



Constructivist Learning Groups

Developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF.

Purpose

To analyze different aspects of a problem or issue; to come to consensus on difficult questions. The questions or statements can address different facets of the issue or different levels of critical thinking that build on each other. Ideally, people go beyond familiar or predictable responses.

Time allotted

30-60 minutes, depending upon the number of questions you use.

Group format

Groups of five.

Supplies

Newsprint and markers

Facilitation Tips

Be open to changing the questions you use next depending upon the answers you get. In this way you and the group construct knowledge.

The Activity

1. Members of the group number themselves from 1-5. Tell them that you will be calling on one of the numbers to answer the question when the time is up but they won't know which number until then—ergo everyone has to be prepared to answer.
2. The group is given a question or problem and a time frame, e.g. five to seven minutes.
3. Give a one-minute warning.
4. Call on a number to report—ask each other group to build on what has already been said. Chart on newsprint.

Reflection questions following the activity

1. What was hard about this?
2. Why did we use this activity? Would you use it?
3. Why is it called “constructivist learning”?