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MINI-MANUAL

Instruction: Cooperative Learning



INSTRUCTIONAL
COACHING
GROUP

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For more detailed information regarding the information contained in this mini-manual, refer to:

High Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching

Chapter 8

By Jim Knight

Also view the High Impact Instruction introduction video:



Instruction: Cooperative Learning

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Cooperative Learning

“The only thing that will redeem mankind is cooperation.”

BERTRAND RUSSELL

“The more credit you give away, the more will come back to you. The more you help others, the more they will want to help you.”

BRIAN TRACY

KEY CONCEPTS FOR COACHES

CRITICAL FACTORS FOR SUCCESS WHEN USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING

- 1 Clearly understand the learning structure.
- 2 Create positive interdependence.
- 3 Create a psychologically safe learning environment.
- 4 Be accessible and approachable.
- 5 Acknowledge the limits of current knowledge.
- 6 Display fallibility.
- 7 Invite participation.
- 8 Highlight failures as learning opportunities.
- 9 Set boundaries.
- 10 Hold people accountable for transgressions.
- 11 Ensure students have learned the expectations.
- 12 Teach social skills.
- 13 Determine the optimal makeup of every group.
- 14 Manage time effectively.
- 15 Use an attention signal.

Turning Ideas Into Action

STUDENTS

- 1 Ask students about effectiveness of cooperative learning activity.
- 2 Ask students to assess their level of engagement at points during the cooperative learning activity.
- 3 Ask students to write down suggestions for how a learning structure could be improved.

TEACHERS

- 1 Teachers unfamiliar with cooperative learning should begin with an easy-to-implement learning structure such as turn-to-your-neighbor.

- 2 Teachers should be aware of exactly what students should be doing during a learning structure, regardless of how simple.
- 3 Go over the success checklist to ensure that the learning structure will be successful.
- 4 Visit other teachers who use cooperative learning effectively to pick up tips.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

- 1 Assist teachers who either have had bad experiences with cooperative learning or have concerns.
- 2 Do everything possible to be sure that a teacher's first experience with cooperative learning goes smoothly.
- 3 Suggest that the teacher write out guidelines for the learning structure so that everyone understands all of the aspects.
- 4 Be a second set of eyes for teachers during the cooperative learning activity.

PRINCIPALS

- 1 Listen to the conversations of students during cooperative learning activities as the primary purpose for these learning structures are actual learning.
- 2 Two important questions to consider: a) when teachers are not using cooperative learning, should they be? And b) when teachers are using cooperative learning, would some other form of learning be more efficient?
- 3 Look for ways to free up teachers who would benefit from observing teachers who are expert at implementing cooperative learning structures.

What It Looks Like



Cooperative learning is most helpful for responding to two basic student needs: engagement and learning. When cooperative learning is done well, both of these needs are met.

SUCCESS FACTORS CHECKLIST

| SUCCESS FACTORS | CHECK |
|--|-------|
| The teacher clearly understands the learning structure. | |
| The teacher has created a psychologically safe environment. | |
| The teacher has written expectations for how students should act, talk, and move while they perform the cooperative learning activity. | |
| Students have learned the expectations for how to act, talk, and move during the cooperative learning activity. | |
| Students have learned and use appropriate social skills to interact positively and effectively during the activity. | |
| The teacher has carefully considered the optimal makeup of each group of students. | |
| The teacher has given students sufficient time for each activity, without providing so much time that the learning loses intensity. | |
| Students have additional activities they can do if they finish their tasks before others in the class. | |
| The teacher has planned additional activities to use during the class if activities take less time than planned. | |
| The teacher has planned how to adjust the lesson plan if activities take more time than planned. | |
| The teacher uses an effective attention signal. | |

TURN-TO-YOUR-NEIGHBOR CHECKLIST

| STUDENTS KNOW... | CHECK |
|--|-------|
| Who their learning partner will be before they start | |
| What tasks, if any, they need to do before they turn to their neighbor. | |
| What tasks they need to do with their partner (for example, confirm their understanding, compare answers, share an opinion). | |
| The outcome they need to produce for the class (a written product, a comment to share with the class, thumbs up, and so forth) at the end of the conversation. | |
| How they should communicate with each other (in particular, how they should listen and talk). | |

THINK, PAIR, SHARE CHECKLIST

| STUDENTS KNOW... | CHECK |
|--|-------|
| Who their learning partner will be before they start. | |
| Exactly what the thinking prompt is to which they are responding. | |
| How much time they will have to write their response. | |
| That they are to use all the time they are given to think and write about their response. | |
| The outcome they need to produce for the class (a written product, a comment to share with the class, thumbs up, and so forth) at the end of the conversation. | |
| How they should communicate with each other (in particular, how they should listen and talk). | |

JIGSAW CHECKLIST

| STUDENTS KNOW... | CHECK |
|--|-------|
| What group they will be in for the first activity (perhaps by writing down the number for their group). | |
| What group will they be in for the second activity (again, perhaps by writing down the number for their group). | |
| How they are to work together to learn and summarize what they are learning. | |
| The product they need to create to share with the second group. | |
| Before moving to the second group, that what they have created has received their teacher's stamp of approval. | |
| How they should communicate with each other in both groups (in particular, how they should listen and talk). | |
| How they will record (usually take notes or fill out a learning sheet) what they learn from their fellow students in their second group. | |

VALUE LINE CHECKLIST

| STUDENTS KNOW... | CHECK |
|---|-------|
| What the question is that they are considering. | |
| How much time they have to consider the question. | |
| Where the numbers for the value line are located in the room. | |
| Why they are being asked to line up in a value line. | |
| When to move and how quickly. | |
| What to talk about and how loud to talk. | |
| What to do when they get to their spot on the number line. | |

ROUND TABLE CHECKLIST

| STUDENTS KNOW... | CHECK |
|--|-------|
| Each question they are responding to. | |
| How much time they have to consider the question. | |
| Where they are to pass the paper. | |
| How they will sum up what they have learned or discovered. | |
| How they will share with the rest of the class what they have learned. | |