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Curated ACUE Reflections

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Curated ACUE Reflections

By: Michelle Lorimer

Abstract

This curated set of ACUE reflections provides insight into the pedagogical skills learned through the ACUE program offered through the TRC at CSUSB. This set of reflections highlights the teaching techniques and skills implemented during the fall 2019 and winter 2020 terms. The techniques include “Implement practices that support student success: Focus on learning,” “Send motivational messages,” “Connect learning to career and other long term goals,” and “Implement classroom or online assessment techniques to obtain responses from your entire class: Analyze student responses for patterns to inform your teaching.” Overall, the ACUE techniques worked to improve the level of instruction in my courses, elicited actionable student feedback of instruction and learning, and helped me build stronger connections with students.

Key Words: Q2S, TRC, ACUE

Module Reflection Example 1

The instructional technique that I chose was “Implement practices that support student success: focus on learning.” I am teaching a California History course wherein 26/30 students are working towards becoming teachers. I make a point to explain the learning goals for each of the activities and assessments in the course. By making my teaching moves explicit to my students, I have been working to demonstrate both engaging teaching skills and also effective learning strategies to a cohort of students who will need to focus on learning with their future students. They also must develop a lesson plan for this course, so a focus on teaching and learning is directly relevant to their success in this course. This week, I develop an inquiry lesson that asked students to write as many questions as possible in 5 minutes about a set of images. Through the exercise, I demonstrated how student-centered learning works in the classroom setting. We discussed the ways that teachers can communicate both content and learning (and life) skills through proper lesson-development. This was a very successful lesson. With the questions developed through the inquiry lesson, students were able to identify the central themes of the content that we will cover next week (that was the intention of the assignment). I also explicitly pointed out the various types of learning (visual analysis, inquiry, divergent and group thinking, critical thinking, civic engagement and dialogue) that students had engaged in with this mini-lesson. It was very successful. I will continue to focus on learning to support student success in the future.

Module Reflection Example 2

The instructional technique that I chose was “Send Motivational Messages.” I am teaching a fully-online writing course wherein the only contact I have with students is thorough digital communication. Many of our students are accustomed to an in-person learning environment and I want to make sure that my students continue to feel supported even though we do not meet face-to-face. I wrote my class a message at the end of the weekly module that provided positive feedback about their progress in the class. I encouraged them to keep up the good work. I also explained my intentions for the “navigating digital information” videos that they were required to watch for an assignment, by explaining how the concepts they learned from the video will support the search for resources for their Research paper. I closed the message by telling students that I am invested in their support in this course. I encouraged them to reach out to me with any questions, comments, or concerns. I had one student email me a question, in her reply to my response, she expressed gratitude for my support of her in the class. I will continue to use this technique in the future. It is a very straightforward technique to employ to motivate students. I will use it throughout the term with all of my classes to help students feel supported and motivate them in my course.

Module Reflection Example 3

The instructional technique that I chose was “Connect learning to career and other long term goals.” I chose this technique because I believe that it is imperative for students to find relevancy in their coursework so that they remain active and engaged. As a historian, my focus for the past several years has been to explicitly build connections between my students’ lives and both the content and learning skills that they are exposed to in my classes. In my current

California history class, a majority of my students are on the teaching track offered in our major. Because of this, I make my teaching strategies explicit. This course is a “content” based course; however, I think it is important for them to also see explicit models of best-teaching practices. Furthermore, I created a lesson plan assignment that asks students to develop their own lesson plan as if they were teaching the content. They have choices in selecting their topic and may choose to work with a partner. I provided them with a template and rubric to help guide their work. I also ask them to incorporate the CA History-Social Science Standards in their lessons to help prepare them for their career goals. After working through this ACUE Module, I realized that I should also provide the option for non-teaching track students to do a different project based in California-focused interests from their major. I presented this idea to this minority of students in the class. While they appreciated the consideration, all of them chose to continue to do the lesson plan project. They had already settled with the idea of developing a lesson plan and did not want to change to something different mid-term. What I learned from this experience was that I should provide choices for students at the beginning of the term. This will allow each student to find intrinsic motivation in the projects that they develop for the course. Next term, I will develop summative assignments with choices built-in for my students.

Module Reflection Example 4

The instructional technique that I chose was “Implement classroom or online assessment techniques to obtain responses from your entire class: Analyze student responses for patterns to inform your teaching.” I chose this technique because I wanted to use a one-minute paper to gauge levels of student understanding to obtain responses from my entire class. At the end of my lesson on the impact of the transcontinental railroad in California, I asked my students to write a one minute paper that included 1) A point or topic that they found the most intriguing, and 2) Something that they would like to clarify or know more about. My students spent a few minutes writing these papers. I was impressed with their insight. Many said that they really like the image analysis that we did during class – it helped them understand the ways that people in California viewed the railroad owners in the late 1800s. A common point that people wanted to know more about was the impact of the railroads on the “average person” in California. Likewise, many students wanted to know how the railroad (and industrialization in general) contributed to disparities of wealth in growing cities. It was very helpful for me to see these comments because I was able to easily modify my follow-up powerpoint to include the points that students wanted to know more about. They seemed to appreciate that I directly addressed the points from their one-minute papers during the next class session. I plan to continue to use one-minute papers in the future with little modification needed. They are easy to employ and offer great insight into student understandings of course content.