



# S.H.I.N.E News & Ideas

(Supporting, Helping, & Inspiring New Educators)

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## Cooperative Learning..why it will or will not work

It is often stated that any teacher who argues against encouraging students to work cooperatively has never encouraged students to work cooperatively. Life is about cooperation. We simply cannot expect students to come to us possessing all of the skills they need in order to work cooperatively with others. That's why they need us! We're here to teach them.

Much research has been conducted on the power of cooperative learning. The results have been consistent: Students who engage in cooperative learning activities develop problem-solving skills, develop better social skills, and achieve at higher levels. So why is it that so many teachers, of all grade levels, tend to avoid the idea of having students work together in cooperative learning environ-

ments?

Once again, we must look back at classroom management. The following are actual teachers' answers to the question, "Why don't you use cooperative learning activities in your classroom?"

- I've tried letting my students work together, and they just can't get along with one another.
- I put my students in groups, and one person does all of the work.
- I don't want to hold back the stronger students because of the weaker students.
- Cooperative learning equals chaos. I want structure and order in my classroom. (Continued on page 2.....)

## Reducing Risk and Building Resilience

Studies in positive psychology have shown that resilience rates high among attitude-based protective factors that help children achieve academic success in environments where, statistically speaking, the odds are against them.

In 2006, researchers at the University of Michigan's Center for Human Growth and Development showed that preschoolers facing eight or more environmental risk factors such as maternal mental illness or single parenthood, minority status or stressful life events, scored more than 30 points below children with no risk factors on tests of IQ. Yet, they consistently found that groups of high resilient children in high-risk environments still outperformed their peers. But how do we develop high resilience in our kids and ourselves?

### Strategies

The astonishing thing, the great surprise of resilience research, is the ordinariness of strategies needed for success. Firm guidance, structured rituals and a focus on each child's

strengths, while simultaneously challenging and supporting students, are among the developmental supports in grouping of high expectations.

For kids that learn resilience on their own, protective factors may include independence, social skills, relationships, self esteem, temperament and a sense of purpose and competence seem to run parallel to positive psychology constructs such as effort, optimism and hope.



Always high on the list of strategies is the importance of social competence among peers, supportive relationships with adults, opportunities for meaningful participation and high expectations. Others list a similar set of developmental supports including car-

## Cooperative Learning...(continued from page 1)

- Today's students simply cannot work together.
- I tried cooperative learning once, and my students argued with one another.
- I like a quiet classroom. I'm not about to put my students in groups where all they'll do is talk.



Notice that in all of the above answers, the issues of order, structure, noise, lack of on-task behavior, and chaos are evident. Again, all point to problems in classroom management. Yes, the above fears can become realities, but NOT with true cooperative learning conducted in a well-managed environment. The key here is structure. It is impossible to

do justice to describing cooperative learning completely here. However, I will provide enough of the overall premise underlying the success of its use in the classroom to encourage those reading this to familiarize themselves with some of the literature on cooperative learning. In a nutshell, this is what true cooperative learning looks like:

- Students are assigned to groups consisting of various personality types and ability levels.
- Each student in the group has a specific job in carrying out the overall charge of the group.
- All activities are highly structured.

- Appropriate behaviors in the group are taught, modeled, and practiced.
- Noise levels are under control, and all "noise" is "structured" noise.
- Students of all ability levels are challenged to think critically and to solve problems cooperatively, just like in the real world.
- Procedures for each aspect of group interaction are clearly established, from day one.

Students are involved in the group's mission, and they experience high levels of success.

Remember that before implementing any type of cooperative group activities, effective classroom management must be in place.

Source: <https://www.cyoeducation.com/Blog/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1811/Poetry-by-Annette-Breaux-Cooperation>

## Cooperative Learning Structures to try

With only a few weeks left in the year, now is great time to try out some strategies you may have wanted to get to this year, but didn't feel comfortable trying out with the critical content. Use the last few weeks of school to explore learning practices for which you want to implement more readily next year. Learn the glitches and "look for's" now, so that you will be ready to roll when the new year begins! Here are a few of the most common ones:

**Team Pair Solo** - Students do problems first as a team, then with a partner, and finally on their own. It is designed to motivate students to tackle and succeed at problems which initially are beyond their ability. It is based on a simple notion of mediated learning. Students can do more things with help (mediation) than they can do alone. By allowing them to work on problems they could not do alone, first as a team and then with a partner, they progress to a point they can do alone that which at first they could do only with help.

**Find the Fib:** Students write down two facts and one fib, the job of the team is to identify the fib.

**Numbered Heads Together** - A team of four is established. Each member is given numbers of 1, 2, 3, 4. Questions are asked of the group. Groups work together to answer the question so that all can verbally answer

the question. Teacher calls out a number (two) and each two is asked to give the answer.

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**Quiz-Quiz-Trade** Directions: 1. Stand Up- Hand Up- Pair Up 2. Partner A quizzes 3. Partner B responds 4. Partner A coaches or praises 5. Switch roles 6. Trade cards, then repeat #1-5

**Showdown** (teambuilding, mastery)

*This activity can be used to check for mastery of concepts and skills, as a review before a quiz or test, or to assess student skills.*

1. The teacher distributes materials to each group: a deck of question cards, one small basket and thinkpad slips (small slips of colored paper) for each team

member to each group.

2. The teacher selects one student in each group to be the Showdown Captain for the first round and asks him/her to turn the question cards facedown in the center of the group's table and pass the thinkpad slips to each team member.

3. The teacher explains that the Showdown Captain will turn over the card with the first question (cards can be numbered on back) and read it aloud for all team members. Then each team member will answer the question individually on their thinkpad slips and turn their answers facedown on the table in front of them.

4. When the teacher gives the Showdown signal, all team members will reveal their responses at once. If all are correct, the team will get 5 team points. If not, the team will coach their team members to correct their answers and will then receive one team point.

5. Team members will celebrate.

6. The student to the left of the Showdown Captain will become Showdown Captain for the next round.

7. Repeat from step 2 for each round.

# Reducing Risk and Building Resilience (continued from page 1)

themselves have a highly developed sense of optimism, plus understand and exhibit social and emotional competence. Students are not born with resilience; it is something students learn, and if they are not learning it adequately at home, schools have to teach. They cannot attain their academic success without it.

**Teachers can play a key role** by creating positive learning environments for children. They can model their belief that life is doable and that mistakes are opportunities to learn. They realize that when children use self-defeating behaviors such as acting out, bullying, clowning or giving up, they may be masking feelings of hopelessness, vulnerability and low self-esteem. Use of rituals or respectful routines and a safe environment will help reduce behaviors that detract from the caring environment in the classroom.

When combined, meaningful opportunities and high expectations give children the opportunity to develop a sense of

mastery by meeting little goals in a step-wise succession. Laying down a track record of personal gains and small accomplishments work into proud memories and big hopes. The self confidence built upon these experiences means that new challenges can be tackled and the bar can be raised on academic achievement.



In fact, one study found that those who were in more challenging academic programs showed significantly lower levels of depression and, as a bidirectional study, left open the interesting question of which was the causative agent — did the more rigorous curriculum protect students from depression or were happier students more successful?

**One of the largest predictors of academic achievement was the students' perceptions of their own abilities.** Another was higher educational aspirations which may serve as a

goal and a motivator for adolescents, providing them with a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, as well as promoting a sense of hope. Meaning and purpose, it appears then, are important to academic achievement, and hope can be leveraged as a catalyst for achievement by nurturing meaningful participation.

## Transfer Time

Now, you've read about all of the things that apply to kids. Your next action step is translation. How can you take what you already do, that matches with the steps above, and expand or strengthen it?

**This is no idle activity: it is about just one thing.** This is about the quality of your life. This is not rocket science. Notice what the research says, and apply. If your students are worth your "best effort," shouldn't the person that GIVES the best effort also be worthy of your "best effort"? Of course notice what you do well, and keep doing it.

Take one thing and do just a bit more of it. Can you start today?

**Eric Jensen** from [Eric Jensen's blog](#)



You might not always have time to search out the best web resources for differentiating instruction. Teacher and blogger Larry Ferlazzo has done the work for you. Do you want to know how to develop differentiated assessments? Or do you just want to make things work in your classroom? Check out his blog post on the best resources on differentiating instruction. (<http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2012/01/09/the-best-resources-on-differentiating->

## RESOURCES

As school budgets get tighter, you can't always afford to purchase books for students to use in class. Project Gutenberg ([www.gutenberg.org/](http://www.gutenberg.org/)) was the first (and remains the largest) source of free electronic books. On the website, you can browse by author, title or subject. There are also books in other languages. Everything is free, although users are asked to make a small contribution.

End of the year lesson ideas at:

<http://www.theeducatorsnetwork.com/main/units/endofyear.htm>

<http://teachingexcellenceprogram.wordpress.com/2012/04/11/5-ideas-for-what-to-do-with-students-when-testing-is-over/>

## Remember to laugh...

### *.Did you know...*

**-Laughter strengthens the body's ability to fight disease.**

**-Laughter fights stress in another way.**

Stressed individuals have higher levels of a hormone called cortisol. Studies show that laughter lowers cortisol levels in the body, which makes laughter a natural stress buster. Much of the stress we experience is related to how we think. Laughing after an embarrassing mistake you made, for example, is far less stressful than losing sleep or remaining stressed over it.

