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1-26-2019

Using Concept Maps and Other Visualization Tools Reflection

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Recommended Citation

Berry II, Thomas, "Using Concept Maps and Other Visualization Tools Reflection" (2019). *Q2S Enhancing Pedagogy*. 43.
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4B: Using Concept Maps and Other Visualization Tools

4B: Practice & Reflect I - Instructional Practice

Thomas Berry submitted Jan 26 at 1:40pm

One of the techniques I decided to implement was explain course and unit organization through concept maps. In my argument and debate class I decided to create an overview of the course that first explains the structure of an argument for an academic debate, then preparation of an argument using the structure that was modeled, next practicing the argument through debate rehearsals, and finally presenting, through a class competition, the debates students had prepared. I organized this information in a course concept map that showed each of these categories, the units and the tasks involved along a timeline for the class.

Before, when I taught this class, students were often bewildered and frightened by the idea of doing a debate. They had no idea what this entailed. I would spend time comforting them and encouraging them to stick with the class because they would make great progress in their abilities. When I implemented the concept map relating the course and unit organization I found that students were confident in what the class was about, aware of the skills they would learn and the tasks they needed to complete. I asked the students about this initial class and they were happy because they knew exactly what was expected of them and appreciated the detail in the concept map. One student said, "thank you Mr. Berry, I didn't know if I would keep this class but now I know I can really learn this and get good at it." We have finished the first week and students have not sought to leave the course.

Another technique I decided to implement included having students answer questions with visual tools. I used this in my interpersonal class to help explain an assignment that encapsulated and synthesized the course material. The assignment is an analysis of a scene in a dramatic movie. I first marked out the best choices of genre to use for this assignment. Then, I showed the class an appropriate scene from a movie that I had picked for the assignment. Next, I drew a concept circle on the white board and marked out in the six sections with a center line the criteria to be analyzed; we labeled the circle with an interpersonal subject, the top two sections were labeled with specific concepts from that subject viewed in the scene, the middle

two sections were labeled with illustrations of those concepts being portrayed in the scene; the bottom two sections were labeled with their explanation of why this behavior was significant or relayed meaning. I then explained that their assignment was an essay that covered three interpersonal subjects found in the scene they chose. Then I showed them how the concept circle could be used to write a paragraph about that subject area to be used in the essay with the left side of the circle being their first example and explanation and the right side being another.

I then had the class do another concept circle only this time I asked the class question concerning a scene from the “notebook.” I first asked if there was another interpersonal subject seen in the “swan scene?” The students answered, “Yes, there is nonverbals.” I then asked where I should put this information on the concept circle. The class said to label the circle with the subject. I then asked if there was a specific concept about nonverbal communication that is illustrated in the scene. One student mentioned that there was a lot of oculesics (eye contact). I then asked why this was significant and another student mentioned, “Because eye contact signifies interest and these two characters are rekindling their love for one another.” I asked the students if doing this process helped and they were enthusiastic with their replies stating that they are now “confident in completing the assignment successfully.”

I really enjoyed implementing these two techniques and plan to continue to use them and adapt them for my other courses of instruction. I would like to use more visual tools to explain assignments for my World Theatre class. I may use the concept map technique to do this with their performance analysis assignment.