



# **Collaboration and Community: Using Student Moderators in Online Discussion Groups**

Distance Education

# Support for Student Moderated Online Discussion

## Research Support for SMDB

- 1. Increase in frequency of posts, level of interaction, quality of material exchanged, and student reported understanding of course materials and perceived connection with peers and instructor.
- 2. Technology may be used to enable students to learn in more active ways, leading to a deeper understanding of the course materials.
- 3. Opportunity to reconsider both teacher and student roles in the learning and teaching process.

# Advantages for Faculty

- **Listening-in**
- **Insights into student learning**
- **Time saving**
- **Minimize Transactional Distance**

# Advantages for Students

- Develop higher order thinking skills through discussion and problem solving as a group process.
- Development of meta-cognitive skills that may be effective in transferring learning and problem solving to new situations
- Multiple roles require using content differently
- Increase collaboration & community building

# Building a Foundation for Success

## Key Points to Remember:

- Modeling the online behaviors you want from your students
- Providing examples of desired style and content of posts/responses with a dissection of parts.
- Clearly stated directions, learning objectives, and evaluation method for moderators and participants.
- Building up a strong knowledge base and resource for students to draw from.

# Example Assignment Overview

## Instructor

Provides information, examples, and instructions for moderating a week's discussion on an assigned topic or a topic chosen by the student.

## Students: Requirements for the assignment.

1. Introducing the Discussion
2. Generating Questions
3. Encouraging people to post responses
4. Guiding the discussion
5. Summarizing – Paper reflecting on their own performance and experience. What they learned, how / if their views changed, and suggestions for improving their performance as a moderator.

# Problems ~ Solutions

## Possible Problems

- Wrong or misinformation posted
- General compare/share posts and simplistic response structure
- Little reflection, debate, critical thinking, or evidence of integration of new information.

## Suggestions for Solution

- Front-end loading of information before forum begins
- Mandate backing-up statements with evidence
- Coaching moderator in use of Socratic questioning, reflection, prompting techniques
- Modeling expected posts and responses

# Instructional Design Support

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