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ELIMINATE DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS THROUGH GROUPING

George M. Usova

THE CITADEL

A troublesome issue that many teachers face is getting their students to complete in-class discussions or writing assignments. When students work independently on a task, many are likely to be lost or uninterested in what they are doing and become frustrated. This frustration leads to despair, resignation or hostility, which in turn can cause discipline problems.

One technique that has met with great success is that of pupil-team grouping. While grouping within the classroom is not a new concept, it often fails because it isn't structured properly. Quite often teachers are afraid to try grouping for fear that chaos will result in the classroom; however, if done properly, it will not only create a better learning situation, but also will reduce discipline problems. Students will be actively involved in a task and less likely to become frustrated. This technique is successful for two principles: (1) peer pressure and (2) active student involvement.

The First Step involves preparation. Give all your students the following information about group functions. It is best to have students write the information. In this way, they will learn it better and will be able to refer to it later. It is as follows: (read to students)

There are three major roles in a group. The first role is that of a Leader. He has the following responsibilities:

1. He repeats the topic or assignment to the group.
2. He makes sure that everyone participates.
3. He welcomes all points of view.
4. He does not dominate the discussion.
5. He is responsible for the group's behavior.

The next role is that of the Recorder. The Recorder has the following responsibilities:

1. He records all points of view of answers from the group.
2. He participates somewhat.
3. He does not change or edit any of the member's "contributions."
4. He reports back to the group or the entire class at the end.

The final major role of the group are the Group Members. They have the following responsibilities:

1. Each member is responsible for contributing to the group.
2. Each member should tolerate the ideas or answers of the others.
3. Each member is responsible for his own behavior and that of others.

After these three roles have been discussed and written down, you are ready for the Second Step. Select a group of four or five of your more able students first to serve as models. Set them apart from the rest of the class

and have them work on some questions at the end of the chapter, for example, while the rest of the class work on the same task independently. This will give them the opportunity to observe the model group.

Since the Recorder is writing the contributions from the group, he is to turn in to the teacher the results of the contributions. Have all members of the group *sign* the recorder's paper. This gives them a sense of accomplishment and responsibility.

After the rest of the class has observed the model's behavior, have the entire class group the next day. This is the Final Step. Remind them to read over their notes and briefly tell them again of the various roles and their respective responsibilities.

To begin with it is better for the teacher to assign Leaders and Recorders. After students become more sophisticated with this process, they may select their own Leaders and Recorders. (This can also be an excellent way to allow the shy, withdrawn student to assume a leadership role.

Factors to Consider

Group Size: Usually groups of 4 or 5 work best. Be flexible.

Time Limit: Impose a realistic time limit upon groups relative to the nature of the task. This adds a slight pressure and eliminates waste of time. The Leader is responsible here.

Group Composition: This is a teacher judgment. Students should be grouped by compatibility or ability. Depending upon the task, the criteria might be "interest." Groups should be flexible in composition.

Now you are ready to try this technique. Begin slowly. Students will adjust rapidly. The results are more in-depth responses, active learning, and student involvement. Students work together, helping each other toward one goal. Peer pressure is involved, and students develop responsibility to each other.

Suggested Reasons for Grouping

1. Brainstorming on ideas on any subject.
2. Doing math problems.
3. Teacher questions.
4. Chapter questions.
5. Map, globe, dictionary skills.
6. Reviewing for tests.
7. Putting on a play.
8. Spelling practice.
9. Discussing relevant issues.