

“The Group Work Problem”

The following are descriptions of an event that happened with a middle school team a few years ago. A team was having a problem working together, and the manager needed to sort things out. He spoke to each teammate individually, the following is a transcript of what they had to say. (The names and some details were changed to protect the innocent...)

Student #1: Debbie

“Mr. Jones, Tom is not contributing to the group at all. We have asked him to do things and he totally refuses. It is really frustrating because the rest of the group really want a good presentation, so we have been working really hard, but he doesn’t care! I think it is unfair that he should get to be part of this!”

Student #2: Tom

“How am I supposed to do anything when “Miss Perfect” wont let me?! Its like, she wont let my ‘inferior’ work get in the way of her “precious trip to States.” I thought we were supposed to have fun but all she cares about is winning. I swear every time I try to do something its like, “Oh, no, that part’s too important, let so and so do that, you’ll mess it up...” If she doesn’t want me to do anything than why should I?”

Student #3: Lisa

“I think Tom is being a total jerk. Debbie told him to do stuff, he just won’t do it! He also started calling her bad names and stuff! I think he should be taken off the team. I mean, Deb and I are really working hard and Steve is at least trying to do things. Tom just doesn’t care.”

Student #4: Steve

“Tom’s OK, I mean we’re not good friends or anything, but we get along. I really want to do well in this competition thing, ya know, and like Debbie really knows how to do stuff like this, so I let her, ya know, take the lead. I don’t think Tom likes that. I like to build stuff, so I have been building the device part of the problem. Tom and the girls fight a lot, but I just try to stay out of it and get it done.”
