Learning and teaching context
This work was conducted at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Since 2015 small cohorts of academic staff from many different disciplines took part in a Student Engagement course within a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP). The course runs twice a year with approximately 10 staff in each cohort. The course aims not only to teach staff about student engagement, but also to model good practice in the way the course runs.

What we did
In order to model good practice in student engagement, I designed and used a range of teaching approaches that can be repurposed by staff participants to enhance student engagement with undergraduate and postgraduate students. I used doughnut rounds (Fleiszer et al 1997), and the jigsaw method (Aronson & Patnow 2010) as two ways of enhancing engagement in core reading materials. I used a range of real case studies to illustrate authentic and current practice and I designed co-evaluation activities including an exercise where participants were invited to design the evaluation questions that would elicit the most useful evaluation information at the end of one of the classes. In the final class I provided the opportunity for participants to co-create learning and teaching activities. Participants were invited to test something out, share something, or pose questions about student engagement by bidding for slots of time in class, several weeks before the class takes place.
Aims of our project/intervention

- To model a range of student engagement teaching practices in order to increase participants' awareness of possible approaches they could use in their own teaching practice;
- To learn from all participants perspectives and practices in student engagement through sharing responsibility and co-creating the final class;
- To enhance participants' knowledge of the student engagement literature and research.

What happened?
The participants reacted well to the exercises modelling student engagement practices. One participant explained after class how he now understood why I had invited participation in co-creating the evaluation questions. He described being much more engaged in the evaluation because he had ownership of the questions being asked. In most cohorts, a small number of participants chose to co-create the final class. For example, a lecturer from engineering demonstrated an experiment he runs with students and showed a video clip covering another related concept that he shows to students. He then led a discussion about the relative benefits of using practical experiments and videos, while staff participants made suggestions of how the video material could be turned into a new and engaging practical experiment. Another member of staff from life sciences posed a question in class 'How do you engage students in large classes' and invited participants to share their ideas, experiences and suggestions so that all could benefit from the ideas discussed.

Reflection
The course ran smoothly and was evaluated positively by the majority of participants. From running the course over several years I have learned that it is worth investing time in explaining clearly the aims of the final co-created class, and giving examples of the kinds of things that participants can do. I asked participants to bid for a time slot using Moodle (the virtual learning environment we used for the PG Certificate), and then left this discussion forum space open to subsequent cohorts so that participants were able to see the kinds of things previous participants had suggested as activities. This meant that later cohorts were in many ways clearer about what was being proposed. The danger is that these previous suggestions might steer future cohorts a little too much in terms of what they could do, but so far there has been no evidence of this, with subsequent cohorts continuing to be highly creative with their very different ideas.

Key outputs
https://www.srhe.ac.uk/conference2016/abstracts/0139.pdf
References