

Collaborative Learning - using multiple groupings

By Joe Craven

Group work can serve a really useful function. It builds on and can help to develop pupils' confidence, as well as ensuring effective preparatory thinking and planning before any high-stakes questioning or writing.

I use collaborative work frequently but one example of when I have done this is during a Year 11 English Literature revision lesson when we were exploring a key question related to the text, *A Christmas Carol*: 'How is Scrooge presented at the beginning of the novel?'

The pupils were already sitting in mixed attainment groups of four and each have a number 1-4. I started with a 'Think-Pair-Share' activity so that pupils had time to individually reflect on the question. I gave them 30 seconds to think and then one minute to write down their own ideas. I then gave them two minutes to discuss their ideas with their partner who was sat next to them. I then gave them a further four minutes to share their ideas with their partner sat opposite them which would lead to a group discussion where they would hopefully come to a consensus for the answer to the question.

I then wanted the class to explore how Scrooge is presented throughout the whole text. I asked pupils numbered 1 to focus stave (or chapter) 2, pupils number 2, to focus on stave 3, pupils numbered 3 to focus on stave 4 and pupils numbered 4 to focus on stave 5. I asked pupils work independently for 2 minutes to bullet point ideas about the presentation of Scrooge in their stave. After that, I asked the Number 1s to move to a designated table at the back of the room, the Number 2s to a table in the middle, the Number 3s to a table also in the middle, and the Number 4s to a table at the front. I ensure pupils make this transition quickly and quietly so that doesn't waste learning time. As pupils have become more familiar with this transition, the routine has become quicker and more efficient.

In their new groups, I gave pupils 5 minutes to share ideas, to pass around their bullet points, to add to their lists and so on. When they are doing this, I circulate the room to support, stretch groups and individual pupils where necessary, focusing on those who require the most support.

When the timer finishes, pupils move back to their original groups and have one minute each to share their notes with the rest of the group. During this phase, it's quite normal and lovely to hear praise, applause and other positive modes of feedback that the pupils give to each other. After this, I took whole-class feedback by asking individuals to share their points and discussed these as a class.

I find collaboration a great way to scaffold pupils learning and have noticed it works best when tasks are well structured, pupils are familiar with any routines involved and when pupils have the prior knowledge required to meaningfully engage the tasks set.

