



e Peer Interaction

The following statements relate to activities involving more than one student. Clearly there is more potential for spontaneous interaction in a group situation than in a one-on-one situation: yet it may take a great deal of thought to structure a group so that interaction between peers actually occurs. In a group situation, clear goals for the group and for individual students should exist. Ask yourself what grouping will best meet these goals? Do your instructional goals really lend themselves to a group situation?

E1 The activity is designed so that all members of the group can participate at some level in a way that includes interaction with one another, regardless of the ability of individual students.

If the activity does not allow meaningful participation by all students, one must question whether the grouping is appropriate. Ideally, all students should be able to participate in the activity on some level regardless of individual abilities. Participation may take different forms for different students. In some cases, participation will be cooperative. In other cases, students may be engaged in independent, but parallel tasks.

Options

- A** What do you expect of each participant? (Goals and objectives for each student may be different.)
- B** Is this expectation realistic and meaningful?

- C** How can you change the activity to make it work better? Do materials need to be adapted?
- D** If you can't make it work better for all, do the benefits for some students justify the activity for other students?
- E** Does the activity provide something of interest to all involved?

E2 The student has a clearly specified role in the activity with regard to the roles of peers. Examples: Student A distributes materials to others, while Students B & C play with materials they receive; Student A requests materials from B, while B complies with A's requests; Student A drives the toy fire truck, while Student B rings the bell.

Clear roles for student and peers give a reliable structure for interaction.

Options

- A** The general structure of the activity should be clear and reliable.
- B** Each student should know what is expected. In some cases, the student might basically fulfill the role of requesting and consuming items (e.g., during a meal). More elaborate activities may have a number of different roles for participants to play (e.g., mother, father, baby).
- C** It may be helpful to use props to make the roles clearer, such as a special hat for the storekeeper.
- D** Positions may also be changed to make the difference between roles clearer. For instance, the storekeeper might be positioned close to the supply of materials, while the customer might sit at a table or have a toy shopping cart.
- E** Each role should have an outcome that is motivating.
- F** It may be helpful to review all the roles and activities, perhaps with pictures or scripts, and allow the student and peers to select roles on occasion.