Activity: The First Five Minutes

Activity Type: Demonstration, homework, presentations

Goal: To have discussion leaders plan and practice their initial classroom interactions.

Abstract:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class prep</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration (first meeting)</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>24 – 48 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations (second meeting)</td>
<td>10 min /person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time needed: 20 minutes one day, 12 minutes per presenter at following meeting

Materials needed: Flip chart paper, pens, dry erase markers, blank index cards for each participant.

Before first meeting:
1. Reserve classroom space for each group of discussion leaders. Maximum of five leaders per group is best.
2. Prepare flip chart posters with information similar to that below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Call me:</th>
<th>Student ID:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where I currently live:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During first meeting:
(6 min) Start: Hi everyone! One of my goals is to make sure everyone feels completely ready to start discussion sections. To do this, we will take turns presenting what I call “the first five minutes.” You have realized that the work starts before the first five minutes of class. You needed to get a web page ready, a syllabus typed and posted, and supplies purchased for the first day of class. But it is also very helpful to plan out how you want your teaching time to go, especially the first day when there are lots of details, lots of confusion, and everything is still new.

So a technique that I’ve used is to actually type out the transcript of what I’m going to say on the first day. Yes, literally type out, “Hi, my name is Dr. Williams.” It sounds goofy, but it is surprisingly useful, even though you will NEVER read the script loud to your class. Here’s how it helps: 1. You are forced to figure out the list of things you want to cover on the first day. 2. When you write out the words, you get a good idea of how long each item will take. 3. When you see the whole list of items, you can rearrange the order until you like the flow.

Board notes:
Transcript:
1. Creates list of topics
2. Calculates timing
3. Organizes flow
I’ll hand out my transcript so you can see how it looks. And then I’m going to present my first five minutes, so you can watch me. When we meet again, I’m going to have all of you go to the room that you will likely have as a discussion room and practice presenting your first five minutes to your cohort of discussion leaders.

(10 min) Okay, here is my first five minutes.

(2 min) Start: Welcome! My name is Dr. Williams, and you have made it to your first discussion section for Bio 93, your first biology class here at UCI. As you came in the classroom, you found an index card on your desk, and instructions on filling it out here on the board. Please finish that up as I make this announcement.

The first thing I need to do is make sure you found the right room. The classroom right next to this one also hosts Bio93 discussion sections, and we always manage to mix up students on the first day. The course code for this section is 05203, so your schedule should have that number. And all of you should be signed up for Bio 93’s lecture B, which meets at 12 noon. If your lecture is at a different time, like 1 pm, you are now free to go next door where a very nice man named Dr. Bialeky wants to meet you. (pause for shuffle)

Okay, hi again. Our normal procedure in discussion will be to work on better understanding some of the concepts of Bio 93. But this isn’t a gigantic lecture, it’s a more intimate group of 30 students. So I want you to get to know the people in here, because there is a good chance you might meet someone who would be good to study with.

(5 min) So right now, please turn your desks around and get into groups of three. Yes, right now. Go on! Good job.

Now take a few minutes and learn something about each person in your group. Maybe you went to rival high schools. Maybe you are interested in the same club. Find out each other’s names, and one thing you have in common with each one. The two topics you CANNOT ask are “what is your major” or “what do you want to do after college.” Ready? Go! (Here I would really wait about five minutes, but I’ll skip ahead now)

Okay? Now I’m going to see how well you did. I’ve got five packs of candy here. Raise your hand if you remember the names of the two people you met. (wait) Okay, what were their names, and what did you have in common with them? (listen, comment) Good! Here’s your candy. Someone else? (continue until candy is gone). Good job! Pass in your index cards, and I’ll tell you a bit about myself.

I did my undergraduate work at UC Davis a long time ago. I did my masters work at CSU Fresno, and got my Ph.D. here at UCI in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. I’m married, and have a 9 year old daughter, and we live here in Irvine. This is my sixth year at UCI. I’m not hired as a professor like your teachers in lecture, so you can call me Dr. Williams, but not Professor Williams. I teach occasionally, but my main job is training graduate students and new lecturers how to teach discussion sections.

(End)

Okay, that’s it! When we meet on Friday, I’m going to have each of you do the same thing. And after you finish, we will go through this list (goal, what worked, what needs improvement) so you can fully understand what worked. For instance, my goal was to get students talking early, and not just listening to me. And I think that worked well. What I didn’t like was how
long it takes students to get the index cards in. Now, what are some comments you have about the presentation?

For our next meeting, I want you to arrive with a printed-out version of your first five minutes. This should include supplies and the agenda for the whole class. You will then go to your discussion classrooms and practice giving your first five minutes to the discussion leaders you are teaching with.

Before Second Meeting:
1. Prepare instruction sheets for all coordinators or mentors who will direct each group of discussion leaders (sample provided as second handout)

2. Welcome discussion leaders and their coordinators or mentors. Give coordinators/mentors the instruction sheet with the classroom location written on it. Provide a contact cell number in case of locked or busy rooms.

3. Send out groups to teach. If you need them to return, be sure to have time to return written on the instruction sheet.
Handout: Sample First Day of Class

Abstract:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class prep (create transcript, write on board)</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have students fill out cards</td>
<td>(before class starts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icebreaker (group discuss, 5 presentations)</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus overview</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short worksheet</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Materials needed: Flip chart paper, pens, dry erase markers, blank index cards for each participant.

Before first class:
1. Write on board this information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please fill out index card:</th>
<th>Dr. Williams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Discussion B13: 05203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call me/ how to pronounce my name:</td>
<td>eee.uci.edu/06f/05203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student ID:</td>
<td>Lecture B only!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During class:
(2 min) Start: Welcome! My name is Dr. Williams, and you have made it to your first discussion section for Bio 93, your first biology class here at UCI. As you came in the classroom, you found an index card on your desk, and instructions on filling it out here on the board. Please finish that up as I make this announcement.

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Now, let’s go over the syllabus….
(End five minutes)

(This is all you need to do for homework. I recommend finishing this for your entire first discussion, adding how you will go over the syllabus, and how you might cover a bit of lecture material. Write it all down NOW, and you won’t worry later.)
Instructions for “First Five Minutes” Presentations

Coordinator / Mentor Name: __________________________

Setup:
1. Find your classroom: ____________________________ (list classroom here)
2. Write on the board (in an out-of-the-way spot)
   a. What was my goal?
   b. What worked?
   c. What needs work?
3. Create the order of the presentations (The course coordinator/mentor should go first!)
4. Assign one person to keep track of time and announce when each five minutes is up

Presentations:
1. First presenter sets up board and supplies.
2. First presenter presents
3. The presenter debriefs while the next presenter sets up their board and supplies. Each presenter should answer:
   a. What was my goal?
   b. What worked?
   c. What needs work?
4. Evaluations: at least one audience member must state something the presenter did well, and what they might improve, before the next presenter may begin.
5. The next presenter may begin
6. Congratulate all presenters. Make final comments or general suggestions. Dismiss group or return to the training meeting.

Return:
1. Return to the training room at this time: __________