



## Cooperative Learning Strategies

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### **Abstract:**

*Cooperative learning, also called small-group learning, is one teaching method that can help students learn academic material and social skills. Understanding more about cooperative learning can help you create a positive social experience in your classroom. In this article, we examine some common cooperative learning strategies, discuss the benefits of using these strategies and provide tips to help you use cooperative learning in your classroom.*

*Innovation and reform are the two key factors in the development and progress of any education system and its practices and processes. New strategies of teaching and learning are being thought and practiced as most important inputs to bring about qualitative improvement in the education. Cooperative learning is one such approach which makes the students to learn as group to maximize their own and each other's learning. The focus of this strategy is on inter- personal exchange of opinions, intellectual challenge, critical thinking, higher level reasoning-the skills which are highly valued in the age of globalization. It is being increasingly felt that thinking process of students is being suppressed by competitive learning environment prevalent in schools. The cut throat competition encourages negative*

*interdependence. The school curriculum has to aim at not only enabling learners to acquire knowledge. The development of intrinsic values and emotional intelligence of learners are equally important. The cooperative learning helps in all round development of personality if applied systematically.*

*The paper focuses on the benefits of cooperative learning, provides insights into various cooperative learning strategies, their use in classroom situations and highlights a number of essential elements that must be met for deriving success from cooperative learning strategy.*

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**Keywords:** *Cooperative learning, Innovative strategy*

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Cooperative learning centers around the idea of breaking students into small groups to learn. This allows both individual students and the class at large to grasp concepts through their personal learning styles and those of fellow students.

What separates cooperative learning from other learning strategies is that in a cooperative learning setting, each group member has a separate task to complete or concept to explain to the rest of the group. This way, individual students' learning benefits the whole group so that students can work toward concept mastery together.

**Meaning :**

The core concept of cooperative learning is the division of students into smaller learning groups. This enables each student to acquire topics through their learning style and that of their peers, as well as the class as a whole.

Each group member in a cooperative learning environment has a unique task to finish or notion to convey to the other members of the group, which sets cooperative learning apart from other learning methodologies. In this method, when each student learns something new, the group as a whole gains, and the students collaborate to grasp the topic.

The term "cooperative learning" refers to an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups towards a common goal. The students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Thus, success of one student helps other students to be successful. Unlike an individualistic classroom or a competitive classroom, students in a cooperative classroom sink or swim together. 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. The claim of cooperative learning

advocates, usually supported in field research, is that ordinary school learning is enhanced considerably when children, following one another or the cooperative learning procedures, learn in groups rather than on their own or in competition to other pupils. While traditional classroom instruction has always entailed a degree of competition among pupils, cooperative learning practices require pupils to cooperate as a team and as a necessary condition of acquiring academic information. This usually means that the instructional outcome results from the pupil's common effort, that the instructional goal is shared and that each pupil's success depends upon and is linked with every other pupil's success and failure. Cooperative learning practices typically have pupils share materials, divide up the labour required to complete the assignment, assist the other members of the group and receive award based on group's performance.

#### **Types of Cooperative learning Strategies:**

The list below includes different strategies for incorporating cooperative learning in the classroom. Depending on the lesson or learning objective, you might choose one strategy or a combination of strategies:

##### **Focused lists:**

List activities can include roundtable discussions where you provide students with a topic and they brainstorm as a group. For example, when beginning a new lesson, you can have students share a word or phrase they think of when they hear the topic. This can help introduce your lesson by seeing what your students might already know about a topic. You can vary this exercise by having students create their own lists beforehand, then discuss them in groups afterward.

##### **Short papers:**

You might have students write for a few minutes on a specific topic. This can help them learn new lessons or subjects. Once they're done, divide them into groups where they can share their notes. Consider providing questions for them to ask each other to help start open discussions. They can practice listening to new opinions by having everyone share their thoughts.

##### **Sentence completion:**

A creative strategy might be to have one student in a group start a sentence on a piece of paper. Then, they pass the paper to another member in the group who finishes the sentence and starts a new one. Have the group do this a few times until they have written one or two

paragraphs. The aim could be to teach team collaboration as they build a story using the group's collective story ideas.

**Numbered assignments:**

Rather than working in groups, you could have student's complete work independently, but assign them each a number. You can then ask the students a question and select one number to answer. For example, all the students assigned to number two might answer. After asking each member what their answers are, you might involve others to see if they agree or had different thoughts. Although students complete this work independently, they can still benefit from hearing the ideas of others in the classroom.

**Collective quizzing:**

In this activity, each student receives a flashcard with a term and definition, or a concept and information. You can use this strategy to identify what students know about an upcoming lesson, which is helpful when reviewing content.

Pair students up and have them quiz each other on their cards. Encourage them to praise their classmate for correct answers and offer help for incorrect responses. Once each pair finishes, you could have the students switch partners and continue the exercise. This learning strategy can help with knowledge building and students may enjoy this interactive exercise.

**Jigsaw pieces:**

One way to improve subject comprehension is the jigsaw method. Each student in a small group is assigned one piece of a larger project to research. All of the research pieces are then put together by the group. You might also consider having each student paraphrase their classmates' research to strengthen listening skills.

**Interviewing classmates:**

Assigning students into groups of three, you might have them interview each other on specific topics. You might ask one student to prepare a few questions, the interviewee student can answer those questions and the third student can be the note taker or reporter. This allows students to practice their listening and comprehension skills.

**Cooperative learning techniques**

**1. Speed Quizzes**

Assign a flashcard with a question and an answer to every student. Divide the class into groups and assign each group a virtual speed exam, going quickly from one student's question to the next.

## 2. Puzzle Pieces

Divide up the work of a bigger project among the group members. To fit the puzzle pieces together, group members will need to speak with one another.

## 3. One-Minute Papers

Before moving on to the next topic, have each student write a brief one-minute paper at the start of class to gauge their understanding of the content that has recently been covered in class.

## 4. Sentence Completion

As a group writing assignment, assign students to finish sentences on a predetermined subject. After starting the phrase, one student in the group passes it on to the following one. After it's finished, the group may go over it to ensure understanding and clarity.

## 5. Classmate Interviews

Assign students to three-person groups. One student is to prepare questions and conduct an interview with another student; the third student is to record the interview's notes.

### **Types of cooperative Learning:**

**Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD):** In this type of cooperative instruction students with varying academic abilities are grouped into 4 or 5 member teams in order to study what has been initially taught by the teacher and to help each one to achieve his or her highest level of achievement. After this students are given individual tests. Teams earn certificates or other recognition based on the degree to which all team members have achieved gain in achievement over their past record of achievement.

**JIGSAW:** In this cooperative exercise the teacher might divide academic material into parts and each member of the team would study one of the parts. Then the members of the different teams who had studied the same parts might meet to discuss and clarify their sections. After meeting with members of other groups who are expert in the same part, the experts return to their own groups and present their findings. They might teach and quiz their teammates about their section.

**Listen- Think- Pair-Share-Model:** It is multi-mode discussion cycle in which students listen to a question or presentation, have time to think individually, talk with others in pairs and finally share responses with the larger group. The teacher signals students to switch from

listening to think, to pair, and to share by using clues. The benefits include longer and more elaborate answers, inferences supported by evidence and logical argument, increased student participation and improved achievement. Students individually or in pairs may write or diagram their thoughts. Teachers may cue them to reach consensus, engage in problem solving or assume the role of devil's advocate. The overall effect of these coordinated elements is a concrete, valid and practical system, made manageable and thereby acceptable to teachers.

**Round Robin Brain Storming:** Class is divided into small groups (4 to 6) with one person appointed as the recorder. A question is posed with many answers and students are given time to think about answers. After the "think time", members of the team share responses with another round robin style. The recorder writes down the answers of the group members. The person next to the recorder starts and each person in the group in order give an answer until time is called.

**Team Pair Solo:** Students do problems first as a team, then with a partner and finally on their own. It is designed to motivate students to tackle and succeed at problems, which initially are beyond their ability. It is based on mediated learning. Students can do more things with mediation than they can do alone. By allowing them to do work on problems they could not do alone, first as a team and then with a partner, they progress to a point they can do alone what at first they could do only with help.

**Reciprocal Teaching:** Reciprocal teaching developed by Palincsar and Brown (1999) is a strategy of teaching in which the teacher and students take turns as teacher. The method is, both read a passage to themselves and the teacher demonstrates the process of formulating a question based upon the passage, summarizing the passage, clarifying it and making predictions based on the information contained in it. When the pupil takes a turn as teacher, the teacher carefully coaches the pupil in these skills of comprehension and offers prompts and criticism until none is needed by the pupil, at which time the teacher's role becomes more passive.

### **Implementing Cooperative Learning Strategies**

As a teacher, at this point, you're probably wondering how to best "implement" the different cooperative learning strategies. Regardless of the strategy you plan to use in your class, here are a few tips to help make classroom implementation as effective and efficient as possible:

- Gradually shift into cooperative learning, rather than starting your class with it.
- Explain what the concept of teamwork looks like in your class.
- Make extra efforts to ensure students stay on task.
- Collaborate with fellow teachers for better classroom management.
- Create easy-to-manage groups for more effective and efficient observation.
- Remember that students are likely being exposed to content for the first time.
- Remember that you're in control of your classroom.

### **Essential Elements of Cooperative Learning Groups in the Classroom**

To be successful in setting up and having students complete group tasks within a cooperative learning framework, a number of essential elements or requirements must be met:

**Public recognition and rewards for group academic success:** It is essential that the teacher reward a pupil only when all members of the group succeed in learning the assignment or in the case where the teacher assigned the pupils different parts of a complicated task, only on the basis of the group's overall achievement and not according to the merit of any individual pupil's contribution to the group's effort. **SA clear set of specific student learning outcome objectives:** A proper planning by describing precisely what students are expected to learn and be able to do on their own well beyond the end of the group task and curriculum unit.

**Group to master common skills:** Everyone in the group needs to master the common set of information or skills.

**Clear and complete set of task –completion directions or instructions:** Teachers have to state directions or instructions that describe in clear precise terms exactly what students are to do, in what order, with what materials and when appropriate, what students are to generate as evidence of their mastery of targeted content and skills. These directions are given to students before they engage in their group learning efforts.

**Heterogeneous groups:** Teachers should organize the three, four or five members groups so that students are mixed as heterogeneously as possible, first according to academic abilities, and then on the basis of ethnic background, race and gender. Students should not be allowed to form their groups based on friendships and cliques.

**Equal opportunity or success:** Every student must believe that he or she has an equal chance of learning the content and abilities and earning the group rewards for academics.

**Positive interdependence:** Teachers must structure learning tasks so that students come to believe that their access to rewards is as a member of an academic team wherein all members receive an award or no member does.

**Face to face interaction:** Students need to arrange themselves so that they are positioned and postured to face each other for direct eye to eye contact and face to face academic conversation.

**Positive social interaction behaviors and attitudes:** Students should engage in such interactive abilities as leadership, trust building, conflict management, constructive criticism, encouragement compromise, clarifying etc. Teachers may need to describe the expected social interaction behavior and attitudes of students and to assign particular students specific roles to ensure that they consciously work on these behaviors in their groups.

**Access to must learn information:** Teachers must structure the tasks so that students have access to and comprehend the specific information that they must learn.

**Opportunities to complete required information processing task:** Each student must complete a number of internal information processing task aligned with target objectives, such as comprehending, translating, making connections, assigning meanings, etc.

**Provide sufficient time:** Each student and group as a whole should be provided the amount of time needed to learn the targeted information and abilities to the extent expected. Without sufficient time spending, the academic benefits to cooperative learning will be limited.

### **Conclusion:**

In the end, the goal of these cooperative learning techniques is to maintain simultaneous student engagement and to foster cooperation in the classroom. By using these cooperative learning practices, students should participate equally and be held responsible for their contributions.



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