



Supporting Workplace Teamwork & Collaboration: A Guide for Mentors

Purpose: This guide is designed to help mentors support high school students in developing teamwork and collaboration skills in the workplace. Students in the Corporate Work Study Program at Providence Cristo Rey High School attend a weekly Corporate Work Study class, where they learn the foundational skills necessary for contributing to a team.

By cultivating positive collaboration habits, students will be better prepared to communicate effectively, contribute to group tasks, and resolve conflicts constructively. This guide outlines key areas of teamwork and collaboration, includes examples, and offers strategies and games to help mentors support students' development.

1. Understanding Team Roles and Dynamics

Definition: Recognizing different roles within a team and how each member contributes to the group's success.

Examples:

- Understanding the difference between leaders, supporters, and organizers
- Participating in group discussions respectfully
- Valuing diverse perspectives and contributions

Mentor Strategies:

- Explain your team's roles and how everyone contributes.
- Give the student a small responsibility that connects to a team goal.
- Encourage reflection on what role they naturally take in a group.
- **Game Idea:** "Role Roulette" – Assign students random roles in a team task and rotate them to understand various perspectives.
- **Game Idea:** "Build the Bridge" – Teams are tasked with constructing something using limited materials, assigning roles and working together under time constraints.

Discussion Prompts:

- What role do you think you take when working in a group?
- Why are all team roles important, not just the leader?
- How can understanding team dynamics help you work better with others?

Monthly Integration Idea: Pair the student with different team members throughout the month and ask them to observe and reflect on different communication and leadership styles.

Reflection Questions for Students:

- Which team role do you feel most confident in, and why?
 - What did you notice about how your teammates worked together?
 - What was one way you helped support the team?
-

2. Communication in Teams

Definition: Sharing ideas clearly, listening actively, and responding constructively in a team setting.

Examples:

- Asking questions during group discussions
- Paraphrasing to show understanding
- Giving and receiving feedback respectfully

Mentor Strategies:

- Model active listening and invite your student to practice it.
- Encourage the student to contribute at least one idea in each team meeting.
- Help them prepare for team meetings with questions or points in advance.
- **Game Idea:** “Collaborative Storytelling” – Team members take turns adding a sentence to build a story, practicing listening and building on others’ ideas.
- **Game Idea:** “Silent Build” – One student gives instructions while others build something without speaking, then reverse roles.

Discussion Prompts:

- What does good listening look like in a team?
- How can you make sure your voice is heard respectfully?
- What can you do when you don’t agree with someone on your team?

Monthly Integration Idea: Assign the student to lead a small team check-in or share progress in a group meeting.

Reflection Questions for Students:

- How did you contribute to a recent team conversation?
- What communication strategy worked well for you?
- What’s one thing you can do to be a better team listener?

3. Collaboration on Projects

Definition: Working cooperatively with others to complete a shared task or achieve a goal.

Examples:

- Dividing responsibilities fairly
- Checking in regularly with team members
- Supporting teammates and sharing resources

Mentor Strategies:

- Involve students in simple collaborative projects and clarify expectations.
- Help them set shared goals and track progress.
- Celebrate successes and reflect on what went well and what could be improved.
- **Game Idea:** “Puzzle Relay” – Teams work together to complete a puzzle where only one person can touch pieces at a time based on direction.
- **Game Idea:** “Group Planning Challenge” – Students plan a fictional event, assigning roles, timelines, and resources.

Discussion Prompts:

- What does it mean to share responsibility in a team?
- How can you help your teammates be successful?
- How do you handle setbacks when working with others?

Monthly Integration Idea: Include students in a real workplace project with multiple contributors and allow them to participate in planning and reflection.

Reflection Questions for Students:

- What was your role in the last group task?
- What helped the team work well together?
- How did you support others during the project?

4. Conflict Resolution and Team Resilience

Definition: Addressing disagreements respectfully and helping the team stay focused on shared goals.

Examples:

- Expressing concerns without blaming

- Seeking common ground in disagreements
- Staying calm and respectful under pressure

Mentor Strategies:

- Discuss how your team handles disagreement or challenges.
- Model respectful disagreement and problem-solving.
- Coach students through reflection after a tough group experience.
- **Game Idea:** “Scenario Swap” – Students role-play workplace conflict situations and practice resolution strategies.
- **Game Idea:** “Debate Circle” – Small teams take turns arguing for or against fictional positions, then reflect on tone and respect.

Discussion Prompts:

- What should you do when someone disagrees with you at work?
- How can conflict actually help a team grow?
- What strategies help you stay calm during tense situations?

Monthly Integration Idea: Encourage students to reflect on one workplace interaction where they navigated or observed conflict and share lessons learned.

Reflection Questions for Students:

- How did you handle a disagreement or stressful situation?
- What helped you stay calm or respectful?
- What would you do differently next time?

5. Accountability and Dependability

Definition: Following through on responsibilities and earning the trust of teammates.

Examples:

- Completing tasks on time
- Communicating delays or obstacles
- Being someone others can count on

Mentor Strategies:

- Set clear expectations for assigned tasks.
- Encourage students to track and share their progress.
- Celebrate follow-through and gently address missed deadlines.
- **Game Idea:** “Chain Reaction” – A timed task where each student’s part depends on the completion of the previous step.

- **Game Idea:** “Project Tracker Bingo” – Students fill in a bingo card for hitting milestones like updating a teammate or meeting a deadline.

Discussion Prompts:

- Why is dependability important in a team?
- How do you feel when someone doesn’t follow through?
- What can you do to build trust with your team?

Monthly Integration Idea: Have students track their tasks in a shared document or checklist and reflect weekly on how they contributed to the team.

Reflection Questions for Students:

- What’s one responsibility you followed through on recently?
- How did it feel to meet your deadlines?
- How can you improve your reliability?

Final Tips for Mentors:

- Be inclusive: Encourage students to join conversations and feel like valued team members.
- Be transparent: Talk about team goals and decision-making openly.
- Be supportive: Let students know it’s okay to learn through experience and mistakes.
- Be consistent: Reinforce expectations and give regular, balanced feedback.
- Be empowering: Let students take initiative and ownership in small team-related tasks.

By helping students understand the value of teamwork and collaboration, you prepare them for success in any future workplace environment. Strong teams start with strong individuals who know how to communicate, cooperate, and grow together.