**Cognitive Overload?**

**Scaffolding**
- Make the discussion board easy to use
  - Guidelines, deadlines, & feedback should be clear, specific & timely
  - Limit the number of posts
  - Summarize information on complicated posts
  - Concisely summarize weekly content
- Teach students how to participate
  - Initial session on necessary student skills
  - Use example postings, “note starters” & predefined phrases
- Score posts from specific criteria/rubric
  - Give extra point for posts that encourage responses
  - High standards for posts will increase quality
  - Emphasize conciseness and limited number of words

*(Cheung, Hew & Ng, 2008; Darabi & Jin, 2013; Dennan & Wieland, 2008; Gao, Zhang, & Franklin, 2013; Gilbert and Dabbagh, 2005; Hanover Research Council, 2009; Savery, 2005)*

**Group Connection?**

**Build Community**
- Facilitate student interaction & rapport
  - At the beginning and middle of the semester have the entire class present in one setting
    - Utilize web-conferencing if necessary
  - Provide a medium to share a biography and photo
    - Utilize an “All about me” thread
  - Use warm-up/ice breaker postings at the beginning of the semester
    - Two Truths & a Lie, Create a portrait, interview each other
  - Instructor should share a biography & photo
- Increase visibility
  - Postings & comments on the discussion board will increase engagement in the discussion
  - Utilize a peer facilitation technique
  - It is important for the teacher to model interaction
- Utilize peer facilitation
  - Students check for responses to their posts and will become disengaged if no responses

*(Cheung, Hew & Ng, 2008; Gao, Zhang, & Franklin, 2013; Gilbert and Dabbagh, 2005; Hanover Research Council, 2009; Nandi, Hamilton, & Harland, 2012; Teacher Stream, LLC, 2009)*

**Participation?**

**Interesting Content**
- Pay careful attention to discussion questions
  - Socratic questioning
  - Carefully thought out questions and activities/how to phrase question
    - Increase amount of discussion with limited focal questions and open focal questions (opinion) Increase level of thinking with course link, brainstorm and direct link questions (synthesis)
  - Allow for reflection
- Develop concise, interesting, & relevant content
  - Explain the purpose and the value of discussion boards and collaboration
  - All content should be strategically developed to connect to the curriculum and “real life”
  - Wiki, simulation
- Integrate varied design in activity
  - Second life role playing
  - Skype
  - Jigsaw groups & other group projects
  - Expert visitor
  - Utilize voting & surveys
  - Group work on Google docs


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**Course Management - Be VOCAL**

Visible Organized Compassionate Analytical Leader-by-example

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