

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Learning Math Concepts Through Making Financial Life Plans

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

As part of a math fundamentals class where students engage in algebraic thinking—using real-world examples to understand and apply mathematical concepts—students complete a written project about their life plan. In this 8- to 9-week project, students research the type of job, car, and home they want to have, then estimate how their predicted earnings will help them reach their goals, if at all. They must also consider the cost of planning for retirement and raising children, if that is part of their life plan. Each student plots out their life on a Google Sheets spreadsheet, which they share with the instructor and a few classmates randomly assigned as peer reviewers. The instructor and peers provide periodic feedback directly in the Google document to maintain a running account of comments. Students can adjust their plan based on feedback from both the instructor and peers. Students may consult their peers about calculations, but the instructor does not verify the answers to math problems until students submit the final project for a grade.