



Leveling up after
Quarentine

GETTING BACK TO AN ENGAGED CLASSROOM

Justification for Strategy

I was surprised when returning to the full-size, in-person classroom in spring 2022 that students seemed very timid and hesitant to participate in class.

My sense was they were used to hiding behind blank screens and choosing disengagement.

Even when I would do group work and ask students to report out, the whole group would stare into space silently.

I would frequently joke by saying, "Group one, can you not hear me? Is my microphone off? Is my Wi-Fi freezing up?"

This was a very new experience for me, and I felt I would need to develop new strategies to reengage students again.

What to do?

- ▶ I knew I had to clarify expectations and build accountability into group activities and class discussion.
- ▶ I also wanted to make sure that the disengagement wasn't from lack of interest or feeling excluded, which is why I began to pick readings that were more accessible and diverse for the students.
- ▶ All of the strategies represent attempts to promote engagement and accountability during group work and class discussion.

Nine Point Engagement plan

1) Diversify the readings themselves to promote inclusion.

2) Use the critical thinking guide as a model for creating the discussion questions.

3) Hold them accountable for paying attention when groups report out. Require another group to summarize or ask questions of the group presenting.

4) Be mobile in the room during discussions and maximizing eye contact with the students to try to prevent them from getting distracted.

5) Assign roles to different students in the group to ensure that every student is participating.

Nine Point Engagement plan


5) Diversify group formation: forming groups by turning to neighbor; counting off to randomly create three-person groups for workshopping; creating an extended pairing across an entire paper sequence; separating the class in half and having each half report out on a Padlet.



6) Diversify methods to report out of the discussion groups, including group article annotation and Padlet.

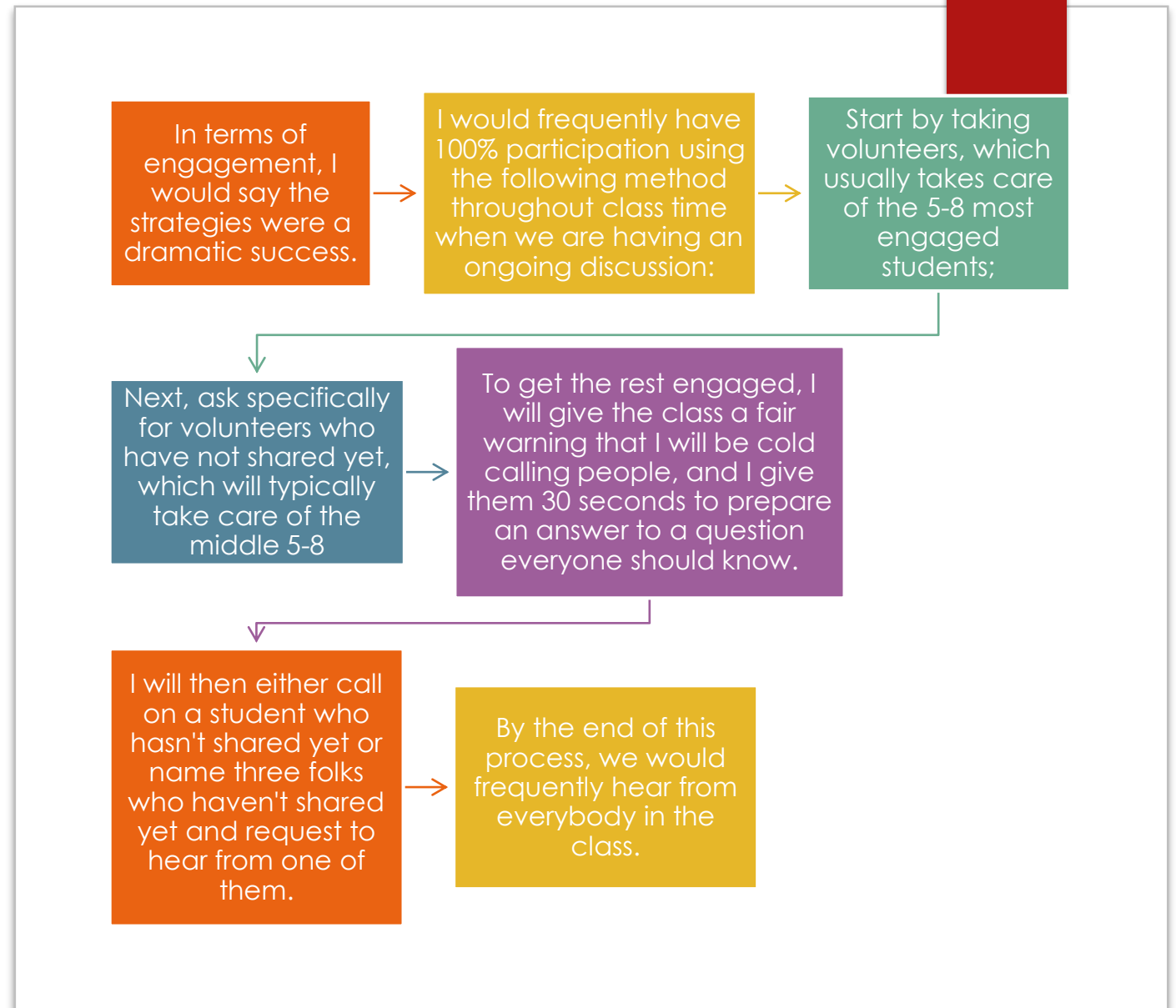


7) Include reflection questions where students can give on-time feedback about what strategies are working well.



8) Hold them accountable for group and individual participation: by having them provide a deliverable after their group work, assessed for completion; cold calling on students who haven't yet participated to share their results on an exercise; walking through the answer with a particular student who expresses confusion or an inability to answer.

Was it successful?



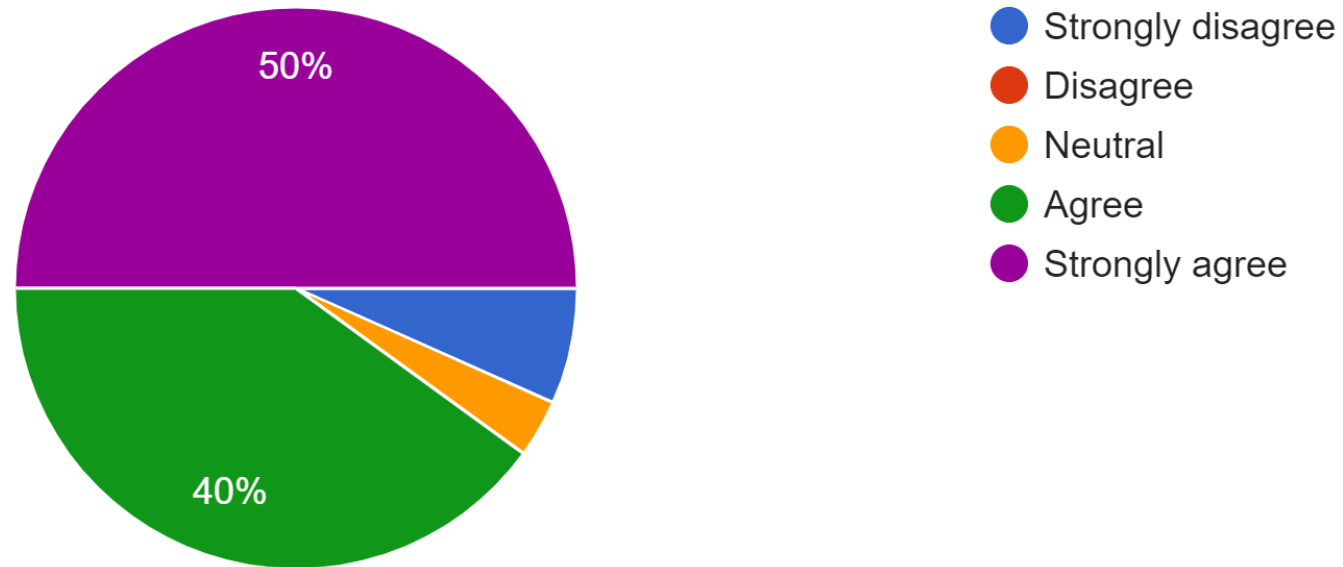
Assessment strategy



- ▶ Reflection and Evaluation Questions
- ▶ I frequently asked students to give me feedback on what strategies were working and what strategies were not.
- ▶ The real challenges that group work and class discussions depends so much on the particular students.
- ▶ So some students loved having semi-permanent partners because they felt it promoted comfort for them.
- ▶ Other students felt like they wanted to change groups more frequently when they didn't feel they had a successful group.
- ▶ All of them were positive about strategies like Padlet that allowed all of them to report out as individuals and make that report available to the entire class.
- ▶ Towards the end of the course, I will have them quantitatively evaluate each of the separate strategies using a 0-5 scale of least effective to most effective so they can tell me which ones they thought worked best and which ones were less helpful.

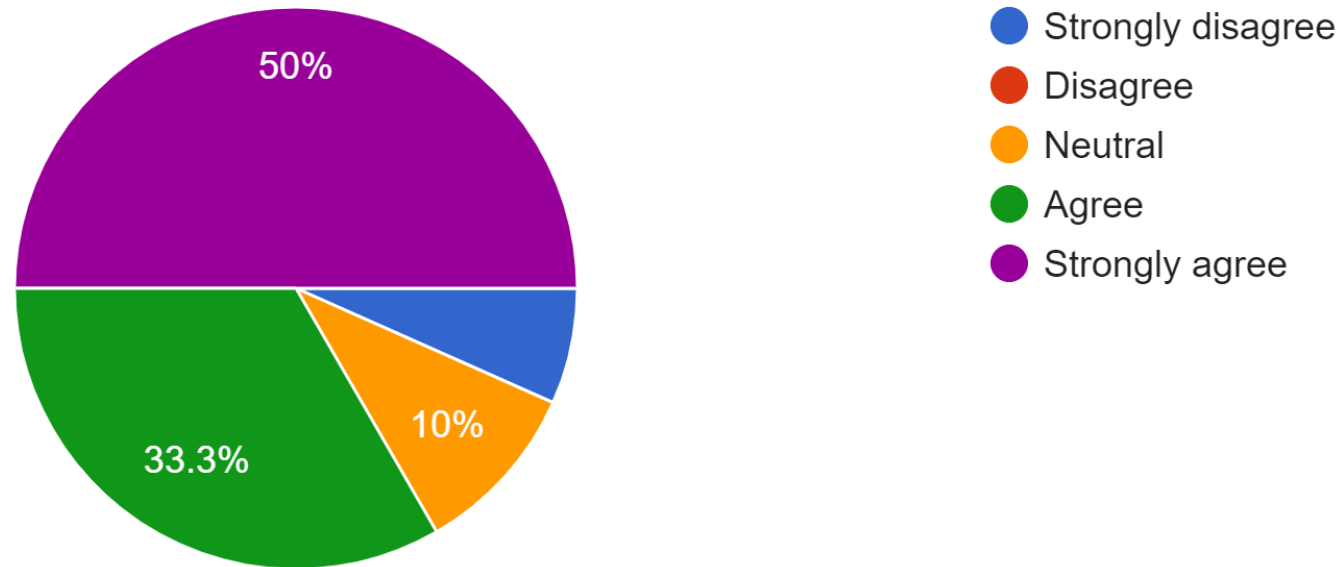
Class discussions were effective and engaging because of the diversity of readings, meaning providing readings from diverse identities by inclu...backgrounds, national origins, races, and so forth.

30 responses



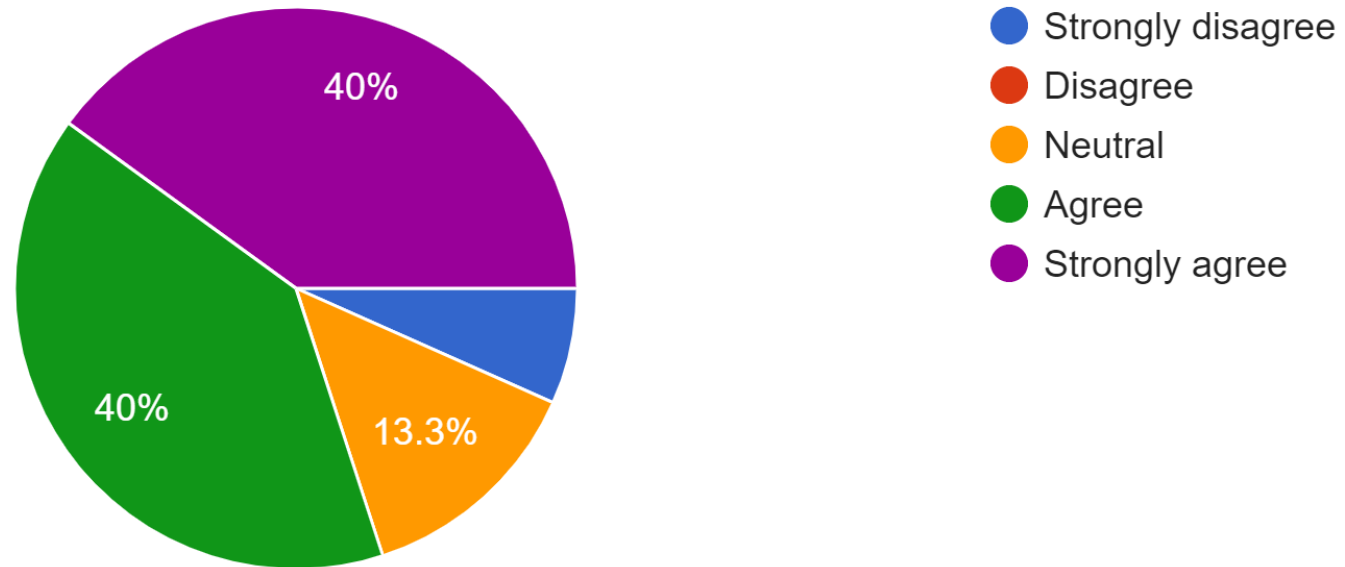
Class discussions were effective and engaging because we use the same critical thinking questions for each discussion, allowing us to better understand how to critically read and think.

30 responses



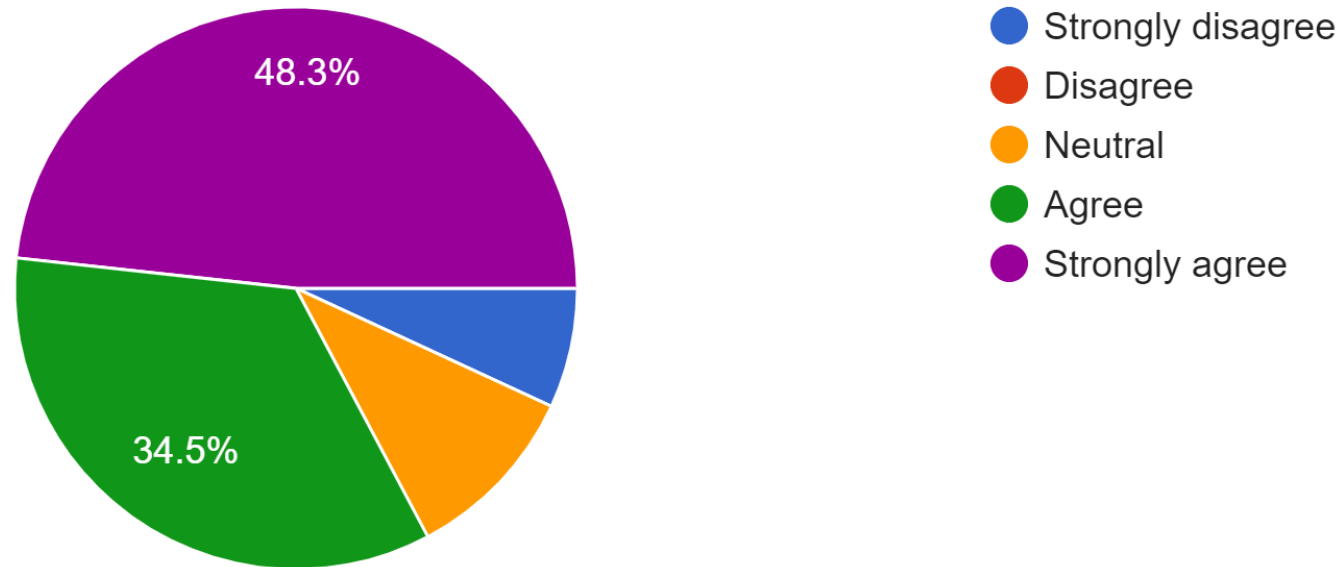
Class discussions were effective and engaging because the expectations were clear that everyone should remain attentive when another group is presenting.

30 responses



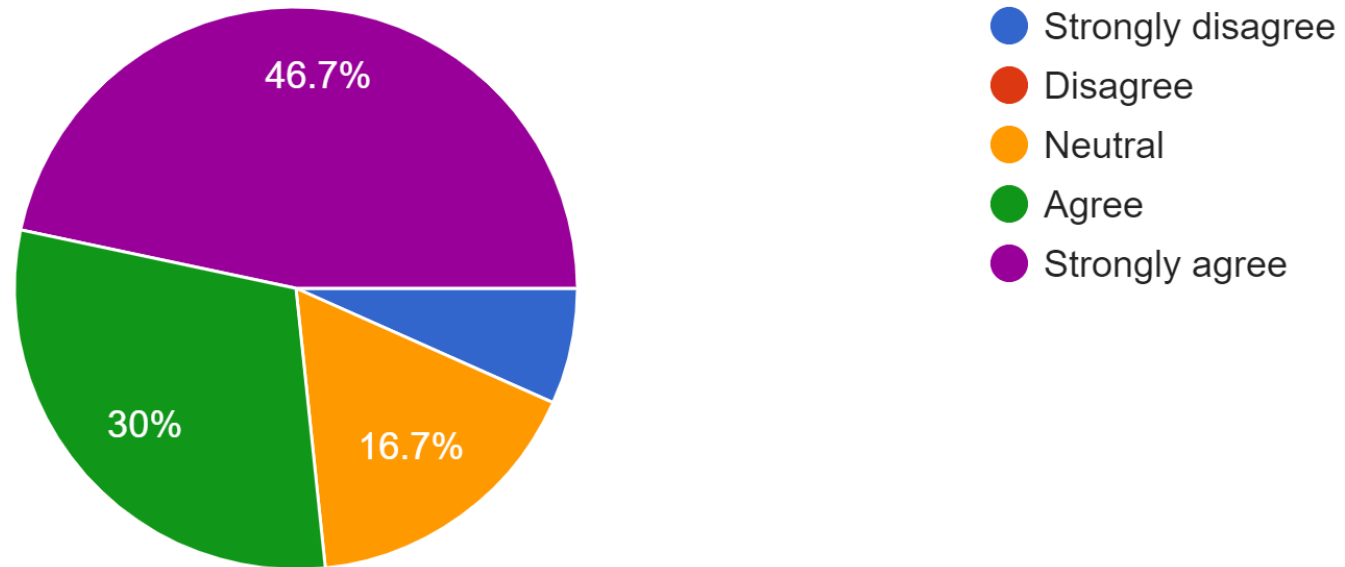
Class discussions were effective and engaging because students were grouped in a variety of ways, including think-pair-share with your neighbor, ...ng by counting off, and splitting the class in half.

29 responses



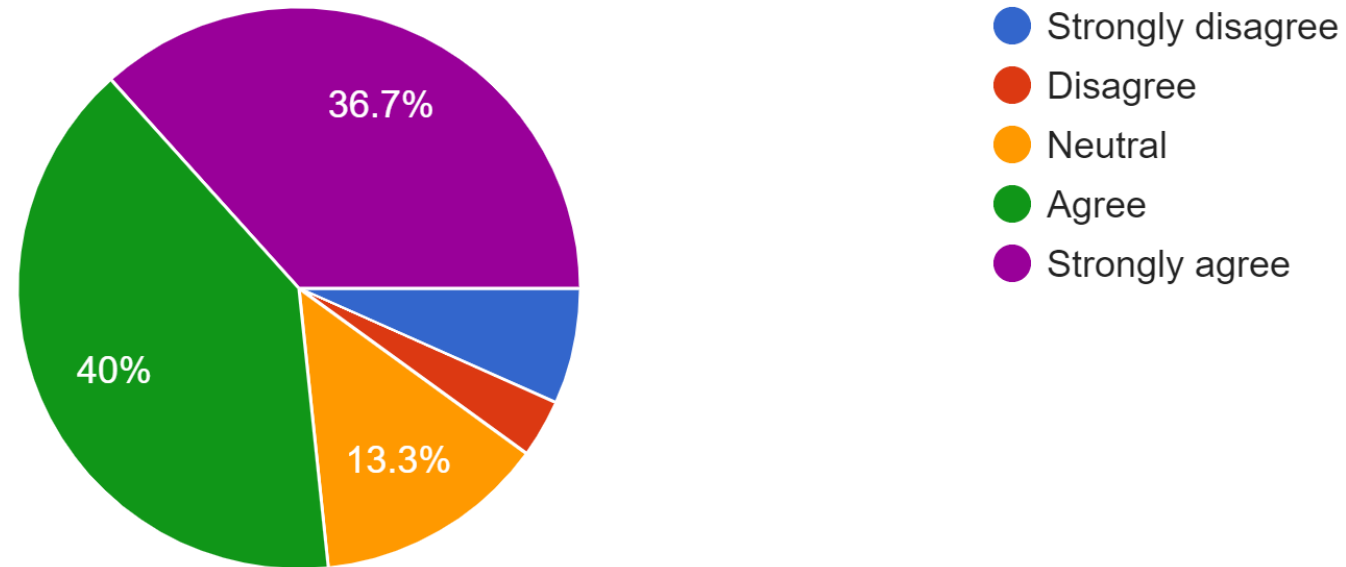
Class discussions were more engaging when you were able to stay with the same partner(s) over multiple days.

30 responses



Class discussions were effective and engaging because there was a diversity of methods through which students reported the results of their discussion on Google Docs, Padlet, and assigned reporters.

30 responses

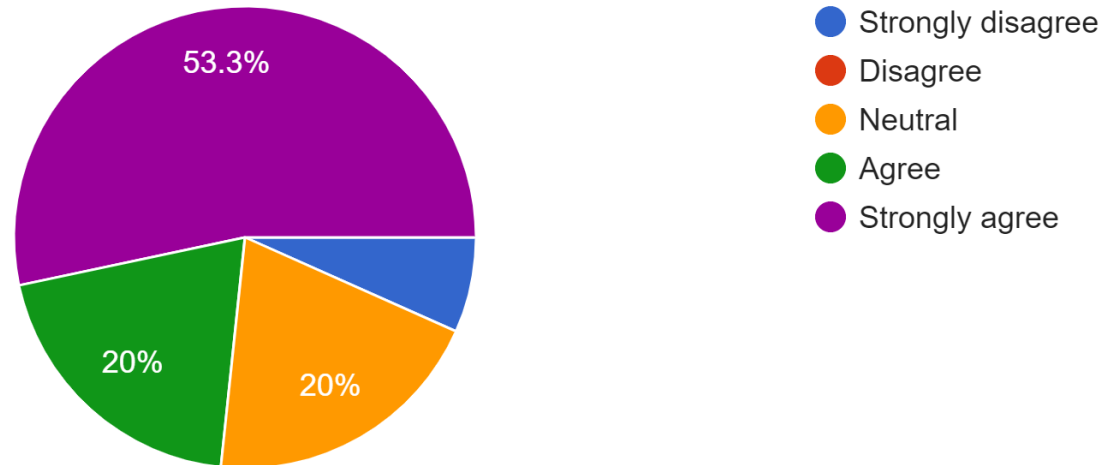


Significant Results: Evaluation

Must credit Bowen with this point

Class discussions were more effective and engaging when it was clear that students were being evaluated for participation or completion of assignment.

30 responses



Feedback

- ▶ I enjoyed the format of the discussions and learning how to discuss and ask the right questions. By doing this I felt that we were able to dive deep into our numerous topics to try and understand what's happening.
- ▶ I think that dividing us into groups where we were able to work with other to develop ideas was effective because then everyone had a say in what we would tell the class. Working in think pair and share was also effective, having a 1 on 1 with someone else means not a lot of voices are talking allowing for more clear-cut and thought-out answers but a little less variety than groups. Raising our hands to share or having us do a certain role to share was pretty effective even calling on random people.
- ▶ The small group discussions were very effective because it allowed diverse students to interact with one another and gave each of us chances to hear the other person's opinion on the subject at hand. For some people who were too shy to publicly state their opinion in front of the whole class, this was a way better way of allowing be heard.

Specific feedback from one of the two "strongly disagree" students

Please provide any feedback or ideas concerning what made classroom discussions effective and engaging in this course this semester.


- I think that everyone was pretty engaged in the topics because they were made to relate to us a little bit. Whenever we would start something, new there was an example from our professor that made it more engaging and then that made our discussions as students better.

Please provide any feedback or ideas concerning what might have been improved about classroom discussions in this course this semester.

- I think this class went pretty smoothly, I don't really have any complaints or anything that needs to be improved.

Influences

- ▶ "Engaged Teaching" by Claire Howell and Elizabeth Barkley was most beneficial for classroom discussion particularly because of the way that it analyzed a huge variety of different discussion and group work strategies, which allowed me to find some that fit the goals of my classroom.
- ▶ "Engaged Teaching" also helped emphasize the importance of clarifying expectations, cold calling to keep students on their toes, and moving about the classroom to avoid student distraction.
- ▶ Several of the earlier books, notably "Teaching Change" by José Antonio Bowen and "Creating Wicked Students" by Paul Hanstedt, emphasize the importance of diversifying readings to promote inclusion. I also tried to bring more joy into the readings, such as a comparison essay of Marvel versus DC, as Bowen recommended in our discussion.
- ▶ The "Guide to Critical Thinking" and the work of Heather Satrom was helpful for the discussion questions.



Thank you for the
opportunity to research
contemporary
pedagogy and grow as
a teacher!