Collaborative Pairs, Distilled*

Distilled (di-stild') adj. 4. Separated or extracted essence

Why we need to use Collaborative Pairs . . .

- Learning is enhanced by "social" interaction.
- All students are actively engaged, each step along the way.
- All students take responsibility for their learning.
- The use of collaborative pairs allows for consistent, intermittent informal assessment.
- The use of collaborative pairs enables teachers to recognize and address misconceptions before they become "fixed."
- Collaborative pair prompts build in opportunities for students to "process" their learning.
- Collaborative pair work automatically builds "distributed practice" opportunities within the lesson.
- Talking about thinking and learning makes the learning permanent.

What it looks like	What it sounds like
- Teachers have trained students to move into pairs smoothly and efficiently. - Conversations are structured and have a specific purpose. - Students are head-to-head or face-to-face. - Each partner has specific responsibilities. - Students are using 6-inch voices. - Teacher is moving around the room and listening in on the interactions. - Time limits help focus the pairs. - Structures for pairs are varied: - Pairs Checks - Think/Write-Pair-Share - Collaborative Note-Taking - Appointment Clocks - Numbered Heads	- The teacher says . . . "Turn to your partner and. . ." "1s tell 2s … ; then 2s tell 1s …" "1s ask the question; 2s tell the answer; then switch roles." "Go to your 1 o'clock appointment and …" - The students say . . . 1s: "One question I have is …"; 2s: "I think …" 1s: "I'll do the talking about…"; 2s: "I'll takes notes about what we say…" 1s: "I'll state our opinion about…"; 2s: "I'll provide the support."

How to use Collaborative Pairs

At the beginning of the year/course . . .

1. Design a variety of ways for structuring pairs of students (appointment clocks, shoulder partners, learning-style partners, etc.)
2. Model routines for moving into pairs.
3. Create a system for identifying individuals within each pair (numbered heads—1's and 2's, older/younger, etc.)
4. Model for students what "working with a partner" should look like and sound like.
5. Give students research-based rationale for pairs work:
   a. "Two minds are better than one."
   b. "Talking cements learning."
   c. "It's hard to opt out in a pair."
   d. "Everybody's thinking is important."

Before the lesson . . .

1. Decide on the pair structure that best suits the individual task. For example, do you want to pair students of similar interests, similar skills, different abilities, etc.?
2. Design prompts for partners that are specific, connected to the lesson essential question, and limited in scope and time requirement.
   Answer . . .   Compare . . .   Sum up . . .
   Develop . . .   Suggest . . .   Give reasons for . . .

During the lesson . . .

1. Monitor the partner work to avoid wasted time, off-task behavior, and misinformation—"management by walking around."
2. Use a timer to focus the pairs work: less is more.
3. Use the information you observe about the student learning to inform your instruction.
4. Build in accountability between partners and with you: give specific responsibilities/tasks to each partner (1s turn to 2s and tell them . . .); have them turn in a product (a short written or illustrated response).