LEARNING IN SMALL GROUPS

WHAT ARE SMALL GROUPS

- Small groups:
    - A collection of individuals
    - With a common purpose
    - Who are interdependent
    - Follow organizing rules
    - Perceive themselves to be part of the group

WHO ARE SMALL GROUPS

- Small groups are a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be part of a group
  - How might students get to know each other?
- Some things to consider related to your groups:
  - Demographics
    - How could you combine groups to ensure students intermingle?
  - Perceptions & Stereotypes
    - How could you help students get to know each other as individuals while also accomplishing group tasks?
  - Privilege & Power
    - How can you think about creating inclusive spaces through both examples and task assignment?

HOW TO SMALL GROUP

- A common purpose and organizing rules

  - How clear at the assignments?

  - How clear are the roles with/in the assignments?

  - How clear are the outcomes?

- Interdependence

  - How do they ensure everyone in the pair/group contributes to successfully completing the task?

CLASS NORMS

- What are the shared expectations for class environment?

- What are the shared expectations for group work?

- What is the accountability structure?

- Consider metacognitive exercises to check in about class norms, participation, etc.

ROLES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORK

- **Initiating**—taking the initiative, at any time; for example, convening the group, suggesting procedures, changing direction, providing new energy and ideas. (How about if we…. What would happen if… ?)

- **Seeking information or opinions**—requesting facts, preferences, suggestions and ideas. (Could you say a little more about… Would you say this is a more workable idea than that?)

- **Giving information or opinions**—providing facts, data, information from research or experience. (In my experience I have seen… May I tell you what I found out about…?)

ROLES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORK

- **Questioning**—stepping back from what is happening and challenging the group or asking other specific questions about the task. (Are we assuming that...? Would the consequence of this be...?)

- **Clarifying**—interpreting ideas or suggestions, clearing up confusions, defining terms or asking others to clarify. This role can relate different contributions from different people, and link up ideas that seem unconnected. (It seems that you are saying... Doesn't this relate to what [name] was saying earlier?)

- **Summarizing**—putting contributions into a pattern, while adding no new information. This role is important if a group gets stuck. Some groups officially appoint a summarizer for this potentially powerful and influential role. (If we take all these pieces and put them together... Here's what I think we have agreed upon so far... Here are our areas of disagreement...)

ROLES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ATMOSPHERE

- **Supporting**—remembering others' remarks, being encouraging and responsive to others. Creating a warm, encouraging atmosphere, and making people feel they belong helps the group handle stresses and strains. People can gesture, smile, and make eye-contact without saying a word. Some silence can be supportive for people who are not native speakers of English by allowing them a chance to get into discussion. (I understand what you are getting at...As [name] was just saying...)

- **Observing**—noticing the dynamics of the group and commenting. Asking if others agree or if they see things differently can be an effective way to identify problems as they arise. (We seem to be stuck... Maybe we are done for now, we are all worn out...As I see it, what happened just a minute ago.. Do you agree?)

- **Mediating**—recognizing disagreements and figuring out what is behind the differences. When people focus on real differences, that may lead to striking a balance or devising ways to accommodate different values, views, and approaches. (I think the two of you are coming at this from completely different points of view...Wait a minute. This is how [name/ sees the problem. Can you see why she may see it differently?)

ROLES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ATMOSPHERE

- **Reconciling**—reconciling disagreements. Emphasizing shared views among members can reduce tension. (The goal of these two strategies is the same, only the means are different… Is there anything that these positions have in common?)

- **Compromising**—yielding a position or modifying opinions. This can help move the group forward. (Everyone else seems to agree on this, so I'll go along with… I think if I give in on this, we could reach a decision.)

- **Making a personal comment**—occasional personal comments, especially as they relate to the work. Statements about one's life are often discouraged in professional settings; this may be a mistake since personal comments can strengthen a group by making people feel human with a lot in common.

- **Humor**—funny remarks or good-natured comments. Humor, if it is genuinely good-natured and not cutting, can be very effective in relieving tension or dealing with participants who dominate or put down others. Humor can be used constructively to make the work more acceptable by providing a welcome break from concentration. It may also bring people closer together, and make the work more fun.

USING BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

- Level I: **Knowledge (knowing isolated information)**

  Know list recall repeat record

  Define locate memorize restate identify

- Level II: **Comprehension (understanding/making connections)**

  Discuss describe explain match find

  Reword review translate express report

- Level III: **Application (using the knowledge in a variety of ways)**

  Display simulate apply demonstrate practice

  Operate compute present sketch use

- Level IV: **Analysis (comparing and contrasting information)**

  Analyze compare contrast probe

  Investigate classify organize examine

- Level V: **Synthesis (developing new information)**

  Compose invent develop construct

  Hypothesize predict speculate role-play

- Level VI: **Evaluation (expressing personal values)**

  Judge infer evaluate advise conclude consider

  determine recommend inquire dissect create generalize

GENERATING QUESTIONS

- Use on campus resources provided by the TH!NK Program: https://think.dasa.ncsu.edu/teaching-strategies-2/

SEE-I

- **S**tate it as briefly, clearly and precisely as possible by constructing a good definition or a single, clear, well-formulated sentence.

- **E**laborate on something to expand or explain it in your own words.

- **E**xemplify clarifies what you mean by using a good, well-chosen, original example.

- **I**llustrate to provide further clarity by using an actual picture, metaphor, illustration, or diagram.

DESCRIPTION/EVALUATION/CRITIQUE

- Start by limiting any discussion to description: What did you see, hear, smell, etc.? What are the literal components of the work? Try to resist modifiers that evaluate or critique and focus on how to name the parts of the work.

- Next, move to evaluation: what worked or didn't work? What did you like or dislike? Did the work meet its stated goals? Limit evaluation to the goals of the work being evaluated. This is a conversation of the work itself without yet making larger connections.

- Finally, move to critique: how does this successfully or unsuccessfully connect with larger goals, themes, contributions etc.? What would you change? Here connect this work to the body of work with which it is in conversation.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

- Pose a question, share a scenario, introduce a concept, etc.

- Have students contemplate on their own (perhaps writing, perhaps not)

- Pair with someone beside them to discussion initial inquiry

- Share out with the large group

- Think-Pair-Square where you do all of the above, but put two pairs together before sharing out to the group or instead of sharing out to the group

3-2-1

- Any variation on a 3-2-1 concept to get students considering the material

- Example:

  - 3 new things they learned

  - 2 critiques of what they read

  - 1 discussion question

- Partner or get together in a small group and choose/edit the best question to ask the large group.

TEAM RESPONSE

- A small group of students sits together with some way to write.

- The discussion leader asks a question.

- Each student writes for a fixed period of time.

- The recorder listens to each response and writes down unique information.

- The discussion leader reads the list of responses.

- Students can add/remove to create the best answer.

DYADIC ESSAY CONFRONTATION

- In response to an assigned reading, each student writes an essay question and model response to that question.

- During class, students pair off, exchange essay questions, and each writes a spontaneous response to the question he or she receives.

- The pairs compare the spontaneous responses with the model responses for the two questions.