



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STAFF AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
WITH SUPPORT FROM THE W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION AND THE SID W. RICHARDSON FOUNDATION

Bringing Worlds Together: Internationalizing the Curriculum Through Focused Interaction

Internationalizing the curriculum, student-centered learning, values clarification, cross-cultural awareness, writing to learn, and cooperative learning are all important issues in education today. This fairly easy-to-arrange exchange between a high-intermediate English as a second language (ESL) class and a sociology class incorporates them all; the basic concept can be adapted to a variety of courses/levels.

Internationalizing the curriculum is not a matter of inserting "international" courses into the curriculum, but of integrating an international perspective into *all* courses. One of the valuable attributes of the method described here is just that: By matching internationals with sociology students in small groups to discuss family customs and issues, cross-cultural awareness becomes an inherent element rather than an isolated curiosity.



Early in the quarter, a date was arranged for an ESL composition class (17 students) to come to the Sociology of the Family class (20 students) for a 50-minute visit. We (the instructors) hoped to expose both groups to the practices and values of family life in other cultures, to give students practice with writing and thinking through writing, and to give the ESL students greater opportunities to talk with native speakers of English.

We divided each class into four groups, trying to balance each group to include students of different genders, races, personalities, ages, and national backgrounds. In the sociology class, students worked in these small groups to develop a list of 10 questions about such topics as dating, marriage, sex, and child-rearing in other cultures. In the ESL class, it was important for the students to become familiar with the ideas and vocabulary for the visit; students, therefore, prepared by first responding in their small groups to the Americans' questions, then compiling a list of their own questions concerning customs in the United States. In addition, as a composition class, the ESL students generated five family-related essay topics; each student wrote on one of the subjects as a class assignment.

On the day of the actual exchange, the sociology class brought refreshments for the international guests and arranged the desks into four "tables" to create an informal setting. Maps on the walls aided students in locating the various nations represented. After a cautious start, the international exchanges became so lively that the noise level in the class reached record levels. A number of conversations continued even after the class was formally over.

The following week each instructor evaluated the experience by surveying her class with anonymous questionnaires. In addition, the sociology class wrote about the visit for their journals, and the international students wrote essay-style commentaries on the exchange. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive; 100% of the students expressed a desire to have additional opportunities to interact.

Some specific comments from international students (English uncorrected):

"I was happy because we were acting as one family."—Lebanon

"We have had a warm relationship with our student's group—the idea of small groups was great—the only problem is that the meeting was too short, so we didn't have time enough to answer all the questions..."—France

"What I liked best was the sociology class were friendly people. In my group we went on discussing as if we knew each other before."—Somalia

"I'm surprised to know that American students are talking about these problems seriously. That's good. In my country people tend to avoid discussing these kinds of problems. I think it should be changed."—Japan

"I found that meeting interesting because it was the first time that I discussed with American students about my society's culture and also theirs."—Iran



We have repeated the exchange, making the groups smaller (four to six students in all). With the noise level in mind, we allowed one-half of the students to meet in one classroom and one-half in the other. For the future, we are considering journal exchanges or making one-to-one student matches for more intensive interviews. We are excited about the possibilities for long-term cooperation and integration between ESL and regular curriculum classes. Certainly this experiment could be a model for similar exchanges in other sociology classes, as well as political science, English, economics...and the list goes on.

Mary Beth Collins, *Instructor, Behavioral & Social Sciences*

Karen Stanley, *Instructor, English & Foreign Language*

For further information, contact the authors at Central Piedmont Community College, P.O. Box 35009, Charlotte, NC 28235.

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND THE
1991 INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON TEACHING
EXCELLENCE AND CONFERENCE
OF ADMINISTRATORS.

May 19-22
Austin, Texas



Excellence In Teaching Retreat

Teaching retreats are opportunities to celebrate great teaching, swap and steal ideas, and focus on direct service to students. Guilford Technical Community College's Excellence in Teaching Retreat—involving faculty, staff, and administrators—is an annual 1-1/2 day opportunity to tap the teaching experiences and resources of their colleagues. [In the event there is a cancellation, one "hand-picked" student—who has a strong interest in pursuing a teaching career—is selected to attend.]



First, participants share teaching problems (both solved and unsolved) in two very brief papers that they have written prior to the retreat. Facilitators identify the issues of vital importance to the entire group. They then organize topical workshops on specific educational issues in which participants (1) share information and (2) move on to creative ways of thinking about the topic.

Based on The Great Teachers' Seminar (Garrison and Gottshall), the Excellence in Teaching Retreat serves as an important staff development activity. Among the reasons cited for its success: the content is not planned; no guest lecturers or experts of any kind are used; there are no specific expectations beyond individual benefits; the participants are inexhaustible resources; and *everyone* is both teaching and learning. Participants leave the seminar with a renewed enthusiasm for teaching and innovative ideas for the classroom.

Lundee Amos, *Director of Educational and Faculty/Staff Development*

For further information, contact the author at Guilford Technical College, P.O. Box 309, Jamestown, NC 27282.

Suanne D. Roueche, *Editor*

January 18, 1991, Vol. XIII, No. 1
©The University of Texas at Austin, 1991
Further duplication is permitted by MEMBER
institutions for their own personnel.

INNOVATION ABSTRACTS is a publication of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), EDB 348, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712, (512) 471-7545. Subscriptions are available to nonconsortium members for \$40 per year. Funding in part by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the Sid W. Richardson Foundation. Issued weekly when classes are in session during fall and spring terms and once during the summer. ISSN 0199-106X.