

CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING IN SMALL GROUPS

Lane Kobel and Shanna Nifoussi Natural Science, Biology Program, UW-Superior

Group work is an integral component of the active learning classroom; establishing an individual's sense of belonging in small groups is an important aspect of learning as it allows students to feel more engaged with the class and to feel more comfortable asking questions. The question posed by this study was: to what extent does the way in which groups are formed influence an individual's sense of belonging in the group? Groups were either formed randomly and changed biweekly, or formed intentionally based on surveyed learning styles and maintained throughout the semester. While no differences in belongingness were found between the groups, strongly positive correlations between feeling safe to share opinions or understanding the class content and a students' sense of belonging emerged. This data solidifies the importance of developing a student's sense of belonging to facilitate course engagement and content understanding.

