

# Engaging Students at Field Sites: Activities and Exercises

The exercises and activities described in this chapter introduce the instructor to a variety of ways to engage students at field sites in meaningful and relevant activities and exercises. Many of these activities, when properly designed and planned, allow students to become involved in critical thinking and problem solving skill development. Exercise descriptions are meant to “tease” instructors into probing the extent to which the exercises can be used within the context and content of their own subject areas. Some of these strategies were developed and used by the author and are based on personal experience. When available, bibliographic references are provided that will supply more breadth and depth. Examples are also provided when relevant and practical. The activities and exercises presented in this chapter have been derived from a number of different resources including corporate training, the health professions, government, and military in addition to community colleges, universities and the public schools.

Most of the activities require some form of cooperative learning in small groups. This can be accomplished in synchronous or asynchronous time for any of the major delivery technologies—audio, video, computer, and print. Many of these activities and exercises were originally developed for use in the traditional classroom where the instructor was physically present with the students and close observation, supervision and immediate feedback based on the responses of the students could be provided. Not so with teleteaching. The instructor is physically separated from the students at the field sites. With two-way television, visual feedback is possible. One-way television and two-way audio allows the instructor to speak with the students but the instructor cannot see the students. The students can see and speak with the instructor.

When adapted for teleteaching, certain modifications need to be made in terms of specific and inclusive directions, both oral and written, and specific time allotments for each exercise and activity. Any activity requires that the instructor specify the exact intent of the activity and how the students are to work in small groups or teams. If the directions are not clear enough, the instructor will spend precious time clarifying them. This takes up important class time. Five minutes of clarification because of ambiguous directions is 10 percent of a 50-minute class.

The activity or exercise directions should be spoken by the instructor on television, appear in print on the television screen, and appear in a student handout. Each activity should be described verbally by the instructor on the television screen, usually as

**TITLE:** Short, catchy, descriptive, and inclusive. Create curiosity and focus attention with the title words.

**DIRECTIONS:** What must the students do? How are they expected to do it? Are they expected to work alone or in small groups? Clarity of communication is the key. When asked questions by any student, note the question, and later re-work the directions.

**TIME:** (2-10 minutes). Will the instructor use a countdown clock videotape with a clock timer, graphic, and music in the background that acts as a reminder to watch the time. A countdown clock can be purchased at a local electronic store and placed under the document camera.

### **Criteria for selection of activities and exercises**

When choosing an activity for use on television, weigh the choice against a number of specific criteria:

- Why is a learning activity desirable for a particular segment of instruction?
- Does the learning activity match the intellectual or affective level of the learning performance objective?
- How will this learning activity be assessed? By whom? For what purpose?
- Are there easier and more appropriate learning activities that could accomplish the same objective?
- Has the instructor any prior experience using this type of learning activity?

- Is this type of activity commercially available?
- How many students should be involved in the activity?  
Three to seven.
- How much time will it take the instructor to create the activity?
- How long will it take the students to complete this activity in a teleclassroom?
- How much time should be allowed so that reasonable discussion and feedback can be incorporated?
- How much will this activity cost?
- Can the activity be reused without a great deal of expense?
- Are there expendable materials that will have to be replaced? By whom?
- Are there other instructors at this school or other schools that you know of who have used this type of activity and would be willing to share their experiences?
- If there are many artifacts in the activity, how can they be easily shipped and stored?
- Does the activity require special equipment, artifacts or materials? If so, is the equipment easily available and transportable to field sites? If so, how, and in what time frame will it be delivered to the field sites?
- How will the students keep track of the time allowed for their activity? Will a countdown clock be used on the television screen? Will you use background music?
- How will you determine how much time will be allocated to complete the activity?
- How will the results of the activity be reported to the coordinators at other sites?
- If there are single students at several different field sites, how will they participate in small group activities? Could you create an audio bridge among them so that they could function as a small group? How can one way video be utilized?
- Can this activity be done in asynchronous time?
- Can this activity be done through other technologies such as the Internet, e-mail, U.S. Mail, telephone, fax, etc.?

Regardless of the number of interactive student activities chosen, they should be manageable within the total teleclass time allotted—50, 75, 150 minutes, or some other time frame. Interactive activities should be:

- Short
- Intense
- Well-planned
- Meaningful
- Involving
- Fast-paced
- Easily understood (appropriate vocabulary without jargon)
- Based on the learning performance objective type and intellectual level
- Group-centered

## **Student involvement**

In addition to the major delivery formats, consider the use of asynchronous methods that could be used in conjunction with live audio, video, computing, and print delivery. If the main delivery method is synchronous, consider incorporating into the assignment forms of asynchronous communication such as e-mail, voice mail, regular mail, or even delivery services. As you explore each of the many possibilities for live interactive exercises, consider these asynchronous possibilities. Some useful criteria for selecting specific exercises and activities in addition to matching them to the learning performance objectives are:

- The activity must involve no risk for the students physically or emotionally.
- The students must be able to do the task immediately.
- All of the required materials must be available at all of the field sites.
- The explanation for the exercise or activity must be crystal clear.
- The exercise or activity should be fun.
- The students must understand the meaning of the exercise or activity and why they are participating in it.

## Activities and Exercises

**ACTIVE REVIEW.** The instructor summarizes a telelecture. Students are then asked to review the structure within the total framework of the class. They quietly read through their notes for about three minutes and identify any points of confusion. They ask each other any questions and then query the instructor.

*Example:*

Recall major points of lecture

Summarize in one to two sentences

Question

Comment on how they felt (affective domain)

Connect this telelecture to previous class topics (Cross & Angelo, 1988, pp. 152-154).

**ADVERSARIAL PRESENTATION.** Working with a teleinstructor/moderator, two guest teleinstructors discuss different or opposing points of view on a “hot” topic. This could also be accomplished on videotape. The teleinstructor then gives a short presentation with comments on each side of the issue. Questions are then solicited from each of the field sites with the teleinstructor acting as a moderator. This activity can also be combined with listening teams. (See also *Controlled Discussion*.)

*Example:* The moderator asks the student teams (composed of two or more students at the field sites or a combination of sites) to listen carefully to the three main points of the “hot” topic so that at the end of the ten to twelve minute presentation the students can provide a summary of the presentations to the listening team prior to the teleinstructor summary. (Silberman, 1995, p. 68). This activity can be used for all media delivery.

**ALTER EGO.** Students are asked to take a stand on an issue or topic relevant to a class assignment. Two students with different points of view are paired. One stands behind the other who is seated. The teleinstructor moderates. The student who is standing presents his/her point of view. The seated student argues for the opposite point of view. Field site students then ask questions and make comments. This can be conducted at any of the field sites. Students are asked to identify values, opinions, facts, and proper documentation. This activity can be used for all media. The presentations

must fall into the realm of the students' knowledge base, and students should utilize outside readings as sources to make their points. (See also *Fishbowl; Hot Seat; and Interview, Teleinstructor.*)

*Example.* The teleinstructor could ask the students to “physically feel an abstract concept, such as discrimination” (Meyers & Jones, 1993, p. 90). The students respond accordingly.

**ANALOGIES, CREATING.** Several students (at the same or different field sites) are provided with single concepts and phrases currently under study and printed in large bold type on paper. An equal number of students are given pieces of clip art blown up on a single sheet of paper on bothsides. Alternating, a concept is shown and the meaning is briefly discussed. A student with a piece of clip art holds his/her graphic up and attempts to draw an analogy between the graphic and concept. Another student holds a graphic up and describes what it is. A student holding a concept or phrase then tries to draw an analogy. Another variation is to use puppets, hats, or other artifacts.

**ANALOGY, THE \$10.00.** Prior to this exercise, a handout showing how to form an analogy should be given to the students. Then students are given a make believe \$10.00 bill and told to purchase an artifact for \$10.00 or less in any “store.” The article must be used as a visual analogy in the topic under discussion. Examples of the types of stores include: toy, super market, hardware, clothing, fabric, etc. The teleinstructor must have several examples of visuals on hand for the students to select, unless this activity is performed before class time. This activity can be used for both synchronous and asynchronous delivery. (See also *Visual Analogy.*)

*Example:* The students “purchase” their artifact (game, puppet, toy, hat) and demonstrate it to the class applying the analogy.

**AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT.** The student audience is engaged physically by asking them to raise hands, stand up, wave a handkerchief, or hold something. Counts of responses to the query are reported from the field sites. (Newstrom & Scannell, 1980).

**BRAINSTORM SESSION.** The objective of this activity is to promote creative thinking through the free association of

ideas. Working on a given problem within a determined time period (five to ten minutes), with a student to record publicly all ideas (two students at two different flip charts), students at field sites call out possible solutions in single words or short phrases without any commentary or discussion at this time. All judgments are suspended until the allotted time period ends. As the session progresses, one creative idea stimulates another. At the conclusion of the call-out, each list of ideas is edited and evaluated (Cox, Dufault, & Hopkins, 1991, p. 31; Davis & McCallon, 1974, p. 13).

**BRIEF READING.** Students are provided with a short one to three page reading and asked to complete it in two to three minutes during the teleclass time. They are then asked to form pairs or a small group, discuss the topic, and then complete a work sheet. The teleinstructor questions students at each site about the topic. Discussion among the field sites follows. The field sites will need the work sheets prior to class time or the work sheet can be shown on the screen and the use of a countdown clock can be incorporated with soft music as a backdrop during the count down.

*Example:* Students could pinpoint one major flaw of the reading or one major point made by the author. They would then use the group's collective knowledge to prepare the work sheet using questions, comments, and reflections on the reading.

**BUZZ SESSION.** A small group of three to five students, working within a predetermined time limit and without a leader, attempt to answer a question or solve a given problem and reach some type of conclusion or recommendation. The results/conclusions of the short discussion are reported through the teleinstructor to all sites. Students may be asked to write a short paper on the field based discussion.

*Example:* The teleinstructor or field site coordinator assigns each group a specific problem based on the course readings. Each team member writes a preliminary response to the problem. The group shares and revises each response, presenting its consensus to the other groups. This works best with synchronous time delivery (Kraft, 1985).

**CARD SORT.** Divide the field sites into groups. If the field sites are too small, let each field site function as one group through an audio bridge. Pass out 3" x 5" cards that have an option listed on it. Let the groups know that they are to choose one of the options and explain to the other class

members why they chose that particular option. All of the groups are given the same scenario or problem to solve and all are given the same options. The sites will follow up with a discussion involving the entire class as a summary of the activity. (Hart, 1991). (See also *Choices, In-Basket, and Simulation.*)

**CASE STUDIES, COMPLETE.** These are “real world” descriptions of problems with all of the accompanying data. Cases must focus on authentic scenarios that are believable, realistic, and lifelike (Hutchings, 1993, p. 2). The case must have concrete detail, be open-ended, and be open to different interpretations and conclusions. Good cases create immediate interest and tell a story. The cases are distributed and read prior to a teleclass as part of an assignment. Some field sites can be assigned a specific part of a case to analyze. The teleinstructor, or preferably a student, moderates the ensuing discussion (Boehrer & Linsky, 1990).

**CASE STUDY, MINI.** Given guidelines, students at field sites are asked to construct their own cases related to a learning performance objective or topic under study. Data is fabricated by the students. Davis and McCallon (1974, p. 137) call this the most versatile and useful method. Questions can be invited from the sites.

**CHAPTER PRESENTATIONS.** The readings are divided among groups represented by each field site as well as the origination site. Each team is required to make a short presentation on one of the readings or chapters to the whole class. After the presentation the team provides handouts of the chapter or reading and discussion follows. These can be presented under the document camera.

**CHARACTER DIALOGUE.** The teleinstructor assumes the role of one or more characters and speaks through the character or creates a dialogue between the characters. A student at any site could role play a second character and dialogue with the teleinstructor. A script outline is an option. Accents can be used for emphasis if they do not demean or negatively characterize any special group. Characters can use puppets, masks, or artifacts to reinforce the role.

*Example:* The teleinstructor prepares several short skits to be presented at the origination site. The skits are designed to be interrupted so that students at the field sites as well as the origination site can “supply appropriate dialogue for the