



How can we arrange students in the classroom to help them be engaged in their learning?

Arianna Crosara, Alyssa Kharod, Harleen Dhaliwal

What is the motivation or rationale behind the question? (i.e. Why is it important/meaningful? Why did you choose it?)

We chose this question because we were wondering how the arrangement of students in a classroom affects their ability to learn, be motivated, and to succeed. We wanted to know what strategies would be effective for helping students work together given their diversity in skills and challenges, as well as in their personalities. We discussed, for example, how some students don't work well together; some are introverts and dislike social interaction; and the issues of conflict in collaboration. We also thought of emergent properties: how placing some students around each other can impact each student's ability to work and be engaged, which could be a positive or negative result. In particular we were interested in knowing how to help introverts to be comfortable with the people around them in the classroom arrangement and feel included. Depending on arrangement, these factors could be impediments or advantageous to students' engagement in their learning.

What have you learned so far?

So far in our inquiry we have learned that there are differences between introverts and extroverts that are rooted in neurobiology. According to the interview with Susan Cain in the article, “**Strategies to Ensure Introverted Students Feel Valued at School,**” by Elissa Nadworny, Susan Cain states the importance of “encouraging schools to think in terms of classroom engagement rather than participation...[and to] [t]ake a more holistic way of looking at how a child is engaging with this material or with their classmates.” In addition, the think/pair/share technique is recommended to help engage introverted children. This allows those children to have time to collect and articulate their thoughts. In addition, in Nadworny’s article, Cain advises caution with introverts in group work; there has to be a careful balance. Properly balanced, though, it can be positive and beneficial experience for introverts as well as for extroverts.

We have also learned that grouping students in the most beneficial way can allow not only for them to be engaged and motivated, but also will help to create better communication between them. Done correctly, grouping students can be immensely beneficial to their success in later life as well. This is noted in *Productive Group Work*, by Frey, Fisher, and Everlove. The book goes on to explain the significance of group conversations in helping a person learn and understand. It also refers to studies on the positive impacts of successful group work in increasing self-esteem, relationships between the students, and social skills.

Incorporating groupwork in classrooms is beneficial for students to gain or add on to their social skills. In addition to the social benefits, group work can also be utilized to solve class conflicts and issues. The book “*Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom Third Edition*” also focuses on implementing group work in order to allow students that have varying levels of linguistic proficiency to complete tasks. Communication between students builds on students’ cooperation and listening skills. The article “**30 Ways to Arrange Students for Group Work**“ suggest various strategies that an educator can form groups in the classroom. Groups can be created in a way to initiate classroom management and even based on student’s interests if they are working on a project for instance. It is interesting to see the article mention that students can form their own groups. All in all, working in groups encouraged students to be responsible for their work and also allow struggling students to receive feedback or any help from their peers.

What have you learned so far?

Through flexible grouping, students are able to work with all their peers, individually, or in small group settings. According to “**How to Use Flexible Grouping in the classroom,**” by Jessica Hockett and Kristina Doubet flexible grouping encourages students to push themselves “out of their comfort zone.” Flexible grouping also takes into account students skill level and groups can be formed based on these learning preferences. It is essential though that students interact with a range of peers so they can engage in learning from a variety of groups. Overall, having flexible grouping allows for student collaboration, to respect one another, and to contribute more.



Where to from here? How will you continue this learning or how has it inspired new learning? What questions do you still have?

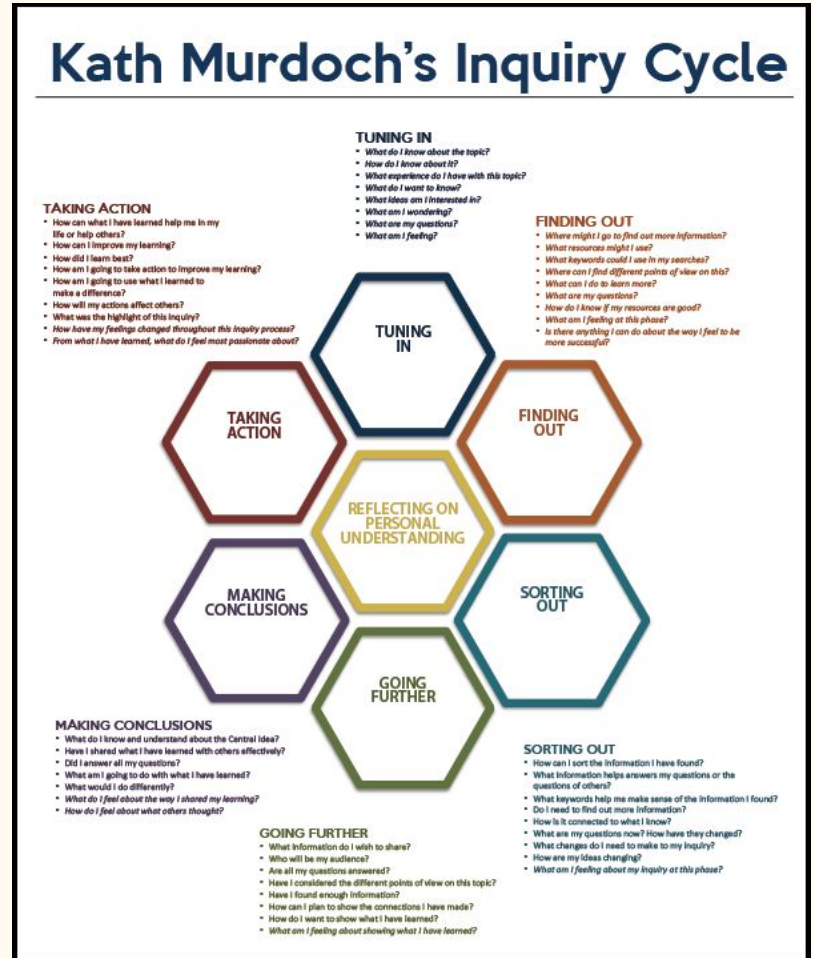
Questions:

- How often group work should be implemented in class, and when is it appropriate to have students work individually?
 - How might we, as educators, instill student engagement in class even without group work (students work individually? Can it become problematic if students are dependent on working in groups, and could this impact how engaged they are in lessons? How might we address this issue if it arises or any preventative measures?)
 - How can teachers group students in a way where they all feel comfortable and included?
- Using Kath Murdoch's Inquiry Cycle, we can continue to seek answers to our questions. Through this cycle, we will always be actively reflecting and seeking ways to improve classroom arrangement.

Murdoch's Model of Inquiry

- Student interactions in group settings further the students' understanding of the concept through an inquiry mindset that is instilled by asking questions, comparing and contrasting ideas, and so on.

- Going Further: If students are working on a group project, each student can create their own detailed question that they would like to be more informed about.



Works Cited

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