The Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ATLE)
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Creating Great Group Assignments

Join us for this discussion about the most common student objections to group work and explore features in Canvas that can be used to facilitate truly cooperative learning experiences that you and your students will enjoy.

"There is difference between simply having students work in a group and structuring groups of students to work cooperatively" (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 32).

Features of Cooperative Learning:

1. **Clearly Perceived Positive Interdependence**
2. Clearly articulate group's goal and individuals' roles in accomplishing that goal
3. Pre-assign each member an essential part of total task (task interdependence)
4. Allocate essential resources across group members (resource interdependence)
5. Randomly select group members to report on group progress & members' learning (learning interdependence)
6. Add an element of competition between groups; use Pages to display status
7. Assign group grade for deliverable that includes percentage for individual contributions (90/10); use rubric (reward interdependence)
8. Create bonus "assignment;" give group extra points when all individual performances meet a certain criterion; set assignment at 0 points (reward interdependence)

9. **Considerable Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction**
10. Be mindful of group size and demographic characteristics (i.e., proximity, gender, race, etc.)
11. Collect demographic info via Ungraded Survey to form heterogeneous groups
12. Allow students to self-select groups (with instructor veto power)
13. Allot in-class time for group meetings (especially first meeting); specify tasks (group name, contact info, meeting info, etc.)
14. Provide advance organizer outline/checklist for each meeting to be turned in
15. Encourage students to use Conferences (Big Blue Button) for meetings beyond required number of face-to-face meetings

16. **Clearly Perceived Individual and Group Accountability**
17. Keep size of groups small (no place for members to hide)
18. Give quizzes to assess individual learning related to project
19. Assign additional individual grade based upon group feedback for contribution & participation (use Rubric & Peer Reviews)

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20. Give pop quizzes regarding group progress (i.e., How many meetings? Who attended?, Outcomes?, etc.).
21. Require students to use Collaborations tools (EtherPad, Google Docs) and evaluate individual contributions at regular intervals

22. Frequent Use of Interpersonal & Small-Group Skills

23. Discuss stages of group development (forming, norming, storming, performing); use Pages (maybe embed YouTube video)
24. Discuss common hindrances to group performance (social loafing, groupthink); use Pages
25. Discuss/role-play appropriate social skills
26. Pre-assign (or allow students to choose) defined roles (i.e., encourager, summarizer, includer, questioner, etc.)
27. Encourage groups to develop a contract (limit length); could include consensus voting, absence policy, etc.
28. Configure odd-numbered groups to enable majority voting
29. Give feedback to groups' recorded sessions

30. Frequent & Regular Group Processing

31. Demonstrate group processing/debrief after in-class group activity
32. Have group submit a 1 paragraph, 3-tiered reflection (before, during, after); use Text Entry graded assignment
33. Include a reflection piece in final project/deliverable
34. Encourage students to use group discussion board for post-meeting summary; join and comment
35. Provide students with group processing questions to answer (i.e., How were group decisions made?, How well did I listen?, How well did each member play their role?, Did we include all group members in our discussions?, Did any one person dominate our discussions?, How did we focus on the interpersonal dimensions of our group?, How could we function as a group more smoothly?. etc.)

Johnson, R. T., & Johnson, D. W. (1994). An overview of cooperative learning. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa, & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning: A practical guide to empowering students and teachers* (pp. 31-44). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks.