

Team Scheme

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The goal of this practice is to teach adult ESL learners job-related skills that they will need to enter the American workforce. The practice is designed to encourage the development of teamwork and cooperation, skills that are not prevalent in some cultures.

The concept is essentially a job chart posted on the classroom wall that assigns groups of learners specific, simple classroom tasks on a weekly basis. Some examples of classroom tasks are passing out books and papers or erasing the chalkboard at various break times; however, for simplicity it may be best to keep this activity limited to four main tasks that need to be done daily. The tasks are printed on a large grid on newsprint along with the days of the week. The learners' names are printed on small, rectangular cards that are then covered with contact paper and backed with double-sided transparent tape.

Learners are divided into four teams and each team is assigned a classroom task. Each team assigns a member a specific task that is to be completed for a given week with the catch being that if a team member is absent, it is the responsibility of the other team members to carry out the task. This encourages a sense of teamwork and a sense of the group being responsible for the task without assistance from the instructor. In addition, each learner is forced to learn the names of teammates and intermingle with others resulting in increased cooperation between diverse cultures and social groups. Finally, learners must take responsibility for routine classroom tasks, freeing the instructor to concentrate on teaching.

Initially, there was some concern that the learners would be insulted by the elementary school nature of the job charts, but that was proven to be unfounded when the learners seemed to enjoy meeting the goals set before them. When new learners join the class, established learners can explain the routine and invite newcomers to join teams, thereby reinforcing the lessons of cooperation and team building.

This practice is easily replicated and can be modified to meet the needs of any class. After the cost of the materials needed to construct the chart and name cards, the instructor's time is the only other dedication.