they have is redundancy, they will not achieve anything beyond what they enter the group with. To be generative, they also need diversity; the things that individual members of the group bring that are not shared by the others—different ideas, viewpoints, perspectives, representations, et cetera. Groups of three seem to have the perfect balance of redundancy and diversity. This is why self-selected groups tend not to be as productive—too much redundancy, not enough diversity.

For Grades K–2, however, the optimal group size was two. Despite the lack of diversity this affords, students at this age are still developmentally in a stage of parallel play, and collaboration consists mostly of polite turn taking. What we learned was that groups of two, coupled with the guidance of the teacher, allows this polite turn taking to start to shift toward listening to each other and building on each other's ideas—to shift toward true collaboration. This is not to say that your eighth graders are demonstrating great collaboration in your classroom, but rather that they have the skills in place to do so, and often use these skills outside the classroom.

Once we were implementing frequent and visibly random groupings, we saw an immediate uptick in the amount of students' engagement and thinking. By removing the nexus of control from both the teacher and the students, the students entered their groups not knowing what their role would be that day. This allowed for different students to step forward and begin to think. We ran the aforementioned survey after two weeks of implementation, and we saw a definite increase in the number of students who would offer an idea. And after six weeks

Figure 2.1 A group of three students working collaboratively.
Source: SDI Productions /iStock.com