



DESIGNING FOR ACTIVE LEARNING

Quality Matters Toolkit

Quality Matters Toolkit

University of Minnesota Extension Youth Work Institute delivers education, training, and professional development for adults who work with and on behalf of young people. Since 2000, the Youth Work Institute has provided the latest youth development research and taught youth workers throughout Minnesota how to apply it in their work. The Youth Work Institute is committed to expanding the knowledge and strengthening the practices of staff and volunteers who are committed to high quality youth development experiences for young people.

CREDIT AND THANKS:

This tool kit was written by Beth Daniels and Stephanie Love, and edited by Jennifer Griffin-Wiesner and Deborah Moore. It is part of Quality Matters (QM), a technical assistance and training project of the Youth Work Institute focused on improving youth development program quality, in part with the help of the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA). The YPQA is a validated instrument designed to evaluate the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. T

Thanks to the QM coach/consultants and youth programs who have participated in the project. All QM resources, including this tool kit, are based on their spoken needs and wise advice. Thanks as well to the McKnight Foundation and the Minnesota Department of Education for continued financial support.

For more information about Quality Matters see <http://www1.extension.umn.edu/youth/training-events/>

For more information about the YPQA see the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality web site at <http://www.cypq.org/>.

Designing for Active Learning

Active learning is a powerful strategy for strengthening your youth program and its outcomes. This toolkit is designed to help you lead your staff through a workshop that illustrate simple, cost effective things they can do to integrate active learning more often and more effectively, and thus improve overall program quality.

The facilitator can be a person from your organization (adult or youth) or an external consultant or stakeholder. The outline given is for an approximately XX hour facilitated staff development session. There are many different ways you can the tool kit once you become familiar with the contents. It includes:

- A “landing activity” that is fairly short and low risk and intended to get your group centered and focused on the topic at hand
- An activity you can use to introduce your group to the ideas and concepts covered in the tool kit
- Instructions for a “Teach Out” that will involve the participants learning about and facilitating for one another activities related to the information about youth leadership provided in the Resources section
- A closing reflection

Introduction (10 minutes)

Active learning happens when activities involve youth in doing things and thinking about what they are doing. Active learning does not happen when youth are listening passively to a lecture or a watching a video. Think, “hands-on, minds-on.”



**ACTIVE
LEARNING
ENGAGES
YOUTH.**

Most people—youth and adults—prefer to learn in active ways. Active learning works well with a variety of learning styles and enables participants to use their multiple intelligences. Some ways to promote active learning include cooperative groups, discussion or conversation, role playing, simulations, drama, debates, peer teaching, hands-on projects, problem solving.

Active learning is at the center of high-quality youth programming. Well-implemented active learning supports youth development by challenging young people in healthy ways and offering them new opportunities to engage with the world around them. When youth actively engage in learning, they form powerful new connections in their brains while forging positive relationships and building life-long skills that will enable them to navigate the wider world.

In recent years, new research-based quality-improvement systems have emerged that are designed explicitly to address program factors that impact positive outcomes for youth. The Youth Program Quality Assessment is one of the most promising of these standardized observational tools. Many of the YPQA indicators of quality are linked directly to active learning.

- Youth engage with materials or ideas
- Activities lead to tangible products or performances
- Youth talk about what they are doing
- Activities balance concrete experiences and abstract concepts
- Staff are actively involved with youth
- Staff use specific, non-evaluative feedback
- Staff use open-ended questions
- Staff vary the kind of groupings (individual, small group, whole group)
- Staff use different ways to form small groups

- Groups have purpose and members cooperate
- Staff share control with youth
- Staff explains guidelines
- Youth make plans for projects and activities
- Use a variety of planning strategies
- Youth make content choices
- Youth make process choices
- Youth reflect on what they are doing
- Youth reflect in multiple ways
- Youth make presentations
- Youth give feedback on the activities

Landing Activity: The Digestive System (20 minutes)

[NOTE: NEED TO CREATE SIMPLE HUMAN DIGESTIVE SYSTEM WORKSHEETS]

Materials: Human digestive system worksheets, markers, chocolate chips (one per participant) or something else that melts (perhaps mints for those allergic to chocolate), two large sheets of butcher paper (large enough to outline a person), other resources on the digestive system, pencils or pens, timer

Set-up: Set up the room so that one half is classroom style, with individual desks or students in a lecture format with the teacher in front. Place a worksheet and pen or pencil at each participant's spot, face down. In the other half of the room, have a shared workspace for two small groups to work, with markers, large paper, worksheets and resources handy. Keep the candy hidden from participants until after they close their eyes during the activity. Activity: Split the group in half using the grouping strategy of your choice. You will be the activity leader for both halves of the group, but instruct the group watching to take notes on what they observe about the engagement of participants in the activities. Find out if there are any

chocolate allergies or sensitivities to sugar.

Group 1 (classroom style): Set the timer for one minute and instruct the first group to sit down and fill in the worksheet on the digestive system as if they were taking a test. Do not allow talking among participants, and after one minute, ask participants to raise their hands as you give the answers to the worksheet. Do not allow discussion. Have the students write their names on their worksheets and turn them in to you (this should take five minutes total).

Group 2 (group work space): Ask the participants to gather around the table and close their eyes. Tell them you are going to take them through some guided imagery of the digestive system. Let participants know you are going to hand each one a piece of chocolate or a mint, and ask them to let the candy slowly melt in their mouths. Ask participants to think about the role of teeth and tongue in the digestive process as the candy melts. As they swallow, have them imagine the candy moving down the esophagus toward their stomach (and how gracefully it avoids going into the lungs!). As the candy moves into the stomach, tell participants to imagine the muscles in the esophagus moving food like ocean waves toward the stomach. Once the food gets into the stomach, digestive juices are added and food mixes and churns away before slowly emptying into the small intestine. As the food moves through the small intestine, it dissolves in juices from the liver and small intestine, and is absorbed into every cell of the body. Any undigested food (known as fiber), collects in the large intestine, and eventually leaves the body as waste (take about two minutes or less to read through this description).

Now given the second group the worksheet and ask them to fill it in.

Activity Reflection (3 minutes):

Bring the group back together and ask what they noticed about what it was like to take the test/fill in the worksheet without any background information or context. What was different about completing the

sheet after the guided imagery? What does that get them thinking about in terms of active learning?

Active Learning Brainstorm (10 minutes)

This activity provides participants with a little bit of background on active learning and sets up for the Teach Out activities that follow.

1. Have participants write for one to two minutes on, “What is active learning?”
2. Do a “Crossing the Line” activity. Ask participants to stand on one side of a real or imaginary line. The side they are on represents “disagree.” As you read each statement have them cross the line if they agree.
 - “Youth need to sit down and focus. If everyone is talking, nothing will ever get done.”
 - “I often plan activities that youth find ‘hard’ and ‘fun’ at the same time.”
 - “Most activities I do with youth involve doing things or making things.”
 - “I often combine physical activity with some serious thinking and discussion.”
 - “Reflection isn’t that important. If we don’t have time, it’s okay to just skip it.”
 - “Process is every bit as important as content, sometimes more so.”
3. Do a quick group brainstorm using the prompt “Active learning is good for kids because...” Be prepared to contribute two or three ideas if the group needs some prompting.

Teach Out (40+ minutes)

Activity Directions:

- Break the group small teams using whatever method you choose.

- Ask them to browse through the Resources section of this toolkit.
- Explain that some of the materials are specific activities while others are important contextual information regarding active learning.
- Assign each group one of the resources that they are to “teach” to the rest of the group, or give groups the option to choose on a first come, first served basis. If you have a very large group you can have more than one group addressing a topic.
- Ask them spend some time reading and learning their assigned piece of content. Then, have each group teach their topic to one other group. If the class is small or you have enough time, groups can teach to the entire class or teach to more than one other group.

Closing (25 minutes)

This activity will give participants the opportunity to debrief (summarize) and reflect (process) about what they taught and what was taught to them. The activity uses the Rotation Brainstorm technique.

Materials: Chart paper, markers, Post-It notes, pens/pencils.

Set-up: Prepare chart paper ahead of time. Write the name of each Teach Out activity at the top of a piece of chart paper. Also, write each of the Reflection questions (see below) at the top of a piece of chart paper. Post the Reflection papers around the room.

Instructions

1. Have participants gather into their Teach-Out groups. Give each group the piece of chart paper that lists the activity they taught.
2. Debriefing/summary:
 - a. Have each group spend three minutes writing a brief summary of what they taught.

b. Have each group spend three minutes writing a brief summary of what was taught to them.

3. Reflection/process:

a. Have each Teach-Out group stand by one of the Reflection questions on the wall. Give them three minutes to write their thoughts about the question on sticky notes. Participants may talk and compare notes.

b. Ask the groups to move one question to the left. Give them three minutes to see what the previous group wrote and to write their own thoughts. Participants may talk and compare notes.

c. Continue rotating the groups to the left every three minutes. Have participants answer all the questions, if time allows.

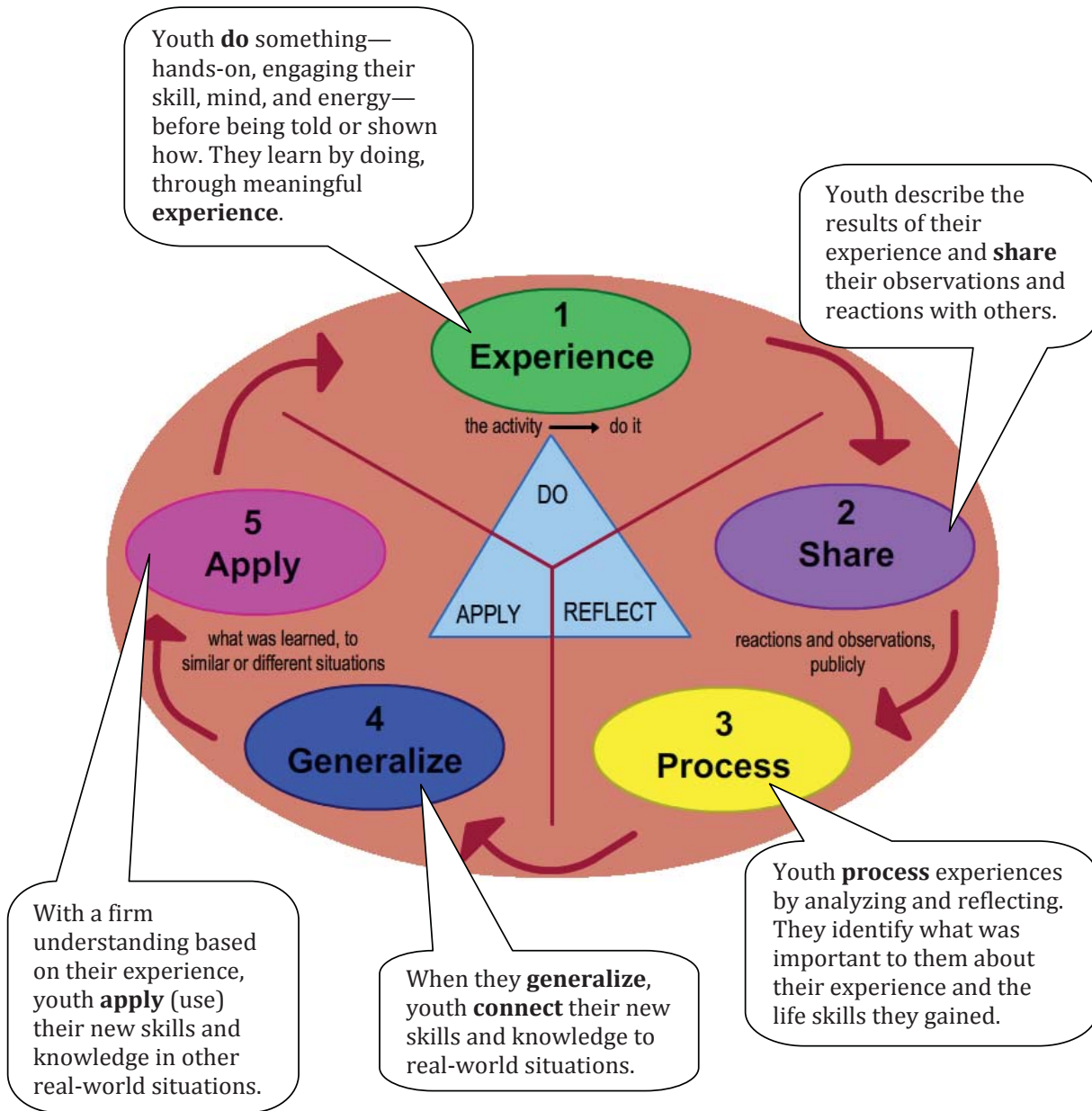
d. Bring the group together. Ask people to contribute their “Top Two Take-Aways” from the session. Record these on chart paper, if desired.

4. As a follow-up to the session, you may want to type up the debriefing and reflection notes and share them (anonymously) with the group.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you learn from:
 - o The “landing” activity?
 - o The “intro to active learning” activity?
- How did it feel to teach out? How did it feel to learn from your colleagues?
- What are three things you can do right away in your work with youth? How will you implement these things?
- How has today’s session changed your paradigm for designing/planning your program activities?
- How will you share what you have learned? How will you support active learning in your program?

The Experiential Learning Cycle



Experiential learning happens when youth are actively involved in projects or activities and they have opportunities to think critically about these experiences. Youth consider what was useful and important about their experiences and take this information forward to use in real life situations. This is deep learning that fosters growth, understanding, and positive development.

From Robideau, K., & Daniels, B. (2010). Youth Work Matters: The Online Course, Session 1: Understanding

Positive Youth Development. (University of Minnesota Extension) Retrieved October 24, 2011, from Youth Work Matters: The

Online Course: https://moodle.umn.edu/file.php/5674/Session_1_Understanding_Pos_Yth_Dev/YWM%20Site/index.html

Ways Youth Workers Can Facilitate Active Learning

1. Step back and make room for youth to do things and make discoveries on their own.
2. Allow enough time for reflection.
3. Ask meaningful, open-ended questions.
4. Plan reflection activities that are engaging and appropriate for the youth you work with.
5. Listen!
6. Look for ways to support each youth's unique learning.

Questions/prompts that support experiencing—doing the project/activity:

- Tell me about what you're doing.
- Tell me about what you're working on.
- What's this about?
- How do you do that?

Questions/prompts that support sharing--:

- What did you do?
- Where did you go?
- What was your goal, when you started working on this?
- What did you learn while you did this?
- How did you feel?
- What was easy?
- What was not-so-easy?
- What surprised you?
- How are you going to share what you did with others?

Questions/prompts that support processing—identifying themes and discovering what was most important:

- What did you learn about yourself by doing this?
- How did you make decisions about this?
- What did you learn about making decisions?
- What problems came up? Which ones came up more than once? How did you handle them?

- How did other people help you?
- Why was this an important/useful thing to do?
- What new questions do you have, after doing this?
- What advice do you have for someone else who wants to do something like this?
- What was most challenging about doing this? Why? How did you solve the challenges?
- What skills did you develop?

Questions/prompts that support generalizing—connecting skills learned with real-life situations:

- What are the key things you learned?
- Where have you faced similar challenges in your life?
- When else have you had fun and learned at the same time?
- What did you learn about making decisions?
- What did you learn about communicating with others?
- How would you describe your skill at _____?
- What do you feel you need, to get better at _____?
- Think about the things you learned to do. How are they important to you?
- Think about the things you learned to do. Where else could you use these skills in the future?
- How do you like to learn?

Questions/prompts that support applying—taking the skills and knowledge forward and using them in other life situations:

- What does this mean to your everyday life?
- What principles or guidelines can you take from this to use in real-life situations?
- What other situations like this have you experienced before? What other situations like this do you think you will experience in the future?
- What can you do to help yourself keep learning?
- How will you do things differently in the future because of this experience?
- How/why was this important to your life?

(Excerpted and adapted from “Questions for Guiding Experiential Learning”, (2005), MN 4-H, and Youth Work Matters Online, (2010), MN Youth Work Institute)

You Know It's Active Learning When...

Principles of Active Learning

You know it's active learning when...

- Youth are speaking and/or moving and/or writing; youth are generating something, preferably something meaningful/useful within the objectives of the activity (can be “soft skills” or concrete content, etc.).
- All youth are actively involved.
- Youth are interacting – with each other, with adults, with materials and ideas.
- Adult facilitators support the activity by providing appropriate structure and scaffolding, asking open-ended questions, and facilitating the process of discovery.
- The learning is process-oriented. Although active learning often does result in a tangible product, the focus is on how the product is created rather than on meeting production deadlines. In active learning, youth learn by doing, and getting there is at least half of the fun.

Features of Active Learning

Active learning features...

- A sense of purposeful activity, which might look like “controlled chaos”
- “Hard fun”; in other words, the challenges of active learning stretch young people’s capabilities in a way that is enjoyable. This concept of “hard fun” is related to the concept of flow or optimal experience, especially the idea of providing just the right amount of challenge.
- Opportunities for youth to have a say in their learning (planning, making meaningful choices, tangible products or performances).
- Support for visual, kinesthetic, and audio learning, integrated naturally into the activities.

ACTIVITY: ADULTS, YOUTH

YPQA and Active Learning

This worksheet connects the principles and practices of active learning to the youth program quality items and indicators of the YPQA. Promoting active learning builds quality into youth programming. These YPQA items and indicators highlight key aspects of active learning; use them to help focus your efforts. In third column write down ideas for how can incorporate them into your programming.

Items from **Supportive Environment** set up conditions that support active learning. It is important to design with these supports in mind.

YPQA Item/Indicators	How Active Learning Connects and Supports	Ways We Can Do This
<p>Youth engage with materials or ideas Activities lead to tangible products or performances Youth talk about what they are doing Activities balance concrete experiences and abstract concepts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active learning gets youth up and moving, using their hands, bodies, and minds. • Active learning increases motivation as youth manipulate materials and critically engage with ideas. • Youth solve problems and experience success through tangible products or performances—objects, demonstrations, presentations, shows, creative works, etc. • When youth talk about what they are doing, they can connect their activities to what they already know and build new understanding; this is how new connections are forged in their brains. • Concrete experiences involve youth actually making or doing things—these could include field trips, interviews, experiments, building things, games and simulations. Abstract concepts are ideas or principles—these are often addressed through mini-lectures, discussions, diagrams, plans, or formulas. You can pair these for a deep, well-rounded active learning experience. 	
<p>Staff are actively involved with youth Staff use specific, non-evaluative feedback Staff use open-ended questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By staying actively involved as youth engage in active learning, staff assumes the role of facilitator, working in partnership with youth as they explore new experiences and ideas. • Specific, non-evaluative feedback builds youths’ confidence and sense of accomplishment. • In contrast, praise (“good job” “way to go” stands in judgment and undermines youths’ ability for self-evaluation by focusing on getting it right rather than on exploration and creative engagement in problem solving. • Open-ended questions—questions that don’t have a single “right answer”—help youth process what they are doing and help build strong youth-adult relationships. 	

Items from **Interaction** address the kinds of interactions that support active learning, and indicate the positive results that come from using active learning with youth.

YPQA Item/Indicators	How Active Learning Connects and Supports	How We Can Do This
<p>Staff vary the kind of groupings (individual, small group, whole group) Staff use different ways to form small groups Groups have purpose and members cooperate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups promote collaboration in work and play. Youth interact with others, learn to appreciate other people’s perspectives and contributions, and develop interpersonal skills. • Varying the groupings and mixing up the way you form groups are two ways to keep things focused and interesting. • Sometimes random groupings are appropriate; other times, there are reasons to form groups more deliberately while allowing for some youth preference in tasks or partners. • Group size should be kept manageable so that everyone is fully engaged in the group tasks. • Use specific activities to help the group shape their goals and learn to work together as a team. 	
<p>Staff share control with youth Staff explains guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This item focuses on adults’ ability to share control with young people. This means achieving a balance of power – neither an adult-controlled “dictatorship” nor a situation where adults give up entirely and a “free-for-all” ensues. • True adult-youth partnerships take careful work, intentional planning, and scaffolded experiences that prepare and support youth in their new shared-power roles. • Staff should have a reason for the guidelines they give to youth and should provide explanations rather than simply saying “because I said so.” Providing these explanations is an important part of sharing power. 	

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The three items in the **Engagement** section of the YPQA Pyramid address the “plan-do-review” paradigm. This is closely related to the experiential learning cycle (see earlier resource, above). In this approach, youth make plans to achieve a particular goal, then they implement their plan, and finally they review the experience and the results. They then apply lessons learned as they plan their next activity/project. Design activities with this approach in mind and the activities will promote active learning.

YPQA Item/Indicators	How Active Learning Connects and Supports	How We Can Do This
Youth make plans for projects and activities Use a variety of planning strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This essential life skill can be incorporated into everything you do with youth. • Youth can make small plans or big plans; all kinds are important and help build this skill. • Using a variety of planning strategies helps keep things fun and interesting. Don't just say, "What are you going to do?" Take planning to the next level and provide support to make it a meaningful process. • Use processes such as brainstorming, idea webbing, and backward planning to build interest and increase youths' skills. 	
Youth make content choices Youth make process choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to provide a range of meaningful choices within a supportive structure. • Youth workers support youth in making choices by providing meaningful activities, asking open-ended questions to promote deeper thinking, by participating with youth, and by scaffolding experiences to meet the developmental needs of the youth. • Choices need to be meaningful (not "token choices," such as what color paint to use) and open-ended ("how can we _____" rather than "should we do _____ or _____"). • Content choices refer to the topic or what the activity is about • Process choices address how the activities are carried out or what roles participants take in the process. 	
Youth reflect on what they are doing Youth reflect in multiple ways Youth make presentations Youth give feedback on the activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection can mean that young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review what they did ✓ Process feelings from the experiences ✓ Connect their experiences to their understanding of how the world works ✓ Learn from what they did ✓ Think critically about their experiences ✓ Celebrate their accomplishments ✓ Start making new plans based on what they learned from what they did • Reflection can—and should—be carried out in a variety of ways. Mixing it up keeps youth engaged. 	

Adapted from the “YPQA Handbook”, (2007), by Tom Akiva and Monica Jones, HighScope Press)

Activity: Adults, Youth

Active Learning Planner

Designing for active learning requires an intentional approach to planning. Process is as important as product. Focus on maximizing engagement through a “hands on, minds on” approach. The template on the following page will help organize your ideas and keep your planning focused on high-quality active learning.

Activity Name: _____

Intended ages: _____ Number of youth who can participate: _____

Activity Leader: _____ Other staff/volunteers: _____

What is the topic/content _____

What’s the goal _____

Duration : One session (_____ hours) All day Multi-day
 Multi-week Other (Describe: _____)

What will youth DO? Brief overview: _____

What is the tangible result (product or performance)? _____

What new skills, knowledge, attitudes, and/or competencies will youth develop? _____

How will you keep all youth actively involved?

How will this activity/project challenge youth (“hard fun”)?

Sample open-ended questions that will be useful in this activity:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What will youth do to make plans and decisions/choices within this activity? _____

How will youth reflect, and at what point(s) during the process? _____

What are the main reflection questions?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

How will you use small groups? What supports will the groups need? _____

How will you ensure that your activity is responsive to youths' various cultural approaches to learning? _____

How do you balance concrete experiences and abstract concepts? _____

How will you share control with youth in this activity? _____

What components will you use in designing your active learning?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cooperative groups | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> discussion/conversation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> role playing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> simulation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> drama | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> debate |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> peer teaching | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> hands-on projects | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> problem-solving |

Describe how these approaches will be used:

Activity: Adults, Youth

Active Learning vs. “Boring Learning”

Here’s a powerful way to demonstrate the benefits of active learning. Take a simple idea—maybe something you’ve recently done with youth—and “teach it two ways”:

- 1) using a lecture-format lesson, and
- 2) via active learning.

Follow up with a debrief-and-reflect discussion.

Here are some examples of topics. Choose one or use your own!

- Finding the percent of a number.
- Learning about light and shadow.
- Learning about how animals survive in the Arctic.
- Revising a paragraph.
- Learning how to conduct an interview.
- Learning to compose a photograph.
- Studying a poem.
- Learning to communicate in groups.
- Comparing the costs/benefits of owning a car to the costs/benefits of using other transportation.
- Studying some aspect of the Great Depression.
- Learn about careers in health care.

Lecture Format: In a **lecture format**, you “tell them what you’re going to tell them, then you tell them, then you tell them what you told them.” In other words:

1. Provide a motivating preview of the topic.
2. Present the information, asking questions where appropriate.
3. Review the information presented.

Active Learning Format: In active learning, you set up a situation/project/activity in which the youth experience the information directly. Look for ways to incorporate one or more of the following strategies

- role playing

- simulations
- interviewing
- oral histories
- apprenticeships
- debates
- peer teaching
- experiments
- learning projects in communities

Be sure to incorporate reflection.

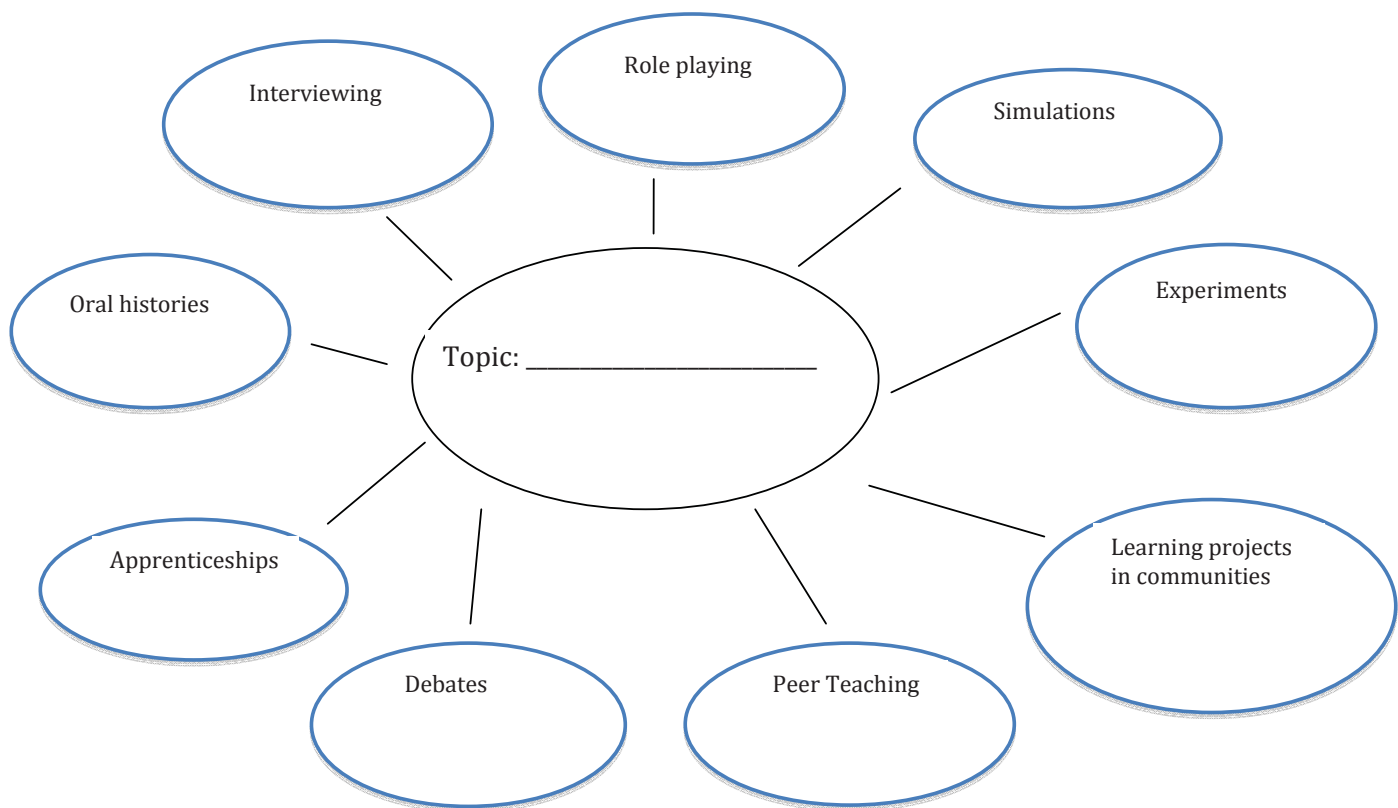
Procedure:

1. Split your group into two sub-groups.
2. One sub-group plans the lecture. The other plans the active learning. Each lesson should be about five minutes long.
3. Teach the content to your participants, using both formats. You may do these one after the other, or split your participants into two groups and teach both formats simultaneously.
4. Debrief and reflect. Plan to spend a good 10-15 minutes on this! Use open-ended questions. You may use a round-robin approach, going around the circle for each question. Or you may want to have participants write on chart paper, or share in small groups and then share out to the larger group. Ask participants how it felt to be taught in the lecture format. Ask them how it felt to be taught in the active learning format. Ask them what they learned and what they remember. Ask what they liked and did not like about learning in each approach.

Activity: Adults, youth

Active Learning Web

Create your own active learning brainstorm by choosing one topic and coming up with brief descriptions of how you could use each of these strategies to teach it



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