

Cooperative Group Team Formation

Long Term Grouping (6 weeks)

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Forming effective teams is an important first step in cooperative learning. A team of four has been shown to be the most effective size. A four-person team allows for many different kinds of interactions. The group can work as a team or can be broken down into two sets of pairs. Each team should be as heterogeneous as possible so that kids can learn to work with all different kinds of people.

Suggested Guidelines for Team Formation:

- Each team should consist of one high student, two average students, and one low-ability student.
- Teams should generally include both boys and girls.
- Each team should reflect the ethnic diversity of your classroom.
- CL teams generally stay together for about six weeks.
- After forming your teams, provide opportunities for them to get to know each other. These icebreaker activities are called "team builders" in the structural approach.

Option 1: Quick and Easy Method

1. Write each student's name on an index card.
2. Deal the cards into 4 equal piles according to student ability (High, Medium High, Medium Low, and Low)
3. Choose one card from each pile. Be sure to include a mix of students (according to gender, race, and personality). Set this stack aside as Team 1.
4. Form the remaining teams in the same way. Assign a team number to each stack of cards.
5. On a separate sheet of paper, record the name of each team and its team members. That way you'll have something to refer to the next time you form teams. You don't want kids to end up on the same teams over and over.

Option 2: Team Formation Card Method (See Cards on the Back of this Page)

1. Duplicate enough Team Formation cards so that you have one card for each student in the class. Never show these cards to your students!
2. Write each student's name on a card, circle "boy" or "girl," and fill out the section on race.
3. For ability, decided if the student is High (H), Medium High (MH), Medium Low (ML), or Low (L). The numbers of students for each category need to be roughly the same. This judgment is very subjective and can include areas such as leadership ability, willingness to work hard and complete homework, organization skills, and ability to follow directions, and so on.
4. In the Notes section, write down any miscellaneous information such as learning disabilities, personalities, special needs, etc.
5. After you fill out the cards, spread them out in rows on a table. For this example we will assume you have 28 students in your class, which means you will have 7 students in each category.
6. Start by placing your 7 highest students in one COLUMN. Your Highs can be thought of as the leaders in your class; these are the kids you can count on to lead the group in a positive direction. Next, place your 7 Medium High students in a column beside the Highs. Continue with a column for the Medium Lows and the Lows.
7. When you finish, you will have an array of cards that is 4 columns wide and 7 rows high. As you look over the array of cards, picture each ROW as a team. Look across each row and decide if you need to switch some cards to make the team more balanced. Do you have two boys and two girls? Do you have one High, one Medium High, one Medium Low, and one Low student? Does each team accurately represent the ethnic composition of your class? Will the students get along with each other? Look at all the teams and continue switching cards in each column until you have teams that are as heterogeneous as possible.
8. It's important to have a way of keeping track of who has been on which team. The Team Number boxes will help you remember who has been on each team throughout the year. After forming teams, record each student's team number in the box on the bottom of his or her card. To assign team numbers, start with the top row and call it Team 1. Write a 1 in the first box on every team member's card. The next team becomes Team 2, so write the number 2 in the first box on their cards. Continue with all 7 teams. After six weeks have passed and you form new teams, you will be able to see at a glance that was on each team. That way you can make sure that most students are placed with new team members each time.

How Should I Assign Grades for Teamwork?

Johnson and Johnson (1991) give the following suggestions for assigning grades to cooperative learning tasks:

1. Individual score plus bonus points based on all members reaching criterion:

After studying or working together, each student completes his or her own work. He or she then receives a grade plus bonus points if all group members have achieved a preset criterion of success.

2. Individual score plus bonus points based on lowest score:

After studying or working together, each student completes his or her own work. Members then receive a grade plus bonus points on the basis of the lowest individual score in their team.

3. Individual score plus group average:

After studying or working together, each student completes his or her own work. He or she is awarded a grade consisting of his or her individual score plus the score which is the average score of the group.

4. Individual score plus bonus based on improvement scores:

After studying or working together, each student completes his or her own work. Each student is then awarded a grade which consists of his or her individual score plus bonus points if the group score average has improved from the last task. Every two or three tasks, the base score (on which bonus points are based) is updated.

5. Totaling members' individual scores:

The individual scores of members are added up and all members receive the total of all the scores.

6. Averaging of members' individual scores:

The individual scores of members are added up and an average is taken. All team members receive this average.

7. Group score on a single product:

Team members work together to produce one product and all students receive the grade given the product.

8. Randomly selecting one member's paper to score:

After working or studying together, each group member completes the task individually. One product is then randomly chosen and all team members receive the grade awarded this product.

9. All members receive the lowest score:

After working or studying together, each group member completes his or her own work. All members then receive the lowest score of the team. This method dramatically improves the performance of low achievers since everyone in the group is motivated to help him or her achieve.

Team Building Activities

Form Relationships in Long Term Groups

A Little Respect...Goes a Long Way

Materials Needed: One paper to share

Purpose: Students will explore the meaning of “respect” and “disrespect” by creating word webs in small groups. Middle and high school students throughout the country have identified disrespect, teasing, and bullying as serious problems in their schools. Obviously, students and teachers can’t do their best work in an atmosphere of disrespect. In this activity we explore the meaning of respect. We all want to be treated with respect, but what does respect mean exactly? What does “respect” look like and feel like? Does it look different with different people and in different situations? When is it easy to treat others with respect? When is it difficult? What can guide us as we try to live our lives so that other people respect us and we respect other people? Those are some of the questions we address in this activity. We’ll create webs for “respect” and “disrespect.”

Procedure: Each group should write the word “Respect” in the middle of it. Ask students to share a few of their free associations out loud with the word “respect”. Then give them time to use create a web around the word respect on their paper using the responses that were shared and their own in addition. Stop and share a web. Then repeat with disrespect. Have groups discuss the meanings of the words and times when they have seen both respect and disrespect.

Think Differently

Materials Needed: Three signs: “Strongly Agree,” “Strongly Disagree,” “Not Sure”, Chart paper for noting guidelines for speaking and listening

Purpose: Students will share their opinions, observe that people, even friends, can have different opinions, practice listening, and practice supporting their opinions. Here’s an activity you can use throughout the year in any subject area to find out where your students stand and generate lively discussion.

Procedure: If necessary, begin by reviewing the definition of “opinion.” Elicit from the students that it’s a strong belief that people have, sometimes based on fact and sometimes not.

1. Tape the sign reading “Strongly Agree” on one side of the room and the sign reading “Strongly Disagree” on the other. Tape the “Not Sure” sign to the floor midway between the two.
2. Tell students that when you give them a statement, you want those who strongly agree to stand on one side of the room. Those who strongly disagree should stand on another side of the room. Those whose opinion falls somewhere in between should range themselves across the room between the two extremes. Stress that you are asking for opinions and that there are no right or wrong responses to the statements.
3. Start with something trivial, such as:
 - Vanilla is the best flavor of ice cream.

Then you can move on to statements that address more serious issues of a social, educational, historical, or political nature, for example:

- Alcoholism is a big problem among teenagers.
 - Students should wear uniforms to school.
 - Students in our school get too much homework.
4. After students have taken their places along the continuum in response to a statement, ask them to take a moment to notice who is standing where.
 5. Then ask one student, why did you choose to stand in the place where you are standing?
 6. After that student has given an explanation, have him or her ask another student to explain the choice s/he made.

Race to 12

Teacher provides a topic (ice cream flavors, presidents, authors, Colleges) and the teams race to come up with a list of 12.

I Never

Each group member has a card that says “I have” on one side and “I haven’t” on the other. The teacher says “I never (ate a worm, rode a train, flew in an airplane, etc...). Each person in the group shows the appropriate side of the card. Then the teacher gives time for the students to share stories with their groups. The teacher should model and break the ice by share a story of something he/she HAS done.

Race to Write 12

Created by Laura Candler



Race to Write 12 is a fun activity to use when you have a few minutes of extra time and want to stimulate creative thinking and foster collaboration. Students in teams work together to write 12 items on a given topic and complete the task before the other teams in the class.

Teacher Directions

1. Print one set of Topic Cards for the class and cut them apart. Eliminate any cards that you don't want to use and create your own replacements using the blank Topic Cards template.
2. Seat students in teams of three or four so that students are facing each other. Each team will need one sheet of paper and one pencil.
3. Designate one person on each team to number the paper in one column from 1 to 12.
4. Shuffle the Topic Cards and draw one out.
5. Read the topic as a question, "Can you write 12 _____?"
6. When you say "Begin," the first student writes the first response and passes the paper to the left. The next student writes one response and passes again. They keep passing and writing until they have 12 responses.
7. Students may whisper responses to help each other if team members can't think of something to write, but no one may skip a turn or write for someone else. Spelling doesn't count.
8. When a team has 12 items on their list, they all raise their hands. The others should keep working while you check the first team's list for accuracy. If all 12 responses are acceptable, that team wins the Topic Card. If the team has an incorrect response, they are eliminated from that round of the game and can't win that topic card later.
9. When you have a winning team for that round, all teams stop working on that topic. The person who has the paper draws a line under the list and numbers the paper again from 1 to 12.
10. Draw out a new card and repeat steps 4 through 8.
11. When you run out of time to play the game, the winner team is the one that has collected the most Topic Cards.

Race to Write 12 Topic Cards

Write 12
cities

Write 12
sports

Write 12
fruits

Write 12
animals

Write 12
ice cream flavors

Write 12
authors

Write 12
holidays

Write 12
weather words

Write 12
famous people

Write 12
synonyms for said

I agree.
In addition I
think...

You made a
good point
when you said
....

I see what
you're saying.
Would that
also mean..?

Another idea is
...

I see what
you're saying.
That reminds
me of ...

Another
example is...

Another reason
is...

If that is the
case, then

Even though
_____, I
think...

Yes, that is
true, but it is
also true that
...

As _____
already
mentioned ...

I see what
you're saying,
but I think that
...

How Can I Approach Problem Behavior Within Cooperative Teams?

Dishon and O'Leary (1984) describe and discuss how to handle the four most common behavioral problems which occur during cooperative learning (especially when students are first learning how to work as a team). These are as follows:

Passive Uninvolvement: Passive uninvolvement is expressed by students turning away from their group, not paying attention to the group, saying little or nothing, not bringing materials and work to the group, etc. When these behaviors occur, you may try to:

- Jigsaw tasks so that each team member has needed information. Then, if the uninvolved team member does not voluntarily contribute information, the other members will actively involve the student.
- Assign the uninvolved member a role which is crucial to the group's success and is implicitly involved, such as reader or secretary.
- Reward teams for their average performance. This will motivate teams to actively involve an uninvolved member.

Active Noninvolvement: Active noninvolvement is occurring when a student is doing and talking about everything but the group task. He or she may be leaving the group and walking around, purposely giving wrong answers, and refusing to do group work or to work with specific team members. In such cases, you may offer some sort of positive reinforcement that is especially preferred by the uninvolved student or the group which is contingent upon group success.

Independence: When you see a student working alone and independently of the team, you can:

- Limit the resources of the group, for example, provide only one pencil and piece of paper or one newspaper. In this way, the student will be forced to work with the group.
- Jigsaw tasks so that each team member has needed information. The student must then work with group members in order to complete the task.

Taking Charge: When a student "takes charge," you will observe him or her refusing to let other group members do work, ordering other team members around, doing all the work, bullying other members, or making team decisions without the input of other members. In such cases, you can:

- Jigsaw materials and resources so that the student cannot complete the task without input from other members.
- Assign group roles so that other group members have more powerful roles such as reader, secretary, summarizer, etc.
- Reward the group on the basis of the lowest group score(s). This will pressure the student to help and cooperate with others so that they learn the material.

Behavior Reflections

Reasons for My Behavior

Name _____

Consequences of My Behavior

Date _____

Description of My Behavior

How do I feel?

How has my behavior affected others?

Other Consequence(s)

Plan for Improvement _____

Student _____

Teacher _____

Parent _____