My Very Word

ACTIVITY: 'MY VERY WORD'

TIME: 15+ minutes
SIZE: Groups of four to eight
SPACE: For small groups to work
RESOURCES: Index cards, thick pens, pens and paper

The aim is for students to work quickly together as a group.

The result should be an appreciation that each student can bring something important to a group, and also a firmer understanding of group dynamics.

1. Break the class into groups of six or thereabouts – try for equal numbers in each group.

2. Give each group two minutes to name themselves and work up a quick war-cry or chant, and try it out.

3. Distribute five index cards per person. Have each team member choose and write five letters from the alphabet (one letter per card) without showing his/her teammates. Have students keep them hidden for the moment.

4. Each group now pools together its cards, and group members must work out as many words as possible from their collected cards, writing them down on a master sheet. Set a time limit (five minutes should suffice). Scoring is one point per word; you may opt to give extra points for longer words and no points for plurals.

5. As a variation, you may allow each team to swap four unwanted letters with four letters from a rival group.

DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

•   What went through your mind as you were choosing your letters? Were you thinking about the group? Or what the group might think of you? How did those thoughts make you feel?

•   What did you think about your group members? What did you think about the other (competitor) groups? How did those thoughts affect your actions?

•   How were roles divided in your group? Was there a natural leader? Were tasks delegated, or did everyone share duties equally? Did your system work, or would you change it? Why/why not?

•   Were there conflicts in your group? If so, how were they resolved? If not, why not?

•   What strengths did you bring to the group?

•   How is this activity like real life? What circumstances can we be thrown into where we have to make the most of what we've got by working together? What circumstances or events would be easier to handle as part of a group? Why?