

Exercise on Developing Arguments

1) A group of workshop participants will discuss a problem while the rest of us watch and listen. This exercise is called a Fishbowl. It can be used to teach students how to engage in collaborative learning (it is normally followed by an all-class discussion of the subject of the group's discussion as well as a meta-discussion of how the discussion was conducted).

Setting:

Imagine you are students in a business class, and you will have to write a term paper in the form of a memo recommending actions that the Treasury department should take to combat the current recession. The Treasury is charged with printing money, managing tax collection, recommending economic policies, managing public debt, and some bank supervision. [Note that you cannot directly recommend actions that are under the purview of the Federal Reserve (e.g., setting reserve requirements, open market operations, discount window) or other government agencies, but the Treasury can recommend government actions to the President and can work with other agencies.] A recently added power is related to the TARP (see below).

Background on TARP:

In recent months the Treasury department has been implementing a program known as TARP (Troubled Assets Relief Program). Money for the program was provided by Congress in two parts, or "tranches". The original version of the plan, which used nearly all of the first tranche, was to buy illiquid assets from banks, but the policy it subsequently followed was primarily to buy equity in banks. Now there is debate how the second tranche should be used, with some people suggesting that the original purpose should now be followed, perhaps by creating a "bad bank" in which the federal government will hold underperforming assets it acquires from banks.

Directions: Listen to the Fishbowl discussion. Take notes (you will use these shortly).

Time: 10 minutes

2) Observers may ask questions of the Fishbowl group. **Maximum time: 5 minutes.**

3) Form groups of 3-4 people. Outline, in **flowchart** form on the large piece of paper provided, *the best **argument** you can develop in favor of a particular policy for the Treasury to follow.* (This is a variation on the graphic organizer CoLT called "Word Webs.") **Time: 20 minutes**

4) Open discussion: We will discuss the instructional implications of the various teaching methods used, and your experiences with them. **Time: 5 minutes**