CREATING AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

5

Assess Your Audience ◄
Assess the Physical Environment ◄
Room Setup ◄
Classroom Management ◄

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

OVERVIEW

Suggested instructional time for this lesson: 1 hour

Introduction

This lesson explains the purpose of gathering information about students and offers suggestions about the type of information that, once acquired, can contribute to the success of a course. Guidance is given about how to adjust instruction to meet the needs of each unique group of students. The importance of the learning environment, its characteristics, and how to create an atmosphere that supports a rewarding educational experience are discussed.

Lesson Objectives

Through group discussion and question and answer sessions, the EMS instructor trainee will be able to:

- Describe three information-gathering techniques used to assess an audience
- Specify three individual or group attributes that affect learning
- Describe an adaptive strategy for dealing effectively with three individual or group attributes
- Identify two potential obstacles to learning
- Cite methods to overcome two potential obstacles to learning
- List five characteristics of an ideal learning environment
- Describe seating arrangements that promote interaction
- Name three factors that contribute to a stimulating atmosphere

Materials Needed

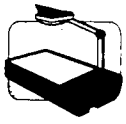
- Overhead projector and screen
- Flipchart and markers

Instructional Strategies

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Question and answer
- Visual aids
- Activity

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Go over the objectives using a flipchart prepared before class.



Display OH #5-1

Write on flipchart

Ask the following questions, and list student responses on a flipchart labelled Audience Information.

What can you find out about your students during introductions?

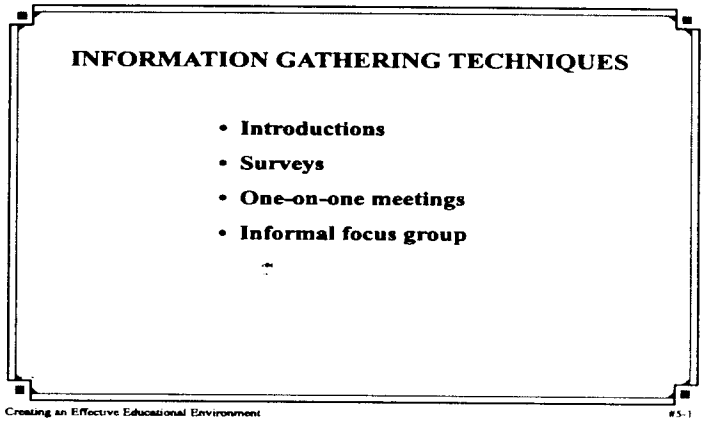
How might you adapt a lesson plan based on that information?

LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

I. Assess Your Audience

A. Information-gathering techniques



1. Using introductions effectively

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

I. Assess your audience

For many reasons, it is necessary to know "who is in the room." Audience characteristics are a principal concern in the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of any educational experience. As courses are conceived, the audience is postulated in a general sense and the material is planned accordingly. During the first session of class, the premise gives way to reality, and the adept instructor will adjust his/her strategies and methods as the situation demands.

A. Information-gathering techniques

1. Using introductions effectively

Think back to the first lesson of this Instructor Training Program. Remember the introductions? Valuable information can be shared during those first few minutes of class. Handled effectively, an easygoing question and answer session can help you to find out the particulars of an audience quickly, while at the same time you demonstrate interest in your students as individuals—an essential step in establishing rapport. The information you gather can be used to adjust the instruction, thus enabling you to better meet the needs at hand.

Here are some questions to ask:

- Have you ever taught before? What courses?
- How long have you been involved in delivering emergency medical services?
- What is your specialty? Are you full-time EMS or a part-time volunteer?
- Is this a required course or an elective?
- Are there any particular skills you hope to improve?
- Are you excited about being here?
- Why? What do you hope to gain by attending this training?

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Refer to handout

Have students turn to the blank survey in Appendix B, reference 5-1, as an example.

LESSON PLAN

2. Icebreakers
3. Surveys
4. One-on-one meetings
5. Focus groups

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2. Icebreakers

   - Hand out a sheet of paper with 20 "one-liners" on it describing hobbies, activities, places visited, and other experiences. Have students go around and get signatures of people who have had the experience.

   - Distribute matching "items" and have students find their match, e.g., puzzle pieces, numbers, etc. One variation is to have everyone put one shoe in a large bag and then take someone else's shoe out. When they meet their match, they ask questions and then introduce the person to the rest of the class.

3. Surveys

   One way to get honest information from your participants is to conduct an anonymous survey. If you have the opportunity, try and get the answers to some pertinent questions ahead of time. This will allow you to prepare for any special needs in advance. If you cannot survey for the information ahead of time, make the survey one of the first exercises in the course; then adjust as necessary.

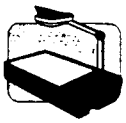
4. One-on-one meetings

   Sometimes a student will approach you one-on-one about a question or concern s/he was reluctant to bring up in class. For example, if a student needs special arrangements for a makeup exam, s/he will often use "office hours" to make the request. Sometimes students will simply catch you in the hallway. Determine before the course starts if and when you will be available outside of class and communicate this to the students on the first day. Use these one-on-one meetings to get to know your students and to obtain feedback about the class.

5. Focus groups

   A focus group is just that, a group with a focus. Focus groups can be information-gathering or problem-solving. A survey can be used prior to the meeting; discussion can then center around the survey results. The instructor of a new curriculum might conduct an informal focus group during the first session of class with the goal of customizing the presentation before the next session.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES



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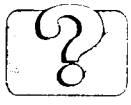
Please note that this material reinforces much of what was modelled in Lessons 1 & 2. If you feel your students are ready, proceed to the next section and just let them know the material is here for their reference.



Ask a question

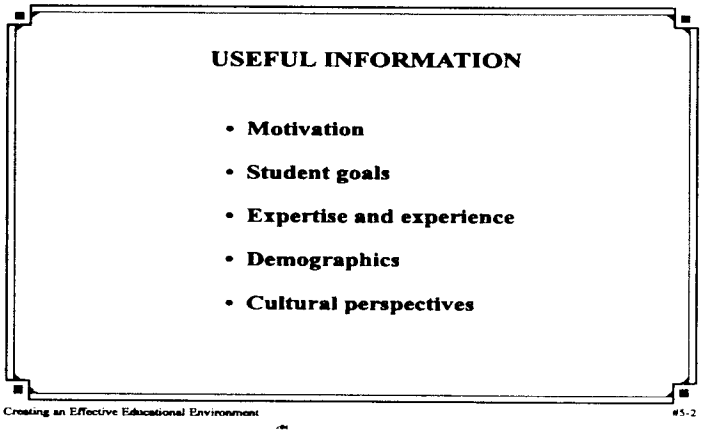
What might motivate a student to attend a class?

Some possibilities:

- Certification
- Letter of recommendation
- Specific skill acquisition
- Information about specific topics

LESSON PLAN

B. Useful information and adaptive strategies



1. Understanding motivation

2. Balancing student goals with course objectives

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

B. Useful information and adaptive strategies

1. Understanding motivation

As discussed in Lesson 1, the Introduction, student motivation is an important component of successful training. You were urged to find out whether the training is mandatory or voluntary and if students are excited to be in class. If you have a highly motivated group, you may go through the course faster than anticipated. If this occurs, restructure lessons and increase the depth planned for the most relevant topics, and/or include more exercises, activities, and practice. Some learners have a voracious appetite for knowledge and skills and an adaptive strategy will help you to challenge them.

If a group is unmotivated, find out why. Address the issues whenever possible. Enlist the students' support in making the course more fun and interesting. Control is important to adult learners. If you can persuade them that they influence what occurs, they may work with you instead of against you to create a more productive learning experience.

There are often incentives that motivate students to attend training and it is good to know what they are. Perhaps the course is necessary for professional advancement. You may have students who attend because the class counts for continuing education credits and they are obligated to complete a certain number of hours. Students may attend because they are simply interested in the subject matter. As you seek to involve and interest your students, it helps to understand what is motivating each of them.

2. Balancing student goals with course objectives

Differences may exist not only in basic enthusiasm, but in students' focus, interest, and how much value they perceive in various topics. Many times adult learners have years of experience and want in-depth knowledge on the subjects that interest them. They may want to concentrate on a particular skill or an area that directly relates to their job requirements. As the instructor, you have to measure individual interests against the lesson plan, try to meet the needs of your students, and still present the entire curriculum.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
	3. The significance of expertise 4. Using demographic information

For example, in the Instructor Training Program, literally hours could be spent on the learning theory that underlies "practical" teaching methodologies. Typically, the adult learner is interested in real-life application, and so the focus of this course is on skill development. However, there may be those in the room who are fascinated by the theoretical underpinnings of education. These individuals see theory as the substance behind the application; others want to "stop talking about it and just do it!" Instructors need to be able to balance the objectives of the course with divergent participant interests. When in doubt, look to the course and lesson objectives for guidance.

3. The significance of expertise

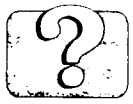
Additionally, the depth and breadth of experience represented by each student in each classroom is significant. Levels and types of experience vary from course to course and, as an instructor, you must be ready, willing, and able to adjust accordingly. How much experience have they had? Is there a wide range in the degree and variety of expertise represented, or is the group fairly homogeneous?

Most groups are not homogeneous. Therefore, in a typical classroom, you will have to "teach to the middle." Some tips on remediation and enhancements that target the students at either end of the spectrum are included in Lesson 7, Evaluation and Lesson 8, Instructional Strategies and Methods. It is important to evaluate student progress at regular intervals, throughout the course. Frequent assessments allow an instructor to address problem areas before it is too late for adaptive strategies.

4. Using demographic information

Demographic data includes details such as age, educational level, EMS experience, and place of residence for each student. This information will help you tailor your presentation; for example, through the use of age-appropriate anecdotes. Students will appreciate it if you incorporate location-specific practices/regulations or details unique to the branch of EMS service represented. This is because adult learners have a strong desire to learn material that is particularly relevant to them, not just information in general.

Demographic information should, on an individual basis, be anonymous. If you want to report your findings to the group, do so as class averages. The course administrator may want to keep a record of demographic data.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
 **Ask** a question Ask what students think might be potential obstacles to learning.	5. Appreciating cultural issues C. Identify and overcome potential obstacles to learning 1. Learning disabilities

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

5. Appreciating cultural issues

Recognize that the ways in which individuals interact in a learning environment can be influenced by unique cultural characteristics. For example, certain cultures place a high value on consensus-building. It may be difficult for an individual who has adopted problem-solving strategies consistent with a consensus-building approach to argue his/her position effectively in a group that sees compromise as backing down, or even losing. As an instructor, you are obliged to evaluate each student on achievement, regardless of personal style. Furthermore, appreciation of diversity issues will help you to create an educational environment that is flexible, creative, and receptive to the needs of all students.

C. Identify and overcome potential obstacles to learning

1. Learning disabilities

A learning disability typically refers to any condition that interferes with an individual's ability to absorb, process, and apply information. An "attention deficit disorder," for example, is a condition in which concentration is impaired. Dyslexia is a physical condition which presents impediments to processing the written word. Below average reading ability is another obstacle to learning, as is a deficit in study skills. Obviously, these must be dealt with effectively for the student to derive maximum benefit from a course of study.

Learning disabilities should be handled on an individual and confidential basis. You should encourage all students who have special needs to speak with you privately. If you suspect a problem, approach the student yourself. Although these conditions are being identified more reliably, many adults may have never recognized their "symptoms" as something which, with appropriate interventions, can be overcome. Explore solutions with the student to make his/her training an effective and rewarding learning experience.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
	2. Physical limitations 3. State and institutional policies 4. Local resources

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2. Physical limitations

Physical limitations are as important to identify as learning disabilities because they too can affect learning. Adjustments to your instructional presentation may be required for hearing- or visually-impaired students and wheelchair-bound participants.

For example, a hearing-impaired student may require an interpreter. However, a seat at the front of the class to facilitate lip-reading might be sufficient or even preferable. When options are available, select an intervention that the student feels comfortable with, and if lip-reading is the preferred solution, remember to maintain an unobstructed view for the student as you lecture.

A visually-impaired student may require a front row seat as well, so that instructional aids such as graphics and overheads can be seen clearly. As per the design principles discussed in Lesson 9, Media, make sure that your visual aids are legible. It may also be helpful to provide printed copies of your overhead transparencies.

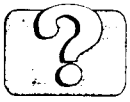
3. State and institutional policies

Contact your state EMS office to determine what, if any, accommodations are required and/or appropriate. Disability requirements will differ for educational institutions; check with site administrators for their guidelines. Appendix B includes the accommodation policy adopted by the National Registry.

4. Local resources

Familiarize yourself with locally available resources, because there may be times when you will need to refer a student to other sources of assistance.

You are not expected to be all things to all people. If a student is experiencing serious personal problems that interfere with successful course completion, it is probably in his/her best interest to address those problems with a trained professional or personal friend rather than with you. That frees you up to make reasonable adjustments to help them complete course requirements; this is your responsibility as their instructor and should be the focus of your support strategy.

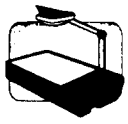
INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
 **Ask** a question Can you think of other adjustment strategies that we haven't mentioned, particularly related to EMS?	D. Your "Game Plan"—a review of adjustment strategies ■ Restructure lessons by increasing the depth of the most relevant topics ■ Add exercises, activities, and practice ■ Enlist the support and commitment of students to help create a learning experience that meets their needs ■ Give examples of how their participation and feedback can help you to make the material more relevant and useful to them ■ Meet individual needs, if possible; e.g. letter of recommendation, certification, critical skill development ■ Teach to the middle, but employ remediation and enhancement strategies ■ Be aware; appreciate cultural differences ■ Use informal evaluation tools to measure comprehension, competence ■ Assess frequently, before beginning new material

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

D. Your "Game Plan"—a review of adjustment strategies

Now that you've gathered all this data, how do you move forward with an instructional "game plan" that will be effective? Teaching is a lot like coaching a ball team. If you're out there on the field, and the defense seems impenetrable, you may have to beef up your offensive strategy. On the other hand, if your team is flying high, with victory in the air, how do you keep them focused enough to win once more? Adjustment strategies should be considered and incorporated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the needs of the students.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES | *LESSON PLAN*



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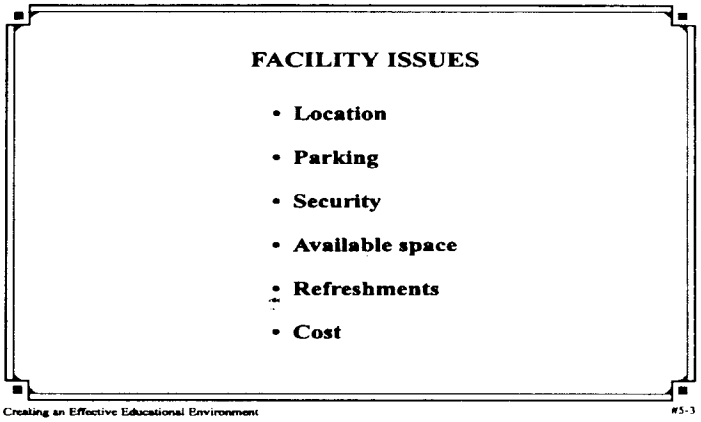
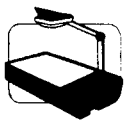
II. Assess the Physical Environment

A. Features to consider

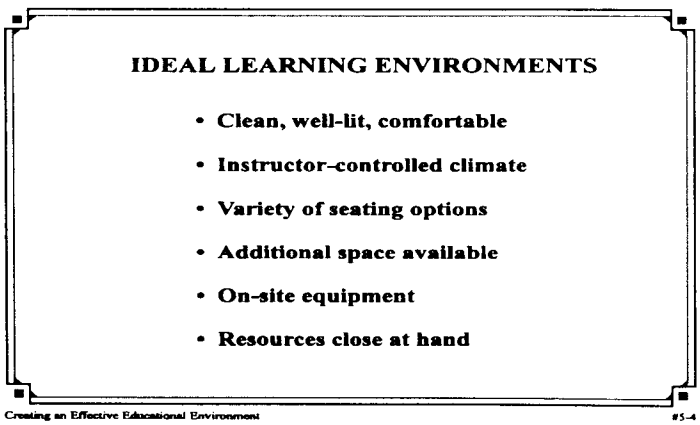
1. Facility issues





Display OH #5-4

2. Classroom characteristics



II. Assess the Physical Environment

During training, it is important that students feel comfortable and are free of distractions. It may be your responsibility as an instructor to research available facilities and select the appropriate one for your course needs. Listed below are some characteristics of an ideal learning environment. Take these into consideration when you are securing a facility.

A. Features to consider

1. Facility issues

- Location
- Parking
- Security
- Available space
- Restrooms
- Refreshments
- Cost

Determine what each facility provides for the convenience and comfort of students and instructors. Be aware that the class schedule impacts criteria importance, e.g., outdoor lighting and security may be essential for student safety during night classes, while day classes require readily available food service. You might also consider that parking needs are affected by class size, and that your student population will probably be happiest with a local facility or a trip to a coveted location.

2. Classroom characteristics

Creating an effective learning environment requires attention to those aspects of the training site that affect how comfortable students are in the classroom. When students are at ease they are better able to concentrate and learning is facilitated.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
	3. Course-specific criteria a. Break-out rooms b. Special requirements

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Consider some of the characteristics of an ideal learning environment:

- Clean
- Well lit
- Climate control; i.e., the ability to adjust temperature
- Classroom size is appropriate for the number of students and course requirements
- Seating can be arranged to suit the needs of each lesson
- Additional space is available to store equipment and supplies, or as an extra room for small group work

In addition to basic environmental conditions, consider the following:

- Equipment availability on site
- Organization and layout, i.e., resources close at hand and easily utilized
- Potential distractions, e.g., cheerleading camp directly outside the window

3. Course-specific criteria

a. Break-out rooms

When a course includes large numbers of students and the lesson plan calls for a highly interactive instructional strategy, it is often beneficial to have designated space available for small group work. Sometimes called breakout rooms, these areas provide privacy during group interaction. This is particularly useful if the group will be presenting to the entire class later on and an element of surprise is desirable, or if the class size makes it difficult to concentrate in one large room.

b. Special requirements; e.g. practical skills courses, such as ambulance instruction

Be aware of any special equipment or site requirements. For example, if you are teaching the Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC), you will need outdoor space adequate for ambulance instruction in addition to classroom space.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
	B. Facility arrangements 1. Find the right training facility 2. Visit the site 3. Check out supplies and equipment

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

B. Facility arrangements

1. Find the right training facility

   As the instructor, it may be your responsibility to research available facilities and select the appropriate one for your course needs. Use the criteria listed above to assess the advantages and disadvantages of each site. Determine essential vs. non-essential elements and eliminate potential sites that lack key criteria. Then, weigh the advantages of each to decide upon the right training facility for your particular course.

2. Visit the site

   Once you have a training site secured, visit the room. Based on the room and your instructional strategies, develop a plan on how to best utilize the space. Determine workable seating options that allow space for all of the instructional methods you will employ, such as lecture, small groups, and practical exercises.

3. Check out supplies and equipment

   Note the equipment requirements for each lesson and confirm what the site has available and what must be planned for and provided by the instructional staff or course administrator. Arrange for the equipment well in advance of the training. Identify in advance who is responsible for helping you to set up equipment or replace faulty equipment. Have a supply of extra parts that may need to be replaced; e.g., light bulbs for the overhead projector.

   Prepare overhead transparencies and handouts as you complete your lesson plan. Proofread carefully; participants will notice errors and be distracted by them. Make sure that you have all supporting materials duplicated as far in advance as possible, to allow time for unexpected delays or last-minute corrections. For more information about media and equipment management, see Lesson 9, Design and Use of Media.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
	4. Plan for known distractions 5. Scheduling

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. Plan for known distractions

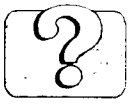
Distractions come in all shapes and sizes, and are created by people, places, and things. The concentration of students can be affected by poor lighting, a lawn mower outside, a disruptive student, uncomfortable temperatures, rattling air conditioning units, loud fans, street noise, etc.

Deal with known distractions before class begins. For example, if the lights flicker, make sure the facility takes care of the problem right away. While it is impossible to identify all potential distractions, a quick site survey may prevent a difficult situation when class begins.

If a disturbance occurs during class, assess its significance. Though minor distractions should be ignored, if something interferes with student concentration, the training suffers. In those cases, consider options to resolve the situation, either by yourself or as a class. When the class participates in the solution, they are likely to be satisfied with the outcome. Don't let unforeseen events determine learning outcomes. Keep the course goals and lesson objectives in mind and find creative ways make the instruction accomplish those objectives regardless of disruptions.

5. Scheduling

As you develop your agenda for the training session, plan for regular breaks. Adults need frequent breaks to take care of physical needs (restrooms, coffee, soft drinks, smoking, stretching), to stay alert mentally, and to take care of other responsibilities. Scheduling breaks every 50 minutes is ideal, and sessions should never go longer than 75 minutes without a break. Scheduling breaks and listing them in your agenda gives students a sense of structure and control. Of course, once a break is listed in the course schedule, participants will hold you to it. If necessary, bring them into the decision-making process and reach consensus on a change in schedule.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
 **Ask** a question What are some factors to consider when you set up your classroom? **Write** on flipchart List responses on a flipchart labelled Factors in Room Setup.	**III. Room Setup** A. Factors to consider 1. Lesson objectives and types of activities 2. Space available 3. Group size

III. Room Setup

Adults tend to have more physical discomfort in the classroom; for example, difficulty seeing and hearing or discomfort sitting in one place for a long time. It may have been a long time since adult students completed their formal education and some may find it hard to adjust to the constraints of the classroom.

Room setup is just as important as other aspects of lesson preparation. Trainees will take their cue from the setting they encounter and their motivation to learn will be affected accordingly. Orderly and careful preparation will maximize comfort and minimize distractions.

A. Factors to consider

Consider the following factors as you determine the best seating configuration for the classroom:

1. Lesson objectives and types of activities

   Ask yourself what is required and what seating arrangements will best facilitate goal accomplishment. Must students perform actions and/or demonstrate understanding; i.e. performance- or knowledge-based objectives? What are the space requirements for a given practical exam or activity? Will students need a lot of group interaction, or is there a great deal of individual analysis that is best done without distractions? If the circumstances change from lesson to lesson, can you alter the seating easily?

2. Space available

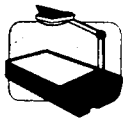
   Ideally, the instructor would decide what the best classroom set up is for each lesson based on the answers to the preceding questions, and that would determine the classroom obtained. However, instructors will most often have to choose among available rooms. Reality demands adaptation as well.

3. Group size

   Some room setups accommodate large groups more easily. The number of students will also impact the number of small groups or pairs, if needed. If group work is part of your instructional strategy, plan accordingly.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

LESSON PLAN



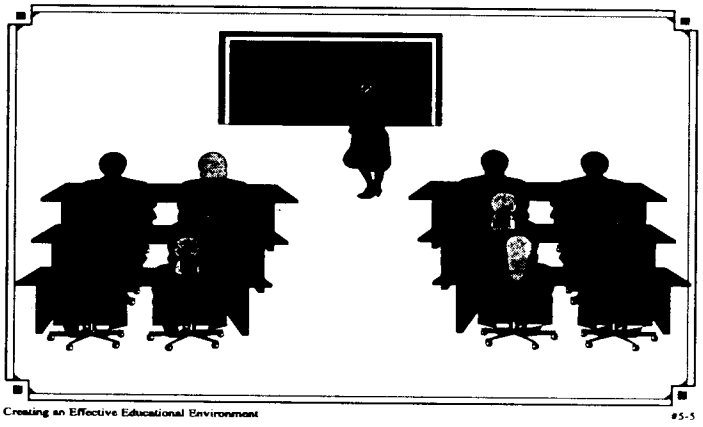
Display OH #5-5

4. Media

5. Need for instructor control vs. participant interaction

B. Seating options

1. Classroom



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. Media

   Seating must allow every student an unobstructed view of any visual aids used during instruction.

5. Need for instructor control vs. participant interaction

   Certain configurations encourage interaction more than others. If maintaining attention becomes an issue, adjust accordingly.

B. Seating options

1. Classroom

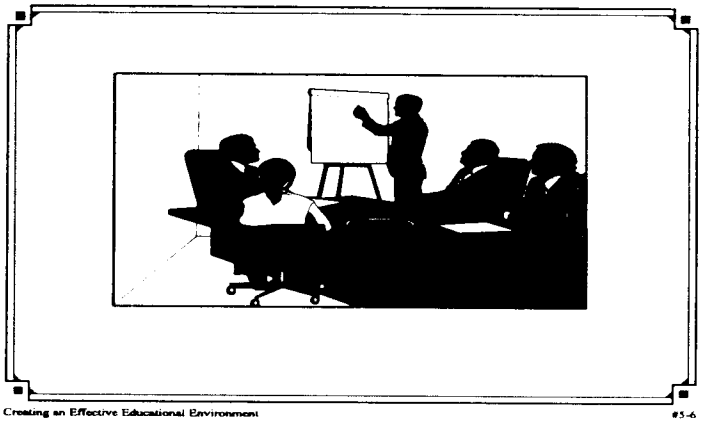
   Advantages

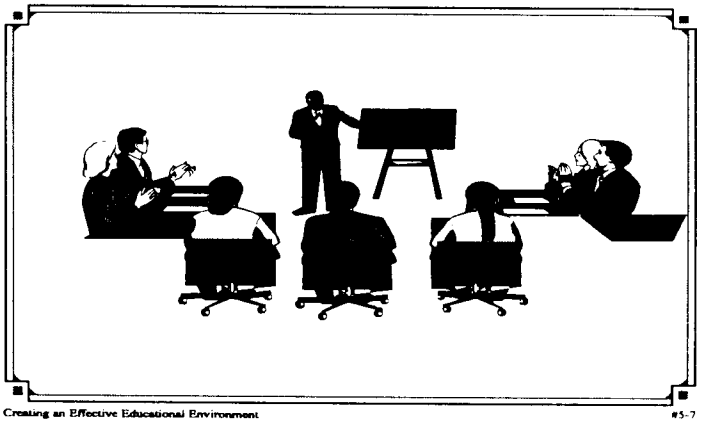
   - Maximizes instructor control
   - Fair instructor mobility (with aisles at center and sides)
   - Good ability to see visual aids in the front of the room
   - Maximizes space

   Disadvantages

   - May lose people in the back of the room
   - Discourages participation
   - Reduces interaction among participants

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
Display OH #5-6	2. Boardroom
Display OH #5-7	3. Semi-circle, U-shape





ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2. Boardroom

This arrangement works well for small groups of experienced trainees who know one another.

Advantages

- Encourages interaction among participants
- Encourages participation
- Maximizes writing space for participants
- Excellent for team work in small or break-out groups

Disadvantages

- Poor instructor mobility
- Some participants may have difficulty seeing visuals
- Some participants may have difficulty seeing instructor
- Uses more space per person
- Not suitable for large groups

3. Semi-Circle, U-Shape

Good for hands-on work where the instructor will check on progress.

Advantages

- Excellent instructor mobility
- Encourages interaction among participants
- Encourages participation

Disadvantages

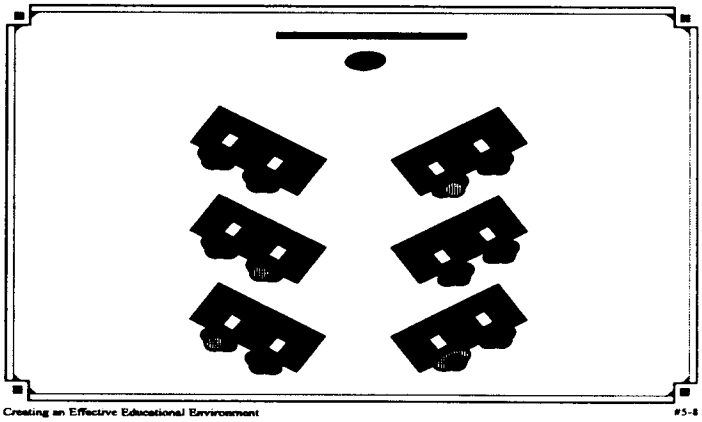
- People near the front may have to turn to see visuals
- Uses more space per person
- May not work for large groups

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Display OH #5-8

LESSON PLAN

4. Chevron



Conduct activity

Six cards have been provided in Appendix A, each with two different situations. These should be reproduced and cut out prior to class. Use blank cards if you prefer other examples.

C. Activity 5.1—Room Setup

1. Form small groups
2. Given group characteristics and typical learning events, come to consensus on the ideal seating arrangement(s)
3. Present your conclusions to the class

D. Logistics involved in room setup

1. Team teaching
2. Time

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. Chevron

Advantages

- Excellent instructor mobility
- Excellent interaction among dyads or quads
- Encourages participation
- Provides writing space for participants
- Good ability to see visual aids
- Works well even with large groups

Disadvantages

- Poor for whole-group interaction

C. Activity 5.1—Room Setup

Divide the class into small groups. Six scenario cards have been provided for this activity, each with two scenarios depicting different learning objectives, types of activities, and class size. Refer to Appendix A, Activity 5.1.

Students should discuss optional seating arrangements, list the advantages and disadvantages of each one, and come to consensus on the arrangement best suited to the characteristics of each example. Each group should share their results with the entire class.

D. Logistics involved in room setup

1. Team teaching

In some team teaching situations, instructors split lessons between them. This requires communication. Instructors should talk to one another about the requirements of each lesson and plan ahead for changes in the room setup.

2. Time

Be sure to allow time in the course schedule for the logistics of rearranging the classroom. You can ask the students to help you, but this is inherently disruptive and you will lose some time. It is also a good idea to explain to students why any changes are being made.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES | *LESSON PLAN*

IV. Classroom Management

A. Preparation

1. Checklist(s)

2. Helpful hints

B. Establish ground rules

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

IV. Classroom Management

A. Preparation

1. Checklist(s)

Checklists are valuable organizational tools. Encourage students to prepare one prior to teaching a course and before each lesson. Depending upon the course materials, equipment/supply requirements may be indicated in an overview section at the beginning of the lesson. This list should be added to with more specific notes as necessary. Refer students to the sample pre-class checklist that has been included in Appendix B.

2. Helpful hints

- Flipcharts that can be done ahead of time will save you time in the classroom. Roll the prepared sheets and secure them with a rubber band until you get to the training room.

- Match each overhead to the lesson plan outline.

  Make sure that you have a transparency in good condition for each one noted in the lesson plan. Clear plastic covers, three-hole punched, are a great way to organize overheads and protect them. Simply arrange them sequentially by lesson in an open binder on the lectern.

- Arrive early

  Get to the training room at least 45 minutes before your session begins. This gives you time to skim through your lesson plans, run through your pre-class checklist, and solve any problems you find. Additionally, you will be able to greet the participants individually as they come in, which will help them (and you) to feel more comfortable.

B. Establish ground rules

Ground rules specify the norms (or "shoulds") for a session. An instructor may describe the ground rules for a session and post them, asking for any additions that the group believes would enhance performance.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
	C. Encourage an interactive, participatory learning environment 1. Set the tone 2. Practice active listening

On the other hand, the instructor may begin with a blank slate and solicit group input on ground rules that would make the group work at its best. Either way, ground rules provide trainees with a structure from which to develop expectations. Ground rules make acceptable behavior clear up front and even help to generate desired behavior. These rules are a valuable tool to use when addressing inappropriate behavior.

C. Encourage an interactive, participatory learning environment

The ideal adult learning environment also includes less tangible elements. Because adults have often had many valuable experiences that are relevant to the course material, they will achieve the most when they have opportunities to direct their own learning. As we've said, adult instruction must be participatory to be effective. At the same time, instruction needs to be structured in order to achieve its objectives.

1. Set the tone

Adults are self-motivated unless the environment threatens their self-esteem. Many adults are uncomfortable with the possibility of venturing a "wrong" answer or a "stupid" question, and may even be uncomfortable with being in a teacher/student hierarchy. In teaching adults, it is essential to set the tone of a session immediately. Participants will be absorbing your verbal and non-verbal cues to assess your perceptions of them and the risks of participating. Make it clear that you think of yourself as someone who is facilitating learning among adults who already have a broad range of skills and experience.

2. Practice active listening

Active listening is an important part of creating an interactive environment. It involves carefully listening to what a participant is trying to communicate and then reflecting back your understanding of what was said. Avoid simply parroting back answers that trainees give. Instead, reflect, identify the most important message, and summarize. In content areas, you can use active listening to clarify. An example of an "active listening" response to a content statement may be, "Jennifer, it sounds to me like you feel you understand the *[insert your own EMS process example]* process as a whole, but are having trouble linking *[x to y]*. What do you think?"

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
	3. Pay attention to signals from students a. Regarding physical needs b. Regarding distractions c. Involve participants in resolution process

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Active listening is invaluable when dealing with emotional issues or with participants who are responding emotionally. After reflection, a simple statement such as "John, it seems to me that safety concerns are behind your objections to the new procedures" lets the student know that you take his or her concern seriously and are attempting to work with them. Do not be concerned about being wrong. Participants will quickly correct you if you are. If you have listened carefully and tried to understand, students will appreciate it. In fact, having someone listen carefully to their concerns is often sufficient to smooth out a difficult situation. Active listening requires work, but the dividends can be exciting.

3. Pay attention to signals from students

a. Regarding physical needs

Participants will give you cues about their physical needs. If they need a break, they may withdraw, begin holding side conversations, or even engage in challenging behavior. The most obvious sign that it is time for a break is participants leaving their seats.

b. Regarding distractions

If participants are distracted by noise or sounds, they will generally concentrate their attention on the source, withdraw, or hold side conversations. If participants are too hot or too cold, they will adjust the temperature themselves by removing or adding jackets, opening collars, fanning themselves, or huddling.

c. Involve participants in resolution process

Check out unclear cues of participants by using active listening techniques. Describe what you have noticed and suggest an interpretation. "I noticed some of you putting your jackets back on. Is it too cold in here?" If practical, give participants a choice when addressing a problem, particularly if they have strong feelings. "It seems like the group is ready for a break, but we have one short section left for this morning. Would you prefer to push on now and go to lunch when we're done, or take a ten-minute break now and come back to finish this section before lunch?" The group will be more likely to cooperate if they feel like they have some control.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES	*LESSON PLAN*
	V. Summary
	References

V. Summary

This lesson has presented the importance of knowing your audience before you begin to instruct. Audience information allows you to tailor your presentation to meet the needs of your students, thereby making your presentation more effective. The lesson also discussed the importance of the learning environment, and suggested a variety of seating configurations depending upon the instructional objectives. Classroom management skills such as pre-class preparation and establishing ground rules were introduced. Finally, the principles of active listening, facilitation, and other facets of creating an interactive, participatory learning environment were discussed.

References

Berliner, D.C., & Gage, H.G. (1991). Educational Psychology (5th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Heinich, R., Molendo, M., Russell, J.D. (1993). Instructional Media and the New Technologies of Instruction. New York: Macmillan Publishing.

INFORMATION GATHERING TECHNIQUES

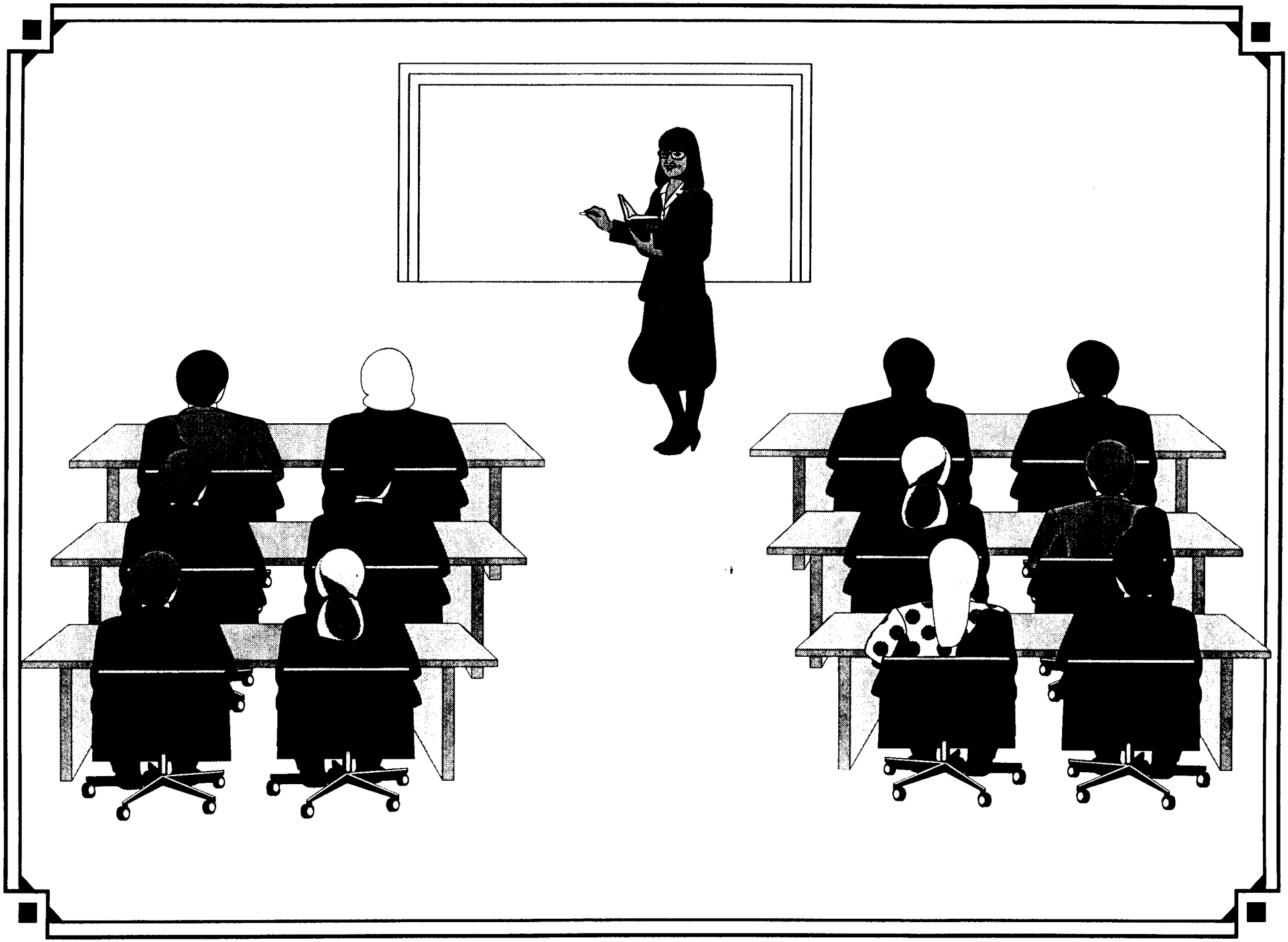
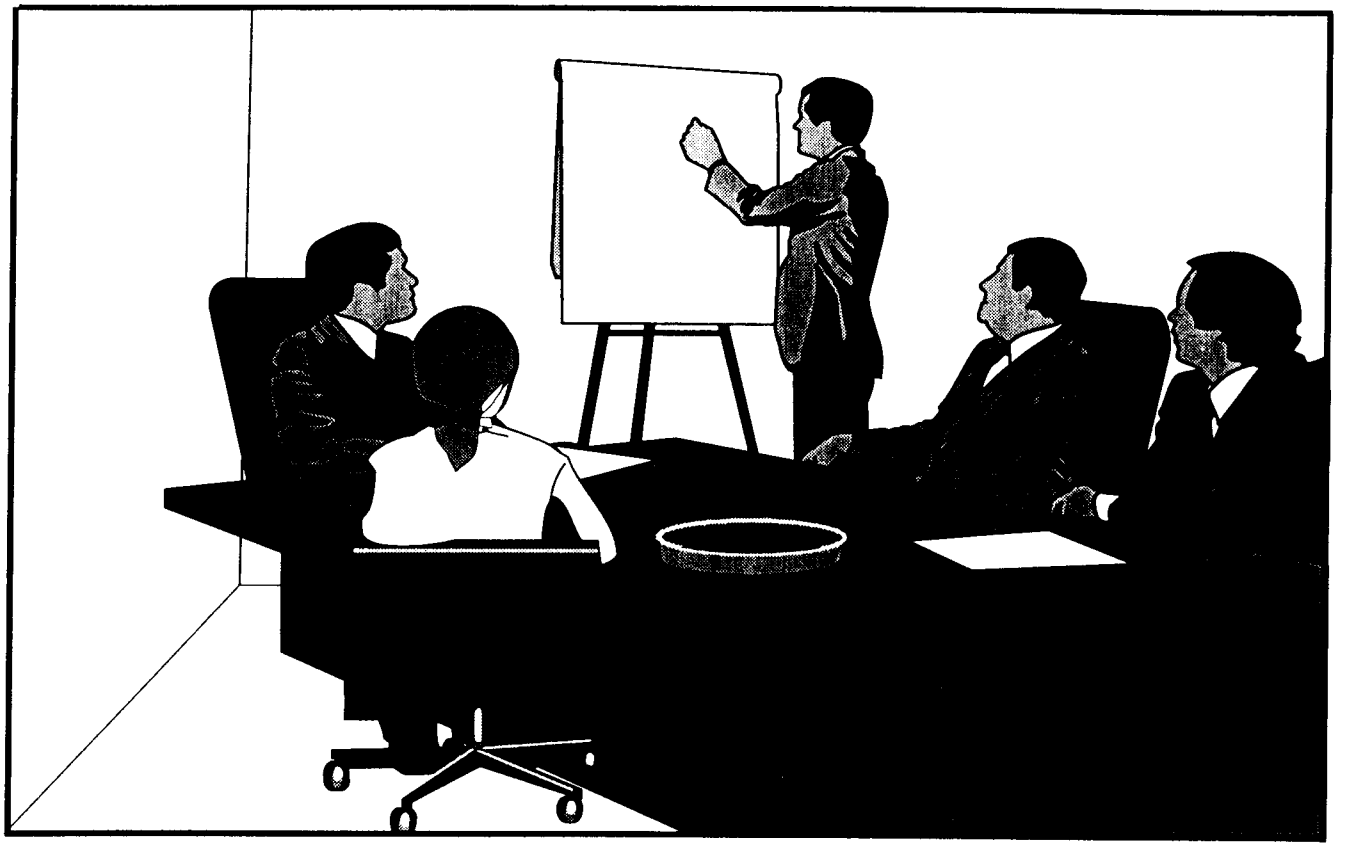
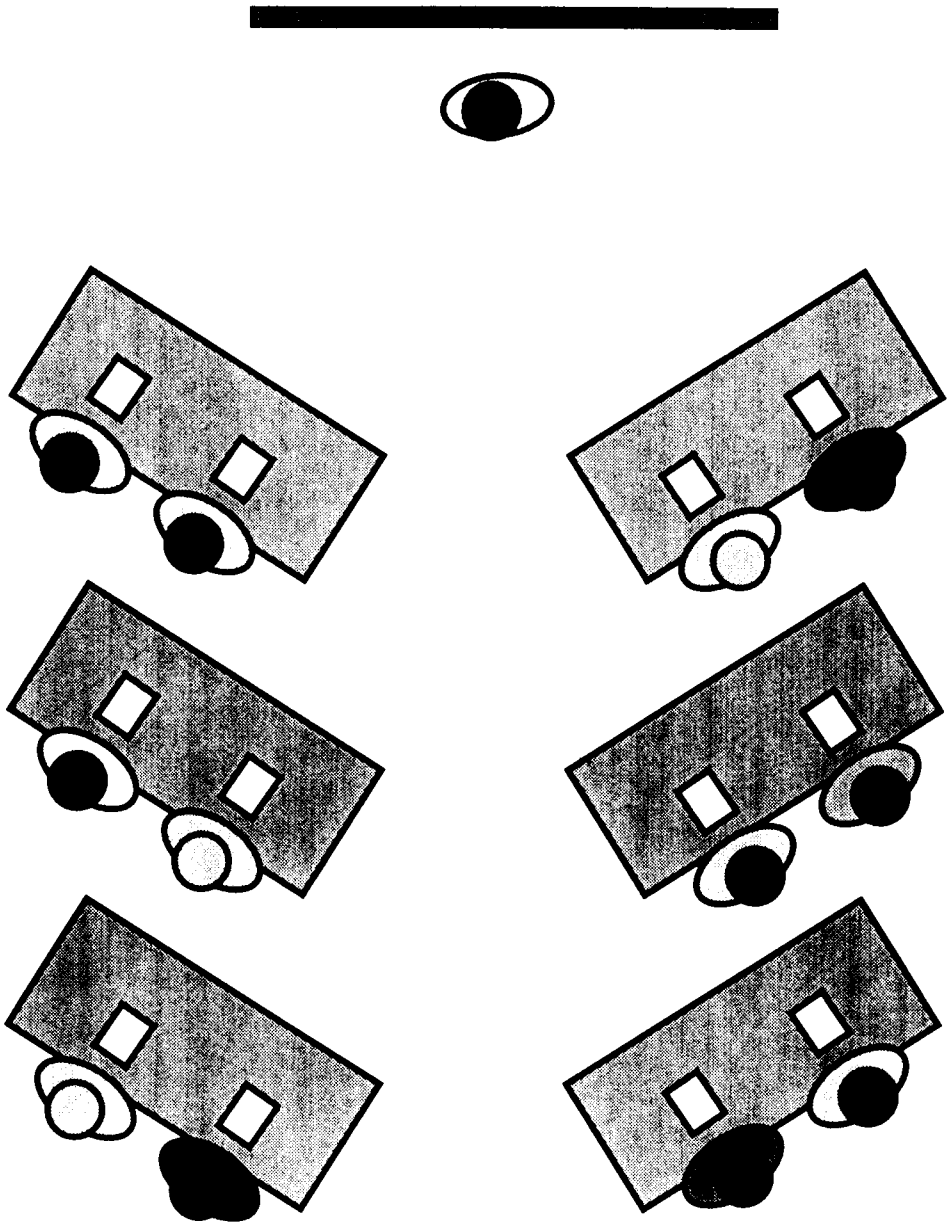
- **Introductions**
- **Surveys**
- **One-on-one meetings**
- **Informal focus group**

USEFUL INFORMATION

- **Motivation**
- **Student goals**
- **Expertise and experience**
- **Demographics**
- **Cultural perspectives**

FACILITY ISSUES

- **Location**
- **Parking**
- **Security**
- **Available space**
- **Refreshments**
- **Cost**

IDEAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- Clean, well-lit, comfortable
- Instructor-controlled climate
- Variety of seating options
- Additional space available
- On-site equipment
- Resources close at hand