

Writing to Learn activity

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There are two major things that I have learned from being a part of writing to learn.

One- creating a writing assignment for students that make sense.

In the past I have always required students to produce a traditional written research report for class. This paper is to be APA style, and contain 3 or more citations from a peer reviewed article.

What I learned from the TLC group is a way to have students produce a report that actually means something to them, as well as develop research skills.

The writing prompt I used for this assignment for the student was:

WHAT I WANTED TO KNOW AND WHY IT'S WORTH KNOWING

WHAT I DID TO FIND OUT.

WHAT I FOUND OUT.

WHAT I THINK THIS MEANS.

HOW I THINK I MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE WHAT I'VE LEARNED HERE.

This is the first paper this student has written in two years that actually looks like she has put some thought into the process. Her feedback to me was that this is information that she will always use in her career, and that this writing assignment was actually fun.

My goal was that the student:

1. Learn to research a topic of interest to herself or a patient; to use evidence-based dentistry.
2. Learn about the subject being researched, not just a regurgitation of the information found in the research.

I believe that the student actually enjoyed doing this type of paper over the traditional paper. I know that I enjoyed reading this paper much more than a traditional paper. I will need to develop a new grading rubric for this, but I believe the dental hygiene program will benefit from this change.

The second thing I tried was an end of class low-stakes writing assignment.

In this exercise the students pair up. At the end of a lecture ask the students:

1. write down the number one thing you learned today
2. swap with your partner- the partner reads your comments, then makes a comment to the partner
3. swap back- then ask- what are you still questioning about today's lesson.
4. swap with partner, partner comments back- at this point you can have swap back and forth a couple of times to answers each others concern.
5. discuss each partners findings

This writing prompt seems to open discussion and review the highlights of the days lectures. I found that the quieter students seemed to be drawn out by this exercise. Interesting enough, the usually vocal students were the ones that participated the least in this exercise. It is also a great way as an instructor to see where the blurry points of the lesson are for the students, which may help clarify points of the lesson.