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# The Use of Student Projects in Teaching Sport History

by

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As is true in most state universities our students are very diversified. We have well prepared serious students, serious students who work from 10 to 40 hours a week, students who are the first in their families to enter a university, students whose last choice was UMass, and student athletes who have made a daily commitment to their sport. In an attempt to meet the needs of such a variety of students I have developed a modified Kellor plan from which the students may choose a variety of options. My purpose is to stress and support student learning and provide opportunities to use practice and more practice as a means of learning. For all students electing to try for grades D through A there is a Grade Improvement Period and only students who desire to work for an A complete a student project. Students opting for grades C through A begin the student project, but only A students need complete the project.

If students do not receive a grade which is satisfactory to them they may improve their grades by two letter grades within a two week period. The assignment or quiz must be on time if grades are to be improved. A term project or an idea for a project is developed by all students except those on Pass-Fail or just passing the course. The first step in the term project is a library resource assignment which provides the students with opportunities to construct sport history questions; locate, investigate and evaluate a number of sources relating to the question; and demonstrate correct bibliographical style. This assignment is undertaken early in the term and the first meeting on the work takes place in the library where the library staff acquaints the students with key resources, microforms, and other helpful material.

For the students completing the project, an outline is required by midterm and I encourage them to submit a rough draft about three weeks later. I try to discuss their projects as much as they desire. We talk about how difficult it is to write clearly. I point out that

efforts and time usually bring results. At times I suggest that students seek help with their writing. The projects are due early to allow for the Grade Improvement Period. Not often, but occasionally students have reworked papers three or four times.

How do the students react to this program? At first, they don't believe it. By the end of the term many believe that B qualifications deserve A's and many A students believe they have undertaken an inordinate amount of work. Some of the C, D, and Pass/Fail students are relieved that they can be open about the work they are doing in addition to the class in sport history. However, the number of B's and A's is high and you and your department chairperson should be prepared for this. I like it because I believe that the student has the opportunity, especially on important term projects to correct and improve material which otherwise might never again be touched. Many times, that is when real learning starts.