

## IS IT FAIR FOR TEACHERS TO MAKE STUDENTS WORK IN GROUPS?



Group projects are a staple of the American education system. They are meant to teach skills like cooperation, time management, and problem-solving. The skills gained through teamwork are important ones for students to develop; they help children grow as individuals, and those skills are highly valued in the workforce. So, if group work has all of these benefits, why is it so common for a class of students to groan when they are told about a group project? Many students say that although the potential benefits of group work are appealing, the reality doesn't always live up to that dream. When a group includes people who don't pull their weight or talk over others, there can be significant frustration when the whole group ends up with the same grade at the end.

A STUDY FROM THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE FOUND THAT ALMOST 62% OF STUDENTS PREFERRED INDEPENDENT WORK TO GROUP WORK!

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How should group projects be structured to maximize the benefits and minimize the potential harms?

Is it more fair for students to pick their own partners and group roles? Or should teachers assign them?

How should grades be decided in group projects?



### YES, IT IS FAIR

Many teachers believe group work is invaluable, as students can complete complex and large-scale assignments in a short period of time. It also gives teachers an opportunity to observe how students contribute and collaborate. Others in favor of group projects believe that they introduce essential life and career skills. By working as a team, students improve communication, learn to manage their time, and figure out how to divide responsibilities to meet a common goal. These skills not only support academic success but also translate into real-world readiness. In fact, three out of four employees consider teamwork and collaboration to be essential in the workplace. Group projects give students a chance to develop these abilities in a supportive, lower-stakes setting.

### NO, IT IS NOT FAIR

Some teachers and students are critical of group work. All the potential benefits—like learning teamwork or tackling big assignments more efficiently—depend on the project being thoughtfully planned and managed. Without that structure, it's easy for one or two students to end up doing most of the work while others coast. Some students believe teachers assign group work to take a break themselves, which can lead to projects feeling like meaningless “busy work.” Another common complaint is about grading. When everyone receives the same grade, it can feel unjust and demotivating. When group projects go poorly, students don't just miss out on valuable skills—they can pick up bad habits, lose trust in the process, and walk away feeling discouraged about teamwork altogether.

