Structured Constructive Controversy

Rules (Johnson & Johnson, 1987)

1. I am critical of ideas, not people. I challenge and refute the ideas of the opposing positions, but I do not indicate that I personally reject them.
2. Remember, we are all in this together, sink or swim. I focus on coming to the best decision possible, not on “winning.”
3. I encourage everyone to participate and to master all the relevant information.
4. I listen to everyone’s ideas, even if I do not agree.
5. I restate what someone has said if it is not clear.
6. I first bring out all the ideas and facts supporting both sides, and then I try to put them together in a way that makes sense.
7. I try to understand all sides of the issue.

Schedule

1. Meet your partner. Meet with your partner (and others) who are sharing your position and plan how to argue effectively for the position. Make sure you have mastered as much of the material for your position as possible. Consider other ideas and suggestions on how to present the issues.

2. Present your position. Each side will have an opportunity to present their position as persuasively as possible. While one side presents, the other side listens and takes notes, but does not talk. Hold all responses, clarifying questions, or suggestions for the time of open discussion.

3. Open discussion. Any person may talk. Everyone argues persuasively for the assigned position, presenting as many facts and as much reasoning as possible to support the assigned point of view. Critically listen to the opposing point of view and ask for facts and clarification. The issue is complex and you need to understand all of the information to make a good decision and prepare a good report. Work together and understand all of the issues.

4. Role reversal. Switch sheets of paper and prepare to argue effectively for your newly assigned position.

5. Present your newly assigned position. Each side will have an opportunity to present the newly assigned position as persuasively as possible. While one side presents, the other side listens and takes notes, but does not talk. Hold all responses, clarifying questions, or suggestions for the time of open discussion.

6. Open discussion maintaining your newly assigned position. Any person may talk. Everyone argues persuasively for the newly assigned position, presenting as many facts and as much reasoning as possible to support the newly assigned point of view. Critically listen to the opposing point of view and ask for facts and clarification. The issue is complex and you need to understand all of the information to make a good decision and prepare a good report. Work together and understand all of the issues.

7. Come together as a group. You no longer have assigned positions. Discuss the issue as a team.

8. Reach a group decision. Summarize the best arguments for the various points of view. Detail what you know about the issues under consideration. When you think you have consensus in your group, come to a group decision, preferably a decision with all group members in agreement. Organize your arguments for your group report. Be prepared to defend your decision in discussion with the entire class.

Campusless College Degrees
Structured Controversy

Assigned point of view:

YES, my campus should grant “campusless college degrees” through online courses.

Arguments

1. Instructors often use tests to measure student learning of course information. Computer testing is available, timed, and easy to use. Any issues with testing validity, accuracy, and or cheating are problems for both face-to-face and online classes.

2. Each subject area has basic information participants should know. Instructors can teach basic information easily through online courses and tutorials.

3. Online instruction enhances both student and teacher accountability (e.g., online courses record how much time an instructor or student spends online and allows discussions to be recorded on a discussion board). These data allow for greater objectivity in educational evaluation.

4. Online instruction helps participants balance personal goals, such as parenting while working in an online course, obtaining a degree from a rural area, and attending class late at night.

5. College has never been more convenient. Participants may study anytime and anywhere!

6. At the end of the academic year 2000, about 75% of all USA universities already offered online course work, and 5.8 million participants had participated in online courses in the US.

7. Campuses may make more money from tuition through online courses by attracting more students.

8. Faculty and student contact may increase through online coursework.

9. Online courses can create a highly social experience through e-mail and chat rooms.

10. Degrees do not have a mark on the certificate to indicate whether a degree is from online study or classroom study. No stigma exists.

11. Online courses and tutorials can help participants learn cognitive material to improve their thinking abilities, develop decision-making strategies, and increase their scores on educational tests.

12. Cameras are standard with all computers, which make online experiences classroom-like. Participants will be able to see other participants and their professor(s).

Additional arguments: