

Benefits of Collaborative Learning

(These items are from a listserv about teaching.)

Builds Self-Esteem in Students (Johnson & Johnson 1989)

Collaborative efforts among students result in a higher degree of accomplishment by all participants as opposed to individual, competitive systems in which many students are left behind (Slavin 1967). Competition fosters a win-lose situation where superior students reap all rewards and recognition and mediocre or low-achieving students reap none. In contrast everyone benefits from a CL environment. Students help each other and in doing so build a supportive community which raises the performance level of each member (Kagan 1986). This in turn leads to higher self esteem in all students (Webb 1982).

Enhances Student Satisfaction with the Learning Experience

By their very nature people find satisfaction with activities which value their abilities and include them in the process. Effective teams or groups assume ownership of a process and its results when individuals are encouraged to work together toward a common goal, often defined by the group. This aspect is especially helpful for individuals who have a history or failure (Turnure & Zeigler 1958) Passive educational experiences where the student is the receptacle for information presented by the expert teacher are inherently dissatisfying.

Promotes a Postive Attitude Toward the Subject Matter

Collaborative learning fosters a higher level of performance by students (Bligh 1972). Their critical thinking skills increase and their retention of information and interest in the subject matter improves (Kulick & Kulick 1979). When students are successful they view the subject matter with a very positive attitude because their self esteem is enhanced. This creates a positive cycle of good performance building higher self esteem which in turn leads to more interest in the subject and higher performance yet. Students share their success with their groups, thus enhancing both the individual's and the group's self esteem. Some cooperative learning structures formalize this effect by awarding certificates of achievement or improvement to students, or extra credit to groups for an individual's or group's improvement.

Additional benefits:

CL is especially useful in Foreign Language and ESL courses where interactions involving use of the language through speaking are important.

Allows assignment of more challenging tasks without making the workload unreasonable. (Felder 1997)

Provides weaker students with extensive one-on-one tutoring. (Felder 1997)

Provides stronger students with the deeper understanding that comes only from teaching

material (Cognitive Rehearsal). (Felder 1997)

Leads to the generation of more and better questions. (Felder 1997)

Jigsaw is an ideal structure for laboratory and design projects. (Felder 1997)

CL increases students' persistence in the completion of assignments and the likelihood of successful assignments. (Felder 1997)

Provides training in effective teaching strategies to the next generation of teachers. (Felder 1997)

Helps students wean themselves away from considering teachers the sole sources of knowledge and understanding. (Felder 1997)

CL fits in well with the TQM and CQI models of effective management. (Walker 1997)

Promotes learning goals rather than performance goals. (Gentile 1997)

Promotes a pattern of mastery attribution rather than a helpless attribution pattern. (Gentile 1997)

Allows students to exercise a sense of control on task. (Sharan and Sharan, Gentile 1997)

CL promotes positive societal responses to problems and fosters a supportive environment within which to manage conflict resolution. (Davis 1997)

CL is especially beneficial in mathematics courses. (Davidson 1990)

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