

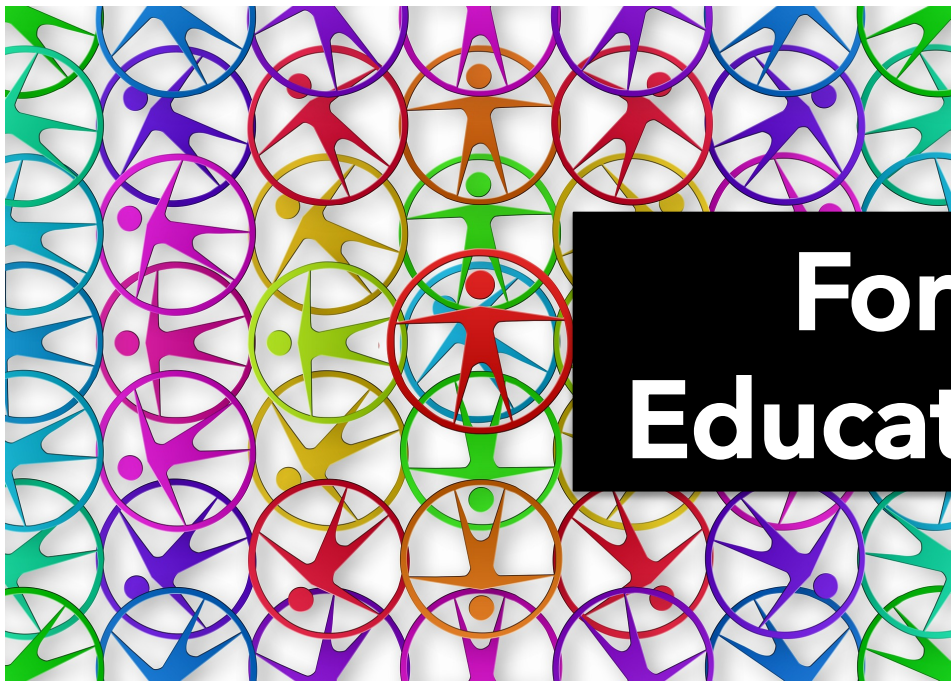
ELA 6-12



Grappling with Group Work

*Four Handouts to Help your
Students Work Well Together
in any Discipline*

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For Educators

In this packet you'll find resources to use in guiding students to consider the sticky questions of group dynamics. While we often ask our students to work collaboratively, they rarely have the opportunity to consider the nature of such work. With these four handouts, which you can use together over the course of a unit involving group work, or at the beginning of a term to help students prepare for all such work, you will give your classes a chance to explicitly consider what makes a good group member and what makes a positive group experience.

I designed this curriculum because I never had anything like this myself as a student, and I never really understood group work. In my groups it seemed there would be one or two students competing for the glory of doing all the work and one or two students competing to do the least. No one was too happy with the situation.

Hopefully, by using these handouts, students can discover ways to interact positively and productively together. Though every student is always going to contribute differently, by discussing the goals and dynamics up front, they will understand how they can contribute using their individual gifts and respecting the contributions of others.

What's inside:

Mini-Interviews: This handout invites students to discuss their past group work experiences with their classmates, drawing conclusions about positive group dynamics as they go.

Brainstorm: What Makes a Good Group Member? : This handout gives students a chance to reflect on the types of contributions that do and do not help a group succeed.

Group Work in Real Life: This handout gives students a chance to consider the many group situations they will encounter in their future. As they come up with ideas, like family life, boardroom debates, sports team experiences, camping trips, volunteer committees, etc., they will further understand how important learning the art of group dynamics can be.

Reflection: How did the group work go? : This handout gives students a chance to reflect upon a group experience and draw conclusions they can build on in their next group situation.

Mini-Interviews: Group Work Experiences

During the interview period, talk to five other people in class about their past group work experiences and fill in their responses below.

1. Do you like group work?

Why or why not?

2. What's one group project you've done in the past?

What went well?

What didn't?

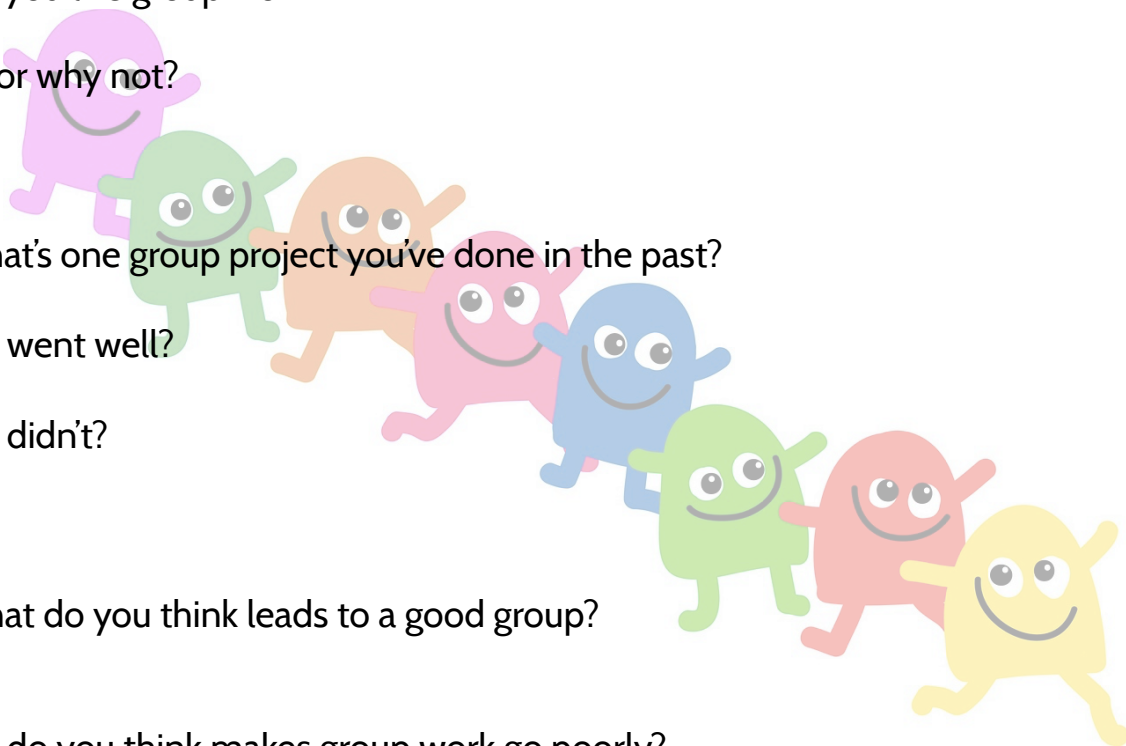
3. What do you think leads to a good group?

What do you think makes group work go poorly?

4. Do you think group work is good practice for your future out in the wider world?

Why or why not?

5. If you were in charge of grading group work, how would you do it?



Brainstorm: What makes a Good Group Member?

Discuss the following questions in your small group, jotting down ideas as you go.

1. How much of the talking does a good group member do?
2. What does a good group member do when the group gets off track?
3. What does a good group member do when she disagrees with someone else's idea?
4. What does a good group member do when everyone else disagrees with his idea?
5. What does a good group member do when someone else offers to do all the work?
6. What does a good group member do when someone in the group isn't contributing at all?
7. What does a good group member do when she feels upset about the dynamics in the group?





Group Work in Real Life

With your partner, fill in the boxes below with three times you might need good group work skills in the future. Brainstorm together what kind of group members will succeed in these scenarios.

Example Situation: Parenthood

Successful Group members will probably...

- Listen to their partners and make decisions together
- Listen to their children's point of view so they can understand them
- Engage and participate in family decision-making and conversation
- Recognize and respect the differences between family members

Situation:

Successful Group members will probably...

Situation:

Successful Group members will probably...

Situation:

Successful Group members will probably...

Reflection: How did the group work go?

1. What did you like about the way your group worked together?
2. What didn't you like?
3. Did everyone in your group have a chance to contribute?
4. Did anyone dominate? If so, did the dominator try to include others at all?
5. Did anyone in the group seem totally unengaged? If so, why do you think that was the case?
6. Is there anything you could have done differently to help the group do a better job with the task?
7. Is there anything you could have done differently to help the group do a better job with group dynamics?
8. What grade do you think the others in the group would give you as a group member? Why?
9. What was one thing someone else in the group did that you found helpful?
10. What was one thing someone else in the group did that you found disruptive?

