



**LAW AND JUSTICE**  
Foundations in Law · Foundations in Criminal Justice

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**TEACHER TOOLKIT: COLLABORATIVE**  
**LEARNING AND TEAMWORK**

Collaborative learning and teamwork are central to the Law and Justice curriculum. Practitioners in the fields of law and law enforcement have identified collaboration and interpersonal skills as essential to their work in a variety of settings and toward a variety of purposes. The fact that people are more productive and efficient when working toward the achievement of common goals has been well-established through a broad range of research studies. The advantages of effective collaboration are even more relevant in law and law enforcement, which are founded on a belief that the social contract requires us to be responsible for one another as well as for ourselves. This curriculum is designed to establish the conditions for successful group work, and to name and teach specific personal and interpersonal skills that are essential to working effectively with others.

Before collaborative work can be successful, several elements must be in place. Most teachers and students have experienced the frustrations of unsuccessful group work at some point. All too often, group work is conducted for its own sake, with no identified purpose and no accountability for individual contributions. While the curriculum sometimes refers to student "groups" when students work together for brief periods on short-term assignments, students are considered to be in *teams* when their work is of a longer duration. In teams, they are assigned specific roles to meet common goals, work together to contribute to decisions, and develop a product. The following five elements are essential to successful cooperative learning experiences:

1. Students understand why they are working together and what they need from one another to be successful
2. Students work together, face to face
3. Students are clear on their personal responsibilities in accomplishing the group's goals
4. Students are taught group skills
5. Groups regularly reflect on how well they are functioning

The Law and Justice curriculum is designed to ensure that each of these five elements is explicitly embedded into daily classroom instruction. The curriculum provides resources on forming and facilitating student teams, group management techniques, and means for assessing both team products and processes. Teachers also receive tools for troubleshooting common difficulties, such as large team size and interpersonal conflicts. In addition, teachers can and should use their personal expertise, experience, and familiarity with their students to inform the creation of student teams.

Once these elements are in place, specific personal and interpersonal skills should be taught and assessed in a classroom context in order to provide the conditions for successful student learning. Students and teachers are not necessarily born with an innate ability to work well with others. The skills essential to effective team functioning can and should be taught explicitly, just as the skills of, for example, decoding unfamiliar text and interviewing are taught and assessed. The Law and Justice curriculum provides instruction for teaching and assessing the following skills:



- Accepting and considering differences and differing ideas
- Understanding and fulfilling group roles and responsibilities
- Understanding and using processes for time management and group functioning
- Effectively communicating with teammates, including giving and receiving feedback
- Identifying and using techniques for conflict management and resolution
- Demonstrating leadership, creativity, and initiative<sup>ii</sup>

Students use self-assessments, peer assessments, and teacher assessments to identify progress toward mastery of teamwork skills taught in an authentic project-based context, and compile evidence of progression toward mastery in their Career Portfolio. These foundational skills will provide students the tools with which to successfully continue in this career pathway as well as in other professional and academic environments.

*Note: This document is currently in development and will be modified to include specific instructional strategies and tool for classroom use.*

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from Johnson, R. T., & Johnson, D. W. (1994). An Overview of Cooperative Learning. Originally published in J. Thousand, R. Villa, & A. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and Collaborative Learning*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing. Retrieved from [www.co-operation.org/pages/overviewpaper.html](http://www.co-operation.org/pages/overviewpaper.html)

<sup>ii</sup> Adapted from the following source documents:

- Partnership for 21st Century Skills: “Student Outcomes: Teaming and Collaboration”
- California CTE Standards, Public Services Industry Sector: “Leadership and Teamwork”
- States’ Career Clusters Initiative, Law Enforcement, and Legal Services Pathways: “Knowledge and Skills Charts: Leadership and Teamwork”