***Collaborative Learning***

By David Kleiman

***Background information:***

Collaborative learning is an area of pedagogy that has been subject to much research for a long period of time. It has long since been known that learning is most often socially constructed, and that well structured, thoughtfully planned collaborative learning opportunities for students can greatly enrich classroom learning (Bennet and Rolheiser, 2001). It is also intuitive from most of our own classroom experiences that if collaborative learning is not thoughtfully planned, or properly structured, it can lead to extremely ineffective, even chaotic consequences in our classrooms. How can we best use this time tested pedagogy?

*Don Plumb’s 2006 STAO workshop*

**\*\* It is important to note that Collaborative Learning strategies are likely more effective when used in your classroom routines along with a variety of other teaching techniques. \*\***

***Best Practices***

* *Kagan’s PIES approach: (Kagan 1994)* Not all structures are equal. Look for these characteristics. Not all collaborative learning activities will fit all of these criteria, but the most effective activities

**P**ositive interdependence *(Joritz-Nakagawa)*

* Activity is structured so that students benefit from helping each other.

**I**ndividual Accountability

* Build in mechanisms to check quantity and quality of each participant’s input   
  (eg. paraphrase passport)

**E**qual Participation

* All students contribute equally to the activity.

**S**imultaneous Interaction

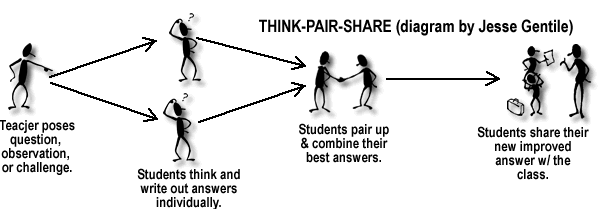
* All students are actively engaged at the same time throughout the activity.
* Group sizes between 2-4. More than that decreases individual participation and accountability.  
  (Bennet and Rolheiser, 2001)
* Be mindful of groupings. Pre plan groups. Group by interest, ability, readiness, etc.

**Round Robin / Round Table**

* + Teacher asks a questions with multiple possible answers
  + In groups of 3-4 students take turns sequentially stating their responses
  + Record your answer on a piece of paper. Pass the paper to the next group member who adds to the answer. This is called a Round Table.
  + **Variations:**
    - Set a time limit
    - Make it a race. Which team can come up with the most answers within the time limit?
    - Send around multiple papers for multiple sub-topics
    - Complete a diagram in Round Table (particularly effective for visual learners)
  + **Add-on: Paraphrase Passport**
    - **Before the next student can contribute their answer, they must paraphrase the previous person’s answer**

**Placemat**

* **Each member:**
  + records their ideas in their designated space
  + chooses 2-3 of their main ideas
  + shares their ideas with the group
  + optional: Record the key ideas in the center
* **Variations**
  + Each group member answers a different question
  + Each group member assumes the role of a different   
    stakeholder
  + Hand-in / present for assessment / evaluation

**Think-Pair-Share**

* The teacher poses a discussion question or problem
* Students:

1. Think independently about question or problem
2. Share your ideas with a partner
3. Share your ideas with the class

* To encourage PIES principles in a Think-Pair-Share, try a **Timed-Pair-Share.**

1. Pairs numbers off (partner 1 / partner 2)
2. Teacher announces which partner starts
3. First partners speaks for a designated length of time, other partner listens   
   (can smile and nod, but cannot talk)
4. Switch roles
5. Why not make it a **Rally Robin**, or add a **Paraphrase Passport**?

There are MANY more structures that can be used to encourage collaborative learning. Some great ones to look at are: Jigsaw (many variations), Graffiti, 3 Step Interviews, 4 Corners, Quiz-Quiz-Trade, ***References:***

Bennet and Rolheiser. (2001). *Beyond Monet – The Artful Science of Instructional Integration.* Bookation Inc. Toronto.

Joritz-Nakagawa, Jane. *Spencer Kagan's Cooperative Learning Structures.* Aichi University of Education. Japan. Available at <http://jalt.org/pansig/PGL2/HTML/Nakagawa.htm> Accessed July 12, 2010

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*Methods for Assessing Group Work.* Univeristy of Waterloo. Available at <http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_resources/tips/methods_for_assessing_groupwork.html> Accessed July 20, 2010