

## Inside This Issue

### HUMANITIES

1. Responding to Instructor Comments on Assignments (V. Byard)
2. Student Portfolios (K. Wade)
3. Gathering Ideas for Writing Using Blackboard (K. Desbonnet)
4. Lecture Notes Available Online (K. Hahn)
5. A Creative Student Project for Intro to Spanish (P. Rizzo)
6. Practicing Editing in the Writing Process (P. Czech)
7. Remembering New Foreign Language Materials (G. Galinsky)
8. An Exercise for Oral Communication in French (P. Czech)

### EDUCATION

9. Creative Activity for Reviewing Readings (L. Bush)
10. Real-life Scenarios: Parent-Teacher Conferences (E. Chakonas)
11. Giving & Receiving Feedback Effectively (S. Beyda)
12. Collaborative Exam Review (T. Stirling)
13. Modern Education Through the Eyes of Historical Figures (A. Piña)
14. Muddiest Point Online (P. Heydenburg)
15. A Multicultural Exercise in Leadership Skills (A. Eames)

### SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

16. Developing Presentation Skills (J. Peller)
17. Getting to Know Students Through Table Cards (J. Zefran)
18. Virtual Tours of Best Environmental Practices (D. Mir)
19. Cultural Competency Activity (J. Stanley)
20. Sharing Food – Making Friends (N. Caftori)
21. Illustrating Sociological Concepts with Music (M. Thompson & J. Lucas)

### MATH & SCIENCES

22. Students Deliver Physics Demonstrations (P. Dolan)
23. Service Learning in the Biology Curriculum (R. Waikel)
24. Questioning-Activity During the Lecture (M. Schukas)
25. More Than One Correct Answer (P. Dolan)
26. Associating Math Functions with Student Personalities (J. Morris)
27. Hands-on Lab Experiments (P. Dolan)



Here is the second volume of NEIU's *Teaching Ideas*, formerly called *Best Practices*. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) publishes these contributions from 24 faculty and instructors in 15 departments in the hope that many more faculty across the campus may benefit from them. They include a large number of topics: from creative course assignments to effective use of technology, integration of multicultural experiences, test preparation and review, ways of incorporating basic skills training, hands-on work in the science lab, and much more. They illustrate the pedagogical creativity of our faculty and are a showcase of the resources that faculty can provide to each other.

We have organized the teaching ideas under the categories into which subjects in the university are traditionally divided. This is done to provide some disciplinary context for each technique. It shall by no means indicate that you should not be looking for ideas from areas other than your own discipline. In fact, we hope you will let yourself be stimulated by teaching approaches used in other fields.

As always, print publications by the CTL can also be found on the CTL website at: [www.neiu.edu/~ctl/](http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/), where you can also find the previous *Best Practices* published four years ago. Please feel free to contact any of the colleagues represented below if you are interested in further details on their ideas.

## 1. Responding to Instructor Comments on Assignments

Dr. Vicki Byard (English and Women's Studies)

**Description:** When I return a graded, major writing assignment to students, I reserve the first few minutes of the following class period for students to write me some feedback on the comments that I wrote on their papers. I invite them to tell me what comments they found helpful and urge them to also write down any concerns or questions they have about my comments or the paper's grade. Because students write this response in class, their comments are less guarded, and

the responses teach me how the students are reacting both emotionally and cognitively to my assessment of their work.

**Rationale:** I began this practice simply to ensure that students had read and thought about my comments. I now appreciate the responses because students who may not otherwise take the initiative to ask a question are given an easy chance to do so. Also, some students who did poorly on the assignment use their response to "save face" by vowing that they'll

try harder next time. In addition to answering students' immediate questions, I reread the responses before commenting on the next major assignment so that I can adapt my comments (but not the grade) to students' individual needs and learning styles. For example, I've learned that some students benefit from fewer comments because they can then better prioritize what skills most need their attention.

**Used in:** First-year and upper level writing courses.



## 2. Student Portfolios

Kay Wade (English Language)

**Description:** I have students keep all their essays (including outlines, freewriting, cluster graphs, and brainstorming), exams, and quizzes in what I call a "Portfolio" (a three-ring folder with pockets). In this way, they can see at a glance what they have done before and also view what types of errors they have made and what I liked about their essays. I have also created a cover for this portfolio, which lists all the most important assignments, which ultimately lead to the

grade each has earned. Grades earned also appear on the cover sheet.

Part of this portfolio includes a "Correction Guide" for each essay. I have listed the 15 or so types of errors that most often occur in their essays. The guide leaves space for students to write down the page numbers where they can locate help with each type of error. To make this easier for them to see, I put a check for each and every mistake of that

type they make. If there are 10 or more check marks, obviously, that student needs to find out how to prevent making that type of error in the future.

I insist that each student keep the course syllabus in the left side pocket with yellow highlights showing the pertinent due dates. While I doubt that my techniques will win any prize, they work well for me and my students seem to appreciate having all this information immediately available.



Blackboard

## 3. Gathering Ideas for Writing Using Blackboard

Ken Desbonnet (English Language)

**Description:** A planning/gathering ideas activity is usually used to begin a writing assignment in writing classes. For this activity, after choosing topics, students will get ideas to write about at home on their own. Each student then posts his/her ideas as new thread in a forum created by the instructor on the discussion board in Blackboard. The student is then responsible for responding to two other threads. The student's responses may be to add ideas on the topic that the original student did not

think of or to question ideas posted by other students. Or the students may be given more specific instructions by the instructor on what to look for and how to respond. For example, the instructor may ask students to respond with examples from their own lives.

**Rationale:** Students working with other students to come up with ideas has a number of benefits. Each student gets more ideas to write about and thus can create a piece of writing with greater

breadth and depth than when writing alone. By responding to other ideas, the student gets to see how others plan, which can change how a student works on his/her own or motivate a student to put more energy into a project. There are many other benefits, and such activities are common in writing classrooms. Putting the activity on Blackboard allows students to interact outside of class time and allows the instructor more time in class to do other activities.



## 4. Lecture Notes Available Online

Dr. Kate Hahn (Linguistics and CTL)

**Description:** I make my lecture notes available to my students. I do this in different ways for different courses. In all cases, the notes I make available are a streamlined or simplified version of the notes that I use in class. They are in pdf format and located on the class Blackboard site. In some cases, I make my notes available for students to download and review before class. Ideally, students look over the notes and do the readings before class in order to facilitate class discussion and to aide comprehension of the material while they are listening. In other cases, I make the notes available only after the lecture has occurred. Students

can download the notes to review the material, check their understanding, and then determine the completeness of their own notes.

**Rationale:** The rationale for this technique is that I am not trying to hide the ball from the students. Rather, the information in my notes is information that I want the students to have and to understand. The notes provide a model of what their class notes should look like, as well as offer the opportunity to review material or have material that they missed due to an absence. This technique is particularly helpful to non-native English speakers or other students who may have difficulty comprehending

content delivered in a lecture format. I present the rationale to students at the beginning of the semester and note that downloading the lecture notes is not a substitute for attendance, but is intended as a helpful supplement to their own notes and study aide for quizzes and tests.

**Used In:** I have used this technique in several different courses at different institutions. I find it is most applicable and most helpful in 100- and 200-level courses and any level course that has non-native speaking students. Currently, I use this technique in Linguistics 120.



## 5. A Creative Student Project for Intro to Spanish

Patricio Rizzo (Foreign Languages and Literatures)

**Description:** Students of Spanish 101 make a booklet in Spanish about a place they would like to visit or a place they visited. Each page of the stapled booklet of about 10 pages has a few sentences, which I correct, and an illustration of their dream place. The booklet must include a Title Page, a Map of the real or imaginary place, a Description of the

place, Points of Interest, Homes, Food, Clothing, Work, Entertainment, and other relevant topics which match what we learn in class.

**Rationale:** This assignment works because of three reasons. First, it serves the purpose of gathering together in a personalized way the grammar and the vocabulary used in the classroom, basic verbs like

to go, to be, etc. Second, students use their creative side to invent and decorate their "book," so they have fun and are engaged. And third, the whole class learns in our target language about the interesting place that they describe when they read and show their work to the whole class.

**Used In:** Spanish 101 classes.



## 6. Practicing Editing in the Writing Process

Pamela Czech (Foreign Languages and Literatures)

**Description:** Students read an extremely repetitive story (Jacques loves Jacqueline but Jacqueline does not love Jacques. Jacques writes emails to Jacqueline every day, but Jacqueline never responds to the emails...) Their task is to replace some, but not all of the nouns with the appropriate pronouns in order to make the story less repetitive. These stories must be word-processed and spell-checked (accents included) and saved (on disc or jump drive). As long as agreed due dates are

observed, students may revise and edit the story as many times as necessary. Each rewrite is attached and resubmitted until perfect.

**Rationale:** These assignments accomplish the following: 1.) Students gain a greater awareness of French orthography. 2.) Students practice using word processing software in French. 3.) Students read a story and get to know it intimately. 4.) High frequency vocabulary is reinforced. 5.) A

tedious and repetitive story allows students to utilize personal pronouns in a rather non-tedious and non-repetitive fashion. They become "editors" and therefore are not merely spitting back a manipulative series of predetermined phrases but rather creating a polished product according to their own aesthetic sensitivities. 6.) The before and after products speak for themselves. Everyone is thrilled to earn an "A" on the final draft.

**Used in:** French III and beyond.

## 7. Remembering New Foreign Language Materials Galina Galinsky (Foreign Languages and Literatures)



**Description:** The purpose of presenting material in the elementary foreign languages classes is to create a number of powerful associations in order to assure the first memorization of the new vocabulary and structures. The more and the stronger these associations are, the easier it is to remember and learn. The presentation which I use in my class has 4 (four) steps:

1. Preview/Decode: This is a brief introduction of the new situation, which is the new text. I present the text as a real life situation, and

"what happens" to the main characters. I present them as if they were my friends.

2. Dramatic presentation: This uses a whole range of psychological techniques including mimicry, gesture, rhythm and intonation. Students are given the instruction: "Look, listen, repeat after/with me with my gesture and intonation".

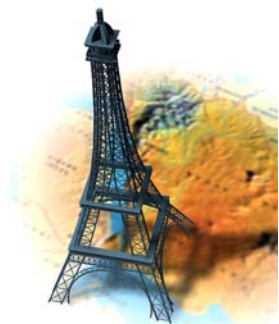
3. Active Session: I read the same text in the foreign language and in English. The foreign language version is read very loudly, the English version - in a whisper.

4. Passive Session: I read the foreign language text in a calm and relaxed manner with Baroque music in the background. The students are given the instructions: "Relax, close your eyes, imagine a beautiful summer day and the sea..."

**Rationale:** Students memorize the material easier and better when this technique is used.

**Used in:** I have been using this method in French 101 and 102, as well as in Russian 101 and 102 classes.

## 8. An Exercise for Oral Communication in French Pamela Czech (Foreign Languages and Literatures)



**Description:** I created a series of classroom activities called "You hear, you say". This is a sort of chain game. Each student receives a different card (or more) with one sentence on the left (you hear) and another on the right (you say). When the student hears the sentence on the left, he or she will say the sentence on the right. We usually repeat the game three times, the students exchanging

cards in between each round. Afterwards, I pose content-based comprehension questions to the entire group.

**Rationale:** This technique engages the entire class. Every student participates. It reinforces relevant vocabulary and structures and incorporates at least three main skills. It allows (forces) all students to read, to actively listen and to speak clearly. Misunder-

standings are met with rapid-fire requests of, "Répétez, s'il vous plaît!" Follow-up comprehension questions allow and encourage students to imitate and to elaborate on model sentences. My students adore this activity and it clearly gives them each a satisfying opportunity to contribute in class.

**Used in:** French I, II and III

These "Bright Teaching Ideas" and the Previous "Best Practices in NEIU Teaching" can be found on the CTL's website at  
<http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/teaching.html>



## 9. Creative Activity for Reviewing Readings Dr. Lynn Bush (Educational Leadership and Development)

**Description:** The instructor begins by putting up between 5-8 large pieces of "post-it" poster paper on the walls. Each sheet of paper should have a concept or big idea or essential understanding or question from a textbook chapter or article at the top of the paper (i.e., school reform). After having already read the assignment prior to class, students start at the first piece of paper and write a few words about what they know pertaining to the concepts from the reading. Then each student moves to the next piece of paper and so forth (in carousel fashion)

until they have commented on all the pieces of paper. **ONE RULE !!** If students arrive at a piece of paper and what they were going to write has already been said, they cannot repeat or write "ditto". They can write the word, "pass". When all students have finished writing, the instructor goes through the poster paper sheets in a discussion format, asking for explanations, adding, deleting or clarifying the student comments with the actual concepts in the textbook or article.

**Rationale:** This teaching technique gives the instructor a great

deal of information about student interpretation, understanding, application, analysis, and synthesis of content in relation to the "big questions" asked. During the debriefing of the poster paper, the instructor can also be doing future mental planning as to what concepts need more practice or repeated explanations. Students who may not understand can be noted. Because of the interactive nature of this activity, student interest is at a high level, while the instructor is facilitating the essential learning from the text.



## 10. Real-Life Scenarios: Parent-Teacher Conferences Dr. Elaine Pierce Chakonas (Teacher Education)

**Description:** In this methods course for future elementary and middle school teachers, students role-play several scenarios of difficult parents during parent-teacher conferences. One conference involves parents who believe that their child is a gifted child and will automatically follow in the parents' career path of applied mathematics, even though the child's career interests and apti-

tudes appear to be very different. Another parent blames her child's lack of achievement on her spouse who wants a divorce. The teacher's evidence regarding lack of achievement is twisted by the parent to be the fault of the estranged parent.

**Rationale:** In addition to teaching the pedagogy of the elementary and middle school classrooms, it is important to acquaint teacher

candidates with the realities and challenges, also. Although most parents are supportive, this exercise acquaints teacher candidates with the small percentage of parents who are problematic. This technique provides teacher candidates with opportunities to develop their skills in dealing with difficult parents during conferences.

**Used in:** ELED 301- Curriculum of the Elementary School



## 11. Giving & Receiving Feedback Effectively Dr. Sandra Beyda Lorie (Special Education)

**Description:** To train pre-service teachers to communicate effectively with others, I address the skills of giving and receiving feedback. Steps are explained to the class and students are grouped into fours. Each group draws one card from a set of cards depicting authentic school situations involving the need to give or receive feedback. Two members of each group role-play the situation while applying the steps. The other two members use checklists to ob-

serve the application of these strategies. Following the role-play, the observers provide feedback about how their role-players did. Then the group members switch roles, drawing a new scenario card.

**Rationale:** Students are actively engaged in both the observation of and application of the communication skills. Students are also able to recognize their knee-jerk responses to the feedback process,

which may not be the most effective strategies to use. Because the scenarios are drawn from real life situations, students are given the opportunity to anticipate and reflect upon uncomfortable situations they might not otherwise have expected to encounter in their professional practice.

**Used in:** Consultation and Collaboration in Special Education (SPED 323)

## 12. Collaborative Exam Review

Dr. Terry Stirling (Educational Leadership & Development)



**Description:** As a collaborative way to review for a midterm or final exam, the Collaborative Review & Assessment Model (CRAM) can be adapted to any subject area. Each student is given a "review sheet" covering the central concepts/questions to be tested. These concepts are phrased to encourage higher level thinking and followed by a place for two signatures---one for an "expert" and one for an optional "discussant." At the top of the paper is a title such as "Midterm Review." The directions state: Find an expert in the class who can intelligently discuss one item with

you. When you feel confident that you understand that item, move to another item and discuss it with a different person. If you feel you need a third party to validate your ideas, ask another class member to serve as the "discussant," who can clear up misconceptions and add a critical dimension to your deliberations. Each "expert" and "discussant" should sign your paper. Your goal is to collect signatures for all items on the review sheet.

*For example:*

*(History): Compare the military strategies of the German General*

*Staff in World War I and World War II in terms of conception, execution, and outcome.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Expert* \_\_\_\_\_ *Discussant*

*(Science): Rank the following public health issues based on any criteria that you select-polio, HIV/AIDS, avian flu, hunger, smallpox, obesity.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Expert* \_\_\_\_\_ *Discussant*

**Rationale:** I have used this strategy in most of my classes. Students become very involved and, usually, are very concerned about understanding each concept and acquiring a page of signatures.



## 13. Modern Education Through the Eyes of Historical Figures

Dr. Anthony Piña (Educational Leadership & Development and CTL)

**Description:** What would some notable figures of the past have to say about our current educational system? For this assignment, I have my students assume the identity of an historical figure (e.g. Plato, Thomas Jefferson, Maria Montessori, Martin Luther King, John Dewey, B. F. Skinner, Jean Piaget). Their first task is to research writings from and about these figures that deal with educational issues. Students are given a list of resources, including website links and library databases to begin their search and are instructed to use library resources and Internet search engines to gather as much information as possible. They are instructed to keep notes as they research, as they will be asked questions by their peer. The students are given one week to prepare their research. When the students have completed their research, each of

them will post a statement on the "An Historical View of Modern Education" online discussion forum in Blackboard. In this statement they are to summarize a major problem in today's educational system and how they (acting as the voice of their character) feel that it should be addressed. During the next week, students are to read all of the posts and I select pairs of historical figures to discuss and debate with each other in the "Responses to Historical Figures" online discussion forum in Blackboard. They are free to point out any agreements and disagreements, but they must remain in character—they are to respond as their historical figure would, regardless of whether they personally disagree with the character. The last part of the activity is for each student to post their personal reflections about their historical figure on the "Reflections of

Historical Figures" online discussion forum in Blackboard. The students are invited to share their own personal answer about the major problem in today's educational system and how they (acting now as themselves) feel that it should be addressed. They also are asked to state where they personally agreed and/or disagreed with their historical figure and why.

**Rationale:** The purposes for this activity are to 1) form a bridge between the past and present; 2) allow students to research a different point of view on a contemporary issue; 3) engage students in personal (researching, role playing reflection) and interactive (debate) learning activities; and 4) utilize technology in the learning process.

**Used In:** Graduate courses in Teacher Education.



## 14. Muddiest Point Online

Paul Heydenburg (Human Resource Development and CTL)

**Description:** Students are required to participate in an online discussion board thread after each class where they're expected to log into the course discussion board and list what was covered during the class and what part or parts were not clear to them. They are expected to complete this assignment before noon of the next day, composing the response in Word and attaching it to a thread for that specific class. This particular application of an old teaching favorite does not use in-class time

and has the additional benefits listed below.

**Rationale:**

—The exercise keeps the students engaged with the course, each other, and the technology/interface in between class meetings.

—The instructor is provided with an opportunity to address any questions from individuals or the class in general before the next session, which helps the group move forward at a similar rate.

—Students read each other's submissions for a different perspective on the material.

—Having the students attach a document rather than compose their response in the thread itself usually results in a more thoughtful response and can help the quality of writing to improve due to the more robust spell check features available in Word and the likelihood of the work being proofread.

**Used In:** HRD-315, Computer Utilization in HRD



## 15. A Multicultural Exercise in Leadership Skills

Dr. Angeles Eames (Management and CTL)

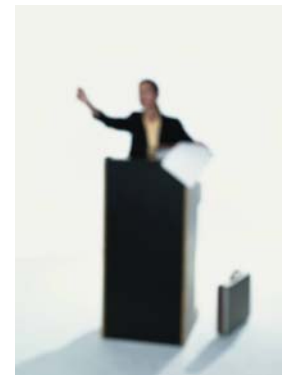
**Description:** A case scenario is provided for the "Fountain of Youth Corporation," a cutting edge pharmaceutical firm. In this scenario, students are provided with a description of one of the challenges facing the firm—a shrinking market in one segment of the business and the need to establish new segments overseas. Next, the class was divided into 4 teams. Based on the detailed scenario, each team selected a country from a limited list. Using their collective knowledge of the language, culture and aspiration of the citizens in their chosen country they either (a) developed a culturally appropriate marketing campaign to recruit employees, or (b) developed a culturally appropriate television commercial for one of its products. Depending on the class, this exercise takes 45 minutes to an hour. This includes time for the students

to develop their strategies and campaign; time for each team to present in front of the class their work; and time for debriefing with the instructor.

**Rationale:** Knowledge can come from many sources. At NEIU, the diversity of our students can be used as a teaching tool in many ways for students to learn from one another. During the first class session, I asked students to provide some demographic information as well as to summarize what their learning goals were for the class. In subsequent classes, students were divided into teams for various activities. Many of the students were international students. Using this information, I selected countries of origin that represented several students to form the "limited set of countries." In this class these were Italy, Thai-

land, Poland, and Japan. Many objectives were served by this exercise: (a) students learned that true leadership has to take into account the cultural context, (b) students were provided with an opportunity to exercise leadership in the team, (c) students learned about common business practices in other countries that are different than in the United States, (d) they came to see each other as "experts" in their own right and as "learning partners" in helping to form the learning community within the classroom, and (e) they demonstrated their knowledge of leadership theories, oral presentation skills, critical thinking and team building as they approached this task.

**Used in:** Leadership and Organizational Behavior, Management 403.



## 16. Developing Presentation Skills

Jane Peller (Social Work)



**Description:** In my social work practice class students are required to make several presentations. In order to help them build their confidence in front of an audience I have them play this simple game to build confidence and have fun while learning about presenting.

**Game:** Instruct students to write 10 nouns (you can also use 10 adjectives) on a piece of paper. Collect the papers, mix them up, and place the pile of papers on the desk. Ask for one volunteer to begin. The first student comes up to the podium, takes one of the

pieces of paper and reads the list out loud to the class. The student then gets one minute to create a story using all 10 words. The student MUST use the whole minute (not less, not more) and use all 10 words. When the student is done, he or she chooses another student to go next until all students have completed the exercise.

**De-Briefing discussion:** When everyone is finished, open up a group discussion which includes:

—Feedback to individual students on what they did successfully and what was a challenge

—Conversation about patterns of presenting

—Developing rules of thumb when presenting

**Rationale:** When students are involved in the internship program and later in the careers as social workers, they are often required to 'think on their feet' and make presentations to all kinds of audiences. I have found over the years that students often know how to read a presentation but they do not have the confidence to talk about what they know in front of a class.

**Used In:** SWK-304 Social Work Practice.

## 17. Getting to Know Students through Table Cards

Joe Zefran (Social Work)



**Description:** As a way of getting to know my students, helping my students getting to know each other, and taking attendance, I use Table Cards (each card has a student's name printed on an 8.5x11 card stock folded in half).

At the beginning of each class, I assign two students to hand out the Table Cards to each student. During class, both I and my students can see each student's name as we interact. At the end of class, I collect all of the Table

Cards and thus have a record of all students who attended that class.

**Used In:** I have taught 7 classes using this technique and find that it is a simple but effective way of connecting students and taking attendance.

## 18. Virtual Tours of Best Environmental Practices

Dr. Debby Mir (Geography)

**Description:** In the G&ES-363N-01 Field Experience - Urban Environmental Analysis course we study best practices in Europe and the US for sustainable urban development (e.g. mixed housing, high density, accessible green space) and compare them to Chicago's vision for a green city based upon the city's 2005 Environment Action Agenda—Building the Sustainable City, student experiences, media reports and other documentation. Each lesson is based on a theme (e.g. bicycle transportation) and illustrated with photos of innovative practices mostly but not restricted to European and comparable US cities. The photos are found using the 'Image' option on Google

searches, which also result in my learning more about those particular case studies. I teach this and other methods to my students. Halfway through the semester, students chose and investigate a sustainable practice in Chicago (Individual Experience), submit a report and present an illustrated PowerPoint lecture. Project requirements include identifying stakeholders and their positions, difficulties and successes as well as student recommendations.

**Rationale:** Students enjoy and remember the concepts they've read about in the text and experienced in their virtual class tour. A picture is worth a thousand words. Students become familiar with

PowerPoint, and for many this is their first attempt. Students learn about their city and are genuinely interested and surprised about the thought and commitment Chicago has made towards sustainability. Their perception about Chicago changes significantly (e.g. green-roofed Best Buy, program for farmers market targeting low income residents, reflective roofs counteracting the heat island affect). Students react in a supportive and thoughtful way to each other's presentations and many chose to investigate an issue beyond the case study in their final paper. Finally, many students joined NEIU's student environmental group with the goal of making NEIU a greener campus!



## 19. Cultural Competency Activity

Dr. Jade Stanley (Social Work)

**Description:** During mid semester, I have students read and locate symbols used in Ghana - called Indikra. We discuss symbols and their use globally and internationally and how families often create their own symbols for family names, crests and communities. We then use the symbols with ink pads and make a quilt with each person making their own squares. For the middle square we take a "family" picture and copy it on to paper that we iron onto the fabric. The symbols include words of strength, power, endurance, and various ways to overcome the odds. One student sews up the material, one student irons on the family image and other stu-

dents hang our quilt. We talk about team work, using the internet for information, the idea of knowledge production and who produces knowledge and other ways of knowing. The students are now using the internet to gain knowledge about families, attending a cultural function with the family and write up reports pertaining to values and patterns of families that are different from their own. Critical thinking is a large part of the focus of this activity.

**Rationale:** The advantage of this practice is that it opens up the students to develop and implement Gardner's Multiple Intelligences and Lazar's Seven Ways of knowing. The students become co-

learners with the instructor and often become the teacher in sharing cultural meanings and experiences. Students generally work very diligently in this type of activity as they develop something that reflects family and community issues and represents themselves as first generation college students or new immigrants. Additionally, I believe that learning takes place in multiple settings and arenas, and I have witnessed that students who are not often verbal or skillful writers have found this activity as a form of self expression through creative arts. As a professor I am always challenged to find ways to help my students to develop their voices.



## 20. Sharing Food – Making Friends

Dr. Netiva Caftori (Women's Studies and Computer Science)

**Description:** For a night class of 3 hours I bring tea or coffee in a big thermos, and the students bring food. Each week one or two students are selected for this. We take a 15 min break in the middle.

It serves many purposes, like waking them up, talking to each other, making friends and building a community ...

For after-lunch classes, where

most students admit they haven't eaten anything all day, I allow them to bring food and share, but only food w/o sugar...Otherwise instead of napping they get hyper.

## 21. Illustrating Sociological Concepts with Music

Dr. Martha Thompson (Sociology and Women's Studies) & Dr. Jim Lucas (Music)

**Description:** It is not an original idea to use music in sociology courses to illustrate a point or to stimulate critical thinking. My twist on this idea is "commissioning" a songwriter to write a song to illustrate an idea or concept for which there isn't an existing musical example.

I use Arlie Hochschild's chapter "Men Who Do and Men Who Don't" from The Second Shift to stimulate discussion about gender and housework. There are many songs from a woman's point-of-view about housework, but I couldn't find any existing song about men and housework. When I men-

tioned this to Jim Lucas, Music Department, he said he would write something. For the first "commission," he wrote and performed two songs "It's a Dirty Shame about Mr. Clean" (Mr. Clean tells women how to improve their cleaning but never does any himself) and "Half" (a marriage proposal in which a man says he will do half the housework). Jim has since written songs for other classes of mine; for instance, "It's a Person" to illustrate gender socialization and "Let's Sit Down and Talk Together" to illustrate the importance and skills of active listening.

**Rationale:** Listening to and analyzing a song involves both the right and left brain, so this technique is a whole brain activity. Students are more likely to remember and continue to think about concepts illustrated through music if tied with a discussion of how the song relates to the reading. Having the songwriter perform in the class encourages students to see that an issue can be examined in multiple ways and that there is room for creative as well as critical thinking in sociology.

**Used In:** SOC100 Introduction to Sociology; SOC204 Sociology of Small Groups; SOC306 American Women:



## 22. Students Deliver Physics Demonstrations

Dr. Paul Dolan (Physics)



**Description:** From the syllabus: "Each student (often as a group of 2 or 3) will be expected to present & explain to the class one of the many lecture demonstrations that we will use during the term (and hopefully get the explanation correct)! I expect that each demonstration will not exceed 10 minutes, to allow time for all that we need to cover during the term." A list of expected demonstrations is provided at the start of the term. Students spend a few minutes with the instructor, at least one class period beforehand, to be shown the equipment, so they can prepare their

explanation, and some of the demonstrations require a bit of practice.

**Rationale:** Science is a 'hands-on', phenomenological activity. "Talk About" the physical process is among the least effective methods of presentation; "Show me the Effect" (instructor does a demonstration) is more effective; "Let me DO it" can be the most effective. Not only do the students get practice in speaking in public (to a usually friendly audience), but ALL the students, both those presenting and those watching, tend to

pay more attention to the demonstration when it is done by one of their peers. Post-class assessment also shows that the students remember the demonstrations that they themselves did, as well as those of their peers, and usually also remember accurately the physical principles being demonstrated.

**Used In:** Physics I (Lecture), Physics 199 (Physics Concepts for Middle School Teaching); I hope to use this in the future also in Physics II (Lecture).

## 23. Service Learning in the Biology Curriculum

Dr. Rebekah L. Waikel (Biology)



**Description:** Service learning is an educational method that requires students to design and implement a project, which benefits the community and promotes a greater student understanding of their field of study. Service learning can be used to complement standard teaching practices in the undergraduate biochemistry and molecular biology classroom. The service learning projects I initiated

have included designing informational brochures on medical conditions that directly affect their target population, giving presentations in their workplace that addressed disease transmission (particularly in health care offices), and teaching short science lessons to K-12 students. The impact of these projects on the individual student and the community is assessed by post-activity questionnaires for

both the student and members of the community. Service learning projects empower students to use their scientific knowledge to be social advocates. In return, the community becomes better educated about science, thus more supportive of science education and research.

**Used In:** Courses: Biochemistry (Biol 316), Cell Biology (Biol 301), and Molecular Biology (Biol 399G)

## 24. Questioning-Activity During the Lecture

Mark Schukas (Mathematics)

**Description:** You know when your students are not paying attention, because their heads are down, their eyes are closed, or they are looking at their cell phone and talking with a fellow student. When you stop and ask them a question concerning the current area of work, they often seem to have no idea. Because I like to avoid these situations, I do my best to get to know my students. In my experience, addressing them by their first names encourages

them to "pepper" my lecture with a question or two. To create "built-in" class participation, I stop at points during the lecture and, moving from student to student, ask questions in order to create interaction. I don't go past three students for any one question. I call these three comments (i.e., wrong answers, no comments, etc.) and you're "back to the Professor." I tell students they can give a correct answer or answer as best they can or ask a question

(I'm surprised at how many questions I get at this point that I wouldn't have gotten otherwise). I also allow students to "pass it on" - to their neighbor or back to me.

**Rationale:** The objective is not to get each and every student involved orally in *each* class, but to take a sample that in the long run hopefully represents the viewpoint of the whole class.

**Used In:** Business Calculus Math 111 and similar courses.



## 25. More than One Correct Answer

Dr. Paul Dolan (Physics)

**Description:** The evaluation (quiz) on “Units” is a ‘matching’ quiz, but a non-traditional one. Since there can be more than one ‘correct’ unit for a physical quantity (meters, feet and ‘spans’ are all units of length), and there are also many combination units that can be used to express the same quantity, the quiz specifies that there may be “... more or less than one correct match”. However, the total number of points (with 2 points for each correct match) is stated. In this

way the students need to check ALL the possibilities for correct matches, and to see if in fact a matching unit for the physical quantity is given (which it may not be).

**Rationale:** The “Units” in which some physical property is measured is as important as the actual number, and knowledge of the units allows one to work in a ‘sensible’ system of measurement. The fact that there may be more

than one correct answer also emphasizes the fact that there may be more than one correct way to approach a problem. To prevent students from merely filling in all possibilities in each box, there is a one point deduction for each “extraneous extra match.”

**Used In:** Physics II (Lab), Physics 110 (GenEd “Physics in Everyday Life”), Physics 199 (“Physics Concepts for Middle School Teaching”); Physics I & II.



## 26. Associating Math Functions with Student Personalities

Juanita M. Morris (Statistics and CTL)

**Description:** Upon entering class, students are given an “alternative identity” for the session. Their identity can take on any statistical calculation that has been covered in class, as well as fundamental math functions and operations. For example, one student may take the identity of  $\bar{x}$ , while another may take on the identity of  $\mu$ . Other students may be given an identity of addition, subtraction, square root, multiplication, division,  $n$ ,  $n-1$ , variance, standard deviation, etc. When a formula is called, each piece of the formula must come forth and assume the proper location within the formula based upon personal identity. If a

problem is given, the appropriate formula must come forth and explain why they are the most appropriate formula for the problem. There is also a “historian” for each formula and each individual identity. The purpose of the historian is to provide a brief background of the formula or calculation and what the primary purpose or function is for the formula or calculation.

**Rationale:** The rationale is to bring formulas that are printed in the texts to life and give them meaning and personality. Often times what happens is that not only does the student take on the definition of the formula or piece of the formula that is their alternative identity, that

piece of the formula also takes on the personality of its owner. Students are more apt to remember the personality with the formula in conjunction with a historian, in comparison to the formula with many board examples. It also allows the students the opportunity to be active and engaged in the learning process and move around instead of being stationary for the entire class session.

**Used In:** Basic math and statistics courses. In general, any mathematics courses where there are a lot of formulas that may be difficult to grasp and apply even with problem repetition.



Additional “Short Tips on College Teaching” can be found on the CTL’s website at <http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/teaching.html>

## 27. Hands-on Lab Experiments

Dr. Paul Dolan (Physics)



**Description:** In lab courses I include a mixture of "Traditional" labs, "New" standard labs, and some that are completely "non-traditional". Examples of the latter include ones on "Simulations" of exponential population growth, using dice as 'individuals', which reproduce only on a roll of '1'; "Non-Newtonian Fluids" (those that are not 'well-behaved', such as Ketchup), in which we make and test the properties of cross-linked polymers, using Elmer's® Glue; and "Granular Materials", think: piling & pouring sand. For the Granular Lab, we use a large variety of different regular

'granules', mostly foodstuffs, and investigate how the properties of the collection of granules depends on size, shape and density.

**Rationale:** Science is a 'hands-on', phenomenological activity. The traditional exercises give students practice in making scientific measurement and solidify their understanding of basic concepts. The "New" standard labs allow the students to make use of innovative pedagogy, such as computer assisted data acquisition. The "non-traditional" labs allow ALL the students to get some flavor for what scientific research is really like, to explore situations that are

completely new to them, and indeed to gain experience with phenomena that they likely would not study elsewhere. As an additional advantage, many of these exercises are ones that can be readily adapted for use at home, with one's children or siblings, or that future teachers can use in their science classes, at any grade level.

**Used In:** Physics II (Lab), Physics 110 ("Physics in Everyday Life"), Physics 199 ("Physics Concepts for Middle School Teaching"); CPS "Gifted" class ("Mysteries of Physics"). Aspects of this approach also used in various 300-level lab courses I teach.



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