

Junior Core: Dyad Assessment

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When John told us at the end of last quarter that we would be paired up with another classmate for all of winter quarter, I was excited. At the same time though, the idea of being partners with one classmate for the entire quarter somewhat scared me because I have a hard time getting close to people. That day we were to pick our partners, I came to class unbelievably nervous. Our class is filled with wonderful people, but I did not know any of them particularly well. I held my breath as everyone picked names, and when it came time for my turn, my heart started going out of control. I was so relieved when I picked Kiley's name; I had never talked to her one on one before, but I knew we would work well together because she has a great sense of humor (and come on, she always looks adorable). Kiley and I instantly clicked, and from our first conversation, we have had a fantastic dyadic relationship. I could not have picked a better partner.

Kiley is an excellent communicator, whether she is communicating with me or others. When we met to plan out details for our project, she was able to keep us on task, but we were still able to make it fun. In meetings with school officials, she seemed to flip on a professional switch, while I seemed to flounder around with my words. Kiley was very easy to talk to because she kept eye contact throughout the conversation. Not so much that a person would feel uncomfortable, but enough so that they knew they were getting her full attention and respect. I really admire that. Another non-verbal communication pattern that I noticed in Kiley was that she always shows her emotions. She is a very genuine person, and that makes it easier to build a relationship with her. The number one thing that I was looking for in a dyad partner though, was being a good listener. Not only to listen to my ideas, but as well as if I had a problem that were distracting me. Kiley is very good at listening to my ideas, and is great at communicating what she thinks about them in a constructive and supportive way. Throughout this quarter I learned

that Kiley is an empathetic person, and she often used her empathic listening skills. This quarter was tough for me, as my boyfriend left for basic training right as our first class started, and I have had a hard time focusing on school. Kiley was patient with me and always asked more questions to keep me talking; I felt as if she knew that talking about it would help me be able to focus more fully of school. In chapter five of *Bridges Not Walls*, Stewart described empathetic listening as a balance between encouraging skills and reflecting skills (Stewart, 2009). Kiley balanced them well, mixing open questions with related anecdotes, and keeping in mind appropriate silences. The only thing that I would think Kiley needs to improve on is the frequency in which we communicated, but I believe that fault lies on both of us. We did not communicate much outside of class, and I think it would have been less stressful if there had been more communication.

I am not sure that Kiley and I had any real conflict throughout our dyad project this quarter. There were however, times when I had ideas that were not appropriate for the amount of time that we had and although we would have really loved to carry them out, it just was not reasonable and Kiley was able to explain that to me. When we first started, we knew we both wanted to work with children in a school setting, and we are both crafty people. Right away, we had the idea to do an awareness project in a school and work with the children to create an art project of some sort. As I thought about it more, I thought it would be really cool to do a school-wide awareness project, with different grades doing a different topic so each grade could teach the other about what they learned. I had not worked out all the details, but I wanted to incorporate a poster contest. Although Kiley agreed with me that this would be a really great project and a great way to teach the children about an issue in their community, she was honest with me and told me that it was too big of a project to tackle in just one quarter. I do not have

any suggestions for improvement of conflict management. In True Partnership, we read about speaking authentically to one another and being open and honest in your communication (True Partnership, 118). I think it is important to be honest and authentically, but caring as well, in the face of a conflict, and Kiley does a wonderful job of both.

One of the many things I love about Kiley is that she is dependable. I know she is dedicated to our project and our relationship. We both have busy lives, but no matter how tired she is or how many other things she has to do, she is always on time to our meetings and never has to reschedule. Today for instance, we took our CPR/First Aid class. I think we were both tired, and I know we both had other things we needed to get done. I really needed to write my paper, and she had a book to read before she could write her paper that is due tomorrow. Even with the stress of such a big chunk of work to do, she still wanted to meet as scheduled after our CPR class and she was focused and on task the whole time. This showed her dependability and dedication to our project. I could tell she was dedicated to our relationship as well because she showed genuine interest in my life and remembered little details that she would follow up on days after I had mentioned them. Kiley was consistent in this manner as well. When we had planned to meet and talk about our project, she was always there on time and focused. When we had scheduled meetings in Lynden, we would have to leave campus at 8:30am, and she was consistently on time which was impressive considering neither of us are morning people. I cannot think of a way for Kiley to improve on her dependability, she is already a very dependable and consistent person.

I think one of the high points during our project was when we first met and threw out our initial ideas. There was so much excitement, and I could tell we were both passionate about the project we had chosen. That excitement was renewed when we met with Cyndie Shepard to talk

about our project and ask for her help figuring out ideas. Cyndie was so excited to see that we wanted to be involved, and there was a lot of energy in that meeting. Everybody involved in our project has a lot of energy and it is so fun to see everybody's excitement when we are working out details. With so many people to collaborate with, schedules can get hectic. Kiley and I ran into a scheduling problem when trying to figure out when we would be able to go to the school to do our presentation to the class. Our class schedules, my traveling schedule, and Lynden Middle School's schedule were not mixing well, and Kiley and I did not think we would be able to find a time to go out there before our final presentation was due in Core. This was definitely a low point in our project. I could tell that we were both low in spirit when we couldn't find a date that would work for everybody.

Overall, our dyad relationship and project have gone extremely well. Kiley and I have run into bumps along the road, but with our great communication skills, we have been able to straighten everything out. One of our greatest defining moments throughout our project was when we met with Mrs. Revak and the school's vice principal. Kiley and I had worked out a lot of details, but that meeting was our chance to present our ideas to school officials and get their input. They loved our ideas and were completely willing to work with us. With their help, Kiley and I could see everything coming together. My experience working with Kiley has been fantastic; I am so glad I drew her name at the beginning of the quarter. I have learned a lot about good communication techniques and working well with a lot of people to get a project together. I am thankful for the time I have gotten to spend with Kiley, she is a great person and I have found a lot of great qualities in her that I did not even know I should look for in a friend.

## References

Stewart, J. (2009). *Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communication*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

*True Partnership: True Partnership is an Individual Choice.*