Ensure Students Are Learning:
Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Giving Students a Voice Through Group PSA Creations

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

Using a group project format, this instructor gives students a voice through the development of a public service announcement (PSA). Students select topics that are meaningful to them and collaborate with classmates to develop their message.

In a class that meets daily, students have one week to work with their team to develop a public service video using technology such as Movie Maker. The instructor introduces the concept of the PSA at the beginning of the semester; however, the project is done toward the end of the semester. Throughout the semester, the instructor prepares students by engaging them in other learning activities that help them develop the necessary skills—for instance, an audience analysis. In this example, the instructor randomly sorts students into small groups and assigns each group to an audience type or profile. Students then work together to determine the best way to address their assigned population (e.g., a room of 25 eighth graders). Students will apply what they learn in this activity to their public service announcement project.

For the PSA project, students brainstorm a list of potential topics like cyber-safety, distracted driving, or bullying; then they self-sort into small groups based on common topics. Although the instructor likes to keep it to a maximum of three students per group, at times the class size may require a slightly larger group size. In an important step, the instructor checks in with each newly formed group to ensure that at least one person in the group is comfortable with using the video software. On rare occasions, the instructor may reassign students to different groups so that each group has a technology-savvy person. After students determine their topic, they must work together to identify their audience and develop a concept for their video. During class, the instructor walks students through a thought exercise to come up with things they will need to consider when developing a PSA.

Although there are no specific roles assigned, each member of the group is expected to contribute to the project. The instructor meets with each student to verify their contribution and students must demonstrate what they did for the project. Students are graded on participation and group cohesiveness. The project is graded on message clarity and the extent to which the topic chosen is appropriate for a PSA.