

A word cloud graphic enclosed in a red rectangular border. The central and largest text is "Student Centered Discussion" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Surrounding this central text are several other terms in various colors and orientations: "Active Reading" (purple, horizontal), "Critical Thinking" (yellow-green, horizontal), "Active Listening" (black, horizontal), "Communication" (black, horizontal), "Interpersonal Skills" (yellow-green, vertical), "Interactive Competence" (brown, horizontal), and "Climate" (brown, vertical).

Active Reading  
Critical Thinking  
Active Listening  
Communication  
Interpersonal Skills  
Interactive Competence  
Climate  
**Student Centered Discussion**

*Developing*

*Interactive*

*Competence*

*through*

***Student Centered Discussion*** ©



## Model Information

### Developers:

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The authors collaborated for many years on workshops and other activities that promoted *Student Centered Discussion*®.

### Certified SCD Trainer: **Cindy Decker Raynak**

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## **SCD provides students with the opportunity:**

- To practice basic skills during the discussion process
- To develop effective communication and interpersonal skills in addition to strengthening critical thinking skills.
- To practice active reading, listening, and note taking before, during and after the discussions
- To take responsibility for group and individual assessment and evaluation of participation and involvement.

This model is effective regardless of discipline or knowledge base.

The origins of the model began in 1988 as curriculum materials used by the Pittsburgh Public Schools. After implementation and practice of this generic model in 1990 at both secondary and higher education levels, we, the SCD developers expanded the components of the model, developed formats for successful discussions, added tailored-made activities, strategies, and techniques, and broadened its use within various populations. This expanded format provides for the needs of both faculty and students.

Besides using SCD in educational fields, the model has been successful with participants in the technical, business, and medical fields as well as with instructional development specialists.

The SCD training is highly interactive. Participants not only learn about the SCD approach and how to conduct it in their own setting, but also experience it through constant participation and interaction. The training experience will emphasize ***there is more to discussion than just talk.***

## **Workshop Objectives**

- Discuss the SCD model and its benefits.
- Determine appropriate ways to incorporate Student Centered Discussion into the curriculum.
- Plan and conduct Student Centered Discussions.
- Assess the Student Centered Discussion process and skills.
- Develop assessments for improvement of process and skills.
- Evaluate the curriculum with the use of the SCD model.

## **What is Student Centered Discussion (SCD)?**

Student Centered Discussion<sup>®</sup> (SCD) is a model which trains students in the process of developing, strengthening, and practicing more efficient and productive communication, interpersonal, and thinking skills.

It is a delivery system that integrates and assesses reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills while actively engaging the students in the process of discussion. This model provides an arena for practicing interactive competency skills which are necessary for success in the life-long learning process.

The model elicits more elaborate responses from students and maximizes the quality of student's engagement with the curriculum. SCD increases the quality and quantity of active participation with minimum preparation.

## **What is Interactive Competence?**

Interactive competence is a level of comfort when involved with others. SCD takes "interactive competence" to another level where not only is one comfortable in a group situation, but also where the participant is engaged in a meaningful discussion that produces a common goal.

SCD provides the practice students need in order to be competent in all aspects of their lives. Through SCD students are encouraged to provide feedback, to think and rethink ideas, and to make connections among what they read, what they know, and to the rest of their life experiences.

## **How Does Classroom Environment Benefit from SCD?**

Through SCD, students begin to show awareness, tolerance and acceptance of others' viewpoints and perceptions. They demonstrate common courtesy and display sensitivity to civic responsibilities.

Consistent use of SCD improves verbal and written communication, enhances thinking skills, increases active participation, and strengthens group interaction. Consequently, students become more confident and competent in challenging attitudes, concepts, and ideas read and discussed.

SCD empowers the students to become more responsible for their own learning and enables them to develop life skills.

## **How Will the SCD Training Benefit Students?**

SCD will accomplish the following:

- provide lessons in active reading, listening, and note-taking before, during, and after the discussion.
- establish an arena to identify, practice, and demonstrate critical thinking and communication skills.
- foster responsibility for group and individual assessment of participation and involvement.
- strengthen interactive skills during the discussion process.
- increase opportunities for quality participation.
- provide tools for assessments and evaluation of the process and curriculum.

## **What Changes Will I Need to Make if I Implement SCD?**

Lecture and recitation is still an important part of the classroom teaching technique. Discussion does not replace either recitation or lecture; however, discussion does enhance recitation.

In SCD, the teacher becomes the facilitator of a discussion instead of the leader. In a discussion, the teacher/facilitator provides the text, models the skills, reinforces the guidelines, poses questions and statements for elaboration and justification, and furnishes feedback.

## **How Long Does It Take To Learn SCD?**

Faculty find that SCD training works best after:

- Participation in face-to-face workshops.
- Implementation, practice, and assessment in the classroom.

## **What Do Others Have To Say About SCD?**

*"An excellent way to increase group interaction."*

*"Built confidence and produced a warm climate."*

*"Many different ideas for organizing and promoting discussions."*

*"I now have a better understanding of why discussions did not work better in the past."*

*"Very practical information that will revolutionize my classroom technique."*

*"I now have a better understanding of why discussions did not work better in the past."*

*"I feel more ready to implement SCD strategies in my class since I participated in the process myself."*

*"The training provides the confidence that these innovations can be successfully instituted in the classroom."*

## **Preparing for Student Centered Discussion**

- Arrange chairs in a “clean” circle in which no one’s view is blocked
- Consider a seating chart to change the pattern of the participants’ seating if necessary.
- Develop a Warm-Up activity.

## **Introduce the Guidelines**

1. Be Courteous
2. Participate Responsibly
3. Actively Read and Question the Text
4. Build Ideas on What Others Say
5. Be Credible: Back Up Your Statements
6. Stick to the Subject
7. Question Opinions of Others
8. Listen Actively
9. Speak Clearly and Loudly
10. Strive for Understanding

## **Conduct a Warm-Up Activity**

A discussion warm-up is a preliminary activity conducted prior to the actual discussion to help students focus on the topic of discussion. Allowing the group to think, write, and/or share ideas prior to discussion helps to “warm-up” their brains and “kick start” their discussion skills. Warm-ups are designed by the facilitator and should be centered on concepts, themes, or issues that appear in the discussion text. A variety of warm up activities can be designed.

## **Read the Text**

Following the Warm-Up Activity, review the Active Reading Process and then have the students Actively Read the text. Provide a time frame of 10 – 12 minutes for silent reading and note taking.

Upon completion of the Active Reading and note taking, students formulate thought-provoking questions or statements used to initiate and continue discussion.



## Perform an Opening Move

Sometimes students are hesitant to ask or to state their questions or opinions. As a consequence, the discussion may begin with a silence. To avoid this beginning silence, the facilitator can “pre-set” the opening question by planning an Opening Move. There are a variety of ways to do this. For example, the facilitator can mark one of the copies of the text with a sticker, star, or number. Whoever has the “marked” text begins the discussion by stating a question or statement.

Additional Opening Move Suggestions:

- tagging a chair
- tossing out a ball
- passing out straws (short or long straw wins)
- calling out birthday, birth dates, or birth months

The Opening Move should not take more than 1 – 2 minutes to conduct. It should be set up so that not any one student’s text or situation is different from anyone else’s.

Allow the students who are opening the discussion a few moments to reflect on their questions. During this time, the facilitator should review the following areas:

- Check for a clean circle
- State the content purpose
- Identify focused skills and/or guidelines
- Remind students to use location moves  
(A location move is when the speaker makes reference to the text by identifying the location of the paragraph and lines to which the speaker is referring. These lines are read aloud. In addition, it might be helpful if the students number the paragraphs or the lines if the text is short.)
- Use names of other students in referring to their comments or in asking questions

**NOTE:** Keep in mind that, most likely, the participants may have little experience in speaking to one another in a discipline context. This process will take time for both the facilitator and the group to master. Early discussion will not always be satisfactory. Some may be slow and/or boring; students may speak with great hesitancy and reluctance. However, when the groups begin to realize that they are in control and need not fear retribution or correction on the part of the facilitator, they will begin to speak with more confidence. ***However, if a facilitator asks content questions, or does most of the taking, then a “discussion” has become recitation.***

**The goal of a facilitator is to help the group express themselves in a clear responsible manner. Avoid giving members of the group any kind of reinforcement, praise, or criticism for their comments-even non-verbally. *It may even be necessary to avoid eye contact with a speaker in order to encourage them to talk to the entire group and not to the facilitator.***

## Scripting the Discussion and the Discussion Process

To avoid becoming a dominant member of the discussion and to continue to remain neutral, “script write” as much as possible of the discussion and the discussion process. This “scripting” is then used to provide constructive feedback to participants in the discussion process and/or on their use or abuse of the guidelines.

Another use for scripting is to handle potential silences which may occur during the discussion. To keep the discussion “student-centered,” all content questions must come from the students. Therefore, if a silence occurs and continues longer than one minute, the facilitator will need to bring the discussion back by referring to a content question that was previously asked by a student. The only way to be prepared for this is to be scripting as much of the discussion as possible, including all questions.

### How to Script Write a Discussion

#### Pre-Discussion

- On the **Scripting Sheets** prepare for discussion by completing the upper part of the log sheet.

#### During Discussion

Script the following for keeping track of use of Guidelines:

Students’ use of each others’ names	Be Courteous Participate Responsibly
Changes in topic or subject	Build Ideas on What Others Say Speak Clearly and Loudly
Students’ questions to each other	Question the Opinions of Others Actively Read and Question the Text Striving for Understanding Listen Actively
References to text	Be Credible: Back Up Your Statements Stick to the Subject
Location Moves	Actively Read and Question the Text

## **Scripting for the SCD Process**

- Tally number of total participants
- Tally number of students who speak during the discussion
- Count number of references to the text
- Watch and note “sideboard” discussion as in “talk” which occurs between two participants and which is not a part of the whole discussion
- Note patterns of interaction and communication.

## **Post Discussion**

In class, as students are formulating a response to the Reflection part of the text, edit your scripting sheet. Clarify your notes in order to provide the students with feedback concerning the content of the discussion. This is where you as the “teacher” provide additional information about what the students discussed.

Following class, while the discussion is still fresh in your mind, edit and clarify your notes to summarize, show use and abuse of guidelines, and briefly assess the discussion process.

# PARTICIPATION AND INTERACTION GUIDELINES

## 1. BE COURTEOUS

Provide the person speaking with your full attention and respect. Check to be sure that the speaker has completed all ideas before you begin to speak.

## 2. PARTICIPATE RESPONSIBLY

Communication, interaction, and discussion will be successful if everyone works together. Direct all comments to the entire group; do not raise hands to speak or direct comments to the teacher. It is the responsibility of everyone involved to make sure all are learning from the experience.

## 3. ACTIVELY READ AND QUESTION THE TEXT

Underline, circle, or highlight sections that are surprising, confusing, exciting, or sections with which you agree or disagree. Make notes that reflect your feeling. Form clear, concise, thought provoking questions.

## 4. BUILD IDEAS ON WHAT OTHERS SAY

Use statements and questions that will add to what others are saying and which will support the discussion topic. Refer to past speakers by name when making reference to their statements. Say "I agree with \_\_\_ (name) because (provide supportive statement)"; "I think what \_\_\_ (name) is saying is different from what I think because (provide supportive statement)."

## 5. BE CREDIBLE: BACK UP YOUR STATEMENTS

Evidence for your ideas and opinions may come directly from the text, subject, topic, or from your own personal experience if it is relevant to the text.

## 6. STICK TO THE SUBJECT

The subject of the discussion is an important element of communication. Not everything said will always be directly related to the subject or text. Use examples from personal experiences to illustrate a point and be ready to explain how the example is related to the discussion. It is not necessary to know anything about the author or the work in order to discuss a text successfully.

## 7. QUESTION OPINIONS OF OTHERS

Ideas can be analyzed, but never the person who said them. Learn to provide and accept useful feedback. Saying "I disagree with \_\_\_'s (name) point because (provide supportive statement)" is more appropriate than saying "You're wrong!" In discussion, everyone's opinions are open to questioning – even the author's.

## 8. LISTEN ACTIVELY

Avoid blocks to listening such as comparing, dreaming, judging, or being right. Listen with both ears and eyes. Avoid trying to think of a response until the speaker finishes.

## 9. SPEAK CLEARLY AND LOUDLY

Pronounce words clearly, carefully, and loudly so others will hear, understand, and be able to respond.

## 10. STRIVE FOR UNDERSTANDING

Don't give up if you fail to understand the subject or if the text seems difficult. If you don't comprehend either the text or the discussion, then ask questions and make statements that will enable others in the discussion to clarify, justify, restate, or elaborate ideas for you. Say, "I don't understand what you mean" or "Could you state that in another way?" or "Can you give me an example of what you mean?"

## TALK GROUP ASSESSMENT

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Your Topic \_\_\_\_\_

### WHEN YOU WERE THE SPEAKER:

1. Who responded to your topic?
2. Were the questions asked relevant to your topic? Explain.
3. Did the questions build on your ideas and continue the discussion?
4. Explain how you know whether or not the listener comprehended your answer and was or was not satisfied with that response.

### WHEN YOU WERE THE LISTENER:

1. Rate your listening.                      5        4        3        2        1  
Support your rating.

2. Rate your interest level.                5        4        3        2        1  
Support your rating.

3. Rate your courtesy level.                5        4        3        2        1  
Support your rating.

5. What was the most important question you asked?

6. Was your question answered to your satisfaction?

### ASSESSMENT:

7. What skills are necessary to become a productive member of a group?
8. Explain in what way your group successfully discussed the topics?
9. Which skills did **you** efficiently use to successfully aid your group?

# Script Writing

Appendix 18

Text \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose \_\_\_\_\_ Focus \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Time \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Time \_\_\_\_\_

Conduct Warm-Up

Remind Guidelines/Focus/Purpose

Conduct Opening Move

Begin Discussion / Scripting

Give 3 Minute Warning

Close Down with "Reflection"

Review Guidelines / Focus / Purpose

T = Reference to Text

? = Questions Asked

N = Use of Names

==== = Changes in Topic