

## Module 1: Designing Group Work that *Really* Works

(2-3 hours—complements “Getting *Beyond* Covering Content...”)

CAUTION: Group assignments can and, all too often, do more harm than good. The most common sign of trouble is when students (especially the better ones) feel like they have to choose between doing more than their fair share of the work or risk getting a bad grade. When that happens, the real cause usually isn’t the students—it’s almost always *what the teacher is asking them to do*. In addition, even if they turn in a high quality product, many students will leave the experience with negative attitudes about group work that are likely to limit their ability to adapt to today’s team-oriented workplace environments.

In this session, you will engage in a series of activities that demonstrate why most problems with learning groups are caused by poorly designed assignments. In addition, you will learn about four keys that will enable you to design group assignments that: 1) are effective for developing students’ application and critical-thinking skills, 2) promote positive student attitudes about group work, 3) can be graded easily and fairly and, 4) can be used with any level of students and in classes of up to several hundred students.

### Getting *Beyond* Covering Content:

## Module 2: A Key to Student Motivation and Success

(2-3 hours—complements “Designing Group Work that *Really* Works”)

Teachers often face a dilemma based on two realities—most students are:

1. Far more motivated (and successful) when they see how course content applies to *their* “real world.”
2. Bored by lectures but, unable to apply course content unless they know what the content is.

This workshop will begin with a demonstration of a Readiness Assurance Process that is an effective approach for dealing with this dilemma by creating conditions that motivate the vast majority of students to complete pre-class reading assignments. This enables teachers spend most of the class time focusing on content applications *without reducing the number of concepts that are covered*. Following the demonstration, we will explore additional issues and concerns about using learning groups including:

- Building groups into self-managed learning teams with norms that promote high levels of individual preparation, content engagement and class attendance.
- Coping with the mechanics (e.g. physical layout, materials and exams, classroom procedures, grading, etc.).

## Module 3: Turning Good Group Assignments into Great Ones

(Advanced Workshop—after completing the above workshops)

During this workshop, attendees will participate in a series of activities that will: 1) highlight two key strategies that can be used to improve the effectiveness of group assignments and, 2) have the opportunity to apply these strategies to *design and/or improve assignments for use in their own courses*. The session will also explore related issues and concerns about using groups including:

- ◆ How to design effective group assignments for teaching higher level thinking and problem solving skills.
- ◆ How to deal with contextual problems such as large classes, classrooms designed for lectures—not group work, resistance from traditionally focused students, faculty peers, and administrators.