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Gaining Knowledge: Creating Activities for Students by Students

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ABSTRACT

This article describes an activity suitable for high school and college/university communication courses. Combining outside research with in-class discussions and class interaction give students the opportunity to become more knowledgeable about interviewing in the ‘real world.’ Students research interviewing topics, find articles to support their topic, then create an activity and present this to the class. This allows more in-depth analysis of common topics discussed in an interviewing class allowing students to take control for their learning, deepening the learning process for themselves and others while decreasing common interviewing pitfalls.

Goal

The goal of this activity is to provide a creative and fun approach to teach interviewing techniques by going beyond the textbook and in-class discussions. By the end of the semester, each student should be more knowledgeable about interviewing as well as having a complete file of articles to help prepare for the real world.

Courses

Interviewing, but could be modified for most communication classes.

Rationale

By participating, students take ownership of the class and into their learning. According to Davis (2001), “learning is an active, constructive process that is contextual: new knowledge is acquired in relation to previous knowledge; information becomes meaningful when it is presented in some type of framework” (p.177). Students read their chosen article and the entire class gets to learn to apply it, pushing them to think beyond summarizing content. This assists students to reach higher-order thinking in real world application by allowing them to synthesize their knowledge into a new situation. This activity also allows full participation by each individual, and through the activity, the whole class.

I make this a low point assignment. That way, there is not too much pressure; it is more about the process and the application of the article. This approach could be adapted easily for use in different classes.

Directions/Explanation

Each student finds an article that has something to do with interviewing; it can be on any topic relevant to the class (such as professional dress, how to write a good interview, body language, cross cultural interviews, typical interview questions, etc). I assign this to my class early on in the semester so they have time to research and think about their activity.

Each student is responsible for finding an article and presenting a ten-minute activity, which will expand on the article for the first 10 minutes of class time. Students must hand in their article **two** class periods before leading the activity. This gives me time to make copies and pass out to the class so it can be read before the activity and discussion. You could modify it so this could be done electronically over email. This activity gives each student the opportunity to show the knowledge that they have learned.

Students pick a day to present from a list of preselected days. My students email each other once they have a topic to limit duplicate topics. If they choose to miss class on their activity day, they will not receive the points. This activity could also be done over the Internet or in pairs/groups.

To begin this assignment, I had students read an article currently posted at AOL's *Find a Job* website entitled, "Nine tricks if you're bad with names" (http://jobs.aol.com/article/_a/nine-tricks-if-youre-bad-with-names/20050808184609990064) to give students something to model from. During the beginning of class I asked students to tell me their thoughts on the article. We talked about the article's suggested techniques for remembering names, when they may work and when they may not. I asked the students to share any techniques about remembering names that were not listed. Most of the students already knew each other, so I handed them a sheet of paper with a new name. They had to learn their new name and then meet as many new people as they could, and try to remember the names of people they met. I told them to act as if this were a party and to try to meet as many contacts as possible.

After about 10 minutes I asked them to sit down and remember and write down as many names as they could. I called roll, and had each student raise his/her hand so the students could associate the right name with the right face. The person who got the most right got a small prize. We then broke down the assignment talking about techniques that worked and why, we also talked about what could have been done differently.

The students enjoyed this! They thought it was great fun to take what they had read and discussed, and make it into something they could easily remember in a hands-on approach. They were very excited to try it themselves.

Typical Results

One should start talking about this early on in the semester, to allow for discussion about expectations of the assignment. I modeled my expectations of the assignment by creating and presenting the first activity, this allowed students to have a clear understanding of the assignment. It was also helpful to debrief the class with a short discussion of the topic and the activity. They should be graded not just on creativity, but also on their ability to help fellow classmates and create an open classroom atmosphere.

Through this ongoing activity students have an opportunity to get the most out of class, get to know each other and to help create information that will be of use to them while they are applying and interviewing for jobs. This allows students to diagnose common interviewing pitfalls, and help their classmates find the right remedy. Topics have included, how to dress, talking too much during interviews, how to write good thank you letters, how to evaluate benefit packages, how to build a resume, and the dos and don'ts of dinner etiquette.

References

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