

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Contextualized Writing With Feedback Loops

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

For this innovative teaching practice, the instructor creates writing assignments based on current events or topics that directly impact students' lives. For example, a topic may be "Is college the best option?" The instructor gathers articles based on the assigned topic and guides students through the reading process to prepare them for writing. For the first writing assignment, the instructor guides students through the readings using two reading strategies: SQ3R and the "sticky note method." SQ3R is a reading process that requires the reader to survey the material, formulate questions, read, recite, and review the material. With the "sticky note method" students put sticky notes at the end of each page of the reading and write brief notes about what they learned on that page.

Once students have learned the reading strategies, they complete the readings for subsequent writing assignments outside of class. For every assigned reading, the instructor leads an in-class discussion and encourages students to share their insights. Each class is structured the same way—students participate in a round of small group discussions followed by a larger class discussion. The small group discussions consist of reader response questions to the assigned readings. The larger class discussion allows groups to share any unique insights or ideas that emerged during the smaller discussions. At the end of the

in-class discussion, the instructor asks students to complete a quick free-write about what they learned from their readings and from the discussions. The reading, discussion, and free-write are all intended to prepare students for the formal writing assignments that follow.

The first writing assignment is a summary paper, which can be two or three pages, depending on the number of articles assigned. Students submit this assignment, receive written feedback from the instructor, revise it, and then submit a final draft. This summary is used as a springboard to their next writing assignment; the instructor asks students to find their own article related to the topic and to draft a second paper that incorporates their opinion about the topic. Students again submit their draft, get written feedback from the instructor, revise, and submit a final draft.

The instructor delivers detailed feedback for each draft using techniques found in *Ways of Responding* by Peter Elbow. Using this method, the instructor writes a letter to the student at the end of their paper. The letter is a response to the students' ideas and asks questions to encourage students to think differently about their own writing.

How to Ensure Participation in This Innovative Teaching Practice:

The instructor fosters engagement by breaking the class up into small group and then large group discussions. The instructor engages with each of the groups during small-group discussions to ensure participation and active learning. The instructor also presents topics and issues that directly impact students' lives to help keep students interested in the work.