3.2: Achieving Effective Collaboration

Student Objective
Students will learn how to negotiate their own roles within a collaborative group through the use of effective elements of collaboration.

Overview
The following activity will aid with explicitly teaching students how to collaborate. The components of effective collaboration will provide common language among students for effectively communicating with one another during collaboration.

Materials/Set-Up
- Handouts:
  - 3.2a: Components of Effective Collaboration
  - 3.2b: Academic Language Scripts
- Teacher Resource:
  - 3.2c: Teaching the Components of Effective Collaboration

Instructional Steps
1. Provide a copy of Components of Effective Collaboration to each student and introduce the topic.
2. Go over the components as a class and determine if there are any vocabulary words or concepts that need to be discussed for further clarification.
3. Have students partner up with someone whom they have not yet spoken with that day and explain the components to one another.
4. Additional tips for initiating collaborative work throughout the year are included below:
   - As students engage in various collaborative activities during the school year, it will be important to provide them with a specific collaboration focus for the activity.
   - Pre-determine which component will be the focus of the activity and have students examine this component prior to the beginning of the group task.
   - Hold students accountable during the activity for using this component. As students feel more comfortable with using the components, consider challenging them to focus on two or more components in the next activity, until ultimately, the majority—if not all—of the components are used effortlessly as students engage with collaborative activities independently.
   - Once the activity has concluded, as a class, reflect upon that same component to determine what went well and what opportunities can be worked on next time.

→ Extension
- To increase scaffolding, hold students accountable for using academic language to accurately identify when one of the components was used. Refer to Academic Language Scripts.
- To integrate technology, have students mark the text digitally, using a PDF reader app or opening the document in Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Students can add digital remarks or comments as a reflection on their progress in that collaborative skill area.

Components of Effective Collaboration

Component	What Is It?	Tips
Positive and Productive Communication	Positive and productive communication includes verbal (speech) and non-verbal (body language/facial expressions) messages that are respectful and focused on the task or goal. This also includes active listening skills, speaking skills, and a team's communication using technology outside of class.	• Be aware of both tone of voice and body/facial expressions. • Use technology (e.g., email, Skype, FaceTime, Dropbox, Edmodo, Google Drive, etc.) to continue communicating outside of class.
On-Task Behavior	The team focuses on the task and avoids distractions.	• Make sure that the group is not too close to other groups. Find a private space if possible. • Invite team members to participate.
Equitable Work	Group members divide responsibilities fairly, and ensure that all students have the opportunity to share ideas.	• Be willing to listen to all ideas and decide, as a group, which idea (or combination of ideas) is best. • Do your share of the work. • Invite team members to participate.
Task Analysis	The team identifies the goal and plans out a course of action to meet the goal.	• As a team, read instructions carefully and mark the text (take notes on the instruction sheet) if possible. • Identify the goal/target and refer back to it each time that the group meets. • Use tools (e.g., collaboration social contract, agenda/planner, backwards mapping) to break up the assignment into logical parts.
Leadership	Group members (maybe more than one) encourage all students to participate and contribute, and may provide group with direction and a sense of purpose.	• Encourage others. • Identify team strengths and interests, and distribute work accordingly. • Share the leadership.
Conflict Management	When disagreements arise, group members use specific strategies to find a resolution.	• Utilize the conflict management process. • Use tools, such as the Conflict Mediator Rubric, to manage disputes.

Academic Language Scripts

Requesting Assistance
- Could you please help me?
- I'm having trouble with this. Would you mind helping me?
- Could you please show me how to… (do this…, write this…, draw this…, pronounce this…, solve this…, etc.)?

Interrupting
- Excuse me, but…. (I don't understand.)
- Sorry for interrupting, but…. (I missed what you said.)
- May I interrupt for a moment?
- May I add something here?

Asking for Clarification
- Could you repeat that?
- Could you give me an example of that?
- I have a question about that….
- Could you please explain what _____ means?
- Would you mind repeating that?
- I'm not sure I understood that. Could you please give us another example?
- So, do you mean…?

Probing for Higher Level Thinking
- What examples do you have of…?
- Where in the text can we find…?
- I understand…, but I wonder about….
- How does this idea connect to…?
- If _____ is true, then…?
- What would happen if…?
- Do you agree or disagree with his/her statement? Why?
- What is another way to look at it?
- How are ____ and ____ similar?
- Why is ____ important?
- How do you know that? Can you give an example?
- Is there another way to look at this?

Expressing an Opinion
- I think/believe/predict/imagine that….
- In my opinion….
- It seems to me that….
- Not everyone will agree with me, but….

Building on What Others Say
- I agree with what _____ said because….
- You bring up an interesting point, and I also think….
- That's an interesting idea. I wonder if…? I think…. Do you think…?
- I thought about that also, and I'm wondering why…?
- I hadn't thought of that before. You make me wonder if…? Do you think…?
- _____ said that…. I agree, and also think….
- Based on the ideas from _____, _____, and _____, it seems like we all think that….
- That's an excellent point, and I would add….

Soliciting a Response
- Do you agree?
- _____ [name], what do you think?
- Can someone else ask a question or offer an opinion?
- _____ [name], what did you understand from that answer?

Disagreeing
- I don't really agree with you because….
- I see it another way. I think….
- My idea is slightly different from yours. I believe that…. I think that….
- I have a different answer than you….

Offering a Suggestion
- Maybe you/we could….
- Here's something that we/you might try….
- What if you/we…?

Classroom Reporting
- _____ [name] explained to me that….
- _____ [name] pointed out that….
- _____ [name] mentioned that….
- _____ [name] shared with me that….
- _____ [name] brought to my attention that….
- _____ [name] pointed out something interesting/intriguing/surprising/etc….

Teaching the Components of Effective Collaboration

Intentionally and explicitly teaching the following components of effective collaboration to students prior to group assignments is critical. To accomplish this, a teacher must have a clear understanding of the following.

Positive and Productive Communication

Students must be skilled in the art of both verbal and non-verbal communication. For a direct resource on this topic, refer to Academic Language Scripts.

On-Task Behavior

In order for groups to successfully complete a task, team members must focus and avoid distractions. At the outset of the year, teachers will need to monitor this closely and coach groups to find ways for all students to participate. For example, if using roles, play the role of the facilitator in a group where a student does not seem to be actively engaged. Demonstrate how group members can invite students to participate in a non-threatening way: "We haven't heard from you lately, what do you think about…," or "I know you are really good at…, would you please help us…."

Equitable Work

Group members must learn how to break up assignments fairly and ensure that all voices are heard and valued. Consider discussing with the class what this would look like or sound like during a group assignment.

Task Analysis

This refers to the ability of a group to identify the goal and break up the task into logical parts. For more information and resources on this subject, refer to the Project Action Plan for Self-Directed Students.

Leadership

Effective teams demonstrate shared and flexible leadership, and all students have the potential to develop into leaders with practice and explicit instruction. For concrete ways to develop student leaders, see the Leadership Development chapter.

Conflict Management

Conflicts will inevitably arise during collaborative work. For a variety of tools to effectively coach students in resolving conflicts, see the Leadership Development chapter.