



Innovation in the Classroom

Activities that promote critical thinking and a sense of fun about learning



Innovation in the Classroom

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Innovation Requires Courage

Success is not final,
failure is not fatal:
it is the courage
to continue
that counts.

-Winston Churchill

The background of the slide features a light blue gradient with a faint, semi-transparent image of classical architectural columns on the left side. The columns are white with detailed capitals and fluted shafts, set against a darker blue background.

Innovative Methods are Risky

- The student composition of each class is unique
- Reaction to methods is unknown
- Nothing ventured, nothing gained



Teaching is Storytelling

- History of the topic
- Highlight the major personalities
- Mundane and the controversy of the subject
- Pass on our observations
- Encourage students to explore the topic and form their own opinions based on their studies.

Lecture is Like a Cup of Folger's:


Passable and ordinary



Innovation is like Espresso

Stimulating with a dash of pizzazz






“Conversing critically implies an openness to rethinking cherished assumptions and to subjecting those assumptions to a continuous round of questioning, argument, and counterargument.”

Discussion as a Way of Teaching
Brookfield, p. 7




Guidelines for Success: Clarity of Purpose and Direction

- Clearly state the rationale and goal or purpose for the activity.
- Clarify why the topic is important.
- Be very specific with directions.
 - Always give a time limit and stick to it
 - Give written directions whenever possible; verbal directions are quickly forgotten.



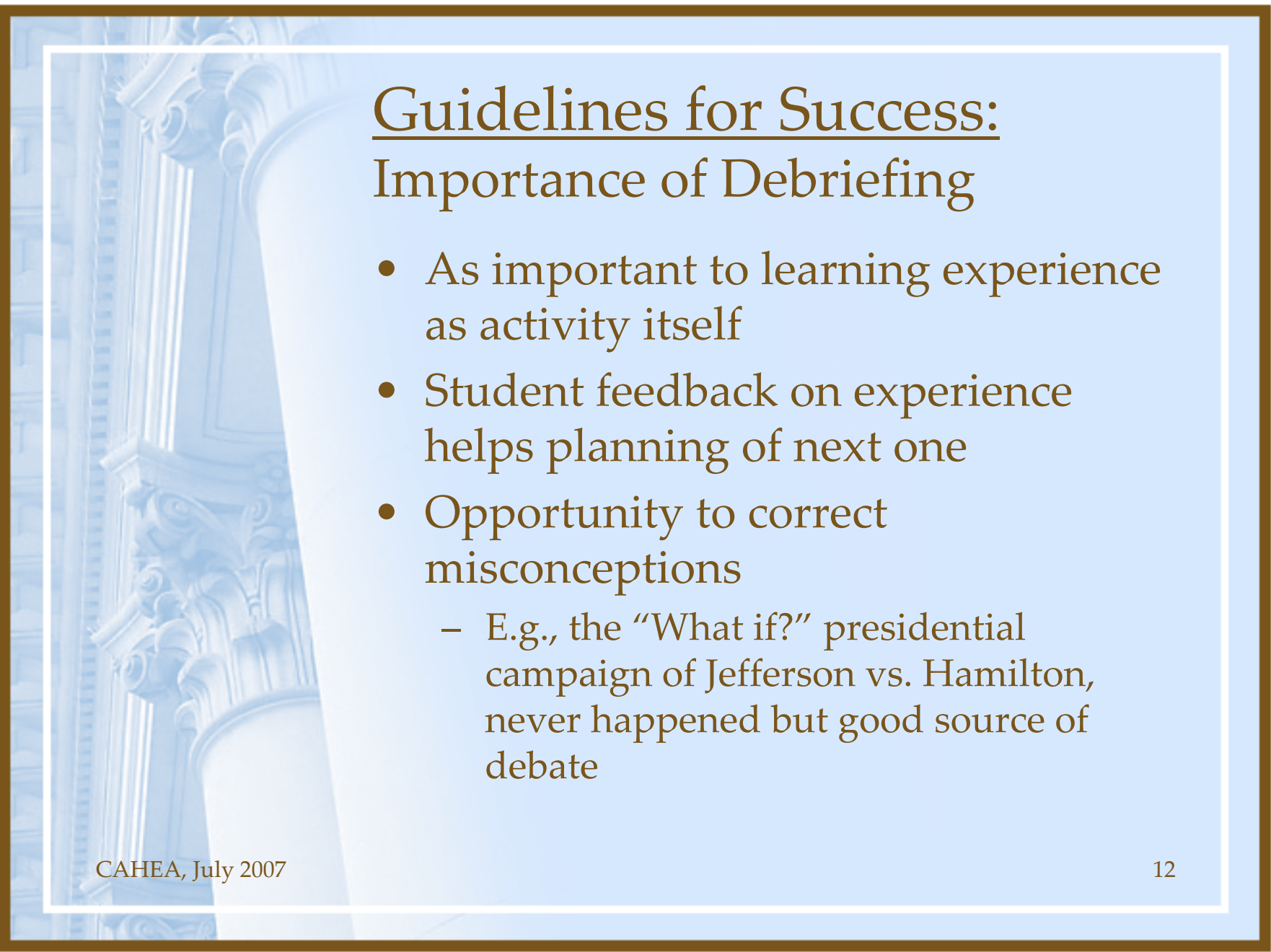
Guidelines for Success: Context/Relevance

- Establish context and relevance for the activity; many issues are universal to a work setting.
- Point out similarities to current events/work life
 - Example of Potsdam Conference Simulation
 - HR issues : staff turnover
 - Productivity loss due to loss of knowledgeable staff
 - Cultural diversity challenges
 - Advanced negotiation skills required
 - Multiple competing interests, legitimate and otherwise
 - Personality clashes



Guidelines for Success: Enrollment and Timing

- Number of students should determine choice of activity.
- Be deliberate about the timing of the activity.
- Timing is critical to a successful learning experience
- Time of day, day of week can have a profound effect on success
 - E.g., activity that worked on Saturday morning failed on a Tuesday night.
 - E.g., Monday nights especially difficult due to work cycles.



Guidelines for Success: Importance of Debriefing

- As important to learning experience as activity itself
- Student feedback on experience helps planning of next one
- Opportunity to correct misconceptions
 - E.g., the “What if?” presidential campaign of Jefferson vs. Hamilton, never happened but good source of debate



Method: Discussion

- Discussion will always trump lecture as a method
- Discussion builds community due to its social nature
- It is under-utilized in the classroom by most instructors
- Sage on the stage vs. facilitator
- Control vs. chaos



Activity: Pyramid Discussion

- In pairs share an innovative learning experience either as the student or instructor
- Join with another pair and share experiences

Discussion Group Dynamics

Dyad	57%	43%					
Triad	44%	33%	23%				
<i>Four</i>	32%	29%	23%	16%			
Five	47%	22%	15%	10%	6%		
Six	43%	19%	14%	11%	5%		
Seven	43%	15%	12%	10%	9%	6%	5%

R.F. Bales Group Dynamics Research Findings

Personality & Interpersonal Behavior , R.F. Bales (1970)



Method: Simulations

Establish foundational knowledge

- Give students what they need to succeed (facts, concepts, personality profiles, etc.)
- Precise written directions
- Allow 30-90 minutes for the simulation; 15-30 minutes for the debriefing.
- Simulations should be done during one class session; difficulty to carry momentum to the next week.

A decorative background image of classical columns, rendered in a light blue, semi-transparent style, is positioned on the left side of the slide. The columns are fluted and feature ornate capitals. The entire slide is framed by a dark brown border.

Potpourri of Activities

- Devise a board game (Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit).
- Create newspaper headlines for ideologically opposed papers.
- Create slogans/logos/bumper stickers
- Learning concepts: pair up students with one concept to define; pair up two groups to compare concepts, challenge class to put them in hierarchical order.
- Use maps to demonstrate how geography relates to the topic.
- Plot a timeline for an event or concept (high-low points, development beginning to end).
- Create genealogy tree of ideas/concepts

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Potpourri of Activities

- Students create a multiple choice quiz and pose questions to another group.
- Ideas on trial: appoint the prosecution, defense, judge and jury to debate an issue.
- Biography: ask students to choose a person related to the topic at hand and create a story board for presentation in class.
 - E.g., students chose historical figures related to the American Revolution; story boards included photos of person and their home or business, excerpts of speeches, commercial uses (Dolly Madison pastries, dollar bill).

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Potpourri of Activities

- Object tangents: bring an object to class that typifies topic at hand.
 - E.g., WWI helmet generates questions about just/unjust wars, identity of soldier, speculation about which battle caused bullet hole, manufacturing practices of country where helmet originated, etc.
 - Trade magazines: most publishers will send free copies of previous editions; assign articles to each student for a class report.



Discussion Questions

Questions that provide more evidence:

- What does the author say that supports your argument?
- How do you know that?
- What data is that claim based on?
- Where did you find that expressed in the text?
- What evidence would you give to someone who doubted your interpretation?



Discussion Questions

Clarification:

- Can you put that another way?
- Can you give another example to illustrate your point?
- Can you explain the term you just used?
- What do you mean by that?

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Discussion Questions

Complementary:

- Is there any connection between what you've just said and what John just said?
- How does your comment fit in with John's earlier comment?
- How does your observation relate to what the group discussed last week?
- Does your idea challenge or support what we seem to be saying?
- How does that contribution add to what has already been said?



Discussion Questions

Hypothetical:

- What if . . .
- How might this event have turned out if . . . ?
- What might have happened if . . . ?



Discussion Questions

Cause/Effect:

- What is the effect . . . ?
- How might this cause . . . ?

The background of the slide features a light blue, semi-transparent image of classical architectural columns, likely from a government building or university. The columns are arranged in a perspective view, receding into the distance. The overall aesthetic is professional and academic.

Discussion Questions

Summary/Synthesis

- What are the one or two most important ideas that emerged from the discussion?
- What remains unresolved or contentious about this topic?
- What do you understand better as a result of today's discussion?
- Based on our discussion today, what do we need to talk about next time if we're to understand this issue better?
- What key or concept best captures our discussion today?

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Sources of Inspiration

- *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: tools and techniques for democratic classrooms*, 2005. Stephen Brookfield, Stephen Presskill, Jossey-Bass.
- *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*, 2003. L. Dee Fink, Jossey-Bass.

*I highly recommend purchasing the above two books. Many of the ideas for this seminar are from these two books.

- *Short Role-Playing Simulations for World History Classrooms*, 2003. R. Di Giacomo, Magnifico Publications.
- *Thinking Socratically*, 2001. S. Schwarz, Harvey Lape, Prentice Hall.
- *What the Best College Teachers Do*, 2004. K. Bain, Harvard University Press.



Sources of Inspiration

- *Enlivening secondary history: 40 classroom activities for teachers and pupils*, 2006. Peter Davies, et al., Routledge.
- *Critical Thinking: tools for taking charge of your learning and your life*, 2006. Richard Paul, Linda Elder, Prentice Hall.
- *Critical Thinking: learn the tools the best thinkers use*, 2006. Richard Paul, Linda Elder, Prentice Hall.
- *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, 1995. Stephen Brookfield, Jossey-Bass.
- *Engaging ideas: the professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*, 2001. John C. Bean, Jossey-Bass.



Innovation leads to value

Whether we use hypothetical, simulated, or real problems and questions, we are asking students to learn how to engage in effective practical thinking, an ability that will have extensive value in their personal, social, and work life.

- L. Dee Fink, Significant Learning