

Title: Motivating Group Work

Goals: (1) To set the tone for the course by implementing group activities immediately; (2) To foster a sense of community within the classroom

Description: Have students work on a problem or create a list individually. After a sufficient amount of time, have students work in small groups (3-5 students) on the same problem or list. Discuss solution or answers with the class. At the conclusion of the activity, ask students whether they prefer working individually or in groups and why.

Example: In a general chemistry class, the instructor writes on the board the chemical names of common materials, and asks students to work individually to determine what everyday materials correspond with these chemical names (i.e. sodium chloride = table salt; sodium bicarbonate = baking soda; acetic acid = white vinegar, etc.) After a few minutes, students are instructed to work in groups to share their knowledge and come up with a more complete list. When asked whether they prefer working in groups or individually, students choose group work since they have experienced the power of multiple minds working together on a task.

Total Time: 5-10 minutes each for individual attempt, group collaboration, and follow-up discussion.

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