What is Microteaching?
(From a 27-year-long Course Design and Teaching workshop for the Great Lakes Colleges Assn.)

Microteaching is a workshop process where faculty members from diverse disciplines teach short segments of material to small groups of 6-8 colleagues. **We therefore learn from feedback on our own teaching, from observing others, and from the group conversations about learning and teaching that follow.** The basic premise of micro-teaching is that **there are many different ways of being an effective teacher,** and, therefore, we can expand our effectiveness by observing other teaching styles and strategies and by discussing shared issues of teaching and learning, regardless of our discipline, unique style, or years of experience. **Diversity of styles, students, course content and cultures enhances the process and widens the learning.** Microteaching provides a mini-liberal arts education in which colleagues experience and reflect on learning and come to appreciate the pedagogical challenges of a variety of disciplines other than their own.

**The process** is as follows: each person teaches a 8-12 minute segment from their chosen focal course, while the other members of the microteaching group serve as ‘students.’ For this workshop there will be three microteaching sessions, each with a specific assignment/theme [some specifics for each session are found in the Teaching and Learning Workshop agenda, with more details for each session to be given during the workshop]. The intent for each session is for you to **introduce your focal course to an audience in a “safe environment” while exploring some new teaching tools.** If you wish, on this first day you can simply introduce yourself and your course to the students. You may want to experiment with some new approach or strategy, one that involves the “class” in some form of active learning that could help you find out what students already know, or understand (or misperceive) about an important concept for the course; or try a creative way of introducing the key themes to the students; or simply introduce yourself to the class and have them introduce themselves to each other. **Think of the segment as a “slice” of the course; it need not (and probably CANNOT) necessarily be a completed lesson or idea.**

Those not presenting will listen and participate as if they were students, and, when the segment is finished, offer constructive feedback (see the guidelines for constructive feedback on the other side of this page). Please keep in mind that the **primary purpose of microteaching is not about being judged or even about giving and getting feedback (though that will happen and be maybe useful) but rather about the gift of each lesson leading us into a discussion of shared issues of learning and teaching.** Usually, a 10-minute slice of teaching easily can generate 30-40 minutes of discussion (or more!) and the time goes by very quickly. For each of the three days of microteaching, different assignments will be made, but in each case you need to stay with the same focal course you have chosen. With each microteaching session you should keep expanding or trying **new approaches,** and do whatever you think would be most helpful to your growth as a teacher.

It is our experience that people leave microteaching workshops with a clearer and more positive sense of their teaching style and strengths, an empathic understanding of students as learners (having been one themselves), and an appreciation for the intersection of disciplines and effective styles in their colleagues. They also leave with a deeper collegial bond around the challenges of teaching and learning that lie at the heart of the mission of small liberal art colleges.

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Kalamazoo College Sept. 2007  
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Guidelines for Constructive Feedback in Microteaching

1. During a teaching segment participants should not role play being “typical” students unless specifically asked to do so. **Just be yourselves.** After the segment, the “teacher” should have the first opportunity to comment on how s/he felt about it before listening to others.

2. Feedback from others is most helpful when it is **descriptive and specific.** Do not make evaluative or judgmental comments, best avoided by starting sentences with “I” rather than “you.”

   **Examples of helpful comments:**
   - “I felt nervous when you said the paper was worth 50% of our grade”
   - “I felt encouraged when you said you knew a lot of us were anxious about statistics.”
   - “It helped me working in a pair with Nancy.”
   - “I understood the principle when you repeated it that third time.”
   - “I saw the point clearly when you put the diagram on the overhead.”
   - “I understood the concept when I got to do it myself.”
   - “I didn’t dare discuss because men [women] were doing all the talking.”
   - “I felt scared when you raised the race issue.”
   - “It felt good when you understood what I was trying to say.”

3. Helpful feedback **focuses on behavior** rather than on the person, and on behavior s/he can do something about. “You are a real intellectual” or “you have a dominating personality” are not helpful; “I didn’t understand all those big words” or “I felt intimidated” might be. The teacher can then decide what to do about that kind of feedback.

4. Feedback should be **checked with others** to determine the extent of agreement about a particular experience or observation. Is this one person’s impression or is it widely shared?

   Remember: students may have differing cognitive, social and cultural learning styles, as well as gendered learning styles and experiences. These differences may show up in the microteaching group; or might not.

5. Since each microteaching incident raises shared issues or concerns to be explored, not problems to be solved, please **do not offer advice and solutions** (“this is what I would do”) unless specifically invited to do so by the person teaching the slice.

6. When you are **the person receiving feedback,** it is best not to feel compelled to respond to each point but rather to listen quietly and try to understand what others’ experiences were as you taught, asking only for clarification. The leader (and perhaps others) will keep notes of comments made and give them to you as well as making sure that you do not get overloaded with too much feedback.

7. Finally, remember that **pointing out strengths** is perhaps the most helpful of all. Also, remember to reflect on your experiences as a learner and think about how your own student learners might experience you as a teacher.