

Increasing Student Engagement Using the Jerry Springer Moment

Introduction

One of the biggest struggles for teachers of any subject is capturing and maintaining their students' interest (Prensky, 2002). Teachers have started to use social media, the most popular form of media viewed by young people, as a way to connect academic content to the world of the student to increase involvement and motivation (O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011). One example teachers are utilizing is "The Facebook Experience" worksheet (Rudolphi and Anderson, 2011). The Facebook Experience is an innovative idea that uses Facebook to organize content of virtually any subject into a form that students are extremely familiar with. Utilizing the popularity of Facebook, The Facebook Experience can be combined with another popular media source to increase the learning potential. The Jerry Springer Show has been on air for over 24 years (Springer, 2015), and as of 2012 the show was averaging 2.1 million viewers daily (<http://tvseriesfinale.com>). Jerry Springer's popularity has made the format of the show well known. A majority of the episodes are based around relationship problems that are caused by one person engaging in a relationship with more than one other person. By using the conflicting relationships discovered through "The Facebook Experience" students can stage a Jerry Springer Show in class to discuss their conflicting relationship statuses.

How it Works

Agricultural Education teachers can use the Jerry Springer Moment to reinforce the relationships taught in a variety of topics through active student engagement. For example, an Agricultural Mechanics class covering small engine parts identification can use the Jerry Springer Moment to highlight the relationship between individual small engine parts. Students will first need to fill out a blank Facebook profile worksheet for the small engine part that they were assigned. The Facebook profile worksheet includes a section titled "Relationship Status." In this section, students put what relationship their small engine part was in. For example, if the assigned small engine part was a piston, they could be married to piston rings, and the connecting rod, while dating the cylinder on the side. In the popular show "Jerry Springer" complicated relationships such as these would be brought on stage to discuss which relationship was the one true relationship. In the Jerry Springer Moment, one engine part would be selected, and all students who identified as being "involved" with that engine part would come to the front of the class in an attempt to defuse their relationship quarrels. The students on stage need to think creatively to defend why they are the most connected with the engine part in question, while the students in the audience are watching, asking questions and making connections between the engine parts.

Table 1. Steps designed to implement the Jerry Springer Moment

Step	Activity	Description
Step 1	Facebook profiles	The teacher will assign one small engine part to each student for them to fill out the Facebook profile worksheet.
Step 2	Gather visuals for each part	The teacher should provide either a picture or actual part for each student to hold during the activity.
Step 3	Students share their Facebook profiles	Each student will share their Facebook profile with the class. The class will take notes of every person that says they are “in a relationship” with their own part.
Step 4	The first round of Jerry Springer	The teacher will chose a student that was “in a relationship” with multiple other parts and call them to the stage. One of their “companions” will also be called on stage. The first student on stage will state their case on why they belong together, as will the companion.
Step 5	The debate gets heated	The teacher will then reveal that the first student on stage is seeing someone else and bring in the next person they were in a relationship with. The debate continues as to which part is truly the most connected with the first part on stage.
Step 6	Introduce additional “companions”	If the first student on stage still has parts they identified to be in a relationship not on stage, the teacher should call them up and continue with Step 5.
Step 7	The class gets to decide the verdict	Based on the things that are discussed on stage, the class will vote on who gets to remain in the relationship.

Results to Date

This innovative idea was field tested in an agricultural mechanics course at [STATE] University. The teacher began the Jerry Springer Moment by calling up the first group of students and initiating the discussion on their relationship and later brought up an additional student that was involved in the relationship. The students debated over which relationship would be the most appropriate relationship, or if they should even be in a relationship. The class decided what the result should be based on the discussion. It was observed that the students on stage were making good connections between what their part was, how it worked, and how it connected with other parts within the engine. The students in the audience were also very attentive and interested in what was being said by the students on stage.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

The Jerry Springer moment can be modified to fit a variety of topics that have connected parts, for example: animal reproductive systems, parts of a plant or animal cell, or bio-system parts. To help the activity, the first student “on stage” should be presenting an item that the teacher knows has multiple connections with others. This will aid in the debate by providing the students with additional opportunities or variables to analyze to determine which relationship is the most appropriate fit for the situation. It was noted that it was hard to follow which part the students were representing when they did not have a visual aid with them. It is recommended, but not required that the teacher provide a visual aid for the items assigned to the students. This will help the other students (and teacher) remember what items are being represented by the students “on stage.” Teachers should be cautious of inappropriateness during the debate. The discussion should be monitored closely in order to keep the debate from straying towards a direction that should not be tolerated in a school environment.

Costs/ Resources Needed

The costs and resources for this activity were minimal. The only cost experienced in the implementation of this activity was printing the Facebook worksheets. The instructor already had the small engine parts available for the students. However, there could be additional costs associated with securing other visual aids.

References

Jerry Springer. 2015. The biography.com website. <http://www.biography.com/people/jerry-springer-498154>.

Maury, The Jerry Springer Show, The Steve Wilkos Show: Renewed for two more seasons. 2012. In TV Series Finale. <http://tvseriesfinale.com/tv-show/maury-jerry-springer-show-steve-wilkos-show-renewed-23478/>.

O’Keeffe, G.S. and K. Clarke-Pearson. 2011. Clinical report- The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. *Pediatrics* 127(1): 800-804. DOI: 10.1542/peds.2011-0054.

Prensky, M. 2002. The motivation of gameplay: The real twenty-first century learning revolution. *On the Horizon* 10(1): 5-11. DOI: 10.1108/10748120210431349.

Rudolphi, J. and R. Anderson. 2011. The Facebook experience: Creating small engine parts profiles to increase higher order thinking skills. American Association for Agricultural Education Conference, Coeur D’Alene, ID.

Submitted by:

John Rasty
Sherrard High School
Sherrard, IL

Ryan Anderson
Texas State University
San Marcos, TX