

Inquiry Mini-Lessons

Dividing and Sharing Tasks When Working with Others

Learning to work with others requires modelling, lots of practice, reflection, and refinement. Start small, providing many opportunities for students to interact successfully. Because inquiry is related to big ideas, it allows for a variety of activities that are open-ended enough to allow different points of entry for different levels of learners. Opportunities are available for exploration, investigation, and communication.

Time: 20–25 minutes

Materials:

- chart paper and markers, or interactive whiteboard
- four or five pieces of mural paper, divided into columns so each student (in the group of four) has a column for recording
- labels for the mural charts (e.g., “What I know about clean water?”, “What I know about unclean water?”)
- a variety of coloured markers

Grouping: whole class and small groups of four students

Procedure:

Teaching Tip: Form mixed-ability groupings and, when possible, consider students’ interest and background to increase engagement. Place the mural paper and markers in different areas of the room.

1. On your interactive whiteboard or chart paper, set up a chart with two columns, using the following headings: “What I know about clean water” and “What I know about unclean water.” Provide two different coloured markers for filling in the chart.

What I know about clean water	What I know about unclean water

2. Explain to students that today you are going to work together on a shared task. If you’ve just finished the *Water Works!* unit, for example, tell students that they are going to begin by thinking about all they know about water—clean water and unclean water. Proceed to model and record, using Think Alouds.

To explore our inquiry, we need to think about what we know about water—both clean and unclean. Because it is a large topic, we need to divide up the task. Here is a chart that we can use to fill in our ideas. Each column allows a person to record their thinking. Some of you will be thinking about what you know about clean water and others will be thinking about unclean water. Each person writes in a different colour and begins by signing in. I will begin and fill in my box as I think about clean water. I am thinking that I know people need to drink clean water.

What I know about clean water	What I know about unclean water
Mrs. G. • people need to drink clean water	

3. Have a student come up and sign in, filling in one thought in the column labelled “What I know about unclean water.” If necessary, use a prompt, e.g., “What do you know about unclean water? Where might you find unclean water?” Remind the student to use a different colour marker.

What I know about clean water	What I know about unclean water
Mrs. G. • people need to drink clean water	Lucas • rain water is dirty and you can't drink it

4. Have small groups record their ideas on the mural paper posted around the classroom. Encourage them to divide the task and to talk to the person beside them to clarify their thinking. Remind students to sign in before filling in their part of the chart.
5. After, give each group time to present individual ideas to their own group members. Remind them to take turns and be active listeners. Circulate and listen in and/or prompt when students discover similar ideas are recorded.
6. Over the course of the next few days, have each group share their ideas with the whole class, adding their ideas to the class chart and encouraging them to practise being active listeners and using prompts as needed.

I like how you are taking turns. Jason connected his idea to one Tamara wrote. Good for you!

Teaching Tip: Praise students for the information they recorded. Make sure you note how many recorded similar information. Consider marking this information so all can readily see it, e.g., by circling or underlining. Make reference to the fact that as we learn more, some of our facts may not prove true.

7. Keep the charts posted and allow students to place a check mark beside facts proven to be true as the inquiry continues.