

Pragmatics of Structured Partnering

Developing a Classroom Seating Arrangement Conducive to Structured Partnering

Develop a seating arrangement that is conducive to alternate partnering, one that allows students to easily partner with two different classmates. You might have students work with partner one for an entire week, then change to partner two the subsequent week. Here are some possible seating arrangements for regular structured partnering:

- rows - one partner to the left and one partner behind
- tables - one partner across and one beside
- chevron - one partner to the side and one behind

Assigning Appropriate Partners

- ✓ Allow random partnering the first few weeks of the school term until you have had a chance to observe student behavior and social skills and analyze academic performance. Consider allowing students to submit a form to you identifying four students within the class with whom they would feel comfortable and productive working on partnering tasks. Tell students that you will do your best to accommodate their requests and that you will try to at least partner them with a few of their choices over the course of the school year. Assign partners but change at the beginning of a new school term so students can experience working with different individuals.
- ✓ Consider the following variables when determining appropriate partners:
 - English communicative competence, including speaking and listening
 - English reading and writing proficiency (consider data from CELDT, CSTs, etc.)
 - subject matter knowledge'
 - performance on assigned tasks to date in the class
 - personality traits: reserved, insecure, extroverted, class clown, domineering, etc.
- ✓ As a general partnering rule of thumb, don't put high students with low students in terms of academic competence. High students can be placed with other high or mid-level students but not with low. Here is a process for assigning partners taking into consideration literacy and language skills. Rank your students numerically from highest (1, 2, 3) to lowest (28, 29, 30).

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| 1. | is paired with | 16. | 3. | is paired with | 18. |
| 2. | is paired with | 17. | 15. | is paired with | 30. |

Observe how these partners work together and adjust as appropriate.

- ✓ Designate two "floaters" or "pinch hitters" who are flexible, reliable, friendly and socially competent. If a student is absent, have one of the floaters go work with the student missing a partner. Have the other floater go work with a pair of students who could benefit from an extra contributor. The floater will be an additional number 2 in structured partnering tasks.
- ✓ Instruct students early in the term to notify you immediately if their partner is absent. In that way, you can efficiently assign a floater before beginning instruction.