

CTE This Week **January 20-23, 2004**

To have knowledge is to make it, to construct it, not to record, absorb, or memorize it.
Teaching is not simply telling.
--Martin Bickman



Teaching Tip of the Week - Getting Discussions Going

There are many different techniques for leading discussions, from the most nondirective to the most programmed. Here are some ways to get discussions moving from <http://www.ku.edu/~cte/resources/teachingtips/discussions.html>:

- **Start with a common experience.** One of the best ways to start a discussion is to provide a concrete, common experience through the presentation of a demonstration, film, or role playing. Following such a presentation it is often easy to ask a relatively open question such as, "What are your immediate reactions?" or "Does anything in this film disturb you?"
- **Start with a question.** The range of questions is listed in the section above on setting objectives. Questions that speak well to students' puzzles can be obtained by asking students to submit written questions in advance of the session. Once the first question has been asked and responded to, further questions come easily. The trick is to phrase the first question as well as possible. In general, instructors may:
 1. Use open questions to begin long discussions.
 2. Wait at least 10 seconds before rephrasing the question. (Instructors rarely wait long enough for student responses).
 3. Offer an example if the problem you have posed appears too abstract.
- **Start with a controversy.** One of the best ways to create a hot discussion is to pose a controversial issue and ask by a show of hands how many students take one side or the other (e.g., "how many of you feel that . . . is true? How many feel it is false?"). To control the discussion, ask for five statements of evidence or argument from each side, then statements of rebuttal. Write these statements on the board. One of the easiest ways to create controversy is to play devil's advocate when a class comes too quickly to agreement on a complex issue. Students should be later informed that the position was taken for purposes of discussion.
- **Place students in buzz groups.** In this procedure, classes are split into subgroups for a discussion of a problem. Groups can be asked to come up with one hypothesis that they see as relevant, with one application of a principle, or an example of a point. In order to make this method effective, students must be given a clear task and a definite amount of time in which to do it and asked to use their responses in a follow-up discussion with the class as a whole.
- **Ask for responses in writing.** One excellent way to get discussions going is to ask students to respond to the question you wish answered in writing. Usually five minutes is enough time for students to prepare their answers. Encourage them to be creative by using the writing as a chance to brainstorm. Then invite oral responses. Often quiet students will speak up if they have the words before them. Also, written responses often lead to more reflective discussions.

eLearning Teaching Tip of The Week - Enhancing Online Discussions (from <http://tlt.suny.edu/discussion.htm>)

- **Require participation.** Communicate expectations as to acceptable quality and quantity of participation. For example, students may be required to respond to the question you

(or another student) poses and to the responses of at least two other students. You may wish to provide guidelines regarding quality as well. This may be as simple as pointing out that "I agree" is not a substantive comment in an online discussion. Or you may provide criteria regarding how students should support their opinions with reference to readings, research or other course materials.

- **Include a grade for participation.**
- **Participate wisely:** The instructor should not dominate the discussion. Nor should he or she be absent. It is your job to keep the discussion on track by guiding without "pontificating". Frequently an instructor will provide a comment that students perceive as the "official answer" and discussion can come to a grinding halt.
- **Require a product which is based on or the result of discussion:** A "hand-in" assignment that is based on class discussion can help students to synthesize, integrate and apply what has been discussed.
- **Have students lead the discussion.** Assign students to post focused, topic relevant discussion questions and lead the discussion. It may be necessary to model a few discussions in advance and/or assist the student to choose appropriate discussion questions in the early stages.



Resources at CTE - Come by and take a look at some of the articles and books in our library. If you would like a copy of any of the articles abstracted below, contact the CTE (c.wehlburg@tcu.edu). You might be interested in:

Improving Discussions by William Cashin (Kansas State University) and Philip C. McKnight (University Kansas). *Although such learning can take place during a lecture, it is more likely to occur in discussion classes where there is give and take. Everybody knows what a discussion is, but try to find a good definition or description@ In this paper we will use "discussion" to include a variety of teaching approaches which focus on two-way spoken communication between the teacher and the students, and more importantly among the students themselves. This paper offers a description of strengths and weaknesses of the discussion method and a series of recommendations regarding three aspects of discussions (improving learning, improving interest in learning, and increasing participation).*

Enhancing Learning -- and More!! -- Through Cooperative Learning by Barbara Millis (US Air Force Academy). *Some of higher education's most challenging goals include enhancing critical thinking, promoting "deep" learning, encouraging both self-esteem and the acceptance of others, and improving interpersonal effectiveness. This paper describes cooperative learning, an instructional approach designed especially with these objectives in mind.*

Instructional Tools for Nursing Education: Concept Maps by Anita All, Larae Huycke, and Mark Fisher (University of Oklahoma). *Through Students must deal with vast amounts of information in multiple formats, yet their ability to organize and link data in a logical way varies widely. Concept mapping offers nurse educators a useful tool to assist nursing students in wading through and critically analyzing this information more effectively. This article explains concept/cognitive mapping as a teaching strategy for several aspects of course work. Types and examples of maps developed by undergraduate and graduate students are used as illustrations and points of discussion. Illustrations are assessed according to type of map, information presented, aspects of the maps that facilitate meaningful learning, and what information is missing. Strategies for remediation to help learners assimilate new information are included. Finally, implementation of mapping in nursing education and ideas for research in concept/cognitive mapping are discussed.*

Upcoming Events at CTE - Mark Your Calendars (and check out <http://www.cte.tcu.edu/workshopsevents/index.htm>)!



Teaching with Technology Fair - The first annual Teaching with Technology Fair will be held **January 28!** You are invited to browse through faculty poster/demonstrations to discuss how technology is used on the TCU campus from 9:00 - 11:00 in the Student Center lounge area.

Educating the NetGen: Strategies that Work - a live satellite broadcast!! Dr. Diana Oblinger, Executive Director of Higher Education for the Microsoft Corporation, explores the characteristics of the next generation of learners, the uses of technology to support these learners, and the learning styles that may signal different instructional needs. Thursday, **January 29th from 1:30 to 3:00**. Call Cathy Vahrenkamp to register (ext. 7434).

eCollege: Building Your Course Template - This workshop is designed to allow faculty to work with the eCollege system to build a course template and to add modify, and design course content. This workshop also provides an introduction to the management tools offered by eCollege. **Friday, January 30th from 2:00 - 4:30** in the Extended Education Computer Lab.