MODELING GOOD DISCUSSIONS

Overview:

The Learning Fellows position may be the first time that students have taught in a classroom. Although their first inclination may be to directly instruct students, Learning Fellows are primarily hired as small group facilitators. Their focus should be on helping students understand their own learning, especially through small group discussions. This activity introduces Learning Fellows to a critical aspect of their job: showing students how to have productive discussions.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize what productive discussions look like in small groups and in class.
- Explore ways that Learning Fellows help promote group discussion.

Reading (choose one):

STEM classrooms:


Social science classrooms:


continued on the next page
More inspiration:

Reading (choose one, continued):

Humanities classrooms:

Gee, J. (2014, March). Reading circles get students to do the reading. Faculty Focus: Higher Ed Teaching Strategies: Retrieved from:
https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/reading-circles-get-students-reading/

All classrooms:

https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/nine-ways-to-improve-class-discussions/

Activity:

- Give the Learning Fellows a few minutes to read over the readings.
- Conduct a think-pair-share reflection. You can use some of the reflection questions provided below or create some of your own. (If this is the first time that Learning Fellows have used a think-pair-share reflection, explain the think-pair-share strategy to them. First they will answer the reflection questions on their own, then they will share answers with a partner or small group, then they will share answers with the whole group.)
- Possible reflection questions:
  - Why does the author support classroom discussions?
  - What recommendations does the author provide for supporting classroom discussions? Is there one recommendation that I think will work for our class?
  - What does the author seem to be missing from their recommendations, or what won’t work for our classroom?
  - How much do I, as a student, value classroom discussion? Does it contribute to my learning? Why or why not?
  - What are the qualities of a productive discussion?
  - What is one way I can help students talk to one another, not just to the professor or to me?