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Developing Self-Directed Learners: Reflection

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4E: Developing Self-Directed Learners

4E: Practice & Reflect I - Instructional Practice

Thomas Berry submitted May 17 at 2:31pm

The techniques I decided to use in the classroom were assigning project flowcharts and using checklists and rubrics to facilitate self and peer assessments. I decided to use these techniques because they were new to me and I thought they could be of benefit for my students in Critical Thinking for Argument and Debate. The challenges I have for this class include students who have no idea how the process of argument and debate works. Nor do they understand the work entailed. My concern was how to communicate what needs to be done for a particular debate and to provide students with a method for completing it. Using project flowcharts as well as checklists and rubrics provided the tools that I needed to guide students in planning their approach to debates that they can re-use in addition to giving them a method to self-asses their work progress.

While designing the course work for the particular lesson on the flow of debates I created a chart that shows the process of an actual debate that included speaking times and duties of the participants. I then translated this into a flowchart that shows, much like a board game. Each of the steps that happens in the debate with a starting point and end point. The flowchart begins with the First Affirmative Constructive (1st AC) speaking for 4 minutes then I had an arrow showing the next person in the lineup which was the Second Negative Cross-Exam (2nd NX) for a minute and a half. I then proceeded to build the flowchart allowing the students do visualize each step in the debate process. I then proceeded to explain each step in our class.

Here is how the debate flowed step by step:

(1st AC 4min) >> (2nd NX 1½ min) >> (1st NC 4min) >> (1st AX 1½ min) >>

(2nd AC 4min) >> (1st NX 1½ min) >> (2nd NC 4min) >> (2nd AX 1½ min) >>

(1st NR 2min) >> (1st AR 2min) >> (2nd NR 2min) >> (2nd AR 2min) >> Debate ends.

Of course the flow chart was much nicer than the example here. As well, In order to help the students to check their work, self-monitor their progress, and complete the tasks for the debates I made checklist for each job that the students do during the debate. So for each of the steps on the flowchart there was a correlating checklist that outlined the tasks for the debate paperwork as well as what should be practiced before delivering the speeches. For example, the 1st AC duties include providing an introduction, thesis, proposition, stating the law, its problem and then providing definitions. Next stock issues and the conclusion duties were included in the checklist.

This was tedious work but I received great feedback from students. One stated that by having the checklist they were able to make sure they had each item that they would need for the debate. Another stated, "Thank you Mr. Berry for explaining how the speeches flow for the debate... this is beginning to make sense to me now." Overall I believe the students were helped by these techniques and I plan to use them in the future. I am also looking for ways that I can adapt this to the different tasks that students need to do in my other courses.