

products. This phase of the instructional framework is ideal for the “spiral review” that so many educators know their students need, and it is a way to build students’ confidence by allowing them to demonstrate their expanding competence.

Our focus on productive group work is an attempt to rectify the fact that many current implementations of the gradual release of responsibility model focus primarily on teacher/student interactions and overlook student/student interactions: learning through collaboration with peers. Productive group work provides students an opportunity to collaborate to complete specific tasks. Sometimes the teacher develops and guides these tasks, and other times the tasks are student initiated and student led. Regardless, these tasks provide students an opportunity to work together to solve problems, discover information, and complete projects.

The best productive group work tasks allow students to apply what they have learned during teacher-modeled focus lessons and guided instruction, and they prepare students for independent learning, which is the ultimate goal of instruction. Less-effective tasks are those that are disconnected from the course of study or topic. Too often, these less-than-effective tasks have been the mainstay of group work,

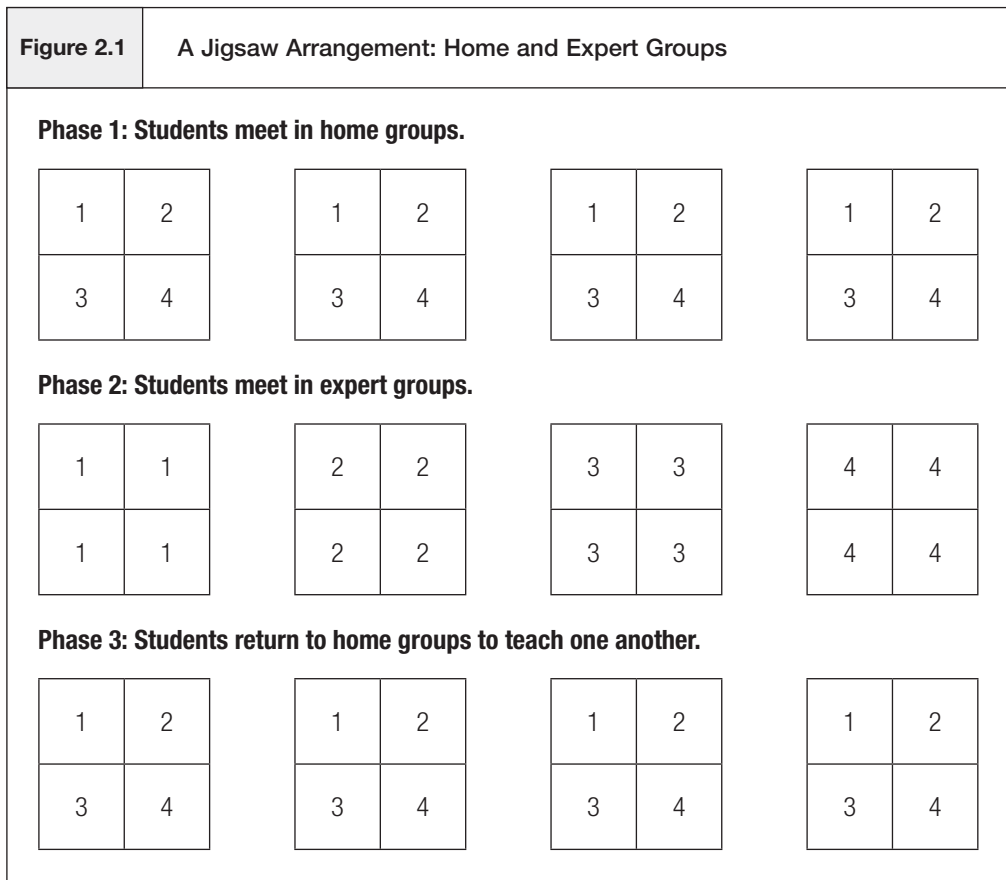
2

Using Positive Interdependence



Many hands make light work. English poet John Heywood was probably not thinking about productive group work when he wrote these words in 1546, but he undoubtedly had some end result in mind. A key feature of productive group work is what Johnson and Johnson (1975) call *positive interdependence*. In fact, positive interdependence is considered by many to be the defining quality and most important component of cooperative group work.

When established successfully, positive interdependence results in students' recognizing that their individual success is inextricably linked to the success of every other member of the group. This realization only occurs when the accomplishment of a group task requires more than just segmenting the work into smaller pieces for members to do alone. The structure of the task must demand that each member of the group offer a unique contribution to the joint effort. When students perceive that every member is indispensable to achieving their mutual goals and that they are both dependent on and obligated to their peers, conditions are ripe for collaborative learning.



On the other hand, a student who is already an expert on a topic may become impatient with other members of her group. It may be helpful to assign these more knowledgeable students as group leaders so that they can facilitate the process. Let them know that practicing is an essential part of learning and that it can and should occur. The teacher should also check the accuracy and completeness of each student's learning in the expert group before they return to their home groups. When students of differing abilities feel well supported in a jigsaw arrangement, there is a positive effect on motivation (Shaaban, 2006).

The originator of jigsaw grouping, psychologist Eliot Aronson, had another goal in mind when he came up with the jigsaw method. In his book *Nobody Left to Hate*, Aronson (2000) describes how in 1971 he and his graduate students devised

Setting Expectations

To be accountable, students must understand the expectations for their learning as individuals and as group members. These expectations should include both what they are to contribute and how. Remember, although productive group work leads to a useful outcome or end result, it isn't only about completing a task; it's about the process—how learning occurs.

There are a number of useful tools that can help ensure students understand what's expected from them. Timelines can establish what group members must accomplish and when. Checklists can outline the steps required for completing a task, like a collaborative poster or writing a readers' theater version of a text. And group members can use checklists to monitor their individual and group progress toward task completion. Finally, rubrics are a way to establish criteria for grading and relieve the teacher of having to subjectively evaluate work. Our experience suggests that students should be involved in establishing criteria for the rubric. Participation leads to better understanding of the criteria and how they relate to the task goal, and it can focus students' performance on achieving the expected outcome. (Rubistar is a free Web site where teachers can create and share rubrics. Find it at www.rubistar.4teachers.org.)

Note, too, that both checklists and rubrics can help guide students in the *hows* and *how-wells* of productive group work: participation, interaction, and the group skills of listening and providing helpful feedback.

Giving Feedback

Feedback lies at the center of accountability. The teacher's role in fostering individual and group accountability is to create assessment systems that encourage feedback among the members of the group *and* between the teacher and student. This feedback should be instructive—not designed as a “gotcha” to determine who's slacking off. At first blush this may seem simple, but providing this support for group learning can challenge some teachers' philosophies about grading, particularly when evaluation supplants formative assessment. However, if we don't make the effort to help students to assess their work and determine the next step to take, they will confuse learning with getting it right the first time. As Brookhart (2008) puts it, “If part of the classroom culture is to ‘always get things right,’ then if something needs improvement, it's ‘wrong’” (p. 2).

Figure 5.4		Active Listening Techniques	
What to Do	Why Do It	How to Do It	Examples of What to Say
Encourage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To convey interest in what the speaker is discussing • To keep the person talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nod, smile, and use other facial expressions. • Don't agree or disagree. • Use noncommittal words with positive tone of voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I see. . . ." • "Uh-huh. . . ." • "OK. . . ." • "Keep going. . . ."
Restate or clarify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show that you are listening and understand • To check your perception of the speaker's message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate the basic ideas, emphasizing the facts. • Clarify points. • Don't "fake listen"! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If I understand correctly, your idea is . . ." • "I see what you mean." • "In other words, this is . . ." • "What did you mean when you said . . ."
Reflect or paraphrase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show the speaker that what he or she is saying is being heard • To show you understand the speaker's feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate the other's basic feelings. • Respond to the other's main ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "So you feel that . . ." • "You must feel angry that . . ." • "I think you're very happy that . . ."
Summarize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To pull important ideas, facts, and so on together • To establish a basis for further discussion • To review progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate, reflect, and summarize major ideas and feelings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "So would you say the key ideas are . . ." • "If I understand you, you're saying that . . ." • "Based on your presentation, would it be accurate to say that . . ."

- Asked a clarifying question
- Restated someone's idea
- Made eye contact with the speaker
- Asked a follow-up question
- Used friendly body language

At the end of the day, he tallies his score with the class and asks for a rating from 1 to 10 on his Good Listener scale. "The kids like the idea of grading me each day,"