



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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I Know It When I See It: Great Teaching

At Brookdale Community College we have produced a video series on teaching excellence. All of the videos incorporate actual classroom footage and an interview with the instructor explaining his/her techniques or strategies. Some examples follow.



Solving World Problems

The demonstration performance method is used as a key strategy in teaching students how to solve problems in a math class. The instructor demonstrates and explains the techniques, then guides the students at the chalkboard in performing the skill. Students can be seen working and thinking through the process. The benefits of the demonstration method and the chalkboard as a supporting tool are featured.

Doubling

Teaching students to portray feelings and emotions are taught via the demonstration method. In Socio Drama, the instructor helps students to express inner feelings of a third party. The method takes on an unusual focus of learning an affective skill.

"Lost on the Moon"

The students, in small group discussion, are led through the simulation game "Lost on the Moon." Students are seen working in small groups in an attempt to problem solve for their survival on the moon. They are given a list of items to prioritize, and their survival is based on their score. An interview with the instructor clarifies her agenda for engaging students in a unique problem-solving process, as well as in the dynamics of gaming.

Teaching: The Art of Having Fun

This instructor allows his students to view English and French law via a new perspective. Situations of law are placed in a setting that forces the student to laugh and smile. The style of lecturing supports the theory that teaching and learning can be fun for students and instructor.

Enthusiasm in the Classroom

The Battle of Lexington and Concord is the lesson topic in this American Civilization history class. The student is given a vicarious experience of the battle via dramatization. Through the use of the chalkboard,

storytelling, quotations, dramatic gestures, voice changes, and humor, the battle comes alive. During the interview the instructor uses the same charm and techniques to articulate the philosophy behind his approach.

Using Examples

The instructor is teaching Human Growth and Development; it is the first day of the semester, and the lesson topic is assimilation/accommodation. The concept involves how children learn and acquire new information. The instructor uses three forms of examples (communication) to teach the concept. The first illustration (enactive) is having the student physically learn a new (physical) skill. The second example (symbolic) has the student listening to how a young child reacts to different objects being rolled across the floor. The third example (iconic) has the student examining a spoon-like object in an attempt to classify its use. Footage is interspersed with comments from the instructor's interview: how examples are selected, their purpose, and their importance to students.

Role-Playing

Charlie Russell, a Western American artist (late 1800's/early 1900's), visits the classroom. The dialogue is a mixture of Charlie's quotations and stories told in his unique Western drawl. Humor and wit of the artist are threaded throughout the visit. Charlie is interviewed in costume and answers questions that reflect his views on role-playing as a teaching technique.



In the literature there seems to be no consensus on what constitutes an excellent teacher, but we all know a great teacher when we see one. The dilemma is not recognizing excellence, but identifying its specific characteristics.

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A Pound of Prevention...

Integration of Ethics Into Introductory Accounting

Pick up a current copy of any major newspaper or business publication and you will find articles about business leaders who stepped into the gray areas of ethical business practices and are now accused of mismanagement, deceit, or outright fraud. Continued media exposure has raised the level of concern about American business ethics, and colleges and universities are responding by adding ethics courses to their business school curricula.

All instructors can supplement and reinforce the formal courses by integrating ethics into their routine course content. Following are three approaches that have been effective in integrating ethics issues into my introductory accounting courses, promoting student interest and active participation.



Current Events and "War Stories"

I introduce ethics during the second class meeting by asking the students where they got the pencil or pen they have in their hands. Without fail, about 75% of them will admit to having taken it from work without permission. This question generates a lively discussion on the degrees of right or wrong and the scope of ethical considerations. It is clear that ethics is not just a one-time, important business decision made by a high-level executive, but rather an accumulation of day-to-day, small-scale decisions made at all levels.

At the beginning of each subsequent class period, we spend five minutes discussing current business news articles or practices observed by students on the job. Management expense reports are a favorite topic and emphasize how difficult it is to draw the line between management discretion and unethical practices. Financial statement disclosures, asset management, inventory control, employee relations, and leadership issues all relate to ethics.

Case Studies

I allocate part of one class session per semester for case study discussions. I divide the class into groups of three to five students and give each group a pre-selected case study. The small group structure encourages a more open discussion about values and possible applications in the student's own work environment. I serve as facilitator to avoid influencing the group's analysis and assessment.

I do, however, pose general questions to get the

discussion started and keep it focused. For example, one case study put the students in the role of a manager who found out through another employee that his best employee was stealing and selling bicycles for cash. I asked the groups to consider how they would detect or, better yet, prevent such an occurrence. I also asked if their decision might change if the employee had stolen just one bicycle and had given it to an impoverished child for Christmas.

I schedule 20 minutes for group discussion and 20 minutes for the groups to report and defend their conclusions. Students are encouraged to challenge other opinions.

Student Reports

My final strategy is to offer students an extra-credit option of preparing an in-depth written or oral report on a current news topic or a topic of their own choosing. I ask students to consider how the issues impact the business' relationship with its stockholders, employees, vendors, and customers; what aspects of the media coverage might have been biased and why; what corrective measures seem to be needed; and who should police the correction—the government, the industry, or the business itself.

Two students selected their own topics. One interviewed a whistleblower and reported on his personal devastation and near financial ruin. The other designed a 10-part ethics questionnaire for completion by her classmates. It was not a scientific study, but the results fostered a lively discussion.



There are other ways to integrate ethics into business and non-business classes, but these methods worked well. The students did not walk away with a checklist of right and wrong behaviors, but with reference points for recognizing possible unethical acts and compromising situations. This exposure will help them understand the potential consequences of the decisions they make.

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