

Name

Daniel Bartholomay

Session Type

Interactive Presentation

Title

Does Group Work Really Work?

Abstract

Incorporating insights from scholarship and first-hand experience, this presentation evaluates contemporary pros and cons of group work in undergraduate courses.

Session Description

This presentation is all about group work. In addition to drawing from the scholarly literature on group work, I will also share findings from my personal experiences both using and researching the effectiveness group work in courses I've taught here at UWM. I will discuss and evaluate both the advantages and the disadvantages commonly associated with group work in undergraduate courses. This assessment will consider the pros and cons of group work for both students and instructors, paying particular attention to the ways in which advances in technology have impacted the terrain of group work in contemporary learning environments. Focusing primarily on group projects that extend beyond a single class period, some specific topics related to group work the presentation will cover include:

- Distributing workloads among group members
- Grading projects individually vs. as a group
- Communicating effectively and working with conflicting perspectives

The topic of this presentation will be accessible for everyone. The main example of group work I'll use throughout my presentation is a group research project that I have my students complete in an undergraduate sociology course here at UWM, but no particular background knowledge or experience in either the research process or in sociology will be required for attendees to engage in this presentation.

My presentation style for this session will be highly interactive. I anticipate that about one-third (20 minutes) of the session will consist of interaction with attendees. I will frequently seek input from those in attendance to incorporate their experiences/thoughts/questions about group work into the presentation and subsequent discussion. I'm an advocate for collaborative learning and hope that those in attendance will feel compelled to share their thoughts and experiences related to this session's topic throughout the presentation. In the remaining two-thirds of the presentation (40 minutes), I will present findings from the literature on group work and from my own research to discuss some challenges associated with group work and

effective strategies to overcome them. I'll also share an example of a semester-long group research project I currently use to provide an example of how to apply many of the strategies I will discuss.

Group work is an important topic for UWM instructors to grapple with because it has the potential to be a valuable pedagogical tool, if it is implemented correctly. My experience studying this topic has led me to believe that much of the stigma associated with group work can be overcome if instructors are willing to adapt their approaches to group work in ways that better accommodate the realities of students in today's educational environment. I look forward to the opportunity to share my knowledge of this topic with others.

Session Objectives

1. An appreciation for the benefits group work has to offer to undergraduate students.
2. The ability to resolve common challenges associated with group work.
3. Knowledge of various strategies and techniques that facilitate the group work process.