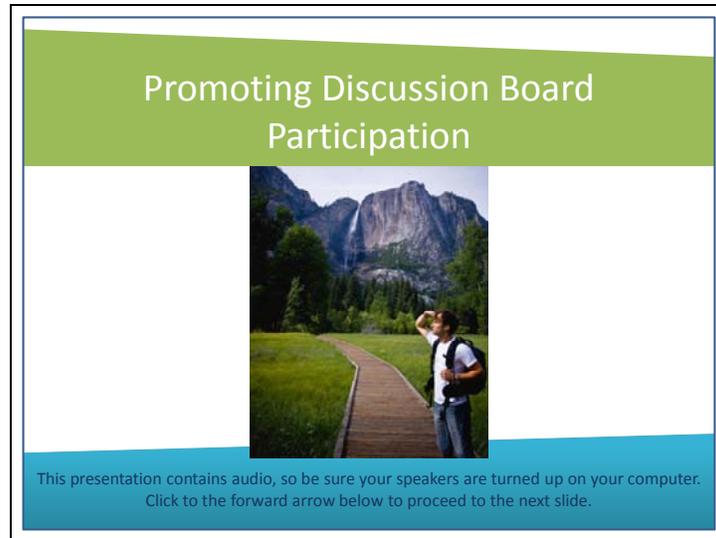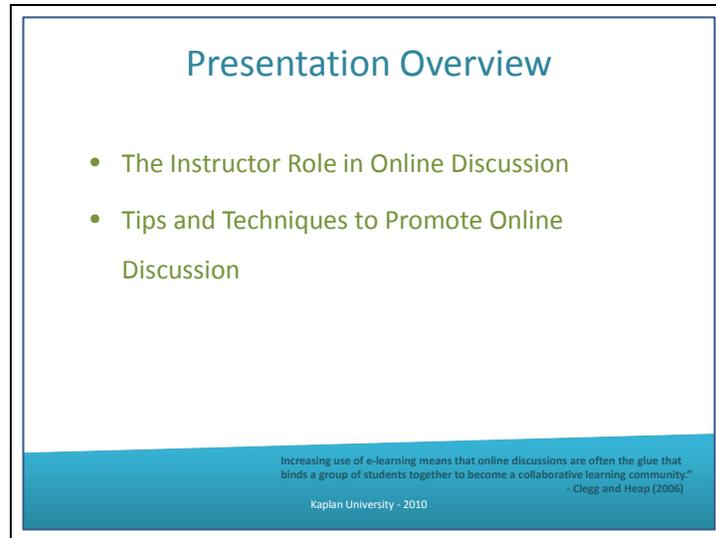Slide 1

Hello, and welcome to this presentation Promoting Discussion Board Participation. This presentation contains audio, so be sure your speakers are turned up on your computer. Click the forward arrow below to proceed to the next slide.

Presentation Overview

- The Instructor Role in Online Discussion
- Tips and Techniques to Promote Online Discussion

Increasing use of e-learning means that online discussions are often the glue that binds a group of students together to become a collaborative learning community."
- Clegg and Heap (2006)

Kaplan University - 2010

The Discussion Board is truly the heart of the classroom; this is where you will get to know your students and they will get to know you.

- The Instructor Role in Online Discussion
- Tips and Techniques to Promote Online Discussion

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The Instructor Role in Online Discussion

Remember that students often learn best when they are engaged, drawing on their own experience and ideas. Your job an instructor is to get them participating actively, and to enhance and facilitate their learning. The Discussion Board is one vital area in your course where you can facilitate continuous class engagement.

As the instructor, you need to "lead by example" and find the best ways to move the discussion forward in each unit.

The role of the virtual instructor is to select and filter information for student consideration, to provide thought-provoking questions, and to facilitate well-considered discussion."(Kettner-Polly , 1999 as cited in Yang & Cornelious, 1981).

Slide 4

Tips and Techniques to Promote Online Discussion

- Encourage via questioning
- Challenge assumptions
- Help to see another perspective

Sometimes students don't know they have more to say. Encourage them via questioning to explain more and in doing so you will challenge their assumptions, helping them to see another perspective.

Each week, you as the faculty member, need to find ways to question your students so that their posts go beyond opinion. Bennington and Kirkner, as reorganized by Richard Paul (1993), recommend using the following six questioning techniques.

1. **Conceptual clarification questions**
   Questions that get students to think about concepts behind their arguments. For example:

   Why are you saying that?
   What exactly does this mean?
   How does this relate to what we have been talking about?
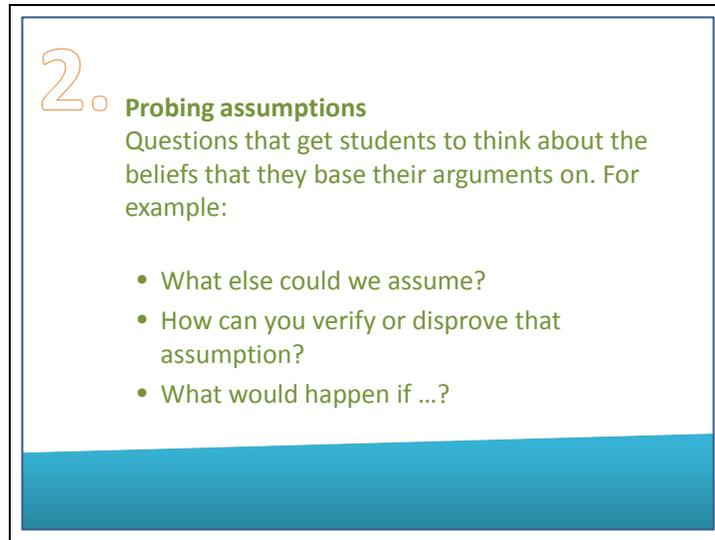   Can you give me an example?

2. Probing assumptions

Questions that get students to think about the beliefs that they base their arguments on. For example:

What else could we assume?
How can you verify or disprove that assumption?
What would happen if …?
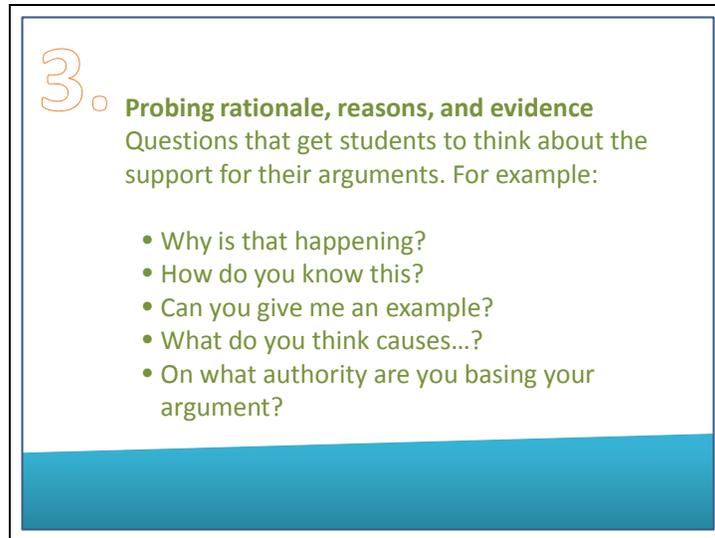
3. Probing rationale, reasons, and evidence
Questions that get students to think about the support for their arguments. For example:
> Why is that happening?
> How do you know this?
> Can you give me an example?
> What do you think causes …?
> On what authority are you basing your argument?
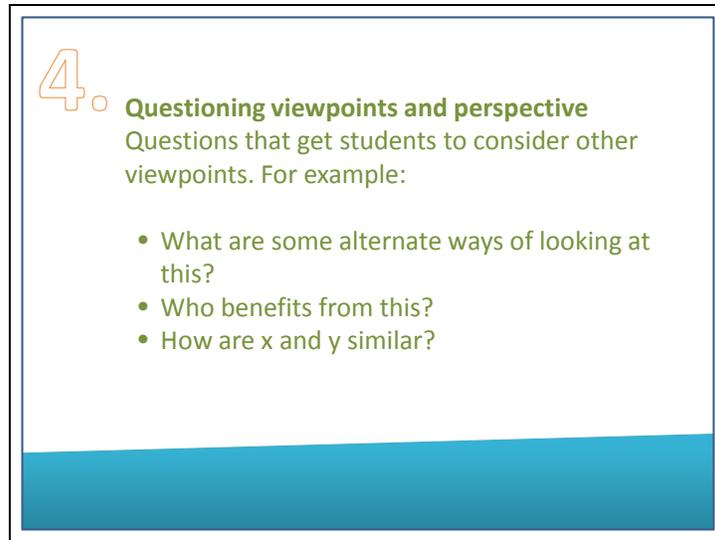
4. **Questioning viewpoints and perspective**
Questions that get students to consider other viewpoints. For example:

- What are some alternate ways of looking at this?
- Who benefits from this?
- How are x and y similar?

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Slide 9

5. Probe implications and consequences
Questions that get students to think about what follows from their arguments. For example:
    Then what would happen?
    What are the consequences of that assumption?

6.

Questions about the question
Questions that turn the question in on itself.
For example:

- What was the point of asking that question?
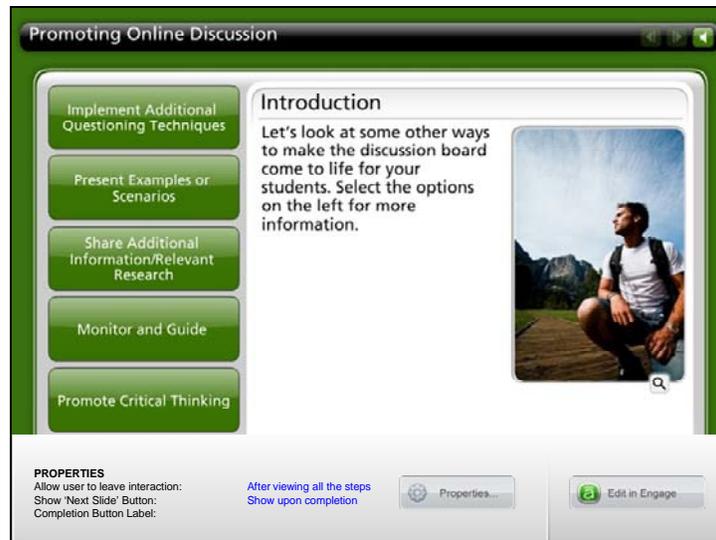- Why do you think I asked this question?

6. Questions about the question
Questions that turn the question in on itself. For example:
      What was the point of asking that question?
      Why do you think I asked this question?

Let's look at some other ways to make the discussion board come to life for your students.

Implement Additional Questioning Techniques

- Ask questions that have more than one correct answer
- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask higher-order thinking questions (Bloom's Taxonomy – for more information, click here)
- Ask probing questions (Socratic method)
- Play devil's advocate - challenge statements (nicely)
- Ask for clarification
- Additionally, Georgia-Southern University, a doctoral research college, recommends the following questioning techniques:
    Promote divergent thinking by using mind mapping or brainstorming techniques
    Promote convergent thinking by helping students learn to outline main ideas from their reading or research

Present Examples or Scenarios

One way to promote discussion board engagement is to present examples or scenarios for them. Ask students to react to what you post, drawing on their own experiences or interpretations of readings.

In a study on discussion boards conducted in the health sciences, the most powerful types of posts were emotional, based on Bloom's Affective Domain: "Among such opportunities were posts that demonstrated the following behaviors and expressions of feeling:
- sharing painful experiences (expressions of anxiety, self-recrimination, and hurt feelings);
- expressing difficulty coming to terms with the realities of patients' lives;
- sharing insights into mistakes in professional life; and
- describing interpersonal and ethical dilemmas in clinical practice" (Clegg & Heap, 2006).

Share Additional Information/Relevant Research

Promote active discussion by sharing additional information such as a piece of relevant research, a great website, or even your own related experiences. Provoke reactions and discussions with interesting, additional sources. Be on the hunt for articles related to discussion board topics, keep a file of these, and post them if you need to encourage further discussion. Add to the Webliography and ask students to do the same.

Monitor and Guide

Monitor and moderate discussion to keep it on track or guide it in a different direction. As you're working on your posts each week, think of the ways that the students could best learn the material for the Unit. Reflect on what you want your students to be able to do? How can you best help your students to understand the material? Wrap up each discussion with a summary of the key points that were made; attribute ideas to the students who contributed them.

Promote Critical Thinking

Also, help students understand the important difference between rendering conclusions and stated conclusions. Help them understand the difference between fact and opinion. Help them learn to include effective support for all claims. Make sure they learn how to effectively support their answers with quality research, individual experiences, related examples, or even textbook support. Have them defend their stand or opinions with supporting evidence.

Be Present!

The number one way to stimulate your students and help them be successful is to be there. Check the course often, daily if possible, for new activity and respond promptly to questions. Try to post every day; please refer to your School's Faculty Expectations Guide to see what your specific requirements are. What your students need most is you!

According to Mandernach, Gonzales and Garrett (2006), "Central to the effectiveness of online learning is the issue of instructor presence and the role of interactivity in establishing this presence."

Slide 12
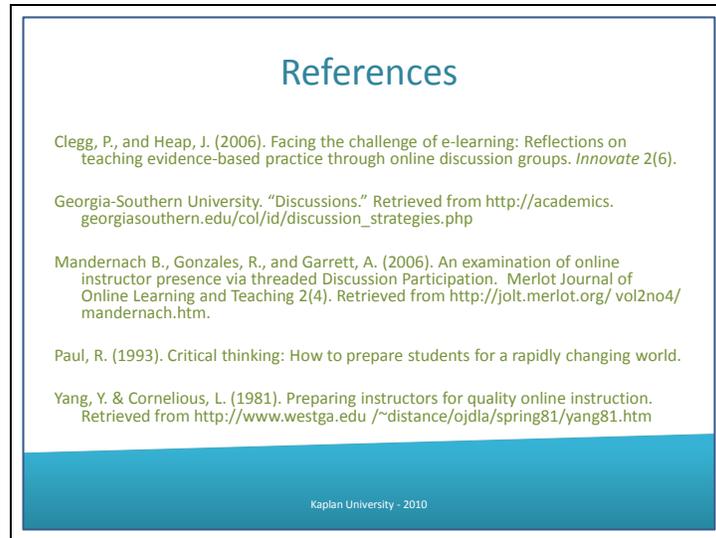
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