

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Musical Chairs Group Stories

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

The “group stories” activity is a musical chairs-style activity in which students collectively build stories. This activity takes place mid-semester in a classroom that has a computer for each student. The game begins with each student seated at a computer with a blank Word document open. The instructor provides the first line of a story and instructs the students to type the first line exactly as she dictates it. For example, the first line may be “It was a dark and gloomy night when my friends...”

After all the students type the first line, the instructor tells the students that they must continue adding to the story when the music starts playing. Students are told that their objective is to use descriptive language to introduce a plot and characters and they must continue typing as long as the music is playing. As soon as the music stops, students must move to the next seat, even if they are in the middle of a sentence. After students arrive at the next computer, as soon as the music starts, they must pick up the story where the previous writer stopped and they cannot use anything from their own story or previous rounds. The instructor plays the music for three to five minutes, and then students shift again. The instructor takes time to sit with each student during the process to ensure that they are actively writing and to see how the stories unfold. The game lasts approximately 45 minutes. During the last round, students are

asked to go back to their home computer and write a conclusion for their story, incorporating all of the new information their classmates added.

How to Ensure Participation in This Innovative Teaching Practice:

The instructor engages with each student during the process and provides positive affirmation as students are writing.

Notes from The Instructor About This Innovative Teaching Practice:

Students seem to find this activity fun and it relaxes them in their writing. Even students who do not like to write seem to really enjoy this activity and end up with wonderful stories.