

More on - Students Learning Collaboratively

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The Think-Pair-Share Activity

This is a learning strategy that can promote and support higher level thinking. The activity is relatively straight forward and can be integrated into most any classroom situation.

The basic steps are that the instructor:

1. Asks students to think about a specific topic or address a specific question.
2. Asks the students to pair with another student and discuss their own thinking about the question.
3. And, then asks a few students to share their ideas with the class as a whole.

The think-pair-share activity can be applied at any point in a class session. However, this strategy should be carefully pre-planned in order to be most effective. These are the steps to plan and conduct a successful think-pair-share activity.

1. Before class, prepare the question to be asked, the timing and how the sharing will be occur. This should be written as part of your lesson plan for that class session. Consider: The question you will ask; is it open ended or do you prescribe possible answers.

How much time you will allow for thinking time and discussing time.

How you will manage getting students into groups or pairs.

How many responses you will solicit.

How you will debrief after the discussion.

2. Pose the question to the students.

3. Allow time for them to think. This may be 15 to 20 seconds or so, depending on the nature of the question. Consider asking them to briefly write down their responses and rationale for that response. In this latter case, you will need to give them a little more time.

4. Get them to pair with their neighbor and share their responses to the question. Typically this two students talking together, however, sometimes three will for a group. Allow several minutes for this conversation. Walk around the room, listening to the discussions. Identify common misconceptions that you can address at the end of the activity. Get a feel for the overall discussion. Also, you can tell when most pairs have run out of things to say.

5. Debrief. This starts with asking several students to share their responses. You can ask for volunteers. Or, if you overheard a particularly good response as you were walking around the room, ask that person to share their response first. This will encourage others to speak up, too.

Also in debriefing: You point out common responses and unique responses that came from the discussions. Ask if anyone learned something new or gained a different or unexpected insight from their discussion partner(s). Be sure that you address the question or topic. Students always want to know the “answer” and to hear your own response and thoughts.

Activity: [after the video]

Part A

Pick one of your favorite lectures that you teach. Pick a topic within that lecture that you are comfortable teaching. Develop a plan for a Think-Pair-Share activity as a means of introducing that topic. Write this up as if it is a part of your lesson plan for that lecture.

Include in your plan:

- Your question
- The timing of thinking and sharing
- How you will organize the pairings
- How you will manage the sharing
- How you will debrief

Part B

Pick one of your **least** favorite lectures that you teach. Pick a topic within that lecture that you are **least** comfortable teaching. Develop a plan for a Think-Pair-Share activity as a means of introducing that topic. Write this up as if it is a part of your lesson plan for that lecture.

Include the components as in Part A in your plan. Also, how might you use this strategy to enhance both your enjoyment of that lesson and the understanding of the students?

Notes:

Steps for a Successful Group Activity

Use this group activity format to maximize the impact of the activity:

Step 1: Each group member needs to come prepared with something to share. This can be done by having students first individually do the assignment/activity or part of the activity and produce a work product. The students can be given the assignment/activity as homework from the previous class session, or given the assignment/activity in class before they gather into their groups. The result of this step is that each student comes to their group prepared and with something productive to share so that the group can move quickly to developing the group product.

Step 2: When the group meets together, each student should share their individual work product with the rest of the group. Step 2 can be conducted in only a few minutes, depending on the nature of the assignment/activity. The instructor should be the time-keeper. Step 2 can be done by:

- a. The student sharing their own product with the other group members. This allows the student to explain their individual product in their own words.

b. Or by asking each student to pass their product to another in the group and have that group member describe the other student's product. This approach can point out the strengths and shortcomings of the other student's product. This works well when the initial assignment/activity is something visual such as a drawing. This can then be followed by the student that made the product explaining their what they thought they were producing.

Step 3: The group should then be tasked with completing the assignment/activity in a collaborative manner. This part of the activity should be given the greatest amount of time. They should be challenged to develop a group work product that either:

- a. Incorporates all elements of the individual work products.
- b. Builds off of one or two of the individual products to enhance the final product.
- c. Or, starts anew minimizing replication of any of the individual products.

Step 4: Each group product should be shared with the class as a whole, allowing each group to briefly describe their work product and explain why they developed the product in that manner. The group can also be asked to explain the process by which they collaboratively developed their work product.

Step 5: It is always **important** for the instructor to provide some feedback, comments and insights after each group has made their presentation. The students want to know what the instructor thinks about the work products and the how the students conducted collaborative activity. They want to know whether their efforts doing in the activity were meeting the instructor's expectations.

Group Development Model

From: Tuckman, Bruce W. and Jensen, Mary Ann C. (1977). Stages of Small-Group Development Revisited. *Group & Organization Management*, 2(4), 419-427.

Tuckman and Jensen's Group Development Model

Successfully navigating the phases of the process are necessary and inevitable in order for a group/team to: grow, face up to challenges, tackle problems, find solutions, plan work, and deliver results.



FORMING: The team meets and learns about the opportunities and challenges, and then agrees on goals and begins to tackle the tasks. Members getting to know one another. Ends when group members are comfortable with one another.

STORMING: Disagreement and conflict about roles and procedures occurs. Disagreements and personality clashes must be resolved before the team can progress out of this stage. It is important to promote different perspectives and clarify each team member's positions. This stage can also be upsetting. Establishing a group contract is helpful to proceed from here to the performing stage. Be sure the students understand these terms:

Quorum: The minimum number of members of a group that must be present at any of its meetings to make the proceedings of that meeting valid.

Consensus: General agreement among a group of people. Depends on participants having broad agreement on specific issues and overall direction. Implies that everyone accepts and supports the decision and understands the reasons for making it.

NORMING: Establishment of team rules, team structure and social relationships. Group is cohesive and norms have been established with trust. All team members take the responsibility and have the ambition to work for the success of the team's goals.

PERFORMING: Focus is on completing the task. Team members are motivated and knowledgeable, and competent, autonomous and able to handle the decision-making process without supervision. Most performance occurs here. Not all groups reach this stage.

ADJOURNING: Dissolution, completion of the task and end of group. This may a stressful time when ending formed relationships. Should be also time for learning from team experience.

Walt's Practical Thoughts on Students Working in Groups & Teams

Students are typically novices at working effectively in groups and teams. Share these points with your students in the early stages of establishing groups in the classroom. Explicitly explaining these points may help your students more quickly engage in their groups and have a more positive and meaningful group experience.

Students, here are some thoughts on how to succeed in your groups:

Show up each time the group meets

Come prepared

Speak up, say something each time

LISTEN carefully to your group members

Always be respectful to your group members

Take ownership of your own perspectives, ideas, comments, etc.

Jot down notes about the discussion, not just the "answers"

Reflect on what you are learning from the discussions

Communicate with other members outside of class time

You cannot succeed unless your group members success, and vice versa

Your group's products should be superior to the sum of the individual contributions

SIT IN A CIRCLE, every time you meet

Group Contract Template

In order to have a successful group, there are certain strategies that work to help with interpersonal communication and decision-making. The group contract makes your expectations of how the group will function visible. Contracts allow a group to establish procedures and roles in order to move into the “performing” stage and you can get to the work more quickly. Each person should agree on the final contract and each person should sign the document. Each group member and the instructor should have a copy of the signed contract.

Use Google Docs to develop a group contract. Address the topics below (in bold) in your contract at a minimum. You may add other items that your group thinks important for the contract. Use specific and concrete metrics to define the expectations.

Preferred method of communicate (email? Group discussion board? etc.)

How often should members check these communication sites for updates?

What is the expected response time? 24 hour? 12 hour? Other?

Where will you post/share/edit your work as you write papers, PowerPoint etc.?

Decision-making policy

Will decisions be made by majority vote, by consensus or by another method?

Who decides when a part of the assignment or project should be reworked?

How will you make decisions about completion of the final group presentation/project?

Participation

What strategies will you use to ensure cooperation and fair distribution of tasks?

What strategies will you use for keeping people on task?

What is the expectation for attending group work meetings? How often are you going to meet? When are you going to meet? Does everyone agree?

How soon do you need to notify the group member that you cannot attend a meeting?

What about individual attendance? Punctuality? Illness notification?

Define the expected level of responsibility for assignments, timelines, and deadlines.

Conflict

While constructive conflict can be good, what happens if it interferes with the project?

What if a member disappears, does not participate, does not do their assignment?

What if you have discussed with the team member about the behavior that is affecting the group and there is no change? What does the group believe is the next step?

When will you get your professor involved if there is a conflict?

Other rules that your group would like to add

Project grades are based on completion of all the parts of the assignment, group member evaluations and final submission by the due date.

Your Learning Concept Map

Supplies needed per group: one copy of this list, scissors, tape, large paper

Add several of your own words to the list

Student	Bloom's Taxonomy
Cold Call	Novice
Learning How to Learn	Think-Pair-Share
CATs	Memory
Classroom	Informal Groups
Higher Order Thinking	Understand
Learning Objectives	Create
Active Learning	Teams
Close-ended Questions	Tuckman/Jensen's Model
Forgetting	Summative Evaluation
Analyze	Lower Order Thinking
Making Connections	Warm Call
Remember	Inquiry
Collaborative Learning	Apply/Application
Concept Maps	Expert
Group Contract	Significant Learning
Evidence of Learning	Facilitator of Learning
Human Dimension	Learning Styles
VARK	Formative Assessments
Student-Centered Learning	Low Density Lectures
Role-Playing Activity	Open-ended Questions