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Effective Teaching Techniques to Engage Students: ACUE Course Reflection

The ACUE course started with a theme of getting to know your students. I chose several teaching techniques to implement in my classroom including the reciprocal interview 2(A) and the name tent (2C). I spent time to reflect on these new strategies and how it would build on my knowledge base and impact my teaching practice. I chose the name tent technique to quickly identify my students by their names. This technique is important because it is the start of building relationships with the students and learning more about them on the first day. The name tent provided the opportunity for useful information to be shared which facilitated community building and an interactive learning environment. The reciprocal interview was also a very good practice for the first day of class, as it became my opportunity to set the tone that created an interactive and conducive learning environment. Using classroom activities such as ice breakers to facilitate rapport and clarify class expectations, inaugurated a warm interpersonal relationship between instructor and the students. This increased motivation, confidence and overall learning performance for my students. Also, it gave the students the opportunity to find out important details about the course and clarify misconceptions about the course or my instruction.

The course guide was useful in achieving this technique. Students were seated in small groups and each student shared some information about themselves with the class to break the ice. I, the instructor also shared information about myself with the students. Note cards were created with questions for the students. They were given time to review the questions and determine their answers. The class was interviewed by asking the same questions and if there was any misconception, this would be clarified. The students were given the opportunity to prepare questions for the instructor regarding the class expectations, assignments, and grading policy. The activities were well received. The students appreciated the opportunity to have their voices heard by interviewing the instructor about class expectations and constructing ground rules for the course. They indicated that the question and answer session did provide clarity for concerns they had. Also, I was informed about the students' expectations for the course and was able to define my role in achieving the student's goals.

Deep learning and critical thinking were significant concepts from the ACUE course which I had already been using in my classroom. The 4B module gave new insight into these concepts and prompted a reflection of my current and future teaching actions. I sought to inculcate my student's thought process to drive the class instruction. Classroom discussions

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focused on the significant role that metacognition plays in problem-solving and the concepts of critical thinking and deep learning. For module 4B, using concept maps and other visualization tools, I recognized the significance of how these class tools can improve students class performance. Concept maps encourage students to think creatively about the subject and evaluate assumptions. I utilized the partially completed map that required fill in the blank spots and label the relationships. This is useful in developing higher level thinking skills to synthesize and integrate information as well as structure creative ideas. This technique has been very useful in my class to evaluate previous knowledge and connecting new information to old knowledge. Written self-reflections and mind-mapping were also strategies I implemented to increase student's meta-cognitive awareness, making real-world connections to the class objectives. Asking students to write about what they learned in class and how it can be applied to clinical situations, or to create visual mind-maps that show the development of their critical reasoning on a given subject, helped to assess their understanding of the course objectives and how their critical thinking had evolved over time by participating using this tools.

The ACUE modules on Talk Technique to check for learning and Active Learning Techniques were strategies that I had also been using in my classroom, but the modules prodded me to reflect on my delivery and provided guidance for improvement. The "I Do, We Do, You Do" teaching method was introduced in the 1E module. This is an uncomplicated active learning technique that is effective in teaching new concepts to students. In this method, a new concept is introduced by the instructor with demonstration and the students work together in groups to deepen their understanding of the concept. A collaborative active learning strategy, where students can work together on an assigned reading or discussion topics to solve a problem or answer a question, facilitates individual critical thinking and create a forum to share ideas with peers. This team effort encourages participation, focus attention and engage students in comprehending the material being studied or discussed. The students will have the opportunity to construct their own knowledge, which facilitates a deeper understanding and a student-centered learning environment. This learning technique was also well received in my classroom.

The "I Do" phase occurs at the start of a new lesson or when new material is being introduced. The instructor has an important role in the introduction of new information and skills. I made sure objectives were clear and had the students work in small groups. In this phase,

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concept exploration is imperative to facilitate critical thinking and encourage reflection on new content, creating interesting discussion topics for the next phase. In the next phase, the “We do” phase of learning, there is a shift of learning responsibility from teacher-directed instruction to student processing activities. Here the instructor provides prompts and cues as needed to answer student questions and clarify any misconceptions they may have. Key materials were provided via lecture to expand their foundational knowledge and provided a vehicle for knowledge application. Lastly, the “You do” phase summarizes the student-center learning approach, which moves students from passive receivers of information to active participants in their own learning process. Here they applied their knowledge to solving relevant problems and were given several options to have their voice heard, including raising their hands to give their opinions. The students were given the chance to take charge of activities, even when they may not have had all the content skills. The students choose the focus of the content and allowed their interests to drive the content that teaches skills and concepts. This classroom activity brings structure, purpose and encourages participation. The technique is useful in building a community of learners starting from day one. Gradual release of responsibility is a way to utilize differentiated instruction principles to all content areas of instruction as the responsibility for independent learning shifts to the learners.

Lastly, the ACUE course designed with a structured reflection at the end of each module, prompted a pause to reexamine my own pedagogical approach to relatable situations. It gave me the opportunity to appraise new knowledge and enhanced my ability to facilitate affective learning. Common themes through the course created thought provoking questions and demonstrated mindful communications, notable themes like Planning Effective Classroom Discussions and The Phases of the Active learning Cycle. Both encouraged reflection on knowledge and the impact of new content which facilitates a need to know, igniting a curiosity to learn and stay engaged. This brings structure to the classroom, purpose and encourages a supportive learning environment. Establishing a supportive and productive learning environment is imperative to student’s ability to meet course objectives. The ACUE course in effective teaching practices provides the opportunity for college educators to develop teaching skills that facilitate student success. The teaching techniques learned are practical and I have been able to implement some of these techniques with positive feedback from my students.