



# INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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## UNIQUE STUDENT-TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS

I have been teaching Introduction to Education at a local community college for several years. The course is designed for students who are considering teaching as a career. Among the varied class assignments, each student is required to teach a 10-15 minute lesson to the class on a chapter in the assigned textbook. Students are given a one-page set of guidelines, rules, and instructions for this assignment. For example, two of the rules are that the textbook must remain closed for the presentation and the student-teacher is to involve class members in the instruction. The students also read an article describing several examples of prior students' effective teaching techniques. Most students perform adequately on the assignment; frequently, the presentations flow well and are enjoyable.

This semester I had the opportunity to become a visiting associate professor of education at a fairly large private university. I was asked to teach five sections of Foundations of Education. There are a few key differences between the student populations even though the institutions are less than 10 miles apart. The average age in the education classes at the community college is about 10 years older than the average at the private university. For the most part, the private university students are residential and recent high school graduates whereas many community college students are returning to college after an absence of several years. At the private university, the classes are smaller, with an enrollment cap of 20 students as opposed to 35 in the community college. The textbook covers more information, with three chapters each on philosophical and sociological foundations of education, and a chapter on assessment. The community college has an open enrollment policy; the private university has admission requirements.

Some of the chapter summaries presented by the two different groups of students were very similar. Games are a popular way to cover the subject matter. Questions and material from the textbook have been used to play versions of popular TV shows like "Jeopardy" (includ-

ing the "Saturday Night Live" version of Celebrity "Jeopardy"), "Hollywood Squares," "Concentration," "Survivor," "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," "Match Game," "Family Feud," "Double Dare," and "Deal or No Deal." Some students prefer to prepare worksheets, handouts, or a combination. A few students favor PowerPoint presentations while others choose to hold class discussions. Additionally, students have made large or small puzzle pieces from the textbook material—which must be assembled and coordinated. Still others have arranged for scavenger hunts for classroom material around the classroom, the building, or the campus. A few students have played a form of large-scale "Monopoly" with each team moving their marker in accordance with correct answers from the textbook.

There were many similarities in the quality of the presentations between students at both institutions. In a separate creativity teaching assignment, some community college students excelled. However, at least seven chapter presentations in this new educational setting were so distinctive that they are worth documenting.

### The Presentations

*The Museum.* Long before class began, the student rearranged the room into the "Museum of Educational Philosophy." About seven different stations were set up around the room, each with both a three-dimensional object and a narrative description explaining the objects' purpose and meaning. The student was our museum guide, leading us from station to station. Additionally, each class member received a tri-folded, illustrated museum brochure describing the exhibits in the room and key terms and definitions from the textbook. Most students realized how much time, effort, and thought went into the planning and delivery of this presentation.

*The Tent.* When students arrived for class, they saw a large tent assembled inside the classroom. Each student grabbed the ingredients for a s'more as they entered the classroom and then went into the tent and sat on the floor. Our camp counselor (student-teacher) then told the class a series of campfire stories from the material he gleaned from the text. Everyone was paying attention and thought it was a unique way to present the material.



A second student also used the tent theme. Some class members were assigned to sit at their regular desks in the classroom with their books, paper, pencils, light, and proper ventilation. Poor, disadvantaged, and students of color were assigned to sit on the floor of the tent with no books, paper, and only a nub of a pencil. Both sets of students were asked to take notes on the presentation of the textual material. However, the students seated in the regular desks were taught in English, and the students in the tent were taught in a foreign language. The object lesson of the presentation was to emphasize graphically the inequality of educational opportunity in America's past (and perhaps present) between students of substance and students who were poor, of color, or not native speakers of English.

*Lily Goes to School.* One creative student had all of her classmates sit in a circle on the floor. Her assigned chapter discussed different educational philosophies. She passed out oversized pages from a book she had written, entitled "Lily Goes to School." Each student held up a page of narrative with pictures and read it to the class. Lily was a little puppy, and her mother was searching the community for the best school to place her intelligent Jack Russell terrier. She interviewed the principal, college educators, teachers, neighbors, and school board members while attempting to match the correct educational teaching philosophy with her puppy's optimum learning style. She then held a class discussion to decide which philosophy of education would best suit "Lily" as she entered school. If Lily's mom spent all of this time finding the right school for "Lily," her puppy, how much involvement, time, and effort should parents spend discovering the best philosophical approach to educating their child?

*Balloon Facts.* One student divided the class into two teams. Each team needed a runner, a gunner, and team members to paste statements and facts from the textbook onto posters she had crafted. Where were the statements? At the front and back of the room, there was a board full of different colored balloons. Each team's gunner had to shoot air gun darts into the balloons. Some of the balloons were filled with crumbled-up statements and facts from the textbook. If the balloon broke, the little paper was among the ruins of the balloon pieces. The runner had to take the color-coded statements back to the appropriate work group table for team members to paste the text statements under the correct categories on the poster. Each team worked hard to shoot the balloons, gather up the tiny pieces of paper, run them to the work stations, and glue them correctly on poster boards. As a review, the student-teacher then had all class members look over the completed poster boards and make corrections as necessary.

*Singing.* One student divided his textbook chapter into four sections and subsequently divided the class into four sections. Each group was given a large piece of poster board and instructed to pick out the eight most important points in that section of the chapter collaboratively. After that task was completed, each group was to use the poster board to re-write its eight important statements into the lyrics of a popular song. When that part of the assignment was completed, the groups went to the front of the class sequentially, held up their lyrics, and sang their important points back to the remainder of the class. One group sang their key points to "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer"; another sang the lyrical course material to Pink Floyd's "We Don't Need No Education." There was a lot of laughing and forced rhyming going on in class and praise for the student-teacher who came up with this idea.

*Ping-Pong Balls.* A student-teacher gave each member of the class a handout of the important details of the chapter and a white ping-pong ball, and arranged the tables in a square. Class members were asked to read the handout and put their names on their ping-pong balls. The student-teacher designated the first student to pull a piece of candy out of a bag. The piece of candy had a question from the handout taped to it. The student read the question and attempted to answer it. If the student knew the correct answer to the question without looking at the review sheet, the candy was hers. If not, other classmates were allowed to pitch their ping-pong balls into a box in the center of the squared tables. The student whose name was on the first ball to arrive in the box was allowed to answer the question. If the new student gave the correct answer, the original student had to pass over her treat. This system was repeated until every learner around the squared tables had a chance to answer a question.

## Conclusion

These student-teacher presentations were stimulating and exceptional. They were inspirations to teachers and future teachers, and they created a classroom environment that was fun and exciting for learners of all ages.

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