

Social and Emotional Learning: Promoting Teamwork in Pre-Kindergarten

Pre-Kindergarten is a fun but also demanding period for young children. For example, for many, this is the first-time they experience learning in peer group settings. Being an effective group member requires that children develop a variety of social and emotional competencies. These include how to: follow rules, share, take turns, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts and negotiate shared goals. (Romero, L.E., 2016) These kinds of competencies form the basis of what is known as teamwork skills. Teamwork skills are vital, lifelong, social assets that can positively impact academic and work success. However, due to young children's innate egocentricity, learning these skills can be challenging. (Warash B.G. & Workman M., 2016)

The way in which early childhood teachers plan and organize their daily instruction can play an important role in assisting Pre-K children to learn about teamwork. (Holloway, J.H, 2003/2004) In classrooms organized for promoting self-regulation and relationship building skills, children's social, emotional, and cognitive development can thrive. Alternatively, a teacher's inadvertent lack of emphasis on teamwork can contribute to increases in student conflict, formations of "cliques," and/or student insecurity as to the "hows" and "whys" of group learning.

How Can Pre-Kindergarten Teachers Teach Teamwork?

WHOLE-GROUP TEAMWORK SKILLS

Typically, Pre-K children meet several times a day in whole-group settings (often known as Circle Time). Circle Time is an effective and efficient grouping method to ensure that the same information is shared, at the same time, across all members of a classroom community. (Glazzard, J., 2016) Successful learning in this kind of group setting requires that students develop and practice applying a host of core social and emotional skills.



Dr. Lee Wright

Dr. Lee Wright is a specialist in early childhood education, focusing on classroom management and biliteracy. In his varied career, he has been a kindergarten teacher, literacy coach, state staff development specialist, corporate educational specialist, and professor. Currently, he trains educators on topics that focus on the importance of effective classroom management, small-group instruction, and early literacy. He is a coauthor of Three Cheers for Pre-K from Savvas Learning Company.

A. During Circle Time: Explicitly Teach, Provide Ample Practice, and Give Feedback for How Children Should...

Practice applying Circle Time rules	Be respectful of others' physical spaces	Support each other's efforts and contributions
Signal wanting to share information or ask a question	Share with others (Time, attention, materials, activities, etc.)	Demonstrate courtesy (i.e., Saying "Please," "Thank You," and "Excuse Me")
Take turns speaking	Use positive words to express differences of opinions	Offer and accept help from others

B. Use a Classroom Circle Time Seating Chart

Post this type of chart at children's eye level. Ensure that it displays each child's name (including, ideally, photos of each child) and where each child should sit during Circle Time. Regularly update this chart to ensure that, over time,

all students have opportunities to be seated near, and able to work with, many different peers during whole-group settings. This encourages children to practice learning how to work with a variety of different personalities. You can also regularly update this chart to seat children close to you who may need additional supervision.

C. Make Use of Community Helper Jobs

Create, assign, and model classroom helper jobs aimed at providing students with opportunities to assume peer support responsibilities during Circle Time.

SMALL GROUP TEAMWORK SKILLS

Converging research findings and best practices suggest that the majority of a Pre-K child's day should be spent in small group settings. (Mulvahill, E. 2019) During this time, children work on completing shared learning experiences, typically in group sizes of 2-4, aimed at cooperating and/or collaborating toward meeting teacher-facilitated or group-determined outcomes. Often, Pre-K teachers set up an assortment of Center/Workstion classroom areas to provide children with opportunities to learn in small groups. But simply assigning students to physically work side-by-side in small groups is insufficient for promoting effective



teamwork. As such, early childhood teachers can consider teaching the following additional fundamental teamwork skills for planning and organizing small group learning.

Before, During, and After Center/Workstation Time: Explicitly Teach, Provide Ample Practice, Give Feedback, and Monitor the Following Additional Teamwork Skills

Teach children how to...

Practice applying and helping peers apply small group rules	Reference and use the classroom's Center/Workstion Rotation Chart	Negotiate who contributes which efforts and actions towards the completion of small group cooperative activities
Assume small-group helper roles (examples: Writer, Artist, Materials Manager, Reporter, Timekeeper, etc.)	Transition to and from the classroom's teacher-led small group area(s)	Resolve problems constructively, cooperatively and collaboratively

The social and emotional competencies needed to become productive and constructive members of teams are well worth teachers' investment of time and effort. When these skills are introduced and reinforced in Pre-Kindergarten, children are provided with a significant early advantage for lifelong academic and career success.

Bibliography

Glazzard, J. (2016). The value of circle time as an intervention strategy. *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 6(2), 207-215.

Holloway, J. H. (2003/2004). Research Link / Student Teamwork. *Educational Leadership: New Needs, New Curriculum*. 61(4), 91-92.

Mulvahill, E. (2019). The most important skills we teach in the early years aren't academic. Retrieved June, 1, 2020, from <https://www.weareteachers.com/social-emotional-activities-early-years/>

Romero, L. E. (2016). What everyone should know about teamwork. *Forbes*. Retrieved June, 1, 2020, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/luisromero/2016/01/20/what-everyone-should-know-about-teamwork/#5e3678f6363/>

Warash, B.G., & Workman, M. (2016). Teaching preschoolers to self-assess their choices in *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 6(1), 97-104.



Savvas.com
800-848-9500

Copyright © 2020 Savvas Learning Company LLC All Rights Reserved. Savvas™ and Savvas Learning Company™ are the exclusive trademarks of Savvas Learning Company LLC in the US and in other countries.

Join the Conversation
@SavvasLearning



Get Fresh Ideas for Teaching
[Blog.Savvas.com](https://www.blog.savvas.com)