

Holistic Conversations About a Course – Activity for the Last Week of Class

For some classes it may be important to obtain information about what assignments and experiences were of value before course evaluations are returned – especially if you are preparing to teach the same course the next term prior to course evaluations being processed and returned.

1. Prepare a sheet of paper that simply has a label for the assignment or experience on the top – one for each area you are interested in obtaining information. For example:

Autobiography of your science education	Long-term observation journal	Article critique	Small group discussions on differentiation	Field experience
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2. Group your students by the number of areas you are exploring.

3. Give each group one of the sheets ask one person to be the scribe. They are to write what was effective about the assignment/experience and what was ineffective about the assignment. Give the group about three minutes to do this.

4. Rotate sheets clockwise. The next group reads what is on the sheet and adds effective and ineffective aspects. Give the group about three minutes to do this.

5. Rotate sheets clockwise again...same task as above. Give the group about three minutes to do this.

6. Rotate sheets clockwise – this is the last time – the group is to read all the comments and then rank order the three most important comments on the sheet. The groups may need more than three minutes but are usually done within five minutes.

7. Open the floor for discussion. Start with the area you are most interested in and ask the group that has that sheet to talk about their ranking and why they rated things this way. This allows you to hear, respond, and acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses. Because the group that ranks speaks first there is less resistance to engaging in the conversation since they are just reporting out the ranking and were not responsible for the items on the sheet. What I have found is that this acts as a catalyst for a healthy whole class discussion of what was learned during the course.

In addition to providing you with guidance for the next time you teach the course, you will be able to reemphasize course outcomes, rearticulate interconnections of concepts and experiences, and communicate intent while having a chance to review material. Collect the sheets so that you can read everything and use them to shape aspects of the course the next time you teach it.

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