COOPERATIVE LEARNING WORKSHOP-

HOW TO START AND KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

This is a three part workshop series on cooperative/group learning which will begin/continue faculty and staff development efforts in using this exciting teaching technique. The focus of the workshop is to help teachers to start using interactive learning techniques in their classes or to expand their efforts if they already use collaborative learning. Group and cooperative learning exercises will be used to demonstrate the difference between these two methods. The topics chosen will help us look at how we currently teach, will define the nature of our students, will delineate potential problems with group learning and will describe what we can do to increase the use of active learning in our classes.

In order to foster group cohesion and create an enjoyable and interesting class environment, it is helpful to use warmup and group building activities. These are relatively short and help students get to know each other and work better together

They promote an atmosphere which encourages group interaction. They help students develop a familiarity with each other based upon non-academic activities and establish an environment of active, student based learning.

SESSION #1- In this interactive session we will explore the differences between group and cooperative learning exercizes. We will focus on teachers present methods, student behaviors and identifying and working on potential problems which arise when using cooperative learning techniques

RANDOM ORGANIZING

Line up by birthdays using the month and year of your birthday. This exercise will be done using nonverbal communication only. The purpose is to arrange people randomly in order to encourage everyone to meet someone with whom they are not familiar. It also fosters critical thinking skills and builds group cohesion through a group goal.

PAIR SHARE/WARMUP

Part 1

This exercise will be done in pairs based upon the birthday lineup. Each person in the pair is charged with learning about his/her partner and then reporting back to the whole group. Explore such questions as where the person is from, how he or she came to teach at your school, what he/she teaches, as well as hobbies, interests, etc.

part 2

In addition to the general biography we would like to ask the following: how do you run your classes? Do you use a lecture format, lecture discussion, group learning, cooperative learning, interactive learning etc.?

WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION

Pairs will introduce their partners and describe their teaching techniques. A discussion will follow about the mechanism and benefits of students working in pairs and the nature of organizing students to work in groups, especially the difference between random organizing and teacher selection.

WARMUP EXERCIZE

We will switch to working in groups of four by combining pairs of faculty and staff members. In order to help people get to know each other we would like you to find five things you have in common, not related to your job or school. They must be of a personal nature, such as you all have been to Yellowstone National Park or all like Pink Floyd music.

ROUND ROBIN DISCUSSION

We would like to find out what you think your students are like. Using a round robin technique, each group member will contribute one observation about what he/she feels the students are like, going around the table in order. The recorder will paraphrase each person's contribution. This process will continue until you have obtained everyone's ideas. The questions we are answering are as follows:

WHAT ARE YOUR STUDENTS LIKE ACADEMICALLY, SOCIALLY OR PSYCHOLOGICALLY. HOW DO THEY ACT IN CLASS,? ANY CHARACTERISTIC WHICH WILL HELP US GET A PICTURE OF WHAT THEY ARE LIKE MAY BE INCLUDED IN YOUR DESCRIPTION.

WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION

We will use a round robin approach with the whole group to explore the question of what your students are like. It will be helpful to see if we have a consensus on how our students behave in and out of class. This activity will form the basis for later discussions about implementing group learning.

PRESENTATION ON COOPERATIVE LEARNING

The activities completed in session #1 demonstrated the basic elements of cooperative learning. These include positive interdependence of mutual goals, shared resources, joint rewards and assigned roles; Face-to face promotive interaction; interpersonal and small group skills; group processing; individual accountability through a test, paper or project.

GROUP BUILDING/ WARMUP EXERCIZE

FIND SOMETHING IN YOUR WALLET OR PURSE/POCKETBOOK OR ON YOUR PERSON WHICH WILL HELP THE GROUP UNDERSTAND WHO YOU ARE A LITTLE BETTER.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING EXERCIZE

We will use a cooperative learning format where roles are assigned, an observer records participants' interactions, and the group members review their behavior and interactions within the group. This exercise will be used to demonstrate the five areas which constitute cooperative learning and how these items distinguish group and cooperative learning techniques. The question you are asked to answer is:

WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU FORSEE OR HAVE YOU DEALT WITH WHEN USING GROUP OR COOPERATIVE LEARNING AS A TEACHING METHOD?

- Each person will be assigned a role. These roles will be explained prior to the start of the activity. Roles used for this activity are:

Reader

Recorder/timekeeper

Prober/praiser

Observer

WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION

We will generate a list of problem areas identified by individual groups and begin a discussion of possible solutions. This will be continued by groups in the following activity.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING CONTINUED

We will continue our discussion of group learning techniques by identifying actions that can be taken to deal with problems which arise when you use groups in class. Using the list of problems identified in the previous activity develop a list of possible actions you might take in your class to eliminate problems and keep your students on task during group activities.

In this activity the observer will make an effort to be more specific in her/his observations about group members' participation.

WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION

The group as a whole will develop a list of possible actions which might be helpful in keeping groups focused on their goals.

ONE MINUTE WRITING EXERCIZE-

In order to obtain feedback and suggestions for future workshops we would appreciate your completing this assessment instrument. You may sign it if you would like a direct response or leave it anonymous. This exercize demonstrates a technique which may be used in any class to encourage writing by students and foster communications between student and teacher.

- WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THIS SESSION?

- WHAT QUESTION(S) DO YOU HAVE ABOUT COOPERATIVE LEARNING?

SESSION #2- This session will continue our exploration of cooperative learning processes by working through a sample curriculum and looking at group processing i.e. training students how to work in groups. English and math cooperative lessons will be demonstrated.

RANDOM ORGANIZING- PART 2-

Organizing groups is a major component of cooperative learning. This activity will continue our exploration of how to get stiudents into groups of four using a random process. This is a nonverbal exercize. Each student is given a card from a poker deck.

In order to organize randomly find four people to group up with who have the same playing card that you do. Look for the same number or face card.

Return with your new foursome to a seat at one of the tables.

GROUP BUILDING ACTIVITY-

This activity continues the process of building group cohesion by having students discuss something that will help others understand who they are. Group building along with analysis of group behavior is critical to the success of cooperative learning in any class.

Each member of the group will give their "learning testimonial". What is it that you like best about school, what has been your biggest success with a class, what experience in school has been most memorable for you.

Individuals will be asked to share their testimonials with the whole group.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING CURRICULUM EXAMPLE-

This example will reinforce the function of cooperative which involves assigning roles to students along with their completing an exercise in content area. This will be followed by group analysis and processing. The curriculum example is a geography lesson which includes math, writing and art.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE COOPERATIVE LEARNING EXERCIZE-

1. Using the maps provided, locate the territory at 35 degrees latitude and 110 degrees longitude, which your animal will inhabit.

2. Ascertain the climate, physical characteristics and food of this area and any additional information which might be helpful for the survival of your new animal.

3. Create a new animal which would live here. Draw a picture of your animal.

4. Write a descriptions of your animal, including appearance, habits and type of nourishment.

GROUP PROCESSING-

This is another major component of cooperative learning. Groups need to be taught how to work together. This can be accomplished through a formal analysis process using forms and questions for the group to answer and by the teacher and students observing groups in action.

-What three things worked well in your group?

-What one thing could your group do better?

-How well did you function in your group?

-How did others perceive your performance in the group?

WARMUP EXERCIZE-

GROUP BUILDING AND WARMUP ACTIVITIES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR HELPING GROUPS GET ORGANIZED AND FUNCTION WELL TOGETHER. THIS ACTIVITY WILL DEMONSTRATE ANOTHER METHOD FOR ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO INTERACT AND GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER.

-What animal would you like to be. If you had a choice of becoming an animal what would you like to be. Explain to your partner why you made your choice.

PAIR SHARE EXERCIZE-

WORKING IN PAIRS IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE FORM OF GROUP LEARNING. STUDENTS ARE EITHER LISTENING TO THEIR PARTNER OR EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS OR PROVIDING INFORMATION ON A TOPIC. LISTENING AND VERBALIZING SKILLS ARE EMPHASIZED.

-With your partner define cooperative learning versus group learning and write an answer which represents your combined thoughts.

-What are the potential benefits of cooperative or group learning for your students and you the teacher?

-What are some potential problems that may arise when middle school students work together in groups?

-Do you have any suggestions for resolving the potential problems?

WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION-

IN COOPERATIVE LEARNING IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE THE GROUPS REPORT THEIR FINDINGS. THIS PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING AND A SHARING OF IDEAS BY THE ENTIRE CLASS. IT GIVES A REVIEW OF THE MATERIAL AND HIGHLIGHTS DIFFERENT OPINIONS AND APPROACHES USED TO ANSWER A QUESTION.

A round robin procedure will be used to obtain the results of the discussions from the Pair-Share activity. It will demonstrate how the resources of the entire group can be brought out as a summary and review of information.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING DEMONSTRATIONS IN ENGLISH AND MATH

Demonstrations of an English and Math lesson will be held by the workshop facilitators. The workshop participants can choose one or the other depending upon their interests. (People whose classes involve much reading, like social science and humanities, will be encouraged to attend the English session; people who work with math, and teach science, computer, business and technology courses, will be encourage to attend the math session.

ONE MINUTE WRITING EXERCIZE-

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORKSHOPS WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR COMPLETEING THIS ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT. YOU MAY SIGN IT IF YOU WOULD LIKE A DIRECT RESPONSE OR LEAVE IT ANONYMOUS.

- What did you learn from this session?

- What question(s) do you have about cooperative learning?

SESSION #3- This session will focus on potential problems associated with starting cooperative learning by looking at potential disruptive student behaviors. Ideas for dealing with these situations will be developed through the cooperative learning process. The problems associated with having a wide range of student abilities in a class will be discussed

HETEROGENIOUS ORGANIZING

Heterogeneous organizing is normally accomplished by the teacher selecting students based upon their achievement level. Students are selected from the upper, middle and lower levels by using initial test scores on the content area or previous grades from other classes. One student from the high end, two from the middle and one from the lower end constitute a good mix of students. Materials are attached explaining how to accomplish this grouping procedure.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING EXERCIZE USING HETEROGENEOUS GROUPS- FORCES HINDERING GROUP PERFORMANCE

For this exercize we will form groups by having five teachers from different subject areas form a group. Role cards will be distributed randomly to each member.

1. We will continue the cooperative learning process of assigning roles in order to create a situation where different people practice a new role each time.

2. The reader will read the list of potential problem behaviors to the group. The group will then prioritize the list according to which problem behaviors you feel your students will MOST LIKELY exhibit. List the number of each item starting with the problem behavior which will be the most likely to occur. (#1 for most likely to #9 for least likely)

3. Develop a list of disruptive behaviors not included on the given list which you are concerned your students might exhibit.

4. Review the suggested solutions, provided in the second handout, to determine if they might work with your students. What alternatives would you suggest to the ones presented?

5. What actions might you suggest to eliminate the objectionable behaviors? Do not limit your suggestions because of possible budget constraints. In an ideal world what resources would you have available to you to help you succeed using cooperative learning in your classes?

GROUP PROCESSING

1. The first performance processing will involve individuals assessing their own level of participation and cooperation within the group by using the student cooperation checklist.

The second stage of this group processing exercise will involve members checking with the other members of the group to see if they concur with each individual's self analysis of his/her contribution and participation in the group activity.

2. Each group will complete the form which identifies three things the group did well together and one thing the group could do better. Please use descriptive sentences versus one word answers.

3. Review the observer's check list to see how many times each member participated within the group.

4. Results from number 3 will be shared with the entire group to help foster a feeling of improvement for all groups. When the results are presented to the entire group names will be removed and numbers substituted, i.e., person #1, etc.

5. The use of a "T" chart will be discussed which helps students identify appropriate behaviors for group interactions.

PAIR SHARE EXERCIZE-

HOW TO GET STARTED USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING

There are two approaches to introduce your students to cooperative learning.

The first method teaches them about cooperative learning by teaching them how to function in groups. This approach emphasizes process. The second method uses content as the basis for demonstrating how groups function. For teachers who have not used cooperative learning we suggest starting with the process approach. Review the proposed curriculum and discuss with your partner whether you feel this approach will work with your students and what modifications you might suggest.

SESSION WRAPUP AND ASSESSMENT

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? Establishment of a school wide support system for teachers beginning to use group learning and for teachers currently using this technique would be very helpful. A discussion will be held about mechanisms which might be put into place to help faculty initiate or expand group/cooperative learning into their classes. This will serve as a wrap up for the day's activities.

Participants will be asked to complete an assessment form for the workshop which will help us in making recommendations to the administration for future faculty development activities in the area of group/cooperative learning.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING INITIAL CURRICULUM

STUDENT HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Make a list of all the places you get together with other people in groups of two or more people. This includes meeting with friends, relatives, other classmates etc.

You may consider places in school at home or in your neighborhood.

Which is your favorite place for getting together with other people (friends, family, other students)?

OPTION- Have students interview their parents in addition to making their own lists. Where do their parents work or socialize with groups of people such as at work, community groups, religious activities etc. What is their parents' favorite place for getting together with other people?

OPTION- Teachers write a letter to parents explaining the process and rationale you will be initiating in some classes and alert them to the possibility that their children will be needing their help in writing answers to questions and perhaps interviewing them to obtain additional information.

IN CLASS-

STUDENT WARMUP EXERCIZE- Have students interview/talk to each other and find out where they personally like to be in groups the most. They may select more than one place but should try to prioritize their list of favorite places. Have the students report back to the whole class what they found out about their partner

PAIR-SHARE EXERCIZE- Have the students working in pairs write up a single list of all the places they found where they are together with other people.

OPTION- Repeat this exercise using groups of 4 students. Group them geograhically into fours by having pairs next to each other circle their chairs. Ask them to use a ROUND ROBIN approach where each student contributes one item at a time from their pairs list, moving around the group, until they are finished.

WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION- Using the Round Robin technique have each pair or foursome contribute one place from their master list. Keep going around the room until all items have been given. List all the places where people meet on the board for the entire class to see.

This listing process can be used to lead to a discussion about using groups in school as part of regular classes and how it might help students and make classes active and interesting.

END OF CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT- The students will write about what they have learned and what questions they may have about people meeting in groups. The one minute paper may be rewritten for Junior High students asking specific questions. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage students to reflect upon what they did in class through a writing assignment, to determine if they learned what the teacher expected they would and to practice writing and critical thinking.

STUDENT HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

The student will write up a list of all the ways they see themselves and other people behaving or acting when they are working or socializing with groups of other people or students. The list should include both good and bad behaviors.

OPTION- Have the students interview their parents to ask the same question. What behaviors do they see people using when they work or socialize in groups?

INCLASS-

PAIR-SHARE-Students work in pairs to develop a list of all behaviors that they see occurring in groups.

OPTION- Try using cooperative learning (CL) with assigned roles. Describe it to the students as an experiment to see if they will like using CL. Have each group develop a list of behaviors.

Have each group write their list on the board for comparison purposes.

Use the group lists to develop a master list for the whole class.

WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION- Have the groups contribute their items by going around the class and asking students to read one item at a time. You can ask for volunteers or move from group to group soliciting responses.

END OF CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT- Students summarize what they have learned. You may wish to ask their opinion of group learning as they have practiced it to date and/or suggestions they have on making the process work better.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING EXERCIZE- Organize students into groups of 4 with assigned roles. Use a random organizing activity such as lining up by birthday or alphabetically or using playing cards.

OPTION- Use a warmup activity such as asking the students to find five things in common not related to school.

Using the master list of peoples behaviors in groups developed in the last class the groups are to develop two lists, one for good, helping behaviors and one for inappropriate behaviors for people working in groups.

WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION- Ask one group to write their list on the board. Ask the other groups if they agree with the list presented and discuss any disagreements to try to reach a consensus on which group behaviors are helpful and which are not.

GROUP PROCESSING- Have the students complete the "Student Cooperation Sheet" individually to help them focus on their own behavior in the group exercize just completed. Have the students share their self evaluation with the rest of the group to see if their perceptions of themselves are shared by the group as a whole.

OPTION- Teacher reviews the "student coop sheet" prior to having the students fill it out. This may be necessary the first time students work through the processing technique to help them understand each category listed on the work sheet.

WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION- Bring the students back together to discuss how they functioned in their groups. What will they try to do better next time.

-Go through each question and ask students to indicate by raising their hands how many answered in each category of each question.

GROUP PROCESSING- Have the students complete one worksheet per group working in 4's, which asks them to identify three things they did well and one thing they need to improve. Ask the recorder to read the list to the whole group.

WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION- Have each group read their 3 good things and one improvement item to the whole class.

OPTION- List the items on the board in order to compare the various observations made by each group and compare and share their suggestions for improvement