

Instructor notes for first joint TA/LA meeting

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As TAs and LAs come in:

- Have questions for board talk written on the board. Let TAs and LAs know they should write 1 – 2 things on the board.
- Give TAs and LAs a handout with assigned groups they will be working in during the meeting (as well as questions they will be discussing in #4 below). It will save time if TAs and LAs assemble into their groups before the meeting starts.

1. Ice Breaker (10-15 minutes):

- **Think of one thing that you've done that no one else has done**
- **Rationale:** Ice breaker activities help establish a comfortable and interactive community. By doing this during the first TA/LA meeting it helps create opportunities for TAs and LAs to meet one another beyond recitation. A strong working relationship is the foundation to a successful recitation, and the more interactions TAs and LAs have with one another and the more they get to know one another the more comfortable they will feel to share thoughts and to give feedback to their cooperating TAs or LAs throughout the course of the semester.

2. Have a board talk (as TAs and LAs come in, and then 5-minute discussion):

- As TAs and LAs are making their way into the room they are asked to write at least two things on the board under any categories of their choice (have these questions written on the board before the meeting starts):
 - What went well this week?
 - What did not go well this week?
 - What is one improvement that can be done for next week?
- Give everyone 2-3 minutes to read over the comments and ask if there is anything up on the board that needs to be clarified? (Q/A session...no more than a few minutes)
- **Rationale:** Board talks provide a great way to facilitate a group discussion without taking too much time. Not only that, but individuals who are less prone to speak up to the whole group will feel more comfortable just writing something on the board and thus, everyone gets their voice heard. Instead of letting the discussion run too long, individuals will be given the opportunity to only further explore comments that they don't quite understand or are particularly interested in.

3. Have TAs/LAs split up into pre-assigned groups to work through Part I of materials (15 minutes):

- **Rationale:** Having TAs and LAs working in groups is a way of providing them with a mock recitation in which they can evaluate what went well and what

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didn't for them so that they can anticipate questions to be better prepared for their students.

- TAs and LAs to complete Page 1. Discuss as group, then move on to assigning each TA/LA group to a different part of the materials (see next thing under green highlighting).

4. Each group of TAs/LAs will get assigned a different part of the recitation in which they are to answer the following questions for (even though they should eventually be considering all of these questions for every part of the recitation). (15 minutes):

- What are some questions students will have?
 - What are some questions that can be asked to guide students?
 - Will students struggle with this?
 - What kind of questions will student ask?
 - What about this topic do I still not understand?
 - How else can I explain this concept?
 - What analogies, metaphors or real life applications can I use to make this easier for students to grasp?
 - How many students will most likely struggle with this problem?
 - Is this a problem we want to go over with the entire class?
 - Should we help students get started on this problem? How?
 - **MAKE A SHEET WITH THESE QUESTIONS AND GROUP MEMBER NAMES (ROLES)**
- Each group will write at least two of pointers/suggestions/concerns/etc. they have about their part of the recitation to share with other TAs and LAs.
 - **Rationale:** Having different groups of TAs and LAs be responsible for presenting different parts of the recitation is a way of showing TAs and LAs the importance of working together and how effective it is when we take the time to listen to one another. It is important when working with students that they are encouraged to work through ALL the material and not just focus on the section they are assigned to. To prevent students from focusing on only one part of the recitation the TA and LA should assign parts after students have had a chance to work through the material.

5. We will reconvene and each group will share their thoughts (10-15 minutes).

- **Rationale:** The purpose of this activity is the same as that of group work, it allows TAs and LAs to feed ideas off of one another. This is extremely helpful because throughout the course of the semester different TAs and LAs will come across different obstacles or will discover a strategy that is helpful for facilitating recitation and by sharing these with one another TAs and LAs can help their peers anticipate and prepare for what could be heading their way.

6. Talk about photo rosters...and learning names...ask TAs to print photo rosters for LAs

- **Rationale:** Learning names is such a simple thing...and it escapes our mind how tremendous of a difference knowing someone's name is. When TAs and LAs address students by their names the classroom community becomes

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more personal and comfortable. It is important for TAs and LAs to make an effort to learn students names early on in the semester because if they do not they will get to what I call the “awkward stage” where you are too far into the semester to be asking a student what their name is.

7. Give TAs and LAs time to find their other cooperating LAs and TAs to discuss what they can do next week (if time permits)

- **Rationale:** One of the most important aspects of running a successful recitation is preparation. Preparation for students means coming to recitation with questions, curiosity and sometimes answers. For TAs and LAs, preparation means coming into recitation with a good understanding of the material, good enough to answer questions and to help guide students to develop a better understanding of concepts. Furthermore, TAs and LAs prepare in terms of deciding on how to structure. More specifically, TAs and LAs need to consult one another to see where they anticipate students to struggle and therefore as a team they can decide on whether or not they will do an entire class discussion.

8. Last chance for questions (questions that are arising about the brochure)...maybe hand out additional resources (if not done during orientation) and follow with a summary of what's important to keep in mind during the following week's recitation.

- a. **Rationale:** Providing TAs and LAs with the opportunity to ask pending questions is crucial because it models how they should end their recitation: by not only clarifying confusion but also summarizing the key points and major purposes of the meeting/recitation. It is important to provide students with this opportunity because it eliminates the possibility that they will leave still confused or uncertain...which could potentially lead to more misunderstandings.