Quick Write: Important Elements

As you come in, please respond to the following prompts on the lined side of the notecard. No need to write your name.

1. *What important elements would you like to see in classroom or online discussions?*
2. *What are you currently doing to facilitate discussions in your courses?*

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Learning-Centered Discussion Strategies to Improve Participation, Collaboration, and Critical Thinking

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Goals for this Working Session

- Discuss conceptions of learning-centered teaching
- Explore a range of learning-centered teaching strategies to generate lively and productive classroom discussions

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What is Learning-Centered Teaching?

- Focusing instruction on what students are learning (rather than on what instructors are doing), how they are learning, and how they can apply that learning in meaningful ways

- Creating a learning environment that actively engages students in authentic, meaningful, and useful learning

(Blumberg, 2009; Doyle, 2011)

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Five Dimensions To Consider

- Role of the instructor
- Balance of power
- Function of content
- Responsibility for learning
- Purposes and processes of evaluation

(Weimer, 2013)

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Five Dimensions To Consider: Responsibility for Learning

A. Create a classroom climate that promotes student responsibility for learning
B. Hold students to high standards
C. Hold students accountable
D. Be consistent
E. Demonstrate your commitment to learning

(Weimer, 2013)

Setting Up the Discussion Environment

- Identify what you want students to learn from discussions
- Set some ground rules for discussions
- Assign one or more students to serve as observers, and then have them report back to the class about what they observed
- Audio record the class and play back a portion to the class – ask for ideas to improve discussions
- What if one student takes over?

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Why Won't They Participate?

- Habits of passivity
- Failure to see value
- Fear of criticism or of looking stupid
- A push toward agreement or solution before all points have been considered
- Feeling like the task is to find the answer that the instructor wants, rather than to explore the possibilities

(Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011)

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So, What Can I Do?

- Create a positive climate in your classroom
- Arrange students in a circle
- Have students share their personal history so that you will know their personal expertise
- Start discussions with a question

(Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011)

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Instructional Strategies

- Buzz groups
- Fish bowl
- Think-Pair-Share
- Jigsaw
- Gallery Walk

(Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011)

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When Things Go Wrong

- If an argument breaks out, reference the text or other authority
- Use the conflict as the basis of an assignment
- Use it as a learning opportunity to examine the methods
- List evidence (or pros and cons) for either side of the disagreement
- Table the discussion – make it a pillow problem

(Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011)

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Active Learning

Bonwell and Eison (1991) characterized active learning as “anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (p. 2). C haracteristics of active learning:

- Students are involved in more than listening.
- Less emphasis is placed on transmitting information and more on developing students’ skills.
- Students are involved in higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation).
- Students are engaged in activities (e.g., reading, discussing, writing).
- Greater emphasis is placed on students’ exploration of their own attitudes and values.

Active Learning

Activities that engage students in active learning include

- the pause procedure (stopping for a few minutes during a lecture to allow students to summarize and synthesize information or to allow for discussions among students);
- short writes (time for students to rework their notes or summarize big ideas);
- the wait procedure (a chance for students to think and evaluate their ideas before answering a question);
- think-pair-share (the wait procedure followed by pair discussions and then larger group discussions);
- formative quizzes (used to keep students attention focused and to determine how students comprehend material);
- lecture summaries (forum for students to summarize lectures or share notes with peers);
- classroom assessment techniques (used to assess students' recall of information presented in the classroom); and
- group work (small groups of students working together on activities dealing with course content)

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(Bonwell, 1996; Bonwell & Eison, 1991, Bonwell & Sutherland, 1996; Ebert-May & Brewer, 1997)

Think-Pair-Share: Considering Cases

1. Read through the two cases and jot down notes about suggestions for how the instructor can facilitate learning-centered discussions in his/her class.
2. Share your ideas with one or two other people, and then we will discuss as a group.

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Upcoming CETL Events: Learning-Centered Teaching

Date & Time	Event	Location
Tuesday, **September 22**, 2015 - 3:30pm to 5:00pm	Workshop: **Learning-Centered Assessment Practices**	**Kennesaw Campus** CETL House 3211
Wednesday, **October 14**, 2015 - 9:15am to 10:45am	Book Club: **Teaching with Your Mouth Shut**	**Kennesaw Campus** CETL House 3211
Wednesday, **October 21**, 2015 - 9:15am to 10:45am	Book Club: **Teaching with Your Mouth Shut**	**Marietta Campus** Building H Room 202

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Quick Write: One Change

Before you leave, please respond to the following prompt on the blank side of the notecard. No need to write your name.

What is one new idea that you are considering to facilitate learning-centered discussions in your course?

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