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CORNELL NOTE-TAKING FORMAT

We have implemented the Cornell Note Taking method in the PACCT (Personal, Academic, College, and Career Readiness and Transition) class at San Jacinto this semester. In order to do that, we taught two lessons on how to use the format following as much as possible the step-by step procedures as presented by Ms. Tollefson during the training. The lessons were "Introduction Activity Using the Note-Taking Format" and "Introduction to Taking Notes in Class."

"Introduction Activity Using the Note-Taking Format"

First, we welcomed the students and told them we were going to do an activity in which they would interview one of the students and introduce him/her to the group.

We gave each student a color copy of the format. It had no words written in the color sections that are used for the headings. We showed them how to fold it so that they could only use the yellow section.

Using the document camera (Elmo), we displayed this information on a screen:

- Name
- What do you want to study in college?
- Why?
- How did you learn how to take notes?

On the board, we wrote the rules the students had to use during the interview:

- Interviewer may write no more than 4 words on each of the 4 main points. No sentences and no articles can be used.
- Interview may not last more than 6 minutes.

- Change roles and follow the same rules.

We also made a large drawing of the format on the board next to the rules.

The two instructors modeled the interview once and how to take notes by filling in the information in the drawing on the board. Students read our notes to make sure that we had not broken any of the rules on the board. (We did not give ourselves a prize!)

The next thing we did was to pair up the students so they could do the interviews. They checked each other's notes to ensure they had followed the rules.

Then we projected a new set of instructions using the Elmo. The instructions read as follows:

1. Pretend you are the teacher who is going to test the students on their interview notes.
2. Look at your interview notes and write 6 test questions.
3. The answer to your questions has to be found in your notes.
4. Questions must be written using correct grammar.

One of the instructors wrote questions in the "green" section on the board. We checked them with the participation of the students to make sure all the answers were found in our notes. Questions whose answers were not in the notes were circled.

After that, we showed the students how to unfold/fold the format (sheet) in order to use the green section only. Students then wrote 6 questions for about 15 minutes. We only asked two students to write their questions on the board to help model checking grammar mistakes.

The next step was to model using the blue section. One of the instructors wrote a 4-sentence summary with the information in the yellow section shown on the board.

Instructors modeled unfolding/folding the sheet so that only the blue section at the bottom could be used. Now the students took about 10 minutes to write their own summaries.

The instructors modeled introducing the other instructor based on the summary.

Finally, the instructors wrote two phrases the students had to use to introduce their classmate:

- It is my pleasure to introduce you to _____
- I would like to introduce you to _____

Students were instructed to read their summary after the phrase.

All the students one by one introduced the classmate they had interviewed using this method.

Students had the homework assignment to interview a friend or family member using the method learned. The questions the students were going to ask were:

1. What is your name?
2. What do you do?
3. Where?
4. How did you learn to drive?

"Introduction to Taking Notes in Class"

This lesson was presented the second day. We followed the steps learned in the training session. This time the students had a format containing the headings and the information they used to take notes was projected on the screen. They took notes on the instructions on how to fill each one of the four sections of the Cornell Test-Taking Format.

Using the Cornell Note-Taking Format

Only few students are using the Cornell format to take notes, and one of them takes notes her own way and re-writes them at home. We are having resistance to use the method.

In our experience, the 'questions for review section' is the one the students have had the most trouble with. One problem is that they write questions about things that they remember from the class but that they don't have them in their notes. Another is that they come up with questions using their previous knowledge about the subject (topics that we didn't talk about in class). They also write clarification questions instead of test questions. Finally, some students don't write their questions at home.

The summary section seems to be the part the students have the least problems with. During the 12 days we have been working with the students, we have not been able to revisit this section since we have been trying to get them to master the first two. We are planning to go over the summary section after they feel more comfortable with the other two.