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The benefits of ACUE training: Effective Teaching Practices
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Abstract

The following paper is an outline and reflection of lessons I learned throughout my time on canvas; ACUE training. Thanks to CSUSB's TRC program they offer effective trainings to create a positive learning environment. I also include different challenges I experienced while implementing these lessons.

Keywords: ACUE, TRC, Effective Teaching Practices, Planning, Implementation

The benefits of ACUE training: Effective Teaching Practices

As instructors it is our job to ensure our students receive knowledge in a meaningful manner. Throughout history we have seen teachers use instructional utensils to enhance learning in the classroom, however, the classroom is always evolving. This past quarter I have received numerous lessons on improving my instruction for the benefit of students thanks to ACUE (American Council of University Education). Instructors education should continue to grow as our students knowledge does so, which is why I took part in this course. Effective teaching practices and lessons, advice, and technique experiences I learned are as follows:

Designing an Effective Course

- Establishing powerful learning Outcomes
- Aligning assessments with course outcomes
- Aligning activities and assignments with course outcomes
- Preparing an effective syllabus
- Planning an effective class session

Reflection. At the beginning of every quarter/semester I provide a calendar to students. On this calendar they can find all deadlines and assignments found throughout this course. For certain assignments, such as speeches and final papers I create a check list of what I am looking for in these assignments. The purpose of providing this information is so that the students can have clarity on what I am expecting and how they will be graded. I have yet to create a big idea syllabus, but moving forward I would like to. I believe it helps students at a quick glance understand what will be occurring throughout the course. Successes I have encountered include students completing assignments on time and at a higher level. I find that students are more

motivated to complete their work because they know what they are expected to complete. A challenge that I encounter is knowing when to provide information such as checklists to students. However, watching this module has helped me understand the importance of when and how. In the future I will continue to review and refine my calendar and checklists to make sure I am not overloading students with information, but also providing the necessary information for students.

Overall, I believe providing this information in a graphic will help improve clarity for students.

Establishing a Productive Learning Environment

- Learning the first day of class
- Promoting a civil learning environment
- Connecting with your students
- Motivating your students
- Helping students persist in their studies
- Embracing diversity in your classroom

Reflection. For every class session I follow an outline, however, it is very broad that covers only the chapter. After watching this first module I believe I will make sure to make it class specific along with an agenda to follow. This way we are utilizing time wisely and ensuring that everything gets accomplished within a timely matter. I noticed in the classes which I practice small talk with students the more likely students are to communicate with me during lecture. Sometimes I find small talk to be quite difficult because I do not know what to discuss. I feel awkward in these situations. This quarter was the first quarter which I did not print the syllabi out for my students, however, after watching this demonstration I do not believe this was the best idea. I think having a tangible copy available to students can help students. I try to build

community with my students by completing an activity and allowing them to ask any questions they may have about content. This course overall was quite refreshing. I believe in the future I will turn the review of the syllabi into an activity. I believe I am very successful at creating a positive community in the classroom.

For every class that I teach I try to learn the students names. It can be quite difficult, especially when you are working at multiple campuses. It sometimes takes me a few weeks to complete this task, however, I can see my students passion for learning grow as my relationship with them grows. When the students see that I am passionate about the class they seem to have passion that grows for the subject as well. I plan to implement students creating “table tents” or signs with their names on it. To make it easier to remember their names. I also plan to have them say their name every time they answer a question so I can thank them after. I have implemented students saying their names, however, I have yet to use the table tents...yet.

I find it difficult to have small talk with students sometimes before class, because I do not know what to talk about. Do I talk about my weekend? Or should I talk about theirs? If not what subjects are safe to discuss with students. It is still unclear to me what exactly I should state or discuss. However, I think I can work on this by utilizing activities that relate to course content. Students found my small talk to be engaging and delightful... Well that is from nonverbal cues I am picking up on.

I believe I can benefit by creating an online portfolio but I think I would rather share this information in person. So maybe have it available online and in person. I plan to implement this next quarter. I have yet to implement this.

I try to make content relatable to all students, but I find it becoming more difficult to relate to students. How does one person understand their likes and dislikes. I suppose the trick is to say current on pop culture, but how? I find it easier to talk about things that I am passionate about, however, that does not necessary follow that students will be passionate about it.

Overall, I plan to try to improve my small talk, relate more to students, and learn students names. I think I have more anxiety about it then I actually have difficulty. However, I will continue to learn in this class to try to enhance my instruction. Overall, plan to implement name cards, small talk, and discussing content driven activities at the beginning and end of class. This way students can be more interactive in class and feel involved in the content.

Using Active Learning Techniques

- Using active learning techniques in small groups
- Using active learning techniques in large classes
- Delivering an effective lecture
- Planning effective class discussions
- Intergrating civic learning in your course

Reflection. Sometimes I find it challenging to integrate visual tools into the classroom, however, I have found that this obstacle although may be challenging has proven to be helpful to students. I am a visual learner. So, my whole life in my notes I always create charts. In order to help students that learn in a similar manner I have always tried to include charts. For example, when I teach APA formatting I create a chart on the board where as a class we build a correct APA paper together. Sometimes I find myself talking more than I should, which is probably a control issue I need to work on. So I plan to try to incorporate student engagement more. I plan to ask more engaging questions in order to keep students engaged.

Another example I can think of is when I teach general purpose, specific purpose statement, and central idea to students I organize them into three categories. I slowly move from one side of the board towards the other. I do this so students can understand that you cannot throw together a specific purpose statement or central idea. It takes time to organize our thoughts. When I changed my lecture to be like this I have found that students have a stronger understanding between the differences of general purpose statement, specific purpose statement, and central idea.

Overall, I believe I already use visual aids, but of course I can improve. I plan to keep an eye out for areas in which I can incorporate more visual aids. I do plan to improve my student engagement when it comes to forming flow charts.

As previous stated in my previous submission, I do not really know how to measure my student's successes and failures when implementing different components into lecture. For example, I do not see a big difference in grades when it comes to their assignments. I guess a success could be that students seem more engaged when I use a chart compared to utilizing only content. At this time I cannot identify any failures. I believe I could answer this more when it is implemented to a further extent.

Promoting Higher Order Thinking

- Providing clear directions and explanations
- Using concept maps and other visualization tools
- Teaching powerful note-taking skills
- Using advanced questioning techniques
- Developing self-directed learners

Reflection. In this module I learned the importance of outlining your expectations, sharing pointers, and using clear signals to help students take effective notes. I do this now, but not to the extent in which I should. I think as instructors we sometimes forget that taking effective notes is not always taught in school. So, I plan to outline my expectations when it comes to taking notes, such as, actively asking at least one question for clarity each class, taking notes, and identifying key concepts, as we go. I often tell my students that I expect them to write down at least two concepts that I verbally state, although it might not be written down. I believe by sharing effective pointers I learned over my college experience I can help students become stronger note takers. Pointers I might want to share is do not write everything on PowerPoint slides down; summarize and learn how to abbreviate words to shorten what you are writing. I think a clear signal I utilize now is repeating important concepts three times. However, I think I can do this by also showing nonverbal cues. I have not figured out what I plan to incorporate to show the importance of such content, but for now I will continue to repeat important content three times.

I do not know the successes of me incorporating these pointers yet, because it is not the end of the quarter. What I would like to do is compare the engagement of students from this quarter to previous quarters. Right now, it seems like students enjoy the pointers I am giving them. However, I do not know how to measure successes. As for challenges, I find it challenging to decide when to share pointers and when not too.

Assessing to Inform Instruction and Promote learning.

- Developing fair, consistent, and transparent grading practices
- Developing and using rubrics and checklists

- Providing useful feedback
- Checking for student understanding
- Using student achievement and feedback to improve your teaching

Reflection. I think it is important that we allow our students to provide feedback, because if they can identify issues or problems in classmates work they will be able to do the same in their own work. Currently I allow my students to peer review each other's work for three of their four speeches they conduct in my public speaking courses. However, I believe I need to do a better job of this in my interpersonal and small group course. When I provide feedback to students, I try not to be harsh and just apply concepts we discuss in class because my job is to teach them not take away from them. I hardly provide the opportunity for them to make revisions and resubmit, however, after watching this module I believe I should provide more of these opportunities, however, sometimes my assignments are more about the presentation than the paper in these cases I wonder what would be some suggestions on how to submit revisions.

Personally, I truly enjoy peer review assignments because it allows students to engage with each other. However, from time to time it is hard to make time for this on a quarter system. It is so easy to fall behind on a quarter system. I think it is vital to show students what we expect of them. So, when this module discussed using visual or technology to display examples I thought of my training as a GTA and the importance of modeling what you expect. One problem with displaying examples is that it can also have error, however, I believe it is still helpful to students to see or hear what is expected of them.

Conclusion

Overall, I learned many lessons throughout these modules that have actively increased my potential as an instructor. I encourage anyone entertaining the thought of the ACUE training to do so. It has helped me immensely in the classroom.