

## Assignments and Discussions:

Team projects and problem solving in real world scenarios can enhance the student experience by giving students the opportunity to lead, follow, create, share, and even make mistakes in a low-stakes, supportive environment. In order to build meaningful team projects and/or incorporate problem-based learning into your course the following considerations could be made:

- Incorporate a real world scenario associated with your content area
- Allow students to find relevant themes within that content area to their future, past, or current lives
- Assign, or require team self selection, specific roles within the team will be assigned
- Alert students of the objectives of the team work
- Make student self and team assessments a requirement and make those requirements known before beginning team work

Advantages of team work incorporation include

- Enhanced student engagement
- Students may take a greater stake in their own learning when they can see a clear line between the content, activity, and their past, present, or future lives

Team project guide: <http://facultyguidetoteamwork.umn.edu>

Problem-based learning <http://https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/instructional-design/problem-based-learning-helps-bridge-gap-classroom-real-world/>

## Teambuilding

Teambuilding can help students start working together more cohesively towards shared goals.

- Connects and engages students.
- A 'student-centered approach' encourages team- work and cooperation among students.
- Encourages collaborative work with peers

## Team Building Icebreakers

These icebreakers help to start interaction within the group.

- **Interviews:** Ask participants to get into twos. Each person then interviews his or her partner for a set time while paired up. When the group reconvenes, each person introduces their interviewee to the rest of the group.
- **Problem Solvers:** Ask participants to work in small groups. Create a simple problem scenario for them to work on in a short time. Once the group have analyzed the problem and prepared their feedback, ask each group in turn to present their analysis and solutions to the wider group.

- **The Human Web:** The facilitator begins with a ball of yarn. Keeping one end, pass the ball to one of the participants, and the person to introduce him- or her-self and their role in the organization. Once this person has made their introduction, ask him or her to pass the ball of yarn on to another person in the group. The person handing over the ball must describe how he/she relates (or expects to relate) to the other person. The process continues until everyone is introduced. To emphasize the interdependencies amongst the team, the facilitator then pulls on the starting thread and everyone's hand should move.
- **Ball Challenge:** This exercise creates a simple, timed challenge for the team to help focus on shared goals, and also encourages people to include other people. The facilitator arranges the group in a circle and asks each person to throw the ball across the circle, first announcing his or her own name, and then announcing the name of the person to whom they are throwing the ball (the first few times, each person throws the ball to someone whose name they already know.) When every person in the group has thrown the ball at least once, it's time to set the challenge – to pass the ball around all group members as quickly as possible. Time the process, then ask the group to beat that timing. As the challenge progresses, the team will improve their process, for example by standing closer together. And so the group will learn to work as a team.
- **Hope, Fears and Expectations:** Best done when participants already have a good understanding of their challenge as a team. Group people into 2s or 3s, and ask people to discuss their expectations for the event or work ahead, then what they fears and their hopes. Gather the group's response by collating 3-4 hopes, fears and expectation from pairing or threesome.

For more information on this strategy: [teambasedlearning.org](http://teambasedlearning.org).

### Cooperative learning

“Cooperative learning is the intentional use of student groups to facilitate learning. There are five elements considered necessary for successful cooperative learning. They are:

- Positive interdependence (each individual depends on and is accountable to the others)
- Individual accountability (each person in the group learns the material)
- Promotive interaction (group members help one another)
- Social skills (leadership, communication)
- Group processing (assessing how effectively they are working with one another)

For more on cooperative learning, including guides to using it in the college classroom and research on its effectiveness, see the Cooperative Learning Institute web site: <http://www.co-operation.org/>.”

### **References:**

*Chlup, Dominique T. and Collins, Tracy E. “Breaking the ice: Using icebreakers and re-energizers with Adult Learners,” Adult Learning 21, (3-4), 34-39.*

Eggleston, T. & Smith, G. Building community in the classroom through ice-breakers and parting ways. Office of Teaching Resources in Psychology Online.

West, E. (1999). The Big Book of Icebreakers: Quick, Fun Activities for Energizing Meetings and Workshops. New York: McGraw-Hill.

L.K. Michaelsen in Davis, 2009. p.215

## Research-Based Strategies for Asking Questions

This activity involves the use of four questions that get students actively involved in the material they are studying. When used by the authors and subsequent instructors, this technique demonstrated improved understanding of course materials and higher critical thinking scores upon evaluation.

The questions/prompts used:

- “Identify one important concept, research finding, theory, or idea ... that you learned while completing this activity.”
- “Why do you believe that this concept, research finding, theory, or idea ... is important?”
- “Apply what you have learned from this activity to some aspect of your life.”
- “What question(s) has the activity raised for you? What are you still wondering about?” [You might need to prohibit the answer “nothing”.]

See more at: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/prompts-that-get-students-to-analyze-reflect-relate-and-question/#sthash.1Ec0oUBP.dpuf>

According to the authors, the question set is versatile. Here are some examples of how it could be used. Use the four prompts as a way to summarize an in-class discussion, adjusting the wording of the questions:

- Have students answer the questions about a reading assignment. Dietz-Uhler and Lanter had students write 100-word responses to the first three prompts. Written answers could be shared in small group discussions.
- At the beginning of class, give students five minutes to write answers to the questions as a way of reviewing notes taken in a previous class session. Or, have students submit answers online before class and use sample responses to review the material.
- A version of the question set could be the template used to provide peer feedback on a paper. (What’s one important idea presented in this paper? Why does the author think the idea is important? Is that idea important to you? Why or why not? What question(s) do you think the author still needs answer?)

- Use the questions as way to end and evaluate a course. (What's one important idea you'll take from this course? Why do you believe it's important? How does it relate to your life? What are the next questions you want to find answers to?) To answer these questions, students must reflect on their learning. Their answers might cause teachers to reflect as well.

See more at: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/prompts-that-get-students-to-analyze-reflect-relate-and-question/#sthash.1Ec0oUBP.dpuf>

### *References:*

Dietz-Uhler, B. and Lanter, J. R. (2009). Using the four-questions technique to enhance learning. *Teaching of Psychology*, 36 (1), 38-41.

Alexander, M. E., Commander, N., Greenberg, D., and Ward, T. (2010) Using the four-questions technique to enhance critical thinking in online discussions. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 6 (2), 409-415 –