



The TLC Newsletter

Trends in education



Collaborative Learning in Community Colleges

Adapted from: *ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges*
<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/ERIC/digests/dig9709.html>

Collaborative learning is the instructional use of small groups. Its goal is to allow students to work together to maximize their own and other's learning. The traditional teacher's role is expanded to include facilitating and coordinating the student groups, which then assume part of the responsibility for instruction. There are five essential components that must be present for small-group learning to be truly collaborative:

- clear, positive interdependence among students
- regular group self-evaluation
- interpersonal behaviors that promote each member's learning and success
- individual accountability and personal responsibility
- frequent use of appropriate interpersonal and small group social skills

Collaborative learning is not simply putting students in groups to learn; rather, it is **structured cooperation** among students.

"As Worlds Collide"

At Central Arizona College, a team of three instructors taught a nine-unit learning community that combined history, social psychology, and communication studies to explore questions of culture and community. The students participated in a variety of learning activities, including the formation of teams of six or seven students to present instruction to the class and the establishment of student discussion seminars. Instructors were present, but not as leaders or active participants. Portfolio assessment was used; each student accumulated class and discussion notes and wrote three papers.

Learning outcomes included improved writing skills through class discussion, writing assignments, and the use of journals. Group activities, increased student recognition of their own improved academic performance, and developed awareness of others' values, culture, and beliefs. The students appreciated the relaxed atmosphere, the opportunity to speak freely, and the variety of teaching strategies.

"History of Western Civilization"

At Calhoun Community College in Huntsville, Alabama, an innovative curriculum that combined collaborative learning and contracting was tested on two sections of the History of Western Civilization class. Each student agreed to a "student learning plan" that set forth a grade as a goal with objectives (tests, book reports, and papers) that enabled him or her to meet the goal. Collaborative learning strategies were used in the small group study sessions held before each test.

(Continued, pg. 2)

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Fall Hours

Monday - Wednesday
 8:30 – 5:00
 Tuesday – Thursday
 8:30 – 6:00
 Fridays - Sporadic

Fall TLC Workshops

Effective PowerPoint

Oct. 9, 2:00 – 2:50

Group Work IV:

Evaluate Group Work

Oct. 14, 6:00 – 7:00

Dealing with Personality Differences

Nov. 3, 1:00 – 2:00

Tablet PC

Nov. 18, 3:00 – 3:30

Classroom Assessment Techniques

Nov. 20, 12:10 – 1:00

For a complete listing of upcoming events, visit the TLC Workshops page at:

tlccvc.org/workshop.htm

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 Director..... Tim Xeriland
 Editor..... Kate Burkes

(Collaborative Learning, continued)

The students responded very positively to the group work and to the overall curriculum. However, 79% of the students in one section and 50% of the students in the second failed to meet their goals. The teacher concluded that while students recognize the value of setting goals, they may not be able to follow their own contracts.

Conclusion

Collaborative learning allows students and faculty to share responsibility for learning. It helps prepare students for workplaces that increasingly value self-motivated, self-confident, team-oriented employees (Cooke, 1994). However, depending on the structure of the program and the level of student participation, teacher expectations and increased student performance may not be met. Nonetheless, a collaborative learning strategy can be a useful addition to the repertoire of teaching methods used in community colleges.

Collaborative Learning

Students learn best when they are actively involved in the process.

Students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other formats.

Plan for each stage of group work. When you are writing your syllabus for the course, decide which topics, themes, or projects might lend themselves to formal group work.

Create group tasks that require interdependence. The students in a group must perceive that they "sink or swim" together, that each member is responsible to and dependent on all the others, and that one cannot succeed unless all in the group succeed.

Carefully explain to your class how the groups will operate and how students will be graded. As you would when making any assignment, explain the objectives of the group task and define any relevant concepts.

Give students the skills they need to succeed in groups. Many students have never worked in collaborative groups and may need practice in active and tolerant listening, helping one another in mastering content, giving and receiving constructive criticism, and managing disagreements.

Assign group tasks that allow for a fair division of labor. Try to structure the tasks so that each group member can make an equal contribution. For example, one faculty member asks groups to write a report on alternative energy sources. Each member of the group is responsible for research on one source, and then all the members work together to incorporate the individual contributions into the final report.

Ensure that individual student performance is assessed and that the groups know how their members are doing. Members need to know they cannot let others do all the work while they sit back. Ways to ensure that students are held accountable include calling on individual students to present their group's progress.

Decide how to grade members of the group. Some faculty assign all students in the group the same grade on the group task. If you assign the same grade to the entire group, the grade should not account for more than a small part of a student's grade in the class.

*From **Tools for Teaching** by Barbara Gross Davis; [Jossey-Bass](#) Publishers: San Francisco, 1993.*

PowerPointers

Setting Up Presentation Masters

Masters allow you to make design decisions that will affect each slide in the presentation.

Individual slides can deviate from the master, but each new slide will follow the master specifications.

You should set up the master before building any slides.

When you create the master first, all slides you add to the presentation will be based on that master

To create a Master:

1. Choose **VIEW : Master**.
2. Then, choose the master you wish to create from the list. There are masters for Slides, Title Slide, Handouts and Notes.

NOTE: Title Master is only available after you have applied a Design Template.

To make font changes on the master, highlight the text that you want to change, then make the changes using the tools on the Text Toolbar.