

Some Collaborative Learning Activities

Think-Write-Pair-Share

Students are given a few minutes to think quietly (and write) about a problem or question posed by the instructor then asked to discuss their answers with their neighbors. Pairs may then be called on to share their common answer with the class. This activity works well in larger lecture classes.

Jigsaw

The class is divided into several “expert groups” which are assigned separate subtopics relating to a common theme. Group members research the topic, meet to discuss and refine their understanding, then reassemble with members of other expert groups. Experts report their findings to their new group mates, or the group collaboratively solves a task incorporating all the subtopics.

Send a Problem

Each member of a group writes a question or problem on an index card; the group reaches a consensus about the answer, which is then written on the back. Cards are passed to the next group, which discusses their own answers, compares them to the previous group, and may write an alternative solution on the back. Stacks rotate until returned to the original senders, who examine and discuss the alternative answers. VARIATION: The instructor creates questions/problems and staples them to a manila folder which is then passed from group to group with answers placed inside.

Three-Step Interview

Students form pairs, with one partner leading an interview on a predetermined topic for two to three minutes. Partners switch roles; then pairs combine to form groups of four with each member introducing the partner’s ideas. This activity serves as an ice-breaker as well as fostering good listening skills.

The Learning Cell

Prior to class students read an assignment and prepare questions. Upon arriving to class they are randomly assigned a partner, asking each other their questions and discussing the answers.

Study Teams

Students meet regularly outside of class to review class content and assignments and to comment on each other’s work. Students may also answer study questions, which will first be provided by the instructor, later in the semester by the students themselves. Meeting times, duration, and locations should be set at the beginning of the semester.

Four Corners/Linear Continuum

Create four (or two if a continuum) large signs with the phrases STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE, STRONGLY DISAGREE. Place the signs in the four corners of the classroom. Prepare a position statement on an overhead or blackboard (you might prepare a series of these) Students move to the corner that best describes their feelings on the statement and discuss their views with similar-minded classmates. Then the groups present summaries of their justification to the rest of the class. Students may change their places after hearing others’ arguments