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FOSTERING CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE ONLINE CLASSROOM

Abstract:

Online learning is expanding at an exponential rate, with more than one third of all higher education students taking at least one course online (Allen & Seaman, 2011). However, dropout rates for online courses are 10-20% higher than for traditional, face-to-face courses (Carr, 2000). Many students report dissatisfaction with content, process, and lack of engagement. Besides lectures, video clips, assigned readings, and discussions, what can online instructors do to encourage creativity and collaboration in an virtual learning platform? How can instructors design and assess assignments that meet course learning objectives while also supporting creative and collaborative endeavors on students' parts? Online educators need to implement best practices; the static, instructor led discussions are not particularly supportive of student engagement (Adams, 2007). Done appropriately, online education can be an engaging, creative, collaborative venue for teaching and learning with the proper tools and supports. Contrary to popular misconception and fears, online learning can be an effective conduit of creative, dynamic student engagement. This session will present one assignments with multiple dimensions that actively engage student creativity and collaboration resulting in practical classroom tools for special education teachers. Students are required to create a Parent Newsletter to provide information about the teacher, his/her classroom procedures, and resources for families. They then share and critique each other's work in small, online groups with clear documentation of everyone's participation and responses. Using peers' feedback, students can refine their newsletters and submit it for final grading; an additional benefit is they have ideas to write future newsletters for their own classroom. Students report that they use these newsletters in their own classrooms.

Keywords:

Online education; Creativity; Collaboration; Accountability

JEL Classification: I29, I23, I21