

COMPILATION: optimal lab group size

Date: Sat, 4 Sep 1999

From: John Barrere <forcejb@YAHOO.COM>

I have a very nice problem: should I use lab groups of two or three students. Several of my classes are small enough so that I could have groups of two students at each lab station. I know from experience that three is way better than four, but I don't know if two is really better than three. Does anyone have any experience on this issue?

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From: Richard McNamara

I'd say go with three. My experience with groups of two is that there isn't enough diversity for good group discussions. The other issue is absences. With one group member absent, a group of three becomes two and can still get things done. On the other hand, a group of two becomes a singleton and frequently can't get much done.

Date: Sun, 5 Sep 1999

From: Jim Harpel

My experience would agree with groups of three as well.

Date: Sun, 5 Sep 1999

From: Kristen Guyser

In response to whether two or three students should be used in a lab group, I found three to be best. With two students, I found there wasn't enough "background" to really pool ideas, and I found that a group of two doesn't "discuss" or argue enough as a group of three. The two students either tend to agree with one another or either one of the students is willing to keep quiet to keep their partner happy and get the lab done. With a group of three, there is at least one person who disagrees and sparks discussion and there's enough people to get a lab done in an appropriate time (each one takes a job like timing, working the computer equipment, and setting/starting the lab). That's just my experience and opinion! And I agree, four to a lab group seems to be one person too many sometimes.
