Small Group Learning (SGL) Workshop

Notes and Handouts
Creating Effective Small Group Learning (SGL)
Jim Borgford-Parnell

Purpose:
This workshop provides an overview of the types, benefits, and key elements of Small Group Learning for implementation in the classroom. Techniques for group selection, task design, problem identification, and assessment are also discussed.

Agenda:
The intended time for this workshop is 120 minutes.

Topics for this workshop include:
- Types of SGL
- Key elements of SGL
- Benefits of SGL
- Implementing SGL in your course
  - Selecting groups
  - Designing tasks
  - Assessment
  - Common problems

Goals:
1. Expand your SGL conceptual framework
2. Participants leave with something helpful
Principles for Learning Activity and Instructional Design (PLAID)

The PLAID exercise is a straightforward method for distilling useful and practical ideas from various information sources, and for compiling a personal set of principles for use when designing learning activities. Source information for PLAID comes from learning research, theory, literature, and reflective observation.

PLAID uses research and scholarship to complement and reflect experience teaching. It is a multi-directional tool, meaning you can start by 1) reading teaching and learning research and literature and deriving applications to classrooms and your method of teaching, or 2) search for sources which support your pedagogical methods.

PLAID helps you to plan learning activities and instruction to create more effective pedagogy and to be a more scholarly teacher.

EXAMPLE

Source Information:

“Students come to the classroom with preconceptions that must be engaged or they will leave with the same conceptions.”


=PLAID:

1. Use knowledge probes to find out what students already know or think about a topic.

2. Small groups can be safe and comfortable environments for discussing different perspectives and/or understanding of particular topics.
Principles for Learning Activity and Instructional Design (PLAID) Worksheet

Source Information:

=PLAID:
Applying the Science of Learning to the University and Beyond

- Practice at retrieval, promotes long-term retention
- Varying the conditions results in better learning
- Re-presenting information in alternative formats enhances learning
- Learning depends on prior knowledge
- Learning is influenced by our ideas about learning
- Experience alone is a poor teacher
- Lectures don’t promote deep understanding
- The act of remembering enhances the ability to remember
- Understanding a few things well, beats understanding a lot superficially when it comes to retention.
- How learning occurs determines how and when knowledge may be recalled.


Key findings in How People Learn

- Students come to the classroom with preconceptions that must be engaged or they will leave with the same conceptions
- Competence results from: (a) a base of factual knowledge; (b) knowledge built in context of a conceptual framework; and (c) knowledge organized for retrieval.
- A metacognitive approach makes for better learning and better learners.

## SGL Typologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual &amp; infrequent</td>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Change of pace tool. 2-8 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured &amp; Frequent</td>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Well planned technique. 2-4 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive &amp; Course Changing</td>
<td>Team-based Learning</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Well planned strategy. 5-7 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term out of class</td>
<td></td>
<td>Base Groups</td>
<td>Study support. 3-5 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**
Criteria for Effective Small Group Learning
Worksheet

Individual Accountability

Positive Interdependence

A Challenging Task

Timely Feedback
**Assessment of Contributions of Group Members**

At the end of the quarter, it is necessary for all members of this class to assess the contributions that each member of the group made to the work of the group. This contribution should presumably reflect your judgment of such things as:

- **Preparation** – Were they prepared when they came to class?
- **Contribution** – Did they contribute productively to group discussion and work?
- **Respect for others’ ideas** – Did they encourage others to contribute their ideas?
- **Flexibility** – Were they flexible when disagreements occurred?

It is important that you raise the evaluation of people who truly worked hard for the good of the group and lower the evaluation of those you perceived not to be working as hard on group tasks. Those who contributed should receive the full worth of the group’s grades; those who did not contribute fully should only receive partial credit. Your assessment will be used mathematically to determine the proportion of the group’s points that each member receives. Evaluate the contributions of each person in your group *except yourself*, by distributing 100 points among them. Include comments for each person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #: ____</th>
<th>Points Awarded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason(s) for Points Awarded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reason(s) for Points Awarded</td>
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<td>3. Name:</td>
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<td>Reason(s) for Points Awarded</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reason(s) for Points Awarded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason(s) for Points Awarded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Name:</td>
<td>TOTAL: 100 Points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Fink, 2002)
Team Evaluation Form (Course and Term)

Your Name: __________________________________________
Team Name: __________________________________________

Circle the number that best represents your assessment of the team's effectiveness or performance in each category. Please use the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The team has a well defined set of goals and objectives.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ideas are encouraged and fully explored.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions of all team members are appropriately acknowledged.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team members are able to resolve differences in a professional manner.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team member assignments are given to maximize individual learning and mastery of new material.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team meets deadlines and schedules.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions are focused and useful.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meetings are always productive.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All team members contribute fully to team success.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our team is highly productive; we exceed our expectations.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use the space below and on the back of this form for any additional comments that you wish to make about the team.
Small Group Learning (SGL) Bibliography


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