The Role of Collaborative Skills in Enhancing Powerful Group Learning, and Understanding of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

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Johannesburg, South Africa
Why collaboration?
That wasn't what we decided!
Yes it was.

No! It wasn't!

I forgot something—be right back!

Yap Yap Yap Yap! Ha ha ha! YAP!

The Efficient Group

Image retrieved from https://techofcomm.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/jan262012-efficient-group11.jpg
Why collaboration?

“... to do well in today’s fast paced, highly social, ultra-competitive and globally connected world, our children need twenty-first-century skills.”

Dr Shimi Kang (2015)

• Creativity
• Critical Thinking
• Communication
• COLLABORATION

St John’s Prep School’s strategic focus...

21st Century Skills

The Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (University of Melbourne)
Data Collection and Analysis

- Online surveys - pre-project, for the duration of the project and at its conclusion
- Exit tickets
- Self- and peer-assessment rubrics
- Written artefacts including notes, posters and journals
- Photographs of work and group participation
- Video interviews
Pre-Project Survey
(22 respondents)

Do you enjoy working in groups?

Rate of success in accomplishing what was set
The most enjoyable aspects of group work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of ‘group thinking’ &amp; sharing ideas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with friends</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting help from peers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of work is enhanced</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishing the task</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pressure is shared</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The least enjoyable aspects of group work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not listening</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of agreement/difficulty reaching consensus</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘off task’ distractions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncooperative behaviour</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship issues/working with people “I do not like”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sharing the workload</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People not bringing what they needed to bring</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared mark - being penalised for others’ work ethic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Action Research Project...

How might the explicit teaching of collaboration skills in a study of *Macbeth* enhance powerful group learning and understanding for Year 7 boys?
My project’s design...

STEP ONE
Designing a group-worthy task
The task is **open-ended**

The task requires **complex problem solving**

There are **multiple ways to show competence**

**All boys** can make use of their **unique talents and strengths**
Group-Worthy Tasks

- **The content of the task is significant**
  - A BIG IDEA is addressed
  - Subject specific skills are used
  - An essential question is explored

- **The task requires group interdependence**

- **The task requires individual accountability**

- **Evaluation criteria are clear and made explicit**

  You need your team members!

  e.g. submission of a written report upon completion of the project

  Teaching for Understanding Inquiry-based learning
My project’s design...

STEP TWO
Explicitly teaching collaboration skills
“Effective groups are made not born.”

Harvey and Daniels (2015)
How Proficient Collaborators Think and Act

©2009,2015 by Stephanie Harvey and Harvey “Smokey” Daniels, from Comprehension and Collaboration, Rev. ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Image from https://media.licdn.com/mpr/mpr/p/2/005/057/186/3babe0c.jpg
# How Proficient Collaborators Think and Act (adapted)

©2009,2015 by Stephanie Harvey and Harvey "Smokey" Daniels, from Comprehension and Collaboration, Rev. ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>EXAMPLES/ACTIONS</th>
<th>SOUNDS/LOOKS LIKE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be responsible to the group</td>
<td>Come prepared: work completed, materials and notes in hand</td>
<td>“Does everyone have their articles? Good, let’s get going.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Record interesting ideas/questions/artefacts</td>
<td>“Let me show you this great website I found...”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take initiative, help people get organised</td>
<td>“I’m sorry, guys, I didn’t get the reading done.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live by the group's calendar, work plan, and ground rules</td>
<td>“OK, then today I’ll take the notes...”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Settle problems within the group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Acknowledge if you’re unprepared, and take on some other work</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Listen actively</td>
<td>Make eye contact</td>
<td>“Joe, pull you chair up closer.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nod, confirm, look interested</td>
<td>“I think I heard you say...”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lean in, sit close together</td>
<td>“So you think...”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summarise or paraphrase</td>
<td>Asking follow up questions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use names</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Take notes when helpful</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak up</td>
<td>Join in, speak often, be active</td>
<td>“What you said reminded me of...”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connect your ideas with what others have said</td>
<td>“Can I piggyback on this?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask lead and follow-up questions</td>
<td>“What made you feel that way?”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use appropriate tone and voice level</td>
<td>“Let me show you my work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draw upon the notes, materials, or drawings you’ve brought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share the air and encourage others</td>
<td>Support your views and findings</td>
<td>Show tolerance and respect</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show friendliness and support</td>
<td>• Explain and give examples</td>
<td>• Receive others’ ideas respectfully; no putdowns allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take turns</td>
<td>• Refer to specific passages, evidence or artefacts</td>
<td>• Try to restate opposing views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be aware of who’s contributing; work to balance the airtime</td>
<td>• Connect or contrast your ideas to others’</td>
<td>• Use neutral language in disagreeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitor yourself for dominating or shirking</td>
<td>• Dig deeper into the text or topic; revisit important ideas</td>
<td>• Offer your different viewpoint; don’t be steamrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Invite others to participate</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Welcome and seek insight in divergent viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Build upon and learn from others’ ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Can you say more about that, Jack?”</td>
<td>• “Wow, I thought of something totally different.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “We haven’t heard from you in a while, Kgosi.”</td>
<td>• “I can see your point, but what about ...”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I better finish my point and let someone else talk.”</td>
<td>• “I’m glad you brought that up; I never would have seen it that way.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “That’s a cool idea, Ryan.”</td>
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My project’s design

TIER ONE
Focus on a collaboration skill

TIER TWO
Utilise the collaboration skill in a group-worthy activity

Pre-Project: Preparation

Boys were put into their groups.

They were required to download *Macbeth The Graphic Novel* onto their devices.

They were asked to read the novel and to share any questions or observations in a shared Google doc.

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<th>COLLABORATION SKILLS</th>
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Activity One: Exploring the text

Discussing and exploring deep questions:

- To what extent does the supernatural motivate Macbeth’s actions?
- How do humans deal with the conflicting elements in their personalities? (i.e. good vs evil)
- Is Lady Macbeth more responsible and a more evil character than Macbeth?
- Does Macbeth cause his own downfall?
- Does King Duncan deserve what he gets because he is too trusting?
Activity Two: Multiple Perspectives

Using the Project Zero MTV routine, Step Inside, boys explored the various characters and shared their thinking.

Three core questions guide students in this routine:

- What can the person or thing perceive?
- What might the person or thing know about or believe?
- What might the person or thing care about?

http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03g_CreativityRoutines/StepInside_Routine.html
Activity Three: A Modern Perspective

Can wanting something too much lead us to do things against our nature?

“Overreaching ambition can lead to dire consequences”

COLLABORATION SKILLS
- Be responsible to the group
- Listen actively
- Speak up
- Share the air & encourage others
- Support your views and findings
- Show tolerance and respect
- Reflect and correct

A Modern Perspective

Article One:
Five men to appear for the murder of DA councillor Johannes Baitjies

A Modern Perspective

Article Two:
Indian couple accused of faking photo of summit at Mount Everest

Click on the link below to read the Nevis24 article about this crime.

Click on the link below to read the Guardian Newspaper article about this event.

A Modern Perspective

Article Three:
Lance Armstrong: It’s not like we just showed up to the Tour de France and won

Click on the link below to read the online article in Cycling Weekly.
The Final Project

MACBETH – FINAL PROJECT

INSTRUCTIONS

In your groups, you will produce a final project that reflects modern day ambition that has caused a downfall.

The content and setting must be relevant to your lives as young teenage boys.

Your group will decide what the actual product will be:
- dramatic role play e.g. a television news report or a short play;
- a movie trailer;
- an animated app e.g. Telegami or Puppet Pals etc.

When choosing what your final project will be, you must carefully consider the limited time available for preparation.

The final project must be ready by Thursday 3rd November 2016.
My findings were...

The need for a structured approach to planning a project that includes the establishment of ground rules.

If we had no ground rules it would lead to more arguing and disagreeing which would lead us to falling behind.
I enjoyed being able to discuss my findings with my group and being able to produce a better project with my group.

My findings were...

The need for strategies for effective group communication: active listening; turn taking during discussions
If I didn’t understand something I could refer to a group member to help me instead of trying to figure out one of Google’s complicated explanations. If we all didn’t understand something then we could all discuss it and probably come up with an amazing idea. I also loved the fact that I didn’t have to do all the work.

My findings were...

The need for a deliberate focus on respectful interaction and responsibility towards the group
In summary...

“Off task behavior” was minimized; deadlines were met!

Group interactions were optimized through the use of specific collaboration skills so each group benefited from group thinking.

Powerful discussions were conducted and complex themes were explored with greater depth, focus and maturity.
The focus on collaboration helped us a lot because this time, we worked together instead of against each other.
References


