

THE SGID PROCESS: A TOOL FOR MIDTERM EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION

If you have read the brief description of the SGID method, you probably have a good idea of the facilitator's role. Here are some further explanations and ideas that might help you function more effectively in preparing for and facilitating the SGID student discussions as well as in facilitating the instructor feedback session.

Preparation

Before the SGID session with students, you should meet with the course instructor to clarify the instructor's expectations and to establish meeting details. Information you will need to know includes:

- Course meeting place
- Date and time of SGID session
- Number of students in class
- Media for recording feedback (chalkboard or overhead).

Establish the time the SGID will begin can be very important. Instructors often like to lecture for the first part of a class session and allow for the SGID session at the end of the class. In doing so, they sometimes run overtime or don't anticipate student questions at the end of their lecture; they thus encroach on time you need for the discussion. Classes of only 20 or 30 students should only need twenty minutes, but larger classes require twenty-five to thirty minutes. Be sure to clarify this with the instructor.

It will also help if you discuss with the instructor the course objectives, strengths, areas of concern, and any other information regarding the class that the instructor thinks might be useful.

While you don't need to know anything about the course content or structure to facilitate the SGID method, you will spend less time asking for clarification of students' comments if you familiarize yourself with the course issues beforehand. This also builds a case for the later feedback session.

At the SGID Student Session

The most important thought to remember is to keep the process moving at a brisk pace. You have only a limited amount of time, and you want to give students the maximum of time to think about the course. Proceed directly into the process. Although some may choose to leave the classroom door behind when you come in (this should be done confidentiality also), by positioning yourself near the door while giving the instructions, if that seems natural and/or by stating outright that it is to their benefit to remain.

Following is a brief introduction:

"My name is _____, and your instructor has asked me to come in today to help him/her collect some information about how this course is going. This method is different from the evaluation questionnaires you usually fill out at the end of the semester because you don't have to write anything and you can be specific about things you like or are uncomfortable with. In fact, the more specific you are, the more useful your feedback will be to your instructor. I'll be getting together with your instructor to feedback the information and suggestions that you generate. This is a chance for you to possibly change the way that the course goes for the remainder of the semester.

I'll run through what I want you to do and then we'll begin.

First, divide into groups of about five or six

Next, choose a spokesperson for each group who will be responsible for keeping notes

Then discuss these three questions in your group (write the key words on the board):

1. What do you like about this course?
2. What do you think needs improvement?
3. What specific change?

Take 5 to 7 minutes to discuss these, and reach a decision about your group's most important responses to each of these questions. Then we'll come together as a class and share the ideas."

At this point you might begin moving up the aisles and facilitate the forming of groups, pointing out some natural groupings. During the discussions remain available to answer questions and assist groups in reaching decisions. You might wish to announce how much time is remaining and what questions they should be on. As the group discussion time draws to a close or the groups seem "talked out", announce that they have another minute to "wrap up". This will provide a structured close time that won't interfere with the group reporting.

To save time, you should elicit one or two students to record on paper for you everything you write on the board. You should check their notes with your postings before you erase the board.

Have a spokesperson report one of their group responses, then move on to another group, asking for an additional item. Record responses on the board. You should get about six to ten different items, reporting the rounds if needed. Try to use their exact words and phrases, asking for clarification when necessary. Remember that it is not necessary for you to understand all of the suggestions (especially technical or subject-specific comments), as long as you confirm that the instructor will understand it. If the students make a general comment (i.e., "we don't like the book") try to help them identify specifics about their likes or dislikes. ("What don't you like about the book?" or "What would make it better?"). Once again, quick pacing keeps the momentum and saves you the needed time. When there is apparent disagreement with a stated

response (i.e. some groans), seek a show of hands for agreement/disagreement. Estimate percentages to save time. Make sure you leave sufficient time for the last item - Suggestions - since it provides critical information to the instructor.

After all groups have reported, and if there is time remaining, you may finish the evaluation process by one or more of the following:

- Offer a quick, general summary and check if the class agrees
- Ask for a show of hands on each comment to sample class consensus
- Ask for disagreement or other reactions to the listed suggestions.
- Ask for individual comments not offered by the groups
- Ask the class to address any issues identified to you by the instructor that the students did not address fully in their feedback
- Repeat what the next steps in the process will be.

When you have covered the above topics, or more likely, run out of time, collect the student suggestions and remove the information from the board or overhead to ensure confidentiality.

Instruction Feedback Session

Review of Classroom Procedure: Some instructors are not familiar with the SGID process, and a brief description of the process you followed with the class will help them understand and evaluate the data. You should also share some descriptive data, such as whether any students left or did not participate (reassure the instructor that this is not an uncommon occurrence), and any other important observations you might have made during the group discussion.

Review of Data: Share with the instructor verbatim responses of the student groups. Provide clarification where necessary. Most instructors tend to equate evaluations with telling them what they are doing wrong. Ideally, however, the evaluation should help them to focus on their strengths also. You can aid them to do this by identifying and emphasizing these strengths and suggesting ways in which they might be maximized. This might be done by presenting the student "likes" first; to give them emphasis, and by underscoring the responses that seemed to be most important to the students. You can also help to put issues in perspective by adding any additional information or observations from the clarification and discussion that followed the student suggestions.

Summary and Analysis: Help the instructor to identify major themes and issues of the student data. Your experience as an instructor will allow you to provide insight and interpretations as to the possible motivations and underlying issues that the students raised. You can also help the instructor to keep perspective and recognize that student viewpoints are not the only important perception of the teaching process. The instructor may feel some defensiveness, and your empathy and identification with experiences from your background should dispel some of this feeling.

Small Group Instructional Diagnosis
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