

## Methodology

My discussion board philosophy is based in the Socratic Method. I view my involvement as a guide for the students to refine (in application) the instructional materials themselves. I accomplish this asking questions in reply to the student's postings and then commenting on (brief guidance) their answers.

This method results in other students answering my questions in discussion threads and commenting on other posts. I stop asking questions the day previous to the end of the discussion board and summarize posting threads while inserting closing comments.

My strategy for encouraging and ensuring quality participation in the discussion threads is to clearly enumerate the posting requirements, maintain daily participation, and guide posts back that stray from the topic. Students require a clear understanding of what the topic for discussion is, what the posting requirements are (including netiquette), and how their work will be graded (rubric). Buelens, Deketelaere, Dierickx, and Totte (2007) found that student postings were significantly longer when netiquette guidelines were posted along with student posting expectations (p. 715).

I participate in discussion daily; I believe this is leading by example. My students know that I am interested in discussion and usually reciprocate the enthusiasm. Students may veer off of the discussion topic for a variety of reasons. I re-focus the student by canalizing questions back to the discussion topic.

I do not limit post length. I believe this inhibits the creative process and truncates explanation. Further, I only require citations when the student has used a direct quote or paraphrase. "The third element of structure, postings protocols, specifically, limiting the length

of a post and mandating reading citations, was shown to have a negative impact on meaningful discourse" (Dabbagh & Gilbert, 2005, p. 16).

I maintain proper netiquette by initially referring all students to the netiquette procedures and then exhibiting the proper behavior in my postings. I find that students seek a model in discussion and, by providing the correct example, students readily follow.

In summation, it is my job to provide discussion board posting examples with a positive and inquisitive tone. This is infectious on discussion boards.

### Discussion Board Inactivity

The instructor must take the initiative if the discussion boards become inactive. This could be posting the first answer if the discussion boards are empty (this provides the students an example answer) or posing follow-up questions. If the discussion boards are inactive for more than thirty-six hours, I email all students to inform them of the discussion highlights and to encourage them to participate further.

### Managing a Dominating Student

Dominating students usually reveal themselves by criticizing other posts and insist that they have the correct answer. They sometimes feel the need to address every post that is 'incorrect', yet other times they only address specific posts of students they do not like.

A dominating student can be identified immediately. I participate in discussion daily and read every message; it is patently obvious that a student is dominating in a post. I immediately address the issue with the student. Addressing the issue immediately usually solves the problem. Some students are not aware of how their writings are translating to others. Some students have not read nor had practice with netiquette. I gently remind the student to review the netiquette

policies (I attach them to the email) and reinforce my classroom environment statement that all ideas, people, and thoughts are welcome because our diversity creates learning strength.

I take appropriate action if the issue persists which always involves contacting the administration for further ideas, opinions, and guidance.

### Managing a Disrespectful, Rude Student

Rude, disrespectful students reveal themselves immediately. Some students imply rudeness and disrespect. These students may not be aware of how their comments are translating to other students, so I remind the student of the netiquette policies (I attach them to the email) and reinforce my classroom environment statement. Further, I inform the student how the indirect comments could be (or were) interpreted.

Some students are directly rude and disrespectful. These students are aware of their comment intent because of the direct statements. I address this with the student immediately in the same fashion that I have previously outlined. I also inform the student that such comments are not tolerated and what the sanctions for further comments are. I contact my administration for permission to remove the post. Finally, I find it important to address the rude and disrespectful comment to the entire class in a posting. I correct the behavior and use the comment to reinforce netiquette guidelines, my classroom environment statement, and that such comments are not tolerated.

### References:

Buelens, H., Deketelaere, A., Dierickx, K., & Totte, N. (2007). Electronic forums in medical ethics education: the impact of didactic guidelines and netiquette. *Medical Education*, 41 (7), 711-717. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier.

Dabbagh, N. & Gilbert, P. (2005). How to structure online discussions for meaningful discourse: a case study. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 36(1), 5-18. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier.