COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

“Maximum learning probably occurs when a group breaks its dependence on its instructor and assumes its own responsibility for learning” (Flannery, 1994, p. 22).

WHY USE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

Benefits of Collaborative Learning

Develops skills like interpersonal, group-building/management, inquiry, conflict-resolution, synthesis and presentation.

Enhances cultural diversity awareness when students work with others of different ethnic, religious, etc. backgrounds.

Students often learn more through active engagement with course information than through passive listening.

An effective partner can be as effective as a teacher.

Some students more likely to speak up in small groups.

Some students are more likely to ask questions of other students in small groups.

Those who understand the material are able to reorganize their own learning to help answer other students’ questions.

WHEN TEAM PROJECTS ARE DONE SUCCESSFULLY, THERE IS...

80-100% involvement and 50-75% retaining of information,

VERSUS

10-20% involvement and 20-30% retaining of information in lectures (Hartley & Davies, 1978, as cited in Henderson & Nash, 2007)

Why Collaborative Learning Works

TEACHER’S RESPONSIBILITIES IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

- PREPARE your students to make sure they have enough background knowledge on the topic.
- IDENTIFY the collaborative skills you want to teach.
- DESCRIBE how working collaboratively is valuable.
- EXPLAIN tasks clearly.
- DEMONSTRATE the skills.
- ALLOW students time to practice the skills, and give them constructive feedback.
- MOVE AROUND and listen in on student groups.
- GIVE time at the end for students’ reflections on the experience and their new skills.
ACTIVITIES TO USE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Pair-Learning Activities

The Learning Cell: students learn in pairs by asking and answering questions on commonly read materials.
1. Students read the same material and write down questions dealing with major points.
2. At beginning of each class, students are assigned to pairs.
3. Students go back and forth asking and answering questions.
4. Instructor goes from pair to pair giving feedback.

Teach-Write-Discuss-Process
At the end of a short unit, give a brief essay question or a few multiple choice questions.
1. Ask students to write down their answers and a short statement about why their answer is correct.
2. Have students discuss their answers and explanations with a partner near them.

Group-Learning Activities

The Jigsaw Classroom
1. Divide students into teams with one team leader; give each team one aspect of a problem to solve.
2. After the teams meet, the team leaders meet to share their groups’ resolutions. They come up with one comprehensive solution.
3. The team leaders return to their groups and share the final resolution, thus becoming peer educators.

Syndicate: team-based system of learning
1. Divide class into teams.
2. Give each group assignments.
3. During class, each group discusses findings.
4. Have each group give a written or oral report to the class as a whole, and encourage students to make it interesting.

Team Written Reports
1. Encourage collaboration and group review so as to dissuade students from each writing a separate part of the paper and lumping them together at the end.
2. If a group member is not doing his or her share, you can “fire” him or her from the group and have the student complete the report individually.

Oral Presentations
1. Encourage research, organization, and scripting.
2. If you’re using role play, make sure students know who they are to portray and what they are supposed to feel and do. This makes students feel more comfortable.

WHAT IS THE PERFECT SIZE GROUP FOR A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT?

3-4 group members.
Two members are often not enough because one member may become dominant and take over the project. With five or more members, it is easy for some to bow out of the process.

SOURCES: