

3.5.4 Group drawing

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

This activity focuses on developing another fundamental element of resilience: a future-oriented mindset and optimistic outlook. The children work together to draw a much more positive “future situation” – which we call the dream position – compared to a “situation” defined by a teacher. Every student’s contribution must be clearly represented in the co-created, unified artwork. This activity can be linked to any subject where visual expression is possible. This activity is effective and develops resilience only if the children work together, rather than the artwork reflecting the ideas of just one dominant child.

Skill focus

Primary Skill Focus

- Resilience

Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus

- Emotional awareness, regulation, and communication
- Problem-solving
- Flexibility

Age group	Student number	Duration
7 + years old	groups of 2 to 6 students, class size	15-45 minutes (depending on the topic, paper size, and technique)

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity

1. The teacher provides the "starting situation", or the children choose one together. The current situation (starting point) can be anything: for example, we can use a scene from a fairytale where the characters get into trouble and ask the children to draw a positive outcome. Or we can recall a past (already resolved) situation when the children were at an emotional low point and draw the "dream position." The goal is that the children work together to create a rich (detailed) picture that represents a much better future state.
2. The group discusses how the drawing should look, who will take responsibility for each part, and how the different elements will be connected.
3. Each student works on their part according to the plan, making sure all sections come together as one single image.
4. At the end, the group looks at the finished piece together. Everyone shares how they contributed and how they felt during the activity.

5. Ask the students to explain the different parts of the picture, i.e., why this situation is better. What do they think the characters did to get to this state? In this context, the teachers can raise the question of reality, what skills are needed for this, or who can be asked for help (supportive social relationship development).

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

It can be carried out both indoors and outdoors, provided the conditions are suitable. A table or surface is needed where the drawing paper can be placed, and children can sit around it.

How does this learning activity develop this particular skill?

This activity helps develop students' resilience by:

- the activity essentially and primarily develops resilience by helping children to imagine and visualize a positive, optimistic future. Visualization through drawing is particularly important because it develops and reinforces the skill much more powerfully than "simple" storytelling.
- requiring children to consider each other's ideas, which supports the development of flexible thinking and acceptance,
- presenting situations where the drawing may not turn out as originally imagined, helping students learn to cope with disappointment and seek new solutions,
- involving shared planning and space management, which can lead to disagreements that must be resolved peacefully and collaboratively,
- encouraging children to carry the group task through even when they face difficulties, strengthening their perseverance,
- reinforcing children's self-confidence through active participation in the joint drawing and recognizing their own contributions – building the feeling of "I can cope and contribute."

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

While creating a collaborative drawing of the "better future", students must agree on how to represent the chosen topic. They need to be able to explain why they think the situation is better, and what in the picture shows that the situation is better. Everyone needs access to the paper, which requires planning and organization. This process supports the development of important personality traits such as acceptance, patience, problem-solving thinking, responsibility, social skills, empathy, and a solution-focused mindset.

As a result of completing this task, students will:

- be able to develop a positive dreamed position and understand that the situation can always be better.
- are able to imagine and explain an optimistic future in detail, and to understand and imagine the logical steps needed (including the asking and receiving help and support) to achieve it.
- by experience the joy of success (the realistic achievement of the better, dreamed future), which reinforces their future-oriented and optimistic mindset.

In addition

- be able to accept that their own idea may not always be the one implemented, yet they still play a valuable role in the shared work.
- become more flexible in adapting to group decisions and changing circumstances during the task.
- be able to emerge challenges or disagreements are approached through cooperation and calm communication.
- show perseverance in working toward the common goal, even when they experience frustration.
- Their self-confidence and positive self-image grow as their contributions to the final product are recognized and appreciated by others.

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

Creating a collaborative drawing should never be an end in itself – it should always serve a specific purpose, such as decorating the classroom, summarizing content, or supporting storytelling.

This method is well-suited for text-based activities. Students create a joint illustration of the story or passage and then use the drawing to support an oral presentation. If the drawing is successful, it often makes it easier for students to recall and retell the content of the reading.

Specific lesson related examples:

- **Math:** The initial story behind the exercise: the squirrel has lost the nuts it collected for the winter. The children work together to draw a "happy future" in which the forest animals help the squirrel; their task is to hide and count a specific number (e.g., 15) of nuts in the drawing.
- **Reading and Writing:** We pause at the sad part of a short animal story, and the group draws a happy ending. Since they are just learning to write, instead of a long text, they write only 1–2 simple words that describe the picture or a single sentence next to the drawing (e.g., "The cat is happy.").
- **Environmental Studies:** The starting point is a very trash-filled, neglected playground or park forest (which the children can easily imagine). In the group drawing, they create a clean, rebuilt dream playground, where they must consciously include recycling bins and people helping one another.
- **Grammar (Vocabulary):** The children transform a stormy, scary picture into a cheerful, sunny, peaceful drawing. As a grammar exercise, they must collect and write down simple pairs of opposites (e.g., dark-light, sad-happy, stormy-calm) around the finished drawing.
- **Language:** The problem is a very basic situation: a puppy is hungry and cold. The group draws the ideal situation (the puppy eating in a warm little house) and names the basic elements in the drawing using the language they have learned (e.g., dog, house, happy, food).
- **Music and Visual Arts:** The teacher plays a slow, sad piece of music (representing the problem), then switches to a cheerful, upbeat tune, to which the children must paint the "happy future." In the visual arts class, the task is supplemented by the requirement that they may only use warm, bright colours (yellow, orange, red) to express joy.

Materials and tools needed for implementation

Coloured pencils, markers, watercolour, tempera paint (with necessary accessories such as brushes), paper.

Guiding questions

- Ask the students to explain the different parts of the picture, i.e., why this situation is better.
- You can also discuss what made the situation better (what needed to be done to achieve this). What do they think the characters did to get to this state?
- In this context, the teachers can raise the question of reality, what skills are needed for this, or who can be asked for help (supportive social relationship development).
- You can also ask them to enrich the picture by adding the positive emotions of the people in the picture (difficulty level). What do the children think the characters be happy (focus on the benefit of the new situation)
- The next guided questions support the development of both skills: resilience and flexibility. If children choose a topic freely (not the dreamed positive future), this activity is excellent for developing flexibility.
- Were you able to plan together what you wanted to create?
- Did you consider everyone's ideas? Were you able to make compromises when your opinions were different?
- How could you draw your idea in a way that fits well with the others' drawings?
- What happens if someone wants to draw in the same place as you? How can you talk about it and find a solution?
- How did you feel when someone suggested something different from what you wanted?
- How can you work together so that everyone feels good while creating?
- Was there a part you had to do differently from how you first planned? How did you manage that?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

During the activity, children are not given pre-assigned roles within the group (as in cooperative learning structures) unless necessary.

Creating a collaborative drawing should never be an end in itself – it should always serve a purpose, such as decorating the classroom, summarizing content, supporting storytelling or dramatization, etc. Make sure that you always make the children draw a positive future only. Older children (aged 14+) can already start thinking about what could make the situation worse and plan their protection in advance (flexibility – conscious preparation for change – development).

Common challenges and suggested strategies:

- **Challenge:** Several children want to draw in the same spot.
Tip: Encourage finding a joint solution, such as merging ideas or sharing the space.
- **Challenge:** Some children become sidelined or do not engage in the activity.
Tip: It can help to address them directly and offer a smaller, clearly defined role to get them involved.
- **Challenge:** Someone is unwilling to change their original idea.
Tip: Reminding them of the shared goal and encouraging flexible thinking may support collaboration.
- **Challenge:** A disagreement or conflict arises.
Tip: Support children in finding their own peaceful solution to the disagreement.

Difficulty level tailoring

Teachers can tailor the group drawing activity to three difficulty levels to meet learners' needs.

- **Beginners (6-7 years old):** – Learners with low resilience: The aim of the activity: to help children safely participate in group art and practice future-oriented thinking. The starting story is simple and easy to understand, with few characters and a clear, easily grasped conflict. The teacher provides concrete examples of how the problematic starting situation can be transformed into a positive outcome, for instance briefly explaining how the characters could solve the problem or what positive ending could be drawn. Children work on smaller parts, focusing on simple tasks, while the teacher supports participation and guides the process. The teacher gives encouraging feedback, for example: “You did a great job on your part, which was a nice idea!” The activity helps children recognize that situations can be turned in a positive direction and provides a safe environment to practice cooperation.
- **Advanced learners (8-9 years old):** – Learners with moderate resilience: The aim of the activity: to develop independent idea generation, cooperation, and future-oriented thinking. The starting story is moderately complex, with more characters or minor complications, allowing for a more detailed positive outcome. Children actively participate in planning, discuss who will draw which part, and how the elements connect. They work independently on their own parts, while paying attention to other group members and supporting each other if needed. The teacher gives supportive feedback on participation and cooperation, for example: “Nice how you fit all the parts together.” The activity helps children contribute ideas independently, pay attention to others, and envision the future optimistically, while experiencing the value of group work.
- **Experts (9-10 years old):** – Learners with high resilience: The aim of the activity: to develop conscious future-oriented thinking, creative problem-solving, and active, responsible participation in the group. The starting story is complex, with multiple characters and conflicts, possibly emotionally challenging, requiring children's creativity and problem-solving skills. Children create more detailed, complex, positive visions of the future and reflect on the skills needed to achieve the goals and who could help. They complete the drawing completely independently, yet cooperatively, with each group member supporting others' participation and the process. The teacher supports reflection, for example: “It's valuable how you planned and created the picture together.” The activity strengthens children's creativity, independent future planning, problem-solving skills, and capacity for social support, while teaching that group work makes goals more realistic and achievable.

Debriefing and Reflection questions

- What was the biggest challenge for you during the group drawing? How did you manage to solve it?
- Was there a moment when you had to give something up? How did that feel, and what took its place?
- What helped you keep going even when something was difficult?
- What did you learn about yourself while working together?
- Why was it important to work as a team instead of drawing separately?
- What would you say to a friend if they had trouble with a task like this?
- If you could start over, what would you do differently? Why?