Choosing Jobs in the Kitchen Classroom

Overview

In every kitchen class there is a process of dividing up the work to be done between students. This process can set the tone for the remainder of the class so it is important to make sure that students feel heard and respected through the process. Our goal is for the students to perceive the process as fair and match every student to a job that they are excited to do. This provides buy-in and engagement throughout class.

Before starting a lesson, consider the work that needs to be done and organize it into job groups or categories. For some lessons we divide the work based on ingredients, and for others by recipe. Generally, for younger students we give individual ingredients as jobs and for older students we denote entire recipes as job groups and have them independently organize specific jobs within the recipes. We have a few different methods that we employ based on the lesson and our experience of students' choices within each lesson.

Top Two:

This method is used in most lessons to divide up work between students.
1.	Describe each of the jobs to the group and state the number of students needed to complete the job.
2.	Tell the students that they will each have a turn to share their top two choices and that the order that they speak in does not influence how the jobs will be assigned.
3.	Note each student's choices on a piece of paper using abbreviations for the jobs (eg. "C" for carrot and "O" for onion).
4.	Once all students have expressed their preferences, try to match each student to one of their top two picks. If you cannot match all students to one of their top two jobs, ask if there are any students who will volunteer to switch to another job. If so, thank them for the flexibility. If not, propose a compromise in which students share one of their top picks with another student and then also work on the remaining unchosen jobs.

Raising Hands:

This method is used frequently when there are only a few groups or jobs available. It is faster than Top Two and can be used when time is at a premium. It can also be used with groups in which choosing jobs is not contentious and for whom doing Top Two seems unnecessary.
1.	Describe each of the jobs to the group and state the number of students needed to complete the job. If there is one job that is predictably less popular, start with that one.
2.	Ask students to raise their hands if they want to work on a part of a recipe

and repeat for the other jobs and recipes.
3.   If the groups are appropriately proportioned, proceed with the work. If not, ask for a volunteer to switch groups.

Students Decide:
During Iron Chef and in our eighth grade Independence Series, we ask our students to divide up the work and jobs amongst themselves. This is a high-level collaboration skill that we scaffold by making our processes visible in their seventh grade kitchen classes. In this method, the teacher introduces the recipe and invites students to read the recipe and discuss how to divide the work.

Teaching Notes:
● Encourage all students to take turns sharing their jobs so that they can experience more parts of the process. This can also be a good way to alleviate stress around not getting very popular job options.
● Split up any problematic groups or pairs of students by assigning them different jobs.
● If you notice that certain jobs are less popular, sell that job to the students using one or more of the following strategies:
    ▪ Show the students how the job is done in restaurant kitchens and emphasize that they will be doing it the same way as professional chefs.
    ▪ Note that some jobs involving repetitive work (like washing salad) that may seem boring can be a good opportunity to converse and catch up with a friend.
    ▪ Describe the job with great excitement and enthusiasm and share why you enjoy doing that job.
    ▪ Describe the importance of the job to the meal.
    ▪ Describe the importance of the job being done exceptionally well.
    ▪ Frame the job as a challenge that you need someone to step up to.