Cooperative Learning Structures for ELs

Supporting the Whole Child
Language Matters Conference
Loyola 2015
Agenda

• Rationale Cooperative Learning
  – What is it and why should we use it?

• The How to...
  – Pre-learning
  – During Learning
  – After Learning

• Q&A
  – Exit Activity
High Stakes Everything....

Our Education System

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.
Today's Understandings

• Interaction can generate understanding and enhance retention for all learners.
• There are multiple ways to organize interaction patterns to meet different purposes.
• Learning “what worked” for others and sharing “what works” for you promotes effective implementation.
• The opportunity to apply academic language in a meaningful context is essential to language acquisition.
Four Corners: I know what cooperative learning is and I use it regularly in my teaching.

In your groups use the following sentence frames:

I think cooperative learning is when _______________________.

One example of cooperative learning is _______________________.

I use cooperative learning to ___________ in my classroom and to ___________.

1 = strongly agree
2 = agree
3 = disagree
4 = strongly disagree
Promising Instructional Practices for ELs

1. Teach content, literacy, and language in an **integrated and meaningful** way.

1. **Scaffold** language based on student English proficiency to make sure it is comprehensible.

1. Build on what students already know and help them develop **background knowledge** they need.

1. Explicitly teach **vocabulary** and **academic language** (formal language required to be successful in school settings).

1. Provide ample opportunities for carefully designed **interaction** with teacher and peers.

1. Strategically provide **native language supports**.

1. Teach **reading comprehension strategies** explicitly.
Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is defined by a set of processes which help people interact together in order to accomplish a specific goal or develop an end product...


engaged       successful
positive      challenged
Essential Finding

“Decades of research illustrate the benefits of cooperative learning to help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in a rapidly changing world.”

Greater Retention for all Learners

People retain:

• 10% of what they read
• 20% of what they hear
• 30% of what they see
• 50% of what they see and hear
• 70% of what they say
• 90% of what they say as they do or teach something.

Spencer Kagan’s Structural Approach to Cooperative Learning

http://www.kaganonline.com

This approach teaches multiple ways to structure student interaction, each with a specific name. Hence, giving directions is simplified. Many outstanding resources are available.
## Cooperative Learning Tools

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Research: ELL Shadowing as a Catalyst for Change

Morrison Elementary School in Norwalk, CA

Teachers observed ELLs every 5 minutes. ELLs used academic language only 2 minutes of the day.

Teachers learned 3 strategies:
• Think/pair/share
• Reciprocal teaching
• Frayer model

• ELLs made remarkable gains on state assessments in 2 years.

Some might contend these strategies are simply best practices that can help all learners. But Gonzalez explains that the consequences of not using them are particularly “devastating for a second-language learner.”

http://www.edweek.org/tsb/articles/2011/10/13/01shadowing.h05.html
The Big Brain Protocol
Video Reflection: Numbered Heads & Talking Chips

1) How does the Big Brain Protocol encourage cooperative learning?

2) How would you describe the students' role v. the teachers role in this classroom?

3) How could this strategy apply to another content area? Give a concrete example.

4) How could this protocol have been scaffolded more for ELs?

**Sentence Frame:** We discussed question number ____ and we agreed that ___________. We also thought that ____________.
Alternative Roles

Gatekeeper

Clarifier

Taskmaster

Peacekeeper
ROLES

GATEKEEPER It is your job to encourage participation of all and to politely close the gate on someone if you feel others are not getting a chance to participate.

CLARIFIER It is your job to make sure everyone understands the directions. Check for understanding of content, and encourage others to clarify and ask questions as needed. It is not the job of the clarifier to do all the clarifying.

TASKMASTER It is your job to keep the team on task during group and class activities. Monitor noise level in the team. Encourage everyone to give the quiet signal. Keep time as needed.

PEACEKEEPER It is your job to establish and encourage praising in the team. Help the team to avoid put-downs. Get & return materials.
After doing partner and team tasks without specific roles, ask the team, “Which of the following would you rate the highest and lowest for your team?” After a representative from each team shares the team’s answers. Introduce the roles.

GROUP PROCESSING

1. We were all involved.
2. We clarified if people didn’t understand.
3. We all stayed on task.
4. We supported each other.

Roles can help the development of these skills:

ROLES

1. Gatekeeper
2. Clarifier
3. Taskmaster (Time Keeper)
4. Peacekeeper (Material Handler)
Suggestions for Effective Beginning

• **Start with pair work** (possibly with hands-on partner tasks) gradually progressing to teams of 4.

• **Include a challenge** when some partners/teams finish before others.

• **Model** all expected behaviors - Students model. (fishbowl)

• **Focus on positive behaviors** when giving feedback. Ex. “I noticed that no one in this group was making distracting noises. That helps listening.”

• **If things aren’t going well say,** “I notice this isn’t going very well for us. Is there something I could have done to help you?” Then, “Is there something you could do to help your work be more productive?”

• Progress from **simple to more complex tasks.**
Think-Write-Pair-Share

• What questions do you have about cooperative learning?
• Write your questions
• Share with a partner.
• Volunteers share with the group.
Think-pair-share is the simplest interaction and the fastest to use.

1. Teacher poses a question
2. Students think
3. Pair with partner
4. Share ideas with the whole class

Original source: Frank Lyman and his associates, University of Maryland Howard County Southern Teacher Education Center.
SUGGESTIONS for Think-pair-share

• Identify partners first to avoid wasting time or having a student left out.

• Use 7-10 seconds of wait-time after the question. Ask students to pair only after they have time to think.

• Don’t give too much time for partner sharing. (scaffold sharing)

• Check to see if all got a chance to talk. (Thumbs-up).

• Give sample sentence frames, with the easiest first.

• Use often, even with very small groups.

• Students also benefit from just thinking and pairing even if no one shares with the whole class.

• Call on volunteer. Students put thumbs up if the same idea.

• Speaker calls on volunteers who have a different idea. (They volunteer with thumbs up.)
Mix-Freeze-Group

• Read about your cooperative learning structure.
• Synthesize an explanation of the structure.
• Think of an example of how you could use it given your context.
• Be prepared to share.
Exit Slip 3-2-1

• Write down the names of 3 strategies that seemed promising, given your context.

• Write down 2 ways you could share these strategies with colleagues.

• Write down 1 cooperative learning structure you will try tomorrow!
Thank you!

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