

Classroom Structures Which Encourage Student Participation

METHOD	DEFINITION	WHEN USED	PREPARATION/PROCEDURE	LIMITATIONS
Group Discussion	Opportunity for pooling of ideas, experience, and knowledge.	For majority of meetings because of adaptability to greater group participation.	Preplanning to develop discussion outline. Leader encourages every member to participate by guiding the discussion.	Practical with not more than 20 persons. Becomes disorganized without careful planning.
Buzz Groups	Allows for total participation by group members through small clusters of participants, followed by discussion of the entire group.	As a technique to get participation from every individual. Adaptable to other group methods.	Prepare one or two questions on the subject to give each group. Divide the members into small clusters of four to six. A leader is chosen to record and report pertinent ideas discussed.	Thought must be given as to the purpose and organization of groups.
Panel Discussion	A discussion in a conversational form among a selected group of persons with a leader, in front of an audience that joins in later.	As a technique to stimulate interest and thinking, and to provoke better discussion.	The leader plans with the four to eight members of the panel. The panel discusses informally without any set speeches. The leader then opens the discussion to the entire group and summarizes.	Can get off beam; personality of speakers may overshadow content.
Symposium Discussion	A discussion in which the topic is broken into various phases; each part is presented concisely by an "expert" on that phase.	When specific information is desired.	Leader meets with the 3 or 4 members of the symposium and plans outline. Participants are introduced, reports are given, group directs questions to proper symposium members, leader summarizes.	Can get off beam; A vocal speaker can monopolize program.
Experience Discussion	A small or large group discussion following a report on the main point of a book, article, movie, or life experience.	To present a new point of view or to present issues that will stimulate thought and discussion.	Plan with others participating on how review is to be presented. Then have an open discussion on pertinent issues and points of view as experienced.	Ability of participating members to relate to others and motivate thinking.

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Concentric Circle	A small circle of group members are formed within a larger circle. The inner circle discusses a topic while the role of the outside circle is to listen. The discussion is then reversed.	As a technique to stimulate interest and to provoke good discussion. This is especially good to get more response from a group that is slow in participating.	Leader and planning group work out questions that will be discussed by the concentric circle and then by the larger circle.	Much thought and preparation must be given to the questions for discussion. Room and movable chairs needed.
Reaction Sheet	A method of reacting to ideas: Ideas that you question; Ideas that are new to you; Ideas that really “hit home.”	As a way to get the group to react. Combine this with other methods	Prepare topic and reaction sheets. Explain and distribute reaction sheets with the instructions to write as they listen, watch, or read. Follow with group discussion.	Topic should be somewhat controversial.
Phillips 66	This is a spontaneous method where six people view their opinions on a topic for 6 min.	To add spice and variety to methods of presentations.	Define topic of discussion. Count off six people and allow six minutes for discussion . Allow for group discussion or reassignment of six people.	Must be used somewhat flexibly.
Reverse Thinking	Expression of thought by thinking in reverse.	To gain an insight into others’ feelings and to see another point of view	Prepare topic—explain to group the theory of reverse thinking. Combine with other methods.	A challenge to group members.
Brain-Storming	Technique in creative thinking in which group members voice their ideas and opinion about a problem.	To get new ideas, and release individual potentialities in thinking up ideas.	Leader and members of planning group select suitable problems or questions on the topic selected by the entire group. Procedure: The leader explains to the group the meaning of brain-storming and the following rules: Judicial (critical) judgments ruled out. Criticism to be applied later. The more ideas the better chance of good ones. The wilder the idea the better; it’s easier to tame them down than to pump them up. Hitchhiking is legitimate. If you can improve on someone else’s ideas, so much the better. Leader rings bell when one of the above rules is violated. Recorder lists the ideas. Follow-up —type list and bring to next meeting to give to members.	To be utilized as only a part of a class.

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Debate Discussion	A pro and con discussion of a controversial issue. Objective is to convince the audience rather than display skill in attacking the opponent.	Dealing with a controversial issue on which there are clear opinions on both sides bringing them out in a friendly way.	Divide the group into sides of pro and con. Each speaker should be limited to a predetermined time followed by rebuttal if desired.	Members are often not objective towards the subject.
Role Playing	The spontaneous acting out of a situation or an incident by selected members of a group.	As the basis of developing clearer insights into feelings and forces in a situation which facilitate or block relations.	Choose appropriate situations or problems. Have the group define the roles—the characteristics to be represented by each player. Enact the scene. Observe and discuss specific behaviors, underlying forces, or emotional reactions.	Group leader must be skilled so that actors will play their roles seriously.
Picture Making	A way of bringing our ideas or principles on a topic by means of simple illustrations made by group members on the back-board or large chart paper	As a technique to stimulate interest, thinking, and participation.	Leader and planning group select general principles or questions on the topic which would be suitable to illustrate. Leader divides the group into sub-groups. Each sub-group is given a statement or problem to illustrate. After completing the picture, groups show and explain the picture. Follow by discussion.	Instruction must be clear as to the value of picture making and adequate materials supplied.

Sources:

Berquist, W.H., & Phillips, S. R. (1975). Classroom Structures Which Encourage Student Participation. In *classroom Communication: Collective Readings for Effective Discussion and Questioning*, p. 13-18.