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Learning by Leading: Using Social Work Month Planning as Task Group Engagement

Abby M. Foreman
Dordt College, abby.foreman@dordt.edu

Erin Olson
Dordt College, erin.olson@dordt.edu

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Learning by Leading: Using Social Work Month Planning as Task Group Engagement

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Learning by leading

Social Work Month Planning Committee
Social Work Month Planning Committee

• Structure of the assignment
  • SOWK 311: Social Work with Groups
  • Typically 10-18 junior-level students
Problem-based Learning Framework

• Engages students as stakeholders in a problem

• Creates a learning environment in which teachers coach student thinking and guide student inquiry, facilitating deeper levels of understanding

• Professor monitors and coaches student learning and thinking

(Torp and Sage, 2002)
Tropman’s Agenda Bell

**The Agenda Bell**

**EASY ITEMS**

Item 1: Minutes
10 mins

Item 2: Announcements
15 mins

**HARD ITEMS ITEMS**

Middle 1/3 has quality of:
- psychological focus
- physiological alertness
- attention
- attendance

Item 4: Moderately difficult
15 mins

Item 5: Hardest Item
25 - 40 mins

**Item 3: Easy Items**
15 mins

Item 2: Announcements
15 mins

Item 3: Easy Items
15 mins

Item 4: Moderately difficult
15 mins

Item 5: Hardest Item
25 - 40 mins

10 mins

15 mins

25 - 40 mins
How to make things go right...

• The role principle
• The Orchestra principle
  • Score = agenda
  • Rehearsals = preparation
  • Conductor = chair
  • Musicians = members each have a specific contribution
• The content principle
  • Meetings should be organized by content, not by reports from individuals

• The three-character principle
  • Informational
  • Decisional
  • Discussional

The goal of the meeting is high quality decisions.
Task group techniques employed...

- Brainstorming
- Round Robin
- Ranking ideas
- Delegating
Student Roles and Responsibilities

- Work together to accomplish the task of creating, planning and implementing social work month activities.
- Create theme for the month
- Lead meetings
- Work together in subcommittees
- Organize volunteers for events
- Publicize events
Professor’s Role

• Stay out the way as much as possible
• Trust the students to do their job well
• Emphasis on the details of planning a good event, communicating with respect with maintenance and other offices on campus
• Point out that sometimes good planning means you decide to pull the plug on an event
• Encourage them when they get nervous and/or overwhelmed
Reflection & Processing Throughout

- Analyze group skills (worksheet)
- Challenge ideas, beliefs about leadership
- Reflect on their role (and others’ role) in the group
- Providing opportunities to offer feedback to others in the group that they identified as a good leader and a good team member
Things that could be improved

- Keeping the theme in front of the students—developing greater connections to the theme
- Developing a better assessment tool to evaluate individual performance in the group
- Other ideas?
Outcomes

• Practice Behaviors: Identify as a professional social worker & Engage in practice in a task group.

• Students often cite this project as one of the more memorable and useful in developing basic work and planning skills.

• Students are more willing to engage in future planning events after having done it in this class.

• Recruiting tool! Raises awareness on campus for our program, for various social problems and the profession of social work.
Questions, comments?
