

## Working Together

### A. What is Cooperative Learning?

“Cooperative Learning is a relationship in a group of students that requires positive interdependence (a sense of sink or swim together), individual accountability (each of us has to contribute and learn), interpersonal skills (communication, trust, leadership, decision making, and conflict resolution), face-to-face promotive interaction, and processing (reflecting on how well the team is functioning and how to function even better).”

Roger T. Johnson and David W. Johnson co-directors of The Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota <http://www.clcrc.com/>

### B. Suggested Ideas for Creating and Managing Groups

Below are several ideas for creating and managing cooperative learning groups:

**1. Coop Cards** – These cards are used to place children into cooperative learning groups. The design of the cards allows for an element of surprise for the students. It also allows for the teacher to “manipulate” the groups without the students realizing she/he is doing it.

#### Rules for the cards:

- a. No swapping of cards. If a student swaps a card, he/she will have to work alone. (or whatever the teacher feels is appropriate for the situation).
- b. Positive comments ONLY!
- c. Use inside voices when looking for groups.
- d. Once group is together, find a working place (or if teacher has pre-assigned, find this place).
- e. Make one person responsible for turning in the group's cards.
- f. Assign jobs to group members:

#### Cooperative Learning Jobs:

**Leader-** The leader directs the action for the day once the teacher has given the instructions.

**Recorder-** This group member does the writing for the entire group; he or she uses one sheet, which saves paper.

**Encourager** - The encourager gives compliments related to how the group is working, such as "That was a great answer!"

**Checker**- This member checks and hands in the work for the group.

**Reporter**- This member reports the group's work to the other groups or to the teacher.

- g. Work together following the **Cooperative Learning Rules**.

## 2. Puzzles

Another fun way to group students is by using puzzles. Paste pictures cut from magazines onto 5 X 8 index cards. Cut the cards into a 4 or 5 piece puzzle. When it is time to group for an activity, pass out the puzzle pieces to the students. Have the students find the other members of their groups by putting the puzzles together.

## 3. Stamped cards or Activity Sheets

When you want to place students into groups and give them an assigned workstation at the same time, use the stamped cards. Cut index cards or card stock paper into small squares. Place a stamp on each square, using the same stamp four times (or the number of times equal to the number of students you want in one group). Place an identical stamp on a full-size index card or card stock paper. Repeat with different stamps until you have enough squares for the entire class. Before starting an assignment, place a full-size card at each workstation. Pass out the small squares to the students. They then match their stamp to the stamp at the workstation.

This can also be done using the activity sheet the students work with. On the corner of each sheet place a stamp that matches a workstation. The students then receive their assignment, find the correct workstation and begin working. With just a little additional time, teachers can manipulate the groups before hand by also placing the students' names on the activity sheets.

#### **4. Color Wheel**

The Color Wheel is used to organize groups and multiple learning centers.

- 1) Create groups. List the groups on the Color Wheel Poster assigning each group a color (this can also be done before hand).
- 2) Spin the wheel to determine where the groups will begin their work.
- 3) Set a timer to let the students know when their time is up at that learning center.
- 4) When the timer rings, announce that it is time to clean up that center and move to the next one.
- 5) Turn the wheel one section clockwise. Students then rotate to the next learning center.
- 6) Set the timer again and begin the next center.
- 7) Repeat until all centers have been visited by all groups.

#### **5. The Jigsaw Method**

In the Jigsaw Method students are assigned to five or six-member teams; the material to be learned is divided into five or six parts, and each student is responsible for learning and then teaching one part of the material to each of his or her members. Members of different groups who have been assigned to the same section of material meet in "expert" groups to study their sections and become comfortable with their responsibility for teaching their fragment. Each group member is tested on all of the material, so that there is forced interdependence between group members.

#### **6. Pair Reading**

Pairs of students work together on this exercise. First, both students read the same section from text or instructor-provided materials. One student explains a single paragraph or short section of the text to his or her partner. The partner listens and then asks questions if he or she does not understand the explanation. The listener then rephrases the explanation. The students alternate roles of explainer and listener until they complete all the material. When the entire class has completed the exercise, groups of students are asked at random to explain the material to the whole class. This serves as a check to make sure the students do indeed understand the material they are reading.