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Helping Students Persist in Their Studies Reflection

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2F: Helping Students Persist in Their Studies

2F: Practice & Reflect I - Instructional Practice

Thomas Berry submitted May 10 at 5:50pm

The techniques I decided to explore, learn, and implement were communicating how increased effort leads to improved performance and providing tools for targeted improvement. For some time now, I have been concerned about how to build student improvement in completing assignments and acquiring subject matter knowledge as a course progresses. This module has given me the tools to think about and implement strategies that allow students to increase their effort and apply to their learning process in order to build consecutive successes. Previous to this module I would assign projects and once the student completed and turned it in, I would take the time to grade it and we would move on in the course. This was not a great measure of their abilities gained from the course and did not provide students with opportunities to learn from their mistakes. Therefore, I was never sure if the students truly mastered the information and improved.

I began to implement these strategies in my oral communication course. I provided at the beginning of the class rubrics concerning the assignment. These were included in the syllabus with the assignment directions and later provided to the students in a chart form that we went through before an assignment was started. I felt the rubric outlined my expectations for the speech projects. I also created checklists for the speeches which allowed the students to mark off each requirement for their speeches as it was completed. In class we would go over the requirement and determine it lacked effort, met the requirement, or exceeded requirement expectations. If it "lacked," students would determine, with guidance, what needed improved according to the rubric. The strategies were brainstormed or provided to assist students in completing these revisions. I wanted to show students where they are lacking in a step and provide/brainstorm strategies to increase effort for completion. I was also hoping that requiring this step would build a habit that they would repeat in the future. We revised their speech outlines twice before they made their final edits and delivered their speeches. I then graded their outlines.

In each step of the process I made an effort to show them where their strengths lie and point out areas that needed improvement according to the rubric. I also encouraged them. Many times a student would say that they didn't understand or didn't get it. I would say that was okay because we learn gradually and often are overwhelmed by the process. I said, "We need to figure out which steps are giving us trouble and fix it. Each time we do this we have a success and get better. Our confidence will grow. If we look at the whole thing, without breaking into parts, we can lose heart. Remember this next time you procrastinate and want to give up... Break the assignment up into manageable parts and complete those your good at first. Get help with those you have hard time with next." It is funny how students gravitate towards you when you encourage them like this. I currently have students who are really happy. They say, "Mr. Berry you are really helpful." "You are the greatest teacher. Thanks!" Some are concerned that they are taking up too much of my time and I say, "No! I want to help you get better."

I had a student from Oral Interpretation of Literature in my office today and she said, "Hi! It's me again." I said, "Good. How can I help you?" I wanted to deflect her from thinking that she was bothersome. I assisted her on her presentation and she was really appreciative. She wasn't sure how to determine meter and rhyme in her presentation and felt it would hinder her performance in trying to convey meaning. She showed me her work and we looked at the text and lecture notes to determine where her misunderstandings were. Then I had her strategize how to solve the problem while completing the work. When her step was accurate, I would tell her that she was doing the correct thing. I also said she was going in the right direction with her work and I look forward to seeing her performance. I also told her, before she left that I was proud of her for seeking help and solving many of her own challenges. I prefer to be a positive person in the classroom and applying these techniques has allowed me to see that rub off on my students. I see more improvement in their understanding of the subject matter and more timeliness in meeting due dates for assignments. This has been a challenge in the past and for a while I took a hard line when it came to meeting due dates. Now I don't find that I have to be this way because students know they are going to get a chance to improve and that each step is broken into manageable parts. I am slowly applying these

techniques to other classes and I would like to apply others from this module that look really helpful. For example, I would like to get better at diagnosing what students know and what they need to work on, as well as connecting learning to career or other long-term goals.