



High-Impact Practices

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Course Context

We team taught a ninety-minute graduate - level, communication-based course to students in the Strategic Communication and Leadership Program at the University of West Florida.

Topic

Our teaching topic was high-impact practices, which included team-based learning and active learning strategies teachers can use to create healthy learning environments.

Our Classroom Experience

To teach students about the power of high-impact practices, we used the metaphor of a teacher as an orchestra conductor who knows the strengths and weaknesses of the musicians and brings each instrument into play at the right time in order to create beautiful music. For this class, we focused less on the theoretical qualities of the teaching strategies and more on the practical nature of implementing them. As students who have experienced the positive effects of a professor who uses these techniques, our class already understood their inherent power. Therefore, we wanted students to get hands-on experience with some of the functional elements. After a short mini-test as a check-on-learning, we began our instruction.

Our team-based learning segment focused on the practical matter of how teachers can divide students into learning teams by using a simple survey on the first day of class. After discussing potential student assets and liabilities, student teams devised surveys that would help them create balanced teams that would spur learning for all of their students.

Our active-learning segment focused on how teachers can create grading rubrics in order to provide students with useful feedback on their assignments. After discussing the basic components of a rubric, we used a team activity where our students created their own rubrics based on a given scenario. We then provided feedback to the groups and facilitated discussion about implementing a rubric-based assessment system.



Class Outcomes

Throughout the class, students participated in lively discussion of the topics. The student teams incorporated the concepts we delivered into their team-based survey and grading rubrics during the exercise. We incorporated dedicated reflection time at the end of the class period, and the students were able to aptly describe how they could use the skills taught in our class to a future teaching or training position.



Participant Feedback

The feedback from our class was highly positive, with students commenting that they appreciated our use of the teacher as conductor metaphor and the hands-on exercise in creating a grading rubric.

"The rubric exercise cemented the concept into my brain"

"The analogy of a teacher as a musical conductor brilliantly added to the presentation"

"I appreciate how you taught and led the class through the concepts with questions and practical assignments. Bravo!"

