



TRANSCRIPT

Hi, this is Sheila Garth. Thank you so much for taking the time to watch my mini course on social skills and social emotional learning within the classroom. Today we're going to talk about group dynamics with group projects. And I know sometimes they're kind of tricky to navigate, so I wanted to take the time today just to talk about how to make them really successful within the classroom and just kind of what sometimes makes them go awry. Oftentimes you may have created a lesson, an arts integrated lesson or STEAM lesson, that you felt like was so awesome and just amazing, and then you put it into the classroom and you notice some students in some groups are really struggling with the project, whether it be they're trying to control the project, whether it's a student that's totally checked out because they're feeling overwhelmed. Maybe it's someone that's really hyper-focused on the social dynamics within the classroom project as opposed to just working on the project in itself.

And then you start to wonder, "Wow, was this not a great project? I thought that it was going to be amazing, but it's just not working out how I was hoping and I'm not sure why." And so oftentimes, I've learned in my 14 years as an educator, nine as a teacher and then five as a school counselor, oftentimes we become so focused on the content of this amazing project that we don't always consider the social dynamics that are going to occur within this project and planning for those as well. So today I wanted to take some time and just talk about the different personalities that you might see in your classroom. I'm going to pick maybe the top five that I've seen in the past years that I've been an educator, as well as how to navigate them and how to make them more successful within the classroom setting.

So the first little character we're going to talk about, I called it a character because I made little animals, is the lion personality. So the lion is the leader of the group and they're just naturally born leaders. They love making sure everyone's doing what they're supposed to be doing. They love engaging everyone. They like facilitating the project in itself and making sure everyone's on task and doing what they need to be doing. So at their best, they're really, really efficient at keeping the group going, keeping the project on course, and just making sure everyone's doing what they need to be doing and just keeping everyone effective and positive. That's at their best.

The lions at their worst, the less mature lions, you'll notice they want to control it, especially if they get really excited about a project. Like let's say math is their content and they love it and they get this math project, so a really immature lion is going to



TRANSCRIPT

want to take the whole thing over. And so then other students start feeling left out and just like they're not able to have any say because the lion is taking it over. So you want to help the lion navigate their strengths in leadership, but also being aware that if they're really invested in something and they're not very lions, they may try to take it over.

All right, the next personality, and I think I must kind of resonate with this one, is the dolphin. They are there to have fun. They want to make sure everyone's having a good time in the group. They're kind of silly. They keep the group motivated in a fun way. Like fun is really, really, really the critical part of this group dynamic for the dolphin. They want to make sure they're having a fun time. They want to be able to use their creativity to express themselves, and at their best they make the project lighthearted as it's happening. They share creative ideas and innovation and they just make the whole environment of the group project really positive.

At their worst, when they're immature, they're actually going to struggle with maturity and just being really silly and actually distracting the group. And this actually happens when they're not as involved with the project. So if it's something that they're kind of indifferent to or not as interested in, this is when you'll see our friendly dolphin distract their friends by being super, super, super silly. So, be aware of these dolphin friends and redirecting them and saying you appreciate their awesome humor and awesome creativity of their personality, but that they're distracting the team.

ALL right, the next friend we have is a sheep. The sheep's main priority is just to make sure everyone is getting along in the group. Although they're really invested in the project, they're way more invested in, "Are my friends in this team getting along?" And so at their best, they're really watching the social norms that are happening. And if someone gets discouraged or frustrated, they're really, really good at helping them feel supported and like, "It's okay, come back and join us." They're really, really good at those social dynamic relationships. So at their best, they're there to help make sure that the social norm of the group and just the morale of the group is where it needs to be.

At their worst, they become really, really just frustrated if they realize that the social dynamics are out of their control. So if they realize it's totally going way downhill, they're probably going to check out because they're feeling like they have nothing else to contribute and they're just so frustrated that they have no control over the social



TRANSCRIPT

dynamics within the group. So you want to help them be supportive, then if you realize that they are starting to check out because the group dynamic is not working so well, that's when we're going to go to our group norms, which I'm going to talk about soon and how to help redirect the groups coming back to be successful within their projects.

Our next friend is the bee. The bee is very hyper-focused on having things being perfect and accurate and detailed. They're super detail oriented. They're very efficient. They want to stay on task. They want to make sure where everything's getting how it's supposed to be going, and all of it's in the right method and there's no mistakes. And so they're really, really good about the details of projects. They're really, really good about catching little mini mistakes about things. And that's really great because they love details, they love efficiency, they love things to be accurate and perfect. So that's at the best.

At the worst, these little friends get so hyper-focused on the details of things that they struggle to move forward in the project. So if they're really hyper-focused on perfecting a part before they're ready to move on, they're not going to move on easily unless they're mature and realize like, hey, I've spent a little bit too much time on this part of the project. In order to keep the project and the group moving forward, I need to stop doing this. So there's our little bee.

Our last little friend is the turtle. He's really, really, really introverted and so he prefers to work by himself. So group projects as a whole are really going to be a struggle for our turtle. They don't like to work in groups. They prefer to work by themselves and maybe share information later as they get it, but honoring where the turtle is and allowing them to have that time to do something a little bit independently and then sharing it with the group when they feel like they're ready to share, will make the turtle be successful. If they feel overwhelmed like they're having to participate in the group the entire time, they're probably going to check out. So at the best, turtles at their best, is that they're able to do some things independently even within the group and then share it.

At the worst, they're being forced to have to participate in entire group sessions without having abilities to check out. If that's the case, they're not going to participate and they're probably not going to collaborate with any of the friends in the group.



TRANSCRIPT

So those are just some of the personalities. I went over them a little bit fast, but I've also provided a printout with all the descriptions of those five friends for you with the details of how they are at their best and when they're not so successful. And a lot of times just maturity and self-awareness plays in those and also involvement of the project itself. So those are the things that contribute to where they are within their personalities. Also keep in mind that these five personalities I've discussed, within these situations, there's no other underlying factors that are contributing to things. So like students that maybe are really, really hungry or have had some traumatic experiences, they're not really playing any part of this discussion. That's a totally different conversation with how they would work in a group dynamic. These are just strictly based on core personalities of students.

Another thing I've included within this packet are the ASCA mindsets and behaviors, which are the standards that school counselors use. And it's actually just one page of standards and it's for K-12. And I know some of you are like, "Oh my gosh, you're so lucky you only have one page of standards as school counselors." But really, they're actually life skills. So I really wish they weren't just K-12, I wish they were birth through life because so many of the skills, even adults are sometimes working on. It's like cooperation, active listening, working with other people, empathy, being flexible.

So these are life skills and that's the reason why they're K-12 and they're just on one page, because we want to focus on these social-emotional skills that people are working on throughout their entire life. And we never always really master all these social-emotional skills at all the time in our lifetimes. So that's why it's focused on one page, the critical skills that students really need to work on and try to master as well as possible within their academic careers. So I've added that too just for information for you as you see the groups and work with group settings. You can see some of the things, some of the social-emotional learning skills that students really need to work on while they're in school.

Another thing I have included in my workbook things is a group norm worksheet. So this worksheet, the group norm worksheet, is for you to give to groups before they start working. So the way to be proactive is to make a plan and say, "Okay, we're about to do a group assignment. Let's think of ways to be effective if we need a break or if it does go awry, what are we going to do?" What are we going to do? Because even though you can effectively put students in groups, there are going to be some



TRANSCRIPT

disagreements. There are going to be some creative differences, maybe some personality differences, and so you should have students have a group norm sheet that every student signs.

So what I put on the sheet, and you can modify it if you'd like to, is the group norms, "We will respect each other by," number one, "Listening when someone else is talking." That's just going back to being a kind person. That's just going back to being respectful. Number two, "Making sure everyone gets to share ideas." And that's going back to the friends like the turtle and also the little sheep, that may be kind of apprehensive to share. That gives them an opportunity to validate their own thoughts and their opinions and their ideas that they'd like to share. Number three, "Be respectful when I disagree with someone else's ideas." And when you talk about respect. What does that look like? So respect means saying, "Hey, this is a great idea," or like, "I appreciate your idea, but what if we did it like this?" as opposed to saying, "That idea was stupid. I can't believe you said that." So that's really not being respectful or understanding. And although for you and I it's common sense what respect means, but giving them examples will really help them when they navigate the social group norms.

These are the critical ones. "If I get upset and need a minute to calm down, I will, A, get some water and return to the group, B, take a minute break in the room and return to the group, C, talk about it," or D, I have in there as teacher approval. So now you're giving them an option if they're getting frustrated to have a plan. As opposed to just totally checking out for the rest of the thing, you're saying, "Hey, I acknowledge that you might get upset in this time. We're still working on social dynamics within groups. Here's some options that you have, which one are you planning on doing?" And that way they're thinking about it ahead of time, before they're in the heightened state of emotional moments or meltdowns. So if they do it like that, you can say, "Hey, let's look back at our group norm. It sounds like you decided you wanted to get some water and then come back to the group, so why don't you go do that?" So you're kind of restating what they decided to do and supporting them in that moment when they're getting really emotional or frustrated within the group. Another one says, our last one, is if someone leaves the group to calm down, the group will discuss with the group and circle one option per the group. So this last question is kind of a group decision what they'd like that norm to be. They will continue to work on the project until the person returns or they will pause on the project and talk about ways to help the group



TRANSCRIPT

member that left feel better when they come back, or C, you can get another option that you discuss with the teacher.

So not only is the person being proactive in their decision to try to figure out what they want to do to help support themselves within the dynamic, the group as a whole is also deciding, hey, if Johnny checks out, if he needs a minute, are we going to keep working or are we going to kind of stop and talk about how we're going to help him get back in the group? And as long as everyone in the group is on the same page of understanding what those group norms are, then everyone knows what's going to happen if they personally get upset, and they also understand what the group is going to do if the person has to leave and the group has to continue in the way that they felt like was the most effective. This allows students to have control over themselves, it allows students to have control over the group in it's whole, and also just allows them to not feel anxious when working with others as much because they understand what's going to happen.

All right, so the next thing I had, and this is probably best for a 3-5, not necessarily K-2, maybe some mature second graders. This is kind of an assessment of what animal are you in a group. So it let students evaluate where they would be within the group setting and understanding what their animal type is. I think for K-2, definitely K-1, you may have to just observe and see where they would be, but there's 10 questions and they have to answer which one they agree with. Like the first question is, "When you get to work in groups, do you like to, A, lead the team, B, make sure the group is having fun, C, make sure that everything everyone is getting along, D, make sure that the group is doing right, or E, quietly share ideas as they come to me. So students take this 10 question assessment, and depending on how many of each letter they have is what animal they are in the group.

Now again, I don't have all the different personality types and you might find there's different ones that are not within these five characters that I created or placed in this podcast, but know that they're a good portion of them and you are always free to add to this. But this assessment just deals with the five main ones that I have. But that gives them an idea of what their learning style is, what their leadership style is, and what their own group dynamic personality is. And I encourage you to let them know like, "Here's what the lion does. Here's what the dolphin does." That way they understand how they



TRANSCRIPT

personally work in groups, which also allows them to become more empowered within that setting as well.

All right. So then they decide which ones they are, and here's, "What do you do with the results?" Now you've given them an assessment of figuring out what animal they are, what you should do is strategically place students in groups that are diverse as possible. So a lot of times we let them pick what group they want to be in or we just randomly choose what groups they haven't worked in in awhile, but now you know, this is your core personality. This is how you work in groups. Mix them up as much as possible. Have as many of each little animal as you possibly can within the group. This helps balance the group. This helps manage the strengths and weaknesses of each person in the group, and it makes the project more efficient and run more effectively.

Have each student fill out the group norm sheet and sign it. That way they're accountable for what they're doing, especially in the 3-5. Now, the K-2 students might be harder to have an individual group norm, maybe create a class group norm. "When we have group works, here are the five things that we're going to do. Here's our five rules for group work." If you'd like me to help you create one, you can definitely shoot me an email. I'll give you my personal email, it's sheilarenee@gmail.com, and I will happily help you create a group norm for the K-2 students or K-1 students, depending on your second grade class maturity.

So definitely have them take that assessment, have them take their group norms and decide what they individually would like to do, but also the last question of what the group would like to do as a whole to make sure that they're on the same page. Now the last question on the group norm was, "If someone leaves the group, what are we going to do?" Everybody in the group has to be on the same page of what that's going to be. If everyone decides they're going to continue to work on the project till the person returns, everyone has to be on the same page with that decision. That is the only question that there can't be individual choices on that. That's to just make sure that the group is unified in what they're wanting to do and just making sure they're on the same page.

Okay. Check in with the groups to see if they're upholding the group norms as they work. So especially when you first start using the group norms, they may slide back into their old habits if trying to control or maybe just checking out, depending on their



TRANSCRIPT

personalities. So just looking at are they being respectful to each other? Are they listening kindly to each other? Check in with them as they're working and give them feedback. After they finish the group work or the group work for the day, have a five or 10 minute conversation to see how it went and if they could have done better. So have that conversation of 'Hey, how did your team work together?' The first couple of times it's probably not going to be perfect, even when you navigate the different types of personalities within the group, because like we said, those behaviors and mindsets are life skills. So we're just putting them in an opportunity to be more effective and more aware of their group work and how they're working together. But obviously checking in with them afterward and saying, "hey, how did you guys feel like it went?" And having the honest conversation and letting them share, "Some of us in the group were feeling frustrated because we felt like someone was trying to take it over." And then, "How did you overcome that? Did you guys use your group norms sheet?" If you didn't do it, "I wonder why. What's going on?" And then just kind of tweaking it as you go along and with the next group project or group assignment that you do.

steam, students are learning social skills the same way they're learning academic standards. We can't assume that they know them all or know how to do them or navigate them. Some students are really great at working in groups and some really struggle with it because of different reasons. And so just taking the time to teach those skills and reinforcing them and just supporting them within that learning as well is really critical to them being successful within the groups.

So thank you so much for taking the time to listen to me workshop. If you have you have any questions, again, my personal email is sheilarenee2010@gmail.com. S-H-E-I-L-A-R-E-N-E-E-2-0-1-0 @gmail.com. If you have any questions about this or questions about the handouts I've given you, please don't feel free to send me an email. I can totally answer as many questions as possible. But I hope that you have been inspired to be more thoughtful on how you navigate social skills groups, because I promise you after you implement these processes a few times you'll realize that the group dynamics will become more efficient and just more purposeful as they do these awesome, amazing arts integrated and steam workshops. Thank you so, so much for taking the time to allow me to share my passions with you guys today. I hope that you have a wonderful day. Bye.