TLA 2013 Participants

The following are the latest versions of handouts and instructions used in past presentations on Meta-Active learning.

These instructions include overviews of each activity as well as suggestions for how it could be used in the library instruction environment. As well, there are copies of the instructions used in the workshop itself so that you can see what previous participants were working with.

We hope you find these insightful and useful.

Sincerely,

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5 Active Learning Techniques for Library Instruction

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These are the 5 Active Learning (AL) Techniques that were covered in the Workshop. They are summarized here for you to reflect on and adapt to your own instruction sessions.

Expert Groups

Our entire workshop was organized as an expert group activity. The premise behind an expert group activity is that students become highly involved in peer teaching. Not only do they have to study the information of their own subject, but they must assimilate the information in such a way that they are able to articulate it to their peers in an effective way.

The Basics for an Expert Group activity are as follows:

1. Students start in groups. These groups are designated their home groups and can be organized in whatever way you think is appropriate. We identified them with the letters A-E today, and indicated the letters on the table tents and one side of the participant cards.

2. Students are assigned to participate in expert groups. Again, these groups can be organized in whatever way you think is appropriate. We used the numbers 1-5 today to identify the expert groups, and indicated the numbers on the other side of the table tent and participant cards to make for easier transitions.

3. Students perform a task, activity, or self study within the expert groups. The idea is for students to become experts at their assigned task or topic so that they can return to teach it to their peers. Their learning can be guided by specific questions they must answer, tasks they must perform, actions they have to take, research they need to do, but will vary according to the objectives of the lesson. In our example, we had each expert group practice an active learning technique that can easily be integrated into instruction.

4. Students return to their home group to teach their peers about the activity. This can be a structured or unstructured teaching. it's up to you. Structured discussion can ensure that students touch on points that you wish them to, but this is unnecessary for some activities as they'll guide themselves where you wish. In our activity, we had participants sum up their experiences at the expert group and describe the activity.

This activity can be used for topics like identifying properties of information sources, evaluations of database content, or assessing credibility of sources. Anything that can be easily divided into separate groupings for students to work on is a potential

Think Pair Share

Among the simplest of the active learning techniques, Think Pair Share (TPS) is often overlooked, but is incredibly easy to integrate into your classes. The basics of the TPS are as follows:

1. Students are presented with a question, task, or scenario to think about. They are given time to work on this question alone and reflect privately.

2. Students pair up with each other to share and discuss their findings/thoughts.

3. This paired-share can then progress to a larger group or whole class sharing.

Again, the level of structure in these shares can be as structured or unstructured as you see fit. However, providing questions to ponder as students work to share what they've been looking at can help pull students along who need more specific guidance. As long as you make sure that your questions are open ended, you will be able to avoid truncating discussion.

You can have students TPS on almost any question you would have discussion around in your sessions and not lose much time in the activity. You can also integrate this technique as part of a larger technique or activity.

Some examples of use have included TPS on areas of research and how one might approach their strategy, examining selected citations to see which were most relevant to their research and why, or assessing credibility of websites.

Baggie Stories

Baggie stories are a great way to have individual or small group effort combine into one large group product for discussion. While a similar activity could be achieved with classic overhead transparancies, the symbolism of the final product would be lost. In some ways, this can be seen as similar to the expert group in that each group is responsible for a certain kind of content on one of the baggies to teach the whole class. However, the teaching is a group effort.

1. Students are given ziploc style baggies split down the sides and sharpies/overhead markers. The ziploc style bags should be unmarked on the sides. Sharpies/overhead markers are preferable to dry erase because dry erase can be too easily smudged. Bags should come pre marked with sequential markings (letters, numbers) so that they'll sequentially zip together properly.

2. Students are given a topic about which they will work on populating the bags with information. The ideal type of task is going to be sequential or process oriented, but categorical topics can work as well. Students can be assigned to do research to back up what they're doing, pull from a textbook, creatively generate their own ideas or recall from memory (which has potential for informal assessment).

3. Students are divided into groups designated by the stage of the process or category that is being examined. In our activity today, our overall topic was Steps in Purchasing a House. Individual categories included "Selecting a Realtor" and "Prepare your Finances"

4. Students write up their 'stories' on the baggies for the sections that they're responsible for. You may provide specific guidance on what is required for a section to be complete or leave it up to the students and have it fleshed out in the discussion afterwards. Try not to be too prescriptive though, lest you turn a generative activity into something rote.

5. Baggies are collected and linked together using the zips. This package is then reviewed on an overhead with the entire class in discussion. We skipped on the overhead since we're working in such small groups today, but this is the point where you can discuss, other students can comment and ask questions about sections they weren't a part of to help flesh out the document even more.

This kind of activity can be used for such topics as describing different information sources, exploring steps in the research process or activities similar to that of the expert group activity.

FishBowl

The fishbowl activity is a highly student driven activity. The basic idea in a fish bowl is that there are students in 'the bowl' who act as fish. They perform a task or carry on a discussion and are observed by those who remain outside the bowl. After a time, they switch places. This activity has a number of different directions you can take it, as it can be a forum for discussion or one for observation and learning. Depending on the approach you choose will depend on how much external guidance and support students need.

Basic Rules of the Fish Bowl:

- Students in the bowl (the fish) are not aware of their observers. They shouldn't pay attention to anything the observers are saying as they make note of what the fish are doing, and simply continue their discussion or task.
- The fish should vocalize what they are doing or thinking as much as possible. Minimal silence should be happening. This is important especially for task based fishbowls because it informs the observers what motivations are for certain actions.
- The fish can communicate with each other. Sharing ideas is good, and helps make things more vocal to make them more observable.
- Observers should make note of what is working and not working for the fish, but are NOT to interfere or influence what the fish are doing. (**Don't tap the glass!**). It can be helpful to create a worksheet or sample questions for students who are observing to help guide them.

1. Students are broken into groups. These groups can be of any size depending on the task to be accomplished, but generally 4 is the minimum that this setup will work with. Discussion based fish bowls will work best with larger groups so there are more people participating in the discussion.

2. First, the initial group of fish completes the task or participates in discussion surrounding a given topic. In our example today, participants were building the tallest tower they could using specific materials. However, in library settings, possible tasks and discussions include topics of information ethics, performing unaided searches, or critiquing individual sources for credibility, etc.

3. After a period of time, students switch places. The observers have a chance to discuss things further and can either be directed to take a different perspective or focus on a different aspect of a topic, or they can use what they've learned about unsuccessful ways to complete a task to try and get better results than the first group of fish. The initial fish are now observers and have a chance to take note of the new discussion or the fresh ideas at performing a task so they can compare to their own approaches and learn.
4. Students are then asked to discuss the results of both sets of fish. What actions made the task more or less successful, etc. Or, students can address specific questions about the discussions as follow up. This can then be taken up on a broader class level (if the fishbowl is already class sized then you don't need to worry about escalating it).

In our own library we've implemented the fishbowl for keyword searching. First students search in a database looking for information on a given topic. Then after the switch, the 2nd set of fish search, but they have a 'cheat sheet' of search tips. Discussion afterwards compares results, what caused problems and how results were improved by using the search strategies.

Placemats

Placemats are a visual tool, a graphical organizer that encourages students to work together simultaneously. Students are all expected to contribute, but are in a safe environment because they can contribute without having to identify their own contribution to the activity.

Essentially, you take a large piece of paper. It can be chart paper or a sheet of 11” by 14”. In the center of the paper you put a circle or square where the theme for the activity should be. This will guide what your students do in the surrounding regions. You want to divide this into 4 regions on average, but you can do more if you wish or need to but you’ll need bigger paper usually to provide students space.

Each region gets dedicated to one category that relates to the central topic, or it can be instances of that topic that are being evaluated.

For example, you could have a central theme of credibility and 4 examples for students to work on around the outside where each square is dedicated to a particular resource or citation to analyze. Students would offer reasons for why that source was credible or not in each square.

Alternatively, students could have a central theme of information sources, and each region around the central theme would be dedicated to identifying the properties of these information sources.

In our example we used the placemat to cover the information timeline. How do we get information immediately after an event? And what are the advantages and disadvantages of these sources?

As students work on the placemat, they add one point to a region, and then rotate the placemat and work in the next region. This continues around until the regions are populated, and allows students to gain inspiration from the ideas of their peers.

Regions can be further subdivided into smaller regions for comparing and contrasting or integrating other activities into this organizer.

Think Pair Share

The Think Pair Share is a simple activity that provides for self reflection, discussion and peer teaching.

In your Expert Group, please complete the following:

1. Identify pairs. These will be the people you will first share with, so it's a good idea to place yourself near them.

2. In your group, read over the options for topics on the following page. Identify the topic that you will be working on.

3. Take about 5 minutes and think about the scenario that has been selected. Brainstorm your own answers to the provided questions.

4. Pair up with your partner. Each of you should take a moment to share your points, discuss areas of difference and see if you reached consensus on some points for the same reasons. This should also only take about 5 or so minutes.

5. Proceed to continue this discussion in a larger group with all pairs together.

Congratulations! You've just completed a TPS! Proceed to page 3.

Think, Pair, Share:

<u>Topic:</u> The 82nd Texas State Legislative approved budget cuts which have adversely affected libraries throughout the state.

- How have these measures impacted your library, as a whole?
- What types of challenges do you face, now that you are required to do more, with less?

<u>Topic:</u> Preparing for the annual TAKS tests require a great deal of effort and large portion of class time.

- What can be done to minimize the impact?
- What do you consider the benefits of the overall test?

<u>Topic:</u> The City of Houston instituted mandatory water conservation measures August 2011, with fines for violations ranging from $150.00 to $2000.00.

- What measures would you use to save your prize winning plants and shrubs from dying, now that those restrictions are in place?
- Because of the drought your yard no longer meets the standards set by your home owners association. How would you prepare yourself if your HOA should decide to take action?

Now that you've experienced a TPS in full, try the following using the same style:

<u>Topic:</u> You've just learned about the TPS learning method. Great! Now you're going back to your home library and you want to try and make use of this basic method in some of your lessons.

- What are some topics that you can imagine using this method with?
- How might you frame your questions for your students using these topics?

Baggie Stories

This is a low tech way for students to work efficiently in separate groups, to pull together a final product useful for learning in the whole group.

Today you're going to create a baggie story of your own. This story is going to be about preparing to buy a house.

Each person in your group should take the following:

1 ziploc bag labelled with a number.
1 marker
1 of the topics below
(if your group isn't big enough to address all of the following topics, focus on the first topics and leave the last ones out).

Topics
1. Finances
2. Research Locations
3. Realtor
4. House Viewing
5. Closing

Once each of you has a topic, take a moment to think of all the steps that go into preparing to purchase a house. Specifically for your step, what points do you need to consider to be prepared for this step or to have completed it to a thorough degree. (ie What are characteristics of a realtor to look at? What are important things to note when you look at a house).

Take approximately 10 minutes to think of these points.

Record these points in a logical order on your baggie. Make sure that the number on your baggie is in the top left hand corner of your baggie. (Pictures encouraged!)

Take approximately 5 minutes to record your points on the baggie.

Once you've recorded all of your points to your baggie, get together with your fellow group members to zip your baggies together in numerical order. Take up your steps with your other group members.

Take approximately 10 minutes to take up and discuss your points. If you have extra time leftover before returning to your home group, take a moment to discuss other possible topics that you might use this for in library instruction.

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Basic Rules of the Fish Bowl:

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- The fish should vocalize what they are doing or thinking as much as possible. Minimal silence should be happening.
- The fish can communicate with each other. Sharing ideas is good, and helps make things more vocal to make them more observable.
- Observers should make note of what is working and not working for the fish, but are NOT to interfere or influence what the fish are doing. (**Don't tap the glass!**).

1. Identify 2 people who are going to be fish and 2 people who are going to be observers.

2. In round one, fish are given a bag of supplies. The fish are to build the tallest tower they can with the enclosed supplies that will hold a golf ball sized ball of play dough as high up as possible.
Observers: You are to watch what the fish do. Make note of what is working for them and what is not working for them. You are taking advantage of their troubles to do better yourself later.

3. After 10 minutes of building, it's time to switch places

4. New fish: You are to use what you observed about the first groups attempts to build the tower to build a tower of your own, but try to beat the first group of fish.
New Observers: Watch what the fish are doing. What are they doing differently? How is that helping them? Would your own strategy for building the towers have changed as a result?

5. After 10 minutes of building, stop and compare results. How did the 2nd tower differ from the first? What did the 2nd team change in their approach to get their results? Did this benefit them?

6. Take 5 minutes to discuss with your group possible applications for this in library instruction. What topics or tasks could you imagine using this to cover?

Placemat Activity

In this activity, you will be working with a graphical organizer to explore categories of ideas. This activity will allow you to collaborate and combine your ideas.

In you groups, you will need markers and an 8”x14” sheet of paper.

1. Draw a square in the center of your paper. This square should not be overly large because you will need the surrounding area to write on. Inside the square write the following:

Where do we get information immediately after an event like the tsunami/earthquake in Japan?

2. Divide the paper’s remaining space into 4 regions using lines radiating out from the center square. In each region, write one of the following titles:

Immediately after event
Days/weeks after event
Months after event
Year+ after event

3. Split the 4 regions in half and title one half “information source” and the other half “advantages/disadvantages”

4. Seat yourselves around the placemat so that a region is close to you. In this region, write one source of information and the advantages/disadvantages of the sources.

5. Rotate the placemat so that you are near another region, and repeat this process.

6. Continue until you run out of space or run out time.

7. If you still have time, discuss with your fellow group members possible other ways that you might have yours explore a topic using this activity.