



Literacy Strategy

Discussion Groups

According to Readence, Bean, and Baldwin (2001), teachers need to model the process of how a small group should function. To introduce the roles within the group, these authors suggest a small group be formed for the entire class to observe. The teacher and students can assume assigned roles within the group and demonstrate the process, with the teacher's direct guidance. Examples of how a discussion can be used to solve a problem, answer questions, or accomplish a task can be modeled.

Groups should be made up of five, four, or three students. It is important that each group member have specific responsibilities needed to complete the assignment and know exactly what is expected of them. In the classroom that uses the lesson plan described in this chapter, the teacher assigns the following roles:



Facilitator

Recorder

Clerk

Manager

Students are given specific duties for each role, and the duties are reviewed and practiced during the introductory phase of the small group participation.

Students are introduced to small group work at the beginning of the school year. This teacher uses Discussion Groups in her classroom at the beginning and end of each new unit throughout the year. Other teaching methods, such as lecture, large group activities, partnering, and individual assignments are practiced by the students throughout the year, also. Group assignments and members are specifically assigned or randomly selected by the teacher. Everything students need, such as activity sheets and materials, is available for each group. Prior planning by the teacher is a most necessary component of successful small group work.

Students should understand that the group activity may receive a collective grade, but the quality of the work depends on the contributions of each member (Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 2001).



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