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# **COOPERATIVE**

# **LEARNING**

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# INTRODUCTION

As the stream of time takes us inexorably toward a new century, many people are beginning to question the direction the stream is taking us. Voices, both inside education and outside it, are heard demanding more efficient "teacher production."

There is great emphasis nowadays on interactive, cooperative and collaborative learning in which we emphasize each person's voice, create an atmosphere of democracy where all opinions are heard, all perspectives are valued, and finally where we build an atmosphere of community, a classroom community. Parents as well as teachers would like to see collaboration as the core of the curriculum.

The value of cooperative learning has been recognized throughout human history. Organizing individuals to work in support of one another and putting the interests of the group ahead of one's own are abilities that have characterized some of the most successful people of our time. Group learning, with its roots in ancient tribal customs, has traditionally been a part of educational practice. Its effectiveness has been documented through hundreds of research studies (Johnson & Johnson, 1986; Kagan, 1986; Slavin, 1988). Cooperative learning is now widely recognized as one of the most promising practices in the field of education.

Finally we can say that cooperation, collaboration, consideration, creativity, responsibility, and participation; all these things seem to become involved in the coming century, as does the suggestion of stretching the student's experience beyond individual knowing to a kind of **collaborative wisdom**.

## Why use Cooperative Learning?

Students and Teachers need strategies for helping them turn diversity into a positive force. Cultural and linguistic diversity in the student population has profound implications for education. The learning climate of the classroom is affected by the nature of the interactions among students. In a culturally diverse classroom, students reflect a variety of attitudes toward and expectations of one another's abilities and styles of behavior. Without structures that promote positive interactions and strategies for improving relationships, students remain detached from one another, unable to benefit from the resources their peers represent. Teachers and students need strategies that manage cultural and linguistic diversity in positive ways, strategies that channel peer influence into a positive force for improving school performance. Furthermore, to reach

students from diverse cultural backgrounds, teachers need multiple alternatives to the prevalent pattern where teachers do most of the talking and directing in the classroom.

As for language acquisition, students need the maximum amount of time possible for comprehending and using a language in a low-risk environment in order to approach the language proficiency level of their peers. Cooperative learning provides the structure for this to happen. Teachers should consider the question, "What is the best use of my students' time?" With approximately thirty students in a classroom who can interact and negotiate meaning, a teacher needs to take advantage of this environment for language acquisition. Reading and writing answers to questions can be done at home, thereby providing more time in the classroom for interactive, cooperative structures in which students are learning from each other. Thus, all students can receive maximum practice in language and interpersonal skills necessary for participation in higher education or the job market. **Let's not forget that Each of us can do Something, but None of us can do Everything!**

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHODS

Cooperative learning methods -- instructional techniques in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content -- are among the most effective teaching methods known. They are increasingly being used at every grade level, in all subjects, and in all kinds of schools and communities. There are many forms of cooperative learning now in use. The most extensively evaluated of these are Student Team Learning methods.

The basic idea behind the Student Team Learning techniques is that when students learn in small, carefully structured learning teams and are rewarded based on the progress made by all team members, they help one another learn, gain in achievement and self-esteem, and increase in respect and liking for their classmates, including their mainstreamed classmates and classmates of other ethnic groups.

All Student Team Learning methods have been compared to traditional methods and have been found to produce the following outcomes:

1. Enhanced academic achievement for high, average, and low achievers
2. Improved race relations and other social relationships.
3. Greater acceptance of mainstreamed students.
4. Improved self-esteem.
5. Better attitudes toward the subject and toward school in general.
6. Improved time-on-task.

# Student Team Learning Methods

They are practical approaches which do not require major changes in curriculum or school organization, and emphasize the elements found in research to be critical to the success of cooperative learning- group goals and individual accountability. Teams are recognized based on the individual progress of all team members. Student Team Learning methods are designed to be used as primary instructional approaches to replace traditional methods.

## **There are five major Student Team Learning methods.**

In all of them, students are assigned to four-member mixed-ability learning teams which stay together for about six weeks. The team members choose a team name and sit together. Following teacher instruction, students work together to help each other master material presented by the teacher, discussing, arguing, teaching, explaining, elaborating, assessing one another, and trying together to build an understanding of the academic content. Later, students must show their individual knowledge on a quiz, essay, composition, or other product accomplished without teammates' help. Teams can earn certificates or other symbols of achievement based on the progress made by all team members. The only way for the team to succeed is to make certain that all team members have learned; teammates can help each other learn, but they cannot do each other's work.

### **1- Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)**

STAD is the simplest and most widely applicable of the Student Team Learning methods. It can be used in grades 2-12 in every subject. In STAD, the teacher follows a cycle of teaching, teamwork, and individual assessment. Teams earn certificates or other forms of recognition based on the degree to which all team members have improved over their past performances.

### **2- Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT)**

Like STAD, TGT is applicable to all subjects in grades 2-12. In TGT, the same cycle of activities is used as in STAD, except that instead of taking individual assessments, students compete in academic tournaments with members of other teams to add to their team scores.

### **3- Jigsaw 11**

Jigsaw 11 is a Student Team Learning program used in grades 3-12 whenever students are learning from written materials such as textbooks, biographies, and social studies or science books. In Jigsaw 11, each team member is assigned a topic as a focus of study. After reading, students from different teams who had the same topic meet in "expert groups" to discuss what they have learned, and then the "experts" return to their teams and take turns presenting and discussing their findings. Finally, all students are quizzed on all topics, and the teams are recognized based on the progress of all team members, as in STAD.

### **4- Team Accelerated Instruction-Mathematics (TAI)**

TAI is a comprehensive approach to cooperative learning in mathematics, grades 3-6.

### **5- Cooperative Integrated Reading & Composition (CIRC)**

Unlike STAD, TGT, and Jigsaw 11, which are "generic" methods adaptable to any subject and grade level, CIRC is a comprehensive approach to instruction in reading, composition, and spelling for grades 2-6.

In CIRC Reading, students are taught in reading groups and then return to mixed ability teams to work on a series of cooperative activities, including partner reading, making predictions, identification of characters, settings, problems and problem solutions, summarization, vocabulary, spelling, reading comprehension exercises, and story-related writing.

CIRC Writing/Language Arts is a comprehensive approach to writing and language arts based on a writing process model, with the same teams used in CIRC Reading serving as peer response groups. Students work together to plan, draft, revise, edit, and ultimately "publish" compositions. Teachers present mini-lessons on style, content, and mechanics of writing, which are integrated with student writing. CIRC Writing/Language Arts provides a structure to help teachers and students succeed in helping all students become effective authors.

CIRC Reading and CIRC Writing/Language Arts are usually used together, but can be used as separate reading and writing/language arts programs.

## Cooperative Activities

Following is a list that helps us decide when to use group-work and what the content of a task should be. As teachers we have the need to:

### **1- Motivate students by capturing their attention and interest before introducing a new concept or skill.**

For a variety of reasons ranging from anxiety to apathy, many students need to be helped to focus on the new material being presented. While it may be frustrating to teach students who do not share our enthusiasm for the subject matter, it is in the instructor's best interest to try to increase their desire to learn. Most learners are intrigued when attention is first focused on their personal opinions or experiences or when cognitive dissonance is created. Motivational strategies include asking students to: explain a puzzling scenario, share personal responses related to the topic, experience a visual or auditory stimulus, or guess the answers to questions that will be tried again at the end of the lesson.

### **2- Provide an initial concrete experience to use as a referent during lecture when explaining an abstract idea or procedure.**

Because instructors have already achieved an in-depth comprehension of the underlying concepts and principles of their discipline, it is easy to assume that explanations alone will be sufficient to transfer this understanding to students.

Unfortunately these explanations often lack meaning because of their abstract nature. Students greatly appreciate any effort to first provide some kind of concrete experience that can be used to add meaning to definitions, rules, characteristics, procedures, or laws

subsequently presented in lectures. Strategies include: teacher demonstration, video or audio tape, artifacts and primary resources, analyzing data, recording observations of an event, inferring the critical differences between visual examples presented in columns labeled as effective vs. ineffective (or correct vs. incorrect), and manipulating physical objects.

### **3- Check for understanding and active listening during our explanations and demonstrations.**

As teachers we should be on a mission to reduce passive listening on the part of our students. It is our responsibility to incorporate methods that will increase the likelihood that learners are actively processing the information. The first time that students are asked to demonstrate, verbalize, or question their understanding should not be on the homework or on an exam. Active listening strategies can easily be inserted during a presentation and include having students: complete a sentence starter, find an intentional error presented on the board or overhead, think of a question that would test comprehension, generate an example, or search their notes for evidence that supports or contradicts a statement presented to the class.

### **4- Give students an opportunity to reflect on or practice newly presented information, concepts, or skills.**

Ideally, students should be able to consolidate their learning after important ideas have been discussed or presented. Many learners need to talk about ideas or procedures in order to integrate the new learning. Content that appeared clear during an instructor's fluid explanation can present special challenges as students begin to grapple with it on their own. These practice sessions need not be lengthy to be effective.

#### **Sessions can include:**

- creating pro/con arguments,
- writing summaries,
- producing dialogues,
- analyzing data,
- writing a critique,
- explaining events,
- signaling agreement or disagreement with oral or written statements, or
- solving problems.

### **5- Review material prior to an exam.**

In an effort to help their students, many instructors conduct review sessions prior to exams. Typically, they will spend time presenting summaries of key ideas and functioning as the primary resource if any questions are asked. An alternative approach is to design review sessions in which students assume a much greater responsibility for their own learning. These strategies can include having students:

- write questions for tests,
- become topic experts and quiz each other,
- design a short review for the class, or

- make summaries of important information to use during the exam.

### **6- Cover extensive textual information efficiently.**

Many students become discouraged when asked to read unfamiliar and lengthy material all alone. It is also risky for teachers to assume that simply because students have read a text selection that they have fully comprehended its meaning. Students can be asked to effectively help each other learn from assigned readings. Section experts can present oral summaries of readings which contain answers to questions their teammates will complete.

### **7- Be sure that students have learned from their performance on their most recent exam or project.**

Many teachers experience an uneasy feeling after exams or projects are returned with errors and grades noted. There is always the concern that students may never really understand the nature of the weakness in their thinking. Small group test debriefing sessions can be a wonderful solution; teammates help each member to understand more effective alternative responses. So that students demonstrate sensitivity and encouragement, instructors need to set clear expectations regarding how they are to discuss each other's errors.

This list of needs or "task functions" can now be used to provide a rationale for both the content and timing of cooperative tasks. When an instructor identifies the instructional need that has priority for the next lesson, a group activity can be designed that best functions to meet a particular purpose.

## **Cooperative Learning: Lesson Planning**

What are the questions that come to my mind when I want to design a lesson plan?

### **I. Curricular Issues: The Focus of Instruction**

A. How does this lesson fit into my overall course curriculum and how does it link with what comes before and afterwards?

B. What are my goals and specific objectives for this lesson? At the end of this class, what should students know (about the content) and be able to do (in the way of discipline-specific processes and thinking skills)?

1. What are my options for helping students to acquire or understand the content?
  - Lecture
  - Modeling or Demonstration
  - Homework Assignments
  - Whole Class Discussion

- Cooperative Learning
- Case Analysis
- Instructional Technology
- Other?

2. What are my options for helping students to develop discipline-specific processes and thinking skills in this lesson?

- Modeling or Demonstration
- Homework Assignments
- Whole Class Discussion
- Cooperative Learning
- Case Analysis
- Instructional Technology
- Guided or Independent Practice
- Other?

## **II. If I Decide To Use Cooperative Learning...**

A. How Do I Go About Designing a Cooperative Lesson?

1. Are there pre-designed structures, lessons, or designs (e.g. Jigsaw) that fit my needs?
2. Are there existing designs that I can modify or adapt?
3. Are there lessons developed by other teachers that I can use?
4. Do I need to create a cooperative learning lesson from scratch? If so,
  - How will I foster positive interdependence?
  - How will I foster individual accountability?
  - How will I foster equal participation?

B. What About Contextual Issues?

1. What is the current state of the classroom climate? Do we need a class-building activity?
2. How are my teams functioning, and would a team-builder or team processing activity be useful?
3. Are there particular social skills or roles that would facilitate working together in today's cooperative procedure? If so, how will I address them?

## **III. Assembling the Lesson**

A. What Might Be Considered in the Way of Specific Design Elements?

1. Initial focus, warm-up, or motivational introduction
2. Review
3. Checking for understanding
4. Closure/synthesis/summary
  - Reflection on content and thinking skills

B. How Do I Put It All Together?

1. Create an agenda
2. Estimate timelines for the agenda

3. Create clear written instructions for students
4. Create or gather and reproduce needed materials
5. Arrange for needed equipment
6. Hope that it works!
7. Reflect, Assess, and Refine

# DAILY LESSON PLAN FORMAT

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Course Title \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Unit** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Instructional goal** (outcome that students should achieve on completion of the total unit of instruction)

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3. **Performance objectives** (skill defined as behavioral objective-action verb that is measurable)

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4. **Rationale** (brief justification of why we feel the students need to learn this topic)

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5. **Content:** (what is to be taught)

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## Instructional procedures

(a) Focusing event (something to get the students' attention)

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Teaching procedures (methods we shall use)

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Formative check (progress checks throughout the lesson)

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(d) Student Participation (how we shall get the students to participate)

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(e) Closure (how we shall end the lesson)

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7. **Evaluation procedures** (how we shall measure if the material has been learned)

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8. **Materials and aids** (what we shall need in order to teach this lesson)

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