

An exploratory study to determine the impact of a creative studies course on at risk students.

An Executive Summary of Avarello's 1999 Master's Project
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Extra, Extra CPS helps at risk students!!!

Does the CPS process really work for students who are at risk? First you have to define at risk students. In this study an at risk student was defined as students due to financial, and academic distress were falling into academic peril. These students were tough to get through to, and didn't have the best of study habits.



Who's in the study?

At risk denotes a person or groups of persons who possess characteristics which place them in jeopardy of having problems in our society. Dropping out, bad behavior, lack of responsibility are a few of the characteristics. Some of the people in the study came from turbulent home and social lives.



Introduction to the problem

Does a course in the creative problem solving process work for students who are at risk? How can it help them out? This is our problem. For years intervention programs have been implemented for at risk students. Some of them work, however some haven't. Why have they failed. If they

succeeded why? Few of the before mentioned intervention methods included the field of creativity. Creativity education does provide some of the needed areas of at risk students. There has been much research on the topic of creativity in education, but not many studies have centered on the at

Special points of interest:

- Who's in the study?
- Introduction to the problem.
- The study.
- Creative studies 205.
- What was found.

Does the CPS process work for at risk students?

Would the process work for you?

Introduction, continued

risk student. However they are the students that require the most attention and resources. As you begin to look at the research there is some initial evidence that creativity and problem solving based education directly impacted the needs of at risk students.



The study!!!!

An at risk student enters the educational system with a variety of needs. In order to effectively help the at risk student the study must clearly define what will be focused upon. Given the lack of research on this subject this study is deemed exploratory. For this exploratory study the subjects were at risk undergraduate students admitted to Buffalo State College through the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). These students admitted through the

EOP program are financially and or economically disadvantaged, and would otherwise not be admitted into school. The study consisted of 22 students (9 females and 13 males), between the ages of 18 and 25. Each of these students took part in an introductory course in creativity. The students were from diverse backgrounds, and included African– American and Hispanic students, many of whom were from urban backgrounds. Most of the students were second semester freshman.

*Give a man a fish
and he eats for a day.
Teach a man to fish
and he can eat for a
lifetime.*

Creative Studies 205

All of the students in the study were enrolled in A 3 credit hour course in creative problem solving. Creative studies 205 provided the students with a introduction to the field of creativity. The set up of the course was set up to reflect Rhodes's model of the four P's. The course was divided into (a) introduction; (b) creative press; (c) creative person; (d) Creative process; (e) Creative product. The course goals were to promote the

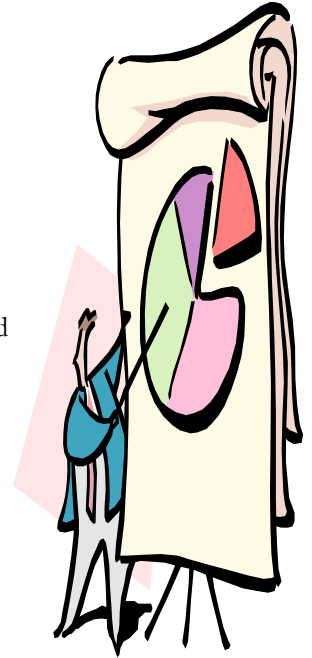
development of creative individuals, and to promote an awareness and understanding of the nature of creativity. Grades were assessed with an emphasis on participation and attendance. Homework and reading were also another part. The class was finished off with an invention project. The study was concerned with exploring the impact of an introductory course in creativity. The course was to provide an opportunity for the discovery of holistic effects of the course on the students.

Methodology of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the impact of how a semester long course in creativity impacted at risk students. To find the results the following assessment tools were used. Personal interviews, faculty evaluations, and a course questionnaire. The questionnaire was taken from Parnes & Nollers Creative Studied Project. The following are the assessment tools defined further:

Interviews: The study selected 9 students at random to partake in personal interviews 10-15 days before their final exam. Eight of the selected students actually took part in

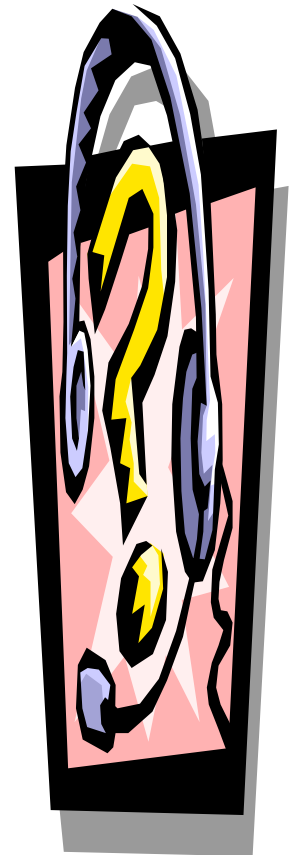
the interviews. They were informed that the decision to take place in the interview would have no adverse effect on their grade. The interviews were taped and witnessed by another member of the creative studies department. The interview was 16 questions long. The questions were all open ended and focused on the students, reactions to the course, personal insights about themselves, use of materials learned outside the classroom, and suggestions of how the course could be improved.



Faculty evaluations

As any creative studies course their is a mandatory course evaluation. The evaluation consisted of 3 major parts. (A) a 10 question test evaluating the course; (B) 10 questions evaluating the instructor; (C)3 open ended questions. For all of the questions in section A and B the students had to circle the number that they felt best answered the question. The scale the students had to pick from ran from 1 being weak, to 5 being superior. For the open ended ques-

tions that were more introspective and course evaluative based. The students were asked what they liked about the course and what they would improve. They were asked what they will take away from the course and how they will use it. They were all informed that the answers to this section would not effect their grades negatively. Fourteen students filled out the evaluations for the course.



Course Questionnaire

This document was taken from the conclusion of Parnes & Noller's creative studies project. The questionnaire consisted of 31 questions. It basically focused on the students feelings, and reactions to the course, personal insights as a result of the course, and how their applying the course out side of the classroom. The students had to answer the questions by circling the degree to which they agreed. The

scale ranged from "not at all" to "a great deal". Fourteen of the students filled out this document. The students were again informed that their participation would not effect their grades negatively. However were told the importance to be completely frank.

Data Analysis



The methods for interpreting the data for this study were descriptive and involved qualitative analysis techniques: fracturing, bracketing, and theming. The technique of constant comparison was also implemented. The concept of constant comparison was used for theory building and development. The personal interviews, course evaluations. All the information was compiled and was fractured at first. Once the information was analyzed it was then sorted into categories. one interview, and question at a time. All of the data was treated with equal value and possible themes began to emerge. The next step is theming. The process of theming involves putting themes and patterns to information. Patterns began to emerge and were sorted into categories. Once all of the information has been assimilated the information is worked into solid qualitative results.

Results

The results of the students responses to the questions, interviews, and faculty evaluations gave a number of interesting results. A total number of 13 themes resulted. Further analysis of the 13 themes it was revealed that the results fell into four broad categories. Personal development, applications (immediate and future), class participation, and students observations and recommendations. Here are the findings put into their respective outcomes.

Personal Development: Self confidence, listening to others, open-minded, working with others, can do attitude, outlook on life, ability to solve problems.

Participation: In class, in discussion, in other classes.

Observations/ Recommendations: Student teacher relationship, make the course mandatory.

Off of Applications comes;

Immediate: In other classes, at work, in personal life, in family life, invention project.

Future: Searching for a job, dealing with people, with friends & family, solving problems, searching for that certain someone.



Conclusion

The study concluded that a course in creativity did help the students. By boosting confidence and giving them a program to follow for solving problems. The students that weren't able to find easy solutions were taught to use their creativity and to apply it to their problems. The students found that their creativity reached further than the class room. They found out that their creativity can touch them in every aspect of their lives.

Reference

Avarello, L. L. (1993). *An exploratory study to determine the impact of a Creative Studies course on at-risk students..* Unpublished master's project, State University of New York College at Buffalo; Center for Studies in Creativity, Buffalo, NY.