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TEPS Abstract
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Thank you TEPS Committee and Dr. Hicks for giving me the opportunity to attend the National Institute for the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP). I learned so much and enjoyed learning from some of the top psychology professors in the country. An interesting aspect for me was listening to and meeting the people who are doing the research, writing the articles, and publishing the books that are on the cutting edge of the field of psychology. Attending several sessions, I have outlined a few of the more memorable ones below.

1) Teaching Traps Session:

The teaching traps session was a very informative session on how to avoid teaching traps that all teachers fall into from time to time and gave strategies how to avoid them in the future. The first teaching trap is teaching content without context. Content should be a vehicle to get to the bigger question or idea, and the deeper meaning of what the teacher wants students to learn long term. Telling students that we need to cover so many chapters in a week is falling into the teaching trap. How to escape this teaching trap is to figure out what are the important themes and big ideas that a teacher wants students to internalize.

The second teaching trap is getting lost in lists and terms. Psychology has many terms and concepts that students need to learn. The teacher must figure out the most important terms the students need to not just know, but understand, and be able to put into a larger context. The teacher should find out what the students already know and use it to their advantage. Memorizing one hundred terms or definitions is possible, but do students really need to know all one hundred terms? Narrow down what students should memorize to just the essential concepts. This takes work on the teachers' end to really understand the curriculum and to just teach what they really need to know. Some strategies to avoid this teaching trap are using Venn diagrams instead of lists. Divide students up into groups, each student has a different term or definition. Students must find the proper term or definition, then present to the class. Play the game 20 questions, where partners work together to ask 20 yes or no questions to each other.

The third teaching trap that teachers fall into is the "know it all" trap. When do teachers know enough content to be able to competently teach the subject matter? When do teachers not know enough? Have the attitude that you don't always have all the answers, it makes you more human, more relatable. Change your mindset when it comes to lesson planning, not what am "I, the teacher" going to get through today, to what are "the students going to do/learn today." It is not all about the teacher and plowing through content, but it is about what experience the students are getting, and if they are learning.

This session was very helpful because all teacher fall into teaching traps from time to time, and I will be implementing some of the strategies to avoid them in my class.

2) Building Direction in your Teaching Session:

This session took a closer look at what you want your students to walk away from your class learning. Teachers should narrow down what they want their students to remember into a single phrase, short enough to put on a t-shirt. The professor does this for each unit, at the beginning of the unit he wears a t-shirt with the phrase on it.

- The teacher should be a thought leader, not a dictator. Teaching is not about forcing a student to do something but engaging and including them in what the teacher is doing. This sense of belonging helps students to actively be engaged in your class.
- Each lesson should have an anchor statement that should be weaved throughout the lesson. The lesson should end with a takeaway statement that students will remember.
- Lessons should include a story, can even use a story board to tie things together. After the story draw comparisons to other similar stories or events.
- Tap into students, ask them questions, get to know them, make them feel important to you, not just another student.

3) The iGen Session:

In this session a well-known psychologist shared with us the data she has been collecting over the past thirty years. Her research focuses on the iGen generation, meaning kids who have spent their entire lives on the cell/smart phone - kids born after 1995. The research shows that kids in high school today are less independent, more indecisive and have higher anxiety and depression than previous generations. The research also shows that the amount of time kids spend on their phones has doubled since 2006.

So how do we deal with this technology in the classroom? Students spend less time reading, and struggle with longer articles and reading books. Some suggestions for the classroom are, not to fight the technology and suppress it, but to embrace it and use it to your advantage. Use the different media outlets in an educational way. Have students do a psychological study on what people post, why they post it, if it is reality, how do these post impact others, etc. The presenter also suggested eBooks, and to get rid of the old fashion textbook. Students would rather use their phone to look up information. Lessons should be broken up into chunks with short videos, visually stimulating presentations and interactive activities. Another way to use cell phones in the classroom is to have them make videos, or documentaries on any subject you may be teaching.

Again, thank you TEPS committee and Dr. Hicks for allowing me to attend the conference. These three sessions are just a few examples of strategies I will implement in my classes. The conference allows me to continue to refine my teaching to have the most impact on the students at Clarence High School.

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