By Your Powers Combined: The Essential Elements of Dynamic First-Year Seminar Classrooms

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Four Phase Model for Class Engagement

1. Class Building/Developing Community
2. Identifying Learner Needs and Characteristics
3. Resource Discovery & Use
4. Bridging and Transition

J. N. Gardner (1981), Developing Faculty as Facilitators and Mentors, New Directions for Student Services, 14 (pp.67-80)

Phase 1: Group Building/Developing Community

- Reduces anxiety in individuals and communication barriers within the class
- Increases level of trust among students
- Increases class cohesiveness

*Ice-breaker exercises*
*Activities to learn names*
Phase 2: Identifying Class Needs and Characteristics

• Focuses on course goals
• Individualizes lesson plans
• Increases buy-in of students

Empathic recall
Guided activities
Structured reflection

Phase 3: Resource Discovery & Use

• Develops and uses teaching strategies
• Recognizes resources in students and class
• Identifies campus and community resources
• Provides ideas for learning applications
• Empowers students

Guest speakers
Peer Leader Guidance
Group presentations on course content
Phase 4: Bridging and Transition

• Creates structure for reflection and evaluation
• Moves learning from abstract to application
• Addresses goal setting/next steps
• Enables learning to extend beyond workshop

Reflection that processes learning
Exercises that demonstrate learning
Affirming closing activities

Innovative Pedagogies

Data from the National Survey of First-Year Seminars 2003, 2006, 2009, NRCFYESIT

• Service-learning components
• Linkages to one or more other courses
• Online components
• Incorporating a common reading program
High Impact Practices
Data from the National Survey of First-Year Seminars 2012-2013, NRCFYESIT

- Various forms of writing
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Exploration of cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own

Why are Learning Goals Important?
Suskie, 2004

Helps Learners
- Understand what they are learning and why
- Learn more effectively
- Organize their learning

Helps Faculty Developers
- Design the program
- Communicate with colleagues
- Justify the program
- Assess the program
Recognition and Rewards

• Simple acknowledgements
• Formal expressions
• Tangible recognition ‘certificates’
• Feedback

Student Development

• Personal assessments
  – MBTI, True Colors, Big Five
• Personal development
  – Work-life balance, wellness, assertiveness
Additional Resources

- FYE Listserv
- Esource for College Transitions
- Toolbox
- Conferences, Institutes, and Online Courses

- www.sc.edu/fye

Questions?
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