

When Schools Overlook Introverts in “The Atlantic”

Description



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A recent article in *The Atlantic*, [When Schools Overlook Introverts](#), argues that schools are overlooking introverts with the education trend towards project-based learning and group projects.

“As the focus on group work and collaboration increases, classrooms are neglecting the needs of students who work better in quiet settings.” *The Atlantic*

In [progressive schools](#), group projects are a key part of the curriculum. My kids attended The Willows, a progressive school in Culver City, before moving to Viewpoint, a traditional school in Calabasas. I intentionally chose the Willows for my daughter, who is a quiet introvert like me. During her time at The Willows, K-6th, I thought the school’s focus on project-based learning would benefit her tremendously by championing the traits and qualities she was born with, while helping her learn skills that might not come naturally. That turned out to be true. After all, as adults we work in groups in the

workplace, when we volunteer and even at home. The ability to learn to work successfully in groups is an important skill, but one that doesn't always come naturally to young kids.

I learned that introverts play an important role in group projects. My daughter took on roles in group projects that fit her personality. She'd often be asked by her peers or the teacher to lead a project, based on her strong organizational skills, her focus and her ability to listen to input from all group members. She'd edit other kids' work at their request or quietly help decide which project the group would choose, after the group discussion concluded. The extroverts in the group had skills she didn't possess. They'd brainstorm project ideas, ask the teacher questions, lead class discussions, use their artistic talents to draw project ideas and debate the merits of a project.

With skilled teachers and just enough structure, progressive schools that incorporate project-based learning in their curriculum can help both introverts and extroverts flourish. Of course, quiet time should be part of the daily schedule. But cooperative learning doesn't have to entail excessively social or overstimulating mandates; it can easily involve quiet components that facilitate internal contemplation, says *The Atlantic* article. I never felt that there was a lack of quiet time or time for individual work because of the project-based learning. Neither did my daughter. Sometimes, the quiet time occurred in the library, as she and the librarian quietly searched for the right book for her to curl up with at home.

Ultimately, when my daughter started 7th grade at Viewpoint, she was able to apply the skills she'd learned working in groups to the classroom environment at her new school, where group projects are less frequent. Currently, she's in charge of organizing all the components of a group project for one of her classes.

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