

TCCTA Conference for Faculty Leaders

Notes from Group Activities on Student Success

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At the 2009 TCCTA Conference for Faculty Leaders, conference participants were asked, in small groups, to describe a practice employed in their classroom or department that has a significant impact on student success. After everyone was given an opportunity to speak in breakout groups, group members selected one idea to report out to the entire conference.

Members of the TCCTA Professional Development Committee took notes during the discussion time. Listed below are brief summaries of the ideas.

Group: English

Best Idea:

First-day ice-breaking activities such as Anne-Marie Schlender's name game and Karen Priest's idea of allowing students to ask questions about the teacher.

Other Ideas:

Karen Priest-- early alert system: a counselor sends out forms and contacts are made by employees; students introduce themselves; students tell a joke; allow students to make an inference about the teacher.

Laurel Lacroix-- small group work on the first reading; students break down appeals and syllogisms regarding *Antigone*.

John Scheffer—in working with literature students, start with visual works including landscapes and painting, moving from idealism to realism, illustrating connections to course readings.

Group: English Notetaker: Jill Coe

Best Idea:

Group consensus—use of rubrics in essay grading; conducting holistic scoring sessions each semester among faculty, including adjuncts, to calibrate scoring consistency; keep student authors and instructors anonymous.

Other Ideas:

Shane Simon—student peer editing; they must work with peers before submitting resumes and career letters.

Beth Shelton—in American Literature, divide class into groups, each of which is responsible for a certain number of study questions; each group makes a brief presentation; all notes are copied and made available in the library.

Jim Richey—for faculty: because face-to-face meetings are hard to schedule, each faculty member emails two “best practices” other useful tips per semester; department chair collects them and makes available to all instructors; very good for new faculty members.

Group: Social Sciences Notetaker: Jane England

Best Idea:

Randy Jarvis— “Sociological Monopoly” played by students: students begin with different amounts of money; the rich own everything. Stratify into different classes with less or no money/property.

Other Ideas:

Terri s Schrantz—get students connected and comfortable right away with the right classroom environment; make use of extra activities like clubs and seminars.

Annie Benifield—extra credit awarded for attending events and seminars; students must write a report on what they learned.

Jane England—conduct study sessions outside of class; use group work and games.

Wendy Gunderson—play competitive games before exams, with the first three groups receiving points toward the exam; this encourages working together and holding each other accountable.

Group: Mathematics

Best Idea:

George Johnson—math lab run by the mathematics department, with 4 – 5 credentialed tutors and over 100 computers; close to two math classrooms; members of the community may come in; we call it “Algebra Acres.”

Other Ideas:

William Heierman—any student may come to any of the three FT math instructors for help.

Rita Lewis—with a Title III grant, the math department hires a tutor; FT faculty donate office hours and work, write letters to students missing class.

Aziel Wilson—students attend a Math Emporium three hours per week unless they score 80% or better on their homework; faculty spend four hours per week in the lab; early alerts are sent; email reinforcement sent to follow up.

Katherine Murray—doing course redesign for Developmental Math, going to modules that test skills; students state individual goals.

Babette Lowe—have 70 modules per class; two instructors plus assistants are used; tests given the first day for placement; classes meet 2 ½ hours twice a week; students can finish early, some in ½ a semester and can begin an eight-week algebra class.

Group: Nursing and Allied Health Sciences

Best Idea:

Irma Rodriguez-- Cooperative learning through groups; groups have a student group supervisor.

Other Ideas:

Bertha Kondrak—introductions, sharing, table tents, encouraging use of first names.

Lisa Baker—group work, allowing students to choose their own group, which results in a higher comfort level for the students and more natural engagement within the groups.

Janis Browning—didactic online learning grouped together; next semester students choose group; debriefing after simulation exercise; strong and weak students tend to find each other.

Claudia Turner—videotape of live client to assess learning.

Group: Humanities

Best Idea:

Source unknown— using permanent groups; autograph party

Other Ideas:

Sources unknown—student contracts signed and individual information taken; reviewing syllabus together; detailed interviews/introductions using student pairs; using collaborative tests; early intervention; faculty provides an explanation of what scholars do.

Group: Government

Notetaker: Lee Grimes

Best Idea:

Kari Clark—using student-led discussion of current events using current media (NYTimes, BBC, Washington Post); students report to the class about their articles; one rule: no celebrities.

Other Ideas:

Mavis Triebel—using hybrid classes; using scenario assignments such as comparing the Dred Scott case with current events like Guantanamo.

Robert Yowell—using remote response pads; students buy their own clickers. Use personalized and randomized engagement with students to keep them alert to the possibility they will be called on.

Lee Grimes—using the district video repository so video clips can help illustrate concepts.

Group: Business/Economics/Accounting

Notetaker: David Sorrells

Best Idea:

Larry Allen—for online classes, contacting students directly and meeting with them personally.

Other Ideas:

Claudia Kurek (Hobson)—engage students by giving examples of current state of the economy and make it relevant to today's events.

Dave Wozniak—using online features in lecture classes to get the introverts speaking.

Robbie Sheffy—give lots of grades, homework; have a reading skill requirement for students in online classes.

Fred Newbury—determine how the students learn; create your own material; no powerpoint, interactive exercises instead; have a mini-lecture on video for every lesson.

Blake Hargrove—for online classes, use cell phones to keep in touch; use text messaging to plan a phone call then have students call him.

Group: Natural Sciences

Notetaker: Robert Bauman

Best Idea:

Source unknown—use open labs as a way to encourage student networking and faculty tutoring; we'll call the lab "Bacterial Bliss."

Other Ideas:

Sources unknown—tutoring/mentoring by faculty outside of class; early assessment so weaker students can be paired with stronger ones; science learning center staffed by faculty with access to software, slides, scopes, etc.; peer tutors every Friday.

Group: Continuing Education and Workforce Education

Notetaker: Russell Kunz

Best Idea:

Russell Kunz—use mid-semester evaluations; six questions such as what students like best, what they dislike, what needs improvement; compile results and share them with the students; students appreciate this and there is still time to change the class.

Other Ideas:

Karen Silverberg—use traditional pedagogy in Paralegal class; explains why in the first lecture—it mimics the oral instructions of the workplace; listening is critical.

Ann Richman—in Business class, conduct a True Color Personality test: students are given cards with six questions, such as major, what is something no one knows about you, who or what is a leader, what interesting place have you been; they interview and introduce each other;

Rod Hellger—use personal surveys at the semester's beginning and sometimes mid-semester.

Tony Cleaver—check with students informally mid-semester to see how things are going.

Bill Fuller—emphasize high moral standards and respect; organize work groups, placing strongest students with weakest; enforce strict deadlines; establish a routine with two weeks; focus on KUD—Know-Understand-Do.

DeDe Griffith—use Service Learning, including Habitat for Humanity; important to see faculty participating outside of class.

Group: Social Science Notetaker: Mike Schneider

Other Ideas:

Melissa Weston—Picks up class notes occasionally and give students credit. She only collects a row at any one time rather than the whole class.

Randy Jarvis—Muddiest Point. Have students submit two questions on a point they are not clear on. Submissions can come from lecture or text. I believe he has them submit questions after a lecture. He then posts them on Blackboard Discussion Board along with a good discussion and has the students respond to the posting.

Group: Computer Science Notetaker: Essie Childers

Other Ideas:

- Formation of learning communities at the beginning of the semester.
- Group activities in which each group has a task of writing their logic, exchange papers with other groups and share ideas.
- The Muddiest Point – Distance learning has students post comments to the discussion board; professor can make adjustments in the next lecture.

- First Day – Students receive their syllabus, professor leaves the room, students interview one another and discuss the syllabus and have students introduce their neighbor; creates a sense of bonding with another student and the class.
- Mid-Term Evaluations – Share and discuss with students; make adjustments if necessary.
- Office Skills – twelve month program; students cover a module called Professional Development for Office Personnel with emphasis on “soft skills.”
- Group Dynamics – Students work together to design a company from scratch; develops critical thinking skills as students incorporate what they have learned through a Power Point presentation (graded individually and as a group) students are learning from one another.