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How Does Eliciting Student Feedback Impact the Quality of Instruction and Student Learning Outcomes for Non-majors in Required Courses?

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How does eliciting student feedback impact the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes for non-majors in required courses?

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Background

- Schmidt, Becker, Wissmiller, Nyland, & Surdick (ISSoTL, 2011)
- Secondary education minor students taking required language arts course complain about relevance, use
The Participants

- 11 juniors & seniors
- 5 history or social science majors
- 3 math majors
- 3 English majors
- 4 men
- 7 women
- Caucasian
The Setting

Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin
Private, liberal arts college
2,500 students
Semester schedule February 6–May 24
Class meets from 12:30–2:10 Tues/Thurs
Students also complete 15 hours of field experience in their content area in either middle or high school; must teach 5 lessons.
The Questions

1. With an opportunity to state opinions and questions in an anonymous, safe online environment in which the instructor can address questions and concerns, will students develop a better understanding, and thus, acceptance, of the course requirement?

2. Does such student acceptance then lead to a greater openness to developing language arts methods that can be integrated into their content area instruction?
The Methodology

- 4 Surveys (will probably change to 5) completed by students in Google forms.
- Instructor responds verbally to first survey and shares survey results with students.
- Incentive: instructor brings treats whenever 9 or more of the 11 students complete the survey.
- Instructor responds verbally and online to student comments, shares surveys with students.
Survey 1 (Week One—Feb. 7)

- What are your hopes/expectations for this course?
- What are your hopes/expectations for your own performance?
- What are your hopes/expectations for the instructor’s performance?
- On a scale of 1-5, what is your level of motivation to learn in this class?
  
  1 = not motivated at all
  2 = slightly motivated
  3 = very motivated
  4 = highly motivated
  5 = extremely motivated

- What can the instructor do to make this course more educational and productive for you?
Survey 1 Results

Survey 1, February 7, 2013 (Week 1)
Course expectations?
- How to teach
- How to integrate language arts into content areas
- How to teach language arts

Your own performance?
- Give it my best
- Confidence
- Growth, trying something new

Expectations for instructor?
- Available/approachable
- Fun
- Effective/constructive/high standards/productive

How motivated? 6 responses (55% return); 5’s =4; 4’s=2; X=4.7
Survey 2 (Week Four—Feb. 26 or 28)

On a scale of 1-5, with 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE and 5=STRONGLY AGREE, please rate your response to the following statements:

1= strongly disagree
2= disagree
3=neutral
4=agree
5=strongly agree

1. The course is meeting my expectations.
2. My own performance is meeting my expectations.
3. The instructor’s performance is meeting my expectations.
4. I am motivated to learn in this class.

Please answer the following questions:

5. Which lessons, discussions, activities, or demonstrations have you found the most useful, and why?
6. What can the instructor do to make this course more educational and productive for you?
Survey 2 Results

1. The course is meeting my expectations
   - 10/11 responses (91% return); X=3.9
2. My own performances Is meeting my expectations
   - X=4.2
3. The instructor’s performance is meeting my expectations
   - X=4.3
4. I am motivated to learn in this class
   - X=4.3
5. ...most useful, and why?
   - Modeling
   - Guest speaker (Writer in Residence) re: poetry
   - Writing
   - Reading the books

6. What can instructor do...more educational and productive?
   - Explain, explain, explain
   - Less modeling, more information (also asked for more text book) **This is kind of a paradox—they want more modeling on the things THEY’LL be graded on, and they want to know how to teach, but they don’t want me to model how to teach. Hmm...
   - More specifics on just how to integrate the language arts
After Survey 2...

- Instructor responded online & in class
- Whole class, in-class viewing and discussion of survey
- Students highly engaged in discussion
- Survey served as framework for instruction given in response to student comments
- Student requested another column to respond to instructor’s responses (!)
My responses were:

- Validating responses
- Addressing specific requests (queries about clinical; request for more engaging visuals; request for more info)
- During survey discussion, I opened a sample of the first paper they had due and “dissected” it with them.
- Encouraged more questions like these in class so that everyone could benefit from the answer
Student Response to My Survey 2 Responses

- Thanks
- More time to write
Survey 3 (Week Seven—March 19 or 21)

On a scale of 1-5, with 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE and 5=STRONGLY AGREE, please rate your response to the following statements:

1= strongly disagree
2= disagree
3=neutral
4=agree
5=strongly agree

1. The course is meeting my expectations.
2. My own performance is meeting my expectations.
3. The instructor’s performance is meeting my expectations.
4. I am motivated to learn in this class.

Please answer the following questions:

5. Which lessons, discussions, activities, or demonstrations have you found the most useful, and why?
6. What can the instructor do to make this course more educational and productive for you?
Survey 3 Issues

Note: Several extenuating factors:
- I had surgery March 19.
- Guest speaker re: ELL instruction.
- Week before spring break
- Two things due—a paper they could have turned in early if they wished, and the take home midterm.
- The following class we did not meet—they had a take home midterm.
Survey 3 Results

- 8/11 responses (73% return)
  
1. The course is meeting my expectations.
   - X = 3.9

2. My own performance...
   - X = 4.25

3. The instructor’s performance...
   - X = 4.25 (well, that’s a relief! Why is the course itself NOT?)

4. I am motivated...
   - X = 4.25 (this is just perplexing—what’s going on?!)
5. Which most useful...why?
- Those sponge activities
- Building classroom community
- Lesson on chapter one (I lectured, not my favorite thing, and brought in children’s literature recommended by the author to foster critical thinking)

6. What can inst do to make more educ & prod?
- More structure to lectures
- A few noted how much they enjoyed; learning a lot; wouldn’t change anything. (yea! 😊)
- Make sure it’s clear WHY doing activities (sounds like I should have given feedback, elicited conversation about lit circle)
Survey 4 (Week Fifteen—May 14 or 16)
On a scale of 1–5, with 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE and 5=STRONGLY AGREE, please rate your response to the following statements:
1. The course met my expectations.
3. The instructor’s performance met my expectations.
4. I have been motivated to learn in this class.

Please answer the following questions:
5. Knowing that she will teach this course again, which lessons, discussions, activities, or demonstrations should the instructor be sure to keep in her repertoire, and why?
6. What could the instructor have done to make this course more educational and productive for you?
7. How did completing these surveys and/or having your instructor respond to these surveys effect the quality of your learning in this course?
What’s Next? (& my questions)

- It’s Spring Break now.
- Respond to Survey 3 student comments
- On April 2, discuss Survey 3 in similar fashion to Survey 2
- Add 5th survey so that there is one in April
- Considering value of numerical data—should I even bother?
- What are the most important questions I can ask them?