Principal - I will be responsible for my own academic progress

Theory – Anxiety Uncertainty Management

Claim – Students can help themselves by getting to know their classmates better. They can help each other to better understand the course work.

Audience – College students, ages 17 – 25, actively attending class, in Spanish 3, first semester at University Park, not Spanish majors.

Cover Memo:

For my final project I decided to use the anxiety uncertainty management theory and put it towards the principal that states, I will be responsible for my own academic progress. Even though the principals states that I will be responsible for my own academic progress, I think that means doing what you need to do to be the best student you can be, as long as you do not cheat. I believe that this includes getting to know your class mates better so that they can help each other to get through the hard parts of class.

The claim that I am going to try to make is that, students can help themselves by getting to know their classmates better. They can help each other to better understand the course work. To help accomplish this claim I am going to use the Anxiety Uncertainty Management theory on my target audience. My target audience will include college students, ages 18 to 25 and actively attending a Spanish 3 class during their first semester at University Park as long as they are not a Spanish major. By using the Anxiety Uncertainty Management theory I believe that I can make it easier for my audience to interact with each other to better accomplish my claim.

In my intervention I will create activities and programs that teachers can do in class to get their students to better know each other without wasting class time. These activities will help the students to lessen their anxiety when it comes to meeting new people and asking classmates to help them or ask them for help. I will use the things we learned in class about Anxiety Uncertainty Management to use this theory in the best way possible to help my fellow students.

I know from experience and through interviewing some of my fellow classmates that fall into my target audience that it can be very stressful trying to do well in Spanish 3 when they have an unfamiliar teacher and usually no friends in the class. For the students who have taken a Spanish class at University Park they end up having the same teacher or they are used to how the tests and classes work. I know, coming from the New Kensington branch that the classes were very different; the home work was in the book not on Angel like it is here. I also know that it was very difficult for me to talk to other people in the class and ask them for help because it
seemed to me that everybody except me knew what they were doing and I did not know anybody.

In our book Em Griffin describes how William Gudykunst explains many different axioms and a few of these axioms help to describe why people have anxiety or uncertainty and they describe what people need to do to overcome their anxiety or uncertainty. Some of the axioms I will cover are axiom 3, axiom 9 and axiom 17. Axiom 3 describes how an increase in our self-esteem will decrease our anxiety. Axiom 9 describes how an increase in our confidence in our ability to predict strangers’ behavior will decrease our anxiety. Axiom 17 describes how if we find personal similarities between ourselves and strangers will decrease our anxiety (Griffin, 434). I think that axioms 3 and 9 are very closely connected; if you have high self esteem it helps your confidence.

I can think of one very easy assignment for teachers to give that will cover all three of the axioms I previously covered. If you divide the class up into groups of three or four and have each person put their name on a piece of paper. When they get into their groups you have them talk for a couple minutes about their previous Spanish experience and there strengths and weaknesses in the language. After they are done they pass their paper around in their group and each person writes a compliment on the paper for the other people, to help raise their confidence. Not only will this help to raise everybody’s confidence it will help people to get to know each other in a small group so they do not feel overwhelmed and it can help people to find anything that they might have in common. This can be followed up by a number of other activities that also deal with the same concepts and you can mix the groups up so the students can meet other students.

You can run into a couple of problems with this plan though. One big problem is that people might not want to be open and participate. This is a hard problem to overcome but by making small groups it should help reduce anxiety and therefore help people to be more open. Another problem you might run in to would be outside competition. I think that this problem is addressed by doing this during the first week of classes. By doing this in the first week, people are more interested in meeting new people and they are not really worried about home work or tests yet. Also, by doing this in the first week students can meet the other students and make friends before the class really starts so that it makes it easier to help each other down the road.

Now to monitor if this works or if it just takes away from learning you could do a couple of things. In the beginning you could hand out a survey or have a question on the SRTEs to see if the students liked the idea and if they made any new people and if that helped them to do better in the class. Another thing you could do would be to only do it to half of your classes to see if the class that did the activity had a better class average or if they communicated better
with each other even if they do not know that it helped them. Or you could always do both of the ideas.

**Intervention**

**Place:** Spanish 3 classroom

**Who:** Half of the Spanish 3 classes

**When:** Second day of the first week of classes in the Fall or 08’

**How:** On the second day of Spanish 3 classes in the fall semester of 2008 break the class into groups of 3 or 4 depending on the class size. Have each student write their name on a piece of paper. The professor writes a series of questions for the groups to talk about on the board. These questions will include, previous Spanish classes taken at University Park, previous experience using the Spanish language, strengths and weaknesses in using the Spanish language for both speaking and writing and any other questions that the professor feels would be relevant to the class. Let the groups talk for about 15 minutes and then have them pass their paper around to everybody in the group. Each member of the group should write a compliment on every paper so that everybody in the group has a compliment from every body in the group. They do not have to write their names with the compliment in can be totally anonymous.

At the end of the semester, before finals, the teacher will hand out a survey that the students will fill out. The first question on the survey will ask if this is their first semester at University Park. The other questions will be, did meeting new people in the beginning of the semester help you in the class, do you think that you would have gotten a lower grade if you did not know some people in the class, did you know anybody in the class before this semester and if so did you just interact with the people you knew or did you interact with new people as well.

The professor will then separate the surveys in to two piles, students who have been at University Park and students who are new to University Park. This way the professor can check my target audience to see if my goal was accomplished and they did do better in the class by meeting new people. Also if the professor wanted to he/she could look at the rest of the surveys to see if it helped the entire class.
Works Cited