

Theme: Collaborative and Group Learning

Tip 1: Connect Group Work to Real-World Tasks

Having students work collaboratively in small groups has several benefits. For example, it breaks complex tasks into parts and steps, helps students develop time management, and promotes stronger communication and discussion skills. These skills are needed in the workplace. When planning a group assignment, consider tasks that mirror realistic problem one might encounter in careers in the discipline, a relevant public issue, or their lives. Break the task into steps and incorporate checkpoints along the way with deadlines opportunities for feedback. In addition, use class time and activities to support the group work by giving guidance, sharing resources or clues, and modeling relevant skills. Read more about this strategy from Cornell University's Center for Teaching Innovation segment "[Getting Started with Designing Group Work Assignments.](#)"

Tip 2: Use Roles to Help Groups Manage

When assigning group or collaborative work, consider what tasks are needed to complete the work and what roles are needed to carry out the work. Whether you assign students the roles or have them choose, integrating roles in collaborative work promotes accountability and allows students to play to their strengths. Group roles can be task-specific (Information Gatherer, Devil's Advocate), social-emotional (Encourager, Compromiser), and procedural roles (Note-taker, Timekeeper). Check out this [Lumen Learning resource](#) for details on different types of roles.

More Info on Teaching Tips

"Teaching Tips of the Month" began as a project of Program for Active Learning in STEM (PALS) and Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM (TIDES) grants. Many thanks to Ray Gonzales and Alla Webb, who served as Principal Investigators of the TIDES grants. You can view archived Teaching Tips of the Month on [The Hub](#). We welcome feedback and invite you to submit ideas for this publication to Angela Lanier, angela.lanier@montgomerycollege.edu

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