
Certificate of Accomplishment in Teaching Program
Workshop Reflection Assignment #4
PTP: Motivating Students

Part I: Describe

Title of the Workshop/Event: PTP: Motivating Students

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this seminar was to introduce PTP fellows to techniques for motivating students learning. This includes motivating students to complete reading and assignments, as well as explaining to them why learning the material you are teaching is important and how it may benefit them in the future.

Lead Presenter(s): Dr. Melissa Bostrom

Date(s)/Location of the Event: 12:00-2:00 PM on 1/24/2011, Tally Student Center

Approximate Number of People Who Attended the Workshop: 20

Brief Description:

This seminar was originally going to be divided into two parts. The first part was to be a presentation by a guest speaker on motivating students and the second was to consist of PTP workshop participants discussing a classroom challenge discussion regarding a specific case study where a teacher was having trouble motivating students. As it turned out, the guest speaker was unable to attend. However, I have chosen to write a reflection for this seminar because the discussions were valuable to my learning about motivating students, and I was exposed to other perspectives on motivating students that I may have not otherwise considered. Since the guest speaker was unable to attend, the workshop actually consisted of the classroom challenge discussion mentioned above as well as a group discussion of the article "Getting Students to Read: 14 Tips." Each group read one section of the article, explained it to the class, and a discussion followed each group's explanation.

Part II: Analyze

1. Why did you choose to attend this workshop? What were you hoping to learn?

I attended this workshop, first and foremost, because as a PTP fellow I make every effort to attend all seminars. I have found them very beneficial to my development as a graduate student and a teacher. However, the topic of motivating students is something I am interested in for several reasons. As an undergraduate student I was extremely self-motivated, and never really needed a teacher to give me a reason to do the work. I enjoyed solving problems and it actually came pretty easy to me. I also enjoy coaching football and I believe motivating players is one of my strong points. But, that form of motivation usually involves making the player perform a physical activity and/or strong words, neither of which is appropriate for a college classroom. I was interested in learning about techniques other teachers have used and found successful as well as unsuccessful and their beliefs about the reasons for those outcomes. I was confident Dr.

Bostrom would provide a variety of resources that would prove useful in the class I am teaching this semester.

2. What assumptions did you have before participating in this workshop?

Prior to participating in this workshop, I assumed I would get a great deal of information from the guest speaker. I figured that the guest speaker would present us with information related to motivating students both from their own experience and from literary sources. A portion of every PTP seminar is dedicated to a classroom challenge where a small group of students present a hypothetical situation and everyone participating in the seminar participates in a discussion that produces possible solutions to the problem. These discussions usually expose me to perspectives that I would not normally be exposed to. I hoped that my fellow first-time teachers would give me ideas that I would be able to absorb and incorporate into my own teaching.

3. Were your assumptions correct or incorrect? Explain how your thinking was either supported (meaning your assumptions were validated) or how your thinking was changed (meaning your assumptions were incorrect)

One assumption that was proven wrong early was that the guest speaker I had anticipated was not able to attend the workshop. In place of the speaker we did read a very useful article titled "Getting Students to Read: Fourteen Tips." The article sparked very interesting discussions amongst the peers at the workshop. These discussions actually helped me understand how the majority of first-time college teachers approach motivating their students to want to learn the material that is being covered in his or her class. Looking back on the workshop, I actually gained quite a bit of insight from the discussion that we had. Occasionally, the class-time discussions fall short of my expectations, but I definitely enjoyed the discussion that we had during this workshop. In summary, my assumptions for this workshop were mostly incorrect, but I was pleasantly surprised with the information provided and the discussion that grew out of that information.

4. What information was most meaningful for you? Be specific.

There were quite a few parts of the workshop that really made me think about what I believe in, in terms of teaching. Many of my colleagues at the workshop seemed to think that students shouldn't need any teacher-provided motivation to do well in a course. They believed that it was the students responsibility to be as interested and engaged in the material as the teacher. In my opinion, it is important to encourage students and inform them of why the information they are learning will help them in the long run. There was also a discussion about when to assign students their required reading for the semester. My colleagues thought that telling students about reading assignments close to the time that they are due is the best course of action. Before the workshop, I had always thought that giving students their assigned readings at the beginning of the semester would allow students to get ahead. However, I learned that research has proven that students will forget about the readings if they are not reminded. This was definitely helpful information, as it overturned my previous assumptions.

5. How do you think you will use this information? Be specific.

I've made an effort in my class to explain to them that the software that they are learning will make them marketable. My class is one of the only classes that will teach the students almost exactly what they need to go out and start their own consulting business. Sometimes, motivating students with money does help. I try to explain to my students that if they do the reading, it will make the entire class easier and will also make the class progress smoothly. If I have to teach the students what is included in the readings and everything else, they won't get nearly as much out of the class. For example, I recently gave a quiz to my class that 80% of the class failed. My colleagues at the workshop thought that the best course of action in that situation would have been to leave the failing grades and not offer any chance at changing the grades. On the other hand, I explained to the students why the information included in the quiz was important and also gave them a chance to retake it. With this added incentive and motivation, they did much better.. I will also take into account the information regarding when to assign readings to my students.

6. What information do you still need to learn related to this workshop? What is your plan for learning more about this topic?

I still would like to learn more about how to motivate a wide range of students. Right now, I use techniques that I know would have motivated me as a student. I know that not everyone learns exactly the way that I do. Not everyone is motivated in the same way that I am either. It would be very useful to learn a multitude of new potential motivation techniques. I'd like to do some research in this area. Dr. Bostrom also promised that the guest speaker intended for this workshop will be coming to talk with us at a later date. I am looking forward to the guest speaker, as I think that the information provided and the discussion the information sparks will be very helpful.