PENNSTATE

"Turn-to-your-neighbor" Approach

Every 10 minutes or so throughout a lecture ask the students to turn to the student next to them and discuss a question. Then randomly call on student pairs to provide the answer.

Appropriate Student Level: Any Level
Suggested Class Size: 3 – 100+
Ease of Use Rating: Easy

Activity Description:

The "turn-to-your-neighbor" approach can be modified to fit any class size and any situation. Students do not have to move from their current seats and discussion can be guided.

"Although some students learn best by listening, others find it easier to learn in more active learning environments. An easy solution is the use of "turn-to-your-neighbor" discussions every 10 minutes or so throughout each lecture. Instead of throwing out questions to the class as a whole and waiting (usually fruitlessly) for a response, ask the students to turn to the student next to them and discuss the question. Depending upon the difficulty of the question, the resulting discussions can last from 30 seconds to several minutes. Then call on one or two student pairs, randomly, to provide the answer." (Liebman, 1996)

This activity can be modified to fit the objectives of the class, it may only be necessary for an instructor to use the method one time during a class period or only when complex concepts presented. The method promotes discussion and helps students to help each other fill in the gaps or ask questions that they may not ask publicly in class.

References:

Liebman, Judith S. (1996) "Promoting active learning during lectures," OR/MS Today, 23(6) http://www.lionhrtpub.com/orms/orms-12-96/education.html

Rao, Sumangala P. (2000) "Peer instruction improves performance on quizzes; Advances in Physiology Education, 24(1)

The Core Competencies are:

1. Writing, speaking and/or other forms of self-expression
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
7. A significant alternative competency for active learning designed for and appropriate to a specific course