Brainstorming

Contributed by Elizabeth Cohn (SIS)

Purpose: To elicit a lot of information in a short amount of time or to generate new ideas. This technique is quite effective and often overlooked in the classroom.

Directions: The professor asks a question and tells the students that the class is going to brainstorm the answer. The professor writes all answers on the blackboard – regardless of whether they are good or correct. Students are not allowed to criticize what anyone else says, though their answer can contradict a previous answer. Once a thorough list of answers is on the board, the professor then works with that information, depending on the learning outcome.

If the goal was to elicit facts, any answers that are incorrect are then crossed off – based on an explanation of why it is wrong. If the goal is to teach conceptualization or theorizing, then students are asked to group the answers in categories of theories (usually no more than five). If the goal is to teach analysis, then the students are asked to prioritize the answers and explain why some are more significant than others.