

Cooperative Learning

HOW2

PINPOINT



There is no evidence that time spent tutoring others is detrimental to learning. The opposite is true.

Spencer Kagan

Definition

Cooperative Learning is when students work with peers, sharing ideas and learning from one another. It happens when teachers organise activities where students are accountable for both their own and others' learning.



If cooperative learning is not accompanied with an effective classroom management system, serious problems are likely to occur.

Spencer Kagan

Benefits

Researchers have identified the following benefits:

- higher grades (see opposite)
- active learning
- responsibility for learning
- motivation to learn
- social skills
- communication skills
- inter-ethnic relations
- mixed academic ability relations
- intellectual flexibility
- assessment opportunities.

Five essential components

■ Positive Independence

Promoting a real sense of sink-or-swim together. One person alone cannot succeed.

■ Face-to-face interaction

Designed for conversations where students help each other learn and support effort.

■ Individual and group accountability

No one can put their feet up. Everybody has to contribute towards the group's goals

■ Interpersonal skills

A focus on communication, trust, leadership, decision making and conflict resolution.

■ Group processing

The team reflects on how well it functioned and how to do it could do it better next time.

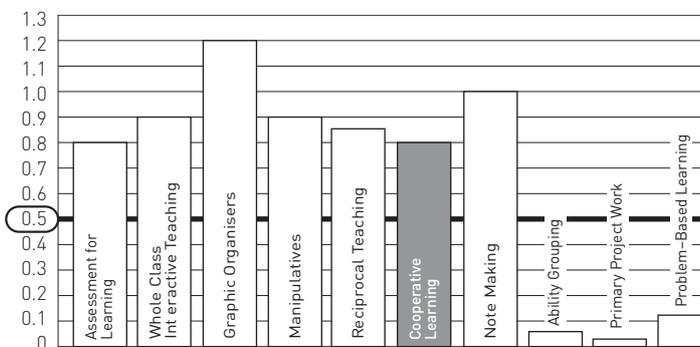


Group interaction not only facilitates knowledge development but also creates awareness that is difficult if not impossible to achieve without interaction.

Robert Marzano

How is this related to learning?

Research over the past 30 years has shown that some teaching techniques work much better than others. The measure for this is called the *effect size*. An effect size of 0.5 means that the particular technique properly employed will raise the students' scores by one whole grade.



Groupings

Cooperative Learning groups are not based on friendships. They are chosen by the teacher and can be based on:

- mixed ability
- random
- ability.

These groupings are also frequently changed to train students to adapt to different partners as they will have to in the world of work. It also supports inclusion.

Roles

The number of possible roles in Cooperative Learning is often over-stated and not practical. Better to concentrate on the key tasks:

- **Search** for relevant info.
- **Check** on understanding it
- **Record** the information
- **Communicate** the meaning.

These are everyone's tasks. The only role is for everyone to complete these learning tasks.

Graphic Organisers

As the core academic purpose of cooperative learning is the co-creation of information, it pays to make sure it is recorded. And as short-term memory is our weakest cognitive link, it doubly pays to do so. Graphic Organisers are the perfect tool for the job. Especially the Single Bubble and Cluster. The Single Bubble is perfect for jotting down first thoughts. Then as new links emerge, it expands into a Cluster.

REFERENCES

Kagan, S. (1994)
Cooperative Learning,
Kagan, San Clemente, USA

Marzano, R.J. et al (2001)
Classroom Instruction that Works.
ASCD, USA