How to Create and Manage Groups

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January 16, 2014
This Session will:

• Consider when and why to use formal group assignments
• Explore how to design effective group assignments
• Discuss how to assign students to groups.
• Identify approaches to promote positive group work.

*Effective group design promotes learning and active participation.*
Framework for Using Groups

- Design good group assignments
- Construct groups carefully
- Teach group skills
- Assess student groups

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Ideas Today That You Can Use Next Week
Using Groups

Why are you interested in using groups?

Introduce yourself and share your interest in groups.
Why Use Groups?

Pedagogical reasons

- Increased academic achievement, motivation, and retention
- Meta-analysis by Springer et al. (1999) showed effect sizes of 0.51, 0.55, and 0.46, respectively

Barkley et al., 2005; Carleton College; Johnson and Johnson, 2002; Wenzel, 2000
Other Reasons To Use Groups

- Also personal, skill based, experiential and practical reasons!
  - Builds confidence
  - Conflict resolution
  - Multidisciplinary teamwork opportunities
  - Greater complexity and depth in assignments
Use Groups When:

- Your learning objectives and assessment align well with the group task
- You can explain the rationale to students of the purpose and value of the group work
- The task lends itself to a division of labor
- Student interdependence is important
Designing Assignments

What instructions and experiences do you give your students in regards to group work?

Turn to a partner and discuss the question above.

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Design Good Group Assignments

- Consider:
  - Beginning with simple, well-defined tasks, then increase their difficulty
  - Creating engaging and relevant problems
  - Assigning roles for each task
  - Defining individual vs. group accountability
  - Developing assignments that require interdependence

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Constructing Teams

How are groups usually formed in your class and what do they end up looking like?

Turn to a partner and discuss the questions above.
Construct Groups Carefully

- Consider:
  - Forming groups of 3 to 5 students
  - Increasing the heterogeneity of groups by considering gender, major, & interests
  - Instructor vs. student formed groups
  - Scheduling and other practical concerns
  - Using free software and other tools to help you

GroupEng from Dimiduk & Dimiduk
Group Work Case Study

What do you think is going on in this group?

How might you respond to the students?

How might you mitigate some of those challenges before they happen?
Teach Group Skills

- Consider:
  - Setting expectations (syllabus)
  - Using team building activities
  - Creating group “rules” (civility contract)
  - Sharing strategies for common group problems
  - Observing and guiding groups

Oakley et al., 2004
# T Chart: Contributing Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looks Like</th>
<th>Sounds Like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaning forward</td>
<td>My idea is..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open posture</td>
<td>I suggest we...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking turns</td>
<td>We could...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>How about...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carleton College; Johnson & Johnson, 1996
Group Work Strategies

• What challenge are you facing in your class with group work?

• What questions do you have about using groups in your class?
Groups: What Can You Try?

Take a moment to jot down one or two things that you can try in your class for your next formal group work assignment.
Is there anything that you would like to discuss further or know more about?

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References


- Carleton College; http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/cooperative/index.html


- Oakley et al., 2004. Turning student groups into effective teams. Journal of Student Centered Learning, 2 (1), 9-34.


Group Work Case Study #2

- A student tells you the first day of class that he can not deal with group work.
- Later in the semester, the same student complains that other group members are not pulling their weight.
- When confronted by you, the other group members all agree that the disgruntled student won’t let them participate, often redoing their work and getting hung up on small details.