

Assessment of Stone Soup Course Experience

This questionnaire is for faculty to describe and assess your experiences with “Stone Soup” Project assignments or activities. Your responses will be posted on the Indisputably blog and may be disseminated in other ways as well. Please describe specifics of your experience, but do not include information that could identify any student (except as noted below) or subject of a Stone Soup assignment or activity.

1. Faculty name: **Robert M. Ackerman**
2. School: **Wayne State University Law School**
3. Course: **Alternative Dispute Resolution**
4. Semester: **Fall, 2017**
5. Number of students in the course: **22**
6. Briefly describe the Stone Soup assignment or activity (e.g., interview or focus group class). If you assigned students to conduct an interview, summarize the type of subjects and focus of the interview. If you conducted a focus group class, describe the speakers and issues discussed.

Students were assigned to observe at least 2 hours of a "real world" dispute resolution process of their choosing. At their option, students could interview the neutrals, legal counsel, or the parties. Thereafter, they submitted 3-5 page reports with their observations.

7. Was the assignment required, one of several options, or for extra credit?

The assignment was required.

8. If students were to write a paper, how long was the paper supposed to be (in double-spaced pages)?

3-5 pages.

9. When was the assignment due (or when did you conduct a Stone Soup activity)?

The assignment was due 3 weeks before the end of the semester, so that we could discuss the students' observations in the last two classes.

10. What percentage of the grade was allocated to the assignment?

25%

11. Did you discuss in class the results of students' work? If so, what did you and the students learn from this discussion? Was this a good use of class time?

We discussed about 12 of the 22 reports in class, interwoven with discussion of hybrid processes and dispute resolution systems design. We were able to compare processes and make comparisons within processes, with follow-up questions. A good time was had by all.

12. What did students learn that they wouldn't have learned without the Stone Soup assignment or activity?

Most importantly, students learned that there are wide variations of practices in processes that went by the same name.

13. What worked well with the assignment or activity?

A wide variety of processes were amendable to this activity, including courtroom observations, mediations, arbitrations, case evaluations, etc.

14. What would you do differently if you do it again?

A few weeks after the assignment was distributed, a number of students were having difficulty hooking up with a good observation. At that point, I emailed about half a dozen friends who were leading neutrals in the Detroit area, asking whether they had good observation opportunities. Most of them did, and my students had very good experiences with them. In the future, I will (a) distribute the assignment during the second week of the semester; (b) ask my friends about observation opportunities at the beginning of the term.

15. What would you advise other faculty considering using a Stone Soup assignment or activity?

Have confidence in students' ability to write thoughtful, insightful reports.