

Enhanced Student Engagement During Synchronous Learning: Using Breakout Rooms

Nicole L. Arkadie, Ed.D, LCSW, PPSC

School of Social Work

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Introduction

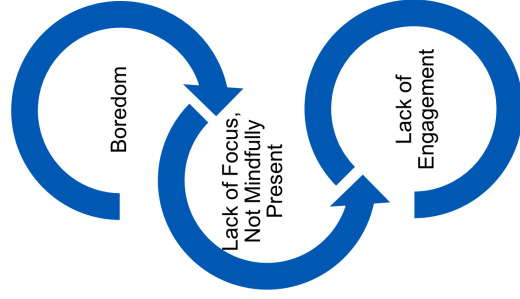
Synchronous online learning is not a new concept. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many instructors had a steep learning curve figuring out how to teach their students using an online platform. For students who were used to traditional in person instruction, abruptly being switched to an online format made classroom engagement difficult. The use of breakout rooms was found to be an effective teaching strategy to increase and enhance student engagement during synchronous classroom instruction.

Classroom Goals

- Use strategies to enhance student engagement
- Have students construct their own knowledge on subject matter



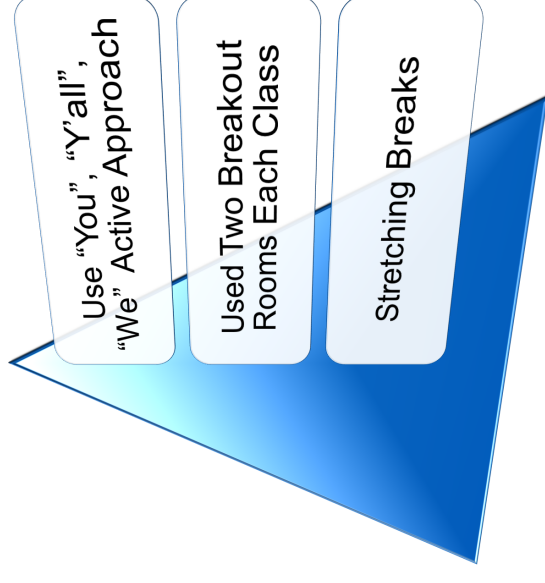
Barriers To Student Learning



Breakout Room Strategy

- Started the class with a daily quote obtained from Brainyquotes.com
- Asked students their thoughts about the quote
- Had zoom randomly assign students into groups of three to discuss, and opened breakout rooms
- Resumed class after five minutes and discussed their responses
- Presented a micro practice vignette to class, had them individually write out their responses
- Then, placed back into breakout rooms to discuss and problem solve in groups
- Resumed class and discussed together with instructor responses

Active Learning Strategies



Conclusion

- Students enjoyed beginning the class with a motivational or inspirational quote and they often reference the quote through classroom discussions
- Placing students in breakout rooms allowed them to utilize critical thinking skills, build a more collaborative approach interacting with their classmates to problem solve, and then they looked forward to hearing the feedback from the instructor
- Students thanked the instructor after we took a five-minute stretching break (facilitated by the instructor) stating it helped them feel less stressed, and they were noticeably more focused
- The breakout rooms kept the students active, enhanced their engagement and classroom participation