

WHAT'S NEXT?

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This method may feel strange at first, but once you get more experience, you will wonder how you could ever have lectured at your students.

—A POGIL practitioner of 12 years

I probably would have quit teaching by now without the ideas and community I have found through my involvement with The POGIL Project.

—A POGIL practitioner of 13 years

This book has focused on POGIL—a pedagogy that is based on research about how people learn. As demonstrated in chapter 5 and throughout this book, POGIL has been shown to lead to better student outcomes in many contexts and in a variety of academic disciplines. However, as mentioned in the preface, it is important to remember that there is no single pedagogy that is optimal for every situation and for every student. What we decide to do in our classrooms necessarily advantages some students and disadvantages others, because not all students are identical. Students have different backgrounds, preferences, goals, aptitudes, and attitudes. What is important is that we are aware of the impact of the pedagogic choices that we make. As educational professionals, what is also important is that we become aware—and remain informed—about the range of possibilities that exist for creating and shaping the learning environments that our students experience. This book has introduced POGIL as one important, broadly applicable, and effective option among many for structuring learning environments and the activities that take place within them. In this final chapter, some suggestions are made for those who are interested in learning more about POGIL, about finding and creating learning activities based on POGIL principles, and about facilitating a student-centered classroom more effectively.

Thinking About Making a Change

Before embarking on the road to implementing a significant change in pedagogy—regardless of what it is—one should carefully consider the current situation and be realistic about what is possible. In a previous book about POGIL and its implementation and effectiveness, Dan Libby (2008) presented a useful five-step approach to considering pedagogic change through a series of questions:

1. Are current student outcomes completely satisfactory? If yes, then there is no need to go further.
2. Am I aware of alternative pedagogic approaches that I believe may improve outcomes for my students? If not, then research should be undertaken to become aware of current practices and the evidence for their effectiveness.
3. How comfortable am I with the potential changes that I have considered? In some cases, the level of discomfort can be sufficiently high as to become a major barrier to implementation, so focusing on those approaches that seem most comfortable can be advantageous.
4. What changes are reasonable to implement now as a way to move toward a new instructional model? Although making a wholesale change is possible, it is not essential and may not be sensible.
5. What support is available—on my campus and externally—to help me with the changes that I want to make?

For many users of this book, the answers to questions 1 through 4 have led them to decide that they would like to try to implement POGIL—or aspects of the POGIL pedagogy—in their classrooms or laboratories. To what extent will this occur? Will one POGIL activity be used or will the complete course be converted to POGIL activities? Many new POGIL practitioners prefer to start slowly by replacing a few lectures with POGIL activities. This is a reasonable way to help both the instructor and students become familiar with POGIL, especially if the instructor has to write his or her own activities. One aspect of gradual implementation to be aware of is that facilitator implementation and student participation, as well as student benefits, improve with familiarity. That is, both the students and the facilitator will benefit more with the cumulative practice of completing POGIL activities throughout a course and across the content.

The remainder of this chapter provides an answer to question 5, which concerns support that is available to help in the implementation of POGIL. The chapter ends with some personal reflections based on over 20 years of experience implementing POGIL in my classrooms.