



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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HUMAN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY WORKOUT

Students of human anatomy and physiology employ many learning strategies to master the major skeletal muscles of the human body, actions of specific muscles, and types of motion and exercise. As an instructor of human anatomy and physiology, I noticed that some students did not master this knowledge from activities in anatomy and physiology courses but rather from participation in exercise programs.

We are fortunate to have an excellent wellness center and supportive physical education program on our campus. The wellness center is equipped with several types of aerobic exercise equipment including a treadmill, a rowing machine, stairmasters, and stationary bikes. There are also machines (of the Nautilus type) for use in short-duration, high-density exercises. Each machine and corresponding exercise(s) is designed to target specific muscles or muscle groups. Unfortunately, only a small number of students, staff, and faculty utilize the equipment and take advantage of available expertise. I proposed to incorporate an introduction to the various types of exercise equipment housed in the wellness center into human anatomy and physiology laboratories dealing with the muscular system, and I believed that the introduction might encourage more participation in the center.

I presented the concept to the head of physical education at our campus and was pleased to receive an enthusiastic response. She suggested that we strengthen the interdisciplinary nature of the exercise by utilizing prospective physical education majors to introduce the equipment and the corresponding exercises. The students she has recommended each semester have been enthusiastic and have performed admirably. I meet with the assisting student and go over the objectives and general format of the exercise prior to bringing the lab students to the wellness center. Preceding the trip to the wellness center, I present a brief overview of the upcoming exercise and suggest wearing of appropriate clothing to the following lab.

I begin the exercise by introducing the wellness center and the assisting student. The student then introduces each type and piece of equipment, demonstrates proper use, and describes the general type of exercise and/or specific muscles or muscle groups utilized in performing the exercises. Students are encouraged to ask questions during the presentation and during breaks.

At the conclusion of the presentation, I review the two major types of equipment (aerobic and high-intensity), introduce the benefits and objectives of different exercise regimes, and answer any remaining questions. Students are instructed (1) to stretch properly (as demonstrated by the assisting student), (2) to utilize each piece of equipment, using light weights during this trial process, and (3) to focus on the muscles used in accomplishing the motion for each exercise. Descriptions of proper techniques and pictorial presentations of the major muscles used in lab exercises are attached to most of the machines.

Feedback from students has been positive. Students have guided and assisted one another in this less formalized setting than they would normally in lab. Those experienced with the equipment share their insights with their peers. The majority of students report that this alternative and supplementary method of learning about the human muscular system increases their understanding and enthusiasm. The assisting students also benefit by having the opportunity to instruct and share knowledge about their area of expertise. An additional benefit has been that several students each term return to the wellness center on their own, and some enter into a regular exercise program.

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PEER AWARDS

Positive reinforcement—for example, a supportive comment or a compliment—means so much to students when it comes from classmates. I encourage this feedback through peer awards in my interpersonal communication, principles of speech, and professional speaking classes.

Guidelines are few (but vital and should be monitored in most classes), materials are cheap, and time involved is normally less than 40 minutes. For the most creativity and sincerity, peer awards are created within student groups of three or four, and there should be at least three groups in the class. (Group "A" will create awards for each student in group "B," "B" will present to group "C," etc.) Throughout the semester or year, students should have learned something about each other, and someone in each group is certain to have enough ideas to create the text for the award.

In its most basic form, a peer award is a 4 X 6 index card. The recipient's first name is written in clear, large letters on one side. (It is helpful if the instructor spells each student's name for the class.) At least four positive comments about that student are written around the name. Teachers may set their own guidelines, but I tell my students to stay away from physical attributes, except for such attributes as "expressive eyes," or "pleasant smile." I also share sample compliments to speed up the brainstorming process. Examples include: "good listener," "open-minded," "reliable teammate," "courteous," "infectious sense of humor," "good common sense," etc. Groups are encouraged to identify the neatest writers and the most creative artists to do the hands-on work; the rest of the group contributes ideas and could present the award verbally. When the front of the card is completed, possibly decorated, each group member signs the back; and the date is included for posterity's sake.

After the cards are completed, the group goes to the recipient group and orally presents the cards. Recipients are told to listen quietly and thank the presenters—without demonstrating sarcasm, dwelling on any one compliment, or negating compliments. By following these rules, students on both the presenting and receiving ends are saved embarrassment and discomfort.

Every semester, without fail, I have former students tell me that they still have their peer awards filed in a desk drawer, stashed in a dresser, or stuck on the refrigerator. Whenever they feel low or sorry for themselves, they look at the card. They have learned that complimenting others not only pumps up the

recipients, but makes the givers feel good, as well.

My communication students learn to: 1) compare perceptions of their fellow classmates, 2) encourage productive interaction in order to meet their goal in a limited amount of time, 3) set aside habitual sarcasm to make room for sincere praise, 4) deliver awards verbally, and 5) graciously receive their own.

This assignment is easily adaptable to any discipline area. But, creative teachers of art, music composition, and writing can have a great time inspiring students to praise each other with original awards!

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