

# Organizing Student Groups

Opportunities, Options,  
Optimal Results



# Opportunities



Why collaborative group learning?

Collaborative learning fosters:

- Development of critical thinking
- Responsibility for learning
- Clarification of ideas
- Evaluation of others ideas

# Opportunities



Impact of collaborative learning on the workforce?

Collaborative learning develops:

- Teamwork skills
- Creative thinking
- Problem solving
- Decision making

# Opportunities



If you decide to use group-based learning you should provide a context that supports the development of knowledge and trust.

Knowledge = Meeting learning objective

Trust = Setting expectations/guidelines &  
Use of Evaluation/Rubrics

# Options



Group formation should be considered when deciding on how best to meet and achieve the learning goals.

# Options



Questions to ask:

1. Which group formation would enable each student to get actively involved in this lesson?

# Options



Questions to ask:

2. How does the group formation selected help students develop their weaker areas as well as use their stronger skills and intelligence?

# Options



Questions to ask:

3. Should students have any say in their group formations for this lesson?

# Group Formations

Pair-Share, Jigsaw,  
Random &  
Ability/Interest Groups



# Group Formation



## Pair-Share

Two students paired to solve one problem, share ideas, or explore a question. Work is shared for a short time. Each person has an opportunity to compose, post and provide/receive feedback.

# Tasks



## Pair-Share

- Peer editing
- Sharing personal experiences related to the lesson topic
- Discussing complex issues

# Benefits



## Pair-Share

- Students have more active engagement time when there are fewer people in a group.
- Students with fewer interpersonal skills will feel more comfortable with this setting.

# Drawbacks



## Pair-Share

- Students receive fewer perspectives and less diverse insight on complex topics.
- Chances of developing better solutions decrease in this type of formation.

# Group Formation



## Jigsaw (novice/expert)

Students research and discuss as part of one group (novice group) and then teach it to the larger class (evolve into expert group).

# Tasks



## Jigsaw (novice/expert)

This group formation works best when there are multiple sections or parts to one topic.

Example: Maya Indians

- » Land Management
- » Commerce & Trade
- » Religion & Local traditions

# Tasks



## Jigsaw (novice/expert)

- Each group researches five significant facts about their question or topic and then posts their findings and summary.
- The expert group is also responsible for answering any additional questions.

# Benefits



## Jigsaw (novice/expert)

- This formation gives students the responsibility and opportunity to develop both teaching and learning skills.
- Review sheets for exams are created as a result of their postings.

# Drawbacks



## Jigsaw (novice/expert)

- Some students feel time constraints in both researching and discussing the information and concluding what should be synthesized and presented.

# Group Formation



## Random Groups of Three or Four

Discussion topics in random groups of three members; topics must be broad to capture interest and focused enough to elicit a significant response.

# Tasks



## Random Groups of Three or Four

- Predict what will happen in a story or play.
- Respond to a crisis situation and create a group response to resolve the problem.

# Benefits



## Random Groups of Three or Four

- Students receive feedback from a variety of perspectives.
- Group members serve as models for one another which creates accountability.
- Three to four members allows for each person to participate without the risk of being ignored.

# Drawbacks



## Random Groups of Three or Four

- Easy to leave out students who are shy or quiet.
- Occasionally two members team up and those left out feel ostracized.

# Group Formation



## Ability or Interest Groups

Ability groups bring together students with similar backgrounds, interests or abilities. Bringing students from high, middle, and low achievement groups is also a possibility.

# Tasks



## Ability or Interest Groups

- Research
- Developing elements of a project
- Building a presentation

# Benefits



## Ability or Interest Groups

- Students work at a pace and level that most fits their abilities in the subject.
- Students are less bored when they move at a comfortable pace.
- Peers who work at similar levels often motivate one another.

# Drawbacks



## Ability or Interest Groups

- Unrealistic to find students who are homogeneous in all areas.
- Students may feel excluded if they don't fit into a specific ability or interest group.

# Role Assignment

Facilitator, Process  
Observer, Summarizer



# Roles



## Creating roles for group members

- Students take on specific responsibilities
- Produces different perspectives
- Rotation of roles

# Roles



## Facilitator

- Responsible for initiating discussion with one or two questions (original/instructor).
- Moderates and extends discussion by posing new questions on issues that arise out of the dialogue.
- Responsible for keeping an active and involved discussion.

# Roles



## Process Observers

- Monitors the groups dynamics
- Responsible for making sure everyone is participating
- Creates order and consistency
- Provides feedback regarding the dynamics and participation of the group

# Roles



## Summarizers

- Looks for key themes that emerge
- Keeps track of consensus/disagreement
- Presents summary of the discussion

# Creating Optimal Results

Successful group expectations, Rubrics and Evaluations



# Optimal results



## Creating Group Cohesiveness

### Successful groups:

1. Listen to every member
2. Define responsibilities
3. Value each persons abilities
4. Model Excellence
5. Promote humor

# Optimal Results



## Assessing Student Progress

### Collaboration Rubric

Category	Expert Collaboration (4)	Effective Collaboration (3)	Average Collaboration (2)	Ineffective Collaboration (1)
Researching Together  Score: _____	Research tasks were done together with findings and results shared and analyzed by everyone.	Usually tasks were done together and results shared and analyzed by all.	Some tasks were done together, but some participants did not carry their load and others carried to much.	Research was not done well and not done as a group.

# Optimal Results



## Assessing Student Progress Collaboration Rubric

Category	Expert Collaboration (4)	Effective Collaboration (3)	Average Collaboration (2)	Ineffective Collaboration (1)
Dividing and sharing work  Score: _____	Work was divided and shared evenly among all members of the group when tasks needed to be done by individuals.	Work was usually shared and divided evenly.	Work was not usually shared and divided evenly.	Work was not shared evenly.

# Optimal Results



## Assessing Student Progress Collaboration Rubric

Category	Expert Collaboration (4)	Effective Collaboration (3)	Average Collaboration (2)	Ineffective Collaboration (1)
Working independently  Score: _____	The team worked independently and was able to follow instructions, do research, and collaborate without extensive teacher involvement.	Some work was done independently, but teacher intervention was sometimes required.	Intervention by the teacher was frequently required to put the group back on track.	The group was not able to work independently.

# Optimal Results



## Assessing Student Progress Collaboration Rubric

Category	Expert Collaboration (4)	Effective Collaboration (3)	Average Collaboration (2)	Ineffective Collaboration (1)
Solving problems and differences  Score: _____	<b>Inevitable problems and differences were thought out, and participants worked together to solve problems and bring everyone into the solution.</b>	Some problems were worked out, but others were not solved.	Problems were not solved effectively, and differences were not well addressed.	Problems and differences were not solved and even became larger.

# Optimal Results



## Assessing Student Progress Collaboration Rubric

Category	Expert Collaboration (4)	Effective Collaboration (3)	Average Collaboration (2)	Ineffective Collaboration (1)
Achieving consensus  Score: _____	Consensus was achieved by respectful consideration and inclusion of everyone's thoughts and ideas.	Some consensus was achieved but not always respectfully and not always inclusively.	A little consensus was achieved, but several members of the group were left out.	No consensus was achieved by the group.

# Optimal Results



## Collaboration Rubric

Category	Expert Collaboration (4)	Effective Collaboration (3)	Average Collaboration (2)	Ineffective Collaboration (1)
Researching Together				
Dividing and sharing work				
Working independently				
Solving problems and differences				
Achieving consensus				
Total Score:	20-16	15-11	10-6	5

# Optimal results



Utilizing student groups in the online environment is an excellent option for collaborative activities.

Successful online groups will incorporate the following:

- Well thought out group formation
- Assignment of roles
- Specific expectations and guidelines
- Use of rubrics and evaluation

# Organizing Student Groups



Questions?