



# Effective Small Group Learning & Facilitation

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# Learning Objectives

- Upon completion of the session the participants will:
  - Recall the principles of small group facilitation
  - Value the importance of pre-work
  - Participate in a small group with a facilitator
  - Identify learning form the small group discussion
  - Debrief the challenges of small group facilitation
  - Discuss the components of formative assessment:
    - learner self-assessment,
    - faculty assessment of learners
    - learner assessment of faculty



# Ice Breaker Question

- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all and 5 ready) :
- How prepared are you to facilitate a small group discussion?



# AGENDA

- Review key principles of small group facilitation (15 minutes)
- Divide into groups of 6-8 learners (5 minutes)
  - Select a facilitator for small group discussion
- Read article (pre-work) for assigned topic (10 minutes)
- Facilitator prepare to start the discussion with group, what is the techniques to start the discussion? (5 min)
- Begin the group learning process (15-20 min)
- Debrief process as a large group (15 min) followed by Q and A (10 min)



# Preparation

- What do I want students to learn?
- How do I want them to learn it?
- Is pre-work required?
- How will I know if they learned it?



# Why Small Group Learning

- Constructive discussions
- Appropriate and effective questions
- Higher order thinking/reasoning/problem solving
- Foster interpersonal interactions (peers and faculty)



# Principle of Small Group Design

- Interaction among those in the group
- 6-8 is best #
- Leadership and learning shared by members of the group



# Group vs Collaborative Learning

- Collaborative learning: activities may differ considerably, but there is a focus on students' exploration or application of the course content, not the teacher's presentation.
- Group work: can improve productivity but is only collaborative learning if a "divide and conquer" process is not supported.
- Group and collaborative work must be designed to incorporate different perspectives, experiences, knowledge and skills





# Group vs Collaborative Learning

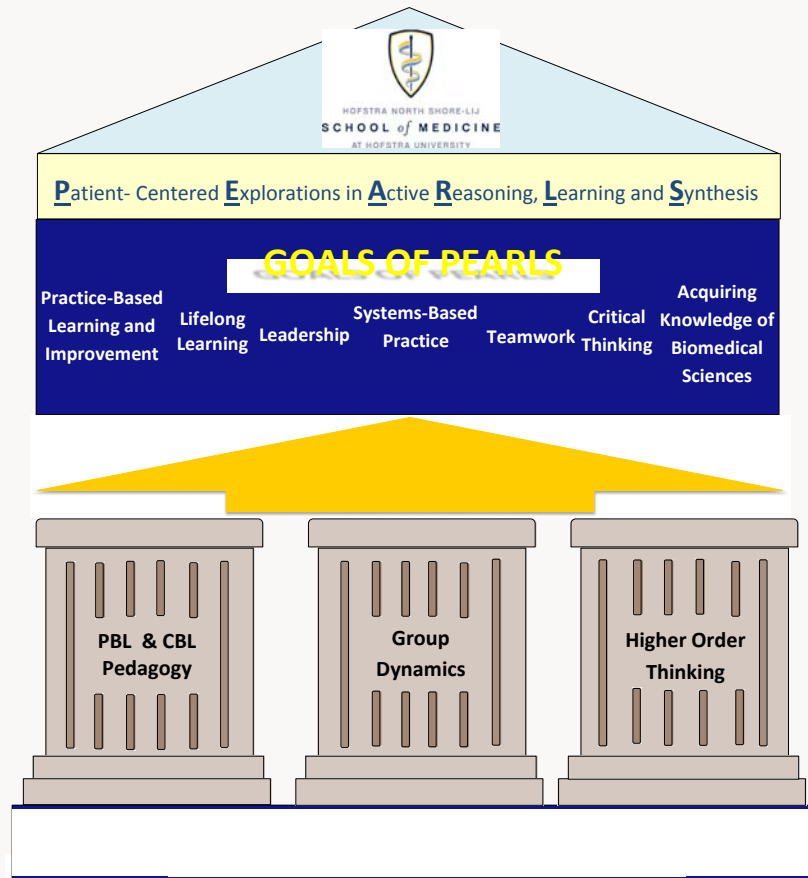
- Accountability-not based on grades-based on assessment of identified competencies.
- Learners are mutually dependent on each other but are held individually accountable
- Emphasis on process and product
- Impacts social skills of learners
- Faculty must do pre-planning for a collaborative group activity

## **PEARLS** - *Patient-centered Explorations in Active Reasoning, Learning and Synthesis.*



All faculty receive training, which includes direct observation and feedback on small group facilitation and student feedback

# PEARLS: Faculty Expectations



- Assess group each session utilizing PEARLS pillars
- Frame appropriate and thoughtful wrap-up questions
- Encourage group to strive for and achieve excellence through role modeling, active engagement and wrap-up frames



# PEARLS: Student Expectations



- Students & faculty ready to go at start of sessions
- Begin with check-in/self-assessment
- Every student responsible for researching each LO
- Leader, timekeeper, scribe; rotate
- Groups responsible for generating higher order discussions



# PEARLS: Faculty Expectations

- AVOID GIVING CONTENT!
- Explain the "why" behind the non-negotiables /student expectations and pedagogy
- Describe and recognize a higher order discussion
- Utilize probing questions: depth, breadth, integration, higher order learning, clarity
  - Why?
  - How does the mechanism correlate with the clinical findings?
  - Why are we doing/discussing this?
  - Are we ready to move on?
  - Is everyone clear on \_\_\_\_\_?



# Benefits

- Development of discussion skills and higher order thinking
- Exploration of attitudes
- Sharing of experiences
- Reflection on experiences

Note: these benefits on dependent on the skills of faculty and students



# Core Discussion Skills

- Asking questions
- Listening
- Responding
- Explaining
- Opening (check-in and question) and Closing (wrap-up)
- Preparation (pre-work completion)



# Cognitive Skills of Students

- Increased understanding
  - Critical thinking
  - Reasoning
  - Problem solving
  - Decision making
  - Creative thinking
- Supports:
    - Teamwork/leadership
    - Collaborative learning
    - Developing communication competency





# Asking Questions

- Arouse interest and curiosity
- Assess knowledge
- Critical thought and evaluation
- Initiate, sustain and direct a conversation
- Types of Questions:
  - Narrow-broad
  - Recall-thought
  - Confused-clear
  - Encourage-threaten



# Listening (as a facilitator)

- Surveying/Multiple opinions
- Sorting/Distinguishing points
- Searching/New Information
- Studying/Group Process

Note: important to be able to listen and not respond readily



# Responding (as a facilitator)

- Challenge vs. Support
- Fear of criticism vs. a safe learning environment
- Reflecting back-encourages elaboration
- Perception checking-check understanding
- Paraphrasing-using own words
- Silence- *“let us spend a minute thinking about that”*



# Explanation

- Clarity and fluency-defining new terms, avoiding vagueness
- Emphasis and interest-tone
- Using examples-use student responses
- Organization-linking words
- Feedback-check for understanding

**Note: Best in summary of a session to avoid passivity and early closure**



# Opening the Session

- R-establish rapport
- E-discuss mutual expectations for faculty and students
  - Aims & Purpose of the session are clear
- S-State structure of the course/session
- T-Relevant task and provide feedback on the task



# Closing the Session

- Summary of key points
- Identify linkages
- Identify unanswered questions-next steps
- Point out what was achieved-knowledge & group process
- Encourage self-assessment of individual's role in group
- Thank the group for discussion



# Common Errors

- Each student contributes their own point of view, with little relationship to the others or overall context (monologue)
- The discussion is a one-to-one conversation or a series of Q &A between faculty and students



# Facilitating Methods

- Plan the seating arrangements
- Pose a problem or question
- Allow think time
- Foster student to student discussion





# Techniques

- Buzz groups (think-pair-share)
- Snow balls
- Jigsaws
- Fishbowls
- Concept/mind maps
- Brainstorming

Note: decide if you need a small plenary as an opening or summary



# Research

- Success depends on the skill sand motivation of the faculty and to a lesser extent on the skills and motivation of the students
- Effectiveness is dependent on how the method is used



# Dynamics of Groups

- Forming-requires more direction
- Norming-developing a mutual understanding
- Storming-rebellion or disagreement/controversy
- Performing-commitment and productivity

Note: Reflect on learning process and not just be task oriented; promote cooperation vs. competition



# Evaluation

## Types

- Processes
  - How did the group perform today?
  - How did I perform today?
- Product
  - Formative
    - **What was learned today**
    - **What is unclear?**

## How to collect data?

- Qualitative/Quantitative
- Students/facilitator/peers



# Summary

- Faculty and students have roles that overlap:
  - **TO PREPARE**
  - **TO DISCUSS...**
  - **TO THINK ...**
  - **TO REFLECT...**



# Summary-continued

- Prepare the learning environment
- Provide a structure that is friendly and focused
- Keep discussion moving forward
- Summarize discussions and develop student thinking
- Students contribute to discussions in a thoughtful way
  - ask questions and provide comments but not conclusions



# Summary Question

- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all and 5 ready) :
- How prepared are you to facilitate a small group discussion?
- One-minute paper



# Guiding Principles for our Curriculum Design

- True to our mission, values, and drivers
- Fully integrated, developmental, four-year science and clinical curriculum
- Integration of health, disease (normal and abnormal), and intervention
- An “adult learner” environment that values independent study and self-directed learning
- Built upon experiential and active small group case-based learning
- Conceptual knowledge in action, not memorizing facts
- Early meaningful patient interactions with emphasis on both individual and population health
- Emphasis on scholarship, critical thinking, and lifelong learning
- Focused on learning rather than teaching
- Assessment drives learning
- Emphasis on reflection, assessment, and transformation





**Spiral curriculum:** Content is revisited at multiple points in time; increased difficulty, greater depth, consistent with current context

