Cooperative Learning for Everyone

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What is Cooperative Learning?

Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that uses small groups of students working together and helping one another on specific learning tasks with an emphasis on group members supporting one another.

It is characterized by activities that:
1. Require students to depend on one another for success. Having students sit side by side working on something they could just as easily do by themselves in not cooperative learning. Students must be required to share materials, knowledge, time, talents, and effort (or any combination of these).
2. Provide for individual accountability. Group members share jobs and make group presentations. Group members are tested individually and/or as a group to ensure that each person has mastered the required learning.
3. Utilizes face-to-face interaction among students. For all group work students are arranged in close proximity of each other. They can be at tables, in desks or chairs pushed together, on the floor, or virtually anywhere they can do the task at hand separated from other groups.
4. Focus on interpersonal and group skills. Tasks are designed to include components of positive interpersonal communication skills such as active listening, building consensus, sharing, supporting, restating, using appropriate eye contact and gestures, and encouraging. Teams learn to stay on task and check each other for understanding.
Traditional Classroom

- Learners are passive
- Students work alone
- Teacher directs work
- Silence is valued
- Teacher initiates discussion
- Some students do not participate
- Individual accountability
- Independent learner
- Affirmations come from teachers
- Individual materials needed

Cooperative Classroom

- Learners are active
- Students work with 1 to 4 partners
- Students direct work
- Learning noise is appropriate
- Students initiate discussion
- All students participate
- Individual and group accountability
- Interdependent learners
- Affirmations come from peers
- Shared materials
Common Attributes

Once participants are arranged in groups, ask one member to be the recorder and write down each individual’s name. A group leader should help the members discover 10 (hopefully unusual) common attributes. At the end of the icebreaker, one person from each group will introduce each group member and read their group’s top 5 common attributes.

List each group members’ name: ____________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

List your most unusual common attributes (they must be true and they must apply to ALL members of the group). When you are finished, put *stars* by your 5 favorite ones. ____________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Effective Use of Cooperative Learning Can

1. Increase achievement (at all ability levels)
2. Empower students to take responsibility for their own learning
3. Improve retention
4. Generate more positive feelings towards the subject matter
5. Provide more active learning
6. Focus more time on learning
7. Lower frustration and anxiety among students
8. Enhance a sense of community among students
9. Promote inter-personal communication skills
10. Boost feelings of self-worth
How To Use Cooperative Learning:

Secondary Learners

In working with secondary learners it is important to remember that:

Group members are responsible for the performance of each individual learner.

Group members are individually accountable and must be able to report on or explain the team’s results.

The groups are to be assigned by the teacher. Their make-up should be heterogeneous with respect to sex, race, socioeconomic status, ability/learning styles, cliques, and other important factors.

Leadership is shared on a rotating basis. Each team member has a job and responsibilities.

The teacher is a resource; students are in charge of their own learning.

Time must be allowed for group processing and self-evaluation.
## Tips for Cooperative Learning in the Early Grades

Differences Between Cooperative and Traditional Learning Groups  
(adapted from J. Abruscato’s Teaching Children Science, 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cooperative Learning Groups</strong></th>
<th><strong>Traditional Learning Groups</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive interdependence</td>
<td>No interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual accountability</td>
<td>No individual accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared leadership</td>
<td>One appointed leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility only for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task and process emphasized</td>
<td>Only results emphasized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills directly taught</td>
<td>Social skills assumed and ignored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher observes and intervenes</td>
<td>Teacher ignores group functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Groups process their effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No time for group processing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group Leader

1. Reads all directions to group.
2. Leads the discussions.
3. Checks the data sheet.
4. Helps with clean-up.
5. Is the only one who can ask a question of the teacher.
Materials Manager

1. Is responsible for collecting and returning all materials & supplies to the appropriate place(s).

2. Is the only one who can get up for materials and supplies.

3. Makes sure everyone in the group has equal access to the materials and supplies.

4. Checks the data sheet.

5. Helps with clean-up.
Time Keeper

1. Holds the team stopwatch (or watches the clock).

2. Keeps group on task and reminds them about time.

3. Is responsible for getting the group to finish on time.

4. Checks the data sheet.

5. Helps with clean-up.
Data Collector

1. Records data on the appropriate form or sheet.

2. Records group’s data on a class data sheet.

3. In charge of getting the written work to the teacher.

4. Makes sure all other members check and sign the data sheet.

5. Helps with clean-up.
Encourager

1. Monitors other team members to make sure they do their own jobs.

2. Takes responsibility for praising and affirming jobs that are well done.

3. Records comments and actions that show positive interpersonal communication.

4. Reports recorded data to group at de-briefing session.

5. Helps with clean-up.
Group Participation Number Line

Date: ______________________

Group Number: ___________

Group Members Present: _______________________________________
_____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________

100 95 90 85 80 75 70 65 60 55 50 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5 0

Participation Points Earned: ___________
Group Participation Number Line

Date:  October 14, 2006
Group Number:  #3
Group Members Present:  Judith    Jack    Nora    Jerome

Participation Points Earned:  85
Teacher’s Job During Cooperative Learning:

• Give immediate feedback and reinforcement for learning
• Re-teach certain concepts if necessary
• Clarify directions
• Encourage oral elaboration
• Affirm positive interactions and efforts

Informally assess student learning and collaboration
Cooperative Learning
(Reaching Consensus)

What is your team’s name?

What is your team’s logo?

What is your team’s favorite movie?

What is your team’s favorite food?

What is your team’s favorite place to visit?

What is your team’s favorite season?
Alternative Ways to Use Cooperative Learning

1. Within a lecture or presentation:
The teacher is discussing, modeling, or explaining something. She/he pauses to ask small groups to summarize, categorize, debate, describe, or otherwise react to the presented material.

2. With higher level questioning:
The teacher asks small groups to come up with a team consensus on something to do with analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of the concept being discussed.

3. As practice reinforcement:
The teacher asks students to get with their groups to practice, memorize, or review the given concepts.
4. Decision-making/problem solving:
The group is to reach a decision or solve a problem presented by the teacher. The teacher is leading a class discussion on the separation of church and state in the United States Constitution. She asks small groups to meet and decide whether or not to include the words, “Under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. Groups are to figure out a way for students to say the Pledge without violating the spirit of the law.

5. As a review:
The teacher asks a question. Team members put their heads together to discuss the answer. The teacher calls out a color, and the person who has that color dot will answer the question as the teacher whips through the groups.

6. In a tournament or game format:
There are several models for using cooperative learning in a tournament or game format. Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) and Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) are two of the more popular ones.
7. With peer editing:
Team members proofread each other’s work and offer suggestions for improvement. This practice helps both the “corrector” and the “correctee.”

8. As an assessment:
A Gallery Walk (sometimes called Carousel Walk) is a way to assess students in groups. The teacher puts large pieces of newsprint around the room. On the top of each is a question for which there are several answers. Student groups are given different colored markers and asked to write one correct answer to each question. Answers cannot be repeated on a page. The teacher can informally assess student learning by listening to them as they “think out loud” in their groups (Slavin calls this oral elaboration). Or teachers can more formally assess the answers by noting the flow of answers used by each colored group.
The Gallery Walk is an assessment that capitalizes on the “people smart” intelligence. It can be used as a diagnostic, formative, or summative assessment. The teacher poses challenge questions for students to answer in small groups (2 to 5). Student groups rotate among the questions written on large pieces of newsprint or giant poster paper placed around the room. Each group has a different colored felt-tip marker with which they give one answer per poster. Answers cannot be duplicated.
GALLERY WALK

Imagine that you are a bright orange butterfly. A predator moves into your habitat that preys on bright orange butterflies. What could you do so that the population of bright orange butterflies survives?

1. Start coming out at night when predators can’t distinguish color very well.

2. Sit with wings folded up tight so color can’t be seen.

3. Sit underneath leaves where they are less likely to be seen.

4. Spend time in fields of bright orange flowers where they would be hard to see.

5. Migrate to an area where other bright orange colored butterflies contain a poison and predators avoid all brightly colored butterflies.

6. Move to a place where there are no predators.
9. Research projects or group investigations:
Group work on projects can promote sharing of the load and commitment to a time line. Often times students who are procrastinators when it comes to doing their own work will get motivated by their peers to finish their part of the assignment.

10. Checking homework:
Even though homework is for independent practice, many teachers have limited time for checking and correcting it during a rushed day. Group members can check each other’s work for accuracy.
In journals, in small groups, or as a whole group:

• Tell how involved each of your team members was in the decisions your group made.

• How do you feel about the work your group did today? Why?

• What would you like to tell your teammates about how you felt during today’s activity or the way you feel now?

• What could your team do to improve the way you get along and/or work together?

• What is your favorite thing about being on this team?
Team  Consensus Processing Guide

Now that your team has completed the Reaching Consensus Sheet, take a few minutes to look back at the interactions of your group. Each of you should write some notes, thoughts, or ideas on this form before you discuss how your group worked together. Look for any patterns in the perceptions of your team members.

1. Tell how involved each of your team members was in the decisions your group made.

2. Do you feel good about the decisions your team made? Why or why not?

3. Is there something you would like for your team members to know about the way you felt during the interactions or the way you feel now?

4. How well did your team do in getting along and making joint decisions? What could you do to improve?
Tips for the Teacher

• Do not assign a cooperative learning activity that could just as easily (or more easily) be done alone. Be sure to create a positive interdependence in the way you structure the activity.

• Provide time for small group-building activities that are designed to help students develop awareness of others, build communication skills, foster trust, and provide practice for interacting successfully with others.

• Participation can be encouraged by grouping reluctant students with more nurturing students.

• Be sure that assigned group work is well-thought-out, organized, challenging, and reasonable.

• Help groups learn to write their goals and agree on major steps before they begin working.
• Constantly move among groups monitoring, encouraging, and providing feedback.

• If the activity is fun, no other reward may be needed since intrinsic rewards are most fulfilling. However, teachers of young learners may choose to use:
  - verbal praise
  - singing a favorite song
  - an art activity
  - game time
  - other suitable reinforcers
  - activities may be videotaped as a reward
Flexible Grouping

Matching students to skill work by virtue of readiness, not with the assumption that all need the same task, computation skill, writing assignment, etc. Movement among groups is common, based on readiness on a given skill and growth in that skill.
Rationale:

Allows both for quick mastery of information/ideas and need for additional exploration by students needing more time for mastery.

Allows both collaborative and independent work.

Gives students and teachers a voice in work arrangements.

Allows students to work with a wide variety of peers.

Encourages teachers to “try out” students in a variety of work settings.

Keeps students from being “pegged” as advanced or struggling.

Keeps students from being cast as those in need of help and those who are helpers.
Guidelines for Use:

• Ensure that all students have opportunities to work both with students most like themselves and with students dissimilar from themselves in readiness and interest.

• Teacher assigns work groups when task is designed to match individual readiness/interest based on pre-assessment or teach knowledge.

• Teacher assigns work groups when desirable to ensure that students work with a variety of classmates.

• Students select groups when task is well-suited for peer selection.

• Alternate purposeful assignment to groups with teacher/student selection.

• Ensure that all students learn to work cooperatively, collaboratively, and independently.

• Be sure there are clear guidelines for group functioning that are taught in advance of group work and consistently reinforced.
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