

“I WILL”: A POWERFUL WRITING ASSIGNMENT

A POSTER PRESENTATION

Jamie A. Dunnington, University of Central Oklahoma

ABSTRACT

After reading an NPR article titled “The Writing Assignment that Changes Lives”, a professor from the University of Central Oklahoma implemented a writing and photography project with her students. The article, written by Anya Kamenetz, began with “Why do you do what you do? What is the engine that keeps you up late at night or gets you going in the morning?” Inspired by the article, the instructor felt compelled to answer those questions herself and to integrate this into one of her classes. During the past three years, *Contemporary Issues in Public Health* students have participated in the project. Students were asked to write about impactful times in their past, personal motivations, and future plans. Students created one personal “I WILL” statement that summarized their dreams or future goals. These statements have often been intimate, heartwarming, and empowering. Examples included “I will evolve”; “I will help the helpless”; “I will be a world changer”; “I will always choose love over hate”; “I will graduate”; “I will break the cycle”. Students share these aloud. The instructor then takes individual photographs as students hold their hand-written I WILL statements on a piece of paper in front of them. She square crops, converts photographs to black and white, and makes a class collage of all students’ I WILL photographs. Through this project, the professor discovered that many college students have rarely given much thought to these important questions. This assignment has become a tradition in her class. Photo collages are given to each student as a reminder of their individual and shared dreams and goals. Students speak about this activity as a highlight from the class and share how impactful it was for them in planning for their future and deciding what it is they truly desire to do with their lives.

SELECT REFERENCES

Kamenetz, A. (2015). The writing assignment that changes lives. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/07/10/419202925/the-writing-assignment-that-changes-lives>

For further information, contact the lead presenter:

Jamie A. Dunnington, PhD

Assistant Professor

Department of Kinesiology and Health Studies

College of Education and Professional Studies

University of Central Oklahoma

100 N. University Drive

Edmond, OK 73034

Phone: (405) 974-5058

E-Mail: jdunnington@uco.edu