

Discussions Prompts and Pods



In Large Group Settings

1. Start by asking a few YES/NO questions that require a "show of hands." This gets those present into the act of participating.

UNDECIDED

If not everyone participates, ask for an "undecided" count.



NO ANSWER

If no one responds...WAIT...and let the room know you need them to respond.



UNCLEAR ANSWER

If there is no clear majority, ask for a few volunteers to explain why they voted the way they did.



CLEAR ANSWER

Even if there is a clear correct majority response, ask for a volunteer to explain why the answer is correct (after indicating to the room that it is).



2. Move to a non-yes/no question that is relatively easy...i.e. "describe" something.

2.1 Start with one volunteer and then ask for others to add to what was said.

2.2 Write the responses on the board if possible, so everyone can see their contribution (this encourages more contributions).



3. On more difficult content or cases, have students work in pairs first to build confidence.



4. Ask the room to generate what might be a good exam question...this all tells what they are having trouble with...and then have the room answer the questions.



5. Ask specific sections of the room that have been quiet to respond.

In Small Group Settings

Keep group size at 5-8

This encourages participation and discourages social loafing.

Establish group rules

For an effective process these are conditions that will help learning.

Reinforce positive behaviors

This is a great way of building on previous ideas.

Deal with negative behaviors

Non-verbally first, then by referencing ground rules.

Set clear roles & responsibilities

Everyone in the group should have a "job" even if it is to observe the group process (which is a great learning experience all by itself).

Establish group comfort

Ask the members of each group to share something like their birthday to allow them to introduce themselves to one another and set an equal tone.

Do group self-assessment

Ask the groups to stop after half the time to self-assess (what are you doing that is effective?).

Identify clear desired outcomes

This signals when the group work is complete.

Avoid the "all report out trap."

Start with one group and ask for additions only.

Foster group reflection

Have each group identify one thing that made it work well.

