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ABSTRACT

The small size of college composition classes encourages exciting and meaningful interaction, especially when students are divided into smaller, autonomous groups for all or part of the hour. This booklet discusses the advantages of combining the inquiry method (sometimes called the discovery method) with a group approach and describes specific grouping techniques and their accompanying teaching strategies. Included is a sample form for student evaluation of group performance. (JM)

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Group Inquiry Techniques for Teaching Writing

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It's no accident that in recent years I've changed my style of teaching radically. I never lecture anymore, which I always thought was a lousy method for me, but which large classes demanded. Now I have small groups and can concentrate on asking questions, probing for answers and evidence. Not quite the Socratic approach, which means you knew the right answers but you wait for the other guy to stumble on them. Instead you stimulate more questions, always referring back to the evidence or asking how you would get the evidence. All I need now is another 20 years and I will be a good teacher.

Theodore Newcomb
Psychologist & Educator

A teacher who endeavors to change his methods of teaching encounters emotional as well as intellectual problems. Readiness for change is every bit as important as awareness of new materials, new instructions, resources and the development of a new idea.

Sondra Napell
"Techniques of Teaching"

Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system developed by the U.S. Office of Education and now sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE). It provides ready access to descriptions of exemplary programs, research and development efforts, and related information useful in developing more effective educational programs.

Through its network of specialized centers or clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for a particular educational area, ERIC acquires, evaluates, abstracts, and indexes current significant information and lists that information in its reference publications.

The ERIC system has already made available—through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service—much informative data, including all federally funded research reports since 1956. However, if the findings of specific educational research are to be intelligible to teachers and applicable to teaching, considerable bodies of data must be reevaluated, focused, translated, and molded into an essentially different context. Rather than resting at the point of making research reports readily accessible, NIE has directed the separate ERIC Clearinghouses to commission from recognized authorities information analysis papers in specific areas.

In addition, as with all federal educational information efforts, ERIC has as one of its primary goals bridging the gap between educational theory and actual classroom practices. One method of achieving that goal is the development by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) of a series of sharply focused booklets based on concrete educational needs. Each booklet provides teachers with the best educational theory and/or research on a limited topic. It also presents descriptions of classroom activities which are related to the described theory and assists the teacher in putting this theory into practice.

This idea is not unique. Several educational journals and many commercial textbooks provide teachers with similar aids. The ERIC/RCS booklets are unusual in their sharp focus on an educational need and their blend of sound academic theory with

tested classroom practices. And they have been developed because of the increasing requests from teachers to provide this kind of service.

Topics for these booklets are recommended by the ERIC/RCS National Advisory Committee. Suggestions for topics to be considered by the Committee should be directed to the Clearinghouse.

Bernard O'Donnell
Director, ERIC/RCS

Theory

The college composition class represents one of those few instances in undergraduate education when students have the opportunity to participate in a class of less than thirty. The commonly accepted rationale for small writing classes is that instructors must be allowed time to carefully read and conscientiously mark student papers. However, many teachers of composition are also aware that small class size can encourage exciting and meaningful interaction among learners during class time. Students can be split into smaller, autonomous groups for all or part of the hour, an approach which in this booklet I have called the "parceled classroom." Even though this is not a new idea, the available literature is often vague about exactly how college writing teachers can function successfully in a role so substantially different from that of the lecturer or discussion leader. In the practice section of this handbook I describe those specific grouping techniques and their accompanying teaching strategies which have worked well in my college composition classes. This first chapter will introduce the discussion with an explanation of some of my reasons for combining the inquiry method (sometimes called the "discovery method") with a group approach.

The group-inquiry method is based on three premises about the personal process of learning, the social nature of education, and the role of the teacher. They are as follows:

1. Students can take responsibility for their own learning in the classroom, just as they often do outside the classroom.
2. Working in small groups of four to six people encourages active participation in the learning process by all students.
3. During small-group work in the classroom, the most effective role for the teacher is to facilitate learning by questioning, listening, and observing.

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of David Ward in preparing this section.

The Personal Dimension

Let me give you a personal example of learning without a teacher. I have always been an on-again off-again gardener, the kind who calls plants by their common names rather than the Latin and whose efforts at propagation result in as many failures as successes. Yet it became apparent to me this past winter that if I didn't prune the many trees and shrubs around our house, and prune them correctly, I would lose several of them to frost and crowding through my benign neglect. As the first step in my self-initiated course on pruning, I spent an hour in the library, coming away disappointed that everything I found on the subject sounded so complicated. Not completely discouraged, I took a more practical turn in my research and, over a period of several weeks, watched professional nurserymen and gardeners, including the city's tree-trimmers and the university's expert horticulturalists, practicing their trade along the streets and pathways I walked daily to and from campus. This observation of "pruning in action" was reinforced when I finally purchased a reference work which not only gave clear and simple instructions, but which described the very same operations I had been observing. I was ready to prune.

Even now, as I look back at the way I attacked our greenery, I am amazed at the confidence and sureness with which such a rank amateur lopped limbs and sawed branches. No one had *told* (read: taught) me what to do; I had talked to no one about how to prune, taken no courses on the subject. Yet I had learned what to do, and with each clip of the shears I was learning more. Our fruit trees survived the frost and are now bearing a bountiful crop; the camellias, roses, fuchsias, heather, and juniper have grown back in exactly the shape I had intended. Could I have learned so well what to do by taking someone's course? Maybe, but I seriously doubt it. The spontaneity and the timeliness would not be there; neither would the chance for extensive first-hand observation of such a variety of capable practitioners; nor would the reading be as extensive or as appropriate as that provided by one neighborhood library and six local bookstores; and, worst of all, I wouldn't have been allowed to complete the course in three weeks and then be so rash as to presume that I could go out into the real world and actually apply what I had learned.

My experiences contained what Carl Rogers defines as the five elements of "significant or experiential learning."[1]

1. There was a "*quality of personal involvement*" in my learning which engaged both my rational and emotional responses; I

[1]Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1969), p. 5.

really cared what happened to those trees and shrubs. I was deeply attached to living, growing organisms, and I felt that I was sharing the concerns of all those gardeners I had observed. Piaget would note that I was learning through *interaction* with my physical and social environment.

2. The learning was "*self-initiated*" simply because I needed to know something; specific information was necessary to solve a specific problem which I had determined was significantly important for me to solve. This is the realm of motivation.
3. There was a "pervasive" dimension which made "*a difference in the behavior, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner.*" As the result of my successful pruning I saw myself as a gardener whose instincts and abilities could be trusted to produce the desired results.
4. My experience was "*evaluated by the learner.*" I learned what I wanted to learn about pruning, no more and no less, and certainly not what someone told me I should learn. I was free to benefit from my mistakes, and I was solely responsible for judging the results in terms of my needs and objectives. There can be no greater "efficiency."
5. Finally, there was a *creative organic flow* to the experience which took it beyond the realm of merely accumulating facts or producing a product; the whole business of being immersed in learning something had a meaning for me which went beyond the individual elements. Rogers says of such learning that "Its essence is meaning . . . the element of meaning to the learner is built into the whole experience." I was certainly getting work done when I pruned the trees, but the learning process I was involved in was so fulfilling that it transcended any sense of physical exertion.

The question would seem to be not *should* these elements be present in the classroom experience—for obviously they *must* be if we are to claim that people are learning—but *can* they be? For me this challenge suggested subdividing the classroom into manageable small groups (five is ideal, though not always feasible) where there is ample time for everyone to speak. For other teachers the answer is to "individualize," or, in the case of large lecture classes with hundreds of students, to turn at least half of the hour over to open but orderly response from the floor with only nondirective, supportive comments from the instructor. Subject matter, circumstance, and opportunity will have much to do with how each of us responds to the challenge, but I think group instruction is especially appropriate for the job of teaching the average size composition class (from 15 to 25 or 30 students).

The subjective nature of knowledge makes social interaction imperative. The implications of this dialectical statement for a composition class or any curriculum which claims to teach a communication skill are profound. Although we are very much alone in our thoughts, those thoughts tend to be as related to other people as they are to our own perceptions. As Piaget has explained,

> The adult, even in his most personal and private occupations, even when he is engaged on an inquiry which is incomprehensible to his fellow-beings, thinks socially, has continually in his mind's eye his collaborators or opponents, actual or eventual. . . . This mental picture pursues him throughout his tasks. The task itself is henceforth socialized at almost every stage of its development.[2]

While we may be self-centered in our quest for knowledge, we also must rely on the direction and feedback we can elicit from our fellows, real or imagined. I never spoke to the gardeners I was observing during my investigation of pruning, but I was interacting with them in a very intense way, both as I observed them and later as I applied what I had seen.

In our rapidly changing environment, *how* we learn takes on more significance than *what* we learn. The historically unprecedented expansion of technology and media in this century has sent our intellectuals and educators on a time-warp back into history to renew their awareness of learning as doing, a stage many so-called underdeveloped cultures have never left. As the body of knowledge about our physical environment expands and makes facts more mercurial and less quantifiable, we must, like Carl Rogers, look to the *qualities* which characterize our learning experiences for the meaning and significance which we once so naively attributed to objects. I will not be pruning those plants again until next winter, but if I wait until then before I treat myself to the processes Rogers defined I will surely be dead.

These two notions, which I have so briefly summarized here, about the impact of social interaction and process on knowledge, must inevitably influence what teachers have students spend their time doing. We are what we do, and what we do is the result of a synthesis between the personal and social dimensions.

The Social Dimension

It is not unusual to see elementary grade classes divided into small groups, with the teacher circulating about the room, touching base at each "interest center." In our secondary schools there are many

[2] Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 39. This particular passage was brought to my attention by Ken Bruffee, who also led me to the work of Abercrombie which I cite below.

teachers who break their classes into smaller work groups, although class size and classroom design make small group instruction less common than in lower grades. By the time students reach the university, it is even less likely that they will meet in a class where they can actively engage in small group learning. As their education progresses, students grow increasingly more passive and become mute consumers of facts rather than active participants in a community of learners. Their passivity is rewarded and reinforced by the traditional lecture system. The more competitive students who are motivated to struggle on to graduate school may possibly find a seminar or two where classmates can talk and learn together with the encouragement of an instructor who is able to inspire more than rote learning. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a large majority of students find the bulk of their university education an exercise in uninvolvement. As one student put it, college was "not so much a preparation as an interruption" in the business of living and learning.

Thus we are faced in a college course with helping our students to unlearn how *not* to learn while they are in school, rather than with teaching them how to learn (something most have already experienced on their own at some time in their lives outside). How can we untangle the net of constricting classroom attitudes handed down by our predecessors and try on new roles that resemble more the parts all of us, teachers and students alike, play when we leave the classroom and participate in the world's community of learners?

I want my students to learn how to write to each other, among a few close associates who are sharing similar processes. The small peer group provides a close approximation to the way communication takes place out in the real world, but it is important that the classroom teacher know how to encourage helpful relationships among students. Although in many social situations peers can be cruel taskmasters and rigid conformists, when they work together within a *structured* situation on a *specific* task they can be supportive of each other as well as critical; in other words, they can be their best selves. When peers relate to each other in the parceled writing class, I have observed them engage in the very same processes of significant learning which Rogers has described.

1. *Personal Involvement.* Students care what happens to the group they identify with. It is a living organism which engages both the cognitive and affective domains of those involved with it.
2. *Self-Initiated Learning.* Rather than being told by the teacher what they must know, students in a group-inquiry class build on what they already know. Every individual taking a college

level writing course, even the student with very poor command of spoken standard English, possesses some language skills. Active verbal participation in the group situation demands that all members make the most of what skills they have, and with this new awareness of present abilities comes an informed self-assessment of individual need. Through interaction with their peers students make their own discoveries of what is important to know for the writing task. If they really need to find a piece of information or develop a skill, they will become motivated with very little external pressure from the teacher.

3. *Changes in Behavior and Attitude*. During workshop periods students become teachers and learn how to give supportive and constructive criticism. Even more important, individuals are free to accept or reject criticism. They are making observable changes in the way they attack problems. They are becoming more flexible learners, better able to adopt or discard a variety of roles and to utilize all available resources.
4. *Self-Evaluation*. Being critical of other students' writing makes students better judges of their own writing. Reading and listening to a variety of their peers' essays, some not as good as others, informs students of the range of possibilities between writing that works and writing that doesn't. Working in groups on writing-related tasks frees individuals to risk making mistakes, allowing everyone to benefit from the experience. With these mirrors for a guide, students can better gauge for themselves if their writing satisfies their own expectations of good communication. They learn how to set priorities, to separate the essential from the nonessential.
5. *The Creative Element*. There is ample research that shows that human beings at play are engaged in the pretty hard work of learning. But how to make play work? Students in groups have so much fun working together they are typically surprised that the hour was so short and they have learned so much. The mental exertion goes unnoticed by students who are intent on their work/play together. It can be very interesting and satisfying to learn alongside others.

It is absurd and incongruous to offer a college class in a communication skill (writing) and then to teach it in such a way that the students in the class seldom communicate with each other. David Bleich shares my feeling about much of what goes on in the university under the guise of teaching "expository prose."

> The discussion of communication skills thus grinds on while the most important motive for writing—having something to say to someone else—is considered either too deep or too obvious for serious attention. If we remember that a child first uses language because she has

> something of the greatest importance to say to someone of the greatest importance to her, the first consideration in writing is deciding if one has something to say, and then to whom it is to be said. Writing is only a subcategory of talking, and everyone knows that when we talk we think we have something to say to someone else.[3]

Linguists have yet to reach a consensus on the precise nature of the speech act (Is language thought? Is it possible to think without language?), but I believe practitioners can all agree that when we are speaking we are thinking, and that in turn our thoughts are influenced by our language. And since writing is talk recorded, manipulated, and stylized, it is conceivable that in learning to write we are also learning to be better thinkers. The speech act precedes and is vital to written language, and in our attempt to emphasize the valid and crucial differences between the two we have risked breaking the close bond writing has to the way we think. Daily we ask for and are handed essays that are exercises in saying nothing to nobody.

Betty Rizzo's success with peer teaching at the City College of New York demonstrates what can happen when teachers relinquish their traditional roles and students do the "teaching." Her "disadvantaged students from the New York city ghetto" teach each other remedial composition and with her supervision criticize each other's papers. "The only freedom I have offered these students is significant to them—the chance to be top-dog instead of underdog. . . . " And, I would add, the chance to exercise their judgment. As one of Rizzo's students put it, "'Some professors have trouble explaining ideas in the simple language that a student can understand; students can usually explain things in simpler terms.'" Although this teacher does not rely solely on group work or collaborative learning to achieve this reversal of roles, she is, I think, striving for similar goals of peer interaction: "After [a student] has actually taught others, he can face the astonishing possibility of teaching himself."[4] And when you have learned something from listening to your peers you have learned something about learning.

Structured peer group interaction has important implications for the teaching of standard English composition to speakers of nonstandard English. Groups in a parceled college classroom are heterogeneous by design if not by accident, and out of five or six individuals in a group there will ordinarily be a congenial mix of standard and nonstandard speakers. My experience has been that peers are very accepting toward and appreciative of the rich variety of

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[3]David Bleich, "Pedagogical Directions in Subjective Criticism," *College English* (January 1976), p. 460. Bleich's article is a survey of the present state of epistemology as it applies to the teaching of English.

[4]Betty Rizzo, "Peer Teaching in English I," *College Composition and Communication* (December 1975), pp. 395, 396.

dialects and accents; however, as a group they are all very concerned with how to write prose which will make sense to the majority of readers. They all know that standard English—the language of newspapers, magazines, radio and TV newscasters, lawyers and businessmen—is the best vehicle for reaching a large audience and just generally taking care of business; what their experience in the group teaches them is the revealing fact that people don't write the way they speak—even speakers of standard English do not talk like they write. Everybody in the group-inquiry classroom is engaged in the business of learning that book language has different conventions than spoken language, and no one is ever forced to go through the painful and identity-shaking job of "erasing" their spoken dialect or becoming "bidialectal." The intense verbal interaction in these pluralistic groups is significant not because a leveling out occurs but because speech and cultural differences become identified, understood, and valued by all. Students are accustomed to having their speech debilitated and their ideas deflected; for many of them, small-group work is the first time in their educational careers that anyone in a classroom has listened to them with respect.

In the parceled classroom oral language is freed to serve its prime function as a shaper of ideas and attitudes. When all students actively participate in the intellectual dialogue at hand, then the social pressure for sameness of speech is temporarily eased, maybe even eliminated within the group, in favor of making a mutual effort toward solving the shared problem: how to write. Unless students can talk to each other and discover what it is they have to say and to whom they have to say it, the task of learning to write will be greatly impeded.

The Pedagogical Dimension

It is true that we can learn many things without teachers, including how to write. What then are teachers for? Let me characterize the teacher as a special kind of learning companion, someone who is probably more knowledgeable than the student but who doesn't find that to be the distinguishing feature of the role. Rather, a teacher is one who creates a certain environment or condition which gives students the opportunity to make discoveries which are significant to them. Carl Rogers calls such persons "facilitators" rather than teachers because they do not tell students what they think they should know, but keep them company while they find out for themselves. For this to happen, teachers must view the authority they carry as that of referees rather than judges.

Understandably, many teachers fear chaos if they should "give up authority." But in truth no teacher ever willingly "gives up authority," or, in other words, relinquishes *control* over the learning

environment. Classroom climate almost always reflects the teacher's influence because, to one degree or another, the power is in the hands of the instructor—the rest is politics in the best sense of the word. Innovators will find it far more productive to discuss *what kinds* of control the teacher uses rather than to argue whether or not control exists. I am advocating that sort of classroom control which *includes* the learner in the controlling process, so that the self-control of the student is complemented and encouraged by the external, more manipulative control of the teacher. When I teach in the parceled classroom, my control is modified so that it is not nearly as absolute as the kind my teachers held over me. Essentially, I am willing to *share* control with the students. One very functional form of sharing control in a writing class is to let small groups of students talk among themselves on specified topics with only minimal intervention and participation-as-an-equal from the teacher.

But how does one stimulate students to make their own discoveries? Once students are in their groups, how does the teacher move among them without creating the usual "top-dog/under-dog" situation? Organizing small groups and handing them suitable, tailor-made tasks doesn't do the whole trick. For instance, one of the hardest things for most of us to do is to stop talking all the time and to learn to ask the right questions. As noted in the graduate assistants' course syllabus at this university, "Learning is a reciprocal process. As the teacher learns from the learner so the learner learns from the teacher. . . . As the quality of the teacher's questions improves, so too does the quality of students' questions; as the teacher demonstrates that he is listening and interested when others are speaking, so do students increase their attentiveness to each other; as teachers accede to, refer to, validate students' ideas—so then does student behavior begin to change."[5]

The impact of questioning strategies has been widely acknowledged. Yet, "research studies on questioning as a means of teaching, both in instructional settings and in empirical investigations, are rare."[6] Most of what has been written centers on the effect of questions on students in preschool, elementary, and secondary grades. Nevertheless, what is important for college instructors to keep in mind is that the form of the question will have a great

[5]Sondra M. Napell, "Techniques of Teaching," *Course Syllabus* (Graduate Assistants Teaching Programs, 258 Le Conte Hall, University of California, Berkeley, 1974), p. 12. For a brief overview of some of Napell's ideas see her article "Six Common Non-Facilitating Teaching Behaviors" in *Contemporary Education* (Indiana State University, Winter 1976), pp. 79-83.

[6]Lawrence F. Lowery, "Learning about Instruction: Questioning Strategies," *A Handbook to Accompany A Personal Workshop* (Berkeley: University of California, School of Education, 1974), p. 39.

influence on the response. There are at least three general categories of questions. Two of the most common types are of the closed-ended variety and often intimidate students who fear "giving the wrong answer." They include fact producing or focusing questions—such as "Why does an expository essay need an introduction?" or "What does an introduction consist of?"—and the Socratic series of questions, which are designed and carefully sequenced to lead a student to a predetermined response known only to the teacher. The trouble with the Socratic method, aside from its obvious lack of flexibility, is that students know the teacher knows the answer and they put more effort into trying to guess at the correct response than into experiencing the thinking process which the conscientious teacher is trying to demonstrate with the Socratic method. The third type, the open-ended question, is posed in such a way that students have to make their own discoveries, and it is the core of the inquiry method. "Could you tell us what you look for when you read an author's introduction?" "How would you break down the elements of an introductory paragraph?" Sound Socratic? It isn't if the teacher is willing to accept a broad spectrum of answers, including "wrong" answers, and to allow students to pool their information and inductively come to their own generalizations.

As you can see, it is not a simple matter to classify questions in this way, and perhaps that would explain in part why there has been so little research on the subject. For instance, a "why" question could be either open-ended—"Why do you feel that is a bad poem?"—or closed-ended—"Why is it wrong to put a comma there?" The literature indicates that it is extremely important how you phrase, sequence, and pace your questions, but I would add that the unstated, underlying expectations of the teacher are probably almost as important.

In effect, the problem is: How do you see your job? Kenneth Bruffee, an experienced group instructor, defines his role this way:

> A teacher is properly [one] whose responsibility and privilege is to arrange optimum conditions for other people to learn. He creates relationships between himself and students, and above all among students themselves, in which students share power and responsibility as well as information not peripherally but in the very processes of learning.[7]

Teacher attitudes are based on what teachers think their pupils should learn. The institution wants a product—a certain number of essays, a certain standard of correctness, etc.—but the inquiry teacher is just as interested in seeing students become adept at the processes of mind which will serve them in any learning task. As Postman and

[7] Kenneth A. Bruffee, "The Way Out," *College English* (January 1972), p. 470.

Weingartner have stated, the goal of the inquiry teacher is "to engage students in those activities which produce knowledge: defining, questioning, observing, classifying, generalizing, verifying, applying. . . . All knowledge is the result of these activities."[8]

Group teaching requires teachers to reorder their instructional priorities so that they can approach group situations with an attitude that will allow them to function in ways which will incubate and sustain student discovery. Groups will wither and die under didactic, teacher-centered methods. You must use a facilitating inquiry approach while the groups are in session because your job during that period of time is to listen and understand, not to talk and explain. The inquiry method informs students that you care about what they are doing, that their work is important, meaningful because it is the work of learning. Without that kind of assurance and support from you, your groups will greet you with either tidal waves of silence or avalanches of questions designed to get you to do their thinking for them.

Conclusion

I am not proposing that the group-inquiry method is a panacea for all the ills currently plaguing the teaching of composition. With some students and under certain conditions it will not work (see p. 21 below). I simply wish to describe these techniques and their limitations as fully as possible so that instructors will know when and how to use them. It is easy to tell teachers that they should circulate freely from group to group. Seldom are the specific methods which create such freedom delineated, and equally rare is the acknowledgement that *the teacher is not solely responsible* for what goes on in the classroom. The physical parameters and students' expectations are as much a part of the total environment as the instructional role. I make suggestions for dealing with these two realities in the practice section of this handbook.

There is not space enough here to adequately explain the many complex ways in which the group instructor can facilitate the processes which represent significant learning. I would recommend a lively regimen of reading and investigation for those who are interested. For the broad view, see the chapter on "The Inquiry Method" in *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. Postman and Weingartner list eight specific things that inquiry teachers do; however, I do not think it necessary to master all eight before you will be able to use the method or even before you can begin being effective with groups. Carl Rogers gives ten brief guidelines for effective

[8] Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (New York: Delta Books, 1969), p. 36.

facilitating in chapter seven, "Regarding Learning and Its Facilitation," of *Freedom to Learn*. Much of what I have said up to this point about peer interaction I now find has been said before and extremely well by Kenneth A. Bruffee within the framework of "Collaborative Learning."[9] And of course Peter Elbow's *Writing without Teachers*[10] is a seminal influence.

On a more applied level, Ivey and Gluckstern[11] are very specific about what it takes to be a good listener. Both Napell and Lowery identify and classify numerous questioning strategies in terms of their effect on specific learning processes. To keep everything in perspective, study Napell's smorgasbord of teaching methods in Unit Six. There she spells out in detail six possible formats progressing from teacher-dominated learning to student self-direction: the lecture, the inquiry method, the large-group discussion (in some cases this would be called a seminar), the small-group problem-solving method, one-to-one tutoring, and independent study. I am arguing here for the necessity of combining the inquiry method with small-group problem solving. The inquiry approach can be used in nearly any educational environment, but successful small-group instruction is impossible without the inquiry method.

The three very helpful and practical handbooks referred to in the paragraph above were all prepared to accompany courses or workshops in teacher training. They also have in common the use of videotape for analyzing teaching styles. I think the message from the practitioners involved in faculty development and training is that teachers who want to grow need help on the job, and that this help should utilize the most advanced methods and equipment and whatever kind of support our institutions can supply. Thus, my final recommendation is that, even while you're in the midst of reading and pondering, you try as soon as possible *doing* some of the things I describe in the following chapters. You will find the actual experience far more revealing than anything you might read. As you attempt to adapt what you do to what you believe, you will gradually find your own style as a facilitator of learning to write in small groups.

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[9]See Kenneth A. Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models," *College English* (February 1973).

[10]Peter Elbow, *Writing without Teachers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[11]Allen E. Ivey and Norma B. Gluckstern, "Participant Manual," from the video-based program *Basic Attending Skills: An Introduction to Microcounseling and Helping* (Microtraining Associates, Inc., Box 641, North Amherst, Mass. 01059, 1974), p. 2.

Practice

The Parceled Classroom

The purpose of the parceled classroom is to give students a total group experience in each class meeting throughout the course. They will have time to see their identity as a group develop and to fully explore relationships within the group. If you prefer to break your class into groups only occasionally, you will find that many of the guidelines in this practice section can also be used for more casual formations.

Setting It Up

On the first day, present the following material by first distributing a dittoed list of points for discussion, such as weekly essays, choosing topics, group tasks on grammar, writers' workshop, etc. Rather than lecture, invite questions on whatever students would like clarified about the list (it is purposely incomplete). In this way a dialogue begins at the very start.

Briefly describe the philosophy behind the class. (1) Real learning is self-initiated. Each student must take his or her share of responsibility for the direction of the course. (2) Writing is communication; if we don't talk to each other we will be writing in a vacuum. Therefore, the class will work in small groups which will allow maximum participation by everyone. Each group will choose its own readings and establish its own essay topics. Other work such as grammar exercises, study of expository structure, and paraphrasing[12] will be assigned according to each group's interests.

A shorter version of this section first appeared, with the help of funds from the University of California Regents' Undergraduate Instruction Improvement Grant, in June 1975 and was distributed to the teaching associates in Subject A (remedial composition) at Berkeley. An excerpt from the original pamphlet was published in *College English* in its March 1976 issue.

[12] For an analysis of the effect paraphrasing can have on student writing, see Phyllis Brooks, "Mimesis: Grammar and the Echoing Voice," *College English* (November 1973), pp. 161-69.

Be honest. Tell these new faces that had it been possible you would have consulted them on the choice of texts, but orders must be placed far in advance of registration. However, you have tried to fully consider the wishes and needs of former students in making your selections so that your arbitrary decisions could be somewhat less imperfect. From this point on, though, they do have a choice. As soon as possible students should survey the reader and become familiar with the contents in order to make reasoned selections of weekly readings. Introduce the skills necessary for previewing and skimming.

Find a way to have students write a paragraph or two. My favorite tactic is to ask them to write on how they feel about being in a required remedial composition course. If you don't need to clear the air of repressed hostility, you can ask them to describe their previous English courses or to write a short autobiography of their history as readers.

On the second day, establish groups which will stay together for the rest of the quarter. Groups of five are ideal, but since one instructor would find it difficult to follow the progress of more than three such groups during a fifty-minute period, the groups may have to be extended to seven or eight. I find that a group any larger than that is not much better than having no groups at all—there are really too many people for all to be active participants. Sometimes I have formed groups of ten, and the anticipated absenteeism and drop-out rate have kept them down to a more manageable size.

The groups should be heterogeneous (break up lovers and friends). The first day's writing sample will help you judge skills levels, but a longer specimen is desirable. You want a balance of ethnic backgrounds, ages, sexes, and writing ability. Call out names and group people in circles which will allow you not only to move freely from group to group, but also to have full access to each member of each group.

Room arrangement is crucial if you are to avoid the typical hierarchical positions which both instructors and students find it so easy to assume. Sadly, few institutions have flexible seating in the classrooms, and you will have to improvise toward separate tables for each group. If you're so unlucky as to be in a room with bolted down desks, try placing students in a geometric shape such as a square or a triangle with a couple of empty seats in the middle of the shape. They can then either twist around in their seats or, if the desks are strong enough, sit on top of the desks and face each other.

Although the groups are being organized for the first time, the steps you are taking them through are the same for the days to follow. Students form their groups as soon as they get in the room. Early

arrivals, including the instructor, can be the furniture movers if it is necessary to rearrange seating.

1. General announcements and passing out paper; group tasks are assigned and explained. (10 minutes)
2. Groups work on assigned tasks. (20-30 minutes)
3. Report period. (10-20 minutes)

When you first introduce students to this routine, put an outline of daily activities, such as the one above, on the board so that they will know what to expect, both now and in the future. The second day's group task is to set up an operational framework which will support and facilitate the daily routine. Specifically, their assignment is to:

1. Select a chair. This should be done democratically. No drawing of straws. This is a leadership position. The chair will keep discussions on track and report to the class.
2. Select a secretary. The one qualification is legible handwriting. The chair will depend on the secretary's notes for help in making reports. The instructor will use the notes to follow each group's progress. When the chair is absent, the secretary will appoint an acting chair.
3. Name the group. It is easier and pleasanter to call a group by name rather than number. The name should come from the world of literature or from some part of the writing process. Some possibilities: The Twains, The Persuaders, The Gerunds, The Infinitives, The Poets, The Dangling Modifiers, The Rewrites, etc.
4. Compile a list of group members and phone numbers. The instructor will give each group a notebook in which the secretary will maintain a daily log of group activity, and the group list will be the first entry. Now is a good time to stress that the notebook must be returned to the instructor at the end of each class. It will be one of the teacher's resources for determining daily assignments. The list of names and phone numbers will be duplicated and distributed, and students are encouraged to call members of their group for missed assignments or other general information.

Ask them to have this work completed within fifteen minutes.

The unstated aim of these exercises is beyond setting up a superficial structure for expediting chores. Students will be getting acquainted, beginning a dialogue which will last for many weeks, and discovering their audience of peers. Although these first two days of class may have an air of "fun and games" about them, it is hardly wasted time when you consider the benefits that will accrue from what the students have already learned about working with one

another. For the report period on the second day the chairs should announce what each group has decided to call itself and why they have chosen the name. Then the others in the group can be introduced to the whole class, either by themselves or by the chair, and each student can briefly describe his/her background. Before dismissing the class the instructor can reiterate that it is the responsibility of the students to form these groups everyday, and that the secretary should turn in the notebook.

The Instructional Role: Three Aspects

During the first ten minutes of class you will find yourself being directive, maybe even delivering a mini-lecture to prime the class for the task you are going to assign. Once groups get underway you will switch to inquiry techniques to facilitate discussion. Finally, you will be called upon to facilitate the report period by using a creative mix of nondirective and directive teaching strategies. Most of what is described in the following sections under body movement, listening, and questioning will serve you well when you are encouraging the exchange of information in the report period. However, there will be one extra dimension to your role: some of the facts voiced may be irretrievably wrong and you will have to explain a point or two, unless you can get someone else to do it. When a group has found a correct solution make it clear to everyone in the room that you feel it is an excellent response. Ask the chair to repeat it. Your support of the best work of the day should be apparent to all, whether they agree with you or not. Without your firm direction of the discussion during this important time, many students might be left swimming in a sea of contradictory data.

Don't allow any one group to dominate. If the exercise was one of several parts, rotate from chair to chair for the answers. Encourage groups to question each other's responses. Before they leave, ask them what they thought of the day's task and where they think they should go from here.

Making It Work

At its best the second day of class is when pertinent questions about *why* students are working in groups are raised and answered, though probably answered tentatively. In order to select a chair, students will want to know what the responsibilities of the position are, which will lead to a discussion of what the chair reports on and hence to what the groups will be doing. Naming the group elicits discussion about what the members see as their major concerns in the class, and such issues as grammar versus content are raised. A good reinforcer of this introduction to working together is to give students a handout they can take home which distills in a few paragraphs the philosophy

behind group work. Students have a right to know what you are expecting of them, and it helps to have it in writing.

At its worst the second day may find a group avoiding the issues which are implicit in the tasks. There are two extremes here. The first sees someone precipitously volunteer for the chair with no concern about the duties. Similar strategies of "let's get it over with" are adopted for choosing a name and secretary, and students get a list of names and phone numbers which are unattached to any real beings. Under the guise of total agreement, the whole process is finished in under five minutes, and students read their newspapers or listen to the other groups at work. The second extreme sees a group unable to agree on anything—nobody wants to chair, everybody wants to be secretary (if you're taking notes maybe you won't have to talk), and nobody likes anybody else's suggestion for a name. When the fifteen minutes are up students may barely manage to complete the list of members.

The instructor can intervene to deflect these or similar impasses. In the first instance there is very likely an underlying hostility toward group involvement of any kind. "We did this in high school." "I just want my C in this course, nothing else." "The instructor's trying to get us to do his job for him." You can't really deal with such all-inclusive biases, and any debate of them would be counter-productive and ultimately unfruitful. Instead, ask questions which focus students' attention away from gripes and anxieties and onto the work at hand. Ask the volunteer chair if she knows what she has let herself in for. What are her qualifications? How can she best represent her group? Do they really want to live for the next ten weeks with the name that they choose? (They'll see and hear it everyday.) Be careful, though, that students don't con you into doing their work for them. Ask your questions and move on to another group.

With the second type of extreme evasive maneuvering there may also be some underlying hostility, but from my experience it is more often likely that students are trying to be too democratic. They want to excise the executive and judiciary branches of government in favor of a congress of knaves where no one makes the final decision. Some ways of solving this dilemma include instituting a co-chair with two people sharing the responsibility, or suggesting a chair-a-week plan with everyone having a go at it at least once, or, after observing who may be an emerging natural leader, making the appointment yourself. In any case, the group must be made aware that even in the most liberal democracy there has to be an individual who is ready and willing to make an arbitrary decision whenever it is necessary. With the instructor's encouragement a leader will emerge in the group and members will learn to settle their differences. When they cannot, their chair will make his or her own decision for the group.

In the second instance I think it is possible to evolve a healthy group organism which learns to work together and produce tangible results. With the first type—"let's get it over with"—I have occasionally had to concede defeat and disperse the members among the other two groups in such a way that they will do the least harm. Their apathy is seldom infectious, for they are also those students who are most likely to miss class often and to be passive while in class. They fade into the background, a singular disappointment to the instructor who is trying to involve everyone. However, I remember some instances when a rebel has been unable after several weeks to continue resisting the pull of the group and has voluntarily joined in. I have taught enough parceled classes to have experienced repeatedly the rewards of full participation and to continue believing that group teaching is a fine method; yet, there have been times when I've felt the need for the wisdom of Solomon.

How to Cope

There is nothing static about group interaction; therefore, the unexpected is to be expected. Unlike students in a more traditional classroom, participants in a parceled class feel less inhibited and are generally quick to speak up. For instance, Sarah W. saw that there would be added responsibility and work for the chairs and secretaries. She asked, "What incentive is there for anyone to take one of these positions?" I was caught off guard and had no ready answer, so I asked her to qualify her question: "Sarah, are you talking about extrinsic or intrinsic rewards?" Her answer was, "Intrinsic." I had offered no payoff either in money or grades. My next facilitating move was to ask her what she thought the inherent benefits of being a leader were. "I guess we'll learn something about how we can handle that kind of situation, whether or not we can relate to people through those kinds of roles. It'll be an experience." The group agreed that the extra work was worth the effort if one were a person who wanted the leadership or record-keeping experience. Sarah had brought forth information that was vital if the group was to make a reasoned decision.

This student was not objecting so much as asking for help, expressing a need to clarify things in her own mind. Though momentarily unsettling for me, hers was a pretty straightforward request rather than an evasion. I find, however, that most calls for help are disguised by some surface behavior which is often puzzling. I can remember having an uneasy feeling about the way one class was dealing with the charge to elect their officials, sensing that they were not really coming to grips with the task. During the report period it struck me that all the groups had elected men to the chairs and women to be secretaries. Placed in an unfamiliar situation in the

classroom, they had called on old, comfortable stereotypes for reassurance that things were as they should be. I let it go for the moment and waited a few days until everyone felt less uptight about being in small groups. On Monday of the second week I asked the class if they had ever met a male secretary or nurse, a female doctor or boss. That was enough to open up a discussion which eventually led to a more equitable distribution of duties among the sexes.

As the quarter or semester wears on, you will notice students taking on roles in the group which either expedite or block the completion of a task. It may be worth class time to talk about what people are doing. Once a behavior is identified, the group can decide whether it should be reinforced or discouraged. Avoidance roles are common, surfacing blatantly in students reading the newspaper or doing homework for another class during group time, and less obviously by someone who's always changing the subject to unrelated topics. Normally several leaders besides the chair and secretary will emerge, functioning in very specific ways: to keep peace in a group, be a good listener, provide useful data, stimulate and probe for ideas, upset and revitalize tired thinking, resolve clashes of opinion, summarize and/or paraphrase the positions of others, or be the trailblazer who holds the light high and keeps everyone on the same path. All these informal leaders are just as critical to the success of the group as are the appointed leaders.

In addition to spending some time talking about individual roles, you may have to deal with broader questions of group organization. At mid-point in the quarter one of my classes decided that all of the groups ought to be disbanded and reconstituted. I agreed to devote a half hour of class time to consider the merits of the proposal and to make the change if that's what everyone wanted. This particular class had been very successful with their group work—in fact, that was the problem: class time had been *too* intense, and after five weeks everyone was burned out. I argued for keeping the groups together by pointing out specific instances when each of the groups had worked extremely well together, and I praised the facilitating roles of individual members. They all agreed that they enjoyed working together and that each group had a strong identity. From this reevaluation of their effectiveness, they concluded that the problem was that they were simply tired and needed a rest before they turned completely stale. It would be nearly as much work to form new groups as it would be to continue with the present ones, so we decided on a change of pace instead. I would lecture for the next two days, and one day each week thereafter either I would lecture or the class would work as one unit on a task; thus, some of the pressure the groups felt would be eased.

You will sometimes encounter an individual who honestly feels

misplaced and who will desire to be transferred to another group. If you determine that the student is in fact not able to function within a particular group, it is usually possible to accommodate such a single request without disrupting the harmony of any of the groups or precipitating a snowball effect. The most important consideration, however, is not whether or not the old group will miss the student, but whether the new group will be accepting. I recall one instance when I came into class and noticed that Robert B. had left The Twains and was sitting with The Rewrites. They had adopted him, and everybody was pleased with the arrangement.

If you sense that either boredom or exhaustion is setting in, there are several things you can do, in addition to lecturing or conducting full class sessions, for a change of pace. Breaking out of the confines of a single classroom helps, and you can devise tasks suitable for "field work." For instance, you can give the following exercise in concrete descriptive writing. Groups leave the classroom and either go to separate classrooms in the same building or disperse to separate quadrants of the campus. Once in their new location their task is to write a cooperative description of an unfamiliar object in the area without using the real name of the object (a nonsense word such as "wriglet" works fine). When the groups reconvene for the report period the descriptions are read aloud by each chair, and those in the other groups who have not seen the object are asked to draw a picture of the object based solely on the description they are listening to. The pictures are then compared for accuracy. This test of writing lucid details is a physically active, invigorating exercise which effectively helps students to take a new look at their environment and their own powers of observation.

Another tactic for shaking up jaded or worn-out groups is to temporarily change the routine patterns they've been following. There are many possible variations on the group theme. Consider the following:

1. Pass out numbers to members of each group. Inform them that only the people who got an odd number may talk for the first ten minutes of group work, then they must be quiet while the even numbers talk for the last ten minutes.
2. Designate one of the three groups as "observers" whose job will be to not participate but rather to monitor the work of the other two groups during the task period. They are not to talk to each other during this time but should keep written notes on the way groups approach the assigned task. The observers use part of the report period to summarize their findings for the whole class.
3. Announce that you are reorganizing the groups for one day. Have students draw coded slips of paper from a box so that their

new arrangement will be as arbitrary as possible. Reconvene the regular groups the next day. If this experiment works well, it might be useful to do it once a week.

4. Freedom of choice might be the key to fuller participation when things seem to be dragging. Clear the desks away from the center of the room and have everyone stand up and mill about. When you feel that people are loosening up, ask them to break off into three separate groups of any makeup that seems natural. Don't rush them. Dispense with the regular conventions of choosing a leader and dive right into a task. Eliminate the report period if that seems right.

Try to remember that the weight of responsibility for their own learning in a classroom setting will be new and hard to bear for many of your students. Be prepared to give them time to adjust and, when they're drained, time to recharge.

In three years of using the group-inquiry method I have had only one case of a student who openly refused to have any part of a class which was not "taught" by the instructor. Carl F. sat off to one side and refused to participate in a group; he used the first report period to condemn my methods and tried to get the class to band against me. His peers rejected him, and he later came to my office and asked to be released from the obligation to attend class, offering to do independent study to complete the composition requirement. I adamantly refused to excuse him from regular attendance, and instead loaned him several books on teaching methods with a charge to write each of his essays that quarter on different techniques of instruction. To help him along with his task, I made him class historian. He not only had to participate in the group he was assigned to, he also had to present a brief written report to the class every Friday which summarized the week's report periods—in essence, capsulizing what we had learned that week. His role as Devil's Advocate kept all of us from becoming complacent. I never succeeded in converting Carl to group instruction, but he did become an accomplished report writer, and his essays on teaching methodology, though strongly biased and dogmatic, were thoroughly researched.

Teachers are no more able to do the impossible than any other professional, and it is important that we understand precisely what our methods can be expected to accomplish. As with any other methodology, there are times when small-group inquiry will not work. I know of at least five circumstances in which I would not attempt to teach a parceled class.

1. When you cannot depend on regular attendance of the full class.
2. When a student does not possess the minimal skills necessary to

build on. The student who has never read will not have a notion of how to write. In a college composition class, there would be few advantages to placing anyone reading below the eighth grade level in a group which is building on more advanced skills. That student needs intense remedial tutoring. Many poorly prepared students with special strengths do very well in groups, but you can't go all the way back to the cradle in your efforts to compensate—the rest of the group won't put up with it.

3. When, for reasons beyond your control, students are determined to do as little work as possible in order to get their C. For example, certain students resent composition requirements because they firmly believe that they won't ever need to do any writing to get by either in or out of college. If their other courses do in truth require no writing, you will have a hard time changing their minds. Such students will never make a commitment to an individual effort, let alone a group effort.
4. When there is a bulk of new concepts and facts to present, as with a beginning ESL class; in this case, lecture and drill are probably best.
5. When some extremely shy or insecure students really need to have close one-to-one relationships with an instructor who can foster confidence building. It might be a painful experience for such students to be forced into a group.

With a judicious knowledge of when not to expect miracles from small-group instruction, I think it is possible to go confidently ahead and apply the methods I am describing with a reasonable assurance that you are treating your students to the best kind of learning environment. Certainly when I reflect on my own educational career, both as student and teacher, I find that my most memorable experiences have been with small groups of people, *all* of whom were involved in the processes of significant learning. They were committed, self-motivated, self-evaluating, flexible, and creative.

I would like to note that I have purposely stayed away from any attempt to deal with the significance of human psychology and the roles we adopt in group situations. I want to caution teachers against seeing their groups as encounter or sensitivity training sessions. M.L.J. Abercrombie has also been careful to distinguish between therapy and teaching:

> However, although the themes that were dealt with are of course deeply rooted in past and present human relationships, they were not treated, as they would be in a therapeutic situation, at an intimately personal level. 'Private lives' were not discussed and only exceptionally were specific personal interactions which occurred within the group or outside it. It is in this respect that this kind of group

discussion differs most sharply from the work done in therapeutic or in sensitivity-training groups.[13]

Most counselors and therapists are more interested in the health of the individual psyche than the well-being of the social group. While we sometimes find ourselves taking on parts of the counseling role when we talk with students during office hours, teachers in the classroom must keep this distinction between the private and the public in mind. We may want to change attitudes and behaviors of our students, but only as they relate to learning in our specific fields.

Making Discoveries

Most competent teachers know more than their students will ever need to know. How can you select from your storehouse of knowledge those facts and ideas which will be most useful to your students? If you subject them to a verbal barrage of information, will they be able to singlehandedly select for themselves what is important for them to know? How can you be certain they really comprehend?

The inquiry method is particularly well-suited to teaching in a parceled classroom because it relies on students' responses. The instructor's prime tool is listening and questioning rather than explaining. Daily tasks are designed so that students reach generalizations inductively and so that a variety of solutions are possible. Inquiry questions differ from Socratic questions in that there is no set answer to which the student is being led. The questions invite students to *discover* for themselves how something is done.

Jeff: Is this the way this sentence should be?
Teacher: How does it sound to you?
Jeff: I don't know.
Teacher: Try doing a few more examples and see if you can find a pattern which will give you a clue. Compare your answers with others in your group. I'll come back later and ask you what you see.

Under our present educational system the instructor must arbitrarily shape the basic course content and structure through choice of texts, written dialogue on student papers, and the overseer duties of enforcing university and department deadlines and requirements. However, the teacher can allow students to shape the course if each day's task assignments are based on issues raised by the students in recent group discussions. The inquiry teacher reserves judgment on what any particular class will need to know or how they will learn

[13] M. L. J. Abercrombie, *Aims and Techniques of Group Teaching*, 2nd ed. (London: Society for Research into Higher Education, 1971), p. 33.

best until after listening to them, and he or she keeps no secrets from the students about the rationale for daily tasks—when they do a task, they know *why* they are doing it. Students can also discover for themselves what their group's needs are through the weekly process of selecting a reading from the assigned anthology, exploring its implications in open discussion, and determining and writing their own essay topics. The instructor circulates freely from one group cluster to another, typically answering a question with another question so that students may make their own decisions, find their own answers, and become confident independent learners.

Alceste: I think misplaced modifiers like this one are so funny. They should be left alone. [The example in question: "Byron, as it happened, was asked to *eventually* leave the household." The reason the word is misplaced will be revealed below.]

Wanda: That depends on what you want your readers to think about you. I wouldn't care to look a fool.

Alceste: But you wouldn't. This doesn't look foolish, it's just funny.

Teacher: What do the rest of you think?

Ing: Sometimes it's okay to play with words if you don't care about getting some precise fact across.

Maurice: It's foolish because no one would be sure of your meaning.

Teacher: What does meaning have to do with grammar?

Maurice: In this case I don't think you can separate meaning from grammar. Byron was either asked to leave *now* or he was told to take his time and leave eventually. Taken in context, I don't think his mistress's husband was inclined to let another man stay on indefinitely. It should read: "Byron, as it happened, eventually was asked to leave the household."

Wanda: I think Alceste just wants us to be confused.

Alceste: Being so exact is boring.

Ricardo: Well, I'd rather be bored than frustrated by silly sentences. Let's look at the next sentence and straighten it out.

The instructor quietly moved on to another group while Maurice was talking. Later, Maurice was asked to paraphrase his point about grammar and meaning for the rest of the class.

You want your questions to bring your students beyond the stage of simple recall and into the realm of inference, analysis, judgment, and application. Bloom's taxonomy indicates that the realm of advanced cognitive learning needs facts to build on, but if the learning remains fixed at this lower level you will never reach Rogers' realm of significant, experiential learning. Here are some guidelines for bringing the impact of your questions on small groups above the base line of recall.

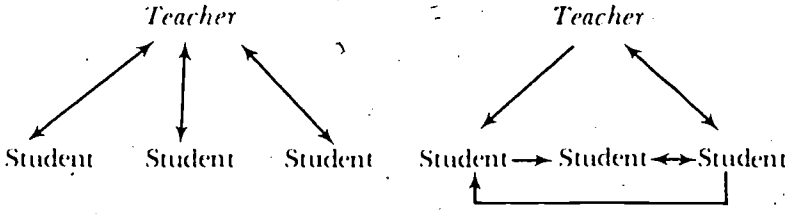
1. Phrase your questions so that they cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."
2. Wait a sufficient length of time, at least ten seconds, for students to respond.
3. Don't ask questions which contain hidden answers: "Is there anything in Malia's logic which destroys the persuasiveness of her essay?" "What about the syllogism she's using?"
4. Be slow to acknowledge right answers. You may know it's right, but your too quick reinforcement can have the effect of cutting off the thinking of other students in the group.
5. Instead of answering your own unanswered questions or applauding an answer you like, turn to other members of the group and let someone else respond.
6. Try never to interrupt a student who is talking, no matter how halting or slow the response.
7. As in the above sample dialogues, sequence your questions so as to move the discussion from narrow concerns with minute data to larger concepts and broader issues. Go from "*What* is true?" to "*Could* this be true?"
8. Balance your questions. There is nothing wrong with an occasional recall question, but dependence on any one type of question will stifle students' responses. Make the question fit the moment.
9. Never answer your own question. That's a very rhetorical statement, but I think the emphasis is justified. The purpose of listening and questioning strategies is to aid students in clarifying matters in their own minds. Try not to unwittingly steal away that opportunity. Sometimes an unanswered question which is left hanging in the air can serve to focus the whole discussion onto a specific problem.
10. When an explanation is given, either by you, the text, or another student, test students' understanding by asking someone to paraphrase the concept. Be wary of the easy-to-say and face-saving claim, "Yes, I understand." Ask for proof.
11. Model good paraphrasing yourself by restating cogent points made by students. Such a technique also demonstrates that you are listening carefully and that you value the statements of students.
12. Use summaries sparingly, and keep them short. It is facilitating to pull many points together into a brief review when the discussion has been wide-ranging, but summarizing minor points every few minutes can shut down any further thinking on the subject. Summaries tend to give the impression that the matter is settled and that further inquiry is not necessary.

13. Control your ego. When a student very directly puts you on the spot—"Thom, what can I do to make this paragraph more logical?"—share the spotlight with the group: "Well, I'm not sure. Let's go around the group and see what other people can suggest."
14. Be specific. Catch-all questions generally catch nothing but silence: "Are there any questions?" Your questions should clarify, not obfuscate; facilitate, not intimidate: "I still feel uneasy, like I'm not certain we all agree on the point Orwell is making in his essay. Does anybody have a suggestion for another way to look at his ideas?"
15. Be willing, at least temporarily, to accept "wrong" answers. This is one of the distinguishing features of discovery questioning. A wrong answer, in objective textbook terms, might be a right answer in terms of a particular student and the stage that student is at in his/her development.

You can evaluate the effectiveness of your facilitating in small groups by comparing your performance to the models below. (Video or audio tape would help you to be more objective about yourself.) If the students' response behavior is like that in model A, you are not using the inquiry method successfully. Model B behavior represents the desired results in a group inquiry classroom.

Model A:
Builds "fear" of teacher.
Minimizes value of student thought.

Model B:
Increases teacher credibility.
Increases student self-respect.



The dialogue on page 24 is an example of model B talk.

Body Talk

In the parceled classroom you can move your body in ways which will communicate more than words can. During the task period your movement between and among the groups is unrestricted, which is reason enough to be conscious of some of the positive and negative effects of your personal kinetics. Add an extra chair near each group which should be kept vacant for your visitations.

Mood-Making Moves

Depending on your goals, you have two basic moves to consider.

Sit at a distance from the groups. Select an inconspicuous location. This position will allow you to watch all groups simultaneously, observing which ones are fluid, which are stuck. Such a perspective is a necessary prerequisite before you move to help anyone, especially when those who are stuck won't admit it or don't know it. When all groups are fluid, it may be good for you to stay away.

Join a group. If you're not actually responding to a call for assistance, you may sit down with a cluster of students either because there's some obvious trouble coming down or because the discussion sounds interesting and you're getting bored sitting in the corner. But beware! In either instance when you move in, the group might want to concede leadership to you and stop talking with each other. Unless you can remain an equal partner (bridle your enthusiasm), go back to your corner. Some less independent groups will never be completely comfortable with the idea of having a teacher who shares power with them and who participates in discussions as an equal contributor. Remember, you're dealing with behavior patterns toward established authority which have been ingrained by twelve years in the school system.

In any event, while the groups are working on their tasks don't stand in the middle of the room, at the front of the room, behind a podium, or in any place or position which draws attention to yourself. Either hover on the periphery or sit with a group. Think of yourself as a ghost who can move in and out of the material world at will. Students are more likely to direct talk to their peers in the group than to an elusive target who is moving from place to place. Thus, you will get fewer calls for help. If they can't find you, they will have to try to solve their own problems.

Problem-Specific Moves

The quiet one. Sit next to the insecure student. He or she will feel more confident because of your close proximity and will be less likely to indulge in comfortable evasion tactics. You're there next to him—he can't avoid you, ergo he can't avoid the discussion. Make a comment and chances are he'll respond. Soon he'll gain confidence and begin to get involved as the conversation passes around him. Support his contributions by asking others if they heard his remarks and understood them. Ask him to repeat. Paraphrase him frequently. When you move on to another group, tell him you'll be back in a few minutes.

I only have eyes for you. This student looks at and directs all her

speech to the teacher. Your tactic is to look away while she's speaking, pretending you don't know she's looking at you. If you direct your gaze intently at one or two other students you may be successful in deflecting her in their direction.

This tactic is also very useful during report time, when the temptation will be great for the chairs to report to you rather than the class. Sometimes something stronger than looking away will be called for. I have had some good results by turning my back toward the speaker and facing the other students, or by moving into a position behind the speaker.

Hyperactive, tense, or irritable student. Place a hand on his shoulder or gently jostle him. I have never found a student, male or female, who was deeply offended by being touched. Supportive, friendly physical contact has a calming effect. Reciprocate by letting him touch you if he wants to.

Loud student. Whisper in her ear. Noise is self-multiplying; people talk louder to be heard over other noise. Let yourself be the first to talk softly. A hush will fall as they struggle to catch your words. The noise threat is a general problem when working in classrooms which were not designed for group teaching. When the groups are straining your tolerance level, go to each cluster except the noisiest and ask them to observe one minute of silence. In the ensuing vacuum the loud group's noise will become patently absurd to all, and you can resume at a more sensible volume.

These are only a few of the possible uses of body talk in the group environment. The nonverbal messages you send with your body tell students something about how closely you are attending to them. For example, sensitive use of eye contact is an indispensable element in letting people know that you are listening to them. Sometimes, however, our words say one thing while our bodies say another. If you tell students you would like to hear their opinions, and then you proceed to wipe your glasses or comb your hair while they are talking, you are not being very facilitative. Group-inquiry teachers need to be aware of what they are saying with their bodies.

Peer Criticism

The study group is not a new idea, but it is seldom encouraged to flourish in the classroom. Here are some ways to help students help each other.

The Regular Workshop

In my class there is an essay due every Friday, and that is when I hold the writers' workshop. One or two people in each group are asked to bring photocopies of their two-page essays for each member

of their group. (This will cost students between 50¢ and $1.00 each. If that is a hardship you can ask everyone to buy a copy from the author.) No one student will have to photocopy more than twice in ten weeks. Initially people can volunteer, but they must be people who plan to turn in their papers on time or the day of the workshop will be a gloomy affair. If no one wants to volunteer, you can quickly get your quota by announcing that everyone will have to be criticized by their peers sooner or later. Thus, your first volunteers will probably be the ones who want to get it over with. Until the first few workshops are behind us, don't try to be nice about this business of "Who's on the chopping block this week?" Sometimes I simply "assign" volunteers; few students are eager to submit themselves to what they expect will be ridicule or, far worse, indifference. Even the fact that the workshop authors have the privilege of rewriting their essays after the due date and possibly earning a higher grade is not enough incentive at the start (no one expects to improve *that* much in one week). The workshop has to be experienced, the students have to become trusting of each other and sure of their own responses, and they have to become adept at the very special process you are going to teach them.

During the first few workshops you establish this pattern:

1. reading
2. spoken feedback,
3. written feedback.

Write these steps on the chalkboard each week until the process becomes second nature. If you don't you may find that many prefer to skip step two—that is, avoid talking to the author and confronting him or her about ideas and form. Spoken feedback is the spine of the workshop, the real "work" of the hour.

The student should follow these guidelines:

1. *Read*. Go over the paper twice if necessary, but don't write any responses yet. After the silent reading, the author will read the essay aloud.
2. *Spoken feedback*. Talk to the author. Tell him or her about the good things in the paper, the parts you especially liked. Be supportive. There is nothing really *bad* about any piece of writing, only parts which may not make sense to other people.

   Talk to each other. Do your perceptions of the author's message and its expression square with your fellow students' reactions? Will another reading bring you closer together?

   Listen to the author. There may be parts he was wondering about himself and now that he has a captive audience he can ask you if you have understood his point.

Make any marginal notations that occur to you during the discussion.

3. *Written feedback*. Stop talking. The author needs a written record to remember all your comments. Expand your marginal notes and on the last page write some general observations about the *whole* essay. Your larger view of the paper will be more helpful to the author than the spelling or punctuation errors you've noted.

Each week's contributing authors have the option of rewriting their essays with the aid of their peers' suggestions. They can take their papers home and refine them, turning them in a few days late with no penalty. Have students turn in both the new draft and all copies containing peer comments. When marking the essays first read and criticize the author's final draft. Then, when you feel sure of your evaluation, respond in writing on the photocopies to the notes of the peer critics. (Once I know my feelings about the essay it only takes an extra five minutes for me to mark the peer copies.) I usually agree with most student comments, disagree with a few, and often change my mind because of something a peer has written. When I return this bulk of papers I tell the author, "Here's your bible." Rarely do any of us, professional or student, get a manuscript returned with a three-way dialogue in the margins: several peers responding to author, instructor responding to author, and instructor responding to peers.

The workshop will work if:

a. The instructor refuses to read the whole essay in class. Your comments come later, when they can't possibly corrode or intimidate peer opinion. Your job during the workshop is to reinforce the three-step procedure and answer questions about basic mechanics of writing: "Should you put a comma before or after but?"
b. Most of the time is spent giving spoken feedback. At twenty minutes per 500-word essay there can easily be a good ten minutes of talk between students.
c. Everyone knows what's happening. Later, when I return a "bible" to an author, I hold up the stapled bundle and leaf through it so everyone can see the plethora of fruitful exchanges. I announce that what was originally a D paper is now a firm C+ because the author rewrote after the workshop. Before the next volunteers are asked for I poll the last week's workshop authors for their responses. Was it helpful? Were you embarrassed? Would you do it again if you had the chance?

By the time you're ready for the third workshop you shouldn't

have to even ask for volunteers—they'll be booking themselves far in advance.

The Improvised Workshop

This is a variation of the regular workshop for those instructors who either do not wish to devote a whole class period to peer criticism or are not inclined to construct any sort of fixed framework for teacher-peer-author interaction. It is more flexible and would also be suitable where regular attendance cannot be counted on (the regular workshop won't work if no one but the author comes to class).

With the improvised workshop any two writers (three if they can read the same essay together) can be paired up to perform the three-step function of reading, talking, and writing. In this case you would want the written comments on a separate sheet of paper. No volunteers are necessary; everyone reads someone else's paper, but no one gets a chance to rewrite extensively at home (unless you want several late papers). Since no photocopying is necessary, you can conduct an improvised workshop whenever enough students bring papers in on time. If you are not already teaching the class in distinct groups, this method will work best because people can pair up arbitrarily and there is no need to establish a prior group identity. Just announce, "Everyone exchange papers with someone else." Any arrangement is possible, and you can step in to pair up wallflowers. However, groupings of more than three are not workable when there is only one copy of each essay. In order for students to get a wider range of opinion you can try switching pairs if time permits.

Task Making

Whether you teach groups on the parceled classroom model or occasionally break up your class into smaller units for special projects, it is important to observe certain fundamentals of assigning tasks. Groups, like individuals, generally tend to work more efficiently if they know they must finish their work by a certain time. Depending on the nature of the task and the amount of report time that will be needed, tasks can be budgeted from fifteen to thirty minutes. On certain days I break the hour into even smaller units. For instance, each Friday the first ten minutes are spent selecting a reading from the text for Monday's discussion, then twenty-minute segments are devoted to criticism of each of the two student essays in the writers' workshop. A complete turnabout occurs each Monday when at least forty minutes are spent discussing ideas and issues raised by the reading and generating topics for the weekly essay.

The task itself will suggest what is the most reasonable time

needed to complete it, but if the groups are not kept within the specified limits you will find that very little work gets done. Of course it's best if students meet the deadline through their own self-discipline, but you should be prepared to step in. For instance, if near the end of the hour on Monday a group has not yet agreed on at least three essay topics (individuals in the group may choose any one of the three to write on), I remind them that something else is planned for our next meeting and that they'll have to live with their limited selection if they don't get busy and do something about it. After a few hair-raising experiences such as facing an essay assignment on nothing or having to report to the rest of the class that they accomplished nothing, students begin to adopt more productive tactics. These tactics include:

1. urging each other to stick to the point,
2. insisting that someone keep accurate notes,
3. double checking or rewriting solutions,
4. making sure everyone has done their at-home reading assignments,
5. supporting their leader's decisions,
6. making compromises,
7. soliciting everyone's opinion.

In addition to budgeting time for tasks, you may want to distinguish between *regular* and *flexible* tasks. For instance, every Monday my parceled class needs no directions because they know that is the day on which they discuss the readings they have selected and write their essay topics. One advantage to regular tasks for fixed groups is that a class eventually becomes quite self-sufficient on those days and, should you be ill or otherwise indisposed, they can carry on without a substitute teacher. Since I've adopted this approach I have had to cancel fewer classes because of personal emergencies. As a matter of fact, I was recently out of town for four days in the middle of the quarter and the groups voluntarily conducted their own sessions while I was gone. They held discussions on essay style and on conventions of usage, and ran the weekly writers' workshop, all without direction from me and with some obvious positive results. Many of them found their voice that week, and the following papers were greatly improved. I have come to think that it is a salutary tactic for the parceled classroom teacher to plan an occasional absence or tardy arrival in order to give groups that have been together awhile a chance to experience total responsibility and also to air differences which might have been submerged while the instructor was there.

The flexible task can be used with casual groupings of students as well as with fixed groups. The instructor who uses casual groupings will base tasks on cues from students' papers, individual conferences, and recent class discussions. But the parceled classroom instructor

will learn more quickly what students need to know from listening to the permanently established groups at work than he would from spending hours in personal conferences and reading weeks of essays. Nevertheless, the flexible group task, like the improvised writers' workshop, can function in any classroom. It can be adapted by any instructor who simply wishes to create temporary groupings of various sizes to work on specific exercises. Matters of sentence, paragraph, and essay mechanics can be introduced in whatever sequence and at whatever pace seems appropriate for a particular class.

Some tasks breed cooperation among groups while others stimulate a competitive spirit. When students are asked to find the *right* solution, such as deleting the pronoun reference errors which you have planted in a passage by Hemingway, the competition to see which group can return the passage to Hemingway's original is intense, and audible cheers and hisses arise during the report period. On the other hand, when the task is open-ended, with a *variety* of possible solutions, cooperation is essential for piecing together a coherent lesson. When students work on the often ambiguous problems of punctuation, each group finds during report time that some of the rules that they've arrived at inductively are either confirmed or modified by the discoveries of the other groups and that all the groups have to pool their information to get functional guidelines for punctuation.

Cooperation may also dominate when each group works on a different but complementary task. If each is assigned one side of the rhetorical triangle (voice, argument, audience) to define and illustrate, there will have to be a considerable exchange of information during the report period because of the organic way in which each of these concerns overlap and influence each other. But competition is also possible when groups work on different tasks. Ask two groups to prepare and present a case either for or against an author's argument and then ask a third group to judge the ensuing debate. If it is an even match you may have to rescue the judges and declare a tie.

Thus, depending on the mood and pace you desire, you will consider both design and content when you select tasks:

Cooperation

A. Same Task
   no simple solution
   (e.g., punctuation, usage, etc.)

B. Different Tasks
   pieces of a pie
   (e.g., rhetorical triangle)

Competition

A. Same Task
   only one possible answer
   (e.g., the way Hemingway wrote it)

B. Different Tasks
   opposing arguments
   (e.g., for or against an essay's credibility)

Sample Tasks

It is an easy matter to convert the exercises from a conventional grammar or composition workbook into group tasks if you omit or simplify the lengthy rules and explanations which usually introduce the material. When errors of one kind are grouped together, patterns which are apparent to nearly every student will inevitably emerge. As much as possible the students should be led toward making an inductive leap and coming to some generalization about the specific problems they've been working on. As long as they can *feel* that something is amiss in a sentence and go about improving the situation, they shouldn't be burdened with terminology and legions of exceptions and variations to a rule. When I choose tasks it is always with the wish to involve students directly in *processes* during class time which parallel, reflect, or characterize some of the processes which occur in the act of composition. Personally, I find that rewriting the work of famous authors or other public figures is the most exciting source of grammar exercises. Loading a paragraph by Margaret Mead with subject-verb agreement errors and asking students to unravel it is the kind of exercise that comes very close to what "real" writers do. Other tasks on essay form, rhetoric, argumentation, etc., are only limited by your imagination.

Some Cooperative Group Tasks

1. Same task for all groups.
   a. Correct the dangling modifiers in the sentences I have dittoed and try to arrive at your own definition of a dangling modifier. [Prepare students by briefly clarifying what modifiers are and how they work. You might prefer to give them a succinct handout on modifiers the night before.]
   b. Find the transitional words or phrases which link the paragraphs of the process-analysis essay which you read last night. Categorize as many types of transitions as you can find.
   c. Survey the writing habits of those in your group and prepare to report on what, in your opinion, constitutes the writing process. [A good way to get at the issues of outlining, rewriting, and proofreading.]
   d. Use commas, semi-colons, or dashes to punctuate the sentences I am handing out (some may need no punctuation). Each sentence that requires punctuation is an example of one or two specific punctuation rules. What rules can your group come up with?
   e. The skills of sending communications (writing, speaking) seem to receive more of our attention in college than the

skills of receiving communications (reading, listening). Yet you have all heard that good readers make good writers. Explore the relationship between reading and writing and describe the effect each has on the other.

2. Separate task for each group (with 3 groups).
   a. Define "voice" (group 1), "argument" (group 2), and "audience" (group 3). Discuss your group's side of the triangle in terms of your concerns as student writers, and give two or three specific examples which illustrate how it works within the rhetorical triangle.
   b. Each group has read and discussed several selections in the text which none of the other groups has read. Go down the list of your group's readings and rate each (scale of 1 to 5) on its suitability as a source of essay topics. Report on your group's criteria for selection of readings. [The pooling of information is vital to all groups if they are to make wise selections in the future.]
   c. In each of these excerpts from three speeches, the orators (Martin Luther King, Jr., George Patton, and Fidel Castro) are using several devices of persuasive rhetoric. Identify the devices in the passage I hand your group, and explain the psychology or logic behind them.
   d. I want one group to make a list of the differences between the spoken and the written word, another group to list the similarities of speaking and writing, and the third group to define and illustrate nonverbal communication. [The report period will reveal that each mode of communication has its conventions, but that writing relies more heavily on arbitrary traditions.]
   e. There are three levels of expertise to consider when you think about improving your writing: (1) the here and now: satisfying the criteria of this course; (2) the near future: other required undergraduate composition courses; and (3) the distant future: graduate and professional demands. You should have some idea of where you are now and where you want to be in ten weeks, one year, four years, ten years.

      Each group will take one of these three levels and investigate the criteria used to judge performance by those who are competent on each level. Your job is to bring to class tomorrow samples of outstanding work from each level. You may leave early today if necessary to start visiting departments and instructors. When you have your samples, analyze them and present the class with a list of the evaluation criteria.

Some Competitive Group Tasks

1. Same task for all groups.
   a. I will give you a paragraph from George Orwell's essay, "Why I Write." Mr. Orwell is a sophisticated builder of complex sentences who deftly uses coordination and subordination to mold his style and content. However, I have removed all conjunctions and subordinating adverbs from this passage, reducing it to a series of short, choppy sentences. Restore it to its original form.
   b. In this paragraph from Albert Schweitzer's "Reverence for Life" he uses twenty-five pronouns. I have changed them all to nouns or phrases. Return the pronouns, avoiding both ambiguity of reference and awkward repetition (Schweitzer uses repetition gracefully).
   c. Benjamin Franklin, in his "Letter to a Young Man," lists eight reasons for choosing an old woman for a mistress. Take the opposite tack and list eight reasons why a young woman should choose an old man for a lover. Your list must reflect an inductive process that justifies the generalization that old men (I mean *really* old) are best for a workable love affair. [May also be used to teach satire.]
   d. Consider the following statement: "What you have to say and to whom you wish to say it determines how you will say it." True or false? Support your decision with specific examples. [Could turn out to be cooperative if students all agree with the statement.]
   e. What makes a good essay topic?

2. Separate task for each group (3 groups).
   a. Change words and phrases in this speech by Richard Nixon (on the naval blockade of North Vietnam) in order to modify or reverse the slant. Slant the message as though it were being delivered by a hawk, a dove, the enemy. Be as convincing as possible.
   b. Choose a theme and produce a newsletter around it. The subject may be anything you like, but it will have to be interesting enough for people in other groups to want to buy copies (10¢ apiece). [This project can take up to a week, with each group doing its own writing, editing, layout, proofreading, and reproduction.]
   c. The essay, "The Crisis of American Masculinity," by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., posits cause and effect relationships which may or may not be true. I want group 1 to prepare a challenge to Schlesinger's evidence, group 2 to prepare to support his evidence, and group 3 to decide how best to

organize, conduct, and judge the debate within the limits of our fifteen-minute report period.

I have called these "sample" tasks[14] because nothing like an exhaustive presentation of the possibilities can be attempted in a publication of this size. Additionally, this pamphlet is chiefly about *how* to teach, not *what* to teach. These samples should suggest ways to create group tasks which will serve as appropriate vehicles to teach whatever elements of composition you consider important.

Evaluation

The officially approved objectives of a course determine how instructor and student performance will be evaluated. As Dr. Walter Loban has frequently stated, teachers will teach what they will be evaluated on. Yet it is possible that students learn much that is not evaluated. For instance, in many of my colleagues' traditional classes students are learning to write just as satisfactorily as they are in my group-inquiry class, and we are all being evaluated on whether or not we can bring the students' writing up to the level of acceptable college prose. However, in traditional lecture-discussion classes students may also be learning such things as how to second-guess the teacher, shut out most of what they hear, and tell the teacher what they think the teacher wants to hear rather than what they really have on their minds. In group-inquiry classes students are learning such things as how to learn collaboratively with peers, discover what they need to know, say what's on their minds, and evaluate their own progress. Everything that is learned in the parceled classroom, not just the end product of reaching a certain skills level, represents the fulfillment of valid educational objectives.

Conventional evaluation forms place the onus of responsibility entirely on the teacher, often putting students in the double bind of knowing it was their fault or through their efforts that something occurred, but having to fill in the blank which assigns blame or praise to the instructor. Were the instructor's explanations misunderstood because they were unclear or because the student was a poor listener? Was the subject matter interesting and stimulating because the instructor made it so or because the student was interested to begin with?

In the parceled classroom the students have just as much responsibility for the effectiveness of the course as does the teacher, and the

[14]Some of these tasks were adapted for group work from materials supplied by several of my colleagues in the Subject A Department (remedial composition) at Berkeley. Notable contributors were Kimberly Davis, Frank Vittor, Phyllis Brooks, and Steve Tollefson.

evaluation forms which are filled in at the end of the quarter should give students a chance to reflect on their influence over the quality of the work just completed. So, for one quarter (Winter 1975) I experimented with the form on the facing page in an effort to supplement, not replace, the department's standard form which essentially asks students only to evaluate how well the instructor helped them to improve their writing skills. The twenty-one students were asked to fill in both forms, but to make their written comments only in response to item D on the experimental form.

Results

Responses to items A and C were the most revealing. Average response to item A, where 5 equals excellent, was 4.1. Average responses to item C were as follows: "yourself"—51.2 percent; "your peers"—13.8 percent; "your instructor"—35 percent. The 4.1 figure appears to be a very conservative rating; in their written comments they were generous in their praise for group instruction. The corresponding item A on the departmental form asks the student to "rate the overall effectiveness of your instructor on the following scale [of 1 to 5]." While the majority of students gave the same rating to both the instructor and the group aproach, the seven who gave separate ratings all rated the instructor higher than the approach. That could mean several things, but I take it as further evidence that undergraduates are conditioned to minimize their own accomplishments and tend to defer credit to the instructor. However, they were more assertive on item C. It's as if they were saying, "No matter what the approach or who the instructor is, it's still up to me." A realistic as well as a mature outlook, and a valid educational outcome. As a group-inquiry instructor I can think of no better result than having students claim that they took responsibility for their own learning while in my course. I am not surprised at the low attribution of learning to the efforts of peers: it is still a very foreign notion to most students that they might be able to learn from one of their own in a classroom setting.

I did not tabulate the responses to item B because of the lengthy interpretation the data would require. Instead, I have collected a representative cross section of student reactions to item D and other general remarks on the group approach from the standard forms I've used over the past three years. The questions in item B of any form are probably more useful in the way they raise issues and stimulate thinking than in any numbered answer they elicit. After reflecting on and answering the questions in item B, most students have a great deal left to say on the back of the form. I encourage them to write at length on their ideas about teaching methods.

Evaluation of Our Group Performance

Instructor's Name _____ Course & Section _____

Quarter/Year _____ Your Major _____ Your status _____

Most conventional instructor evaluation forms emphasize traditional teaching models (lecture, discussion) and place little responsibility on the student for either the structure of the course or the classroom atmosphere. In order to supplement the standard form, I would like your evaluation of teacher-student roles in group taught, discovery-based classrooms such as ours.

A. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the group teaching approach? (Circle one)

Excellent Good Average Fair Poor

B. Rate the following questions on a *scale of 1 to 5* as follows:

5	4	3	2	1
Nearly Always	Most of the Time	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never

a. How often did you talk with your group? _____
b. How often did they listen to you? _____
c. How often did you listen to them? _____
d. Were the group tasks clearly defined by the instructor and did you understand their purpose? _____
e. Did the tasks fit your needs and interests? _____
f. Did the instructor listen attentively to you and others? _____
g. Did you feel intimidated during his/her presence in your group? _____
h. Did he/she dominate group discussion? _____
i. Do you feel that he/she asked stimulating questions during group time? _____
j. Were his/her summaries of student work brief and accurate? _____
k. Did he/she allow a variety of responses? _____
l. When you reported on your group's discoveries, did you speak to your peers in the larger class and did they respond to you? _____

C. What percentage of your learning in this course do you attribute to the efforts of: Yourself_____% Your Peers_____% Your Instructor_____%

D. Please write a brief comment on what you see as the role of the instructor in this class (use the other side if necessary).

Student Comments on the Group Approach

The instructor's role was one of keeping the class in some semblance of order, trying to make the assignments flow easily—any problems and he would try to straighten them out. We worked much on our own, and got assistance only when he or we deemed it necessary.

I think the role of the instructor is one of an organizer. He organizes and interjects sparks of fertility when a group has become somewhat sterile.

I do not care for the group method of teaching. However, I believe that this class was very effective. Given my choice, I would still take the conventional type class. The instructor plays the role of the coordinator, which I feel may take away from his duties as a teacher. I did feel that the approach was good for this course. The class, for the most part, was able to follow without much difficulty. I believe everyone in my group improved.

The instructor is guide and instigator.

His role is to let us learn in an atmosphere in which there are no boring lectures, but stimulating discussions.

The instructor didn't play the usual stereotyped role. I've found in the university that many instructors are very impersonal. The instructor was just the opposite.

When I first entered Subject A and found that we would be working in groups, like I had done in grade school, I thought this would be a very boring class. I was wrong. I found this class so interesting that I attended it more often than all my other classes. I have enjoyed this English class, something I've never done before.

I enjoyed this class because I was given personal attention by the instructor and I was able to air my viewpoints in groups.

It is my belief that no teacher can teach a person to write; he can only point the way and supply the work that needs to be done.

The role of the instructor, as I saw it, was to be close by to offer assistance, to motivate our thoughts, and to help find and straighten out problems. I particularly feel that the group idea worked quite well and was beneficial to my learning experience.

In the groups I never felt like the instructor was shoving the subject matter down our throats. He first tried to find out what we needed to know.

The instructor should make the students feel welcome to ask questions on anything they don't understand. He is here as a "tool of knowledge" that students can use to build up their writing capabilities. I liked the format of breaking up into smaller groups. Also, since the students were allowed to think up their own essay topics they were able to learn better how to answer such questions. I had a good time and learned a hell of a lot more than I thought I would.

The class was very relaxed, and the way in which the students were set into groups made it even more relaxed. It was an experience in human nature (getting to know and respect other people's ideas) as well as a method for improving writing skills.

The groups within the class have functioned effectively, helping individuals, bridging communication gaps that might be found with a large group of twenty-five or more.

I seemed to benefit most when my writing was presented to our group for their suggestions for improvement. I'd suggest more exposure to this type of feedback for two reasons: first, so the student can overcome any anxiety about others reading his written work; second, so that he is able to hear from others what the strong and weak points of his writing are. It helps to better define the problem areas.

I wondered from time to time what the purpose of the three groups was. If we were divided so that there would be a wide variety of essays for reading, then fine. But what were we supposed to get out of it? I feel that the class as a whole could have had meaningful discussions. Maybe the group demanded more of each individual.

The instructor made the class very enjoyable and at the same time taught us a lot! I really like the way our groups worked on structure and grammar. He gave us a sheet with the incorrect structures and we had to find and correct them. This was very helpful as was our Friday workshop where we evaluated each other's essays and got to rewrite them over the weekend. I know for a fact that I have never learned so much or liked an English class as I did this one. I actually looked forward to the class.

When I talked to him on a one-to-one basis I know I learned a lot more vs in the classroom where I felt a lot of my time was wasted. I did not like the idea of being taught in groups—we weren't able to voice our personal opinion for it was always drowned out by the majority of the "leaders" of the group. *I know* there are better ways for us to voice our opinion other than in a group. When the groups were opened I could sense a feeling of freedom amongst the people too—so I think the groups were a major flaw to this course.

One of the most valuable assets of this course was the group involvement program. I feel this was very useful in the formulation of ideas and the teaching of grammar.

Unlike other courses, we were allowed to work with our fellow students. This is the only class I have ever had where the discussions really "worked."

It would have been to the benefit of the entire class if we had had more time for open discussions in which the class as a whole participated. Working in small groups all the time isn't terribly effective. However, the use of small groups did contribute a great deal to the development of my writing, particularly the weekly criticism of essays.

The group method of doing classwork is excellent. Working in groups made the class dynamic, not boring. Many times we found that our group ran out of time discussing the topics and exercises; this is quite the opposite in many other boring classes where you run out of discussion and have plenty of time. Overall the class helped me express in words what I thought (provided I had some thoughts to express). It also benefited me in the respect that the class taught me to listen—something I believe wasn't one of my attributes when the class first began. This is what teaching is all about: helping you to teach yourself.

Everything I learned in this course was the result of my own efforts. The instructor was no help at all.