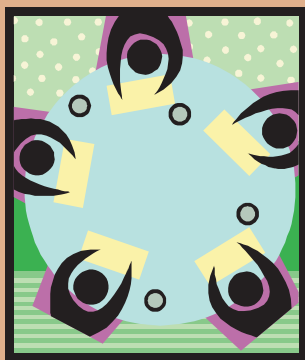


GETTING STARTED: A Guide to Collaboration in the Classroom



Kathleen O. Kane
Joan Harms

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Background of a *Guide to Collaboration in the Classroom*: an Educational Improvement Fund (EIF) Project

The objective of the project was to create a guide for faculty that would enhance instructional quality by creating greater faculty awareness, understanding and collaboration with students in key teaching-learning processes in the classroom. Copies of *Getting Started: A Guide to Collaboration in the Classroom* will be used by the UH-Mānoa Center for Teaching Excellence for faculty development and TA training. Copies will also be distributed to key instructional and support programs and administrative and program offices in the UH system.

This project is a partnership between Faculty Development and Student Affairs in support of enhancing instruction and the quality of student educational experiences. Dr. Kathleen O. Kane, Faculty Specialist for UH-Mānoa Center for Teaching Excellence, facilitates faculty development and course evaluations and Dr. Joan Y. Harms, Faculty Specialist for Research and Assessment, conducts student-oriented research and assessment and provides consultation assistance to faculty. Each have over ten years of professional experience respectively in faculty development, teaching, research and assessment.

The initial orientation of the project began with a series of focus groups composed of key faculty, staff and students carefully selected for their expertise and team building skills. They each reviewed material gathered by Harms and Kane from their areas of specialty. Harms provided credible undergraduate student survey quantitative data on student involvement in the educational environment in 1990, 1993, 1996 and 1999 at UH-Mānoa. Kane provided collections of anonymous narrative based on ten years of mid-semester course evaluation qualitative data at UH-Mānoa. Both data sets span nearly ten years of valuable student responses to their academic experiences. Ten focus group members representing instructional faculty in three different colleges, undergraduate students, academic advising, library, writing-intensive program, learning center and student activities met for a minimum of three sessions, and a graduate student assistant extracted and organized student evaluation data for use by the focus groups.

During the focus group discussions, participants each identified themes derived from the data which they found important to the success of the teaching-learning process, such as faculty-student interaction, course learning, writing effectiveness, active learning, cooperation among students, student activities and facilities and life-long learning. Participants reviewed the student data and from these data derived areas of strengths and needed improvements. To complete the focus group process, participants made suggestions and recommendations for best practices in the classroom related to the themes.

Beyond the expertise and skills for which they were chosen, what enriched our discussions together was the quality of seriousness and good-will with which focus group members approached this project. Their treatment of the data was respectful and good-humored, and we enjoyed one another's company immensely. In great part, this was because we found ourselves enabled by the project to have discussions with one another about concerns and ideas that we all considered critical to the success of both students and ourselves in our work related to students at UH-Mānoa. Focus group members were particularly delighted to discover that UH-Mānoa students express clearly that they want the challenge of learning, and that they are not just and only here for a credential that will ensure that they "get a job." That compelled us to discuss the importance of developing a direct and positive relationship between fostering collaborative skills as an integral part of learning in the classroom setting and as preparation for future marketability and success of students in the wide world. As teachers, we focused on a significant aspect of our work as developing methods of teaching and learning for ourselves and our students that honor both the intrinsic value of becoming critically-minded educated individuals with the accompanying value of becoming effectively-functioning contributing members of future communities.

In gratitude, the project directors recognize the good work of Monica Ghosh, Wayne Iwaoka, Tom Jackson, Jan Javinar, Lia Keawe, Tom Kelleher, Karen Sakamoto, Monica Stitt-Bergh, Jean Toyama, Paige Wilmeth, and Reid Yokote. Many of their written and transcribed verbal contributions appear throughout this guide, and without their brilliance, the project would not have been possible. Many thanks to Bonnyjean Manini and David Sherrill for their contributions to the section on group work and to Ray Jarman who offered his collaborative research with Ronaele Whittington and Elizabeth Bailey as an example of collaboration at multiple levels. Mid-Semester Classroom Assessment materials by Bruce Berg from the University of California-Long Beach have been included. We have borrowed some collaboration principles from the extensive work of Donna Ching. Margit Watts and Randy Heneley collaborated on the entire Chapter 6 on Research and Collaboration. Special thanks to Monica Stitt-Bergh who brought considerable expertise in reading through the entire first draft to provide exceptionally helpful feedback. Any failure to benefit from her exemplar editing lies entirely with us!



When you see this icon to the left, it signifies that these ideas emerged from the focus group. Because of the synergy that developed in these discussions, it was not always possible to identify individual ideas with any one member of the focus group.

This Guide is organized as follows: Chapter Two discusses what constitutes collaborative learning in terms of how the focus group members and students view it, and what characterizes it as different from traditional

approaches. Chapter Three provides some data and views on faculty-student interaction on our campus at this time, based on the quantitative and qualitative material from students over the past ten years. Because it is important to have some ideas of how to begin building collaborative approaches through on-going interactive opportunities to build skills, Chapter Four is devoted to some tips and information on how to prepare for collaboration. Chapters Five and Six provide ways of using writing and research as the means of reaching, as well as being the final cumulative result of, collaborative achievement. Chapters Seven and Eight provide discussion and information on assessment. Chapter Seven addresses ways of assessing the process of collaboration and Chapter Eight addresses assessing courses and instruction. In closing, Chapter Nine discusses the importance of faculty being able to function at our best within our educational institutions and the role of the institution in support of that.

This is a “guide” rather than a “handbook” because it wasn’t possible to have with us in the room everyone on our campus with great ideas, good humor and respect for the work done by teachers and students. Also, it was meant to be a resource supplement for training sessions rather than a stand-alone reference. And so, a web site edition of this Guide appears at: <http://www.cte.hawaii.edu.html> and can be updated with comments and suggestions submitted by faculty, TAs and students. If you gave some of these ideas a try and would like to discuss what occurred, or have had previous experiences you would like to contribute to the web version of this Guide, please e-mail us at cte@hawaii.edu. We will incorporate what you have found to work in your teaching and learning into the website edition.

Joan Harms
Faculty Specialist
Research and Assessment
Office of the Vice President for
Student Affairs

Kathie Kane
Faculty Specialist
Center for Teaching Excellence
Office of Faculty Development
& Academic Support

CHAPTER 2: What is Collaborative Learning?



If collaboration is to be the governing idea (and ideal) that is to permeate this Guide, it would be appropriate to engage new faculty from the beginning in a collaborative dialogue on the nature of collaboration itself: the various types and models, the contexts in which each of these might be appropriate, and strategies that are helpful in implementing these models.

What do we mean by collaborative learning and how does it differ from more traditional approaches to teaching and learning? Traditionally, students have spent the majority of their educational hours in school listening passively to faculty, whereby faculty take on the role of information disseminators and students take on the role of listeners and memorizers. In a collaborative situation, learners are more active; however, as valuable as it is to create a more dynamic classroom interaction, the significance of collaborative teaching and learning goes beyond that.

To Collaborate...

Linguistically, collaboration reveals an apparent contradiction lying at the heart of its own historical meanings. Derived from the political, military or business, to collaborate holds an accusation of cooperating with the enemy. However, in literary, scientific, artistic and academic realms, to collaborate means to labor as an associate of another, to co-labor with one another to compose a jointly accredited work. To follow in this spirit, collaboration is an act or set of practices, but something else is revealed if collaboration is also seen as a state of being and as a desire. That is, to join in a rigorous and willful desire to co-labor in the field of knowledge together. Collaborative teaching and learning, then, creates new challenges for a teacher to find in her or himself the capacity to provide diverse learning environments for students with distinct, often overlapping, motivations and learning practices. It also creates for students new challenges and opportunities, and from all these complexities emerge transformed and enriched relationships with the course materials, for both teacher and students.

Our project brought together a diverse group of members from our UH-Mānoa community. To our discussion table, each brought already well-developed notions about what collaboration within the enterprise of education at UH-Mānoa could mean. Here are a few of the thoughts with which we began our discussions about collaboration:



“One of the things that interests me about this project is the whole notion of the students’ voices. It’s interesting to hear the students’ voices outside the classroom as well as in...what’s challenging for me is that there’s a disconnect between what students in the classrooms are saying versus what students outside the classroom are saying. [I want to help] to find out what those expressed needs in the classroom might be.”



“I’ve done workshops with faculty in [a college at UHM] a number of years ago where the theme was critical thinking and one of the things I discovered there is that some of the faculty are afraid themselves of a changed relationship with students. That they themselves didn’t see different kinds of what teaching could be. They themselves don’t know how to go about creating. [Yet]...they don’t like necessarily staring at a board either.”



“What can I do, what else can I do, and how can I connect with these students in a different way? And so, to find real concrete sorts of things you can do to change that dynamic, to change that relationship, because it’s such a wonderful thing when you finally start to hear real people asking real, authentic questions. It’s to somehow be able to change the university and those structures, so that those voices can *really* count, and that the university can be what kindergarten was for some of us, instead of squelching, it can be really blossoming.”

Based on reflections such as these, our focus groups generated a series of practices that they found significant in enhancing collaborative processes:

- Knowing names of students
- Balancing talking and listening
- Building trust
- Creating comfortable, safe zones for learning because in creating the context of the life of the mind, there is always a degree of discomfort and a great deal of challenge
- Discussing with students how you see your role as faculty
- Engaging in problem-solving approaches and active learning
- Facilitating more and lecturing less
- Having collegial exchange regarding teaching with other faculty and with students
- Integrating course projects and research involving students and faculty together
- Involving students in decisions
- Privileging analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information over absorption of facts

- Providing continuous feedback
- Sharing relevant and appropriate personal and professional aspects of yourself
- Working cooperatively together so that there is mutual responsibility taken by faculty and students

Take a moment to reflect on your experiences and list or describe five actions or practices that enhance collaborative behaviors between faculty and students.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

In What Ways are Collaborative Approaches Characteristically Different from Traditional Ones?

A central question is “how are collaborative approaches characteristically different from traditional ones?” Key characteristics of a collaborative approach to learning compared to a traditional approach are listed below. Examples of methods to build skills are also listed:

- Students rather than only faculty have increased control over learning:
 - *Students create a project management plan and keep journals regarding the completion of the projects; for example, difficulties encountered and how they resolved problems.*
 - *Faculty combine large and small group learning/instruction to accommodate students’ learning styles – present information in a large group followed by small group application of the information through activities.*
- Responsibility for learning is more student-centered rather than teacher-centered:
 - *Students develop communication skills by interviewing individuals in professions related to course content and submit a written report.*
 - *Students engage in service learning in relation to course content.*

- Students are decision-makers and faculty are facilitators:
 - Students summarize articles/text assignments or do an annotated bibliography.*
 - *Faculty present an overview of the information to be covered in class prior to teaching, utilizing “advanced organizers” to show the relationship of the concept/ideas to each other. They present the rationale behind the assignments or information to be learned. This transparency is enabling to students and assists them in becoming engaged from the outset.*

- Students work cooperatively rather than competitively:
 - *In groups, students demonstrate or role-model the application of certain learning skills in their instruction; for example by previewing/surveying material.*

- Students master knowledge through constructing content rather than through memorizing content:
 - *Students create diagrams/maps of information to be learned for integration and synthesis of information.*
 - *Students engage in problem-based learning including case presentations with group discussions, research, presentations and evaluation.*

- Faculty and student jointly construct knowledge:
 - *Students integrate text and lecture information through mapping or written summaries.*
 - *They engage in a combination of instructor and student teaching of course content, utilizing creative teaching activities that could include games, skits, guest lectures, and field trips/visitations to sites.*
 - *Students apply concepts/theories to actual situations or create hypothetical situations individually or in groups. They can first be given an opportunity to apply the information in small groups and then create situations/apply information individually.*

- Students help set their own goals and means of assessment:
 - *Students develop questions related to the content and employ concept mapping/diagramming of the content.*
 - *Students engage in regular self-reflection regarding their learning in the course through the use of conventional journals or email logs.*

Collaboration as a Continuum

Learner

As receiver _____ As constructor

A collaborative approach to learning can be described on a continuum from learners as receivers of information to learners as constructors of knowledge; and, faculty as disseminators of knowledge to faculty as contributors to knowledge along with students.

Faculty

As disseminator _____ As contributor

The Whole is Not Only Greater Than, but Also Other Than its Parts

Peters and Armstrong (1998) describe collaborative learning as people laboring together to construct knowledge that did not exist before the collaboration. They liken it to two people collaborating to produce a book in which both are trying to create a written document that did not exist prior to their collaboration. In essence the whole is greater than the sum of its parts with the sum being something other than the parts. In a group situation, there are individual contributions and a group contribution. Thus, in a collaborative situation, individuals learn and groups learn. The learning outcomes of the group are not simply a collection of individual learning experiences; rather, they are more than and different from the sum of individual contributions. Peters and Armstrong compare it to $1+1=3$ where the whole is not only greater than the sum of its parts but also other than its parts.

The knowledge developed is other than the sum of individual members' knowledge because it is jointly constructed knowledge. Once the meaning of nonverbal gestures or of words spoken is realized by people who are communicating in a collaborative relationship, what each person contributes to that construction can never be fully reconstructed. That is, once talk is talked and interpretations are made, the context changes, the meaning of previously spoken words changes, and the collaborators can't "go home again."

Faculty provide as well as create knowledge. It is a matter of utilizing methods from one end of the scale to another with the scale ranging from a straight lecture to collaborating to jointly creating knowledge with their students.

In a small group, briefly describe educational activities involving faculty and student interactions and rate those activities on the scale of 1 to 10 according to the degree of interaction collaboration.

1 _____ 10

Knowledge provider/disseminator
Straight lectures

Knowledge constructor/contributor
Knowledge jointly created

In a small group, briefly describe educational activities involving student interactions and rate those activities on the scale of 1 to 10 according to the degree of interaction or collaboration.

1 _____ 10

Knowledge provider/disseminator
Straight lectures

Knowledge constructor/contributor
Knowledge jointly created

Collaborative activities can occur in small as well as in large groups; in situations ranging from informal class interactions to formal class projects; and, in short periods in class or in projects spanning a semester or more:

- Socratic dialogues
- Group discussions
- Problem centered activities
- Case study analyses
- Interactive lectures
- Leadership activities
- Team building exercises
- Pilot research projects in many fields or disciplines
- Developing the course syllabus
- Deciding grading procedures together
- Establishing useful deadlines for each student's projects and papers

Even in very large classes, faculty can ask students to turn to another student or to break into small groups to discuss or apply what was covered in their lecture. For example, faculty teaching in large lecture halls can ask

students to work in dyads on a single problem and invite them to share their solution with the entire class, with faculty validating student processes or findings. Beyond that, faculty can report to students the ways in which student work illuminated course thematics in a new and interesting way from the faculty's own examples.

Turn to one or two persons next to you. One of you describe one major point made in a lecture you have recently given or attended. Collectively develop three different questions related to the major point that could be used in a small group activity to promote reflection and critical thinking skills in students. When the task is completed, list some of the things your group considered while constructing the questions.

Major point in lecture:

Question 1:

Question 2:

Question 3:

Considerations when constructing the questions:



Examples provided in this Guide have been utilized with success in a wide variety of very diverse groups and disciplines. Nevertheless, there was discussion of the need for “a lot more work to be done on appropriate and culturally sensitive ways to engage students from diverse backgrounds, just as there are different ways to approach students who learn in different ways. The student body...is highly diverse with the largest number of participants in the study being Asian and Pacific Islander.” When we begin to take account of and respond to the vast diversity in our island community and in our classrooms, what we discover is that integrating practices that are engaging, inclusive and meaningful impact positively and expansively upon the full group.

Legacy of Collaboration: Present and Future



“Students want to be appropriately challenged, they want intellectual growth, want to be pushed, want to be exposed to and come to understand a variety of viewpoints....They want you to be nice, fair, caring...but to deliver; there must be intellectual muscle.”

Because there is concern with the economy and becoming employable, and because that discourse is wide spread in mass media, many parents are genuinely concerned that their university-bound children be directed towards pragmatic, achievable futures. As educators, we hear these concerns through the voices and choices of students, which at times seem to override and undermine certain goals of higher education. Of particular concern to educators are those that relate to our graduates becoming educated citizens able to take their place as truth-seekers, problem-solvers and the authors of humane futures. Happily, even within a historical and social context of contending ideas of what constitutes a good education and a good life for oneself and one’s children, collaborative skills, practices and values are also required in the wide world into which they will enter, that so-called “real” and pragmatic world. By engaging in practices that enable expansive, successful teaching and learning, we as educators can achieve pedagogically what will be expected from our students after they leave UH-Mānoa. A collaborative approach to teaching and learning makes possible an education that ceases to be a road through the sacred grove of academe (Aisenberg and Harrington 1988), creating one that is the articulation of that which is to be attained. Learning content is critical, but is functionally meaningless unless one is enabled to engage with it in ways that make one successful both in school and in life.



Employers of our graduates are now asking and expecting another set of skills, collectively termed “life-skills” or “interpersonal skills.” In a national survey of managers, Litzenberg and Schneider (1987) reported that...“the highest ranking characteristics were self-motivation, positive work attitude, high moral/ethical standards, work with others/team player, work without supervision, self confidence, loyalty to organization, and leadership qualities.” The US Dept. of Labor’s SCANS Report (1990) recommended that...“employees...skills...include the ability to...facilitate group learning and work well with all kinds of people.” Employers, and the communities in which our graduates will live, need individuals with critical thinking and problem solving and interpersonal skills to cope with the rapidly escalating knowledge and information emerging in all disciplinary areas. The report of the 21st Century Workforce Commission (2000) states that:

The current and future health of America’s 21st Century economy depends on how broadly and deeply Americans reach a new level of literacy – 21st Century Literacy—that includes strong academic skills, thinking, reasoning, teamwork skills, and proficiency in using technology.

Collaborative learning at the university that incorporates authentic opportunities to help students learn, practice and grow in these new literacy skills is essential to the future well-being of our students.

The challenge that many faculty encounter is then how to build skills while learning course content, how to integrate the two together such that they are mutually inclusive of one another and therefore provide a more powerful learning experience than would have otherwise been possible.

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CHAPTER 3: Faculty-Student Interaction at UH-Mānoa

Interest in student engagement, involvement and participation in their educational environment has been increasing. Research studies demonstrate that student involvement in their educational experiences is positively related to their learning and development. Just how engaged are UH-Mānoa students in active and collaborative learning and interaction with faculty members? The good news is that faculty-student interaction has increased from 1993 to 1999:

More students are talking with their instructors about course-related information, such as assignments, projects, make-up work and grades.

More students are discussing career plans and ambitions with faculty.

There is also a slight increase of student engagement with faculty on research projects as well as meeting faculty socially outside of class.

The challenge to faculty and staff is to enhance or increase the level of involvement and collaboration with students. Just how much interaction is occurring between faculty and students at UH-Mānoa? Our focus group composed of Mānoa faculty, staff and students selected for their expertise on collaboration and team building skills was asked to review undergraduate student survey quantitative data on student involvement in the educational environment in 1990, 1993, 1996 and 1999 at UHM. They were also asked to review student mid-semester course evaluation qualitative data over multiple years. Some of the data confirmed what some of them knew from their own working relations with students and faculty. But some of it was a surprise to them, sometimes pleasantly and other times, to their dismay!

If you would like to reflect on your own or with others on what your own expectations or experiences tell you about undergraduate student-faculty communications, consider the following questions that were asked of students at UH Mānoa:

Work with one or two other people. Arrive as a group with estimated percentages for the following items.

What percent of UHM undergraduates have talked to an instructor about a course (grades, make-up work, assignments, etc.) they were taking? ____%

What percent have discussed ideas for a term paper or other class project with a faculty member? ____%

What percent have discussed their career plans and ambitions with a faculty member? ____%

What percent have socialized with a faculty member outside of class? ____%

What percent have worked with a faculty member on a research project? ____%

Although faculty-student engagement has increased over the years, according to responses by students (see Appendix for table data) the number of students who often or very often interact with faculty is still very small.

Only half or 52 percent of undergraduates at UHM report that they have talked with their instructors about their class assignments; 32 percent have discussed their academic programs or course selections with faculty; 28 percent have discussed ideas for a term paper or class project; and 21 percent have asked their instructor for comments and criticisms about their academic performance.

Although 70 percent of undergraduates anticipate going to graduate school, only 7 percent worked with a faculty member on a research project as an undergraduate at UHM.

Comparisons with national norms also indicate that UHM students are less engaged in their educational environment than students at peer institutions.

Did your own expectations and experiences fit with the responses provided by students? Observations and insights on faculty-student interactions based on the quantitative and qualitative materials focus group members reviewed suggested to them:



The qualitative data (student course evaluations) said how much students learned from working directly with professors, but the quantitative data (student surveys) indicated that only 52 percent of them actually had the experience of working directly with professors.



Less than 10 percent of students said they socialized or worked with professors. Yet, 70 percent of the students are considering graduate school. So I began to think about what I'm doing in the undergraduate courses I teach.



Although students repeatedly mention in the quantitative data the importance of quality interaction and collaboration with instructors...the quantitative data shows how infrequently those sorts of interactions actually take place. Only about half spoke often or very often with instructors regarding course-related topics. The percentages were much lower when looking at the larger academic and career pictures; students did not with a great level of frequency discuss the discipline with their instructors. There is too large a gap between

what is academically sound (better student/teacher collaboration) and what is actually occurring.

The last observation bears repeating: there is too large a gap between what is academically sound (better student/teacher collaboration) and what is actually occurring. What steps can we take to begin to transform teaching and learning practices within the context in which we have all been formed, students and teachers alike? As university teachers, we have tremendous liberty to create our teaching environments and we know that something transformative can occur there because we ourselves have been so formed by it. A paradox: necessarily built upon hours of preparation and years of teaching practice, great learning and teaching breakthroughs occur frequently in departure from well-laid plans and dearly held intents.

Thoughts Sparked by Reading What Students Have to Say?



Based on narrative responses of students during mid-semester evaluations, focus group members noted the following: “Students like teachers who are enthusiastic, passionate, energetic, open, patient, flexible, good-humored, not intimidating, and kind.”



“Students feel that instructors who facilitate, rather than teach/preach, are instrumental in the learning process. Group work, class discussion, encouraging participation in a nonjudgmental environment, and helping students seek answers rather than providing them are all ways of leading students to learn. Students praised instructors who helped keep the class on topic, though they did want some freedom and flexibility within the syllabus; they also did not like class going completely astray. Instructors who treated students with respect, as colleagues rather than subjects, were praised for their care and guidance. Students charge instructors with a double responsibility: first is enthusiasm for the subject matter at hand, second is a genuine concern for the students’ learning of the subject. Creating a balance between the two is essential.”

Student characteristics have changed; yet perhaps our teaching methods, student governance structures, ways of doing things, have not. There’s a kind of incongruity between characteristics of today’s students and the structure and culture of the academy.



More students work more hours than when I matriculated in the ‘70s. This movement towards work has created time stress for students and this contributes to students’ inability to spend an appropriate amount of time on out-of-class academic activities, including preparing for readings.

This also impacts their ability to participate in student organizations outside of class. Although they see value in co-curricular involvement, they do not choose to get involved. This manifests in low use of facilities, lack of participation in organized student groups, lack of attending student group

meetings, decline in percentage who work on a campus committee or project.

After reading student comments, focus group members made a list of practices they could begin doing. Based on student comments, here is a set of specific actions that teachers can take:

- learn the student names early on
- not embarrass a student
- not lose temper or become impatient
- share views but not become opinionated
- keep order in the class
- make assignments clear
- summarize the important point of a day's work
- show real interest in what students think
- show concern about students' learning and work towards student growth
- keep office hours and be available for informal consultation
- share some appropriate and related personal experiences without being self-centered
- create a relaxed, open atmosphere in the classroom
- respect students as equals—not as colleagues but as human beings
- explain purpose and goal of an assignment
- give context to readings
- create opportunities for collaborative learning—both by students and teacher
- RELAX!

Clearly, teaching that lies on a spectrum between competent to inspired can't embody every one of these qualities. But, students respond very positively to these and so we must find ways to emphasize and employ our strongest qualities and seek to enlarge our repertoire.

Above All Else: Be Yourself!

Being yourself is critical to receiving respect from students, because by necessity, they must be extraordinarily attuned towards detecting authenticity. Efforts to pretend to know more than you really do or to be a different kind of person than you really are—for example, attempting to speak pidgin as if you are local—is not generally viewed as an appropriate gesture towards developing relations of trust.

For a humorous discussion of this issue in pidgin, we refer to an excerpt from Lee A. Tonouchi's "No Make Fun" that appeared in the *Honolulu Weekly*. He writes:

I recently surveyed Lisa (Sista Tongue) Kanae's "Literatures of Hawai'i" class at KCC, and I asked dem how dey felt about haoles talking Pidgin. For avoid da confusions, I had for clarify wot I meant by "haole," 'cuz we all know Local Haole, meaning Local Caucasian people who talk Pidgin. So I defined haole (wit da lowercase "h") as somebody not from ova hea kine, like somebody from da continent, but not necessarily somebody Caucasian Haole.

We did secret ballot and nine out of 17 students said dat outsiders shouldn't talk Pidgin. Seven students said "can," it's cool wit dem. One student made up his own answer and wrote, "It depends. What if the person came here when they were small and grew up here, or what if they're old, but were living here for a long time?"

Da majority dat wuz against said haoles shouldn't talk Pidgin because "it sounds odd when they try to pronounce words," and because "it's not part of their culture..."

Those who voted it's okay for haoles to talk Pidgin said it's a matter of respect. "If we can learn about other people's cultures, then shouldn't we allow people to learn about ours?" One noddah person said we should let haoles talk Pidgin for da "entertainment value," because it's funny listening to dem try." (Look who's mean now.)

Interesting how we's protective of our Pidgin culture...I just hope we remambah for pass along da caution—be sincere and no make fun...

Successful teaching and learning takes many forms and although there are certainly some practices to be avoided, there is no one way to engage in good teaching practices. At the heart of everyone who considers themselves to be a committed teacher—that is, one who loves to teach in spite of the complex challenges and who continually meets those challenges with the creative working and reworking of one's teaching as an artist would—there is a constellation of qualities and practices that defines them as teacher. The particular ways in which that constellation is revealed through good teaching practices is compelling, unique, fluid and specific to that person when they

teach. That quality cannot be replicated, even though we often observe and emulate others who teach brilliantly in order to improve upon our own teaching. Even when we emulate the practices of others, those practices must be able to be integrated into our own inner processes and external expressions. A highly structured teacher can successfully integrate open processes into their teaching practices as long as those practices make sense and have value within the context of their pedagogy. Open-ended teaching practices often integrate structured activities and expectations within the context of flexible and fluid processes. As long as students are in on the reasons for having a variety of practices, the expectations and value of each, and what constitutes success in each, they are able to function successfully.

Which qualities from the list in the last section would you use to describe yourself?

What other qualities would you add to that list that describe other strengths you have?

What qualities especially enhance collaborative learning, and why?

One of the very best reasons for integrating practices that aren't organically grown out of one's pedagogical philosophy is that every class of students is made up of students who do well and poorly with various forms of teaching, learning and assessing. The key is the integrated logic of these inclusions. A non-integrated example would be to conduct classes with a great deal of openness in dialogue and interpretation of readings and then stunning students with a highly structured way of testing and grading. This

is simply contradictory and students will respond rationally by not trusting future class discussions or future tests; indeed, their trust in the teacher who does this will be damaged. An integrated example of collaboration would be to encourage collaborative processes, teamwork and problem solving, but organize grading on individual work within those contexts. As long as the approach to assessing their work is made transparent throughout, students will find themselves able to respond to the criteria of the course because they understand the inner workings of the teacher. *Such teachers are not just being themselves; they are being their best selves!*

Further, if the teacher is structuring her material such that multiple opportunities for success are available to students, and if students are able to understand and trust that the teacher's inner core that compels their criteria is grounded in who they are, and that that core can be trusted, *students will be able to rise to and become their own best selves.* I truly believe that the bottom line for education is for people to become better



human beings and relate to one another a lot more compassionately than they do. And how do we teach that? How do we use instruction to foster skills to make us better human beings?

First Steps

What would be a list of first steps towards making changes that you can imagine taking in your courses? Make sure that they are ones that fit with who you are as a teacher and who you want to be as a teacher, the course material and themes, and the students who take your courses.

Make a list of three to five beginning ideas that make sense to you to encourage student-teacher communication and collaboration:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Here is a list composed for himself by one focus group member:

- Encourage non-lecture teaching strategies
- Meet for class outside the classroom (perhaps with “reservable” spaces on campus)
- Include individual/small-group, face-to-face meeting into class syllabi not necessarily in professor’s office
- Include undergraduate mentoring in teaching—perhaps as part of an independent study course
- Include undergraduate mentoring in research
- Have greater faculty involvement in pre-professional clubs, etc.
- Discuss professional challenges and rewards—e.g., tenure, publications, summer research, etc.—with students in class, when relevant



In reading the many narrative responses to the mid-semester question posed to students, “What has helped you learn?” one focus group member writes that: “...a remarkable consistency emerges, regardless of college. Students want to be known by name both by the instructor and each other, they want to be heard and to hear each other, they want to be acknowledged for who they are, for their cultural and social uniqueness, listened to, involved actively in their learning. They want, yearn for, and deeply appreciate instructors who clearly love their work and subject area, who are knowledgeable, understanding, approachable, available, who present material in understandable, interesting, stimulating ways, who are clear in the objectives and expectations they have, with expectations that are not unrealistic. They prefer discussion and interaction to lectures. They want to be appropriately challenged, pushed, to experience intellectual growth, to be exposed to and come to understand a variety of viewpoints, and to learn to think for themselves. They want this to occur in an environment that is intellectually safe, free from fear of being made to feel foolish or inadequate.”

Resources:

Harms, Joan Y. “College Student Experiences at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in 1990, 1993, 1996, 1999.” Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, August 1999.

Review Team: Art Crawley, James Eison, Kay Herr Gillespie, Devorah Lieberman. “A Commitment to Success: Taking Collective Responsibility for All Students Learning,” *Advocate*. Vol. 19, No. 4, April 2002. National Education Association: Washington, D.C.

Tonouchi, Lee A., “No Make Fun: How Much Haole Can Pidgin Take.” *Honolulu Weekly*, May 20, 2002.

CHAPTER 4: Preparing for Collaborative Activities

Collaborative activities often take a great deal of faculty preparation time mainly because faculty do not have as much control over the group as they might in a lecture situation. Research done at UH-Mānoa comparing three sections of the same course, with only one section integrating into the course a high level of interactive participation, addresses this as a recurring theme.

One recurring theme was the difficulty with relinquishing the position of authority and control. Although each instructor was aware that certain areas such as selecting texts and reading materials, assigning grades, creating and grading tests, and so on remained within their domain of control, many aspects of the dynamics within the class sessions such as the direction of events and activities, changing and emerging topics, and various elements of classroom management became shared processes with the students...

Related to this issue is the fear or uncertain feeling that interactive activities may distract students from or diminish the importance of the course content. There is a great deal of evidence especially in cognitive psychology that attests to the fact that interactive techniques when used appropriately enhance the content learning...

This study does not suggest using interactive techniques just to get things going or to have exercises as supplements to lectures. The use of interactive methods and tools should be a part of a teaching-learning strategy. The interactive techniques become relevant only if specifically linked to course goals, lesson plans, and students' learning needs and abilities. The use of interactive techniques requires constant change and development of new approaches based upon what both the instructor and student bring to each class session. The process then becomes dynamic and stimulating in the pursuit of knowledge.*

Interactive activities, then are the building blocks towards collaboration, such that engaging in them provides both the means (interactiveness) and the end (collaborative skills). These next sections provide some straight forward practices that have been suggested by our focus group members and other experts in the field of classroom interaction and collaboration that can be set up to create a climate for collaboration.

* Citation in Resources at end.

Expectations

Be clear as to what you expect of students in your course, and particularly as it relates to collaboration. As teachers, we often imagine that our written and spoken words are precise in meaning and intent, but too often our meaning is not taken, or is mis-taken by students. This is particularly unfortunate because teacher expectations of students can be very powerful. Our data reveals that a surprising number of students strive to specifically meet course standards and expectations of faculty members. Four out of ten UH-Mānoa undergraduates report that they worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's expectations and standards. When UH-Mānoa students were compared with national norms, they were no different than their counterparts from the continent in their response to faculty expectations.

It is worth our time and effort to explore how student expectations relate to our course objectives by learning what they plan to get out of the course. Beyond that, we can take account of any discrepancies between their objectives and our own, and when their expectations suggest fruitful objectives for outcomes that we had not considered before, we can be ready to accommodate these new ideas.



“As I reflected on the responses [from the narrative and statistical data provided to the focus group], I suddenly remembered my first days of teaching...a real breakthrough occurred when I asked and then convinced the students to respond to the question: ‘If you could select the teachers for this school, what qualities would you look for?’ This activity wound up taking several days and filled the chalkboard with items that certainly echoed the comments [in our data] with equal passion and sincerity.

Once they had exhausted their ideas on what they wanted from a teacher I asked them ‘What do you suppose a teacher would look for in her students?’ (I probably would have said ‘his students’ but that was a different time!) There was a prolonged period of silence. It was as though this was the first time they had considered what life was like ‘on the other side of the desk,’ so to speak. After some additional thoughtful silence they began to suggest things like ‘Homework done neatly and on time,’ ‘Paying attention during class,’ and ‘No horsing around, talking out of turn.’

What this memory suggests to me is that it would be most productive if ways could be found at the beginning of a semester for a genuine dialogue to occur amongst the members of the classroom community, students and teacher, not simply as a ‘feel good,’ ‘warm fuzzy,’ but a substantive exchange on internalized ‘mental models’ of what each at that point thinks teaching and learning is about and what

the respective roles and expectations are. This would need to include some autobiography from each person in the classroom community.”

In the excerpt above, seeking a way at the beginning of a semester to begin a dialogue between himself and students, he was starting to construct a scaffold upon which to engage in a substantial discussion of mental models of teaching and learning. In this way, he was advocating for an expectations exchange, in which a teacher speaks to students as real persons, and not just from inside the role of teacher, making it possible for teacher and students to meet as peers as much as possible. His experience and our data show that students are hungry for establishing exchange at a deeper level, rather than merely a contract and obligations.

Take 3 minutes and write down an exercise or procedure you can use to communicate your course expectations and to identify student expectations in your course. Share your procedure with one other person.

From the First Day Forward: Building on Early Classroom Communication



Teachers can lay the foundation for a collaborative environment on the first day! We should work to understand each other’s “integrated” roles as whole people in addition to our limited classroom roles. By building a mutual understanding of goals, we might uncover opportunities for collaboration. Here are a series of questions to use to clarify expectations in ways that go beyond the formal expectations normally listed in syllabi and on teacher evaluation forms. Some questions teachers might voluntarily share with students; some on the first day; some are best integrated later in the course:

ABOUT THEMSELVES:

- How do you integrate teaching, research and service?
- What do you like most about teaching?
- What do you like most about research?
- What do you like most about service?

- Which is hardest for you? Why?
- Where are you in terms of tenure and promotion? How does that work?
- What are you putting in your dossier and why?
- What other classes do you teach?
- What did you learn in graduate school and what did you learn from other experiences?
- What do you research? Why? How do you choose topics?
- Why did you choose to become a faculty member? How did you make it happen?
- What do you do when you're not teaching?

ABOUT YOU AS A TEACHER OF THIS COURSE:

- What types of questions are suitable for email, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings?
- Can I expect to meet with you outside of office hours? What does it mean if your door is closed?
- How do you feel about getting calls at home?
- How/when do you respond to email?
- How do you budget your time? (e.g. research days at home? Need an hour alone before class to prepare?)
- What's your philosophy on grading – your grading scheme is in the syllabus, but why do you grade like that?

SOME QUESTIONS TEACHERS MIGHT ASK STUDENTS:

- What is your major? Why did you choose it?
- Why are you taking this course?
- What other courses are you taking?
- What do you plan to do after graduation?
- Do you work besides being a student?
- How do you budget your time?
- Can I assume that school is your top priority?
- Can I assume you'll put 2-3 hours into my class for each credit hour?
- Who have been your favorite teachers? Why?
- What do you think makes an "A" student?
- Describe students you admire and discuss why?
- What sorts of co-curricular activities are you involved in?

The 5X7 Database!

Some of the above questions for students are requested by faculty to be answered on 5X7 cards during the first week of class as a way to get to know more (non-private information) about each student. That information

can include the name they prefer to be called, ways to reach them by email and phone if needed and information in their lives that might relate to the class material. See sections below that address the extraordinarily high value that students put on being known by their teachers and being addressed by name. These cards can provide faculty with the information to begin using names from the first day of class. The back of the card can be used to record grades and assessment notes for each student's written work, tests and quizzes, attendance and participation, and special projects. As an example, here is a card that one faculty has printed at the campus duplicating center that might have use in social science, arts and humanities and many other related courses:

Front of Card:

**Course Number: Course Name
Semester & Year**

Name you like to be called?

Email address and how often you log-on?

Phone number(s)?

Major (or intended major)?

Class level: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior?

What other courses are you taking this semester?

What kind of work do you do outside of school?

What other courses/teachers have you had in related studies?

Name a book that you read recently (or an all-time favorite) that you loved:

Name a film that you viewed recently (or an all-time favorite) that you loved:

What kind of social issues concern you?

Why did you select this course?

What would you like to do in this kind of course?

Turning Space into Communication: The Classroom, Office Hours, and the Wide World



“Arrive first, leave last. If you can, show up to the classroom early and be the last one out the door at the end of the session. Students will soon realize that you’re available to answer quick questions or to set up appointments for a longer discussion.” If this becomes a part of the faculty’s regular practice, and if it is done in a relaxed manner without engaging in busywork that looks like you’re setting up for class and are therefore preoccupied, students will begin to respond. They will begin to view this opportunity as a kind of informal “office hours” and have discussions with you about their work in the course and about the relation of the course to their life outside of the university.



In reviewing the qualitative and quantitative data, several features stood out as helping students learn across colleges. “Consistently, students cite teachers’ knowledge of names as an important way of making them feel meaningful, noticed, and validated. I would suggest that the converse is true as well; many students make it all the way through a semester without knowing the name of their instructor. Instructors, especially those of large lecture classes who rely heavily on TAs and whose interpersonal contact with students is limited and/or particularly challenging, should frequently remind students how they can be contacted outside of class when needed. It’s a good way to remind students who you are and how you can be reached. Students also cite instructor availability as an important part of how they learn, stating that both accessible office hours and/or time immediately preceding or following class are good ways to speak with instructors outside of class. This can be helpful, as students feel that conversation is “off the record,” and not subject to judgement or grading. They are more likely to ask risky questions without fear of embarrassment or penalty.”

Names, Names, Names!

Feedback from UH-Mānoa students indicate that remembering the names of students plays a significant part in establishing rapport, trust and comfort levels between faculty and students. In course evaluations, students repeatedly comment on how being addressed by their names impacted their impressions and behaviors in class. This sounds extraordinarily fundamental, yet it comes up over and over again in the narratives of students. Clearly it is significant and formative for students to have the experience of *recognition* at university level courses and knowing and using their names is the primary indicator of this practice. Judging by the number of times students are moved to recommend that it happen, the practice is not integrated into many classes. Yet, there are faculty on campus who teach large lecture halls and who work steadfastly and systematically to learn—and to then use—the name of every student in their lecture. While

this is not common in large sections, when it occurs, the effect it has on students is quite profound. And in smaller courses, for those faculty who don't manage to learn and use their students' names, students assume that these faculty are showing far less interest in their teaching—and by extension their students' success—than in other aspects of their university work.

Starting with the Syllabus

The syllabus is a vehicle to express course expectations to students and to clearly outline course objectives, as well as to establish the beginnings of a collaborative relation with our students. Commitment to these practices takes its written form on the first day when we sit down together to consider a syllabus that functions not as a rental contract in which a faculty-as-landlord holds all the cards to which student-as-tenant is captive. Rather, revisit the idea of a syllabus as an agreement among equals in respect to and for one another, and in which all have responsibilities. A more expansive and evocative notion of what the syllabus can represent is that of a map. Students new to a course pore over the new syllabus like travelers poring over yet undiscovered areas. It is important to them that primary landmarks be present and clear, and that they have the ability to anticipate some of the open areas, tributaries, and smaller roads. Yet, the itinerary is best not fixed but left open so that students' already existing knowledge and concerns can determine the best departure points and routes or where to make side trips or diversions possible. Syllabus-as-map produces new and immediate assumptions about ownership of knowledge and of the course, and signals assumptions that are coherent with reciprocal, collaborative and transformative pedagogy. By figuring the terrain of teaching and learning as that for co-travelers—one who has traversed it before and others who have yet to do so—the dimensions and proportions of the course expand for all. Both textually and contextually, such a syllabus communicates collaboration and reciprocity as inherent in this course; in this sense then, “introductory” takes on a significance that it doesn't in a syllabus-as-contract.

The syllabus narrative functions as our first gift of writing to students whose writings we soon will be holding in our hands. Students experience writing as great risk, because it reveals so much about their competencies and their tenuous confidence in their own inner transformations. If we can offer to them that which compels us as teachers and as scholars, revealing what makes us want to be there, this will go a long way towards creating a climate of collaboration. This is because within a very short time, the course will be expecting them to begin to locate their own deep reasons for being there. At the heart of the syllabus-as-map and the discussion extending from it, is an ethos of reciprocity that promises students that by their ability to make meanings from the inside of the course, they will do well in the course, be deeply engaged by it, and, perhaps most astonishing to them, that the course will be deeply engaged *by them*. Such a syllabus is a written commitment to students at the outset that we will disclose our privilege

and our knowledge as teachers in the same way that the course will be requesting of them through their work. This becomes then our first gesture towards a collaborative relationship between our students and ourselves.

In such a syllabus, we would indicate the degree of interaction that such a collaboratively-based course will require of students and to which they will be expected to rise. It would also indicate the *specific, purposeful* value of attendance in a course that relies implicitly on student interaction and participation. Whenever possible, it is highly engaging to have students collaboratively develop parts of the syllabus. Some faculty have provided students with opportunities to develop the nature and amount of course activities, number or kind of papers, ground rules, grading options and deadlines on a collaborative basis between teacher and student or among students.

How do I decide what makes a good collaborative assignment?

Having interactive activities just to have interaction is not the best use of instructional time and degrades the power of real collaborative exchange. Approach the organization of groups and the framing of group discussion with a clear idea of collaborative objectives. What learning outcomes are you or your students trying to achieve? How will proposing collaborative work further those objectives? Once you—or you along with the students—have decided on a question or problem, other questions arise. How best to create the groups, and how many to a group? Do you work towards diversity in gender, culture, experience, class, and age or for some form of homogeneity?

TIP: When we seek a synthesis of ideas concerning a question or problem, then group work will likely enhance that objective. However when we seek a baseline of precise knowledge of concepts, group interaction may not be useful.

Ground Rules!

Setting up a series of ground rules is extremely important as a starting point. Initially these state clearly what is expected in terms of behavior within the group and set the tone for all future interactions. Once in place, they are available to anyone in the class to assist in reminding others of the importance of adhering to them. In this way, everyone begins to share equal responsibility for interactions through their own behavior and through their commitment to uphold the ground rules for the group. The following ground rules are excerpted from “Learning to Lead Collaboratively,” the workshop text created by UH-Mānoa’s incomparable collaboration workshop leader, Donna Ching. They are very useful in classroom group work and can be integrated into the syllabus:

1. Respect others
2. Listen to understand and avoid interrupting others
3. Resist the temptation to put words into another person's mouth
4. Be clear and concise
5. Avoid side conversations while someone else has the floor
6. Maintain an open and positive attitude
7. Be open and non-defensive about your own ideas
8. Switch seats during breaks
9. Everyone needs to participate
10. Turn off cell phones and pagers and put them on vibrate

How do I divide students into groups?

A common way of dividing students into groups is to count off when it is desirable to break up pairs or groups of friends who sit together during class. One UH-Mānoa faculty forms groups initially around the month of their birthday, then adjusts for large or small group numbers. This has a more convivial feeling than counting off and helps to separate pairs of friends. However, there are times when groups of relative homogeneity can be very productive. For example, in a social science class dealing with issues related to social categories, one faculty forms groups by inviting students to sit in a group with which they most closely associate themselves, or according to interests or points-of-view. Another faculty forms groups according to a discussion in which one's location of origin might provide a perspective that is best discussed with those who hold some assumptions in common, for example whether one is foreign to the U.S., born on the continent of the U.S. or is born and raised in Hawai'i.

An interesting approach can be to combine the choices of students with some organization by the professor. For example, during the third week of class when students have gotten to know one another well enough to do this, one faculty distributes 3 x 5 cards and asks each student to write down their own name at the top, followed by the names of three other students with which they would like to collaborate in a standing small group through the whole semester. This does not preclude spontaneous groupings or dyad discussions, but for long-term thematic discussions or projects, this was the primary standing group. The professor reminds students that this is not a popularity contest; rather, they are to consider that as they deal with the course content and issues, that these are the people with which they feel they will be able to spend interesting classroom time together. The professor has found that students are very astute about this and consistently chose those from which they can learn and to which they can contribute. She lets students know that with 3 options for each student in a class of 20 or more, she is able to ensure that each student is in a group with at least one of the names they have chosen and in which at least one of the other

members chose them. The professor takes the cards away and forms groups based on those two criteria, plus some considerations based on her own knowledge of students that she has gained through their writing and discussion in class. Naturally, when the groups are formed, students will know which member they chose, but they won't ever know which or how many of the others had chosen them. This process provides all students with a sense that they have had some control over their semester-long group process building as well as having been selected by others for what they can contribute. And the outcome has been that it has consistently created highly active, productive, motivated and exciting group work. The following demonstrates how one faculty, who teaches a science-based course, utilizes small group collaboration throughout his course.



1. I have all my students work in groups (of four or five individuals). There are handouts on working in groups, solving problems, developing expectations of each group member, grading in group work, encouraging participation of quiet members, and if necessary, resolving conflict.

2. Each group is presented a list of questions on chapters in the text (easy questions at the beginning, harder towards the end). The questions are written so that the main concepts in the chapter are covered and there are about 6 - 7 questions per chapter.

3. The majority of the class time is spent in group discussion. There is hardly any lecturing, unless a concept or point is difficult to understand. If there is difficulty in understanding, I spend about 5 - 10 minutes explaining the concepts. I try to write questions that don't have clear-cut answers, so there is the tension of uncertainty. This promotes discussion, and some frustration for those students who want to know the "correct" answer.

4. Three open-book examinations (plus a comprehensive final) are administered during the course of the semester. Each exam covers 3 - 4 chapters on the questions that students have worked on in their groups, and consists of 3 - 5 questions. Students don't know which questions will be on the exam and on exam day, must be able to answer (with details) a minimum of 24 - 28 questions.

5. Example questions from a 100-level course entitled: The Chemical Nature of Food, Chapter on Food Selection and Evaluation:

- a. What is a "genetically" engineered food? Give two examples. For these foods, list two major positive and two major negative concerns that people have. Explain why there is so much controversy about these new foods.

- b. You have developed a new custard pie that is so tasty that your friends and family are encouraging you to go into business to sell this pie. However, you are aware that almost every bakery sells custard pies. Devise a sensory evaluation form that you could give to a group of people to obtain feedback if your pie is really that much tastier than the commercial bakery pies. Describe the sensory attributes you would measure (why would you choose these attributes), and explain what the results from each attribute would tell you about your pie.

Beginning to Work as a Group: Examples of Activities

It is important not to assume that students know how to work in groups. Upper division students very likely are more practiced, but do not take it for granted because many have not had the opportunity to work in small groups in meaningful ways. Provide students with guidance and preparation as to how to work collaboratively just as you would in subject matter content. Since some students will have experienced excellent small group work, informally recruit them as initial small group facilitators. Plan to devote a portion of time to assess and assist students in developing necessary collaborative skills for your class, and for the particular processes and outcomes that are most conducive to your course material and expectations. Design assignments so that they start out simply and progressively become difficult, thus allowing you to determine student preparedness for collaborative learning. It can be useful to initially begin with a light group assignment just to break the ice in a non-threatening situation.

Activity: “M & M’s”

This is an icebreaker/team-building type activity suggested to us by Bonnyjean Manini from UH Mānoa Co-curricular Activities Programs and Services (CAPS), who teaches courses in leadership and works with groups of students in a number of programs. She says: “I like this activity because it allows the participants/students to both reflect on themselves as well as share a little about themselves with the rest of the group. I have found that the use of this activity helps build students’ confidence levels through personal reflection as well as helps them get to know each other better. This activity can be used in the beginning of the semester to help students get to know one another, to have students share what they hope to learn from the course, what their goals are, why they are in college, etc. The instructor can develop whatever topic is most appropriate.” Needed materials are as follows:

- 1) M&M candy, enough for every person in the class/group to get between 3-6 pieces
- 2) bowl or container for the M&M’s—make it look nice and appealing
- 3) discussion topic

Fill the bowl with M&M's and pass it around the class/group. Have each participant take 3 to 6 pieces. Ask them not to eat the candy until directed to do so. Once everyone has M&M's, ask the participants to share one contribution or idea per M&M they are holding.

Activity: “Sorting Ourselves Out”

The following instructions have been contributed by David Sherrill, sorter extraordinaire, from UH Mānoa College of Education. It can be effective on the 2nd or 3rd day of class, once the overview and introduction to the course have been completed, and it is time to begin to get into the material and process of the class. Students are comfortable doing it early on and it's an easy icebreaker for faculty to organize and facilitate. Remember as facilitator, it is even more convivial if you also take part in moving around the room with the students. It can also be used very effectively further along in the course when things appear to be settled and a certain amount of routine appears to have set in. An excellent point in the course to try it is when groupings are about to be made. We have seen faculty retreats and workshops in which it is used, and faculty themselves enjoy it:

I ask them to physically sort themselves out in terms of a number of demographic and psychological factors. The procedure is simple and several sorts can be made during a typical class session. For each sort, participants physically move into the subgroups identified. For example, I typically begin with a sort by gender so that men and women move to opposite sides of the room and I draw attention to gender differences. Other demographic sorts include ethnicity, birth order, geographic referent (“Imagine the floor is a map of the world and go to the place where you live or the place where you work.” “Imagine the floor is a map of the campus and go to the place where you spend most of your time.”). I can sort in terms of any variable of interest to the group and I tailor the sorts to the audience. For example, when I work with teachers, I ask them to sort themselves out based on the number of years of experience they have in the field. This creates a continuum of experience in the form of a living hologram—new teachers on one end of the distribution and those with the most years of service on the other. New members of the profession and elders can be easily acknowledged. If I am working with college students, I sort in terms of number of semesters on campus or academic major or level of prior experience in the subject matter of the particular course I am teaching. With any group I can sort in terms of musical talent (Who plays what instrument? Do we have the makings of a band in the group?), languages spoken, employment (part-time or full-time, on- or off-campus), physical fitness routines (Are there runners or swimmers or soccer players in the group who may want to work out together?) I can ask the group what sorts they want to see and do any sort that they suggest as long as there is no likelihood of personal embarrassment (e.g., no sorting on criminal record).

For sorts on psychological variables, I ask participants to arrange themselves along an imaginary continuum from “high” to “low.” I can sort on variables such as creativity, assertiveness, patience (with others and self), sense of humor, math anxiety, computer literacy, leadership ability or experience, punctuality, degree of comfort with the subject matter of the course I am teaching, tendency to procrastinate in doing one’s work, any or all of the multiple intelligences, etc. Again, any variable of interest is a potential sort as long as there is no likelihood of embarrassment.

After all of the sorts have been made, students can “free write” their reactions to the exercise (“What did I learn about us as we sorted ourselves out?” “What did I learn about myself?”) and reactions can be shared in small groups or in the group as a whole. Sorting is easiest when an open area can be created in the classroom in which the various sub-groupings can be formed. Otherwise, subgroups can form around the perimeter of the classroom; or, perhaps, the class can move to a more open area inside or outside the classroom building.

The sorting exercise gets everyone up and moving in and out of various groups. And when it is all over, everyone has a clearer picture of our differences and similarities.

How do students get graded?

When working in groups, members prefer to like, trust and respect one another. However, in what is called “group work” or “group projects” there is a concern that can infect the process about whether the work is evenly distributed when it comes down to the line. Won’t some do the lion’s share of the work and others barely show up? A great deal of this concern has to do with the distribution of the grade for the work. If all students are subject to a grade based on the success of the whole group, what if they experience one or two “weaker links” in the group? Some assessment rubrics in the next session may be helpful in arranging grading so that it isn’t so heavily linked with another’s such that one student’s grade is literally pulled up or down by another. In groups formed for the purpose of discussion and in those working towards a project or presentation, there are concerns that one be in a group from which one can learn and to which one can contribute.

When lacking confidence in being able to create such groups, attempts are often made by teachers to frame that dilemma as a “real-life” situation, and advise students that working in community groups, business situations, or even families in which liking and respecting one another isn’t always possible. The premise of this approach is accurate, but unless the professor is highly skilled at framing and facilitating student interaction toward an enabling model of collaborative work, the outcomes are not likely to produce anything beyond “what already is.” The goal of creating “what could be” when we come together to collaborate with groups, both in class and in “real life” would be a higher goal to achieve.

In the case of the professor who had students use 3x5 cards to select other members of their group, some of these concerns were ameliorated. Students felt they had a hand in the construction of their own groups and the professor had enough information about the students to bring some students together who she saw could learn well together. Even with this degree of choreography in forming these groups, there was always a great deal to learn about collaboration with others because what was formed was never a group based on a notion of perfect relations. Rather, it utilized a model in which there was for each student a sense of one's own authority.

In a culture of technique,
we often confuse authority with power,
but the two are not the same.
Power works from the outside in,
but authority works from the inside out.

Parker J. Palmer

Can I Ask Students to Collaborate Outside of Classtime?

UH-Mānoa is a commuter campus on which most students work at least half-time, many full-time, leaving campus immediately upon classes ending. Indeed, many students arrange their class schedule, and thereby chose their courses, based on an off-campus work schedule. The few students who attend UH-Mānoa on a schedule that would allow for the kind of flexibility it takes to create a solid outside-of-class-working-group of four or five are in the great minority. And so creating out-of-class collaborative work is almost always difficult or even impossible for students, and we advise generally avoiding it, and organizing collaborative sessions in-class.

Having said that, it is also the case that UH-Mānoa is working towards: expanding and improving on-campus housing and wired and mixed-use dormitory communities; working with the community to develop a vibrant college town surrounding the Mānoa campus; and, maintaining exceptional campus facilities that service the diverse social needs of students, faculty, families and persons with disabilities. (Strategic Plan 2002-2010) This vision of a different kind of campus life will alter some of our time-and-space-bound realities. In that spirit and towards opportunities we don't currently have available, we would like to include some thoughts of students from campuses where it is possible—and therefore becomes desirable—to extend collaborative work outside the classroom. In Richard Light's 10-year study of students' expectations and experiences, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*, he initially "assumed that most important and memorable academic learning goes on inside the classroom, while outside activities provide a useful but modest supplement. The evidence shows that the opposite is true: learning outside of classes, especially in residential settings...is vital." Further, when extending this notion into the area of assignments and homework:

...at many campuses today, professors increasingly are encouraging students to work together on homework assignments. Some faculty members are even creating small study groups in their courses to help students work together outside of class. A few students tell of professors who give homework assignments that are so challenging or complex that the only way to get the work done is to collaborate. To complete such assignments, students have to work cooperatively, dividing up the readings and meeting outside of class to teach one another. Many undergraduates report that such homework assignments increase both their learning and their engagement with class. This alteration in the format of homework is a genuine cultural change, one that is happening on campuses across the country.

Collaboration can be integrated into any course, but until UH campus life changes significantly, one way to make it possible for our many commuter students who work off campus to participate would be to designate a certain number of courses in the department curriculum as Collaboration Intensive. In the same way that Writing Intensive designation doesn't preclude writing in non-such designated courses, Collaboration Intensive courses would guarantee that a significant part of the course experience and grade would be based on collaborative work. Sets of practices and expectations could be established to be sure that any course offering this option would be meeting a certain number of criteria, and workshops could be designed to support faculty in these areas of their own faculty development. If such classes attached a selection of multiple one-credit "lab section" times, it would be possible for students to figure into their complex schedules a specific time during which they would set aside their group sessions. The first step in creating this as an option in any department would be for a faculty to initially offer it as a part of an experimental course, something that could be arranged through the approval of the college dean.

One of the major findings of Light's 10-year study was that "students who get the most out of college, who grow the most academically, and who are happiest, organize their time to include activities with faculty members, or with several other students, focused around accomplishing substantive academic work." While this is so, he goes on to say: "Interacting in depth with faculty members or even with (other) students around substantive work does not always come naturally." But because, as Light reports, "A large majority of undergraduates describe particular activities outside the classroom as profoundly affecting their academic performance," it would seem that we must continue to seek ways to make these opportunities possible for our students. Light's report is focused on student narratives and experiences, but the benefits to faculty in the development of their courses, and of themselves as teachers, would be profoundly affected by these institutionally supported efforts.

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CHAPTER 5: What's Writing Got To Do With It?

How can the process of writing foster collaboration among students and between teacher and students? Faculty who teach writing-intensive(W) designated courses, or courses that use writing with regularity and in place of testing, do find that students who write a lot more learn a lot more. Faculty who foster engaged, participating students through writing find that their students do better learning the material. For students who don't envision themselves as writers in any respect, they simply begin to accomplish this without the stakes being high and without challenges to their sense of confidence and competence. By utilizing good teaching practice based on writing early and on a regular basis, we alter the terms of *what it means* to be writing and can begin to build on these activities to bring students towards a more engaged relation with themselves and their thoughts. In so doing, writing begins to take on multiple functions and provides multiple opportunities for success for diverse groups of students. Yet, we also recognize that many students come to us already having learned to view writing and participating as areas of high stakes and low confidence. How can the two activities of writing and collaborating combine to become powerful agents of change in the classroom?

One way is for the teacher to systematically become much less involved in students' writings in some very specific ways, so that another relationship between students and writing can take place, one that will develop and utilize collaboration among students to further their confidence and competence in writing. Initially, this seems to be poor teaching practice because most of us come to teaching believing in certain myths about what constitutes "the good teacher" when it comes to writing. This takes its most dreaded form in student papers left looking like they are bleeding from trails of red ink. Whether the comments are complaining or complimentary, or balanced between, the underlying principle that "less is more" hasn't restrained those eager-to-teach.

UH-Mānoa is fortunate in having had the Mānoa Writing Program (MWP) as an integral part of our teaching curriculum since 1988. MWP has contributed to teaching and learning at Mānoa through its research, workshops, and publications, such as "Writing Matters: Notes for teachers of writing-intensive courses." Through more than 5,000 classes, MWP has found that "students who enrolled in one or another of W classes have in general found that what you write is what you learn best." MWP has provided a list of myths that teachers are inclined towards, and some responses based on research that may free us up to become more mindful about the role of writing as a part of the process of learning.

Myth: More response is better.

Research shows that students are often overwhelmed and paralyzed when they receive essays on which the instructor's comments trail into every margin and leave a depressing map of error and negative response. Even when response is positive, saying too much is often confusing. It is better to choose two or three elements of the essay to focus on, giving highly specific constructive advice or commentary, than to attempt to cover all possible areas of concern.

MWP

We may feel we are performing our teacherly duty if we're responding to each and every paper in-kind, but as MWP warns us, if we are reading all the writing our students are doing, they aren't writing enough. We must teach them to value writing as writing, and to shape their judgments of its own worth. There are ways to move writing away from a form of external and often painful judgement to a collaborative and self-assessed activity that engages students directly with the course concepts and themes. We can begin with what MWP calls "Write-to-Learn" activities that function at a number of levels. They engage students in active writing exercises, and provide important information and communication between students and teacher which enables on a continual basis a sense of connectedness and confirmation about what is really happening during the class period and in preparing for class. Such activities are not in and of themselves highly collaborative in nature, but they facilitate an environment in which collaboration together is more possible and likely. They contribute to building a climate of exchange and make possible the maintenance of common ground among students and teacher. Here are three suggestions to get students writing early and often:

- **Minute Papers:** At the end of class, have students summarize a lecture or discussion, identify the key point, or pose a final question on a 3x5 card. In so doing, they leave class mindful of something meaningful they have grasped or something unclear that you will be able to address during the next class period;
- **Admit Ticket:** Require that students drop off a brief summary of a reading, two questions drawn from a reading, etc. to be admitted to class. Besides demonstrating that they have prepared for class, such a summary would provide for you a sign of how to pitch the material for that day; and,
- **Freewriting:** At any point during the class period, ask students to write for five minutes on an issue or question that you pose. The writing gives students time to collect their thoughts or generate new ideas. Freewriting works well to jumpstart discussion because students are better prepared to talk about an issue.

As their teachers, we can build on these low stakes writing exercises and take students into some new realms in which writing doesn't remain so private and disabling. When students begin to experience writing as a social, rather than exclusively a private act, writing can become another path, like discussion, that leads towards the opportunity for students to become collaborative with one another and with the teacher. One way for the teacher to extend new experiences in writing to students is to resist evaluating some or much of it.

Myth: Teachers Need to Evaluate Every Piece of Writing They Collect.

Research shows that non-evaluated assignments can work well and even be the most frequent type of writing used in a WI class. For example, journals and informal writings, if collected, can be evaluated using a "minimal marking" scheme (i.e., points for completing the assignment plus extra points or a "+" for an insightful response). Or students can be awarded credit for the number of entries submitted, and they can single out a limited number of these for closer scrutiny, grading, and response.

MWP



"I was team-teaching a course with another teacher during a period of time when information sciences was growing and computers were beginning to be privately owned by large numbers of people and working with a team-teacher who implicitly understood the 'information explosion' that was being generated through this technology. As he introduced the assignment for the first of three writings to be completed during the course, he began by talking about the nature of writer's block to the students. He said to them that it was a good thing that writer's block existed; otherwise think of all the rubbish we'd have to read! Students laughed and went on to do their papers knowing that their teachers understood the difficulty of writing well."

Indeed, not all writing need be done "well" in the publishable sense. This is not to deny the value of eloquence in speaking and in writing. Rather, research shows that when students are grappling with new concepts and fields of study, their writing skills in that area are diminished until they begin to gain some familiarity with the concepts along with the discourse and conventions of that discipline. And so, some writing will have done its work if it functions initially as the opportunity to grapple and to find one's way to one's thought. Then, to be able to put a few words around that thought so that one can speak it out, so that others may work on it as well, collaboratively finding and creating meaning.

Myth: Teachers Need to Read Everything That Students Write.

Research shows that having students write for brief periods at the beginning or end of a class helps them focus or achieve closure. When discussion lags or reaches an impasse, students can be asked to write out a response to share. Students can bring to class written questions to stimulate discussion or definitions of key terms to debate. This kind of informal writing need not even be collected. Its purpose is to stimulate discussion and encourage active engagement with the material.

MWP

Using Writing to Prepare Students for Discussions

Speaking to a mid-sized group is worrisome enough; being put on the spot by the instructor can be downright terrifying. Prepare students by providing them with the discussion questions before the class meets or allow them to jot down answers to questions in class before asking them to speak. Giving them 3-5 minutes to write a response gives everyone confidence: you can feel comfortable calling on anyone; students feel more comfortable because they have time to construct and answer.

When starting a new topic, ask questions that compel students to tie course material to their own experiences. Finding common ground by connecting your course material to their experiences serves several purposes. First, it facilitates learning new material because it opens a space in students' minds and gives them a place to hang a new idea. Second, it helps you understand their background and may reveal blocks to effective learning—such as misconceptions they carry with them into the classroom.

For a stunning example of how misconceptions are maintained in the face of instruction to the contrary, view the brief videotape *Private Universe* at Wong Audio-Visual Center at Sinclair Library. You will be astonished by what is revealed there about the misconceptions that exist prior to a lecture, and that persist even after it!

Finally, it shows that you value the students' experiences and voices. You can ask several students to provide their responses to the class or in small groups; you can ask them to write the response in an academically-oriented journal; or you can ask them to write in class ("quick writes" or "freewrites") and submit them. During a subsequent class, you can summarize or comment on a few examples (anonymously) and model how their experiences support or contradict the course material.

Facilitate students to begin talking to and with one another instead of consistently directing their comments to you during class discussions, (It is a discussion after all....)

A Community of Writers: Students Collaborating to Become Better Writers

One of the most powerful ways to engage students through their own thinking processes is to form groups that regularly share and respond to one another's written work. A workshop course by Peter Elbow and Patricia Belanoff called "Community of Writers," is driven by some fundamental, and in some respects surprising, convictions about writing and writers. One is that what writers need is an audience: "a thoughtful, interested audience rather than evaluators or editors or advice-givers." Another is that, "In the long run, you will learn the most about writing from feeling the presence of interested readers." At the heart of their distrust of evaluations or advice is the experience of knowing that experts on writing usually do not agree with one another and even when they do agree about what is weak, they are unlikely to agree about how to improve it.

What professional academics learn through their own difficult writing processes is that when we open our work up to receive a variety of responses, it is much more likely that our writing will improve and prosper... once we recover from the feedback! Elbow and Belanoff sometimes refer to this as writing to the enemy or writing surrounded by sharks. But that can eventually be learned if writing is practiced first among allies and listened to by friends. In a community of writers, a variety of readers means that others besides teachers read students' written work, and that readings and feedback involve a range that can include: no response, non-evaluative responses and evaluative responses. Three examples have been selected and abridged from eleven different and valuable ways of responding to writing from "Sharing and Responding" by Elbow and Belanoff. They have all been used by faculty in classes at UH-Mānoa with success. Consider grouping students into writing/feedback groups according to methods suggested in the section of this guide on "How Do I Divide Students Into Groups" or by adjusting those methods to suit your own situation. Methods that are less complex may be used initially, building towards more complex and disciplined responses. Students are asked to use these as specific ground rules and guidance as to how to *be in the process* of either sharing or responding.

1. Sharing: No Response

Read your piece aloud to listeners and ask: "Would you please just listen and enjoy?" Simple sharing is also a way to listen better to your *own responses* to your own piece, without having to think about how others respond. You learn an enormous amount from hearing yourself read your own words...

No response is valuable in many situations: when you don't have much time, at the very early stages when you just want to try something out or feel very tentative, or when you are completely finished and don't plan to make any changes at all—as a form of simple communication

or celebration. Sharing gives you a non-pressure setting for getting comfortable reading your words out loud and listening to the writing of others.

2. Summary and Sayback

Summary: “Please summarize what you have heard. Tell me what you hear as the main thing and the almost-main thing.” (Variations: “Give me a phrase as title and a one-word title—first using my words and then using your words.”)

Sayback: “Please say back to me in your own words what you hear me getting at in my piece, but say it in a somewhat questioning or tentative way—as an invitation for *me to reply*. It often leads you to find exactly the words or thoughts or emphasis you were looking for.

3. Voice

(a) “How much voice do you hear in my writing? Is my language alive and human? Or is it dead, bureaucratic, unsayable?”

(b) “*What kind* of voice(s) do you hear in my writing? Timid? Confident? Sarcastic? Pleading?” Or “What kind of person does my writing sound like? What side(s) of me comes thorough in my writing?” Most of all, “Do you trust the voice or person you hear in my writing?”

This kind of feedback can be useful at any stage. When people describe the voice they hear in writing, they often get right to the heart of subtle but important matters of language and approach. They don’t have to be able to talk in technical terms; they can say, “You sound kind of bureaucratic and pompous and I wonder if *you* actually believe what you are saying.”

These are just three selections from the full series. They are deceptively simple; their impact can be quite profound. Students and professors who have used these in classes through a scaffolding process report that they produce improved writing through a sense of comradery among students, of having been listened to, heard and respected by peers and of having felt responsible to provide worthwhile work for them to review. For the professor, there are significantly fewer hours necessary to provide much higher quality of feedback to each student. It is an interesting and surprising dynamic; students and professors alike note that the process of sharing and responding among peers in groups brings forth work that expresses more seriousness towards the material of the course and one’s own writing about it. For feedback and editing on grammar and language use, collaborative editing and critique groups can be organized, as can formal critique groups using feedback forms to organize and communicate feedback among students. Collaborative feedback can do more than improve student writing, something which has been previously experienced as an isolating, solitary process. It can transform every aspect of student engagement with the course material through moving writing and commenting on writing into the realm of the social where it takes its place among all other forms of daily communication.

Resources:

Mānoa Writing Program, “Writing Matters for Instructors at the University of Hawai‘i, Nos. 1-10,” “Ten Pointers on Responding to Student Writing,” and, “Quick Tips for Instructors of Writing-Intensive Courses,” University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Phone: 956-6660. Bilger 104. Email: mwp@hawaii.edu
Web site: [//www.hawaii.edu/mwp/](http://www.hawaii.edu/mwp/)

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CHAPTER 6: Research & Collaboration

Contribution by Margit Watts and Randy Hensley

A passion for learning is not something we should need to inspire in our students; rather, it is what we must keep from being extinguished. Human beings are by nature passionate, curious, intrigued, and will seek to connect, find patterns, and make sense of things. Learning is more effective when new information is made meaningful and linked to personal experience or prior knowledge; when we learn how to evaluate, assess, and connect, information is transformed into knowledge.

In its 1998 report, “Educating Undergraduates in the Research University,” the Boyer Commission recommended that students be given opportunities to learn through inquiry and that research-based learning should become the standard. Our own Strategic Plan for 2002-2010 lists the engagement of undergraduates in research and creative scholarship, the provision of applied educational experiences including service learning, and the development of new learning centers as a few new imperatives for the University.

The following is an electronic journal entry written by a first-year student during the first week of class. The student is responding to three questions: What’s going to be different in class at a university? How do you expect to change? How are you feeling right now?

When you’re a freshman you don’t know what’s going to happen in college. Since I like to go backwards, I will start with the third question first. How do I feel? I feel lost, that is the basic word I would use to sum it all up. I don’t feel like I fit in. I don’t know where I’m going and it’s all a big blur to me. The second question is all based on a matter of hope. What I want is to finally feel found. I want to know where I’m going and feel like I fit in. I also want to be successful in my college adventures. All I can give you on the first question is from my experience and I must warn you it is extremely limited. From what the upperclassmen tell me, it (college) is extremely hard. But they told me the same thing when I got into high school and it wasn’t that bad. So I don’t know whom to trust. All I know is that it is going to be different.

The whole concept of being found, stated by the student above, illustrates that we need to connect scholarship to the lives of students. Finding the scholarly in the personal, and vice versa, is one key to producing students with questioning and engaged intelligence. Of course, they need to learn how to formulate questions—the ultimate basis for any good inquiry.

Imagine trying to create a paper and this paper is on a topic that you love. In this paper, you must remember everything you’ve learned through your years of schooling because you want this paper to be in

top shape. This paper has to be the best paper because you should know a lot about your subject. However, there are always going to be things that you haven't learned about something. This is your job to figure out what it is that you don't know. You want to reach that scholarly narrative peak while writing this paper. The only problem is you don't know how to start.

*Now let me ask you a question. What do you do when you're in a situation where you are lost? You ask yourself what is one way I can solve this problem? This is a great start although it may not seem like much. Asking questions is the key to finding answers. To begin your paper, you must first ask the question, **Who?** Who is the paper about? Who might this topic effect? Who causes this topic to be what it is? Who is it that I'm trying to convince with this topic? These are just some of the questions I ask myself when beginning a paper. It gives you a better understanding of who you are and whom it is that you are trying to attract with this topic. My next question would be **What?** What is this about? What do I expect to gain from this topic? What is it that I'm trying to express? By understanding what your topic is about, you can ask these questions.*

(UH student)

Perhaps one of the hardest parts of research for an undergraduate student is choosing a topic that is of interest. In high school students were often given a list of ten topics from which to choose. These were often not something of interest to the students themselves. Students are most often interested in answers and thus have not spent any time honing their ability to ask appropriate questions. In fact, one of the main reasons they do poorly at gathering information for paper assignments is that they don't have the skills necessary to develop specific questions that will, in turn, bring them the information they wish to have. However, there are many ways of thinking about a topic, many of which are directly tied to a discipline itself. And a good facilitative teacher can help a student find an angle that intrigues them. The trick in getting students to connect is to help them with the art of asking questions. For instance, if a student selected a broad topic such as music, here are some questions they might ask:

What does music mean?; what is the function of music?; what is the value of music?; what is the significance of music?; how is music made?; what causes music to happen?

Suggest they use the **who, what, why, when, where, how** and add the other words—**might, could, can, should, will, must, did**, and so forth. It is a useful way to ask good questions, which will help them narrow their topic. They can then ask questions such as: **How might** this music change? **What could** happen to this music? Who will play this music? **How did** this music come about? **Why should** we listen to this music? Prior to

sending a student off into the realm of research, it is a good idea to work in a collaborative fashion with them on question analysis. It is the good questions that will produce solid research.

The concept of formulating my very own hypothesis that NO ONE had attempted to prove was quite intriguing to me. I had never thought that I could create a paper in which I pointed out the problem, and then answered it using my own observations and knowledge learned from different sources that I read. As it turned out, it was pretty difficult to come up with a really good hypothesis that would be provable and realistic. I didn't want to seem ridiculous or fanciful, and in the end, I felt that I had come up with a respectable hypothesis.

I found that it was very difficult to locate sources that dealt directly with my topic. Instead, I found many sources about the general topic, but I had to try and connect the information to my hypothesis somehow. For example, I found many sources that talked about the history of the guitar. Since my topic was the guitar and its significance and contributions to society, I had to find a way to connect the historical information that I found in the sources with my topic. It all worked out in the end, though.

(UH student)

But perhaps even more significant in the question formation process is the personal connection. What do I already know about this topic? What is it about this topic that already connects to my own life and experience? What questions need to be answered so that my own experience is better understood by others and eventually myself? What questions make my own life story more meaningful and significant?

I decided that by showing how the guitar was used throughout ages past, it would be easier to prove that it [the guitar] took part in shaping and molding society, as we know it today. Also, finding journal articles using the online databases was harder than I expected. I thought that it would be sort of like finding a book in the library, but I was wrong. The results that came up were sometimes not even remotely close to what I was looking for. For example, when searching for sources on the construction and design of the guitar, journals that were simply instructional lessons for guitar playing came up all over the place. It was a bit frustrating to go through each one in order to find that one really good source that you're searching for.

I also learned about the importance of utilizing every possibility when searching for online resources. The Boolean logic helped me SO much when searching. When I typed in A guitar history, initially, tons of results were simply about history in general or the history of a completely unrelated object. But when I typed in A guitar AND histories, the VAST majority of the results were relevant to the topic. This saves time and energy and makes your researching much more efficient and quick.

Also, when using web search engines such as Lycos or Webcrawler, you should always try and use the Advanced search option. I never used to choose that option until I learned about what a significant impact it could make when searching for a specific topic. All of these new tools that I learned to use through this unit about scholarly narratives and research will most definitely help me with all of my future research endeavors.

(UH student)

Students regularly miss the relationships between the information seeking process and understanding a topic. It is important to help today's students slow down and consider what answers they are **not** finding along with what answers they **are** finding. Research is a process. Assignments that ask for what perspective a database provides on a subject and what perspectives are missing helps students grasp the conversation of information and knowledge (discourse) while the focus on information products (finding the book) is diminished. Here is an example of something to help students with question analysis.

From a Question to Its Significance

1. Name your topic

I am studying _____

In the earliest stages of a research project, when you have only a topic and maybe the first glimmerings of a few good questions, try to describe your work in a sentence like this: I am learning about/working on/studying _____

2. Suggest a question:

Because I want to find out who/how/why _____
_____. As early as you can, try to describe your work more exactly by adding to that sentence an indirect question that specifies something about your topic that you do not know or fully understand, but want to: I am studying X because I want to find out who/what/when/where/whether/why/how _____. When you can add that

kind of clause, you have defined both your topic and your reason for pursuing it.

3. State the rationale for the question:

In order to understand how/why what _____

There is, though, one more step. It is a hard one, but if you can take it, you transform your project from one that interests you to one that makes a bid to interest others. It becomes a project with a rationale explaining why it is important to ask your question at all. To do that, you must add an element that explains why you are asking your question and what you intend to get out of its answer. In Step 3, you add a second indirect question, this one introduced with *in order to understand how, why, or whether*.

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An additional factor is the positive attributes of collaboration in the research process. We so often send students out into the information wilderness alone; to succeed or fail without the support and conversation that true research thrives upon.

Discussing discoveries and paths of inquiry not only fosters the importance of questioning, but also educates the student about the importance of perspective and values in knowledge creation. Pairing or group projects of information discovery are one way to foster collaboration.

Students are engaging more with electronic access to information, but remain less likely to ask for help when using the library. There is a relative ease of access to electronic resources that should be stimulated and encouraged in the most positive ways. Faculty can recommend electronic resources and encourage students to use critical thinking in selecting materials, thereby collaborating with a form of information with which students are already familiar. It is very important to encourage students to pursue acquiring information in all forms and then to help them develop the skills by which to evaluate the information. Students gain knowledge in a variety of ways, and some ways that many students find appealing are the forms that initially appeal to them for the purposes of entertainment, such as audiovisual materials. Engaging students with library activities in the learning process is a goal that can be accomplished through numerous collaborative strategies.

One of the reasons so many students “go it alone” in the library is because they don’t see research as a process or information sources as conversation and perspective, and don’t see research relying on a collaborative process. So it is no surprise that students fail to see the library (or librarians for that matter) as a resource for the process. Librarians can produce more than directions for where the information source is (the product). They can be collaborators in question formation and knowledge exploration.

Once the issue of perspective in research is introduced, the inevitable corollary of evaluating information resources has to be addressed. How does a student decide that a source (perspective) is credible and valid? In an information-overwhelmed environment? Students can be assisted in discarding the belief that all information is the same or equal, regardless of source or time period or author or substantiation. If perspective is important, discernment is critical.

Determining *credibility and validity* is an excellent way to begin the study of what it takes to be certain that one’s sources are indeed useful. You can do this activity in small groups, as a class, or give individual assignments. Any way you choose will help students realize how much information they take for granted without ever questioning the source. The following can be used to help students identify the credibility and validity of sources.

Credibility and Validity Indicators

	Credibility (believable)	Validity (evidence)
AUTHOR	Academic degrees, professional experience, affiliation (where author works) recognition (awards)	Credentials related to topic, bias towards or against a particular perspective
SOURCE	Affiliation with which university, professional association, or government, reputation for accuracy	Presence or lack of bias towards a particular perspective
METHODOLOGY	Experiments, data, analysis of personal knowledge, analysis and/or interpretation of other research, writing, or documents, not just opinion	Accurate methodology (large enough samples) thorough, comprehensive, relevant sources, appropriate methodology

DISCOURSE	Context (of topic or author), reputation (what others say about author's work or ideas)	Appropriate sources, contradictory and/or confirming sources
CONTENT	Intended audience identified, currency, fact and opinion differentiated, discourse used	Assumptions, questions unanswered, alternative perspectives, evidence provided, conclusions logical

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Ultimately, the goal of infusing the undergraduate curriculum with research-based endeavors is to facilitate the ability of the student to define the meaning of research for their own lives. It is to embark upon a journey that results in a personal definition of research.

An institution of higher education is a place where knowledge is kept, created, revised, manipulated, bantered about, reformed, added-to, constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. Most students have not had the opportunity to become aware of how this all fits together and what role they might play in the larger scheme of things. Students need to understand the purpose of knowledge within academic settings in order to more fully relate to their educational experiences.

It is helpful to use many examples from every day life to help students understand how natural it is to do research. They probably don't view what they do often during a week—look up directions, find the best restaurant, check on available movies, or plan a ski trip—as remotely having anything to do with research. Connect these extremely simple tasks that they do to the more complex scholarly research to which they are being introduced.

So, what is research? It is:

- A part of life
- Telling a scholarly story
- Asking and answering questions
- Producing new knowledge
- A critical process
- Not timeless

And finally, to facilitate collaboration, one of the more helpful activities for students involved in learning about research is to get a great deal of feedback. Peer evaluations and feedback are best in this case. Once the students have chosen a topic and completed their question analysis sheet

provided earlier, you might choose to have the students review each other's work. A template for doing this might be:

<p>Author of Research Topic (name of student doing the research)</p> <p>Author of evaluator (name of student evaluating the topic)</p> <p>Topic (description of topic)</p> <p>Assess the interest level of this topic (circle one)</p> <p>high medium high medium low low</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Which specific points in this research should be included?■ What points about this topic would you add or like to see added to make this more interesting?■ How well do you think this has been researched?■ If you were to do research on this same topic, what would you do differently?
--

CHAPTER 7: Assessing Collaboration

“By collaborating with colleagues and actively involving students in Classroom Assessment efforts, faculty (and students) enhance learning and personal satisfaction.”

Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross
Classroom Assessment Techniques

“**A**ssessment” is defined as the process of gathering data to make a judgment. The objective is to obtain feedback to enhance or improve group performance. There are many ways of collecting data in order to determine how well faculty-student or student-student interactions or group processes have worked. The following are a few methods to add to your assessment repertory.

1. Plus/Minus Method

The Plus/Minus method can be used to assess group work by asking students what went well in the discussion and what needed to be improved. See the sample below. There are many variations of this method (Ching, 1991; Upcraft, 1999).

Sample Form	
WHAT WORKED? +	WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT? -
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Faculty can easily draw the form on the chalkboard at the end of a session and engage the whole class in a constructive review of a session. Start positively by asking the class what went well or what worked in the session. You or a student can record the contributed comments in the first

column. Summarize the comments by briefly mentioning the behaviors and procedures you would like to see in future group work. Then ask the group to suggest what needs to be improved or what can be done differently in the future. Record those comments in the second column and summarize as before. Encourage students to identify specific behaviors or comments of group participants.

Both the collaborative process and the product or results can be assessed using the Plus/Minus Method. Here are some examples of questions that can be asked when assessing collaborative processes:

- How well did the group work together?
- How balanced was the participation of members of the group?
- How well did group members help each other in reaching a solution?
- Was there a tendency of certain members to monopolize the discussion?
- How open were group members to the ideas of others?
- How well prepared were members to contribute to the discussion?
- Were there members who were excessively argumentative?
- Can you identify some ideas that came out of the discussions that you would not have thought of as an individual?

This assessment process can be used in many different ways. It can be faculty led or student led. It can be used with a large group or with smaller groups. If there are multiple groups in session at the same time, each group can conduct its own assessment. The group leader or a group member can lead the assessment with another student as a recorder.

Faculty can also use the assessment form to obtain written feedback from each group member at the end of a session. This is a quick way to monitor group effectiveness early in the process. Highlights of the results can be summarized and shared with the class at the beginning of the next class session. Once shared, students and faculty can collaboratively identify ways to resolve the concerns expressed in the assessment. The process will help build ownership and commitment to improving group processes and skills.

2. Team Performance Assessment

The Team Performance Assessment Form is a method of assessing individuals and/or group performance by using a scale ranging from 0 to 4. The form places a value in being present in class and being engaged in a group session. The student who does not show up in class receives a “0” on the rating scale. A list of criteria is listed on the left with the rating scale on the right. See a partial example in the activity below. As a faculty member you, or you collaboratively with your students, can develop a form

that best represents criteria important to group success in your classroom situation.

The form can be used by faculty observing groups or by students assessing group members. It can also be combined with other assessment procedures, such as with qualitative questions. It provides a quick reading of what might be occurring in a session to assist in improving performance.

Work with one or two others, and review the form below. In the first column, revise any of the criteria listed and indicate why. Add other criteria that might be important for a group to succeed.						
Team Performance Assessment						
	No Show 0	Poor 1	Average 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	Score
Listens & speaks almost equally						
Values comments of others						
Always helps team reach a fair decision						
Well prepared for meetings						
TOTAL						

3. Collaboration Rubric

A “rubric” is a scale describing performance expectations and is often useful in assessing behavior which might be complex. It is based on observation of performance. Most rubrics contain the following features:

- Based on performance objectives or behavior
- Uses a scale or range to rate performance
- Has a range divided into levels that show the degree to which a standard has been met

Unlike the Team Assessment Performance form, the Collaboration Rubric describes the performance expected of a student in order to receive a particular rating. The form itself gives a student a clear idea of the standards of expectation and the rating one would receive based on performance. As a result, it is a harder form to construct because certain outcomes are more difficult to specify in words.

Work with a partner to complete the Collaboration Rubric. Fill in the blank blocks to complete each scale. Create your own rubric by identifying a behavior that is important in collaborative work. Share the results with another group or class.					
Collaboration Rubric					
	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Listens to Others	Never listens & always speaking	Seldom listens & usually speaking	Listens but sometimes speaks too often	Listens & speaks about equally	
Values Comments of Others	Usually argues with others			Never argues with others	
Shares Equally in Work					
Contributes Information					
TOTAL					

4. Group-Work Evaluation Form

The Group-Work Evaluation Form (Angelo & Cross, 1993) enables faculty to measure the students' ability to work productively with others. See sample form below.

The value of this form is the focus it places upon learning that might occur as a result of working collaboratively rather than independently. It asks a student:

- to identify something she has learned as a group member that she would not have learned on her own, and
- to identify something other group members have learned from her that they would not have learned had she not been a group member.

The activity below invites you to critique the Group-Work Evaluation form, adapt the form for your use, and consider ways to include students in the process of using assessment results to improve student performance.

Sample Group-Work Evaluation Form (Angelo & Cross, 1993)						
1. Overall, how effectively did your group work together on this assignment?	Poorly	Adequately	Well	Extremely Well		
2. Out of the five group members, how many participated actively most of the time?	None	One	Two	Three	Four	All Five
3. Out of the five group members, how many were fully prepared for the activity?	None	One	Two	Three	Four	All Five
4. Give one specific example of <u>something you learned from the group</u> that you would probably wouldn't have learned working alone.						
5. Give one specific example of <u>something the other group members learned from you</u> that they probably wouldn't have learned otherwise.						
6. Suggest one change the group could make to improve its performance.						

Answer the following questions pertaining to the Group-Work Evaluation form above. After you are done, share your answers with one or two others.

1. What do you like the best about the Group-Work Evaluation form?

2. How would you modify the form to suit what you need to assess in group work?

3. List at least two ways in which you would use the result of the Group-Work form.
 - a.

 - b.

4. Pick one item on your list in #3 above and describe how you would increase student involvement in the process.

References

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CHAPTER 8: Assessing Instruction and Courses while in Progress

Mid-Semester Diagnostic Instructional Feedback

One of the most powerful ways of obtaining formative feedback while your course is in progress is to invite someone into your classroom to do a mid-semester assessment of student concerns and/or instructional techniques.

This is particularly helpful when experimenting with new teaching practices and can be performed within a department by a trusted colleague or by a consultant from the UH Mānoa Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). Only the teacher can initiate a request for such feedback. Nevertheless, until one has experienced the benefits of the process, it can be imagined as intrusive into what many university teachers have come to feel as an almost private world, this time in the classroom that one spends with students. Yet the role of the consultant in this capacity is a very constructive one made possible by achieving certain critical conditions. These include: anonymity for students, confidentiality for the teacher, and the trust of both students and teacher that the consultant has no agenda in the outcome other than the improvement of teaching and learning for everyone involved in the course and participating in the feedback process at that time.

Students are not interested in taking part in an evaluation process at this point in the semester which does not provide some protections both for themselves and for their professor, perhaps most especially when they may have some critical remarks for him or her. In other words, for them to be willing to be open, they must hear and believe the assurance of the consultant that this evaluation is geared towards communication between themselves and their professor for the purpose of positive changes during the course. When explained to them the idea behind the evaluation, students grasp immediately that this is to be a constructive process, rather than one potentially designed by an administrative or departmental interest in surveillance of teaching faculty. This is something else in which students would not want to be participants; indeed, once they know that they are not being used in this way, they are willing to engage with this process to provide their professor with constructive and honest feedback. It is this backdrop of openness and honesty, for both faculty and students, that is the condition upon which both engage in the process.

CTE consultants are themselves teachers in their own fields, but in the role of consultant to others who teach, they employ a “third eye” on teaching and learning, which honors and respects the vast spectrum in which the work of teaching can be done and done well. The strength of this work with faculty and TAs is that it is knowledgeable, open and honest,

collaborative and derived from “walking the walk” of the teacher, and is thoroughly imbued with this shared professional and collegial experience. The expertise brought to those who request these services must be ever tempered with respect for, and knowledge of, the contexts inside which each faculty and TA is developing in their profession as teachers. What the consultant does bring to the table is knowledge, ideas, encouragement, honest feedback and strategies, as well as evidence that in higher education, pedagogical concepts, beliefs and practices continue to change. Teachers are encouraged in making adjustments to their practices based on: the feedback generated through the feedback from their students; their own interest in making changes and improving; and, the current literature on teaching and learning that is forming and informing changes in higher education. Results of the feedback process are transmitted through the consultant either through observation during the class period or by facilitation and working with students in an open-ended process. In all cases, feedback is transmitted by consultant to teacher, then returns to students in the form of an improved teaching and learning environment.

The UH-Mānoa Center for Teaching Excellence provides these mid-semester services that can be especially helpful to:

- graduate teaching assistants or junior faculty who are new to college teaching;
- senior faculty interested in reexamining their teaching strategies;
- instructors teaching a course for the first time or who have recently created or revised a course; and,
- faculty building a record of teaching development which can be used in personnel actions, such as contract renewal and tenure and promotion decisions.

CTE offers the following mid-semester services:

- Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID)
- Paper and Pencil Assessment (P&P)
- Classroom Observation (CO)
- Classroom Observation/Video Tape (COMBO)
- Video Tape Assessment (VID)

These services are described on the CTE web site at <http://www.cte.hawaii.edu> as follows:

Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID)

Available during four weeks during the mid-semester point of a semester

A consultant from CTE will visit a class for 50-75 minutes and, without the instructor being present, ask the students three questions about the class: 1) what has helped them learn, 2) what has made learning difficult, and 3) what suggestions do they have for change. Small groups of students discuss and

answer these questions. The consultant facilitates a discussion, collates and creates a formal document and meets with the instructor and passes on this information.

Paper and Pencil Assessment (P&P)

Available during four weeks during the mid-semester point of a semester

CTE will provide a master copy of comment forms (with the above three questions) which can be duplicated and distributed to your class. Students anonymously answer questions on what is going well with the course and what may need clarification or improvement. The instructor should review the forms and look for key comments or student consensus. A session could then be scheduled to review and discuss the results with the CTE consultant. Forms may be delivered to the Center for Teaching Excellence for compilation to assure anonymity.

Classroom Observation (CO)

Available during any point of a semester

Upon request, a CTE staff member will visit a class session to observe the teaching process and conduct a peer review. A follow-up session is scheduled with the CTE consultant to discuss the observations and recommendations.

Classroom Observation/Videotape (COMBO)

Available during any point of a semester

Upon request, a CTE consultant will visit the classroom and conduct an observation and evaluation of the session. At the same time, a camcorder can be recording the class, and the tape will be given to the instructor for private viewing. Instructor must provide VHS tape. A follow-up session will be scheduled to discuss the observations and recommendations.

Videotape Assessment (VID)

Available during any point of a semester

Upon request, a camcorder may be made available so that a class can be videotaped. The tape is given to the instructor who views and assesses the tape privately. The tape can then be given to a CTE consultant and a session can be scheduled to discuss the recorded material.

For More Information and Appointments

Please contact the Center for Teaching Excellence, Kuykendall 107, email: cte@hawaii.edu or web-site: <http://www.cte.hawaii.edu> or phone 956-6978.

Collaborative Classroom Assessment: Performed by Colleagues for One Another

In a professional and collegial exchange, colleagues within departments or colleges can perform a modified version of the instruments used by UH-Mānoa Center for Teaching Excellence consultants. In fact, a teacher can perform some of the following with his or her own class and students. Because complete anonymity is not possible in these scenarios, some of the substance that is possible to develop and assess when done by a consultant from CTE is not viewed as appropriate to cover when performed by colleagues within a department. The following set of guidelines make it clear that when the Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) is performed among colleagues, that the evaluation of *you, as an instructor, per se*, is not included in the assessment. Instead, it focuses on areas of your course or text materials or assignments that students believe could be improved. In balance, what one gains by engaging in this process for one another as colleagues is a greater sense of openness among others in the same field regarding teaching as well as some of their own expertise in teaching in a related area of study, which can enrich the assessment. The process can create a lively collaborative climate within departments among colleagues regarding issues of teaching and learning.

When performing the assessment at mid-point in the course, be mindful that the timing of the assessment and the process of using valuable class time and engaging students in the process at mid-point, makes it essential that feedback directed towards changes during the same semester is essential. The following guidelines have been developed by Dr. Bruce Berg of CSU-Long Beach. He writes: The logic behind SGIDs is quite simple—you or one of your colleagues asks your students how you are doing.

- The basic process involves collecting information from small groups in order to better assist you in strengthening your classroom instruction and the educational experience for students.
- It is *not* intended as an evaluation of you as an instructor, *per se*, but of areas in your course or text materials that students believe could be improved.

In this section, guidelines for gathering feedback through three methods follow: small group process, classroom observation, and focus group discussion. Examples of forms that can be used are provided where appropriate.

1. The SGID process includes the following elements:

- It is a voluntary process: Any student not wanting to participate will not be placed into a group.

- It is anonymous: Students should be instructed not to place their names or any identifiers on the form.
- It will not affect grades: Students must be reassured that they can say anything they want on the forms, and that nothing they say will affect their grades, since these forms are anonymous.

Procedures for conducting SGIDs:

- You begin by forming small groups of 4 to 6 students and appoint a recorder in each group.
- Have each group list what they believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the course, that everyone in the group agree on. If there are some items that the group does not agree upon, have them indicate how many people do agree on the item (two, three, etc.).
- Have students list the changes they would like to see made in the class. (Again have them seek consensual agreement.)
- Advise the groups they only have ten minutes to complete both tasks.
- Reconvene and record all the ideas under Strengths and Changes, asking for clarification and amplification. (Write the lists on the board.)

Alternatively, you can collect the form and examine the identified strengths and weaknesses privately. This is less dynamic and participatory, but it still provides good information. Here is an example of a form:

SGID Student Feedback Form

List each of the major strengths of this course. (What items such as lectures, texts, guest speakers, etc. are helping you learn?) Please also explain each item briefly:

<u>Strength</u>	<u>Explanation/Example</u>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

List changes that you would make in the course that you believe would assist your learning. Please explain how you think these changes might be made (e.g., change the textbook, add some videos, etc.):

Change

Way Change Might Be Made

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

2. Effective Classroom Observation Strategies

Classroom observations should never strike fear in the hearts of colleagues. They should always be conducted in a positive and constructive atmosphere. To be an effective and cooperative process, classroom observations should be a consultative process and not an isolated end product of themselves.

Students should be advised of why someone is in the room making observations. The observations should actually begin in a pre-visit conference between the observer and the observed. During this meeting both parties should:

- Discuss any systematic observation code sheet that might be used.
- Provide the course syllabus to the observer.
- Briefly discuss the topical area to be lectured on during the visit.
- Inform the observer of any problem students who might cause a distraction.
- Indicate things that the observer should watch for in the observed (eye contact with students, awareness of student names, use of the boards, style of teaching, etc.).
- Determine when, after the observation, the observer and observed can get together to discuss the observations.

In addition to any specific areas that the observer may be considering focusing on during the observations, the observer should attempt to capture a broad, more holistic sense of the class session.

Results of the visit should be written in a focused narrative format, signed and dated by the observer and a copy provided to the observed teacher. Feedback should be:

- **Honest**—but kind. Watch how you word things: It isn't what you say, but how you say it.
- **Accurate**: Be sure to use concrete examples whenever possible taken from the observation notes made during the visit.
- **Focused**: Discuss the observations systematically from the beginning to the end, indicating the strengths (what went well) and the distractions (what didn't go so well).
- **Constructed Action**: Comments and recommendations should be directed towards assisting the observed to become more self-aware about what he or she is doing well and not as well. It should not leave the observed party feeling poorly.

Discuss specific actions that the observed might take in an effort to integrate the information being offered by the observer. For example: add more use of the blackboard, keep your hands out of your pockets, investigate up-coming teaching skills workshops on campus, observe someone else who is more experienced as an instructor, etc. Here is an example of a how to organize comments of the observer so that the observation touches on a number of features.

In Class Observation Sheet

Observer Feedback

Narrative Comments

General Knowledge About:

The Topic:

The Students:

Class Organization:

Before Class Begins:

During the Introduction to the Lecture Topic:

The Body of the Lecture:

Summary at the Conclusion of the Lecture:

General Use of Time:

Pedagogy and Techniques:

Use of Room (walking around):

Use of Active Learning Strategies:

Style of Teaching (lecture, inclusive, etc.):

Use of Visual Aids:

Check on Student Understandings:

Handling of Questions:

Communication Skills:

Asks Questions of Students:

Listens to Student Responses:

Uses Appropriate Hand Gestures:

Uses Appropriate Facial Responses (e.g., head nods):

Maintains Eye Contact:

Student Performance:

Indicates Interest Level During Lecture:

Any Demonstration of Critical Thought:

General Comments:

3. The Basics of Cooperative Focus Groups: A Step-By-Step Guide

Traditionally focus groups are defined as a kind of interview designed for small groups. In assessing one's class or course, a focus group provides a dynamic way to gain insights from the students. While focus groups are fairly easy and time effective, they do take some preparation. And we

would recommend using class period time because it would be unwieldy to attempt to find a common time outside of class for students to meet. So, consider some of the steps to take before one begins conducting a focus group.

Before the Focus Group Begins:

1. Decide on a time and location for the focus group session. This might be during class time, provided you have a small group. (You should keep the size of the actual focus group to between eight and ten students.)
 - If you have a large class, you might want to break the full class into smaller groups, and have the others work on some project. (Peer work in group projects is a very good pedagogical strategy anyway.)
 - You might want to hold the focus group in the center of the class, and ask the other students to write down their views and responses to questions (on a sheet of paper or index card). Turn these in at the conclusion of the session, thereby producing additional assessment data.
 - Once you have a workable sized group, you can move to the rear of the classroom, and begin the focus group interview.
 - Alternatively, you might select a time away from the class, and outside the classroom (a department seminar or conference room).
2. Choose the general area of assessment for your focus group. Remember, unlike surveys, where you might cover an array of areas with various questions, in a focus group, you will only be addressing three or four key concerns.
 - Identify what you believe are the most important issues for you to know about (e.g., is the coverage of the course adequate, are tests addressing class lectures and text materials well, is the textbook working, etc.)
3. Decide what specific questions will be asked. Again, remember there will only be time for three or four questions if you are to keep the discussion going, and limit the time to about 30-60 minutes.
4. Once you have determined what questions to ask, consider what order to ask them.
 - Consider the logical flow of the questions, what might stimulate further discussion, and time limits. You could run out of time, so you may want to avoid placing the most important question last.
5. Consider the logistics of the focus group session.
 - Make sure you have notified the class in advance of the session, if you are holding the focus group in class to ensure attendance.

- Be sure to reserve the conference room, or seminar room on the scheduled date, if you plan to hold the focus group outside of the classroom.

- Be sure to arrange to have a tape recorder available, and/or someone to observe and take notes.

During the Focus Group:

1. If you are conducting the focus group on your own class (we will discuss the merits and liabilities of this later) advise students that whatever they say during the focus group session will not affect their grades. If you are facilitating the focus group for a colleague, introduce yourself and explain what the focus group information will be used for.

- Advise the group that the session will be recorded

- Advise them that their responses will remain confidential (assuming these are not your own students).

2. Ask each student to count-off and then request that they identify themselves and each other only by their number, and never their real names throughout the course of the focus group session.

- Remind them to identify themselves by their number when answering any of the questions during the session.

3. Be sure to begin with your scheduled (planned) key question. However, recognize that you may need to probe students when they offer too brief or skimpy responses. It is always safe to simply draw out more information by saying, "Please, tell me more about that."

4. At the conclusion of the focus group session, be sure to thank all of the participants. Assure the students that their input will be carefully considered and used to improve the course during that very semester.

Organizing the Focus Group Data:

1. Make a verbatim transcription of the tape-recorded session.

2. Examine the responses that students offered to the questions posed to them.

3. Share and discuss the results with your colleagues (especially those instructing the same course). If you have conducted this focus group session for a colleague, discuss the results with him or her.

4. Provide a feedback session for the students who participated (or the full class). Discuss with the students what elements of the course you do plan on adjusting, and perhaps how.

Resources:

Bruce L. Berg, Department of Criminal Justice, California State University-Long Beach, "Assessing Courses and Faculty Colleagues Using Qualitative Strategies," Pacific Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research Conference (PacPAIR), Honolulu 2002.

CHAPTER 9: Last Thoughts

Ah, not to be cut off,
not through the slightest partition
shut out from the law of the stars.

The inner—what is it?
if not intensified sky,
hurled through with birds and deep
with the winds of homecoming.

Rainier Maria Rilke

One of the most powerful ways that human beings learn is to model what we see already existing. If we as faculty strive to initiate students to collaborative models but are ourselves at a loss for how to make that occur, is it not because we long for some sense of collegiality that goes deeper than the norms of professional and academic collegial relations? In *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, Parker Palmer begins a discussion with the poem by Rilke above. He goes on to say, “We yearn for community with the other because we know that with it we would feel more at home in our lives, no longer strangers to one another and aliens to the earth.” In Palmer, this expression of isolation is specific to all divisive structures of institutional education, where there exists profound privatization of academic life. Many who teach consider ourselves to be rather introverted and so it is likely that some part of the lure of teaching historically derives from something fundamentally private. But when this takes the form of institutionalized practices that are divisive to an academic community, we are left truly alone in our own classrooms. If that were not so, our classroom dynamics would already look and feel very different than they do now.

When we who teach lack open exchange with one another, what we experience is a loss of resource and renewal. Who better to speak with about one's inner life and outer experience as a teacher if not another who walks that same walk? Yet, this remains a complex terrain of our collegial relations. Certainly, the ground rules or goals for faculty relations within departments and the institution are not set in terms that create for us the sort of collaborative environment we have been discussing in this guide, when asking students to work collaboratively together to problem solve or brainstorm. For this reason, for many faculty the classroom space holds the potential as an outer expression of some of their own inner motivations for having entered into the profession of teaching. Some faculty speak of the classroom as oasis or sanctuary within a frame of institutional and departmental conflict over contending values and pressures for legitimacy

and resources. To the extent that this statement represents reality for faculty, it may also signal that relations of collaboration within one's courses or classrooms can come to carry an undue burden.

If faculty find collaboration among ourselves difficult, we must be cautious about not rejecting it as unachievable, or minimizing it as lacking value for students. To some extent, we may be limited in our experiences to provide a living model of collaboration that our students are able to observe and experience. And this may impact upon our capacities to define useful, achievable activities and goals for them in our classes when proposing collaborative criteria and guiding them in working together. Nevertheless, we can begin by trying some of the activities and processes and observing where there are successes. Then, by scaffolding or building onto those successes through fine tuning further our syllabi, grading structures, and expectations of ourselves and our students, followed by integrating course material and processes in compatible ways, we can grow into the role of collaborator, mentor or facilitator for students in these efforts.

When working on research or writing projects with undergraduate or graduate students, we must be extraordinarily cautious about the value of the labor of students and about providing significant credit for their participation. Disciplines and fields of study vary greatly in how credit is signified, and this guide won't attempt to define specific criteria. Perhaps just to reiterate the Hippocratic Oath to "do no harm," to err on the side of generosity and to provide recognition to those who follow in our footsteps.

When We Are At Our Best

Here we borrow from an exercise that Parker Palmer uses in faculty workshops to help faculty generate and explore metaphor and images related to who we are when we are teaching at our best. It can be done privately or along with others. Palmer asks faculty to fill in the blank in the following statement, and we invite you to do so now, quickly without censoring or editing:

"When I am teaching at my best, I am like a _____."

Once you have hit upon an image or metaphor, allow it to unfold and to inform you more about your inner understanding of your identity and integrity as a teacher. Take some time to write what is unfolding in your imagination here:

This space is expandable...

Having done that, see if you can refine those ideas further:

As is this one!

Now, write what these thoughts might suggest to you about your teaching practice when you reflect upon any teaching challenge that you experience:

You know what to do with this space...

It Takes a Village: Support of the Entire Institution

In a recent issue of *NEA Advocate* on the collective responsibility for all students' learning, there is a discussion of the role of the entire institution in supporting efforts of faculty and staff in their work relating to students. It is significant that at the heart of that effort is another level of collaboration that is critical for success:

Faculty and staff need the support of the entire institution. They need time, the most precious commodity, to plan and collaborate in the interests of student learning. Collaboration may take a variety of forms: conversations on the fly, informal lunch discussions, formal planning sessions, and daylong institutes. And faculty need appropriate rewards for their efforts in teaching and learning. Collective responsibility for student learning is an organizational issue as well as an instructional one.

NEA Advocate

For those who experience authentic institutional support, such as collegial support among faculty and within departments—which are further articulated in the tenure, promotion, and renewal process—the creation of collaborative possibilities are far more likely to develop. Collaborative work, lacking some of these institutional supports, is nevertheless achievable with remarkable successes.

...there is no essential conflict between loving to teach and working to reform education.

Parker J. Palmer

What we know about the human condition in environments and communities in which human expectation is simultaneously elevated, inclusive, democratic and humane, is that most people cannot resist rising to their highest level. Particularly when others are engaged in the same process, because the sense of being a part of something significant is profound and compelling. Indeed, a good part of what makes such activity significant is that it is in concert *with* others—by its very nature, collaborative. This is particularly so for the large numbers of students at UH-Mānoa who are born and raised in Hawai'i or in other island communities in the Pacific. For them, the frame of reference is that of "island," where relations of people and of knowledge are reciprocal and in continual return. This is framed in part through and by island geography as well as by the cultures that hold residence here and therefore relates to spatial configurations of knowledge and experience. This way of knowing and being that alters each particular person functions as much on a meta-level as it does on the physical or social. For continent or landmass-based in-land folk, this can be initially difficult to grasp, but eventually is derived from the process by which they find their place within this island culture. It is something that transcends personality or style or self-presentation or what we think of as "skill" or "knowledge," but comes to show itself in the many ways that a teacher engages in-relation with students and colleagues. Most astonishing is how this altered way of knowing and being comes to be expressed in how these teachers come to configure and communicate their field of expertise and knowledge. It *is* the case that students here at UH-Mānoa are highly attuned to this in a teacher and will respond well to it when they find it there.

Towards that opportunity and that promise, as much for faculty as for students, we who participated in the creation of this guide offer it as a way of suggesting many large and small but significant ways that alter the terms of relations between and among faculty and students. In so doing, we can all become transformed by the time we spend together.

Appendix: Faculty-Student Undergraduate Interaction University of Hawai'i at Mānoa 1993-1999 and National Norms

Faculty-student interaction has increased from 1993 to 1999. However, faculty-student interactions concerning academic programs and career plans are lower than national norms.

Percent Often and Very Often

		1993	1996	1999	Norm
1	Talked with your instructor about information related to a course you were taking (grades, make-up work, assignments, etc.)	46	46	52	53
2	Discussed your academic program or course selection with a faculty member			32	40
3	Discussed ideas for a term paper or other class project with a faculty member	22	20	28	31
4	Discussed your career plans and ambitions with a faculty member	13	13	21	27
5	Worked harder as a result of feedback from an instructor			48	48
6	Socialized with a faculty member outside of class (had a snack or soft drink, etc.)	4	3	6	12
7	Participated with other students in a discussion with one or more faculty members outside of class			13	16
8	Asked your instructor for comments and criticisms about your academic performance	19	20	21	26
9	Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's expectations and standards			40	40
10	Worked with a faculty member on a research project	4	3	7	9

Source: 1993, 1996, 1999 CSEQ