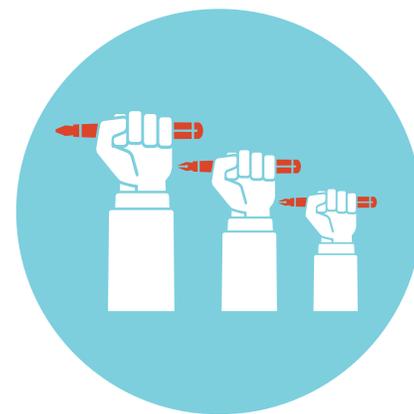




Effective teams require us to think carefully about the kind of work students will be doing throughout the project. What outcomes are most important? How can we utilize teams so students effectively reach those outcomes? We also need to think through our grouping strategy—whether homogenous, heterogenous, or another strategy.

WHY IS IT USEFUL?

Planning specific, real world roles adds a deeper layer of self-management that helps teams run smoothly. The more intentionally you plan team roles, the greater change of success your students can have in teams, and this will buy you time in the long run. You may not have to spend valuable project time switching up teams or stopping to work out issues within teams that are not functioning effectively.



WHAT DO I DO?

Roles. Your goal should be to form effective teams by creating roles based on delegation and overseeing tasks instead of roles that require a single person to take on all of the work for a particular product. For example, you may have heard of commonly used roles like “materials manager” or “team leader.” As you design roles ask yourself, Are the aspect of responsibilities of each role equal? Do the roles you create ask students to help each other with product creation? Do the team roles enhance project work? Do these roles reflect real world work? Instead of team leader, why not project manager? Instead of artist, why not creative director? If we are intentional with our role creation, we encourage students to see their work on a bigger scale. We ask them to think beyond our classroom and into the real world.

Student Voice. The formation of teams is a place to allow student input, not necessarily in letting students form their own teams, but asking students about their interests, strengths, and preferences. The SING Learner Profile* is recommended for soliciting information from students that allows for student voice to be represented in forming teams. You could collect this via Google Forms or a graphic organizer.

STRENGTHS

What do you know you are great at?

INTERESTS:

What lights your fire?

NEEDS:

What structures and supports do you need in order to work effectively?

GOALS:

In what areas of work and learning do you want to grow?

Consider student responses and your project goals when forming teams. As you put students on particular teams, reflect on the makeup of individuals on the team. How do students’ SING profile results mesh with the roles you’ve created for the project? Do you have too many leaders on a team? Do you need to spread out technology-oriented or artistic minds?

*SING Learner Profile is adapted from the Denver Public Schools SNIC Model.

PRIMARY GRADES CONSIDERATIONS

Avoid jobs like materials manager or artist even with the youngest students. They are not too young to learn what a project manager is and what the responsibilities entail. You might consider keeping more static team roles throughout the year so they have a routine, but by no means do we avoid roles just because we assume

they don't *initially* understand the role. If kindergartners can work iPads, they can learn what a project manager is and does.

Pre-K to first grade classrooms might complete the SING profile one-on-one with the teacher. You might also use picture clues for the acronym. Consider using specific read alouds to help students make concrete sense of team roles and what responsibilities they are expected to take on during the project.

TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS



Teachers form teams inappropriately/ineffectively using random "team creators" online.

While these randomizers might be good for shaking things up for classroom activities, you don't want to leave the long term learning in a project to chance. These randomizers don't take into account the context of projects, student needs, or the unique makeup of your class. For PBL projects, it's best to steer clear of these when forming project teams. The effort it takes to construct intentional student teams will support student learning and effectiveness in completing the project.



One student is doing all of the work, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

Consider using the Team Management Log during regular team check-ins. You may also want to check in via peer collaboration reflections based on their group contract or use the collaboration rubric as weekly routine. You may want to check in via peer collaboration reflections, and maybe even use the collaboration rubric weekly if this is a recurring issue.



One student is refusing to do any work.

The same strategy of the team management log and collaboration rubric check-in from the previous challenge applies here too. If those strategies are not producing changes in behavior, as the teacher this is the time to intervene and support that student individually. If focused check-ins with team to find out what is going on are not producing, consider a behavior contract with the student and make a point to communicate progress between necessary stakeholders routinely. Depending on the context another strategy is to up the authenticity of the project. If students are responsible to an outside professional or community members are expecting the results of the work, individual and team engagement will definitely increase.

USING IT THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

During the first few days of the project, teams should engage in team building activities, review the norms, and create or review and sign the team contract together. Teams should also start using the **Task Management Log** or **Team Work Plan** so students know and are accountable for due dates. As teams

are working during the project have them use a collaboration rubric (or a rubric for whichever success skill is being emphasized) to reflect on progress, assess needs, and set goals moving forward. Meet with struggling teams more frequently throughout the project. After project presentations, have students meet in their teams one final time to reflect on audience and peer feedback, self- and peer-assess, and celebrate a job well done!