

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Homophone Game for Active Learning

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

On the first day of class, students are assigned to pairs determined by an ice-breaker. Each student writes a personal fact on a piece of paper, after which the instructor collects and redistributes the papers. Students are then tasked with finding the person who wrote the fact on the piece of paper they have been given, and that person becomes their first partner. Students keep this partner for any games, activities, and peer reviews until the first major writing assignment is complete. The instructor changes the pairs for each new writing assignment, which happens approximately every two weeks. The instructor tries to be strategic in creating the pairs throughout the term. For example, if the writing assignment is about careers, the instructor will pair students by career interest area.

In one early activity, the instructor calls out a set of homophones such as “wry” and “rye.” The pairs are instructed to come up with one sentence using both words correctly. When a pair has come up with a sentence, the designated team “runner” will come to a rotating whiteboard and write the sentence on the back so that the others cannot see it. The instructor makes note of who arrives first, second, third, and so on. The instructor checks each sentence to ensure that the words are spelled correctly, used correctly in the sentence, and that the sentence is grammatically correct. The first team to do this correctly gets points. The winning team does not get any extra points, but they do “get the glory of winning.” All students are awarded participation points for taking part in the activity.

How to Ensure Participation in This Innovative Teaching Practice:

Having the students work in assigned pairs encourages students to engage with each other and be active participants during games.