



Effective teachers provide opportunities for students to participate in flexible groups that collaborate on meaningful tasks, and respond to questions that support achievement of learning goals.

Strategy overview

Hattie (2009) found:

- an effect size of 0.59 for cooperative learning when compared to individual work
- an effect size of 0.54 for cooperative learning when compared to competitive learning.

What is it?

Collaborative (or cooperative) learning occurs when students work together in small groups and everyone participates in a learning task. There is a range of collaborative learning approaches, each involving different kinds of organisation and tasks (Education Endowment Foundation, 2015).

With a focus on meaningful learning, the teacher uses strategies (such as cooperative learning strategies and strategic selection of groups) to establish an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration. Collaborative learning is supported by designing meaningful tasks and inviting group responses to questions.

Collaborative learning relies on students actively participating in negotiating roles, responsibilities and outcomes. Their collaboration may involve projects undertaken by the whole class, such as an environmental project in the school

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or a community survey.

How effective is it?

Hattie (2009) found an effect size of 0.59 for cooperative learning. A 2013 meta-study found an effect size of 0.54 (Kyndt et al, 2013). The Australian Teaching and Learning Toolkit cites an average effect size of 0.41 (Education Endowment Foundation, 2015). Studies show that variations in effect size for collaborative learning are associated with the learning area, students' ages and their cultural backgrounds (Kyndt et al, 2013). Some analyses indicate cooperative learning has a much stronger effect on achievement for adolescent children than for younger children (Nunnery et al, 2013).

Considerations

Group selection and composition is an important consideration.

Group membership should vary according to the activity's purpose and individual learning goals. Team building skills are taught explicitly so students learn to collaborate, negotiate and contribute to joint assignments. Group members experience sharing roles, responsibilities and ownership of outcomes. Group learning activities are specifically designed so that student collaboration is necessary to accomplish the task.

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Personal reflection on my teaching practice...

Reflective practice provides a means for teachers to improve their practice to effectively meet the learning needs of their students. Brookfield succinctly describes the advantages of reflective practice to teachers as:

- It helps teachers to take informed actions that can be justified and explained to others and that can be used to guide further action.
- It allows teachers to adjust and respond to issues.
- It helps teachers to become aware of their underlying beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching.
- It helps teachers promote a positive learning environment.
- It allows teachers to consciously develop a repertoire of relevant and context specific strategies and techniques.

It helps teachers locate their teaching in the broader institutional, social and political context and to appreciate that many factors influence student learning.

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This strategy is demonstrated when the teacher:

- regularly sets group tasks and establishes ground rules about how groups operate

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- explicitly teaches students to work as a team by assigning different roles within groups so that students take responsibility for particular aspects of tasks

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- differentiates learning by assigning group content based on student readiness

Personal reflection on my teaching practice...

- designs tasks that require sharing expertise and ensuring each student's contribution is valued by other students

Personal reflection on my teaching practice...

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- promotes interactions by organising students in flexible groupings in which group membership varies and may be based, for example, on friendship, mixed academic ability or common interests.

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This strategy is not demonstrated when the teacher:

- dominates class discussion

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- allows a few students to dominate discussion

Personal reflection on my teaching practice...

- gives students few opportunities to interact with, and support, each other.

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This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- understand the protocols for working collaboratively

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- accept individual responsibility for participating and contributing to group tasks

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- are skilled at providing feedback to each other.

Personal reflection on my teaching practice...

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Continuity of practice

During lessons, teachers allow students to share and reflect on their ideas with their peers. Occasionally, teachers structure learning activities in small groups. Teachers engage in professional conversations to investigate the evidence base for collaborative learning and share examples of their practice.

Teachers work together in PLCs to build their knowledge of, and skills in, collaborative learning.

Teachers collaborate to design group tasks that help students work and learn together on specific learning goals.

Teachers collaboratively develop and implement protocols for group work that build student understanding of how effective groups operate.

Teachers consistently structure learning around differentiated group tasks that require students to work collaboratively.

Teachers support students to provide feedback to each other using feedback protocols.

Teachers observe experienced colleagues, trial new strategies, and seek feedback to support changes to their practice.

Cooperative learning is embedded in classroom practice. Students understand the protocols for working collaboratively and they are skilled at providing considered feedback to each other.

A banner image with a gradient background transitioning from purple on the left to yellow on the right. The text "High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS)" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered on the banner.

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A banner image showing a group of people with their hands raised, surrounded by a vibrant, multi-colored powder (yellow, pink, purple, green) that is falling or being thrown, creating a dynamic and celebratory atmosphere. The text "Collaborative Learning" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Collaborative Learning

Students design challenging and differentiated individual or group tasks to achieve identified learning goals.

Teachers collect data, including feedback from students, to monitor and evaluate the impact of collaborative learning strategies.

A banner image with a blurred, multi-colored background (purple, pink, orange, yellow) and the text "High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS)" overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

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