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THE PROCEDURE

Morning Meetings

Starting the school day with a class meeting brings the teacher and students together to practice communication skills in a trusted setting. Meeting time is spent answering concerns, outlining the learning objectives of the day, and announcing future events.



THE SOLUTION

Morning Meetings allow the teacher to model discussions and teach effective problem-solving techniques that will serve students well throughout their lives. **Meetings regularly foster class spirit and give students the chance to deal with conflicts in a gracious and non-confrontational manner.**

This procedure provides these opportunities:

1. Gathering the class together to connect
2. Discussing the daily schedule or calendar
3. Discussing any issues the students may have
4. Previewing upcoming events

THE BACKGROUND

Morning Meetings can take place at any time and as often as needed, so the class can connect as a team.

Morning Meetings are usually held after the morning opening activities and typically last no longer than 10 minutes. During the meeting, the schedule for the day is shared, as well as important upcoming dates and events.

The Morning Meeting is a time when students can bring up any relevant issues that may be bothering them. These may include conflicts on the playground or a classroom procedure that is not being followed. Discuss these issues as a class, without mentioning names. Talk about how these issues can be resolved.

At the end of the Morning Meeting, wrap up with a discussion of the opening assignment and set your positive expectation that it will be a great day for all.

Creating Harmony

I use Morning Meetings to create a community of learners. This premise is based on creating cohesion among the students, so they care about each other and accept one another for who they are.

This has been a very important step in my classroom because I have special needs students who require in-class support.

A classroom that runs on procedures and students that respect each other leads to a harmonious environment.

Laura Keeien ■ Brick, New Jersey

THE PROCEDURE STEPS

Establish a time for the Morning Meeting to take place and the location for the meeting in the classroom. Determine how and where students will sit. The ideal arrangement is in a shape (oval, circle, or square) where eye contact is possible among all the group members, and everyone feels a part of the group.

Decide on the flow of the Morning Meeting and keep it consistent. Post it for students to follow:

1. Greet each other.
2. Read morning message.
3. Review the daily schedule.
4. Reminders of upcoming events.
5. Discuss student concerns.
6. Review the opening assignment.

TEACH

1. Explain the purpose of a Morning Meeting and what the class will gain from it. Emphasize that students should not mention names when discussing issues.
2. Ask students to gather for the Morning Meeting in your predetermined location and seating arrangement.
3. Introduce the flow of the meeting chart and tell students that all Morning Meetings will follow this outline.
4. Tell students that all meetings will begin by sitting close together in their formation, followed by a friendly greeting.

5. Start the greeting by turning to the student on the right and saying, "Good morning, Chris." Chris returns the greeting by saying, "Good morning, Mrs. Jondahl," before turning to the classmate on his right and greeting the classmate. The greeting continues around the circle until it returns to you.
6. Read an opening statement to the students. It can be an interesting fact, why today is going to be a great day for learning, or something they will be learning today.
7. Share the day's schedule, as well as any important upcoming dates or events.
8. Open the discussion for students to share issues. Remind students not to mention names. Model this by starting with an example. Keep discussions short and brief so that everyone who has an issue gets a chance to bring it up. Don't allow the class to get carried away with any one issue or by repeating issues.
9. End the meeting with a review of the opening assignment.
10. Conclude by wishing everyone a great day.
11. Instruct the students to return to their seats in an orderly fashion.

REHEARSE

The first time the class gathers for a Morning Meeting, make sure students are spread out as evenly as possible before complimenting them for arranging themselves correctly.

Show them where the outline of the meeting will be posted, and encourage them to anticipate each part as you move through it during the meeting.

Remind students not to mention names before opening the discussion to the floor. During the discussion, identify students who do a good job of talking about incidents in an effective manner. Highlight what the

student said. For instance, "Mary did a great job using her words to express her concerns about . . ."

Tell students you will be the leader of the Morning Meetings at first, but everyone will have an opportunity to lead the meetings.

REINFORCE

Follow the flow of the meeting you have posted, so students will feel comfortable when it is their time to lead the meeting.

It may take students time to get a grasp of talking about issues effectively, without mentioning names. Remind them that one of the purposes of the meeting is to discuss and resolve issues without hurting other's feelings or confronting them.

As you feel confident in turning over the leadership of the meeting to the students, remain a part of the meeting circle and participate as if a student.

Morning Meetings Modifications

Instead of opening the discussion to the floor, a Praises and Concerns Board can be used to facilitate discussions and keep them in check. A portable whiteboard can be divided in half with a line drawn down the middle. One half is reserved for Praises and the other half for Concerns.

Students can note under Praises someone in class who did something nice or for someone who was helpful. Students can note under Concerns an issue they want to discuss.

During the meeting, place the Praises and Concerns Board where everyone can see it and discuss students' praises and concerns for the week.

The Meeting Leader can share a piece of interesting information as an opening or end-of-meeting activity.

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Top Three After Thirty-Three

I retired six years ago, but if I was teaching, I would still use the same concepts of organization and procedures in my classroom. They were the best for me and my students.

The waste-no-time procedure that was the most successful for me was having an independently attainable activity to do at the beginning of the period. Teaching Social Studies, I incorporated a current events journal as my bellwork. I still have former students tell me that journaling is what they remember most about my classes.

Two other procedures that I specifically remember and used were how to pass papers to the side instead of up the aisle and the Give-Me-Five attention getter. These techniques spread to the other teachers in my building.

I loved my 33 years in education.

Lesla Schulze ■ San Saba, Texas

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THE PROCEDURE

Class Discussions

Define how students participate in class discussions to encourage all students to feel confident about sharing their thoughts and ideas. Students learn when it is appropriate to speak or listen, and to do so respectfully.



THE SOLUTION

All students should feel comfortable participating in discussions without anxiety that their classmates will talk over them, interrupt them, or disrespect them. **When students know how to truly listen to what others have to say, they will learn more and acquire greater benefit from a lesson.**

This procedure resolves these issues:

1. Uneven student participation in class discussions—students speaking out of turn, monopolizing the discussion, or not contributing at all
2. Students not respecting their classmates during discussions
3. Students' lack of confidence in public speaking
4. A classroom where students do not feel they are in a safe and trusted environment

THE BACKGROUND

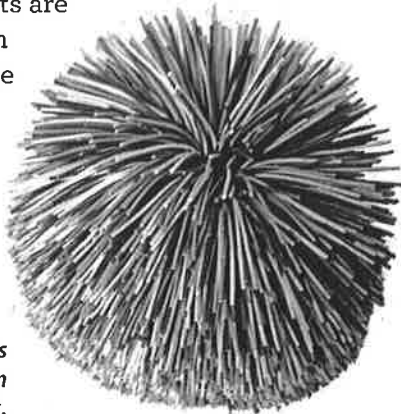
A reactive teacher is preoccupied with stopping students from speaking out of turn. The proactive teacher is more concerned with having all the students take turns speaking in class.

The classroom is a safe space where students feel comfortable participating in class discussions. There will always be students who are more confident with public speaking than others, but they must not be allowed to monopolize class discussions. Quieter students must be encouraged to share their perspectives and are more likely to do so when they are assured that their classmates will listen when they speak—without interrupting, ignoring, or belittling them.

The age level of your students will dictate the technique you use for calling on them. With younger students, providing a Talking Tool—a Koosh Ball, a bean bag, or a stuffed animal—is an effective way to encourage mutual respect. A student can talk only when in possession of the Talking Tool. Everyone else must be quiet, with their eyes and ears focused on the speaker. Discussions are more productive when there is a tool that helps signal to students who can speak and when it is a person's turn to share.

Employing a Talking Tool has the added benefit of providing a visual aid for the teacher to track student participation. When a Talking Tool is passed around the room during a class discussion, it becomes very obvious if some students are participating more than others. The reassurance that the Talking Tool provides also tends to motivate students to participate and get more out of the discussion.

Using a Talking Tool helps the students focus on whose turn it is to talk.



The Teacher as a Model

Students observe the teacher listening and participating in classroom conversations on a daily basis. The effective teacher models

- proper eye contact;
- upright sitting posture;
- how to paraphrase an idea that someone has shared; and
- how to use classmates' contributions as a springboard to their own.

These are valuable communication skills that students learn quickly, demonstrate in school, and use throughout life.

THE PROCEDURE STEPS

If you are going to use a Talking Tool to facilitate discussions, be sure it is safe for the students to use in tossing to one another. Class discussions or small-group discussions need guidelines. These guidelines can include any from this list:

- You may speak only when holding the Talking Tool.
- Eyes and ears must be on the person speaking.
- Mutual respect—respect the person speaking, and he or she will be respectful in turn.
- The classroom is a safe space—everyone should feel comfortable participating in discussions.
- Raise your hand and wait to be in possession of the Talking Tool before speaking.
- Pass the Talking Tool gently with an underhand toss.
- Announce the recipient's name before passing the Talking Tool so that he or she is ready to catch it.

There are other techniques for calling on students. Put names on a craft stick or in a fishbowl, and then simply pull the stick or slip of paper to call on the student.

Craft Sticks

Select names for participation from a container holding the name of every student



The Fish Bowl

The "FAIR" way to select students for discussions, tasks, privileges, and other important duties



A stack of index cards with student's names on each card can be carried around the classroom as you moderate the discussion and call on students to participate.

TEACH

1. Students sit at their desks or on the floor so that they are facing each other and can always see the speaker.
2. Introduce students to how they will be selected for participating in the discussion. Show the device you will be using—Talking Tool, craft sticks, fishbowl, index cards, or other.
3. Remind students that when someone is speaking, all eyes and ears must be focused on the person who "has the floor." Only the person who "has the floor" can speak. Include any other parameters you want to establish for class discussion.
4. At the start of a class discussion, the teacher holds the Talking Tool and explains the topic of discussion. A student who wants to share something must raise his or her hand and wait for the Talking Tool to be gently tossed over. Once the Talking Tool is in his or her possession, the student may speak. In this way, the student is assured that no one will talk over him or her and ensures that the class is listening. Once the student has shared, the Talking Tool is gently tossed to the next student who wants to participate.
5. The teacher can encourage quiet students to participate by saying, "For the next few minutes, I'd like to hear from students who have not had a chance to share yet."
6. Or, at the beginning of the discussion, the teacher can say, "I'd like to encourage everyone to share at least once. So, if you see that there are classmates who haven't spoken yet, and you've already spoken several times, allow others to share their thoughts by not taking another turn yourself."
7. The teacher can also prompt student participation with an invitation to speak or a leading thought.



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Learn a card trick from a college professor and how she calls on students in her classroom.

- “Jonas, since you have been such a good listener, won’t you please share some of your ideas?”
 - “I’m going to start the sentence. Can you share your thoughts on how to complete the sentence?” Give a sentence related to the topic that allows the students to finish with their personal thoughts.
8. To wrap up a class discussion, thank students for participating and sharing their ideas. Also, thank everyone for respecting one another and using the Talking Tool correctly.

REHEARSE

Invite the class to gather for a class discussion. Before the discussion begins, review the steps for a successful class discussion.

Ask the first question, say a student’s name, and toss the Talking Tool to begin the discussion.

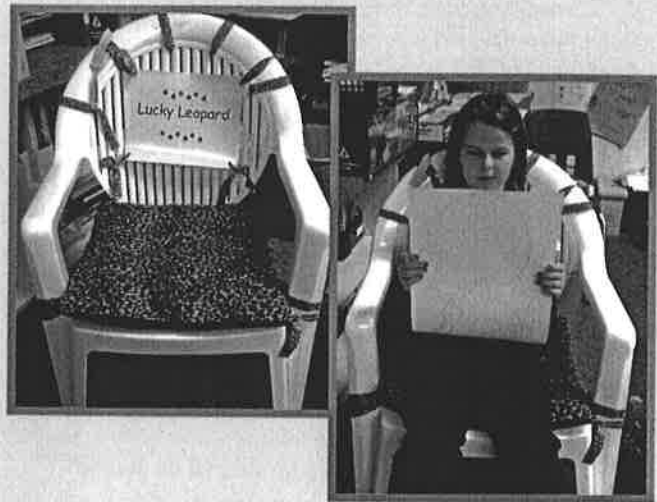
Special Places for Special Speakers

Rocking chairs, stools, recliners, or other special “speaking chairs” in the classrooms are special spots for students to perch upon while sharing ideas, projects, or presentations. Other students have no difficulty seeing and hearing the speaker, and they understand that when a classmate is in the special chair, everyone else must be excellent listeners.

A plastic, resin patio chair can be dubbed the speaking seat. This type of chair is easy to paint and personalize. At the beginning of the year, students bring in items to attach to the chair. These items may be related to the subject, or signify teamwork, respect, integrity, and other positive traits.

When a student sits in the leather rocker, he or she knows to use their “teacher voice.” Listeners in the classroom display the 3 R’s: Respect, Relationships, and Responsibility. If the speaker in the chair sees classmates talking or not listening, the student pauses and says, “I’ll wait for you guys to be ready.” This is a powerful message when it comes from a peer!

If there is a particular student who tends to distract others during class discussions, the teacher can sit next to or directly across from him or her. Establish a non-verbal cue that can be used to remind the student to be respectful of his or her classmates and to participate in an appropriate manner.



- A lowering of the hand to signal, “Please lower your energy level.”
- A time-out sign
- Putting fingers to the lips for silence
- Motioning the zipping of lips for silence

For students who tend to dominate class discussions, sit down with them at another time and suggest that they limit themselves to sharing only three times per discussion. Encourage them to work hard on listening and learning from their classmates. If at the end of the discussion there are still items to share, ask students to write them out for you to read later.

When it is time to change speakers, ask students to recall the procedure.

Continue to practice until all students have participated in the discussion.

If a student forgets to use the Talking Tool, or is being disrespectful, ask a classmate to prompt the student on the correct procedure.

Thank students for holding a successful class discussion that allowed all students to speak and be heard.

REINFORCE

The next time the class gathers for discussion, observe if students are following the correct procedure. Comment and redirect students if necessary. At the end of every class discussion, thank the students for holding such a respectful and interesting discussion and for following the procedure.

Practice Makes Perfect

I have coached basketball for a number of years and the phrase 'practice makes perfect' transfers from the basketball court to the classroom.

We practice the procedures until they become routines and are performed correctly. I provide hand signals to go along with my expectations. This eliminates the use of my voice, especially when I need to be quiet as well. Eventually my students pick up on the hand signals and begin to use them, too.

Throughout the year, the routines need to be revisited, especially after winter and spring breaks; but it doesn't take long before they are in the swing of things again.

Christine Chang ■ Port Angeles, Washington



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Learn the value of wait-time and how it improves students' responses.



I Know the Answer!

Monica Burns teaches in New York City and uses a silent method in class discussion where all students are actively engaged in the discussion 100 percent of the time.

Monica teaches this signal at the start of the year when they begin having whole class discussions at their seats or on the rug. Instead of blurting out, "I know the answer," students pat the top of their head when they concur with the answer being given by classmates who have been called upon. This visual agreement is a quick check for Monica to see who is engaged in the discussion, who understands the information, and who may need additional help.

The pat-on-the-head technique keeps all students engaged in the discussion, regardless of who is answering the question. These are the reasons Monica finds this signal effective:

- Gets less outgoing students involved in a discussion.
- Keeps the whole class actively engaged even when they are not providing an answer themselves.
- Supports responsible talk prompts such as, "I agree with ____ (name) because . . ."
- Adds to a discussion by identifying students who do not support another student's answer ("I noticed that you do not agree with ____ (name).").
- Combats a student's frustration from not being called on; an alternative to slamming one's hand on a desk or sighing heavily.
- Stops students from calling out, "I knew that!" or, "I had that answer!"

- Identifies who is not paying attention and holds every student accountable for participation.
- Transfers to discussions in all subject areas.

For instance, Monica is teaching fact families. She asks students to describe the fact family for $3 + 4$.

Student 1: "4 + 3"

(Monica looks to make sure everyone has tapped their head in agreement.)

Student 2: "4 - 3"

(If a student does not tap his or her head, Monica follows up by asking a clarifying question.)

Monica: "Ali, I saw that you did not agree that $4 - 3$ is part of this fact family. Could you explain your thinking?"

(Student should be able to support why she agrees or disagrees with another student's answer.)

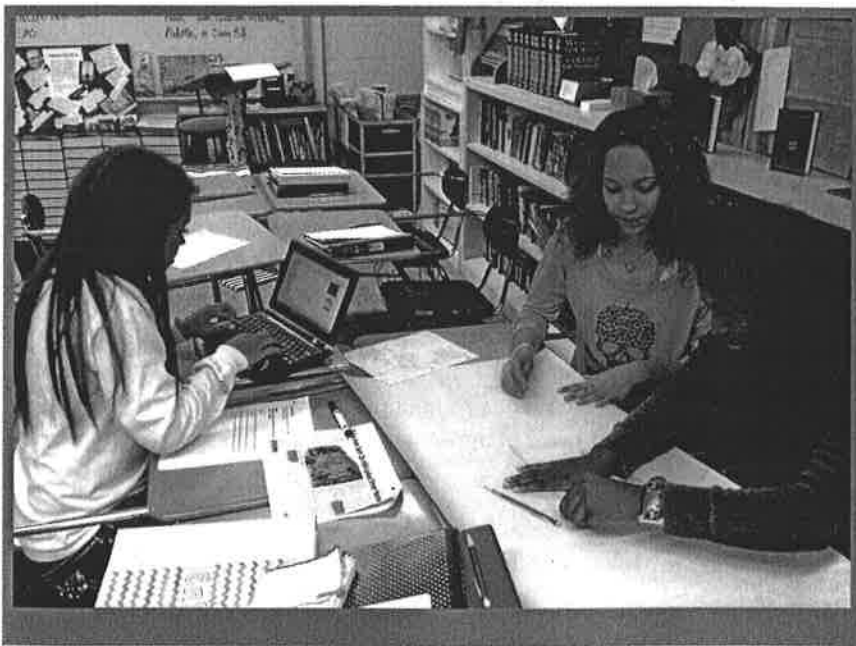
Her technique helps students learn to listen and respect others when someone is sharing. It also gives students an opportunity to disagree in a non-confrontational way.

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THE PROCEDURE

Working in Groups

Getting students into groups efficiently and quietly will set the pace for how productively students work in groups. The less time students spend transitioning into groups, the more time there will be for learning.



THE SOLUTION

Working in groups promotes teamwork, camaraderie, and practical experience for future employment. Students work in groups throughout the day, so having a procedure is a must for minimizing the time it takes for students to transition to an activity.

This procedure resolves these issues:

1. Chaos while students rush about, forming their own groups
2. Less popular students being left out of groups
3. Inefficient use of teacher and class time

THE BACKGROUND

Being able to work effectively in a group, learning to compromise to attain common goals, and assuming shared responsibility for teamwork are skills that students need to learn to be successful in school, at work, and throughout life. The procedure for forming groups and transitioning from a classroom setting to a group work setting must be well-rehearsed and hassle-free.

THE PROCEDURE STEPS

The success of this procedure will be determined before it is even played out in the classroom. The more thought and planning that goes into this procedure, the more effective it will be. There are many questions you will need to answer before you can ask your students to form groups.

- How will students be assigned to groups?
- Where will the groups work?
- How will the group work together?
- What will be the consistent transition cue to alert students it is time to end their work as a group and come together as a class?

ASSIGNING STUDENTS TO GROUPS

The purpose of a group is for everyone to work together as a team. Therefore, everyone in the group must have a job to do as a functioning member of the team. Preassign students to groups, rather than letting students pick their teammates. This eliminates students feeling left out, chaos in the classroom as students search for potential teammates, and grouping students with incompatible learning levels or disparate behavior patterns.

The size of a group is determined by the activity you wish the group to perform. Some groups could have three members, while other groups may have seven members.

Consider this when determining the groups' composition:

- Will everyone have a task to do while working in the group?
- Will the members of a group be able to help one another?
- Will the members learn from each other?
- Will the members work effectively together?

Group composition and size will change with each activity. Students will get a chance to work with all of their classmates and won't be stuck in a group, working with someone with whom they would prefer not to be teamed.

GROUP WORK LOCATIONS

Decide where the best locations are in the room for groups to meet and work together. Assign groups to these locations. Depending on the dynamics of the class, the type of activity, and the set-up of the classroom, students can either move desks or chairs, or themselves to their group's work location.

You assign the place for the group to work. It is not a free-choice decision.

If the group will be meeting for an extended period of time, make a class map that shows where each group is expected to meet and work together. Post this map on the class notice board next to the group list.

GROUP WORK PROCEDURES

Establish a set of procedures for students to follow while working in groups.

- You are responsible for your own work and behavior.
- If you have a question, ask your fellow group members for help.
- If your group member asks for help, try your best to help the person.
- Ask the teacher for help only if the entire group is stumped and everyone can agree on the same question.

These procedures encourage students to help one another, rather than relying exclusively on you. Your time is more effectively used because you need only attend to a group when all members are in doubt.

USING A CONSISTENT TRANSITION CUE

Depending on the grade level, use a suitable cue to facilitate students' transitions to and from groups and back to the classroom.



Giving a verbal cue to transition to the group work is appropriate. A simple, "Please begin your group work," works well.

Use a countdown timer to signal when it is close to transition time.

Playing music to signal when it is time to transition back is a commonly used cue. A song can provide the class with a set amount of time to bring closure to the task and resume working as a class. Music can also help keep the noise level down during transitions—tell students that any noise they make has to be softer than the music that's playing.

Counting down is also an effective verbal cue. Give students a set number of seconds and count aloud, or set a timer. This tells students how much time they have to transition and reestablishes when they have to be in their designated places.

A well-rehearsed cue for transitioning in and out of groups maximizes the time the students will spend on the group assignment.



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Learn some ways to quickly form groups without using any cards, marbles, candy, or other objects.



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Browse these free countdown timers to alert students to get ready for transitions.

TEACH

1. Explain to students that you have preassigned them to groups.
2. Explain that this group is for this one activity and that the next time they are asked to work as a group, it may be with different classmates and a different number of members.
3. Announce the members of your first group.
4. Point out the location where each group is to work.
5. If applicable, show students the group list and class map, and tell them where they can find it.
6. Demonstrate the signal for gathering in groups.
7. Explain to students while they are in working groups that there are procedures to follow:
 - You are responsible for your own work and behavior.
 - If you have a question, ask your fellow group members for help.
 - If your group member asks for help, try your best to help the person.
 - Ask the teacher for help only if the entire group is stumped, and everyone can agree on the same question.
8. Model the transition cue for coming back to the class. Share that it will always be the same cue.
9. Explain what the procedure is when the transition cue is given. For instance, when the teacher starts the countdown timer, the procedure is to
 - bring closure to what they are doing as a group;
 - return materials;
 - return furniture to its original location; and
 - be back in their respective seats when there is no time left on the timer.

REHEARSE

Appoint a few students to be the first group and point out where they are to work.

Give them a simple task to do that requires them to interact.

Ask the rest of the class to act as monitors for the procedure.

Give the cue for breaking into groups.

Once they are in their group and have begun working, stop the process and ask the monitors for feedback on how well their classmates performed the procedure. Correct mistakes and address problems as needed.

Ask the students to resume their work. Approach the group and ask what the procedure is for when they have a question. Allow the class to determine if it is the right or wrong answer. Correct them as needed.

Ask the students to continue working. Give the cue for transitioning back to the classroom.

When the students are back in their seats, ask for observations from their classmates. Correct mistakes as needed.

Thank the students for participating in the first group to model the procedure, pointing out the highlights of your observations of whether the correct procedure was followed.

Reverse roles—the students who participated in the first practice group are now the observers, while the rest of the class has been assigned into groups and their meeting locations.

Give the cue for group work to begin. Stop the process at the same points as before and allow the observers to respond. Correct problems as needed.

Continue prompting at points throughout the rehearsal process until you are sure the students know what the procedure is for going to groups, working in groups, and coming back as a class after group work.

REINFORCE

Before the first real-time group work begins, review the procedure for group work. As the students are going through the process, thank them for successfully following a specific part of the procedure. “Shoji, thank you for moving to your group without talking to your classmates.” This affirms the specific action and is more useful than, “Shoji, you did a good job moving to your group.” Your specific words of encouragement help the student to understand what your expectations are in carrying out the procedure.

When students have returned to their seats after the group work, give them feedback on how the process went. Affirm and correct the procedure as needed.

Working Together in Groups

For group work in the laboratory, there is a procedure, so each student is prepared to contribute equally to the group's work.

I determine the lab groups at the beginning of the year, but will change them from time to time, if necessary. Students will decide which role they wish to complete for the first lab, and will then rotate through the jobs of Recorder, Supply Gatherer, Safety Person, and Recorder.

For group work in the classroom, students will work in groups of three. All students fulfill the role of Researcher for the group. Students will rotate the roles of Recorder, Time Manager, and Fact Checker, depending upon the group activity.

Jancsi Roney ■ Clermont, Georgia