How to Survive a Group Project

By Katie B. Oberlander

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DEDICATION

To my son James, with love and gratitude for the idea of this play. James, you were right, as always, and have definitely earned the title of "muse."

STORY OF THE PLAY

It's Group Project Day at school, and two ambitious students are on a mission to livestream the madness in a new episode of their web series, *Surviving School: Tips and Tricks to Make the Grade*. While documenting the chaos of group dynamics, they capture the absurdities and frustrations that unfold when personalities clash, deadlines loom, and expectations skyrocket. One group attempts a dramatic interpretive dance, another secretly enlists the help of a high-tech AI robot, a perfectionist engineers the ultimate A+ plan, and one rogue student believes sabotage is the key to success. But when the principal threatens to shut the whole thing down, the student filmmakers must scramble to finish their documentary and maybe discover some real lessons about collaboration along the way. This fast-paced, easy to stage, hour-long comedy is a whirlwind of miscommunication, mayhem, and unexpected teamwork, perfect for anyone who's ever survived a group project.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Flexible cast of 21 actors, plus extras.)

NARRATOR ONE: Serious filmmaker of the web series, "Surviving School: Tips and Tricks to Make the Grade."
NARRATOR TWO: Wacky co-creator of the web series.
PRINCIPAL TAYLOR: Stern, no-nonsense administrator.
MRS. CARTWRIGHT: Eccentric teacher who loves to motivate her students with nonsensical proverbs.

BLUE GROUP
DAPHNE: Friendly and fashion-forward student
VICK: Sarcastic realist.
EMILY: Confused student.
AINSLEY: Intense overachiever.

GREEN GROUP
BETSY: Bored student with little interest in productivity.
JADE: Clever student who hates group projects.
DANNY: Responsible and hardworking student.
CARL: Mysteriously absent group member.

PINK GROUP
LILA: Overzealous optimist who leads with relentless cheer.
PETER: Cynical pessimist who resists the group's plans.
QUINN: Chaotic bundle of energy.
NORAH: Anxious and sensitive student.

RED GROUP
ALEX: Gamer.
CARSON: Loud, sports-obsessed bro.
DANA: Level-headed and ethical student.
THEO: Robotics nerd.
CHATTY: AI chatbot who tries to sound trendy with modern slang.

STUDENTS: Optional extra roles.

CASTING NOTES: All roles in the show are flexible. Feel free to adjust names and pronouns as needed for your production. The small role of Carl can easily be doubled by an actor in the blue or red group.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Simple production choices and minimal scenery can help scenes shift quickly and smoothly. In the original production, modular blocks were used for versatility and to keep the focus on the student characters rather than the setting. Consider using lighting to define different areas of the stage for each group of students. Because trends shift rapidly, you're welcome to replace any outdated pop culture or tech references with timely ones. Narrator One and Narrator Two are filming a live-stream video throughout the play, but you can have them primarily face and address the audience.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This show was originally produced through a partnership between Gloucester Stage and Harborlight Montessori in Gloucester, MA in March 2025 with the following cast and crew:

Kaleigh Lopez, Wesley Robinson, Lana Crawford, Scarlet Wallace Rubens, Aksil Benhamza, Drago Murphy, Maya Fahmy, Cecila Frautten, Noemi Polverari, Emma Carpenter, Aurora Robinson, Gwen Kelley, Jenna Pario, Lucian Reznik, Zoe Rowe, Owen Pario, Ben Reynolds, Nevaeh Johnson-Depass, Nolan Costa, Poyraz Colak, Rose Caruso, Lorenzo Aveni, Riena Banks, Claire Mooso, Nicolette Soulette, Ava Crandall, Aksil Benhamza, Crispin Soulette, Maia Motyka, Lily Patel, Liana Sanchez, Maia Motyka, Anna Dollery, Crispin Soulette, Katie Oberlander, Candice Milan, Elaine Rombola Aveni, Sue Sullivan, Karen Goodno-McGuire, Beyhan Kumral-Colak, Jennifer Tarr, Carolyn Ferris, and Alexis Armstrong.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: A school hallway. The stage is dark. The NARRATORS are CS. Narrator Two wears a GoPro camera and accessories. Narrator One holds a phone on a selfie stick. Behind them, VICK and DANNY are frozen in place. A SPOTLIGHT illuminates Narrator One and Narrator Two.)

NARRATOR ONE: It's a typical day. You walk into school, ready to tackle any assignments that may come your way. Then, suddenly, you hear the two words that strike fear into the hearts of any hardworking student.
NARRATOR TWO: *(Dramatically.)* Recess canceled!
NARRATOR ONE: No.
NARRATOR TWO: Fire drill?
NARRATOR ONE: *(Whispering.)* What are you talking about? You hear the words "Group Project."
NARRATOR TWO: Oh yeah, right.
NARRATOR ONE and NARRATOR TWO: *(Ominously.)* Group Project!
NARRATOR ONE: Your palms start to sweat, and your heart begins to race!
NARRATOR TWO: Fear and desperation invade your mind! You think "why me?"
NARRATOR ONE: Or rather, why us? Why would any educator think that the students in this school are emotionally equipped for the worst possible social and educational ordeal?
NARRATOR TWO: Who knows?
NARRATOR ONE: Regardless, it is too late. The fates have aligned. You need to embark upon a…

(SFX: The school bell rings. LIGHTS illuminate VICK and DANNY.)

VICK, DANNY, and NARRATORS: *(Turning dramatically to the audience.)* Group Project!

(NARRATORS exit. During this scene, other STUDENTS can enter and exit the stage as they go to class.)

DANNY: Is it true? Everyone in the whole school has to do group projects?
VICK: Yep. It's like "Collaboration Day" or something.
DANNY: But what about our classes?
VICK: Everyone's been randomly assigned a day-long project in just one of their classes. Check the portal. I'm assigned to the Blue Group in history class with Mrs. Cartwright.
DANNY: *(Checks his phone.)* Ugh, this can't be happening! I'm in history, too. And Group Green. The color of failure.
VICK: How is green the color of failure?
DANNY: I'm just spiraling, ok?
VICK: It says that some groups will be chosen to present their projects at the end of the day.
DANNY: Oh, this is bad. This is very, very bad.

(DANNY and VICK exit as NARRATORS enter with PETER.)

NARRATOR ONE: Hey, everybody, we're back interviewing Peter, who just found out he's doing a group project. Peter, let's be honest. How does that make you feel?
PETER: What's this for, exactly?
NARRATOR ONE: Are you panicking?
NARRATOR TWO: Hyperventilating?
NARRATOR ONE: Questioning your very existence on this planet?
PETER: No…
NARRATOR ONE: Well, lucky for you, Pete—
PETER: Peter.
NARRATOR ONE: We've got some handy tips to help you survive and even thrive within the terrible structure that is a group project.
NARRATOR TWO: And for the affordable price of just $19.99 we're going to share them with you today.
NARRATOR ONE: No, no, we're not charging him.

NARRATOR TWO: Too much? Ok, for the low, low price of just $9.99—
NARRATOR ONE: C'mon, give Pete a break.
PETER: Peter.
NARRATOR TWO: Oh, all right! Peter, we're going to share this super valuable advice with you today absolutely free!
NARRATOR ONE: Right.
NARRATOR TWO: But don't hesitate to buy us a cookie in the cafeteria later. If you want.
NARRATOR ONE: You see, Pete, we're filming a segment for our web series, "Surviving School: Tips and Tricks to Make the Grade."
NARRATOR TWO: We've got 17 followers.
NARRATOR ONE: This is Video Number 73: "How to Survive a Group Project."
PETER: Where are the cameras?
NARRATOR TWO: We use drones.
NARRATOR ONE: Satellites.
NARRATOR TWO: *(Indicating the GoPro on his head.)* My cousin's GoPro!
NARRATOR ONE: And occasionally… video doorbells!
PETER: I'm not interested. *(PETER exits.)*
NARRATOR ONE: Well, that's a shame.
NARRATOR TWO: A real tragedy.
NARRATOR ONE: Student Pete is doomed to fail in his group project because he won't be properly educated on the subject.
NARRATOR TWO: But now, we must move on and begin with tip number one in this informative video.

(PRINCIPAL TAYLOR enters.)

PRINCIPAL TAYLOR: What video?
NARRATOR ONE: Um, no video. We're not filming a video, Principal Taylor.
NARRATOR TWO: On school property.
NARRATOR ONE: Right. We're not filming a video on school property.

NARRATOR TWO: And it's not about group projects, Principal Taylor. Not at all.
PRINCIPAL TAYLOR: You kids are terrible liars.
NARRATOR ONE: Well, that may be true, but…
PRINCIPAL TAYLOR: I saw the last video you posted.
NARRATOR TWO: Video Number 72: "School Lunch - The Good, the Bad, the Disgusting."
PRINCIPAL TAYLOR: Lunch Lady Doris did not appreciate your work on that one.
NARRATOR ONE: She doesn't use a hairnet!
PRINCIPAL TAYLOR: And I also may have seen Video Number 32: "The Basic Principles of Managing the Principal."
NARRATOR TWO: It was a homage to your leadership.
PRINCIPAL TAYLOR: So, you won't be surprised that I'm officially shutting you down.
NARRATOR ONE: But sir, we're providing the student body with valuable information!
PRINCIPAL TAYLOR: Please go to class. Now.

(SFX: School bell rings. BLACKOUT.)

Scene 2

(LIGHTS up. A school classroom. STUDENTS who will eventually join Group Red, Group Blue, Group Pink and Group Green are scattered around the room. JADE and BETSY enter.)

JADE: Why did we have to get stuck in history class?
BETSY: My sister got gym. She's probably gonna play Capture the Flag or something.

(MRS. CARTWRIGHT enters.)

MRS. CARTWRIGHT: All right, students, settle down. Your history assignment is to explore one area of the American Revolution. You've been randomly sorted into either Group Green, Blue, Red or Pink. You may begin. "Carpe Diem! Seize the day and never let it go… unless you get carpal tunnel!"

(MRS. CARTWRIGHT exits. LIGHTS illuminate Group Blue. VICK and EMILY are seated in one area of the stage. DAPHNE crosses to talk to them.)

DAPHNE: Hey, Vick! We're chilling in the Blue Group!
VICK: *(Sarcastic.)* Hi, Daphne. Great to see you.
DAPHNE: Hey, Emily! Are you blue?
EMILY: Um, I feel fine, thanks.
DAPHNE: Are you in the Blue Group? For the project?
EMILY: I guess.
DAPHNE: Ok, I'm low-key obsessed with this group already, but the fact that we got Ainsley on board is everything! She's super smart, right?

(AINSLEY enters. She looks stressed and is texting furiously on her phone.)

DAPHNE: *(Cont'd.)* Ainsley! What's up, girl? I think we're in your group. You're in blue, right?
AINSLEY: Yes. *(AINSLEY is engrossed in texting.)*
VICK: So, do you want to talk about topics or what?

(AINSLEY continues texting.)

DAPHNE: Ainsley, can you hear us?
VICK: Hey, what's your problem?
AINSLEY: *(Looking up from her phone.)* My mom's bringing over a box of posterboard, craft supplies and calligraphy pens. We'll be making signs about traditional cooking techniques in the revolutionary era.
DAPHNE: That's off the hook!

AINSLEY: She's also picking up buckwheat flour, salt and cream so we can bake bread and churn homemade butter.
EMILY: Ok.
AINSLEY: And for the third part of the project—
VICK: The third part?
AINSLEY: We're going to make a historically accurate cookbook. I aged some paper with lemon juice last week, just in case I had to do a group project.
EMILY: We're doing a group project?
DAPHNE: Ainsley, your ideas are amazing! You're on point, girl!
VICK: *(Sarcastically.)* Yeah, I'm so psyched to spend my day crafting artisan goods for this awesome project.
AINSLEY: I know. *(AINSLEY starts to walk away. She turns to DAPHNE, VICK and EMILY.)* Well, c'mon! The butter isn't going to churn itself!

(DAPHNE, EMILY and VICK follow AINSLEY offstage. NARRATORS enter.)

NARRATOR TWO: We just witnessed an example of our first tip which is…always be in a group with a smart person.
NARRATOR ONE: That's not our first tip.
NARRATOR TWO: Yeah, but it's good advice. Let's put it in the video.
NARRATOR ONE: Principal Taylor just shut us down, remember?
NARRATOR TWO: Where's your journalistic integrity? We owe it to our 17 followers to keep going.
NARRATOR ONE: You're right! And that brings us to our first tip for group project success. Get to know one another! Let's watch as these students meet, greet, and start to build group norms.
NARRATOR TWO: Let the bonding begin!

(LIGHTS illuminate Group Green. JADE and BETSY are lounging and looking bored. DANNY crosses to them.)

DANNY: Hey, are you guys in the Green Group?

End of Freeview

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