Highlights

- Greetings from Roger, David, and Edythe
- Cooperative Learning And Moral Education
- Web Site: www.co-operation.org

Inside

The Cooperative Link

Cooperative Learning

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Greetings From The Johnsons

Greetings! Here we are again! We have had a good year, both nationally and internationally.

Roger, David, and Edythe continue to do cooperative learning training. Cooperative learning in Spain continues under the direction of Nicolas Muracciole and Javier Bahon.

We are waiting for staff development to be revived in K-12 schools in the U.S. We continue to encourage colleges and universities to train their faculty in cooperative learning procedures.

The theme of this newsletter is building moral character through cooperative learning. It was first published in 2007. In addition, common mistakes in using cooperative learning will be covered. They were first published in 2001. They are still as relevant today.

We hope all of you are helping classrooms become cooperative places where students care about each other and each others' success.

Roger, David, and Edythe

Building Moral Character Through Cooperative Learning

Everyone agrees that moral education is needed, but there is very little agreement on how it may be effectively provided. While there are many sources of moral education, such as families and churches, schools are major contributors. Moral education is one form of socialization. A primary purpose of schools is to socialize children, adolescents, and young adults into the values, attitudes, roles, competencies, and ways of perceiving the world that are shared by their family, community, society, and culture. Socialization takes place through group memberships and interpersonal relationships.

A central aspect of socialization is the inculcation of moral values and character. Morals are inherently social, as they are rules of "right" conduct that guide behavior in groups and interpersonal relationships. Morals are learned, internalized, and expressed in groups and relationships within a larger community and society context.

For the school to have impact on moral education, it must establish itself as a moral community and ensure that students are involved in positive and caring relationships with schoolmates and faculty. A powerful influence on both these requirements is the use of cooperative learning.

Creating A Moral Community

A **community** consists of individuals who share common goals, values, and culture. A community is first and foremost cooperative. A moral community is created when all members have internalized the same moral values. New members, such as children and youth, have to be taught values and demonstrate that they have internalized them.

Moral values are learned and internalized by working together to achieve mutual goals, adopting roles that facilitate the achievement of the community's goals, and identifying with members of the community who exemplify the community's values. These avenues of learning and internalizing values are more available in cooperative than in competitive or individualistic situations. Schools, therefore, should implement cooperative learning in order to provide the cooperative efforts, adopt assigned roles, and have the opportunity to identify with others.

Schools should also structure positive interdependence at the class, grade, department, and school levels to ensure that the school is both a learning and a moral community.

Cooperative Competencies

Being part of a community requires members to communicate effectively, provide leadership, build and maintain trust, make effective joint decisions, and resolve conflicts constructively. These competencies are learned and perfected more effectively in cooperative than in competitive or individualistic situations.

Value Transmission

In order for moral values to be transmitted from the school to the individual student, students must be open to being influenced (as opposed to being defensive and resistant), positive models of the values must be available, and positive relationships are required.

1. Openness To Influence

Participants in cooperative situations are more open to (a) influencing others, and (b) being influenced by others, than are participants in competitive or individualistic situations. This openness to influence allows moral values to be transferred from the community to the individual. Not only is there more openness to influence, most influence strategies within cooperative situations tend to be supportive rather than coercive.

2. Modeling Prosocial Values

A powerful influence on moral socialization is exposure to models who engage in behavior reflecting the values being internalized. Like a ball player who needs to see other players in action in order to learn and improve, members of a moral community must see other members engage in actions reflecting the community's values in order to understand how to do so themselves. Visible and credible models who

demonstrate the recommended values and who directly discuss their importance are powerful influences. People are most likely to accept new moral values when they come into contact with others who have successfully adopted them. Participants benefit from other group members' modeling behaviors and values more in cooperative than in competitive or individualistic situations.

3. Positive Relationships

Moral values are internalized within relationships. Involvement in two-way, positive, personal, and caring relationships sets the stage for (a) identifying with members who exemplify the community's values, (b) adopting and supporting the community's norms and values, and (c) adopting the roles individuals will play in the community. The relationships also provide arenas for the discussion of moral values and moral issues.

There is overwhelming evidence that more positive relationships are developed with peers, superiors, and subordinates in cooperative than in competitive or individualistic situations. As a result, more constructive moral socialization tends to take place in cooperative situations. Cooperative learning is obviously the easiest way to promote the needed positive relationships in schools.

Making Moral Judgments

Learning to make moral judgments involves using higher-levels of cognitive and moral reasoning, accurately taking others' perspectives, and being open-minded when confronted with opposing views.

1. Level Of Reasoning

The level of cognitive reasoning tends to be higher in cooperative than in competitive or individualistic situations and there tends to be more frequent use of meta-cognitive

strategies. The same thing seems to happen with level of moral reasoning. Higher stages of moral reasoning tend to be used in cooperative than in competitive or individualistic situations.

2. Perspective-Taking

The internalization of the moral values of a community may require the ability to view situations and problems from a variety of perspectives. Students need to recognize the limitations of their idiosyncratic perspective and learn to assume the perspectives of others. Cooperation tends to promote more accurate perspective taking than do competitive or individualistic situations.

3. Open Mindedness

Values have to be refined and modified as individuals deal with changing circumstances and situations. Members of a community may disagree as to how best apply values in their efforts to achieve the community's goals. When members open-mindedly listen to each other's conclusions and ideas, moral education is enhanced. Individuals participating in cooperative situations tend to be more open-minded than do individuals participating in competitive or individualistic situations. In competitive and individualistic situations individuals tend to closed-mindedly refuse to incorporate others' viewpoints in their own reasoning and conclusions.

Moral Identity

Moral identity is the view of oneself as a moral person, with character, who acts with integrity. A moral orientation adds an "ought to," obligatory, quality to identity. Being involved in cooperative efforts affects identity in at least two ways. First, it creates a personal moral identity based on being part of a community in which members promote each other's success and well-being. Engaging in such prosocial behaviors influences

identity. Elementary school students who privately agreed to give up their recess time to work for hospitalized children saw themselves as more altruistic immediately as well as a month later.

Promoting other members' success also tends to inculcate mutual respect and egalitarianism (i.e., a belief in the equal worth of all members even though there may be differences in authority and status). Even when their task performances were markedly discrepant, members of cooperative groups tend to view themselves and their groupmates as being similar in overall ability and deservingness of reward.

Second, being part of a cooperative effort creates a joint moral identity shared by all other members of the community. A person is not only a distinct and unique individual, but are also "a boy scout," "a golden gopher," "a Minnesotan," and "a member of the Habitat For Humanity." Identity in cooperative situations defines the person as part of numerous communities that share a joint identity. These joint identities provide layers of positive feelings toward oneself.

It should be noted, furthermore, that participants in cooperative situations tend to see themselves as being of more value and worth than do participants in competitive or individualistic situations. While contingent self-esteem dominates competitive situations, basic self-acceptance tends to dominate cooperative situations.

Identity in a competitive context defines a person as a separate individual striving to win either by outperforming others or preventing them from outperforming onself. Competitors tend to value "schadenfreude" (i.e., taking pleasure in the misfortune of others). Thus, a competitor may have a moral identity involving the virtues of inequality, being a winner, and disdaining losers.

Moral Inclusion

Engaging in cooperative or competitive efforts inherently influences moral inclusion and the scope of justice. **Moral inclusion** consists of who is (and who is not) part of your moral community and therefore subject to the moral rules of the community. Individuals and groups excluded from one's moral community are outside of one's scope of justice. **Moral exclusion** exists when moral values and rules that apply in relations with insiders are not applicable. Moral exclusion permits and justifies the derogation and mistreatment of outsiders. Those outside the scope of justice can be viewed as nonentities (e.g., less than human) who can be exploited (for example, illegal immigrants, slaves), or enemies who deserve brutal treatment and death.

In competitive and individualistic situations, the boundaries between ingroups (in which moral inclusion exists) and outgroups (which are morally excluded) are quite strong and well marked. Cooperative situations, on the other hand, promote a much wider range of moral inclusion and scope of justice. Especially when the members of diverse backgrounds and cultures participate in the same cooperative group, moral inclusion is broadened. Cooperators are more likely than competitors or individualists to see all of humanity as being entitled to fair treatment, justice, and help and may even extend moral inclusion and the scope of justice to other species and life forms. Albert Schweitzer, for example, included all living creatures in his moral community, and some Buddhists include all of nature.

The research indicates that the more students participated in cooperative learning experiences and the more cooperatively they perceived their classes, the more they believed that everyone who tried had an equal chance to succeed in class, that students got the grades they deserved, and that the grading system was fair.

Common Mistakes In Using Cooperative Learning – And What To Do About Them!

1. **Group size too large!** It takes a lot of skill for students to manage a group of 4 or more. Instead, keep group size small: **2 or 3 is best**. Smaller groups are more effective and take less time.

2. **Not preparing students to work in cooperative groups**. Explain to students why you are using cooperative learning, do a short cooperative learning activity, then have **them** explain how it can help them. Initially, do short get-acquainted and review activities.

3. **Not teaching students appropriate interaction skills.** Ask students to contribute to a **class list of appropriate group behaviors**. Examples: stay on task, contribute ideas, help others learn, encourage everyone to participate, listen with care, show respect for others. Display the list and remind students to use them. Add to the list as needed.

4. **Letting students choose their own groups**. We would all choose our friends to work with if given the choice. Friends often get off-task. Students need to develop positive working relationships with all class members. Randomly assign students to groups. Change groups often enough so no-one gets stuck for long periods with a difficult class member.

5. **Not doing cooperative activities often enough** for students to develop cooperative skills. Have students do something

cooperative at each class session to reinforce positive cooperative habits. If nothing else, have them share what they learned with a partner.

6. **Not planning cooperative lessons with care**. Many teachers confuse group work with cooperative learning. They put students in groups, tell them to work together, and wonder why the groups aren't successful. But cooperative learning groups have **five essential elements** (positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills and processing) built carefully into every lesson to teach the students to learn well together. Learn how to include them in each cooperative lesson.

7. **Assuming that cooperative groups can handle complex tasks** before learning how to complete simple ones successfully. Students must be taught how to learn together. Start with short, simple activities and progress to longer and more significant ones as your students are successful. Have frequent class discussions on what helps the groups do well.

8. **Emphasizing paper or project completion as a group goal**. With completion as the only goal, there's nothing to stop one student from doing the work and the others from "hitchhiking." Assignments should ensure individual accountability is possible (a test taken individually, a class presentation, a follow-up assignment that is completed alone).

9. **An unclear learning goal.** A clear group learning goal is one whose achievement is easily measured. Example: You are finished when every member in your group can explain the work and/or pass a quiz.

10. **Assuming that students will magically develop needed social skills**. You must teach them how to coordinate their work with others and keep everyone included in the learning. Do this by helping them see the need for skills, showing them exactly what to do, having them practice under your eagle eye, then giving them feedback and coaching until their cooperative skills are automatic.

11. **Not understanding the power of positive relationships on achievement**. Start every group session with a get-acquainted or relationship-building question, such as "What is your partner's name, and what's their favorite flavor of ice-cream?" Build in **initial success** by giving review or easier assignments, then slowly increase the difficulty of the tasks as students gain confidence in their ability to work together.

12. **Not carefully monitoring the groups while they are working**. This is **TEACHING** time. Be among the groups - correcting misconceptions, helping students understand, and reinforcing good teamwork skills. **Monitor** the groups carefully by observing interactions and encouraging appropriate learning and teamwork skills. Help the groups ensure mastery by every student. Keep individuals on their toes by asking them at random to explain their group's work.

13. **Giving group grades**. Give group grades only when absolutely necessary, absolutely fair for each member, and when you have taught the students how to work together. Assess learning with individual quizzes or papers. Avoid having students grade each other - that can turn into a popularity contest. Have students assess their own learning by comparing what they can do with criteria.

14. **Using Jigsaw with material that is too difficult for individuals to learn**. The jigsaw technique is one where each student learns part of the material and then teaches it to their group members. If individual students can't learn the material they need to teach, your students are not ready to do jigsaw with that lesson. Instead, use cooperative guided practice and check learning with individual quizzes or assignments.

15. **Not eliciting parent support.** Teach parents the difference between cooperative learning and group work. Let them experience a cooperative learning group on back-to-school night and/or send a letter home explaining the differences and what cooperative learning can do for their child.

16. **Assuming that implementing cooperative learning is easy.** Cooperative learning is complex, procedural learning, like learning to play a new sport. Plan on several years of on-going training and practice in cooperative learning to achieve intuitive, wise use.

Visit Out Web-Site

www.co-operation.org

Summer Workshops

All workshops are concelled for this summer. The summer of 2021 there will be workshops, but probably in Chicago, not Minneapolis, to make it easier for people to travel to and from the workshops.