

Stop working together

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Imagine you're sitting at home working on a project that's due tomorrow. It's only halfway done, but it's already getting late. Your partner was supposed to do the other half yesterday, but refused. Now you have to stay up and do their part.

Is this fair? No! Group projects are a bad method of education. Lots of people could argue that they help you in the future, but they could also destroy it. Many students dread group projects. Professor Curtis J. Bank, from Indiana University, said, "Students may develop a phobia about group work, which may be harmful to their life after school." One reason students dread group projects is that you get docked because your partner didn't do their part.

How many times have you had to pick up someone else's slack? It isn't fair that teachers grade group projects so that you and your partner get the same grade. I remember, in seventh grade, my teacher had us do a poster in a group of four. Two people didn't get done, so I had to do some of their work. I still got docked points when they didn't have the part they said they did. I did my part; I even helped with my partners parts! Why should I lose points because some group members were irresponsible? Teachers need to realize that we can't control what our group members put in.

Students should be graded as a whole. Another issue is that kids will take advantage of each other. Everyone knows this, yet teachers insist on putting the slackers with people who will do whatever it takes to get the grade.

When my dad was in collage, he had to do a project on Japan. He had lived there for two years, so his group made him do most of the work.

Then, when it was time to grade each other, my dad couldn't make it and got the lower grade. He was taken advantage of and didn't get anything out of the assignment. This brings us to peer evaluation. Some people think peer evaluation makes students work harder, but it actually makes them slack just a little more. Knowing their friends are grading them has had the opposite of the intended effect on kids.

Instead of working hard, they just tell each other things like, "If you'll be nice, I'll be nice!" Or maybe it's the other way around! You don't like the people in your group, so you push them under the bus. The authors of *Assessing Individual Student Performance in Collaborative Projects: A Case Study*, S. E. Kruck and Harry L. Reif, did a survey and found surprising results.

They found that 80% of students did not work harder when peer evaluation was used. Another problem with peer evaluation is status. Status and bullies have a big effect on how much a student participates. Professor Awang Had stated, "Telling students that their individual contributions will be evaluated can have the effect of making low status students unwilling to risk active participation." A student with a low status can be intimidated into doing nothing, or sometimes, into everything, but without taking credit for it.

If you put a bully in a group with someone that's not so popular, who knows what can happen? Along with this, there's the problem of finding time to get with the rest of the group. The average student is involved with extra-curricular activities or some other after-school activity. Between three or four schedules, it is hard to find a time all members of the group can meet. You

also have to find a meeting place. This affects not only the students, but their parents too.

Most parents don't want to have too many extra kids over, especially if they already have three or four of their own. As you can see, finding the time and place to meet can be difficult. Group projects can affect students in a negative way. They can affect their life after school, clutter their schedule, and cost you a grade. You don't have to completely eliminate group projects to get rid of these problems though. I have come up with two solutions to these problems.

First, you can give the students a choice whether or not to work with a partner. Second, you can let the students get rid of a partner that is not doing their part after two warnings. This would help students everywhere get better grades and keep their schedules organized.