What is it?

The cooperative learning group strategy is a strategy that involves students working together towards a learning goal set by the teacher and group. Cooperative learning is a subset of collaborative learning (Igel & Urquhart, 2012).

This learning strategy is said to have positive effects in the areas of academic, social and emotional aspects of the individual (Gillies, 2008; Winget, 1988). The students will be learning from each other, gaining new perspectives as well as enabling social interaction.

One important thing to note is that the cooperative learning group strategy effects a maximized only when groups are structured and understand how they need to cooperate (Gillies, 2008; Winget, 1988; Igel & Urquhart, 2012).

Cooperative Learning groups let students practice interdependence. Interdependence occurs in all careers and should be practiced at an earlier age. It also gives students a sense of taking control of their own and for the others in their group (Igel & Urquhart, 2012).

Procedure

The researchers Igel and Urquhart (2012) provide three principles that promote a successful implementation of cooperative learning. There is one more step added to create a 4-step procedure.

1. Teach group processing and interpersonal skills
   a. At this step, teach the students how to interact with each other. These have also been call "group processing skills" or "interpersonal skills"

2. Establish cooperative goal structures within groups
   a. Help the group come up with a shared goal
   b. Grades are not to be considered as an outcome

3. Provide mechanisms for individual accountability
   a. One method would be to have group members or the teacher delegate responsibilities at the start
   b. Limiting the group size is also effective
   c. Have assessment dates

4. The last added step is for the teacher to monitor groups (Winget, 1988)
   a. The teacher should help with questions that the group may have and check-in with group progress
   b. Make sure that every student work is participating
COOPERATIVE LEARNING GROUPS

What is it? cont...

There are other things to consider when designing a cooperative learning lesson such as room arrangement, assignment content, and more. The main aspect to cooperative learning is for it to be structured. Gillies (2008) mentions that placing students in groups alone does not encourage cooperation and learning.

ELL Students

Through Singaravelu’s (2010) research, it has been found that cooperative learning is more effective than learning it through traditional methods. He found that students show more enthusiasm and had them learn in a dynamic way. ELL students were found to express themselves with greater confidence when put into smaller groups (Singaravelu, 2010). The peer interaction benefits the development of language for ELL students.

Students with disabilities

Cooperative learning strategies is a great way to get students to view other students with disabilities more positively. Studies have shown that in structured cooperative learning, students with learning difficulties would show more involvement when initiating interactions (Gillies & Ashman, 2000). For students with ADHD, research has shown reduced negative verbal and off-task behavior when social interaction rules have been established (Kuester & Zentall, 2012). Cooperative learning groups have benefits to students with learning difficulties as well.

References


