

## Cooperative Learning – A Proactive Educational Intervention



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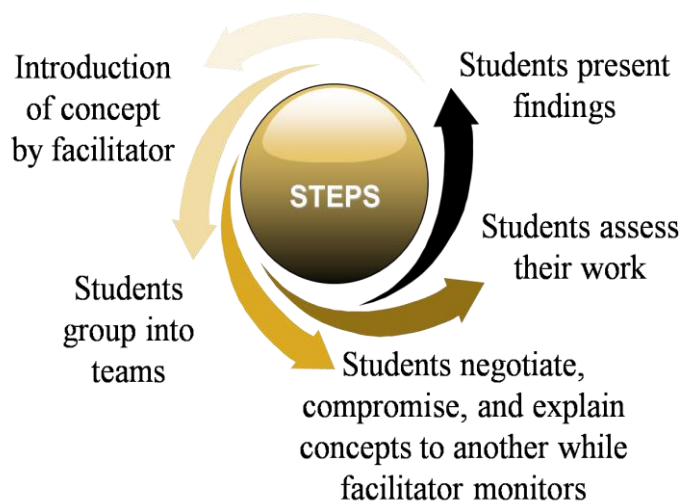
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### What Is Cooperative learning?



Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it. It is an approach to organize Classroom Activities into academic and social learning experiences.

### How can we implement Cooperative learning?

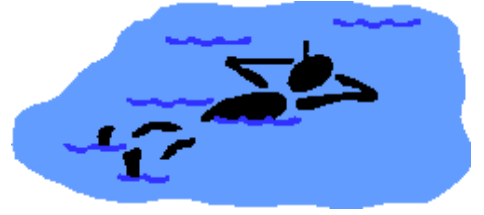


## Elements of Cooperative Learning

It is only under certain conditions that cooperative efforts may be expected to be more Productive than competitive and individualistic efforts. Those conditions are:

### 1. Positive Interdependence (sinks or swims together)

- Each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success
- Each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of his or her resources and/or role and task responsibilities



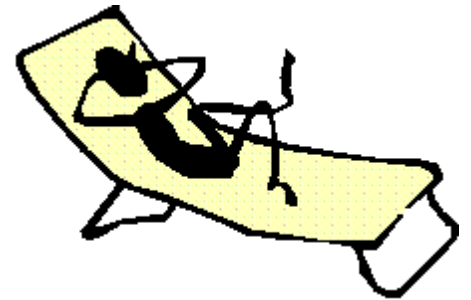
### 2. Face-to-Face Interaction (promote each other's success)

- Orally explaining how to solve problems
- Teaching one's knowledge to other
- Checking for understanding
- Discussing concepts being learned
- Connecting present with past learning



### 3. Individual & Group Accountability (no hitchhiking! no social loafing)

- Keeping the size of the group small. The smaller the size of the group, the greater the individual accountability may be.
- Giving an individual test to each student.
- Randomly examining students orally by calling on one student to present his or her group's work to the teacher (in the presence of the group) or to the entire class.
- Observing each group and recording the frequency with which each member-contributes to the group's work.
- Assigning one student in each group the role of checker. The checker asks other group members to explain the reasoning and rationale underlying group answers.
- Having students teach what they learned to someone else.



### 4. Interpersonal & Small-Group Skills

- Social skills must be taught:
  - o Leadership
  - o Decision-making
  - o Trust-building
  - o Communication
  - o Conflict-management skills

### 5. Group Processing

- Group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships
- Describe what member actions are helpful and not helpful
- Make decisions about what behaviors to continue or change



### **Why Do You Need To Know How To Do This?**

Peer teaching/learning is one of the better ways to learn and retain content. The method permits students to be involved and make decisions about their own learning. You can guide student groups and let them progress at a comfortable rate. The methods also increase a sense of “community” among students.

### **Why Use Pairs or Triads?**

1. For most, not as intimidating as larger groups.
2. Vocabulary of students is similar.
3. Examples are closer to “what they know” and their own “learning levels.”
4. Peers often understand types of difficulties quickly, because they may have experienced them.
5. Students build deeper understanding by teaching and talking.
6. Students find solutions without the teacher – empowers them and builds the “AH-HA!”

### **Determining Partners**

1. Let students choose their own partner/s. You may have to help this a little, because “water often seeks its own level” and students with greater understanding may need to be interspersed with others for greatest effect.
2. Use random choice until you begin to get to know the students.
3. Keep in mind that changes may have to occur (good to change groups from time to time). Changing can help students get to know each other. This may even help students determine study groups.

### **Role of the Teacher**

1. Supervise students working together. Walk from group to group, listen, and ask questions or interject thoughts where appropriate or needed. Moving from group to group tells the students you are interested in what they are doing and helps them stay on task and stay focused.
2. Provide support when needed
3. Give insights when information is incorrect from a team

### **What are the classes Activities to promote in Cooperative Learning?**

1. **Jigsaw** – Groups with five members are setup. Each member is assigned with some unique material to learn and teach his group members. The steps are as follows:
  - a. **Task Division** – A task or passage or set amount of content is divided into its requisite parts. (Best done by the professor)
  - b. **Home Groups**– Each team sends one member to a group to learn and master material on a part of the content. That individual works with members of other home groups to gain expertise.
  - c. **Expert or Focus Groups** – Students having the same topic meet in the Expert Group to discuss information, *master* the topic and plan how to *teach* the information to his/her Home Group.
  - d. **Home Groups** – Students return to their original Home Group and teach what has been mastered to their own group members.
  - e. **Summary Activity** – All of the parts must be put together in the form of a report, a quiz, presentation, or completion of questions.

2. **Think-pair-share-**This is a small group or partner strategy in which students respond to a problem or situation individually, then compare and discuss their responses with another. This method works best with teacher-led instruction. All students are required to make an individual response in writing that is shared with one or two others. The professor may check the work OR students may check their work against a MASTER prepared by the professor.
3. **Pairs Checking-** This strategy requires students in pairs to practice solving problems that have been taught. The students divide the problems in half and take turns working the problems. The checking occurs as each one describes how to work the problem or handle the situation. When disagreement occurs students can ask for help from the teacher. Clarification and “talking out” helps both understand the problem/s.
4. **Combining pairs-** Combining pairs is much like Pair Checking, but requires the pair to think, talk and work out problems or situations together that will be checked by a second pair. This approach uses the benefit of “more heads than one” when working through a problem. Students actually have to talk to each other and explain the process. Uses higher order thinking as they analyze the work of others.
5. **Creating questions-** This technique is a *variation* of a study skills approach referred to as the “reciprocal approach” where students help each other by beginning with *what they know*, *what they want to know* (or need to know) and move to *summarizing* what they have learned. The technique helps students move to higher order thinking and to connect learning to their “real world.”

#### **BENEFITS:**

- Cooperative learning is enjoyable, so students enjoy and gets motivated
- Cooperative learning is interactive, so students are engaged.
- Provides for improvement of social interaction skills, greater acceptance of others, and a greater sense of “community” in the class - in part by addressing learning style differences
- Cooperative learning allows critical thinking and discussions enabling students to an articulate communicator.
- Cooperative learning enhances students to learn and work together.
- Promotes higher levels of achievement, greater depth of thought and improved attendance
- Encourages innovation in both teaching and student involvement.
- Encourages alternative forms of assessment.

#### **Credits:**

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., and Smith, K. A. (1998) Research on cooperative learning. In K. A. Feldman and M. B. Paulsen (eds.) *Teaching in the College Classroom*. ASHE Reader Series. Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Howard Community College's Teaching Resources. "Ideas on Cooperative Learning and the use of Small Groups." [Online] 15 October 2001.

#### **Reference**

Kagan, Spencer. Cooperative Learning. San Clemente, CA: Kagan Publishing, 1994.