

# Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to  
Accelerate Student  
Learning

## Companion Guide

Chapter 4: Behavioral Engagement  
Intentional Step One



## Chapter 4

### Intentional Step One: Improve Student Behavior During Group Work

As discussed, it's important to design group work such that students understand its purpose and can see the benefits of learning from their peers. Building on the cognitive aspects of group work, teachers can also focus on student behaviors. Be clear about the activity's objectives and how students will work together. Offer guidelines for conversing with their peers respectfully, assign roles and divide the labor, and ensure all group members feel included and engaged. See Chapter 15 for more ideas on promoting productive group work.

#### Strategy 1: Teach Students Collaborative Techniques

There are a range of collaborative techniques teachers can use to improve student behavior during group work. This section will cover three: Group Roles and Responsibilities, Group Guidelines, and Sentence Starters.

- 1. Group Roles and Responsibilities** - The teacher gives students a handout at the beginning of group work that includes a list of roles and responsibilities for group members, such as leader, manager, recorder, and spokesperson. Students divide the roles and perform their duties as appropriate to the task. For an example of the Group Roles and Responsibilities tool, see the corresponding handout.

Assigning specific roles and responsibilities helps keep students on task and ensures all group members are aligned on the specific learning goals. These roles make students accountable for their learning and to each other, which deepens emotional engagement. Students can also practice self-regulation (.52), positive peer influence (.52), complex problem solving, and social awareness.

**2. Group Guidelines** - Before assigning group work, the teacher gives students a Group Guidelines sheet that outlines behavioral expectations for group members as they collaborate on a task. The teacher reviews the rules with students and ensures they understand them. As the work begins, the sheet is displayed as a reference for each group. While students perform the task, the teacher circulates the room and offers assistance. Students will take notes on the sheet depicting how well their group follows the guidelines and stays on task. Afterward, students also assess their behavior on the same sheet and turn it in to the teacher. See the “Group Guidelines” handout for an example of what this might look like.

This strategy provides clear standards for students as they move through group work (.47). It also keeps students on task, allows them to reflect on their behavior, and reinforces self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision making.

**3. Sentence Starters** - One approach to modeling collaborative class discussions is to give students Sentence Starters. These conversation-starter questions help students learn to have more meaningful and rigorous peer-to-peer academic discussions. For a more detailed breakdown of this exercise, see the following chapter on rigor.