

**Prompt**

Please reflect on your teaching experiences over the course of the semester and how the materials that you submit in your portfolio exemplify your approach to teaching. Focus also on how your experiences will inform future work as an instructor.

**Personal Reflection**

As I look back on my teaching experiences, one of the tactics I knew students responded well to was the combination of instruction with creativity in classroom activities. I attempted to incorporate more creative aspects into my lesson plans as demonstrated in Lesson Plan I. In that particular activity, students pretended to be either Darth Vader from *Star Wars*, Jacob Black from *Twilight*, or Ron Weasley from *Harry Potter*, all well-known literary and film characters. Then, they wrote a letter, a text message, or a post card to another person. We examined their writing and talked about how the tone changed depending on who they were writing to. I was rather impressed with the results of each scenario, and I could tell that the students appreciated writing in a more creative way.

Unfortunately, not every lesson is going to be as exciting or interesting, especially lessons centered around grammar, style, and format. I sometimes struggled to find a way to design more fun and innovative lesson plans when focusing on mechanical topics. But, as I learned, not every lesson has to be packed with sparkling, artsy-fartsy creativity. If the instructor is excited about what he or she is teaching, the students will get excited, too.

For instance, Lesson Plan II is a basic overview of how to write direct and indirect quotes and correct in-text citations. This material, while important when writing academic papers, is not necessarily going to motivate students to work; in fact, this material might even frustrate some students. I did not want my students to just sit passively in their seats. How would I know that they were paying attention or really understanding the material? I had to find a way to get my students to focus, and the answer came in the form of class participation. I would ask for volunteers to read out loud and sometimes call on those who did not ask questions or talk too much. Making the

students read really focuses their attention on the topic and on the person who is speaking. When I handed out worksheets, I would also ask for volunteers to write their answers on the board.

Additionally, I have noticed that movement is another great technique to get the students focused. When I have trouble getting them to answer questions or when they just look sluggish, I have asked them to stand up and jump up and down with me. After doing this, my students are more alert. The result is immediate: they start interacting with me.

Another minor problem I was experiencing in the classroom was leading class discussion. While I did have discussion questions lined out, I found that my plans would sometimes take a random direction than what I had originally intended. Since structure and organization are two of my key personality traits, I felt like “a fish out the water,” as the saying goes. One of the ways I dealt with this was by listening intently to what my students were saying in response to questions I had asked. I could then build off what they were saying to make some of my own points. In other instances, I felt like I was not as clear as I could be, or I explained too much. I need to focus more on asking the right questions and getting the students to explain concepts to me instead of constantly explaining things to them.

Also, I have been practicing calling on different individuals to make sure everyone has a chance to participate, and I note those who do not talk as much. I try to encourage those individuals to participate by letting them know that they have been quiet, or by saying, “I’ll come back to you later,” and following through.

Overall, I find that I am gaining more and more confidence every time I stand up in front of the classroom. Part of what makes teaching so interesting is learning to adjust to different classroom dynamics. I am beginning to learn what works and what does not work with each new lesson I carry out. Like writing, teaching is a process of its own.