

WEEK 1 PROMOTING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Learning in groups

Advantages of using collaboration

Below are some suggested advantages and disadvantages of collaboration.

Advantages:

- Allows for real communication, more natural than talking to the teacher
- Learners are more engaged than if working as a whole group, this leads to more speaking time, less time to get distracted
- More ideas are generated by a group than by an individual – useful for creative tasks, such as writing or discussion
- Stronger/weaker learners can be paired, or stronger/stronger to aid differentiation
- Less intimidating than speaking in front of the whole group
- Builds confidence, learners are working autonomously
- Gives the learners more chance to speak and communicate freely
- Learners may be more inclined to talk to their friends than to the teacher (could also be a disadvantage!)
- In multilingual groups, learners can work in same language or mixed language groups to allow for reference to L1 or to promote English-only discussion
- Builds essential lifeskills of collaboration (especially important for younger learners)

Disadvantages:

- Some learners may be more willing than others to take part
- Learners may go off topic or use L1, especially if the task is long or they don't fully understand it
- Learners may feel it is 'artificial'
- Learners may not be able to self-correct, and teachers need to be disciplined to be able to listen for/see and correct errors
- It may be difficult for the teacher to monitor all the learners as several conversations will be happening simultaneously (or several pieces of writing are being produced simultaneously)
- Learners with no previous experience of pairwork or groupwork may be difficult to convince or reluctant to take part, as it might not fit with their experience or idea of learning