

COOPERATIVE LEARNING*

What is Cooperative Learning?

Definition: According to Robert Slavin (1994), “cooperative learning refers to a set of instructional methods in which students work in small mixed ability learning groups The students in each group are responsible not only for learning the material being taught in class, but for helping their groupmates learn” (p. 5).

What it is not: It’s not just place students in groups, especially without specific guidelines or minimal training.

Benefits:

- a) higher student achievement
- b) increased self-esteem
- c) greater enjoyment of school
- d) decreased absenteeism
- e) higher motivation to learn
- f) respect for students with different backgrounds

Formation of groups: Teachers can place students in appropriate groups based on academic and/or social considerations. Groups generally should be formed using the acronym SEA; i.e., evenly based on Sex (gender), Ethnicity, and Ability. A random placement technique often employed is the count off; i.e., students count off 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, etc. All one’s for one group, two’ another, etc.

Elements: Use acronym PIGS FACE

Positive Interdependence - the success of the group depends on the success of each member. Therefore, it is vital that each member participates. How can you ensure that each member actively engages in the particular activity? Give, for instance, only one worksheet per group. This technique requires each member to look on with other group members. If you give out a sheet to each member, each would probably work alone, thus defeating your purpose.

Individual Accountability- each student is responsible for learning the material, complete assignments, etc. Teachers hold each group member responsible for learning. In cooperative learning one person cannot sit back and let others do the work. Teachers can ensure accountability by giving each member a test, oral questions, etc. Typically, each member is expected to sign the worksheet to indicate that s/he participated and learned the material.

Group Processing- group members reflect on how well they work together or have accomplished their task. Teachers have groups rate their work at the end of an activity. Teachers also provide feedback to each group.

Social Skills- the interpersonal and communication skills necessary for effective group instruction. One of the most critical elements is that students must be taught proper social skills of working in groups. Teachers spend significant time reviewing rules and procedures and incorporating role plays to ensure compliance.

FACE to-face interaction – students interact within one another in close proximity. What can you do as a teacher to facilitate face-to-face interaction?

Roles:

For students: Each group member must be assigned specific and distinct role such as Reader, Recorder, Monitor, Captain,, Encourager, Spell Checker, etc. What impact does assigning each student a role have on group functioning and output?

For Teacher: Determines group size, assigns students to groups, arranges classroom, determines academic and social tasks, makes expectations for group work clear, monitors-observes and walks around, intervenes as needed, provides feedback; evaluates each member and group

Basic types of groups:

Think-Pair-Share – just turn to your neighbor . . .

Focus Triads – working in small groups of three on specific short-term tasks.

Reading groups

Jigsaw – each member assigned a different part to research and like a jigsaw puzzle comes together at the end.

See Table 1 below

Other factors to consider:

Group size – varies depending on purpose

Physical arrangement of room

Duration of grouping

Selection of group members

Rotation of groups

What to do when a group completes a task during, say, a period and the rest of the class is still working? Plan activities from learning centers, silent reading, individualized instruction, etc. Have on board brain teasers, for example, like: What 7-letter word doesn't contain any of the 5 vowels? Or, what word contains 3 consecutive pairs of letters in it?

Answers: Rhythms; Bookkeeper

Comparing cooperative learning with traditional (competitive) grouping

Cooperative learning

Group members depend on each other
Mixed abilities
Leadership roles are shared
Social skills taught
Teacher observes and interacts
Group members assess their effectiveness

Traditional Grouping

Group members compete with one another
Homogeneous
One leader
social skills assumed or ignored
Teacher not involved much
no group processing

Can you think of other differences?

Sample Lesson Planning Format:

Decisions:

Subject, topic

Group size? __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5

Assignment to groups? __ teacher assigned __ heterogeneous by ability __ randomly __ self-selected __ other

Room arrangement __ small cluster of groups __ round tables with chairs __ three desks together T-shaped
__ other

Materials? __ one set per group __ One set per person __ Other

Roles? ____ specify

Social skills, specify social objectives of lesson

Lesson:

Instructional Objectives

Positive Interdependence: __ one paper per group __ each member gets same reward __ one set of material to share __ each member has a special job __ assign roles __ team logo, name, song, etc. __ each person has only part of info (jigsaw) __ Other

Individual accountability __ signatures __ individual quiz __ test __ random testing or quizzing... __ individual homework __ other

Expected behaviors __ listening __ encouraging others __ moving quickly and orderly __ staying in group __ taking turns __ listening __ praising one another __ checking for understanding __ sharing ideas __ asking for assistance __ paraphrasing __ summarizing __ challenging __ other

Monitoring

Feedback

Group Processing

Overview of Selected Cooperative Learning Methods

Method/Proponent	Brief Description/Comments
<u>Learning Together</u>	Emphasizing cooperative effort, Learning Together has five basic elements positive interdependence (students believe they are responsible for both their learning and the team's); face-to-face interaction (students explain their learning and help others with assignments); individual accountability (students demonstrate mastery of material); social skills (students communicate effectively, build and maintain trust, and resolve conflicts); group processing (groups periodically assess their progress and how to improve effectiveness). Uses four- or five member heterogeneous teams.
<u>Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)</u>	Four student learning teams (mixed in performance levels, sex, and ethnicity);teacher presents lesson, students work in teams and help others master material. Students then take quizzes; cooperative efforts are not allowed on quizzes; team rewards are earned. Applicable to most grades/subjects.
<u>Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT)</u>	Using the same teacher presentation and teamwork as STAD, TGT replaces the quizzes with weekly tournaments in which students compete with members of other teams to contribute points to team scores. Competition occurs at "tournament tables" against others with similar academic records. The winner of each tournament brings six points to her or his team. Low achievers compete with low achievers (a similar arrangement exists for high achievers), which provides all students with

equal opportunity for success. As with STAD, team rewards are earned. Applicable to most grades and subjects.

Jigsaw

Students are assigned to six-member teams to work on academic material that has been divided into sections. Each member reads a section; then, members of different teams meet to become experts. Students return to groups and teach other members about their sections. Students must listen to their teammates to learn other sections.

Jigsaw 2

Students work in four- or five-member teams as in TGT or STAD. Rather than being assigned specific parts, students read a common narrative (e.g., a chapter). Students also receive a topic on which to become an expert. Learners with the same topics meet together as in Jigsaw, and then they teach the material to their original group. Students take individual quizzes.

Team Assisted Individualization (TAI)

Uses four-member mixed-ability groups (as with STAD and TGT); differs from STAD and TGT in that it combines cooperative learning and individualized instruction and is applicable only to mathematics in grades three through six. Learners take a placement test, then proceed at their own pace. Team members check one another's work and help with problems. Without help, students take unit tests that are scored by student monitors. Each week, the teacher evaluates and gives team rewards.

Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC)

Designed to teach reading and writing in upper elementary grades, CIRC assigns students to different reading teams. Teacher works with one team, while other teams engage in cognitive activities: reading, predicting story endings, summarizing stories, writing responses,

practicing decoding, and learning vocabulary. Teams follow sequence of teacher instruction, team practice, team pre-assessments, and quizzes. Quizzes may not be taken until the team feels each student is ready. Team rewards are given.

Group Investigation

Groups are formed according to common interest in a topic. Students plan research, divide learning assignments among members, synthesize/summarize findings to the entire class.

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