

You Can... Take creative approaches to group work

Group work can provide an excellent structure for creative activities. The children work together to create something new that is more than the sum of what the individuals might have done. However, group work must be managed well if it is going to work effectively, and this means that you must plan it carefully.

Thinking points

- In the 'real world', the majority of creative activities are performed by individuals – the novelist, the artist. Although there is sometimes a team at work, for instance, when making a film, there is typically a director or similar figure in charge.
- Genuine collaboration, where each person has an equal impact on the final result, is hard to achieve. Often, it is about individuals bringing different creative skills to the table, with each contribution enhancing the other; for instance, a song-writing duo where one person writes the words and the other the music.
- In school, we want to encourage collaborative group work, because it asks the children to cooperate and learn together. To achieve this, some children must learn how to adapt their normal roles within a peer group situation.

Tips, ideas and activities

- This activity uses the concept of metaphor to underpin thinking about the roles we take on within a group. The children will need to understand how an animal might be used to describe a person. To get started:
 - Show the children several images of different types of animals (tiger, elephant, dog, pig, etc.).
 - Talk about what these animals are like and the qualities they associate with each animal.
 - Ask them to imagine each animal as a person and talk about what that person would be like.
 - Tell the class what kind of animal you would be and why this animal best suits your personality.
 - Ask each child to choose an animal that describes themselves.
 - Play a few rounds of 'Twenty Questions', getting the class to ask questions of a volunteer in order to guess 'their' animal.
 - Now ask the children to tell a partner what their animal is and why they chose it.
 - Finally, talk with the class about how we might choose to play a different animal in certain situations.
- Use the photocopiable sheet on page 56 ('What's my animal?'). Ask the children to think about the qualities that each animal might have, if they were people, and then look at

the words listed. Explain any unfamiliar words to the children and then match the words to the animals. Finally, ask the children to colour the pictures and cut them out to create four animal cards. They could then write the matching words, on the back of each card, as a prompt.

- Next time you set a group activity, ask the children to pick one of their animals card at random. Encourage them to take on that role within the group, for example, being 'a quiet mouse' when they might previously have been 'a loud lion'.

