Talking Through It

Using Student-to-Student Interviews and Brainstorming Activities for Facilitating Critical Inquiry

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Outcomes and Observations
Questions as thinking prompts served as refreshers and search starting points.

Interviewees not distracted by writing “correct” or expected answers.

Interviewer occasionally provided additional topical information. All project members, upon regroup, could contribute; members, professor, librarian then identified areas of topic (un)familiarity. Some questions too open-ended or vague; students struggled with “What do you mean?” Interviewers had trouble clarifying.

Few clarifications asked when the response was “I do not know.” Amount of information collected varied.

Outcomes and Observations
Questions about existing knowledge, with examples, equaled more productive interview.

Wording specificity resolved some vagaries and confusion about exact nature of question.

Addition of separate exercise and structured table encouraged critical thinking and served as better reference for search keywords. Exchanging sheets addressed unequal feedback from interviewers.

Some questions still interpreted as too vague; students struggled to understand question rather than focus on ideas/concepts related to project. Students often neglected fundamental considerations of project, particularly measurements, calculations, governing laws.

Outcomes and Observations
Increasing specificity of question terminology greatly reduced “What do you mean?” responses.

Forcing students to consider laws and measurements before initial design resulted in better design, more on-point searching strategies. Also pushed existing knowledge to forefront for consideration.

Keyword exercise redesign strategically pushed students to consider specificity of project while prompting recall of related chemistry concepts. Specificity in interview and keyword exercise resulted in productive response and tapping into this area.

Outcomes and Observations
A rush to search no strategy. Multiple searches, few on-point results.

Random keyword searches, not well organized.

Underestimating established knowledge from previous courses; require heavy prompting regarding existing knowledge.

Groups not consulting internally before searching not maximizing knowledge and skills. Inequality within student pair dynamics.

Sources restricted to non-textbook, non-laboratory sources.