



# Future Ready Pathways for School, Work and Life

# Teamwork & Collaboration

*Lessons for upper  
elementary students, aged  
8-11*

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*Lessons for upper elementary students,  
aged 8-11*

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# Teacher/Parent Guide

## Welcome

Teamwork and collaboration continue to grow and take shape throughout the upper elementary years. As students gain more independence, friendships deepen, group work becomes more common, and their actions begin to have a bigger impact on those around them.

Just like a piano is one part of a band, each person plays an important role in a group. When everyone works together—listening, adjusting, and contributing—the result is something stronger than any one person could create alone.

Throughout these lessons, students will explore what it means to be a positive and responsible team member. They will practice cooperating, understanding others' perspectives, navigating challenges, and working through problems together.

Students will learn that being part of a team is not about being the loudest voice or always getting their way. It is about contributing, adapting, supporting others, and helping the whole group succeed.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of these lessons, students will be able to:

- Work cooperatively with others by sharing ideas, taking turns, and contributing to group tasks.
- Describe how group dynamics affect how a team works together.
- Demonstrate empathy by considering how others think and feel during teamwork.
- Build trust by being respectful, reliable, and supportive of teammates.
- Navigate conflicts using calm, respectful communication and problem-solving strategies.
- Take accountability for their actions and follow through on responsibilities.
- Contribute to shared responsibility by completing their part and supporting group goals.
- Show flexibility and adaptability when plans change or challenges arise.
- Participate in collective problem-solving by listening to ideas and working toward solutions together.
- Reflect on their role in a group and identify ways to improve teamwork skills.
- Recognize that strong teamwork means helping the group succeed—not just focusing on individual success.



# Teacher/Parent Guide

## Learning Rationale

Teamwork and collaboration are essential skills that support students' social, emotional, and academic growth. In upper elementary classrooms, students regularly work with others through group projects, games, classroom routines, and shared tasks. However, working effectively in a group is not always automatic. Students may struggle with taking turns, accepting different ideas, managing disagreements, or understanding their role within a team.

When these skills are taught clearly and practiced regularly, students begin to understand how teams function and how their actions impact others. They learn that successful teamwork requires cooperation, responsibility, flexibility, and respect. This workbook helps students explore collaboration in ways that are concrete, engaging, and developmentally appropriate.

Building teamwork and collaboration skills helps:



Work more effectively in group settings across all subject areas



Build positive and respectful relationships with peers



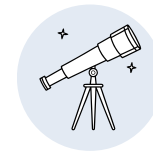
Develop confidence in sharing ideas and contributing to a team



Navigate challenges and disagreements in constructive ways



Take responsibility for their actions and contributions



Understand the value of different perspectives and strengths



# An Introduction for Teachers & Parents

These lessons are designed for upper elementary students (ages 8–11) and can be used in classrooms, homeschool settings, or small instructional groups. Each lesson includes a teacher lesson plan, a student-friendly reading with an anchor text, guided practice activities, and optional at-home extensions.

Across the five lessons, students develop essential communication and leadership skills that strengthen how they listen, speak, make decisions, and contribute to a group. In grades three through five, students experience more complex teamwork, greater independence, and increased social influence. As expectations grow—academically and socially—students benefit from structured opportunities to practice using their voice responsibly, listening actively, and making thoughtful choices that affect others.

The lessons are:

**Structured yet Flexible** – Each lesson can be taught in a single session or extended across multiple days through discussion, modeling, role-play, reflection, or real-world application.

**Skill-Focused** – Each lesson targets a core collaboration skill: cooperation and group dynamics, empathy and trust, conflict navigation, accountability and shared responsibility, and flexibility in problem-solving. Students build understanding step by step, seeing how these skills connect and strengthen effective teamwork.

**Developmentally Aligned** – Lessons reflect the real experiences of upper elementary learners, including group projects, classroom collaboration, changing friendships, peer dynamics, and increasing responsibility within a team.

You do not need to be a specialist to teach these lessons. Each lesson includes clear objectives, step-by-step guidance, and support notes for diverse learners. Student pages use accessible language to help learners understand not only what effective teamwork looks like, but why it matters and how to apply these skills in everyday situations.

Just like instruments in a band must listen, adjust, and play their part, students learn that strong teams depend on each member contributing in thoughtful and responsible ways.



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# Universal Design for Learning

This workbook is designed using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure that all students—with diverse strengths, needs, learning preferences, and backgrounds—can access, engage with, and benefit from the lessons.

UDL recognizes that students learn in different ways. Some learn best through discussion, others through visuals, movement, or hands-on practice. This pack intentionally offers multiple ways for students to engage with content, practice teamwork skills, and demonstrate understanding, allowing adults to adapt lessons without changing the learning goals.

## Multiple Means of Engagement

(How students stay interested and motivated)

- Lessons include a variety of activity types such as sorting, scenario analysis, drawing, role-play, movement, and discussion to support engagement.
- Students are offered choices whenever possible (how to respond, which role to take, or how to contribute to a task).
- Activities are designed to be flexible in length and format, allowing adults to adjust pacing based on attention, energy, or group dynamics.
- Content is grounded in realistic group situations students commonly experience, making learning meaningful and relevant.
- Collaborative tasks reflect real teamwork experiences, helping students stay engaged through shared goals and interaction.

## Multiple Means of Representation

(How information is presented and understood)

- Key ideas are presented using clear language, visuals, icons, examples, and short texts.
- Scenarios and examples introduce teamwork concepts before moving into reflection or group application.
- Consistent routines, sentence starters, and guided questions support comprehension and confidence.
- Concepts such as cooperation, responsibility, and flexibility are revisited across lessons to reinforce understanding over time.
- Visual and thematic connections (such as instruments working together in a band) help students understand how individual contributions support a group.



# Universal Design for Learning

## Multiple Means of Action and Expression

(How students show what they know)

Students are offered multiple ways to demonstrate understanding, including:

- Writing short responses
- Drawing or visual representation
- Sorting, matching, or categorizing
- Acting out scenarios or role-play
- Speaking or participating in a discussion
- Contributing to group tasks or shared problem-solving
- Dictating responses to an adult, when needed

Writing is supported but not required to demonstrate understanding. Lessons emphasize expression of ideas and participation over perfection, allowing students to choose formats that match their strengths.

Collaborative activities provide opportunities for students to actively practice teamwork skills in low-pressure, supportive ways.

## Flexible Use Across Settings

This pack is designed to work in:

- Classrooms
- Homeschool environments
- Counseling or small-group settings
- One-on-one adult-child work

Lessons and activities can be adapted to fit different group sizes, time frames, and learning needs.

## Emotional Safety and Developmental Support

Lessons are designed to promote growth without shame or pressure.

- Lessons avoid shame, punishment, or labeling behavior as “bad.”
- Mistakes are framed as part of learning and growth.
- Students are never required to share personal experiences.
- Adults are encouraged to observe, guide, and support rather than correct or judge responses.
- Differences in opinions, ideas, and working styles are treated as strengths within a team.



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# Pre-Assessment





# Pre-Assessment Lesson Plan

## Learning Objectives

By the end of the pre-assessment activity, students will:

1. Show what they already understand about working with others, including cooperation, sharing ideas, and participating in group tasks.
2. Demonstrate how they currently interact in group settings, such as listening, taking turns, and contributing to discussions.
3. Reveal the strategies they use when working through challenges, disagreements, or different opinions.
4. Show how they respond in a team—whether they collaborate, take over, withdraw, or struggle to participate.
5. Provide a starting point for measuring growth in teamwork and collaboration skills.

## Learning Rationale

The pre-assessment helps teachers and caregivers understand how upper elementary students currently work with others in group settings.

As students move through grades 3–5, teamwork becomes more frequent and more complex. Students are expected to collaborate on projects, share responsibility, and navigate group dynamics. Some students naturally take the lead, others prefer to follow, and many are still learning how to balance participation, responsibility, and respect for others.

Working effectively in a team is a developing skill, and students often show a wide range of strengths and areas for growth.

This activity is not a test. Instead, it provides an opportunity to observe how students:

- Participate in group work
- Listen to others' ideas
- Share their own thoughts
- Respond to challenges or disagreements
- Take responsibility for their role
- Contribute to a positive or unproductive team environment



# Pre-Assessment Lesson Plan

## Step 1: Set the Tone (3–5 minutes)

- “Today we’re going to look at how people work together in different team situations. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone works with others in different ways, and this activity helps me understand how our class cooperates, solves problems, and contributes to a group.”
- If students ask, “What’s the right answer?” reassure them that you are not looking for perfect leadership — you are looking for honest thinking.

## Step 2: Independent Completion (10–15 minutes)

- Students read each scenario and select the response that best matches what they would most likely do.
- Encourage students to answer quickly and honestly.

## Step 3: Optional Pair or Whole-Group Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Choose 2–3 questions to briefly discuss.

Sample prompts:

- “Did anyone notice that people handled the same situation differently?”
- “What might make someone choose to help, speak up, or stay quiet in a group?”
- “How can the same teamwork situation feel different to different people?”
- “What makes someone a helpful teammate versus someone who takes over or steps back?”

Do not ask students to defend their choices.

## Step 4: Close the Activity (2–3 minutes)

Say: “This was just our starting point. Over the next few lessons, we’ll practice skills like cooperation, understanding others, solving problems together, being responsible team members, and staying flexible when things don’t go as planned. It’s completely okay if your answers would change later—that’s how growth happens.”

## Teacher Reflection & Insight Guide

Rather than scoring answers, look for patterns.

- Do students cooperate with others or prefer to work independently?
- Do students listen to teammates’ ideas or focus mainly on their own?
- Are students willing to participate, or do they hesitate or withdraw?
- How do students respond to disagreements or challenges in a group?
- Do students show flexibility when plans change or ideas differ?
- Do they take responsibility for their role, or rely on others to complete the work?
- Do students contribute to a positive, respectful group environment?



## Pre-Assessment

**Directions:** Read each question and pick the answer that most describes you right now. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. During a group activity, everyone is sharing ideas. What do you usually do?
  - A. Wait and think about your own idea
  - B. Listen carefully and build on others' ideas
  - C. Talk over others to share your idea
  - D. Stop paying attention
2. Your group needs to complete a task together. What do you usually do?
  - A. Do your part quietly
  - B. Work together and help others if needed
  - C. Try to take over to make sure it's done your way
  - D. Let others do most of the work
3. Someone in your group has a different idea than you. What do you do?
  - A. Stay quiet even if you disagree
  - B. Listen and try to understand their idea
  - C. Tell them your idea is better
  - D. Ignore their idea
4. Your group is having trouble deciding what to do. What do you usually do?
  - A. Wait for others to decide
  - B. Help the group find a solution together
  - C. Push your idea strongly
  - D. Stop trying to help
5. A teammate is struggling with their part. What do you do?
  - A. Focus only on your own work
  - B. Offer to help or encourage them
  - C. Get frustrated with them
  - D. Ignore the situation



## Pre-Assessment

6. Your group's plan suddenly changes. What do you usually do?
  - A. Feel unsure but go along with it
  - B. Adjust and help the group move forward
  - C. Complain about the change
  - D. Stop participating
  
7. You make a mistake during a group task. What do you do?
  - A. Hope no one notices
  - B. Admit it and try to fix it
  - C. Blame someone else
  - D. Shut down or give up
  
8. During group work, how do you usually share responsibility?
  - A. Do only what you are told
  - B. Take responsibility and support the group
  - C. Try to control everything
  - D. Avoid doing your part
  
9. A teammate shares an idea you don't understand. What do you do?
  - A. Stay quiet
  - B. Ask questions to understand better
  - C. Dismiss the idea
  - D. Ignore them
  
10. Your group finishes a task successfully. What do you usually do?
  - A. Feel relieved it's done
  - B. Celebrate the team's effort
  - C. Focus on your own contribution
  - D. Not think much about it
  
11. During group work, one person is left out. What do you do?
  - A. Don't notice
  - B. Include them in the activity
  - C. Continue without them
  - D. Let someone else handle it



## Pre-Assessment

12. You feel frustrated with your group. What do you do?
- A. Stay quiet
  - B. Express your feelings calmly and respectfully
  - C. Show frustration or complain
  - D. Stop participating
13. Your group has different opinions on what to do next. What do you do?
- A. Go along with others
  - B. Help the group find a compromise
  - C. Insist your idea is best
  - D. Withdraw from the discussion
14. When working in a group, how do you usually listen?
- A. Listen sometimes, but think about your response
  - B. Listen carefully and respectfully
  - C. Interrupt or talk over others
  - D. Don't pay much attention
15. What kind of team member do you feel like most of the time?
- A. Quiet and unsure
  - B. Supportive and cooperative
  - C. In charge of or controlling
  - D. Disengaged or uninvolved



# Lesson 1

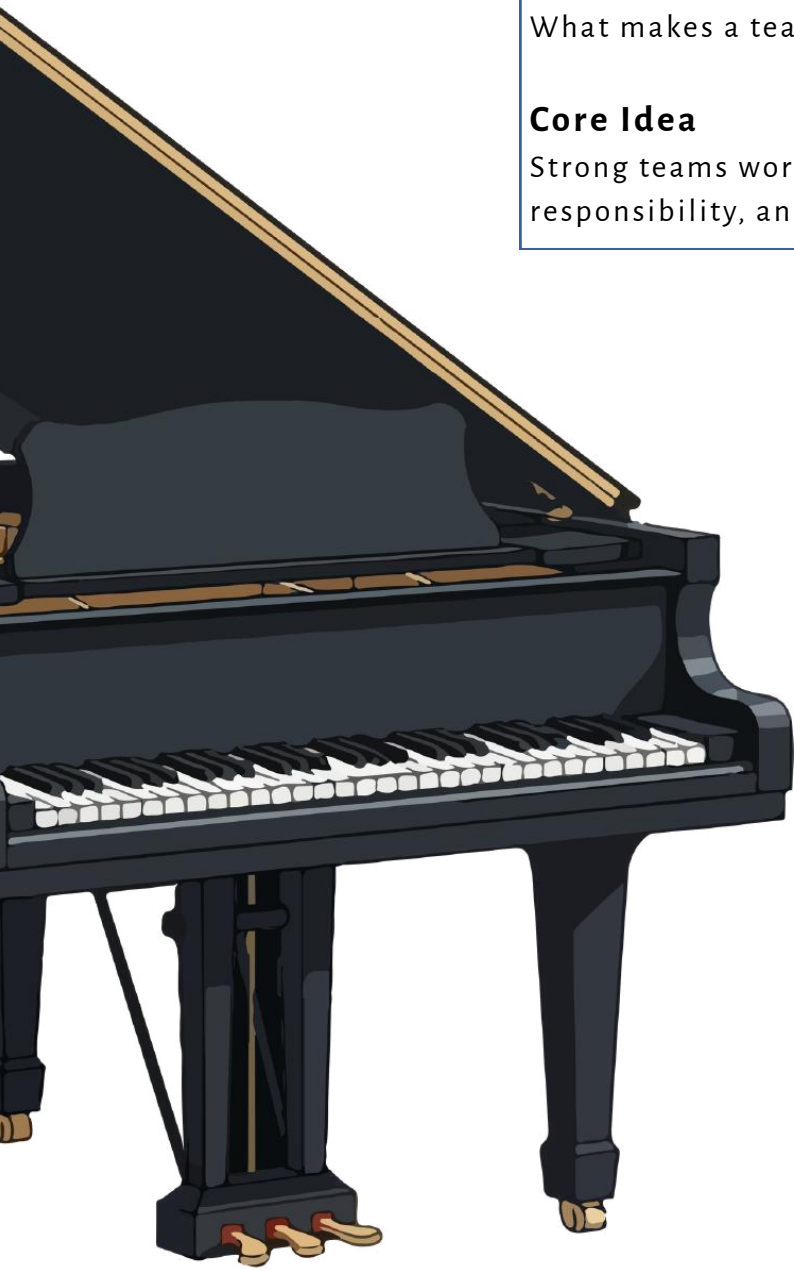
# Building Strong Teams

## Essential Question

What makes a team work well together?

## Core Idea

Strong teams work together through cooperation, shared responsibility, and understanding others.





# Teacher Lesson: Building Strong Teams

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe what teamwork looks like, sounds like, and feels like
2. Demonstrate cooperation by listening, sharing ideas, and taking turns
3. Identify how group dynamics affect how a team works together
4. Explain the importance of each team member's role in a group
5. Recognize how their behavior can support or disrupt teamwork
6. Begin to understand shared responsibility within a team

## Learning Rationale

Building strong teams is the foundation for all successful collaboration. In upper elementary classrooms, students are increasingly expected to work in groups, share ideas, and contribute to collective tasks. However, many students are still developing the skills needed to cooperate effectively, understand group roles, and participate in a balanced way.

Without clear guidance, students may struggle with behaviors such as talking over others, withdrawing from participation, or focusing only on their own ideas. These challenges can impact both the group's success and individual learning experiences.

This lesson introduces students to the core elements of effective teamwork in a clear and accessible way. Using the idea that each team member is like an instrument in a band, students begin to understand that no single role is more important than another—what matters is how everyone works together.

By developing an early understanding of cooperation, group dynamics, and shared responsibility, students build the foundation they need to navigate more complex teamwork skills in future lessons, including trust, conflict resolution, accountability, and problem-solving.



# Reading Guide: Building Strong Teams

## Why use a reading guide?

This guide helps teachers use any read-aloud text to reinforce the lesson: Strong teams work together through cooperation, shared responsibility, and understanding others.

The goal is not to analyze the entire story, but to notice:

- How characters work with others
- How they cooperate (or don't)
- How they handle group challenges
- How their actions affect the team

## Before Reading Prompts

- What does it mean to be a good teammate?
- Does teamwork mean everyone does the same thing?
- What happens when people don't work well together?
- What does it look like when a group is working really well?
- Have you ever worked in a group that went well—or didn't? What made the difference?

Tell students: As we read today, pay attention to how characters work with others—especially when they are part of a group or facing a challenge together.

## During Reading Discussion Questions

### Noticing Teamwork

- Is the character working with others or alone?
- How are they contributing to the group?
- Are they listening to others' ideas?
- What role do they seem to play in the group?

### Cooperation & Participation

- Are the characters taking turns and sharing ideas?
- Is anyone taking over or not participating?
- How are decisions being made in the group?
- What could they do to work together more effectively?

### Group Dynamics

- How does the group interact with each other?
- Is the group working smoothly or struggling? Why?
- Are all voices being heard?
- How does one person's behavior affect the group?



# Reading Guide: Building Strong Teams

## Shared Responsibility

- Are all group members doing their part?
- Is someone relying on others too much?
- Is someone taking on too much responsibility?
- What would make the group more balanced?

## After Reading Reflection Questions

- What made the team successful—or not successful?
- What could the characters have done differently to work better together?
- Why is it important for everyone to play a role in a team?
- How can one person improve or hurt a whole group?
- What is one teamwork skill you saw in the story?

## Recommended Read-Aloud Titles

These books include strong examples of teamwork, cooperation, and group dynamics:

### *Because of Winn-Dixie* – Kate DiCamillo

- Themes: friendship, connection, understanding others
- Useful for discussing how relationships shape teamwork.

### *Wonder* – R.J. Palacio

- Themes: empathy, inclusion, social dynamics
- Great for examining how group behavior affects individuals.

### *The Wild Robot* – Peter Brown

- Themes: cooperation, community, helping others
- Great for exploring how individuals contribute to a group.

### *The One and Only Ivan* – Katherine Applegate

- Themes: collaboration, empathy, working toward a shared goal
- Strong examples of collective effort and support.

### *A Rover's Story* – Jasmine Warga

- Themes: teamwork, problem-solving, connection
- An engaging way to explore how different “roles” work together