**Small Group Facilitation Fundamentals – Facilitator Outline**

**2 min**: Have participants fill out an Entry Ticket with the following directions: Brainstorm individually – *Think about a time when you had a “good” (whatever “good” means to you) small group experience. What made it “good”?*

**3 min**: Facilitate introductions and describe the goals of the workshop: a) to contextualize good facilitation with observations from Brown courses, b) to get hands-on practice facilitating in a low risk environment, and c) (OPTIONAL) to get hands-on practice writing team contracts.

**~ 20 min**: Participants form groups of three to discuss their Entry Tickets.

* **5 min**: Share your thoughts on good small group experiences within your group.
* **5 min**: Summarize your discussion and report out to the whole group.
* **10 min**: Hand out and talk through the Best Practices Handout and debrief.

**~ 25 min**: Participants form new groups of four to work through Fermi practice problems.

* **20 min**: Groups work on each of four problems for five minutes each until everyone has been a facilitator at least once.
* **5 min**: Summarize your experience and report out to the whole group.

**~ 30 min (OPTIONAL)**: Participants learn about team contracts and practice writing their own team contract.

* Allow participants to leave at this point if their facilitation experience will not include team contracts.
* **2 min**: Brainstorm individually – *Think about a time when you had a “bad” (whatever “bad” means to you) small group experience. What made it “bad”?*
* **5 min**: Describe team contracts and the rationale behind them.
* **5 min**: Share your thoughts on bad small group experiences within your group.
* **10 min**: Based on your discussion, create a list of expectations, rules, or guidelines you would include in any team contract.
* **8 min**: Report your team contracts out to the whole group.
* Hand out example team contracts as additional resources to wrap up.

Total = 50 or 80 minutes with 10 minute buffer (either 1 hour or 1.5 hour timeslot)

**Best Practices Handout for SGF Fundamentals Training**

This list of facilitator behaviors and skills evolved from observations of actual introductory STEM courses at Brown University during the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 academic years. Please note: while the list represents a variety of situations and experiences, it is by no means a complete list of all the ways to facilitate well.

Best Practices

**Ask students to write their names on the board at the beginning of the session.**

*Why?* Breaks the activation barrier to writing on the board, and helps facilitators and other students learn names.

**Use questioning strategies (a.k.a. the Socratic Method).**

*Why?* Guides students through the problem solving process rather than simply providing an answer.

*Examples:*

* “Can you take me through your thinking on this problem?”
* “How did you arrive at your question? What is the sticking point in this problem?”
* If the student has offered an incorrect response, rather than saying “That is wrong,” try “What led you to that conclusion?” or, after working through the problem correctly, “In what situation would the answer you initially gave be correct?”

**Model board use for students.**

*Why?* Encourages students to follow your example and extend your work on the board after you have moved on to another group.

**Provide students space to struggle.**

*Why?* Encourages students to author their and their peers’ own learning, and builds comfort with uncertainty.

*Examples:*

* Let students discuss each other’s questions.
* Have students write on the whiteboard or explain to one another.
* Ask students to discuss as a team before calling you over.
* Spend less than three minutes with a team at a time (enough time to gauge their understanding and drop a hint if necessary before moving to next team).

**Give context-rich, real-world responses to student questions whenever possible.**

*Why?* Gives students a glimpse into the relevance of the subject in the real world, and helps students connect with the facilitator through sharing personal narratives about the subject.

**Encourage students by genuinely complimenting their work and effort.**

*Why?* Makes students feel as though they belong in the course.

*Examples:*

* “Your work looks great! I can see that you are approaching this as a scientist.”
* “Good effort so far. Let’s take a closer look at this step…” (good way to remain encouraging, but also address concerns with students’ work)
* Avoid praising the right answer for its own sake and replace statements like “That is right!” with statements like the first example above.

**Best Practices Handout for SGF Fundamentals Training (Continued)**

Behaviors to Avoid

**Try NOT to use controlling or condescending language because:**

* telling students exactly how to do something stifles their own creative processes and limits deep learning, and
* making students feel foolish reduces motivation and desire to persist.

**Try NOT to erase student work to replace with your own because:**

* it is a form of controlling language (see above).

*EXCEPTION:* Students have given their permission for you to erase their work.

**Try NOT to hover over students’ shoulders because:**

* it is the opposite of providing students space to struggle (see best practices);
* many students find hovering annoying or, worse, anxiety-inducing; and
* spending too much time with one team limits their deep processing and alienates other teams.

*NOTE:* If you find yourself hovering because there are not enough teams to keep you busy (e.g., three teams and two facilitators) you can send one of the facilitators home or consider rearranging staffing to better fit the session attendance.

**Try NOT to append “basically,” “simply,” “obviously,” etc. to your explanations because:**

* it is a form of condescending language (see above), and
* whatever you are explaining may not seem simple to students.

*NOTE:* Some people use these as spacer words (e.g., uh, um) to cover thinking time. Be aware and try to reduce usage if you do the same.

**Try NOT to ask questions like “Does that make sense to you?” or “Do you get it?” because:**

* they are risky for students to answer (students must verbalize their lack of understanding).

REPLACEMENT 1: Move focus to facilitator instead with questions like “Did ***I*** answer your question?” or “Was ***my*** explanation clear?”

REPLACEMENT 2: Move focus to content instead with questions like “Can you describe [insert concept here]?” or “What would happen if [insert concept here]?”

**Try NOT to use handheld electronic devices while facilitating because:**

* it makes you appear unavailable even if you are using the device for purposes related to the course.

NOTE: If you must answer a phone call, reply to a text message, or check your email, move to the hallway or outside of the room for clear separation from the session.

**Fermi Practice Problems for SGF Fundamentals Training**

Please form groups of four and work through the four Fermi practice problems below. Your group has five minutes to work on each problem. During this time, three group members act as “students” and one as the “facilitator.” Students work on problem while facilitator facilitates. While playing the role of facilitator, consider what we have just discussed about best practices and try some of them out for yourself (see Best Practices Handout). After the five minutes are up, rotate the role of facilitator and students and go to the next problem until all group members have been the facilitator at least once. At the end can ask facilitators how they might use these strategies in their class and share with group. Ask facilitators to reflect on part of the practice they found most useful and what they found most challenging. [Delete these instructions when handing these problems out for the actual activity.]

1. How many snow shovelers would take to clear the sidewalks on the Brown campus in 24 hours?
2. How many cars park on the Brown campus on a weekday in the summer?
3. How many MacBook Airs would fit under the desk at which you are currently sitting?
4. How many cups of coffee are consumed daily in the average academic building at Brown?

**Addressing Challenges in Facilitation – Facilitator Outline**

**5 min**: Have participants fill out an Entry Ticket with the following directions: Brainstorm individually – *What are some strategies that have worked well for you to address challenges when facilitating? What are some challenges you are still struggling to overcome?*

**5 min**: Facilitate introductions and describe the goals of the workshop: a) to troubleshoot ongoing challenges from previous experiences facilitating in Brown courses and c) to get hands-on practice addressing challenging scenarios in facilitation in a low risk environment.

**~ 25 min**: Participants form groups of three to discuss their Entry Tickets.

* **15 min**: Share your thoughts on challenges and strategies within your group.
* **10 min**: Summarize your discussion and report out to the whole group.

**~ 35 min**: Participants learn about sharing and receiving feedback and brainstorm how to address common problem solving session scenarios.

* **5 min**: Introduce the Problem Solving Session Scenarios Handout.
* **3 min**: Participants form groups of three to discuss the scenarios. Either assign each group a scenario, or allow groups to choose a scenario that interests them. If any participant feels strongly about discussing a scenario from their personal experience, rather than those from the handout, they are free to propose this to their group.
* **2 min**: Brainstorm individually about the questions on the handout.
* **15 min**: Share your thoughts within your group.
* **10 min**: Summarize your discussion and report out to the whole group.

**10 min**: Facilitate whole group discussion and wrap up.

* **2 min**: Brainstorm individually – *What concerns remain for you about facilitation that were not addressed during our conversations today?*
* **8 min**: Report out to the whole group and wrap up.

Total = 80 minutes with 10 minute buffer (1.5 hour timeslot)

**Problem Solving Session Scenarios for Addressing Challenges Training**

You are co-facilitating a large problem solving session with several other people where students work in teams of three to solve problems from a worksheet packet. During a particular session, you observe the following scenarios:

1. One student is dominating their team. They are the only student speaking in the team, working on the whiteboard, and asking you questions. The other students in the team can be seen frantically writing as the other student dictates the problem to them.
2. A team of students is very quiet. They do not ask any questions or use the whiteboard.
3. All of the students in a team can be seen working on separate problems.
4. Two of the students in a team can be seen working on the same problem, but the third student is on a different problem farther into the packet.
5. Two of the students in a team can be seen working on the same problem, but the third student is on a different problem a few problems behind in the packet.
6. All of the students in the team you are working with are stumped by one of the problems and reluctant to move on until they solve it.
7. A student asks you a question and you do not know the answer.
8. A team of students is very loud and disruptive to others. They can be heard talking about a recent sporting event they all attended and are no longer working on the problems.
9. One student is overheard being rude to others and making inappropriate comments.
10. A student comes 20 minutes late and all the teams already have three students.

Choose one of the scenarios above and brainstorm a) how you would approach the scenario and b) how doing so might be difficult.