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## TEAMWORK

As we all know, one day in a future career excellent 'people skills' are vital for success. For this reason it is imperative for us to teach children this essential core skill and ensure effective teamwork is understood and taught explicitly. For children to achieve a comprehensive, well-rounded education, integrated teamwork on several fronts is vital. Be it between children, between children and teachers, or amongst parents and teachers. The more teamwork fundamentals are displayed, the more opportunity for children to learn the vital skills of communication, compromise and collaboration.

Teamwork in a classroom teaches students the necessary skills associated with working as a collective unit toward a common goal, with each member being equally involved and having their thoughts and opinions considered. In any type of "group work", students need to learn to respect and listen to others and then agree about who will handle various components of a project and work in tandem using one another's strengths to accomplish the task. This teaches children time management, resource allocation and most importantly, effective communication skills.

At Southdowns College Prep we encourage children by ensuring that paired or teamwork happens regularly with various peers in the class or across grades, when we have our Prep Pals meetings. Most often the groups are carefully created by the teacher or left to chance, we specifically discourage allowing children to choose their groups, as this does not reflect the real world and encourages favouritism. We prefer group sizes of between 2 and 4 for the most effective results.

We also make use of KAGAN structures, a teaching methodology, which reinforces good social skills and ensures that teamwork gives everyone a chance to contribute and be involved in the process. Effective skills need to be developed over time and so students need lots of practice and explicit reminders of what makes a good team member.

We teach some of these skills through our own Core Skill Super Heroes; namely:

- Katy Coms (whose super powers entail all factors that contribute to effective communication e.g. Eye contact, listen and respond, take turns speaking, extend vocabulary etc.)
- Manage-Me Mike (whose super powers list various self-management skills like time management, follow the rules, control my moods, take responsibility etc.)
- Social Siby (whose super powers are; encourage respect, remember manners, be fair and respect different opinions)

Below is a list of aspects for children and teachers to be made aware of:

- Listening
- Asking questions - making sense of your own understanding

- Explaining by telling how and why
- Helping others - by responding to their needs
- Helping others - to do things for themselves
- Sharing knowledge and reasoning, Allowing everyone to contribute
- Finding out what others think - asking for, listening to and making sense of their ideas
- Reflecting on and making use of what has been said
- Being concise - communicating one's thinking
- Giving reasons for ideas - communicating one's reasoning
- Pulling ideas together - sharing, listening, valuing all contributions
- Finding out if the group is ready to make a decision - consensus making.

Teachers need to be aware of the difference between “group work” (the group gets on with it- sometimes 1 person doing all the work, some children not contributing etc.) and true “teamwork” (where every child's opinion and efforts counts and is expected.)

In our recent assembly we learnt the chant TEAM- Together Everyone Achieves More! Then children were encouraged to sign their name, if they plan to commit to being a responsible and caring team member.

Cheers to effective TEAMWORK in schools and life!

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