

Cooperative Learning: Upper Elementary and Middle School

Cooperative learning is one of those topics that makes its way onto the professional development merry-go-round every few years—without fail! In the upper and middle school grades teachers are often left scratching their heads; unsure of how they can apply this strategy in a classroom of young adults, tweens and almost teenagers.

Many upper elementary and middle school teachers are left wondering...

- Do cooperative learning activities really make a difference in student comprehension and retention?
- How can I make cooperative learning work in my upper elementary or middle school classroom???
- Who has time to put all of the work and effort into preparing for and training students for cooperative learning???

Well, what if I told you that I **use cooperative learning every day in upper elementary classrooms, and have made it effectively work in the middle school classroom** ???

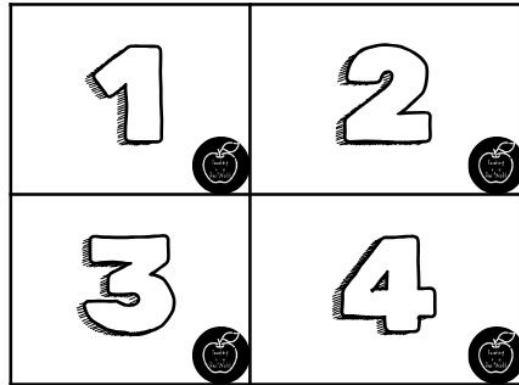
Check out [My Blog](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), for a more in depth explanation.



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STEP 1: Prepare Labels

- Create and tape labels onto every desk/student seat in your classroom (see next page for FREE printables)



- Label the four corners of your classroom (I typically label the directions of the room) North, East, South, West.

Use names/labels that you feel comfortable with, and that your students will respond too. Often times, cooperative learning is geared to the younger grades, so eliminate the use of cutesy clip art or verbage geared towards younger students. For more detail on this checkout [My Blog](#).



1



2



3



4



Tape these labels to the upper corner of your students' desks. When you would like students to pair up simply let them know who they will be working with.

"Today, odds will be working together and evens will be working together."

"Here are the pairs for today: 1, 2 and 3, 4 ."



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A



B



A



B



Tape these labels to the upper corner of your students' desks.

When you would like students to pair up simply let them know who they will be working with.

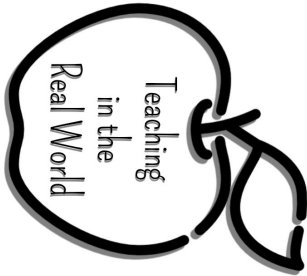
"Today, A's will be working together, and B's will be working together."

"You will pair up A/B."



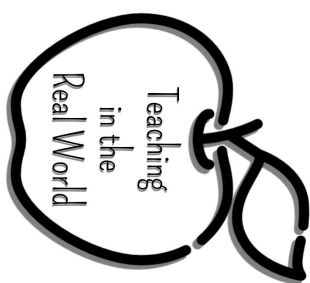
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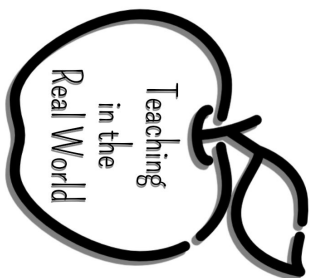
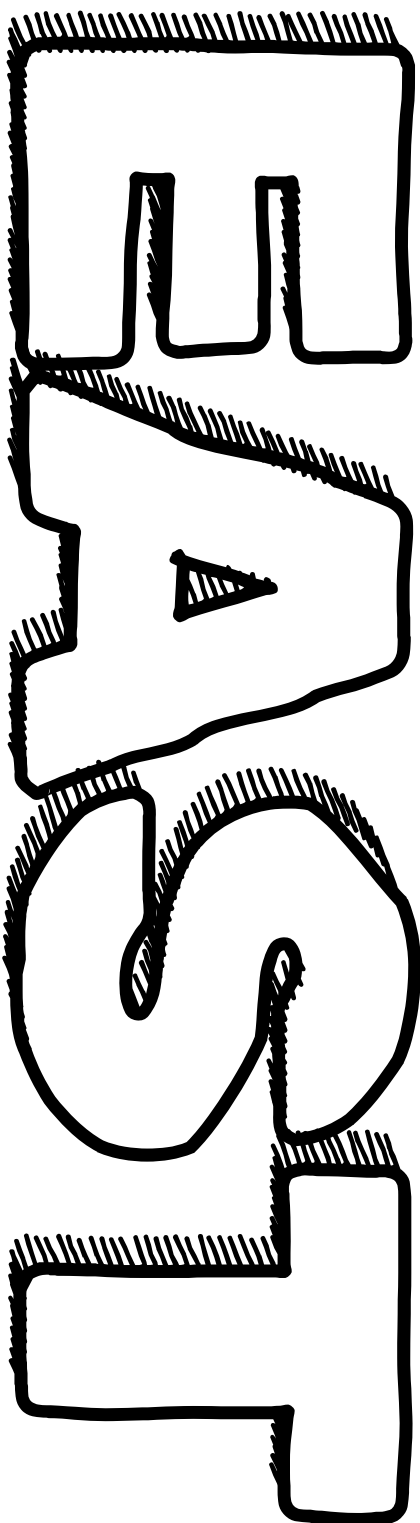


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STEP 2 : Timers and Bells

- Decide which timer you will use, digital, countdown on the computer, your phone, visual analog etc.



- Bells...chimes...gong??? What will be the sound to indicate students need to freeze, or return to their seats?



I preferred to use a timer that was not on my computer since I often had a prompt, directions, or some sort of visual needed for the activity. A bell or distinct sound is needed to call students to attention, only use this sound during cooperative learning activities.



STEP 3 : What is Cooperative Learning?

- Walk through the definition of cooperative, and what it means to you and your classroom.
- Explain each activity, and have the explanations on hand and easily accessible.
 - Utilize student ISNs to tape in cooperative learning definition and activity descriptions.
 - See next page for FREE ISN printable.

It is important that you set the tone and expectations of cooperative learning with your students.. I suggest utilizing my ISN tape-in on the next page; this will also allow students to refer back to the process when trying out new cooperative learning activities.



ISN Insert: Cooperative Learning

What is Cooperative Learning???	<u>Cooperative</u>: A willingness or ability to work with others. <u>Cooperative Learning</u>: Working together to learn and/or come to a common conclusion; a sharing of ideas and academic knowledge. 
Four Corners	Travel to the corner/area of the room that corresponds to the answer that you believe to be true. Once you arrive at a corner, you cannot move.
Stand Up, Pair Up	Walk the room until you hear the signal from your teacher. Once you hear the signal, pair up with the person closest to you and follow discussion directions/complete the task presented.
Think and Share	Listen for teacher direction to let you know who you will be interacting with in your group. Once given the signal, follow discussion directions/complete the task presented.
Paired Reading, Writing, Math	Listen for teacher direction to let you know who you will be interacting with in your group. Once given the signal, complete the task together, being sure to divide the work equally.



STEP 3 : Utilize Cooperative Learning Often!

- Use Cooperative Learning Strategies!
 - Minimum of three times per week.
 - Try to use two different strategies.
- Refer Back to the ISN to Reinforce Rules and Expectations
- Praise Desired Student Behavior
 - Offer rewards for students that are great participants.
 - Give positive verbal feedback, especially to reluctant students.

Students will see the importance of cooperative learning when it is implemented often! Use the same verbiage, systems and expectations when conducting cooperative learning in your classroom, and it will be a success! Consistency is key!



Cooperative Learning: Step by Step

Hopefully this step by step guide can help you to implement cooperative learning in your classroom tomorrow! Consistency is key, start small, and remember, the goal is to get your students talking about academics!

Once You Start Using Cooperative Learning You Will Notice...

- Students thinking at a higher level, and asking more questions.
- More engagement in the classroom, student participation will sky rocket.
- New friendships forming amongst your students, and more empathy for and from classmates.

Check out [My Blog](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), for a more in depth explanation.



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