A Pedagogy of Teamwork:

What Students Expect When Collaborating in College (and Beyond)

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Agenda

- What is the challenge you are facing regarding classroom collaboration?

- Why does classroom collaboration matter?

- Where do the student narratives (the research results) come from?

- What reasons do students give for both their positive and negative experiences?

- What can we learn from their experiences?

- What can you start doing now?

LET'S START WITH A QUESTION

Regarding classroom collaboration, what is the challenge you are facing?

WHY DOES CLASSROOM COLLABORATION MATTER?

- Working well with others is a non-negotiable skill for students preparing to be professionals in today's diverse workplace. Collaboration often ranks high on the list of skills employers want in their new hires (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2016 & 2017; National Research Council, 2012).

- Because of their experiences collaborating in an academic setting, students entering the workforce have certain expectations for how they think collaboration should work.

- What are these expectations and how can educators prepare their students to meet these expectations?

WHY DOES CLASSROOM COLLABORATION MATTER?

- National Association of Colleges and Employers has identified teamwork/collaboration as the third most important competency to prepare graduates for a successful transition into the workplace.

- **"Teamwork/Collaboration:** Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints. The individual is able to work within a team structure, and can negotiate and manage conflict." https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/

INFORMAL (NONSCIENTIFIC) RESEARCH

- ENGL 608: Professional and Technical Writing (online)

- Writing/reflective assignment: What is a positive and a negative experience you've had working in a team?

- Students also met with me virtually to talk through their experiences.

- Students identified both academic and workplace experiences.

- Numbers of students: Approximately 40 students during the past four years.

- What do you think the students said?

RESULTS

- Both their negative and positive experiences boiled down to four main issues:
  - Leadership
  - Communication
  - Shared investment in a goal
  - Meeting often

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- I wanted to know more. So, I asked a group of these students for permission to use their narratives for this presentation. Fourteen responded positively.

- What else contributes to both positive and negative experiences working in teams?

- What can educators learn from these experiences?

Positive Experiences

- Clearly defined goals and an agreed-upon plan to meet them

- Tasks well understood by team members (clear expectations)

- Tasks broken down into manageable pieces

- Tasks equitably divided and based on the expertise of team members

- Deadlines to increase likelihood of work completion and accountability

- Camaraderie

- Productive meetings

- Active listening skills

Negative Experiences

- Inadequate technology or know-how

- Team members not using collaborative technology (e.g., Google Docs)

- Not enough or not clear direction/expectations from the instructor or a superior, or direction/expectations change and work begins over again (frustration, resentment)

- Fear of speaking up when the team falls apart

- Incompatible work schedules and personalities

- No plan for resolving conflicts

- Making assumptions

Negative Experiences

- Lack of authority or credibility of the team leader

- Shortcuts

- Team too large

- Not enough diversity of skill sets

WHAT CAN WE LEARN AS EDUCATORS?

- Please share your thoughts.

LET'S END WITH A QUESTION

What is the one step you could take to begin acting on what you learned during today's session, right away?

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