

# Collaborative Learning – Information Sheet

## Instructor Development Committee

Working definition

**Collaborative learning can be defined as learners working together to refine their collective understanding of a concept or skill.** (Page 7 – Using Data To Focus Instructional Improvement, 2013) Of course concepts and skills have been introduced to the learner through focused lessons, classroom or on-line, with demonstrations or modeling to reinforce learning.

### Reasons for using collaborative learning:

- Technology is creating a more interactive world where people expect to be an active part of the learning environment. For example, social media increases the expectation of involvement with people and information.
- USPS is partnering with Boat US to put all the courses on-line and students may need help with individual concepts instead of general content.
- Squadrons are being asked to move to more on-the-water training that will require knowing when people are ready to apply skills.
- Successful people are making decisions and taking action in a given situation and not sitting back and being told how to think about a problem. Computers and technology are a common part of the thinking and doing process in the work world. (GPS and Radar provide the location of the destination and the coordinates to guide the vessel to the destination.)
- Schools are teaching much differently than they have in the past by involving students in the learning process. Young people expect to participate in creating their own understanding of content.
- It can encourage independent thinking that could include cognitive processes like prediction, judgment, and causation.

### Why experts say collaborative learning works:

- The grouping students provides opportunities for students to interact in ways that enhance and deepen their learning. (Classroom Instruction that Works, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2012 P. 37) The analysis of 20 studies showed very strong effects on learning.
- Retention varies with teaching method. (How the Brain learns, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. 2006. Pages 94-95) The greater student involvement in the learning processes, the higher percentage of memory retention after 24 hours. “Whoever explains the information learns”
- Neuroimaging scans indicate, “When students build their working memories through a variety of activities, they are stimulating multiple sensory intake centers in their brains. “ (Research-Based Strategies To Ignite Student Learning, 2006 p. 10) The more paths for memory mean that they will have an easier time recalling or using the information. Dr. Willis also points out that strategies that allow students to personalize information to be learned will help form stronger memories. (p.20)

## **Organizational strategies you can use for collaborative learning.**

PLEASE NOTE: Collaborative learning is used to reinforce learning of key concepts, or procedures. It is also helpful to find out how well a person understands a concept or skill. (A teacher should use a variety of instructional strategies to support learning) The following are examples of strategies that will allow learners to collaborate with each other to reinforce understanding and memory retention of content, procedures or skills.

### **Think-Pair-Share**

Ask your students to think about a question, situation, or problem and give them a short time to decide on an answer. (30 seconds)

Have the student pair up with a partner or go to an assigned partner

Have each person take a turn discussing his or her responses.

Provide structure by using time so each person can share his or her thinking. Announce times before starting to ensure that everyone can explain his or her thinking. Listen for evidence of learning or misunderstandings. Use prompts or problems that have more than one solution or various points of view to stimulate thinking and the exchange of ideas.

You can also have each pair decide on an answer and share with another pair. (For example if students were practicing the rules of the road and deciding on the best answer to a given situation)

### **Teach a Partner**

Use an overhead transparency, projected image, or poster as a prompt for a quick lesson you deliver to the class, and then step aside so learners can put it into their own words. Have everyone stand and move around the room to find a partner. The pairs should remain standing. On cue, one partner will explain the concept you just taught, while using the displayed overhead transparency as a prompt. The partners then switch places so the other person gets a turn to teach. Listen to the pairs as they teach each other to ensure that everyone understands the material.

Options 1. Split the assignment so each partner teaches half of what is shown on the overhead projector. 2. Put participants in groups of three and assign each a different role. One will summarize the material, the second will link it to past learning and the third will write two questions about it to present to the entire class.

(Tools for Engagement. Jensen. 2003. Page 82)

DO NOT interrupt the process to correct misunderstandings. Use your observations to modify your teaching. If clarification is needed do so for the whole group in a way that does not single out individuals!