

# Cooperative Learning and Conflict Resolution

[Drs. Roger and David Johnson](#)

## **Description:**

Cooperative Learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to achieve shared goals. In cooperative learning groups students are given two responsibilities: to learn the assigned material and to make sure that all other group members do likewise. Cooperative learning may be used to teach specific content (formal cooperative learning groups), to ensure active cognitive processing information during lectures (informal cooperative learning groups), and to provide long-term support and assistance for academic progress (cooperative base groups). Any assignment in any curriculum for any age student can be structured cooperatively if the teacher has the proper training.

## **Applications:**

The purpose of cooperative learning is to make each group member a stronger individual in his or her own right. There should be a pattern and flow to classroom learning--learn it together, perform it alone.

Cooperative learning differs from traditional classroom grouping in that it requires that teachers carefully structure the group so that students believe they

- (a) sink or swim together,
- (b) assist and encourage others to achieve,
- (c) are individually accountable for doing their part of the group's work,
- (d) have to master the required interpersonal and small group skills to be an effective group member, and
- (e) should discuss how well the group is working and what could be done to improve the group work.

Unless these five essential elements are included, the small groups are not cooperative.

## **Results of Use:**

Cooperative learning has a considerable body of research validating its effectiveness. Over the past 90 years 550 studies have been conducted comparing the relative effectiveness of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning. Cooperative learning consistently improves achievement and retention, creates more positive relationships among students, and promotes students' psychological health and self-esteem. We know more cooperative learning than we do about almost any other aspect of teaching and learning.

The Cooperative Learning Center has been a part of the College of Education at the University of Minnesota for over 20 years. The funding has come from the Office of Special Education, Department of Education, Office of Naval Research Department of Defense, and the National Science Foundation.

**Future Directions:**

Recent work has concentrated on moving on from cooperative classrooms to cooperative schools and systems. Leading the Cooperative School is aimed at school administrators and teacher leaders and details this next step from a school where "some teachers use cooperative learning" to becoming a Cooperative School. Growing attention is being given to the book, Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom which examines the use of cooperative learning in adult settings. Teaching Students to be Peacemakers has become the focus of preventing and dealing with violence in the schools. The Center is equally interested in the Creative Controversy material which focuses on stirring up more intellectual conflict in classrooms.

The current projects that may prove promising are related to assisting schools in Eastern Europe to promote cooperative learning as one way to help prepare a next generation for democracy and the free enterprise system. A new project is in collaboration with the Disney Corporation and Stetson University to design the school and teacher academy for the Celebration Community on Disney land in Orlando.

**Key consultants:**

Key consultants, trainers, writers in the field: Dr. Roger Johnson, Dr. David Johnson, Dr. Edythe J. Hollubec. In addition, from the thousands of teachers and administrators who have been trained in Cooperative Learning, have come about five hundred people who have had Leadership Training and are teaching Cooperative Learning in their own areas. This network of carefully selected people allows us to refer people who are seeking help with cooperative learning to leaders in their own community or close by.

**Recommended Materials and Resources:**

Roger and David Johnson. *Cooperation, Competition: Theory and Research*  
Highly recommended: A review of more than 500 studies using meta-analysis techniques. Interaction Book Company. 7208 Cornelia Dr. Edina, MN 55435. (612) 831-9500. 1989.

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**About:**

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