed. When necessary, students made decisions regarding who would lead on certain activities. This was then noted on our sheet and posted on the kanban board.

The end-of-lesson planning sheet consisted of the following columns:

Date/Lesson	What will we work on next class?	Who will lead/what will we need
Lesson 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Warm-up• Shot practice• Film shots• Start tournament	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student A• Teacher• We need our phones• Student B



- Students were able to use the end-of-lesson planning sheet to help remind themselves, when they entered the class, what had to be set-up or ready to go.
- If the teacher or a student was absent, work could be easily seen and tracked by anyone on their return.
- Students had ownership of what they learned, how they learned it, and in what order.
- Collaboration with the teacher allowed for changes in the curriculum, and the time spent and the depth of activities were appropriate for the students.
- The sheet provided exactly what had been worked on, which served as a curriculum map for the teacher, as well as a visible learning journey for the students.

Source

From a middle school course at Leysin American School, Leysin, 2019
Questions: Nic Cosgrove, ncosgrove@las.ch. Twitter: @agileinthealps

References

(2011). YUI Theater — Steve Peha: "Agile Schools - How Technology Saves Education," Retrieved February 18, 2020, from <https://yuiblog.com/blog/2011/11/29/video-agileschools/>.

Miller, J. (n.d). Agile Classrooms. Retrieved February 18, 2020, from <https://www.agileclassrooms.com/>.

Sutherland, J. (2015). Scrum: the art of doing twice the work in half the time. London: Rh Business Books.

Wijnands, W. (n.d.). eduScrum® - Collaboration That Gives You Wings. Retrieved from <https://eduscrum.nl/en>.



Appendix

A template for contributing agile-infused lessons.

Title (Google doc “Heading 1”)

Agile concepts (Google doc “Heading 2”)

- Agile concept or tool
- Agile concept or tool
- etc

Learning & Teaching

In approximately 250 words, what was the lesson? Illustrate the concepts from agility.

Source

From [course], [place], [date]

Questions: [name], [email], [Twitter etc]