

Avoiding Group Work Divorces

Have you given up on group work because the strong students complain that the weak students are not contributing? Don't give up! It's worth making group work work! Students learn a great deal by observing the learning processes of others and need to learn how to work collaboratively for many workplace settings. Here are some tips:

- Help students understand that not everyone approaches work in the same way and help them to value multiple perspectives. (An abbreviated Myers-Briggs assessment can be a useful exercise to introduce these ideas.)
- Help students understand that if students are not contributing, it is most often that they don't understand how to move forward, not that they don't want to contribute.
- Give students a process. For example: require them to meet weekly, establish an agenda, rotate the chair's position, assign everyone a task, identify questions, and assign everyone a buddy who can assist if help is needed.
- Set the expectation that questions are expected and are an important part of the learning process.
- Help students understand that learning to work with different people in a team is an important life skill.

For more, see Linda Nilson, Teaching at its Best, Jossey-Bass, 2016: 179-189.

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