

Altman - Grouping Students Bring Back

I taught a lesson about Solfege (*i.e. "the do, re, mi, stuff"*) to a 5th grade class at BEMS. There were three nested lesson objectives:

Discuss different personality types, according to a model I have created. (It is unscientific, and I'm using it mainly to encourage students to think about their own personalities and how they differ from others.)

Discuss a short informational reading (Altman, Solfege Article) in groups of 3, posing questions according to Costca's Levels of Questioning.

Collaborate on making a short quiz about Solfege that includes questions of levels 1 and 2.

Group make-up was determined according to the student's stated personalities; the Scribe, the Brick, the Mortar. Students had a measure of choice in forming groups (with my arbitration for behaviour).

Each student had a role based on her "type".

The Scribe - This role is for a student who likes to write and has good handwriting, but who may not be as comfortable leading a discussion.

The Brick - This role is for an enthusiastic student -- someone who is interested in their own ideas.

The Mortar - This role is for a student with strong social skills -- someone who can help the others in her group participate and feel included.

Because the groups were based on unscientific self-assessment, some groups were more balanced than others. Each group produced questions for at least the first two levels of Costca's levels of questioning about the Solfege Article. The groups collaborated in making one quiz together, which we did not have time to complete.

Here's what worked: The students enjoyed feeling like their personalities mattered, and that there was a place for them. They were able to produce results, if perhaps below the level I might hope for. Each student demonstrated at least a cursory understanding of Costca's Levels of Questioning.

Here's the problem: The article was not originally intended as lesson material. I chose it because it lends itself well to questioning at various depths. When I do this lesson again, I will use a simpler text.