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3-1-2019

Using Active Learning Techniques in Small Groups Reflection

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Recommended Citation

Berry II, Thomas, "Using Active Learning Techniques in Small Groups Reflection" (2019). *Q2S Enhancing Pedagogy*. 45.
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3A: Using Active Learning Techniques in Small Groups

3A: Practice & Reflect I - Instructional Practice

Thomas Berry submitted Mar 1 at 5:58pm

I chose to implement the Jigsaw activity because I had read about it previously but never tried it and I thought it was an appropriate technique to use for my interpersonal communication class concerning fallacious reasoning and emotional response. Also, one thing I really wanted to work on was to provide students with an aim and rationale for the assignment. I did not want students to feel as if they were doing busy work or that this activity was unnecessary because they could have read the book. I find it challenging to remember to provide students learning outcomes and explain why we are doing the activities that we do. Mostly because I want to get to the information I think is interesting to talk about. By doing the Jigsaw activity, some of the control was taken out of my hands and provided the students a chance to guide their own learning, granted I facilitated the structure. Therefore, I found this a great opportunity to move beyond my shortcomings as the lone purveyor of knowledge.

To start the class, I explained that this activity assisted students in gaining mastery over the material. "Mastery is the ability to not only understand a topic by providing evidence and explanations, it means that one can apply it to various problems and show others how to use the same method." I then explained the directions for the activity and my expectations. Each group was assigned a fallacy and they were provided reference material to expand their knowledge beyond the textbook reading. They were to define the topic, isolate types and patterns, give examples, identify resulting emotions, and explain their thinking. Each student was made responsible for a task during the work and the group had to present a symbolic metaphor drawn on large butcher paper that included their findings as a visual aid for the class when they reported out. I also told them that I would be checking in on their interaction and guiding their understanding and accuracy of the topic. I chunked and allotted time for each step (Review material on fallacy & discuss; Determine info to present & gather; Decide symbolic metaphor and make poster; Present) and we had "commercial" activities in between to relieve tension and debrief about that section of the activity to see what was working and what could

be improved. After each group presented they then fielded questions from their classmates. We then had a final debriefing about the whole activity.

During the debriefing students said they really liked the activity. One student mentioned that “usually doing this stuff bores me and I would rather have a lecture because if I wanted to learn on my own I would just take an online class. But today was really fun and I get this fallacy stuff now.” One student felt hurried during the activity. This tells me I made need to adjust for time during the different sections. Overall I felt the Jigsaw activity was a success. I would definitely use this activity again although it was a lot of work putting together. An alternative adaptation I might try is to have one group break up into individual teachers and then each of those teachers would bring their expertise to the other small groups for a mini lesson. Each group would then progressively break up and teach the others. As far as other techniques, I would also like to implement the Analytic Teams activity in a future class because it sound intriguing and may help students in practicing analysis beyond writing a paper.