

Supporting Whole Learners in Developmental English Classes

An examination of multi-modal, multi-intelligence teaching methods and classroom activities as applied to a developmental reading and writing curriculum in a college classroom - submitted by Eugene Wintner, Joanna Fortna and Susan Cunningham, Northern Essex Community College

Students with learning disabilities are often recommended to take remedial courses in reading and writing when they start college. NECC offers traditional developmental reading and writing courses called Basic Reading and Basic Writing. The curricula for these courses are grounded in current theory and pedagogical experience. However, like comparable courses elsewhere, the courses have been delivered via traditional teaching methods, which rely almost exclusively upon verbal modes of learning--reading and writing to teach reading and writing.

In recent years, Joanna Fortna, developmental writing coordinator at NECC, has been exploring the use of two other modes of engagement in the Basic Writing class: visual and musical. At the same time, Gene Wintner has begun exploring with the use of pictures for vocabulary learning in the Basic Reading course. Last fall, in a developmental learning community integrating both courses, we had students complete simple self-assessments focusing on sensory learning modes (visual, auditory, tactile/kinesthetic) and Gardner's multiple intelligences (verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist). Our class scored highest in interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, and musical intelligences. We then made a concerted effort to employ various modes and intelligences within our classroom and homework activities.

What follows is a general outline of various multi-modal lessons, and four sample lessons described in detail (indicated with asterisk).

Visual Emphasis

- *Mapping your childhood neighborhood as a prewriting activity for a description paper
- Drawing a Body Map as a prewriting activity for a person paper
- *Finding pictures in magazines, newspapers, and on the Web, to associate with new vocabulary
- Drawing pictures to associate with new vocabulary
- Finding or drawing pictures to correspond with themes of reading selections

Kinesthetic Emphasis

- Neighborhood Map and Body Map listed above
- Drawing vocabulary pictures
- *Manipulative games with index cards for vocabulary work

Auditory Emphasis

Teacher modeling of oral reading in both reading and writing courses

Use of reading aloud as a comprehension monitoring and clarifying strategy

Auditory reinforcements, such as pronunciation and oral repetition, for vocabulary learning

Interpersonal Emphasis

Peer response on writing assignments

Dyad classroom learning activities

Small team learning activities/projects for vocabulary and comprehension building

Intrapersonal Emphasis

Directed journal writing

Open journal writing

Metacognitive tasks associated with reading assignments

Musical Emphasis

*Music essay

Reading short selections about the influence of music

Sharing music in class

Song associations for vocabulary

Lesson Plan for Basic Writing: Prewriting Using Maps

Writing a descriptive essay is a typical basic writing assignment. When they write about a place from memory, generally they need to do some prewriting activities to stimulate the imagination and bring out details. One effective way to accomplish this is to have the students draw a map of the place.

1. In a culturally diverse class it helps to break the ice by talking about where they come from. This can be encouraged from the first day when they introduce themselves. For instance a student might say, "I'm Jose, and I currently live in Lawrence, Massachusetts, but I grew up in a small village in Ecuador."
2. After they introduce themselves, provide them with newsprint and markers. Ask them to make a map of the neighborhood where they grew up. In a culturally diverse classroom, there may be many different parts of the world represented.
3. To help the students feel less self-conscious about drawing it helps if the teacher demonstrates by drawing a map of his or her childhood neighborhood.
4. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for students to complete drawings.
5. Then have each student pair up with another student to describe the map in detail.
6. If time allows have students show the maps to the entire class, maybe emphasizing a favorite place in the neighborhood.
7. This prewriting can lead to a descriptive essay. They can narrow to a part of the neighborhood, a playground, a backyard, or a room in the house, to write a detailed, descriptive essay based on memory.

Lesson Plan: Vocabulary Pictures

1. Ask students to bring in magazines and newspapers, and bring some in yourself. You need to have more magazines/newspapers than there are students in your class. You will also need scissors, paper and tape.
2. Have students form groups of three or four.
3. Each group is assigned to find at least one picture representing each vocabulary word you are studying. For example, one of our words was "ominous," and one group selected a picture of the 9/11 attack for this word.
4. For each picture the group chooses, they must write an accompanying sentence. "It was an ominous moment when the plane struck the WTC."

There are many ways to vary and deepen this activity.

--Encourage students to think about the kind of pictures that might represent the word. What visual images does the word conjure in their mind?

--Have students select two pictures per word and then compare them. Is one better for learning and remembering the word and if so, why?

--Separate the pictures from the sentences, and then have another group match them.

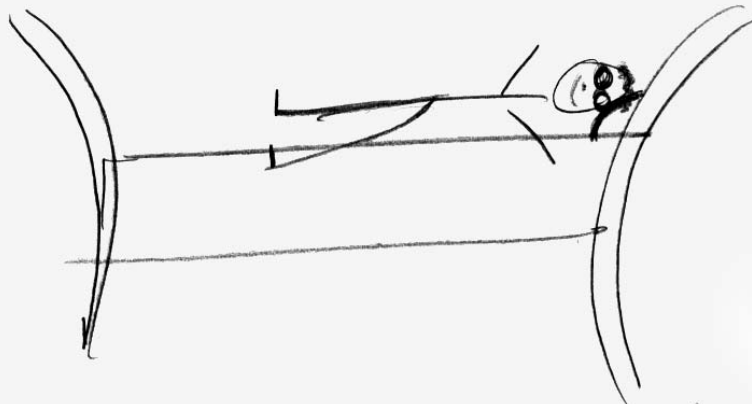
--Have groups swap pictures, without sentences attached, and guess which word each picture is meant to represent.

--Students can also draw their own pictures to represent the words. Photography buffs can bring in their own photographs.

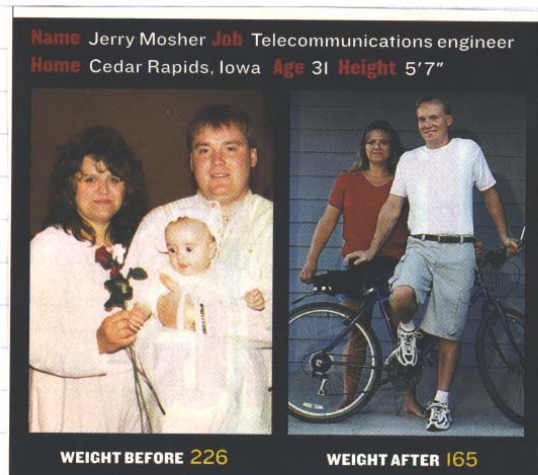
Attached are three samples of vocabulary pictures completed by students.



The young boy had the look of despair
as he walked away from the game.



For many months he has been
suffering from insomnia.



Last year, Bill was fat and sluggish.
Today, after a healthy diet, he has a good
shape and feel happy with his new
appearance.

Lesson Plan: Prefix Matching

(manipulative games with index cards for vocabulary work)

The purpose of this activity is to reinforce learning of prefixes. Students must have reviewed and studied the prefixes beforehand. There are many ways to vary the activity to emphasize different modalities. As presented, the emphasis is fairly well balanced between auditory, visual, and kinesthetic reinforcements.

Preparation: Write each prefix being studied on an index card. On a separate set of cards, write the meanings of the prefixes. Shuffle the two piles separately.

1. Distribute the cards randomly, such that each student has at least one prefix card and one definition card. The class's goal is to match all prefix cards with their definition cards.
2. Have students form pairs. One student begins, saying, "I have uni" (Shows card). If the student knows the meaning, she continues: "Uni means one. Do you have one?" If the student doesn't know the meaning, she continues: "Do you know what uni means?"
3. If the partner has the matching meaning card, he passes it over. If the partner does not have the match, the student with the prefix card will retain the card and continue asking other students for the match.
4. Students then reverse roles, with the partner now asking for the match for her prefix card.
5. To continue, students form new pairs and repeat process.
6. When a match has been made, the student confirms the match on the subsequent round, saying, "I have uni, which means one" (Shows cards). "Is that correct?"
7. If the new partner agrees, the prefix and its meaning are written on the board. If the partner does not agree, the card remains in circulation until the card's possessor has achieved confident agreement on the meaning.
8. When an individual has no cards left, they shift to the board. Their assignment at the board is to list word examples for the prefixes on the board.

Lesson Plan for Basic Writing: Writing an Essay about Music

Close to the end of the semester, after the students have successfully written several essays, incorporate an assignment that focuses on music. Since most college students are passionate about some type of music, the subject matter is interesting to them. Students that are strong auditory learners or musically inclined may particularly enjoy this assignment. Over two weeks the students complete the following activities: choosing a topic, writing informally about music in journals, answering prewriting questions, composing and editing several drafts. After they compose a rough draft they participate in the highlight of the process, the class music day.

Assignment- Write an essay that examines how your favorite type of music influences your life.

Choosing Topic - In order to narrow the topic, ask the students to choose a type of music they consider their own and write about it in their journals. Use the questions below to help them think about different ways music could become their own.

- A. Make a list of the types of music you like. What do you like to listen to the most?
- B. Is there one type of music that has influenced you more than any other?
- C. Is there a type of music that helps define your identity, your clothing, your family, your generation or your culture?

Prewriting -

1. Ask them to have a planned musical experience where they listen to a favorite type of music or a favorite song, and then suggest they do a 10-minute freewriting in response.
2. In contrast, ask them to have some fun observing the unplanned musical encounters they have in a 24-hour period. For instance they might hear music in the grocery store or booming from a car driving by on the street. Generally they enjoy comparing notes on the many places that music is imposed on all of us in our daily lives.
3. Write about a musical anecdote - a dance, a concert, a wedding, a performance.

Note: Make a handout defining some basic musical terms to help students learn the vocabulary of music.

Music Day - After they produce a **rough draft** of a paper, schedule a two-hour class period as music day. The students bring in samples of the type of music that they are writing about. They write on the board the name of the song, the performer, the group, the album and then the genre. The class decides the order that the music will be heard. When a student brings the CD or tape to the boombox, ask her to speak about the reason for choosing the piece. For the sake of time it's a good idea to listen to no more than half a song and then pause to discuss the qualities of the piece.

For example you can talk about tempo, tone or beat. Often it helps to focus on the dominant quality of the piece and its effect on the listener, such as the beat in rap or the melody in a Mariah Carey piece. Sometimes if members of the class become comfortable with each other, students may spontaneously perform the dance, particularly to energetic dance music like Salsa. Music day is always unpredictable, stimulating and sometimes even magical

Final Drafts - After this class they return to the writing of these papers having a better sense of comparison contrast between musical genres and some sense of the vocabulary. However, because of the abstract nature of music, this is not an easy paper for Basic Writers to write. It takes a few drafts for the students to find the focus and produce a paper, but the experience is usually well worth it.

A Few Tips - Encourage students to quote lyrics from songs in the body of the paper. Encourage them to use musical experiences as supporting anecdotes. Ask them to use good judgement when choosing a song for music day, so the class does not have to be subjected to strongly offensive lyrics. Bring food on music day.