

Participation Strategies for Medical Student Small Group Learning

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

- Shift from lecture to small group modified problem-based learning
- Change in teaching responsibilities – facilitators of group discussion, posing questions, letting students discover and learn together
- Clinician educators need development to make the most of small group learning format

Solution

- Targeted faculty development in active learning

CONTEXT

Shared Discovery Curriculum

- First and second year medical students learn in modified PBL groups
- Meet in small groups of 7-8 students
- Student-centered learning
- Students asked to integrate basic sciences with clinical skills
- Groups facilitated by physician clinical educators (lead fellows), basic scientists (team fellows), and social scientists (team fellows) – 54 fellows in total

Fellows and medical students identified a need for participation or active learning strategies to help with student engagement and learning. A team of clinician educators and teacher educators joined to create faculty development to address this need.

METHODS

Educational Objectives

Upon participation in the development and enactment of active learning strategies, participants will be able to:

- Identify ways to know what students are learning
- Plan for and implement one of three active learning strategies in their small group within one week of the development session
- Reflect on the implementation of the chosen strategy

Method

Began development session asking:

- What does 100% participation mean?
- What are the different ways that you foster participation in your small groups?
- Are current participation structures giving students what they need?
- How do we know that each student learns?

Active Learning Strategies

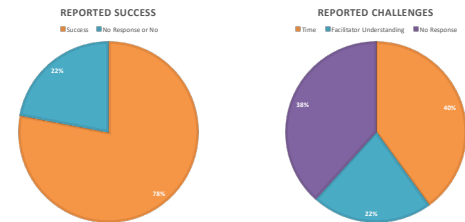
- Quick Check-In
 - When students are given think-time and write their thoughts down on paper, they are more likely to share in class^{1,2}
- Partner Teach
 - When you truly know something you can teach it³
- Group Teach
 - Provides time for group discussion and problem-solving

Application

- Fellows were asked to choose one active learning strategy and plan to use it during an upcoming small group session (using guide)
- Fellows were asked to reflect on their experience using the active learning strategy through a survey

OUTCOMES

76% fellow response rate to survey



Successes

Successes for all students in the small group	Successes for the individual student
<p>All were fully engaged/participated</p> <p>Students became more involved in presenting and understanding essential information</p> <p>Students showed confidence in something they knew</p> <p>Students could take ownership of concepts</p> <p>Students felt more comfortable – not on the spot</p> <p>Gave us [fellows] an idea of what they needed to work on</p> <p>They had great conversations</p> <p>Increased conversation in the group and application of their understanding of the material</p>	<p>Had one student who doesn't participate much be included</p> <p>Had one student who has trouble actually walk through a topic</p> <p>Students who wouldn't typically volunteer (went to board)</p> <p>Encouraged the quiet ones to verbalize</p> <p>I got to see how individual students demonstrated their knowledge</p> <p>Students identified important concepts to be reviewed... in group discussion [after doing quick check-in]</p>

Challenges

- Faculty understanding and implementation:
 - Knowing how to choose a slide or concept that fits the activity/strategy
 - Unclear about the directions and implemented the activity differently than assigned
 - Students became distracted or off task because the directions or their roles were unclear
- Time – pressure to cover a lot of content

DISCUSSION

- Need to balance covering the content with making sure students understand it by responding to student thinking, questions, and misconceptions⁴
- Learners need time to talk about and make sense of ideas, share thoughts with others, and listen to others' ideas as they construct knowledge⁵

Limitation

- Single implementation and survey with self-reported data

Lessons Learned

- Important for clinician educators to be clear about their role as facilitator but also teacher
- Clinician educators need multiple practice opportunities, feedback, and reflection

Recommendations

Faculty development designed to...

- meet needs proposed by clinician educators or medical students
- provide clinician educators demonstrations on how to implement strategies in an efficient way
- give clinician educators time to plan for implementation
- provide follow-up with clinician educators on the results of their implementation and feedback for improvement
- encourage continual practice and adaptation

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