9-8-2017

3,000 Post-its: Minute Papers as Formative Assessment in Business Writing Courses

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3,000 Post-its

Minute Papers as Formative Assessment in Business Writing Courses

Heidi Blackburn
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A QUICK OVERVIEW

- Curriculum was re-written in summer 2015 (face-to-face and online)
- Cumulative formal report accounts for approximately 30% of a student’s grade
- Business librarian presents one 75-minute class to every section
- Minute papers are used at the beginning and end of each library instruction session
WHY ASSESS?

- What are students’ comfort levels with library/research?
- Have they actually reflected on the research topic before now?
- Was the content useful to students and instructors?
- Was the format/delivery method useful to students?
- What still needs clarification from the instructor or librarian?
CLASSROOM
IMPLEMENTATION

BEGINNING OF CLASS:

• What is one thing about the library and/or doing research I want to learn more about today?
• What kinds of information will I need to find for my topic?

END OF CLASS:

• What did you find useful or helpful today?
• What question(s) do you still have?
METHODOLOGY

• Post-its collected at the end of each class
• Responses entered in Excel
• Forty-six sections were evaluated over 4 semesters
• Coding was used to find themes among responses
• Coded independently by instructor and librarian
• Averages taken from coded responses
RESULTS

3,000 POST-ITS

- databases
- research
- libraries
- find
- info
- helpful
- game
- use
- functional
- Criss
- business
- plan
- data
- specific search
- resources
- articles
- information
- good
- research
- many different
- statistics
- articles
- best
- know
- learn
- get
- way learned
RESULTS

Confident but clueless :)

PROMPT 1
I don't know what library resources and services are available to me in general as a student or where I should look for info.

PROMPT 2
I have exactly one specific fact I need to find for my topic and I probably need some statistics.

PROMPT 3
I like having time to brainstorm with partners and the librarian telling me which databases to use for my topic.

PROMPT 4
I'll need more help doing advanced database searching.
CHANGES TO CURRICULUM

RESEARCH

- Increased student buy-in and participation in class with guest lecturer (librarian)
- Increased positive student attitudes about completing research
- Increased confidence in student abilities to begin assignment
- Reduced number of questions about assignment asked of librarian (that were really for instructor)
- Refined activities to enhance active-learning over several semesters
- Refined research resources over several semesters
Changes to Curriculum

Writing

Observation and analysis of minute slips semester-to-semester...

- Illuminates areas of the writing assignment needing further clarification prior to library instruction
- Prompts a revision of assignment directions for students to preemptively address frequently asked questions
- Encourages a reflection on assignment timing and scaffolding of component assignments leading up to library instruction and final draft
- Helps instructor pin-point ideal dates for scheduling library instruction and introducing students to library resources
INSTRUCTOR & LIBRARIAN PARTNERSHIP

Working together semester-to-semester to observe and analyze the minute slips, the instructor and librarian were able to refine and improve the effectiveness of instruction, both during library instruction time and regular classroom time. For the last minute-slip prompt, "What questions do you still have?", the number of students replying "none" steadily increased semester-to-semester, from 22% to 52% to 62% and finally to 66%.

This suggests when the librarian and instructor work together using minute slips to assess student learning over time, students have fewer questions about library resources and assignment expectations.
IMPLEMENTATION IN YOUR OWN

CLASSROOM

- Gauge student skills at the beginning of the course or class
- Understand if student expectations for the class match those of the instructor
- Clarify course concepts at the end of the class
- Discover what topics remain unclear before exams
- Collect feedback on new classroom activities
CONCLUSIONS

The use of Post-it minute-papers greatly improved relations between students, instructors, and the librarian. This just-in-time model can assess student skills or attitudes, or new teaching methods, creating a more agile classroom experience.
THANK YOU!