Why do we teach with group work?

- Helps develop an understanding of concepts and facts
- Increases skill development
- Promotes critical thinking
- Increases interest in content areas
- Changes attitudes/values
- Improves relationships between individuals from diverse backgrounds
- Prepares students for future professional work
What are the drawbacks of small group work?

- Students do not have the skills to work in groups
- Worried about covering content
- Not enough time
- Grade inflation
- Student resistance
  - Inability to resolve conflict with group members
  - Unfair grading
  - “Social loafing”
Effective in class group work

- Planning
- Designing the activities
- Providing direction
- Bringing the groups back together
Planning

- Let students know group work is part of the course
  - Explain what you see as valuable about participation
- Set ground rules for cooperative, “safe” environments
  - Explain mechanisms for dealing with disagreements or conflicts
- Organize appropriate seating arrangements (face-to-face)
- Provide necessary materials (e.g., poster paper to collect ideas)
Designing the Activity

Activities need to fit the students’ current level of skills and abilities

Activities should generate discussion among students
  - For example, students can work in groups to...
    - Synthesize ideas from readings, assignments, or lectures
    - Draw conclusions about tables, graphs, or data
    - Solve multi-step or complex problems
Providing direction

Before group work

- Form groups based on the activity and a purpose
  - Self-selected versus instructor formed
    - Self Selected
      - People tend to select “people like themselves”
    - Instructor Formed
      - Create groups that will “push and pull” each other
- Small Group Roles (see next slide)
## Small group roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Keeps the group focused on the activity and assures that all members participate and understand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recorder/Scribe (or Scribe)</td>
<td>Keeps notes of what the group has done in consultation with the others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spokesperson (or presenter)</td>
<td>Presents reports and discussion to the class.</td>
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Note. Small group roles should change
Providing direction

During group work

- Check Students
  - Ask students about what their “role” is in the group
- Be an “active listener”
  - Listen for “peaks” and “valleys” in the discussion
- Be a facilitator
  - Let students know how much time they have to work in small groups
  - Give a 1-minute warning
  - Provide additional activities for groups that finish early
- Constant monitoring without interfering
Bringing the groups back together

- Provide structure
  - e.g., 1 group provides 1 idea or piece of information
  - Possibly write ideas on board
- Ask the group to explain their reasoning
  - “Why does your group think that?”
- Promote participation and elaboration on ideas
  - “Would someone like to add on?”
- Use wait time
  - Let students have 3-5 seconds to think before they answer
How can we improve the discourse with students after small group work?

Peer-Led Team Learning

- Formalized study groups containing 6-8 students
- Meet for approximately 2 hours each weekend to solve problems
- Facilitated by a trained student (peer) leader who has previously taken the course

*Peer leaders play an important role in whole group discussions by promoting student-to-student conversations
Summary of Findings

- Peer leaders use a range of facilitative and instructional discourse practices
  - **Instructional**: Asking closed and open questions about the content, providing students with explanations
  - **Facilitative**: Providing managerial structure support, refocusing student comments to the whole group

- Use of a high percentage of facilitative discourse was related to increased chains of student-to-student interactions, higher student participation, and more equal student participation

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Tips for conducting in class group work

- Have a clear purpose
- Fit the activity to students’ current level of skills and abilities
- Create groups and establish roles
- Facilitate groups during activity
- Promote student-to-student interaction and participation when bringing the groups back together
Questions?
Resources