Facilitating Group Work

**"...if somebody knows something, then he knows that he knows it, and at the same time he knows that he knows that he knows..." (Spinoza 1632–1677)**

And sometimes we forget, but we know we once knew...right? Related to helping us remember what we know we know, I offer the following tip to help facilitate group work, which may seem obvious to many, but is often neglected:

* Prepare on your own before you work with your group

Sometimes working in a group feels very disruptive and inefficient. Because everyone has a unique perspective, and oftentimes, a different way of approaching a given problem or task, trying to keep track of your own thinking as well as your group members’ thinking can be very challenging. To help minimize this problem, it is best to do some work on your own before joining your group. You may want to down your ideas, your understanding of a topic, a proposed plan for solving a problem, or other relevant thoughts pertaining to the group activity. Doing so can be beneficial for you and your group as a whole—it can help increase group output, ensure that everyone’s ideas are represented, promote understanding of diverse ideas and perspectives, and facilitate equal participation and contribution.

Further Reading:

Congleton, A. R., & Rajaram, S. (2011). The influence of learning methods on collaboration: prior repeated retrieval enhances retrieval organization, abolishes collaborative inhibition, and promotes post-collaborative memory. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 140(4), 535–551.

Nokes-Malach, T. J., Richey, J. E., & Gadgil, S. (2015). When is it better to learn together? Insights from research on collaborative learning. *Educational Psychology Review*, *27*(4), 645-656.

**Submitted by:**

Sarah Pociask, Ph.D.

Teaching and Learning Assessment Specialist

Wellesley College | spociask@wellesley.edu