

## **PLACES and SMILES: Tools for action research** **Explanatory Notes for the Questionnaires**

These notes will augment the *learning environment* questionnaires that we have worked on with teachers interested in promoting positive learning environments in experiential learning settings. Consider them as works in progress and feel free to use them ‘as is’ or to adapt or select items from them as necessary. We now have 2 versions of the forms and 2 reading levels (4 forms in all). SMILES (the intermediate version) and PLACES (the secondary version) attempt to describe the factors in the learning environment which the teachers considered important and the (new) SMILES version has been modified for reading level and has fewer items in response to the comments in our last session. It also has a simplified three point response scale.

The *Preferred* form of each survey should be considered as a diagnostic or planning tool – a way of determining what type of experiences students would like in the ‘ideal sense’ (you just might be surprised what you find out)! The *Actual* form of each survey can be used to have students reflect on perceptions of their ‘actual’ experiences in the classroom – this is also a good way of enacting the ‘reflective practitioner’ in all of us. The versions can be used together or separately for your action research projects.

At this time it didn’t seem useful to do a primary version of this questionnaire. However, many teachers have suggested modifications such as reading the questions to students (and eliciting comments or discussion) or trying the survey in smaller groups (3 or 4 students) and talking about the items. Many of you suggested adding open ended (written response) questions to augment the survey. These are useful strategies to augment your research for all age levels.

Finally here is a list of the Scales (with codes) used on all of the questionnaires:

- Relevance/Integration      RI
- Critical Voice              CV
- Student Negotiation        SN
- Group Cohesiveness        GC
- Student Involvement       SI
- Shared Control              SC
- Open Ended ness            OE
- Environmental Interaction   EI

Please feel free to contact me should you need further assistance or background:

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