

QUICK

S T A R T S

Use these exercises to help your class explore the importance of participation and to introduce the “Participation” video.



The group depends on everyone's participation. Locate a short mystery story and cut it up into pieces, a couple sentences for each student. As students enter the classroom, give each a slip with a few sentences on it. Ask one or two students (in confidence) to hold back, to be reluctant participators. When the students have assembled and solved the mystery, ask them to comment on how the group process unfolded. Was the group hurt by reluctant participators?



We win and lose together. Assign the next class project to small groups and explain that one grade will be given to each group. Ask them to consider how they will share the work fairly. Who will decide who does what? What will they do if someone fails to do his or her part? What if someone tries but can't pull his or her weight? Is it fair to grade a group? Are group grades more “real world” than individual grades?



What does participation mean? Discuss with students how we participate outside the classroom. Use, for example, a club, church group, or sports team as a model. How do individuals contribute to group success? What happens to group performance when one or two individuals hold back? Think of a group or team that has really great “team spirit.” What does team spirit mean? What contributes to team spirit? How is it built? Can you have great team spirit when someone's not pulling his or her weight?



Participation isn't easy. Try the Miller relay. Ask the class to participate outdoors in teams of eight to 10 students. If you can't get outside, use two pairs indoors. Chalk off a start line and a finish line. Distance makes no difference. When the teams are lined up at the start, tell them there's only one rule in the relay: The winning team is the one that crosses the finish line together first. On your mark, get set, go! Most classes miss the point that the team must cross the finish line at exactly the same moment, which requires coordination. After the race, ask students to think of activities in which they must rely on others.



How does participation work? At the beginning of class, ask students to rearrange the desks. Pick a configuration—circle, semicircle, several circles. Don't encourage or instruct; wait for students to finish the exercise. After they're finished, discuss the process: Who did the work? Was there a leader? How were conflicts resolved? Who did nothing ... and why?

“If every American donated five hours a week, it would equal the labor of 20 million full-time volunteers.”

—Whoopi Goldberg