

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Pocketbook



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Cartoons:
Phil Hailstone

C o n t e n t s

Page



The Power of More Than One

Welcome, meet Karl, defining collaborative learning, collaborative vs co-operative, historical roots, Vygotskian theory, zone of proximal development, peer-led development and process, motivational and cognitive benefits of group work, the teacher-facilitator, benefits, conclusion

7



Planning for Collaborative Learning

Why bother?, what to expect, initial steps, success criteria, ground rules, low noise and zero noise signals, does size matter?, gender and ability groupings, friendship grouping, grouping by role, job description cards, competency grouping, engaging the reluctant group worker, collaborative jigsaw, intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, active listening skills, speaking skills, advanced collaborative skills, conclusion

25



Collaborative Learning Starter Pack

Introduction, get equipped!, basic collaborative strategies and how they work, placemat, KWL, numbered heads together, double-entry journals, what if...? and the PMI method, graphic organisers, map it in groups!, limitations, conclusion

55



High Impact Strategies

Introduction, carousel, speed talking, reversed objective, jigsaw learning, *Dragons' Den* – pitch your ideas, range of applications: ordering and sequencing; revision; problem-solving; collaborative creation; debating; conclusion

81



Assessing and Evaluating

Impossible task?, piña colaborada, assessing process and product, process assessment using group scores, pupil self-evaluation, example of self-evaluation sheet, group evaluation, example of group evaluation questionnaire, conclusion

115

The reluctant group worker's phrase book



Here are the kinds of phrases that your unwilling team worker might use:

'I can't work with...'

'They won't let me...'

'I don't want to'

'Do I have to?'

'I can't be bothered'

'He / she gets on my nerves'

(to a peer) 'Why can't you do it yourself?'

'What is the point of...?'

*'Can I go to the toilet (please)?'**

You will have heard similar phrases in your classroom. Beneath the cheeky bluntness that we have come to love (or not!) from our students, there is an underlying issue inherent to the process of growing up: the underdevelopment of social (or collaborative) skills. Working with others is not just about willingness, it is a question of capability.

** Common multi-functional escape phrase, occasionally followed by an emphatic expression such as 'I'm bursting'.*

The collaborative jigsaw



At the heart of effective collaborative learning is a set of **skills** that your learners need to develop or acquire. They are central to the process of learning together.

The diagram opposite identifies these skills and highlights their interdependence.



Collaborative Jigsaw

Intrapersonal skills



Intrapersonal skills are vital to the learning process. They are defined as the ability to hear and analyse your own thoughts. Intrapersonal skills allow you to manage your emotions and sense of self, and are a prerequisite to *interpersonal* skills. In a collaborative situation, pupils' *intrapersonal* intelligence defines their self-belief, which in turn impacts on how they work with others.

Developing your students' intrapersonal skills is all about encouraging self-reflection and boosting their self-confidence. Strictly speaking, you cannot 'teach' intrapersonal skills but you can model them and show your students how important they are in making good personal choices.



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How to develop intrapersonal skills



To encourage the development of intrapersonal skills in your collaborative classroom:

- **Inform your students in advance.** Prior to your collaborative lesson, let your students know the learning objectives, what will happen in the lesson and how it will be achieved. Encourage reflection and incite forward planning by setting a preliminary task, for example a KWL grid (see page 62) to fill in at home
- Give students **space and time to think** before the start of a co-operative task. Allow them to read through the material and maybe fill in a questionnaire about it or mark-up/ highlight text in specific ways before they get into groups to discuss it
- **Model your thought process** to the group using a first-person narrative: *'I am looking at this plant and I am wondering how it grows all the time. Is it something in the air or should I investigate the soil? I know for a fact that the roots need water... ..'* Encourage your students to do the same in their groups
- **Model the use of enquiry language.** Use phrases like *'I wonder how'* and *'what I would like to know is'*. Encourage students to pose hypothetical questions which start with *'what if'*, for instance

Interpersonal skills



As a teacher, you know only too well how some children's poor communication skills affect their well-being at school. In a collaborative setting, a poor communicator can have a detrimental effect on the whole group and can end up with damaged self-esteem. Yet students can only learn effective communication within a social context.

Interpersonal skills, which refer to a person's ability to get along and interact successfully with others, underpin group work. Students with good interpersonal skills have a tendency to project a positive attitude and look for solutions to problems. They visibly thrive in a collaborative context. As a teacher-facilitator, it is crucial to help your students understand – and most importantly manage – their relationships with each other within the classroom environment.



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How to develop interpersonal skills



To encourage the development of interpersonal skills in your collaborative classroom:

- Use **'we'** and **'together'** instead of 'you' when explaining the task. This gives an all-inclusive dimension to your instructional language. *'Today we are going to mind-map our research from last week in order to define the notion of fair trade.'*
- Involve students in setting **social** as well as **academic targets** in group activities. *'First of all you should agree as a group on a time scale for this activity to be completed.'*
- Model **empathy** and **negotiating skills** whenever you can. *'Yes, you are right, we should colour-code the sentences that refer to the narrator's feelings in the text.'*
- Monitor pupils' behaviour towards others and their **positive contribution** to the group. You could, for example, hand out a quick self-evaluation form at the end of the lesson where students assess their role in the success of the group task. Praise and reward also provide an incentive to contribute in a positive way
- If necessary, make students **aware of their behaviour** and how it affects others. Needless to say, this has to be done with a degree of sensitivity

Active listening skills



When we ask children to **listen** or **watch** they tend to hear or see instead. They get the words, but do they get the message? Developing good **active listening skills**, or fully understanding the message, is essential for success when learning with others.

Teach your learners that listening is not a passive activity. It requires concentration and a degree of personal involvement. An active listener has to pay attention to what someone else is saying and show comprehension by using a range of verbal and non-verbal strategies, eg:

- Nodding
- Maintaining eye contact
- Showing empathy
- Shaking head in approval or disgust
- Not interrupting or filling silences
- Responding appropriately (*'That's right', 'I agree', 'No way!', 'Wow!', 'Really?', 'I like that', 'Are you serious?', etc*)
- Paraphrasing
- Seeking clarification and asking for examples (*'What do you mean?', 'What happened?', 'What did you say?', 'Can you show me how?', etc*)



About the author

Gael Luzet



Originally from France, Gael has been teaching in UK secondary schools since the late 1990's. He became an Advanced Skills Teacher in January 2006, is a mentor for newly qualified and trainee teachers and has worked as an external examiner for an ITT provider. He has led several professional networks on effective language teaching skills and Gifted & Talented education.

Since 2008 Gael has helped colleagues develop pupil participation and collaborative learning strategies in a wide range of primary and secondary schools. Now in charge of Teaching and Learning in a successful secondary school, he runs a CPD programme where he encourages teachers to implement practical and innovative ideas.

Recently, Gael was awarded Specialist Leader in Education status and now advises secondary school leaders on good practice in Teaching and Learning and MFL.

His own collaborative team includes his wife Cheryl, a great source of encouragement; his friend and ex-colleague Sarah, a trusted source of advice; and his two children Max and Mathilde who continue to be a fabulous source of distraction.