

Assumptions Wall

Information Processing: Exploring and Discovering

PROCESS

- Individuals list assumptions about a topic.
- Have participants choose one that most informs their behavior.
- Participants write their choice on sentence strip in 8–12 words.
- Post assumptions on the wall.
- Facilitator models inquiry (approachable voice, plurals, invitational stems, and positive presuppositions) and inquiry categories (importance, under what conditions, source, data, beliefs, values). Example: “I’m curious about that assumption. Whose is it? Help me to understand what are some reasons you value that highly?”
- Individuals inquire about posted assumptions in round-robin fashion.

ALTERNATIVES

- The group lists assumptions related to a topic. One to three assumptions are selected. The group makes inquiries about these assumptions. The group then identifies implications of the selected assumptions.

cont.

TIPS

- Use groups of 4–12.
- Caution the group not to “beat to death” the first assumption explored.
- Model approachable voice.
- Intervene and correct whenever the inquiry begins to sound like interrogation and disbelief.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Corners

Information Processing: Organizing and Integrating

PROCESS

- Post labels in corners of room.
- Participants move to the corner of greatest interest.
- Form clusters of two or three. Ask participants to explore and share their reasoning for selecting this topic.

ALTERNATIVES

- Use three corners instead of four.
- After a period of time, instruct people to move to the corner of their second choice and repeat the sharing in clusters of two or three.
- Ask people to stand in the corner that represents their position on an issue.

TIPS

- It is sometimes helpful to remind participants to form small groups by moving to corners where people have not yet clustered.

cont.

- Learning is enhanced when participants identify interests within a topic.
- On the second day, ask the participants to return to their corners of choice and, in small clusters, talk about what connections they are making to their topic of interest.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Finger Minutes

Facilitator Moves

PROCESS

- During an activity, ask the group to pause.
- Participants in a group are to decide how many minutes they need to finish and designate one person to raise his or her hand to indicate how many minutes the group needs to finish the activity. Set a limit by indicating a fist (0) to the maximum number of minutes (with fingers) you want to allow (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5).
- Name the finger numbers you see so the large group is aware of variations.
- Compute a rough average (what you believe to be a number that will allow most groups to be satisfied with the additional time and limit the frustration of groups that are already finished).
- Share the allotted time with the group.

ALTERNATIVE

- Without giving a range of times, ask the groups how much more time they need.

cont.

TIPS

- Another value of this strategy is that it helps the groups to recognize that their group is a subset of the whole and that the facilitator is attending to the needs of the entire assembly.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Focused Reading

Information Processing: Exploring and Discovering

PROCESS

- Members read and mark text for purposes, such as:
 - ✓ Affirms prior knowledge
 - ! Surprises you
 - ? You wish to know more about this
- Within small groups and in round-robin fashion, members explore the items they marked. Each member shares only one item at a time.
- Explore only items marked as ! or ?.

ALTERNATIVE

- Change the prompts to fit the purpose of the task. Other prompts might include the following: what concerns you, what excites you, what neither concerns nor excites you.

cont.

TIPS

- Use for text that the members are to read before a session.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Jigsaw to Learn Information

Information Processing: Exploring and Discovering

PROCESS

- Cluster members into groups of five (if five topics are to be studied) and count off 1 to 5. Each number is assigned a reading.
- Have all the number 1s, 2s, 3s, and so on move into expert groups of like numbers.
- In the expert groups, members read the material, then converse about its meaning.
- Members determine what ideas they will share and how they will share the ideas in their home groups.
- Return to the home groups and share what has been learned in the expert groups.

ALTERNATIVE

- Expert groups develop an image or perform a skit to convey information.

TIPS

- While there is value in member choice, assigning topics takes less time than allowing members to choose their own topics.
- Provide prompts for expert-group conversations.

Journal

Information Processing: Activating and Engaging, Organizing and Integrating

PROCESS

- Give the reason for a prompt and tell how it will be used in the session.
- Provide the prompt. Clarify terms.
- Set a time limit.

ALTERNATIVE

- Journal writing can be used for stimulating thinking prior to dialogue, reflecting time in a think-pair-share activity, leveling the playing field when various roles or cognitive styles are present, or capturing ideas in a fast-write format after being presented with information.

TIP

- Write the prompt using attributes of mediational questions: plurals, tentative language, syntactical substitutions, and positive presuppositions. For example: "As

cont

.learners in this territory [positive presupposition], what things [plural] might [tentative language] you be doing [another positive presupposition] to be resourceful, receptive, and generative?" See Putting Inquiry First in chapter 3.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Like Me
Inclusion

PROCESS

- Participants move chairs back from tables so it will be easy to stand if appropriate.
- Name categories like “My work is done at the elementary level” or “I have been in this district 5 or more years” or “I am a principal” or “I am typically up before 6 a.m.”
- As people stand, remind them to look around and see who else is also in that group.
- Finally, make the category “other” for roles. (In other words, if your role has not been called, please stand.) The facilitator asks standing members to state their roles.

ALTERNATIVE

- For parent groups, change the prompts (My first child in this school, I attended this school, I speak a language other than English).

TIPS

- Because this strategy is done as an inclusion activity when you do not yet have a re-

cont.

relationship with the group, it is important to state the multiple purposes of inclusion activities like this one. They include setting norms of participation, focusing mental energy inside the room, answering the question “who am I in relation to others in the room” and beginning the journey from an aggregate of individuals to a group.

- The category “other” is essential. People feel left out if their role is not acknowledged.

- Do not ask participants to say “Like me” when they stand. Perhaps this is appropriate for elementary children, but it is embarrassing for adults.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Lineups

Facilitator Moves

PROCESS

- Announce that the purpose is to regroup and energize.
- Designate a space in the room for members with low responses to stand and for members with high responses to stand. Others will form a line representing their response in relationship to those two points.
- Provide a topic (e.g., how hot do people like their salsa, birth dates) by another designated profession, if not in education (alphabetically).
- Sample responses from different parts of the lineup.
- Cluster people into working groups by counting off or by moving along the line by threes, fours, or whatever group size is desired.

ALTERNATIVE

- Have half the line step forward. These people will walk toward the other half, forming a double line, with people facing each other. Facing members become partners for the next activity.

cont.

TIPS

- Structure lineups around the perimeter of the room for the best use of space.
- Choose a topic based on group members' knowledge of one another; intact groups might be more interested in alternative professions than groups whose members do not know one another.
- Choose a topic based on the amount of time available; some lineups require more reporting (e.g., years in the district), whereas others do not (e.g., how hot you like your salsa).

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Pluses and Wishes

Information Processing: Organizing and Integrating

PROCESS

- Inform the group that you will be requesting members to name pluses (things they appreciated or things that supported their learning) and wishes (things they wish the group had done more of, less of, or differently).
- Use two to four flip charts, depending on the size of the group. Each chart is displayed as a T-chart, with pluses at the top left and wishes at the top right.
- Recruit recorders.
- Members orally report pluses — what they valued about content or processes — while a recorder charts the ideas.
- Next, report wishes — what they wish had been done more, less, or differently, or wishes for the next session.

ALTERNATIVES

- With a small group, up to 10 or so people, you can serve as both facilitator and recorder.

cont.

- Use multiple recorders to speed the charting process.
- Gots and Wants is another strategy in this appendix that serves this purpose.

TIPS

- After initial contributions, always ask “What else?” rather than “Is there anything else?” to elicit further comments.
- State as “What are some pluses . . .” not “Are there any pluses”?
- After the session, organize each category into subtopics and report to the group at the next session how its ideas will inform this session.
- Keep your facial and verbal responses neutral.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Thumbs Up

Decisions

PROCESS

- The facilitator or any member can call for a thumbs-up to determine the degree of agreement the group has on an item.
- Thumbs up means yes, thumbs down means no, thumbs held sideways means not sure or it doesn't matter.
- Call for a show of hands.
- Announce the result.

ALTERNATIVES

- Use as a poll to learn what direction of thinking the group is favoring prior to further conversation.
- Use as a mechanism for Sufficient Consensus.

TIPS

- Ask members with thumbs held sideways to explain their reasoning.

cont.

- Ask members with thumbs held down what would need to be modified in the proposal for them to give it thumbs up.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS
