Exercise 2: Promoting Collaboration

Achieving Learning Goals

Efforts to achieve learning goals can be organized in three ways:

- **Competitively:** Students work against each other to see who is best or fastest at achieving a goal that only one or a few can attain.

- **Individualistically:** Students work alone to accomplish goals unrelated to others.

- **Cooperatively:** Students work together to achieve shared goals.

Competitive, individualistic, and cooperative efforts all have a role in achieving learning goals. Ideally, all students should learn how to compete, work alone, and work with others.

1. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of each way of achieving learning goals?

2. Do you think you might prefer one way to accomplish your learning goals? Why or why not?

The facilitator will call on participants to share ideas with the whole group.

Forming Collaborative Groups or Pairs

Students in 21st century classrooms are often encouraged to achieve learning goals by working cooperatively in a collaborative manner. Collaboration involves teamwork—working with one or more people to set goals and complete tasks. Research indicates that collaboration provides opportunities for students to improve academic success in that they must ask questions, discuss ideas, explore solutions, clarify their own thinking, and develop a deeper understanding of the content. Also, social skills such as taking turns, sharing, giving help to others, and accepting help from others can be acquired through collaboration.

Collaborative groups or pairs can be formed in many ways:

- By students themselves based on friendships or interests

- By random assignment

- By the teacher

1. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of each way?

2. Do you generally prefer one particular way to form groups or pairs? Why?

The facilitator will call on participants to share ideas with the whole group.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to assign pairs that stay together for the duration of all activities in a unit, with the goal of two students learning together. Efforts to break up pairs that are not getting along are often counterproductive. Breaking up pairs is discouraged because it denies students the opportunity to learn the skills needed to resolve problems in collaborating with one another.

Fostering Critical Thinking and Collaboration

Facilitating Collaboration

Collaboration may not come naturally to students and may require motivation, role modeling, direct instruction, and practice time. For example, ways to work together should be discussed, including taking turns, listening when others are speaking, and being responsible for one's own learning.

When students are collaborating and working together, teachers should ensure that all group members

- participate and feel included

- agree to their goals and their plans for making their product

- work on their assigned parts to complete their product

- review their work together to see how to make it better

- talk about their work and help each other as they go along

When students work with peers, conflicts may arise. Read the following list of conflicts and identify possible solutions as directed.

Conflict 1: A student refuses to work with a partner or in a group.

The facilitator will assign one group to each conflict. Then, as each group reports out, other participants may contribute new solutions as well. No one correct solution exists for each situation.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Conflict 2: No one wants to work with a specific student.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Conflict 3: One student is shy and does not want to speak.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Conflict 4: One student does not let a partner or other group members share the computer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Conflict 5: One student does not respect or listen to the ideas of a partner or other group members.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____