



REAL CHALLENGES REAL SOLUTIONS *Hand in Hand* WITH TEACHERS

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COOPERATIVE LEARNING

As teachers, we want our learners to develop skills such as leadership, teamwork and diplomacy. We want them to listen to their peers and to support and encourage each other. Cooperative learning will help us achieve these aims.

1 CHALLENGE 1: Getting students to support their peers

A traditional education can be rather individualistic. Some students may not understand why they should support their peers or may simply not be used to working in this way.

SOLUTIONS

- Try to create activities in which success is shared: it will be in the students' interests to help each other.
- Point out and let students experience for themselves how support from their peers can be beneficial to the group. A good example of this is the target brainstorm activity: students clearly see what they've learned from their peers.
- For students to appreciate the value of cooperative learning and acquire the skills it develops, it's a methodology that needs to be used regularly.

2 CHALLENGE 2: Getting all students to contribute to the group

Telling students to "work in groups" won't necessarily mean that all group members work equally. Often, more able or confident students take the lead, while weaker or shyer students don't contribute at all.

SOLUTIONS

- The best group tasks are the ones in which all students have to perform a role for the task to succeed. If any one member of the group doesn't do their job, the task can't succeed. This will help to ensure participation.
- A simple, practical example of this is a jigsaw reading activity.
- You can assign different roles to students within a group depending on their strengths, areas of interest, or skills they need to work on.

3 CHALLENGE 3: Fomenting student-student interaction

Traditionally, there's a plenty of teacher-student interaction, but let's place more importance on student-student interaction.

SOLUTIONS

- Get students teaching students. We can use this all the way from presentation (students teaching with flashcards) to revision lessons (groups of students preparing mini-lessons on different topics in the exam). It really does work!

REMEMBER: use group activities where all students have to work for the task to succeed. Let students experience for themselves how support from their peers helps them to learn. Finally, use this methodology regularly so your students really do acquire the skills that cooperative learning develops.