

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

'Structured' game-playing can help student learning

BY KRISTINA PETERS
STAFF REPORTER

Faculty put aside their books in favor of games during a Faculty Development workshop Thursday.

The main focus of Thursday's session was to show Eastern's faculty an effective way to better enhance student learning with the use of games and group work.

Faculty gathered in the Charleston-Mattoon Room in the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union for the workshop titled "Using Groups and Academic Games for Learning and Assessment."

Guest speaker Barbara Millis is the director of Excellence in Teaching at the University of Nevada at Reno. She has been speaking at workshops since 1987.

"For my first workshop I was very thrilled," Millis said about her first lecture nearly 20 years ago.

"I wanted people to take away that games are not frivolous," Millis said.

"They just have to be structured."

She explained there are many advantages to applying games and group activities, which include raising student learning, learning to respect others and learning workplace skills.

Millis demonstrated to the faculty many games she applies to her everyday teaching by having them get into small groups.

The faculty then gathered together and did a scavenger hunt, a snowball discussion, a crossword puzzle, a murder mystery, and she briefly explained a BINGO game.

"The most valuable use of the scavenger hunt is as a review (for tests)," Millis said.

Millis' scavenger hunt was different than the typical version. Her main focus was to have the participants engage in conversation rather than focusing on getting signatures and winning.

"I thought it was kind of fun to share ideas with the other faculty," said Brenda Wilson, professor of communication disorder sciences.

The snowball game was designed for participants to work together while generating as many different ideas as possible.

"It gets people talking and generating," said Jeanne Dau, a new professor of principle and marketing for the Lumpkin business school.

The other two games were to challenge participants to work together to arrive at the answers.

Millis said the key to games is to make them work with the material and to make sure students understand the relevance.

"Nothing is worse than a chaotic game," Millis said.

After learning about the games and participating, the faculty, overall, were accepting to the use of games in the classroom.

"I will definitely incorporate more games," Dau said.

Other professors who have been applying group activities to their classrooms plan on taking the games Millis presented into consideration.



JESSICA CANTARELLI/THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Barbara Millis shows how to reward students with candy during the Faculty Development training workshop in the Charleston-Mattoon Room in the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union.