Designing Meaningful Group Learning Experiences (Online)

Presented to the Online Teaching Community

Erin Hagar, Manager, Professional Development and Education

Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

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Opening Reflection

Today's Framework

What's the purpose of the group assignment? How does it align with your instructional values and outcomes?

What kinds of tasks or activities work well? Can everyone meaningfully contribute? How to foster true collaboration instead of "divide and conquer?"

How many students in a group? Instructor-selected or self-selected? How to hold the group members accountable?

Articulating Your "Why?"

- Values:
  - creating community
  - professional interdependence
  - diversity of ideas and approaches
  - developing leadership and communication skills

- Learning Outcomes:
 - Apply
  - Evaluate
  - Create

Determining the "What?"

- Does the task need the input and effort of multiple people to accomplish?

- Does it encourage true collaboration (or just "divide and conquer?")

- Can each team member contribute meaningfully from the beginning (i.e., one person waiting until the end to "edit")?

- Does the task (and its evaluation) value the process as well as the product? What role will reflection play?

Group Learning Tasks

Divergent

Convergent
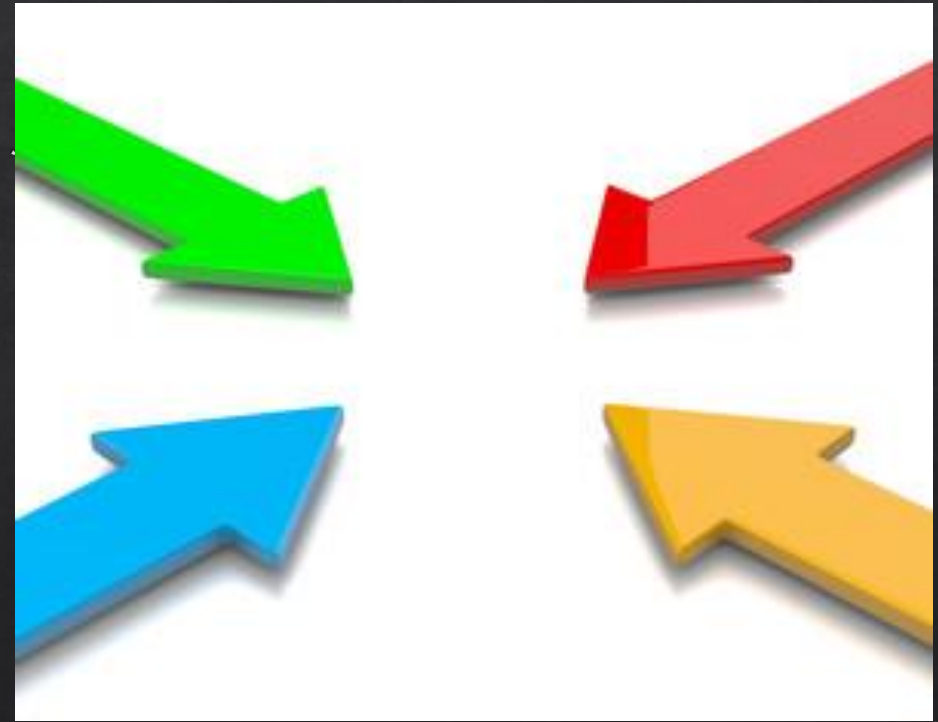
Ideas for Collaborative, Divergent Learning Tasks

◈ Podcast Interview/Recording (guest selection, interview questions, intro/closing, analysis of responses. Team members could also be guests.)

◈ Curriculum Development (audience analysis, learning outcomes, materials development, evaluation plan)

◈ Community Outreach Plan/Program (needs analysis, community asset analysis, description of program, cultural sensitivity statement, evaluation plan)

◈ Grant Proposal (rationale, program description, impact statement, evaluation plan, budget, selection of funding agency)

◈ Program Evaluation (selection of program, research on its outcome measures, development of evaluation criteria, analysis of its impact, reflection)

Ideas for Collaborative, Convergent Learning Tasks

- ⬦ 4-S Activities
  - ⬦ Significant Problem
  - ⬦ Same Problem
  - ⬦ Specific Choice
  - ⬦ Simultaneous Reporting
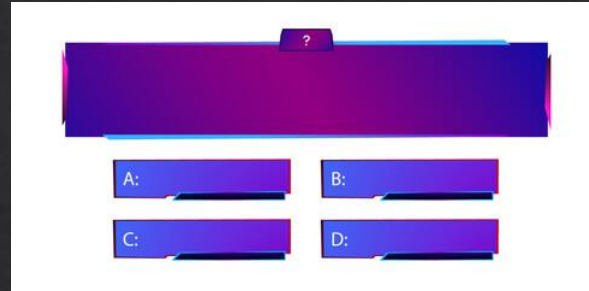
Considering the "Who"

- Group Formation:
  - Group size: 4-5 ideal
  - Preferable for instructor to assign groups
  - Factors in group formation
    - Experience?
    - Performance?
    - Availability?

- Group Dynamics:
  - Communicate product *and* process expectations
  - Consider low-stakes, team-building tasks to start
  - Don't assume fluency in group dynamics—scaffold and support

Evaluation of Group Work

- Clearly communicated from the beginning

- Product/ Process

- Peer and Self-Evaluation

  - Michaelson's Method: Peer eval grade is distinct part of total score. Distribution of points among team members, including self. No two team members can get the same points.

  - Fink's Method: Group gets the same grade on the product, but the average peer review score acts a multiplier, and can increase or decrease the student's individual score based on how the team reviewed her performance.

- Consider a process for teams with challenging dynamics (high bar)

  - First and best option is to make a plan for more effective work (you may need to intervene)

  - A member can complete the project (from scratch) individually, but held to the same standards

  - A member can submit an application to work with another team, but has to make the case for how they'd contribute

Special Considerations When Groups Are Working Asynchronously Online

- Time for team building and expectation setting built into assignment
- Allow extra time for tasks to be completed
  - Products and process documents submitted iteratively
- Consider whether you will require the use of certain tools (i.e. Bb discussion areas etc) so that you have access OR if you will allow them the flexibility to choose how the work
  - Teams can submit a process plan to you as one of their first, low-stakes deliverables
- Consider asking for a meeting recording as an exemplar of their process
- Communication and Flexibility