

Read Ask Reflect #1

After reading the article *Student Collaboration in Group Work: Inclusion as Participation* and reviewing my CT's interview responses, I've realized the importance of stepping back as a teacher to have students step in. Mercer (2008) and Wells (2007) demonstrate the importance of social collaboration to promote learning in the four main codes: (a) the students act jointly; (b) the students discuss; (c) the students help each other; and (d) the source of authority is shifted. Throughout the article it was discussed how these codes were vital to create growth in self confidence and student collaboration. It was also discussed that "to be able to give and to receive constructive feedback in a group implies the necessity of group members to have respectful interactions with each other (Frykedal, Eva)." Which is exactly a similar approach to what my Cooperating Teacher (CT) Claire Gresham had to say. They both stated the importance of having the teacher step back and facilitate if needed when student collaboration was taking place. The reason for that included giving the students an opportunity to socialize with their peers and not create an unnatural balance of the teacher being the one to converse with. For example, if a group were tasked with collaborating but their main focus is to get the answer correct or have approval from the teacher then that is creating an unnatural balance. As a teacher we should aim to strengthen their skills such as "Individual Accountability—in which each group member is responsible for his/her share of the work and has a willingness to help other group members; (Frykedal, Eva)." Building trust among group members also would improve their communication skills and their ability to resolve conflicts when differences occur within their group. I've learned that as an educator, our role is to support via facilitation vs. dictation. To increase the ability for students to collaborate and enhance their confidence they need to have the environment to do so. Some suggestions I learned from my CT were think-pair shares, community class meetings, fun activities such as design challenges within groups or partners and more. These activities aim to build connections with one another both socially and academically. I also learned in the article that a finding in their experiment is having less of an authority traditional teacher mindset, and more of a facilitation (guides students to communicate with one another). In this specific situation, it became clear that students with little opportunity, being individually accountable for their learning, held the teacher to remain with authority. It is important to step back and have them [students] step up! After reading the article and speaking to my CT I would like to incorporate more opportunities for students to take leadership roles. To start off we go small with think-pair-shares or paseo walks to have them just converse with one another. Share interest with one another. Begin the journey to trust one another. From there we can move into having "fun low stake interactive" activities. Then continue to build on into more academic content activities. Both resources were effective and have helped build on my own thinking as an educator.

References

Forslund Frykedal, Karin; Hammar Chiriatic, Eva. *International Journal of Disability, Development & Education*, Mar2018, Vol. 65 Issue 2, p183-198, 16p; DOI:10.1080/1034912X.2017.1363381, Database: Education Source