

ED411023 1997-06-00 Collaborative Learning in Community Colleges. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

www.eric.ed.gov

Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Collaborative Learning in Community Colleges. ERIC Digest..... | 1 |
| WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING?..... | 2 |
| "AS WORLDS COLLIDE" AT CENTRAL ARIZONA COLLEGE..... | 2 |
| SCIENCE LITERACY AT IVY TECH STATE COLLEGE..... | 3 |
| "EFFECTIVE SPEECH" AT BROOKDALE COMMUNITY..... | 3 |
| INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY..... | 3 |
| "HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION"..... | 4 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 4 |
| REFERENCES..... | 4 |



ERIC Identifier: ED411023

Publication Date: 1997-06-00

Author: Foote, Elizabeth

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges Los Angeles CA.

Collaborative Learning in Community Colleges. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT
ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

Collaborative learning strategies offer promising possibilities for promoting active learning and student self-reliance in community college classrooms. This Digest defines collaborative learning then discusses five experimental courses that have incorporated collaborative learning.

WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING?

Collaborative learning is the instructional use of small groups. Its goal is to allow students to work together to maximize their own and others' learning. The traditional teacher's role is expanded to include facilitating and coordinating the student groups, which then assume part of the responsibility for instruction. There are five essential components that must be present for small-group learning to be truly collaborative: clear, positive interdependence among students

regular group self-evaluation

interpersonal behaviors that promote each member's learning and success

individual accountability and personal responsibility

frequent use of appropriate interpersonal and small group social skills

It is not simply putting students in groups to learn; rather, it is structured cooperation among students (Johnson et al, 1991). These principles were used in the five courses described below.

"AS WORLDS COLLIDE" AT CENTRAL ARIZONA COLLEGE

At Central Arizona College, a team of three instructors taught "As Worlds Collide," a nine-unit learning community that combined history, social psychology, and communication studies to explore questions of culture and community. The forty-seven students participated in a variety of learning activities, including the formation of teams of six or seven students to present instruction to the class and the establishment of student discussion seminars that encouraged the development of self-guided learning teams. Instructors were present, but not as leaders or active participants. Portfolio assessment was used; each student accumulated class and discussion notes and wrote three papers. Learning outcomes included improved writing skills through class discussion, writing assignments and the use of journals, improved social skills through group activities, increased student recognition of their own improved academic performance, and developed awareness of others' values, culture, and beliefs. The students appreciated the relaxed atmosphere, the opportunity to speak freely, and the

variety of teaching strategies. The teachers found that a learning community was workable in a rural community college that serves a population of varied ages, ethnicities, and academic preparedness (Isbell, 1996).

SCIENCE LITERACY AT IVY TECH STATE COLLEGE

To make science meaningful to non-science majors, at the Wabash Valley Region campus of Ivy Tech State College in Indiana, a project was undertaken to modify the traditional survey coverage of broad areas of science to explore a series of focused problems in science from physics, chemistry, geology, and meteorology. For each area, a brief background lecture was given. Then students formed groups of two or three to gather more information, discuss current scientific thinking, and determine what sort of actions they might take, both as individuals and as a society, in response to the issues. After the discussion, students wrote position papers. Each unit ended with a test (some tests were group efforts). Topics included hazardous waste disposal, nuclear terrorism, the greenhouse effect, acid rain, and depletion of the ozone layer. The course promoted active, problem-based learning and taught critical thinking skills. Student survey responses noted enthusiasm and satisfaction with the instructional method, and several students continued to research current events in science on their own (Shotwell, 1996).

"EFFECTIVE SPEECH" AT BROOKDALE COMMUNITY

COLLEGE To enhance student outcomes, Brookdale Community College in New Jersey experimented with incorporating collaborative learning strategies into their basic public speaking course. Group activities, such as researching and delivering group informative speeches and peer assistance with individual assignments were added, while the number of graded speech performances was reduced. The grading system changed, with points given for participation in group activities. The goals were to increase students' ability to work in groups, aid their appreciation for cultural diversity, improve their problem solving skills, and enhance their ability to access information and utilize technology. A post-course survey found that teachers felt that none of the anticipated benefits had significantly accrued, and there was only a slight increase in problem solving skills and group work ability. However, they thought that the new method gave them more time to work with each student. Students were enthusiastic about the reduction of performance anxiety and they liked working in groups. Given these results, the Speech Department plans to continue to use collaborative learning strategies (Hunter, 1996).

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

To determine if cooperative learning strategies were effective in improving teaching quality and enhancing the learning process of students, a study was conducted at Kansas City, Kansas Community College. Outcomes were compared for four courses: experimental introductory sociology and psychology courses that used cooperative learning, and introductory psychology and sociology courses that used more traditional methods. The experimental courses involved small (4-5 students) group learning activities such as discussions, problem-solving, and study reviews, as well as textbook reading and a final examination. Each student acted as the leader, the time-keeper, and the recorder on a rotating basis. The traditional teaching methods in the control groups included lectures, large-group discussions, study guide assignments, textbook reading, and a final examination. An analysis of the final course grade for the fifty experimental group students and one hundred control group students found no significant differences in grades. However, the student comments in the course evaluations were much more positive from the cooperative learners (Wilson, 1996).

"HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION"

At Calhoun Community College in Huntsville, Alabama, an innovative curriculum that combined collaborative learning and contracting was tested on two sections of the History of Western Civilization class. Each student agreed to a "student learning plan" that set forth a grade as a goal with objectives (tests, book reports, and papers) that enabled him or her to meet the goal. Collaborative learning strategies were used in the small group study sessions held before each test. The students responded very positively to the group work and to the overall curriculum. However, 79% of the students in one section and 50% of the students in the second failed to meet their goals. The teacher concluded that while students recognize the value of setting goals, they may not be able to follow their own contracts (Harris, 1993).

CONCLUSION

Collaborative learning allows students and faculty to share responsibility for learning. It helps prepare students for workplaces that increasingly value self-motivated, self-confident, team-oriented employees (Cooke, 1994). However, depending on the structure of the program and the level of student participation, teacher expectations and increased student performance may not be met. Nonetheless, a collaborative learning strategy can be a useful addition to the repertoire of teaching methods used in community colleges.

REFERENCES

- Cooke, B. P. (1994, March/April). "Rethinking Teaching and Testing: Quality in the Classroom." Paper presented at the 7th Eastern Regional Competency-Based Education Consortium's Annual Total Quality Education Conference, Asheville, NC, March 30-31, April 1, 1994. (ED 367 406)
- Harris, J. C. (1993, November). "Elements of Contracting, Individualization, and Cooperative Learning in a Community College History Classroom." Paper presented at

the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. (ED 368 407)

Hunter, C. L. (1996). Student as Teacher: Cooperative Learning Strategies in the Community College Classroom. Princeton, NJ: Mid-Year Fellowship Program, Princeton University. (ED 397 873)

Isbell, T. (1996). As Worlds Collide: A Central Arizona College Learning Community. Coolidge, AZ: Central Arizona College. (ED 400 016)

Johnson, D. W. & Others. (1991). Cooperative Learning: Increasing College Faculty Instructional Productivity. Washington, DC: ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports. (ED 343 465)

Shotwell, R. A. (1996, May). "Scientific Literacy: A Non-Traditional Approach to Science for Students Outside of Technical Fields." Paper presented at the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence, Austin, TX. (ED 397 887)

Wilson, C. E. (1996). "The Effects of Cooperative Learning and Teaching Strategies on Student Achievement with Implications for Faculty In-Service Education." Major applied research project, Nova Southeastern University. (ED 395 622)

The ERIC Clearinghouse operates under OERI Contract No. RR93002003. The opinions expressed in this digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of OERI and no official endorsement by OERI should be inferred.

Title: Collaborative Learning in Community Colleges. ERIC Digest.

Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Descriptors: Community Colleges, Comparative Analysis, Cooperative Learning, Course Objectives, Group Activities, Group Dynamics, Interpersonal Competence, Outcomes of Education, Program Effectiveness, Self Evaluation (Individuals), Student Attitudes, Two Year Colleges

Identifiers: ERIC Digests

###



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)