Title: Ice-breaker activity for a Trainer of Trainers (ToT)/ peer-mentoring program

Author: Jon Phillips

Proficiency level

_____ Beginning _____ Intermediate __x__ Advanced

Comments: This activity is geared for ESOL professionals responsible for facilitating teacher training workshops. Fluency in English is required.

Grade level

This is an in-house professional development activity for teacher trainers.

Purpose of the activity

- We used the activity described below as an ice-breaker for our in-house Training the Trainer (ToT)/Peer Mentoring program. This activity helps participants (Ps) relax and gives them the opportunity to get better acquainted with one another as teacher trainers and co-facilitators.
- The information gathered here was also used in planning subsequent sessions in the ToT program. The skills or aspects of facilitation that Ps identified as needing to be developed and improved, as well as the Ps’ mottos, became the focus topics for follow-on ToT sessions (See later).

Type of activity

Please specify:

- This is a structured in-house professional development warm up activity for teacher trainers incorporating individual work followed by sharing in pairs, and then whole group discussion.

Objective

- To help Ps become better acquainted as co-facilitators
- To stimulate thinking about their roles as workshop facilitators
- To collect information about Ps’ professional needs for follow-up seminars

Duration

1 hour

Materials and technology

Blank paper, flipchart, markers
TESOL Resource Center

- **Activity**

  **Procedure**

  1. **Overview (5 min)**
     
     A. Introduce the objectives
     B. Tell Ps: ‘As teacher trainers, we are primarily facilitators. We’re going to take some time to think about what we know goes into being an effective facilitator.’

  2. **Give directions (10 min)**
     
     A. Pass out a piece of blank paper to each P.
     B. Ask Ps to fold their paper so that there are four quadrants.
     C. Have participants label each box as follows:
        - Box 1: A specific skill or aspect of facilitation that you feel you do well.
        - Box 2: A specific skill or aspect of facilitation that you feel you need to develop/improve.
        - Box 3: Two characteristics of the most effective facilitator(s) that you have observed or experienced.
        - Box 4: A motto you live by as a facilitator.

  3. **Have participants work independently to fill in the boxes (10 min)**
     
     Post directions in the room (e.g. on the board, or flip chart) for Ps to refer to as they are working.

  4. **Have participants pair/share (15 min)**
     
     Ask Ps to pair up with someone who was not on their most current workshop facilitation team and share/discuss what they wrote.

  5. **Regroup and share mottos (20 min)**
     
     Ask Ps to share their mottos with the whole group, and say why they chose them. (As Ps contribute, make notes on flipchart.)

- **Assessment**

  The data we collected from this introductory ice-breaker activity (see attached chart compiled from participants' input) were one source that we used to inform the rest of our in-house Trainer of Trainers course. (See additional information below)

- **Follow up**

  As all of our teacher training workshops are co-facilitated by 2-4 facilitators, we used the skills or aspects of facilitation that Ps felt they needed to develop/improve to select topics for the ToT sessions. See chart for examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments from Participant</th>
<th>Training topics selected to address participant comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Jumping in with my comments when</em></td>
<td>Applying workshop facilitation skills;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
someone else facilitates a discussion; Use of flip chart; Time management.  
Managing Time Effectively; Working Effectively with Co-facilitators.

Ask right questions to elicit and guide discussion; How to “raise”/set up questions smartly so as to generate a lot of discussion; Get more experience in facilitating, Answering participants’ questions  
Forming Questions & Probes Effectively; Getting All Participants to Participate

Fielding negative comments from participants and dealing with hecklers  
Developing Strategies for Handling Challenging Participants

Specific input from participants that emerged in the introductory ice-breaker activity was addressed through the process of demonstrations of activities from existing workshops, with observation, discussion and review of training lesson plans; sessions focused on giving and receiving effective feedback & reinforcement among co-facilitators; peer demonstrations/practice facilitation sessions; establishing co-facilitation norms; reflection on own philosophy and practices and modeling activities for new/alternate ways of facilitating.

- **References** – None for this activity
- **Useful links** – None for this activity