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Providing Clear Directions & Explanations Reflection

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4A: Practice & Reflect I - Instructional Practice

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The new techniques that I learned from this ACUE module that I decided to implement are twofold. I first decided to provide effective directions in the form of explaining the purpose of the activity/assignment and modeling the activity. I decided to do this because I was noticing that students were having trouble understanding a concept that is a prerequisite to my course and they needed clarification on how to use it and adapt it for use in speech-making. Second, I wanted to ensure comprehension by integrating visuals (diagrams, videos, pictures, etc.). The reason I chose this technique was to provide students with a graphic organizer that could be utilized to ensure that they were processing the concept correctly. As well it provided a format that could be used to analyze other examples and determine if they valid. I also thought that videos of successful speeches using this concept compared to unsuccessful speeches where the concept was not well used would be a good learning tool.

The concept that I have found students struggling with during the process of writing a speech is developing a strong thesis statement. I began to get feedback from students about their initial knowledge on how to write a thesis and what they have been taught. It seems that thesis writing has not been readily explained in simple specific steps, students indicated a scaffold for learning was not used or used well, nor were lessons supported by worked examples that were clear. I set out to change this by searching for and analyzing thesis statements that have been determined by experts to be good. I then broke them into their parts and compared these parts to find a common process. Part of this included considering the techniques of proper reasoning and making sure that was included in the thesis writing process. When I developed my lesson I applied the new technique of explaining a purpose for the activity which was that "thesis writing guides the whole speech process and allows all materials used in the speech to be linked using one theme or central idea. Anything that does not match this central idea should not be included." I also related the thesis writing to our learning objectives for the class; that students will be able to select, critically think, reason ethically and

BERRY 1

logically in their use of materials for informative, persuasive, and argumentative speaking, as well as, gain competence in speech organization and original composition. I also stated why thesis writing is relevant by telling students that this process of writing with a central idea in mind will be used anytime they write a paper throughout their academic career and likely in their chosen profession.

Next, I developed directions for these simple specific steps, defined them, and then created a graphic organizer that the students could use to develop and simplify their process. During the class I introduced this information and then we worked through a class example where the students provided the information for each step as I helped them through modeling the thought process for conjuring answers. The nice thing about the graphic organizer is how each step provides enough information to enable students to develop answers for the next step. After we were finished I posted our class example with other examples in our online class shell. I then provided a video that clearly showed a speech without a thesis, one with a weak thesis which we used our criteria to determine that it was weak, then a video of a speech with a strong thesis. At the end of class, I had students write a one-minute paper. One student mentioned, "This is wonderful. It is clear to me now how to write and use a thesis to guide a paper." Another student mention how she understands "the difference between a weak and strong thesis." Something that she "never understood what that meant on my papers."
I really enjoyed using these techniques for this speech class and I would like to improve my skills by adding a handout that has written directions and vocabulary that assists students with the graphic organizer. I plan to look at other concepts that the students seem to be weak on in some of my other courses and see if I can apply these techniques. Something that I plan to do in the future is create a video that online users can use for the same lesson.