How to Create and Facilitate Successful Group Work Experiences for Your Class

Physics Department
August 12, 2013
Taimi Olsen, Ph.D.
Ferlin McGaskey, Ph.D.
Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center
Agenda

• Review benefits of group work

• Best practices for developing and planning group work

• Best practices for forming and facilitating groups
What are your experiences with group work?
What do you believe are the benefits of group work?

- Exposes students to multiple perspectives
- Fosters development of collaborative and interpersonal communication skills
- Encourages deeper and more active learning
- Promotes sense of belonging
Questions to answer when planning to use group work

1. Does it serve to help me meet my learning objective?

2. What is the task I want the groups to address?

3. What do I want the groups to produce to indicate they have completed the task successfully?

4. In what way will we close the group work activity?
1. What is your objective for the recitation session?

**OBJECTIVES** are the heart and soul of effective presence in the room. Most simply put, having an objective means knowing very clearly **what one wants from the other** in the scene – in this case, the audience of students.

The **OUTCOME** is what students do at the end.
How do you form a student learning outcome?

Students will be able to analyze X and explain the function of each aspect.

Verbal product
Try this! Working in groups....

- Write an objective for a class session on _____ that you believe can be attain through group work.
2. What is a “task” that I want the groups to address?

- Task should be:
  - Concrete
  - Descriptive
  - Varied
Task

- Some Types of Tasks:
  - Analyze
  - Describe
  - Compare and Contrast
  - Solve
  - List
  - Apply
  - Create
  - Design
Try this! Working in groups....

- Write an objective for a class session on _____ that you believe can be attain through group work.

- Based on the outcome you wrote, write down the task that you want students to engage in and the time it will take to complete it.
3. Determine a Product

Kinds of product that groups can develop and share with class:

• Students report to class about their findings/conclusions/explanation
• Students list questions or solutions, present to the class
• Students demonstrate their outcome (physical demo)
• Students give a mini lecture on their topic
• Students write a “minute paper” on their topic
Try this! Working in groups....

- Write an objective for a class session on _____ that you believe can be attain through group work.

- Determine the task that you want students to engage in and the time it will take to complete it.

- Decide what “evidence of learning” you want them to develop out of their interaction.
4. Instructor will confirm that the group work activity contributed to student learning

- Summarize the findings of groups, comment and connect to the subject/topic/theory being discussed

- Have students reflect on what they learned
  - One minute paper
  - Mini quiz
Working in groups....

- Write an objective for a class session on _____ that you believe can be attain through group work.

- Determine the task that you want students to engage in and the time it will take to complete it.

- Decide what product do you want them to develop out of their interaction.

- Agree upon a way to conclude the activity to confirm to students that learning taken place.
Managing the group: group formation and size

- Dependent on difficulty of task
- Group Formation Types
  - Random
  - Teacher-selected
  - Student-selected
  - Proximity
- Group size
  - 2-4
Example: Group type

- Assumptions: groups of 4, pre-assigned groups

- Assign group roles
  - leader, note-taker, reporter, questioner

- Student role: includes being involved; perhaps sign a contract
Managing groups: Instructor role

- Determining group interaction guidelines
- Considering the space of the room and your position
- Actively observing and interacting with groups
- Asking engaging questions
Asking questions

1. Allow time to think – tolerate some silence (use the 30 second rule)
2. Have students jot down their responses
3. Take advantage of competing views (agree/disagree poll)
4. Have students keep a log of important questions in their notes
5. Ask the class “Why is this a good question to pose?” in order to generate critical thinking.
Asking questions: types that enhance learning

- **Analysis**
  - “Why...”
  - How would you explain...”
  - What is the importance of...”
  - What is your interpretation/meaning of...”

- **Compare and contrast**
  - “What is the difference between...”
  - “What is the similarity between...”

- **Cause and Effect**
  - “What are the causes/results of...”
  - What connection is there between...”

- **Clarification**
  - “What is meant by...”
  - “Would you define...”
  - “Could you give us an example...”

- **Deep questioning**
Types that constrain

- **Simple yes-no**
  - “Is...”
  - “Does...”
  - Do you have any questions?

- **Elliptical**
  - “What do you think about...”
  - (too vague)

- **Leading**
  - “Don’t you think that...”
  - (conveys expected answer)

- **Intimidating**
  - “Why wouldn’t you think that...”
Try it

- In groups of five, four people will role-play students doing the recitation

The person that is the TA actively interacts and fields the two questions

Debrief
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