

Chapter 7

Cooperative Learning: Student-Assisted Social Constructivism

Maxim
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What Is Cooperative Learning?

- Instructional model in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of any social studies topic
- Positive interdependence: all students work together to complete a task
- Vehicle for social constructivism

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How Does Cooperative Learning Work?

- It is a classroom management strategy
- Need to teach students how to work effectively in groups
- Understand factors that influence group function
 - Following directions
 - Keeping focused on the task
 - Completing responsibilities on time
 - Asking for help when you need it
 - Listening attentively to others
 - Contributing ideas when you have them
 - Considering the ideas and feelings of others
 - Offering encouragement to others
 - Making sure everyone has a chance to participate

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Teaching Cooperative Learning Skills

- Cooperative learning skills can be taught
- Three suggestions
 1. Define the skill clearly and specifically
 2. Ask students to characterize the skill
 3. Practice and reinforce the skill
- Provide children with frequent and meaningful opportunities to function as group members

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Group Composition

- Best for teachers to wait until October or November before using cooperative learning
- Common mistake: allowing students to work in groups of their own choosing
- Initial groups should be pairs
- Primary grade children work best in pairs
- By grade 3 or 4, groups of three will work effectively
- By upper elementary and middle school, groups of four work effectively
- Groups should be heterogeneously mixed

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Group Composition, con't

- Two-person Group: promotes relationships and ensures participation
- Three-person Group: changes two-person majority; participation is likely
- Four-person Group: allows for different perspectives, each member can express himself or herself

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Common Roles in Groups

- Group Captain: reads the task aloud to group, checks to make sure everyone is listening, coordinates the group's efforts
- Materials Manager: gathers, distributes, and collects books and resources
- Recorder: fills out forms and writes down and edits group's report
- Illustrator: draws any pictures, graphs, charts, or figures
- Monitor: keeps the group focused on the task
- Coach: sees that everyone has a chance to participate

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Types of Groupings

- Think-Pair-Share-Discussions
- Think-Pair-Square
- Numbered Heads Together
- Jigsaw
- Pick Your Spot
- Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)

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Choosing a Reward System

- Bonus points added to all members' scores when a team achieves an academic task
- Nonacademic rewards such as free homework passes, stickers, erasers or pencils, or extra recess time
- Social rewards such as smiles or verbal praise

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