

Small Group Instructional Diagnosis

Instead of waiting until the end of the term, find out now what students experience in your class...

Are you looking for a way to gather meaningful and honest feedback from your students?

Approaching midterm is a great time to find out from your students how the class is going so far. A Small Group Instructional Diagnosis, or SGID, is a focus group led by a trained facilitator who speaks directly with the students to ask what is working in the course and what they would like to see changed.

This SGID process is confidential and non-evaluative, conducted by fellow faculty members who have received training in how to conduct the sessions. SGID facilitators can act as neutral third parties who can collect anonymous feedback and report it back to you. The SGID session takes about 30 minutes of class time.

Email ctl@cnm.edu to schedule a SGID for one or more of your classes.

A description of the general SGID process

- The instructor and facilitator meet to review the SGID process, individualize the questions, and schedule a mutually convenient time to conduct the SGID, which requires approximately 30 minutes.
- On the day of the SGID, the instructor introduces the facilitator to the class and explains the purpose of the process. The instructor leaves the room.
- The facilitator then divides the students into small groups of 3 - 4, gives them a handout that include the questions (with space for concrete examples). There is usually a question about what the students think is working in the course and a question about what they would like to see changed.
- Students in each group must come to a consensus about what they like or do not like about a course and the suggestions for improving it. The consensus method eliminates the extreme outliers in the group.
- After students have completed their lists, the facilitator leads a whole group discussion, inviting the students to share their group lists.
- The facilitator develops consensus among groups about the most and least effective elements of the course, noting outliers or additional information that arises.
- After the session (within a week or two), the facilitator meets with the instructor to report the results of the SGID.
- The instructor reports back to the class, explaining how the students' feedback informs the course design, activities, or assignments in that course or future courses. This step is one of the most important in the SGID process, since it demonstrates the instructor's commitment to improving teaching and learning and respect for the students' feedback.

Benefits of the SGID process

- The feedback obtained can lead to improvements in instruction as well as enhancing the positive experiences of students in the class.
- Student participation allows students to compare views, so that extremely divergent student views may be reconsidered or moderated.
- Students can provide constructive suggestions in a timeframe that allows for instructor adaptation, instead of waiting for the formal student evaluations at the end of the semester.
- Faculty and student communication improves.
- A SGID is one way to reflect on your teaching through the **Student Lens**, one of the *4 Lenses of Reflective Practice* outlined by Dr. Stephen Brookfield, the featured speaker at the 2017 CNM Conference on Teaching and Learning.

This information is cited from J. H. Herman's and M. Langridge's Chapter 15 in To Improve the Academy Volume 31, "Using Small Group Individual Diagnoses to Improve Online Instruction," pp. 230 - 231. Also from McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers, Fourteenth Edition, pp. 334-335.

Information adapted from Kennesaw State University Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.