Experiential vs. Traditional Learning Among College Freshmen to Enhance Critical Thinking

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OBJECTIVES

- Enhance student success.
- Increase critical thinking skills through experiential learning.
- Increase student learning outcomes by:
  - Participating in small groups and critically examining human behavior in our society through an observational learning activity.
  - Research these behaviors (information literacy) and compare findings with others.
  - Draws inferences about these behaviors and connect to Psychology.

ACTIVITY

- Students began researching famous studies in Psychology and formed small groups.
- With permission of instructor, students performed their own study (mainly on campus).
- They analyzed the data, drew inferences, presented findings and research to class.
- Lastly, they reflected on their experiences.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi First-Year Students Say...

- “This activity really made me think outside of the box when it came to integrating what we learned in class and using it in a real world situation.”

- “I feel that I did a lot better on my exams. I was able to compare what I learned from the experiential activity and apply it to the test.”

- “The experiential learning activity was very hands on. It made the lesson come alive and was fun to produce”

- “This activity was great! I did not just learn and read from a text book. I was able to observe, implement and understand what I learned in class.”

- “I learned a lot of valuable information through this activity and enjoyed working with other students. It was a great way to teach students how people react to certain situations.”

RESULTS

- 0%
- 0%
- 21%
- 67%

- A's
- B's
- C's
- D's

CONCLUSIONS

- Student feedback was very positive in an anonymous, end of semester survey.
- 100% of students surveyed agreed that experiential learning improved critical thinking skills and that they would prefer experiential activities over traditional based assignments.
- In addition, students claimed to recall information for exams more effectively because they connected it to the assignment.
- Lastly, group participation and grades were higher on the Experiential Assignment than the group facilitation activities done in prior terms.