Real-Life Open-Ended Context

Students explore real-life situations and problems through discussion. By definition, these problems don't have a single "right" answer.

Appropriate Student Level: Any
Suggested Class Size: 3 – 60
Ease of Use Rating: Moderate

Activity Description:

There are several critical elements in "Real-Life Open-Ended Context" activities:
- The problem must be well-written, ill-defined (not defined clearly or distinctly), and relevant (for more information about writing the problem see "Writing an Ill-defined Problem".
- The instructor acts as a coach or guide during the process, rather than simply disseminating information
- Collaboration is critical for success

Students are presented with an ill-defined problem relevant to a specific discipline. The greater the students' background in the material, the more autonomy they can handle as they address the problem. Novice students require more coaching as well as clearly defined parameters for the assignment. Students could discuss, brainstorm and research in order to find an appropriate solution to the given problem. There should be no one correct answer; students should be able to make any number of recommendations and support their decisions with research.

The Instructor facilitates the learning process through strategic questions and suggestions of resources. The key to facilitating is not giving answers but providing direction to keep students focused on relevant material.

References:

Hannafin, Michael J. and Others, (1994) "Learning in Open-Ended Environments; Assumptions, Methods, and Implications." Educational Technology, 34(8), pp. 48 - 55

Hill, Janette R. (1998), "Open Ended Learning Environments; A Theoretical Framework and Model for Design.

Land, Susan M., (1998) "Learning in Open-Ended Technology Environments: Problems and Issues." 12p.

Leaf, Jeffery (1999) "Leaf On-Line" How to Run an Open-Ended Problem-Solving Project: http://www.tjhsst.edu/~jleaf/probsolve/#Introduction

Leaf, Jeffery (1999) "Leaf On-Line" The creative problem solver: http://www.tjhsst.edu/~jleaf/probsolve/crprsolv.htm

The Core Competencies are:

1. Writing, speaking and/or other forms of self-expression

2. Information gathering, such as the use of the library, computer/electronic resources, and experimentation or observation
3. Synthesis and analysis in problem solving and critical thinking, including, where appropriate, the application of reasoning and interpretive methods, and quantitative thinking.
4. Collaborative learning and teamwork
6. Activities that promote the understanding of issues pertaining to social behavior, scholarly conduct, and community responsibility
7. A significant alternative competency for active learning designed for and appropriate to a specific course