



CENTRE FOR TEACHING & LEARNING RESEARCH

Active Learning | Focus on TA

Active Learning Strategies

Reviewed by

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Small Group Teaching

Small group teaching is very important for encouraging students to think, compare ideas, give expressions to their understanding of a subject, evaluate and develop personal and professional values. Small group sessions can also be employed to accommodate practice team working, leadership and communication skills.

Rounds

A round involves each student in the group taking a turn to speak briefly on a given issue. Rounds work well to start a session, because they involve each person speaking once before anyone speaks a second time. This establishes a balanced pattern of interaction.

Take a Poll

In introducing a new topic, pose a yes/no question. Ask students to take 5 minutes to get up, walk around and pose that question to as many class members as possible, keeping tally as they go. Debrief by inviting students to share their results and reasons for their own responses. Use the results as the focus of the session.

Bell ringer

Adapt the classic lab exam format to deliver new material, practical development or present issues for discussion. Prepare activities, questions or new information for each station being sure that the demands of all stations will take approximately the same amount of time to complete. Divide the students into groups and have each group begin at a different station. Groups rotate through each station at timed intervals until all groups have gone through all stations.

Carousel

Less formalized than a bell ringer, this strategy involves students walking freely through the class

TeamBasedLearning

Basic Elements of Cooperative Learning

Positive Interdependence

Students must feel that they need each other. They must feel that one cannot succeed unless the other members of the group succeed (and vice versa). In other words, they must... Some ways to create this feeling are through establishing mutual goals (students must learn the material and make certain that group members learn the material), joint rewards (if all group members achieve above a certain percentage on the test, each will receive bonus points), shared materials and information (one paper for each group or each member receives only part of the information needed to do the assignment), and assigned roles (e.g. summarizer, encourager of participation, elaborator).

Frequent Promotive Interaction

Beneficial educational outcomes are due to the interaction patterns and exchanges that take place among students in carefully structured cooperative learning groups, face face or online. Students help, encourage and summarize, giving and receiving explanations, and elaborate (elaborating what is being learned to previous learning).

Individual Accountability/Personal Responsibility

Cooperative learning groups are not successful until every member has learned the material or has helped with and understood the assignment. This is important to stress and assess individual learning so that group members can appropriately support and help each other. Some ways of structuring individual accountability are by giving each group member an individual exam or by randomly selecting one m

questions on the main points of a reading or class material, alternating asking and answering the questions they have prepared. Within the learning team students can be assigned roles, where one student makes up questions regarding the material, one student discusses two points they agreed with, one student discusses two points they did not agree with and one student is required to make up or discuss a specific example of how the ideas or concepts are applied. Students are more willing to share their views in small groups and often display deeper insights about the material when working alone.

Case Studies or Critical Incidents

Case studies are appropriate for learning information analysis, decision-making

classroom environment on a webpage include Jeopardy and Trivial Pursuit. Many templates for these games are available to download from the web.

Fishbowl/Concentric Circle

A fishbowl is a small circle of chairs occupied by students who will have a discussion, conduct a lab experiment or engage in some other observable event. That inner circle is then surrounded by a larger circle of students who will listen in or observe the ongoing activity. You can offer a way for those in the outer circle to join in the discussion or lab activity by simply “tapping out” those in the fish

- x Present and advocate their position. Each pair makes a presentation to the opposing pair, with each member of the pair participating.
- x Engage in an open discussion, refuting the opposing position and rebutting attacks on their own position. Students argue ~~fully~~ and persuasively for their position, presenting as many facts as they can to support their point of view.
- x Reverse perspectives. The pairs reverse positions.
- x Synthesize and integrate the best evidence ~~and~~ reasoning into a joint position. The four members of the group drop all advocacy, synthesizing and integrating what they know into factual and judgmental conclusions summarized into a joint position on which all sides can agree.