

Two–Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Interdependent Roles

Interdependent roles link one person's success to the success of the whole group. When young people experience interdependent roles, they practice important communication, collaboration, and empathy skills.¹ These skills and knowledge strengthen their ability to work with others immediately in school and in work environments later in life. Interdependent roles also help young people build an identity as a useful member of a group.² This sense of identity promotes attendance and positive program participation.¹ We all want to have an important role, contribute something unique, and feel valued by others. Group work with interdependent roles allows these needs to be met in our ELO programs.²

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to give participants the opportunity to experience interdependent roles.

Encourage Diverse Small Groups

Create small groups (of 2 to 6 individuals) that contain a mix of grade levels, abilities, experience, and personal backgrounds. This allows participants to hear different perspectives and gain support from others, a key part of a successful opportunity for interdependent roles.

Process Versus Content Learning

Emphasize that the **process** of working together is just as important as learning or doing the **content** of an activity. You can circulate while participants are working and ask, "How're you working together to do this?" or "Can you all tell me how you're each helping on this?". If there are winners, points, or grades assigned, make sure to let participants know that these are heavily based on how well a team worked together.

Identify Project Roles

One way to easily ensure interdependent roles is to identify clear project roles that align with the number of participants in the group. For example, if groups are made up of three, ask groups to identify a scribe, a person to gather materials, and a presenter.

Activities That Promote Interdependence

Projects like fund-raising, doing community service, and team presentations all offer interdependent roles.

Mini-TED Talks: In groups of 3, participants spend the week researching one thing they are curious about. They research the topic and create a 5-minute fact-

sharing presentation. At the end of the week all small groups present to the entire ELO group.

Human Knot: Start by standing in a circle with your hands by your sides. Then, have everyone grab someone else's hand in each of theirs, and make sure no one grabs their neighbor's hand. Double check that no one is holding the same person's hands twice. Now, you should have a giant knot. Take turns moving and bending until the knot untangles, but don't let go of each other's hands!

Tips in Action!

[Watch](#) staff at Launch at Maple Elementary facilitate an activity where young people have interdependent roles.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:

<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expand-ed-learning-opportunities/>

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

¹Kirk A. Astroth. Fall 2014. *Interdependence: Ninth and Newest Critical Element for 4-H For Positive Youth Development*. Journal of Youth Development: Bridging Research and Practice.

²Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Everlove, S. (2009). *Productive group work*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/109018/chapters/Using-Positive-Interdependence.aspx>