February 2004

Dear Colleagues:

IASCE is pleased to bring you our first member newsletter for 2004. So much is happening in the field of cooperative learning, and IASCE has so much news, especially about our June 2004 conference in Singapore, that it is hard to know where to begin.

In our last newsletter, we told you about the upcoming publication of *Teaching Cooperative Learning: The Challenge for Teacher Education.* IASCE provided both financial and moral support for this work which was edited by former Board members Elizabeth Cohen and Mara Sapon-Shevin and current Co-president Celeste Brody. This book is now available through SUNY Press at http://www.sunypress.edu/details.asp?id=60874 and is also available at amazon.com. Please help us to spread the word about this important contribution to our field.

This newsletter, as usual, brings together an interesting group of resources about cooperative learning and suggests connections to related fields. Each time I read through one of our newsletters, I am impressed by the breadth of work and the number of new voices who are writing about cooperative learning. This newsletter also highlights new work from people who are acknowledged as life-long contributors to the field. Please check out *From the Bookshelf* for new work by David and Roger Johnson, Carol Rolheiser, Jan Terwel (co-organizer of the IASCE conference in Utrecht Netherlands, 1992), Victor Battistich and Marilyn Watson (associated with the Developmental Studies Center in California USA) and Shlomo Sharan (visionary for, and founding member of, IASCE).

Our ongoing series of *Calling Cards*, coordinated through the efforts of IASCE Board members Yael Sharan and Kathryn Markovchick, brings us stories from "around the world." In this issue, Pasi Sahlberg tells us about the development and implementation of cooperative learning in Finland. This is such an interesting story, and I was particularly struck that Pasi's analysis of the issues and dilemmas facing cooperative learning included the statement that "cooperative learning is inadequately included in pre-service teacher education programs." We think that tends to be true in many places, which is why IASCE has supported the publication of *Teaching Cooperative Learning*.

Our biggest news is the on-going preparation for our conference in Singapore. We've included information about Pre-Conference Workshops and Keynote Addresses in this issue of the newsletter. The conference website (which you can access through www.iasce.net) is updated regularly as well. I have had the pleasure to be one of the planners who has participated in the blind review of proposals and, just this week, we received a list with identifying information from the first group of proposals we had reviewed. In this first "batch" alone, we had read proposals from 19 separate countries on five continents. This is very exciting. From experiential sessions to research presentations, from afternoon tea to a trip to the zoo, from Pre-Conference Workshops to Post-Conference Heritage Tours, our upcoming conference promises to be a rich event. Please join us in Singapore, as the Singapore's National Institute of Education hosts IASCE's first conference in Asia.

Cooperatively yours,

Lynda

Lynda Baloche
Co-president IASCE

Table of Contents

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June 2004 Conference Keynotes

The IASCE Conference, 21-25 June, in Singapore features four diverse and dynamic keynote presentations. Here's what you have to look forward to:

Dr. Lynda Baloche
Co-President, IASCE
Professor, Department of Elementary Education
West Chester University, Pennsylvania, USA

Collaborative Contexts for Creativity and Innovation
Abstract: Collaborative contexts have powerful motivational potential for creativity. There are, however, few automatic positive connections between collaboration and creativity. Indeed, to encourage innovation, the conditions for creativity must be carefully designed and nurtured. In this interactive keynote address, research-based pedagogical considerations, such as group preparation for creativity, the integration of creativity-relevant skills into challenging academic material, opportunities for choice and student decision making, student-centered reflection and planning, and the careful use of "the language of creativity," will be explored as they relate to and support the use of cooperative learning.

Dr. Anh Tuan Nuyen
Associate Professor, Philosophy Department
National University of Singapore

The Confucian Self as the Basis of Co-operative Behaviour
Abstract: This keynote address examines the Confucian understanding of the self and contrasts it with the conception of the self found in the "liberal democratic" tradition of the West. I argue that the Confucian self, understood as a self embedded in a network of social relationships, promotes co-operation while the "liberal-democratic" self, understood as an independent individual that stands over and against the society, undermines it. However, all is not lost for the West, as many other ways of thinking about the self can be found in the West that may favour co-operation.

Dr. Spencer Kagan
Director, Kagan Publishing and Professional Development
San Clemente, California

Our Diversity is Our Strength
Abstract: Heterogeneity within classrooms, within teams, and within the cooperative learning movement pushes us toward a higher-level synthesis. In this interactive keynote, we will overview some of the myriad forms cooperative learning takes within different cultures, nations, districts, and schools. We will look at the diversity among and within schools of cooperative learning. Using Formations and Circle the Sage we will use the diversity among us to enhance our understanding and push us toward a higher level synthesis.

Dr. Celeste Brody
Co-President, IASCE
Instructional Dean, Central Oregon Community College, Bend, Oregon, USA.

Begin with the Teacher: Focusing Professional Development on Teacher Learning for Cooperative Learning
Abstract: Educators know that the goal of any good instructional approach is student learning and achievement. But a highly effective way to create sustained implementation of cooperative learning—and one often ignored—is to focus on teachers and how they learn a new practice, how they adapt innovations through their beliefs, and how they use new knowledge to transform their teaching and sense of themselves as professionals. This keynote address will examine some key trends and approaches in professional development that cultivate teacher learning and sustained professional growth in schools. There is a need to understand teachers' practical knowledge about cooperative learning so that long-term professional development efforts can withstand pressures to return to traditional methods when professional support structures may no longer be in place.

Pre-Conference Menu

Singapore, site of the 2004 IASCE conference, is world-renowned for its delicious multi-cultural food. And, the menu of sessions at the one-day, 21 June pre-conference event preceding the IASCE conference promises an appetizing menu of delights for the mind. Indeed, the chefs at the Conference Organizing Committee have outdone themselves in terms of the variety and quality of the offering.

The sessions are in two strands: Early Childhood and General Education. Here's what's on tap. See the conference website - http://www.arts.nie.edu.sg/iasce - for bios of the session leaders.

Strand A: Early Childhood Education

Morning Keynote sessions include:

Keynote One: Little Kids Can Cooperate

Recent brain research has led to increasing awareness of the importance of early childhood education in setting children on the path toward success in learning and in life. One area in which children's capabilities have been underestimated in the past is the area of perspective taking and cooperation. This session will outline the capabilities of young children to collaborate and the ways in which cooperative activities can be structured to make them appropriate for young children. Participants will engage in interactive activities to apply these understandings to promote young children's oral language and interpersonal learning.

Dr Bette Chambers
Early Childhood Specialist (and former IASCE co-president)
Roots and Wings, Success for All Program, Johns Hopkins University

Keynote Two: Using the ARTS for Cooperative Learning in Early Childhood Education

The ARTs come naturally to preschoolers. Children learn best when all their senses are put to use. The ARTs have a way of doing that. Using data from studies of the role of theatre in Child Development (setting the stage for learning), the speaker will focus on specific experiences that can be provided to children. The possible outcomes demonstrate use of the ARTs in cooperative learning, particularly in the socio-emotional aspects, such as role taking, anticipating others' needs, empathising and enjoying while learning.

Dr. Meera Oke
Human Development and Child Development Specialist
Centre for Human Growth and Development, Pune, India

WORKSHOPS

Cooperation in Curiosity Corner
Facilitated by **Bette Chambers**
Success for All Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

There will be a sharing of ideas from Curiosity Corner, the comprehensive preschool reform program from the Success for All Foundation. Curiosity Corner includes:
• 38 units based on science and social studies themes
• Detailed theme guides that address all domains of learning
• Books, table-top toys and guessing activities
• Songs, fingerplays, and dramatizations of nursery rhymes and poems
• Learning Labs with cooperative problem-solving activities
• Interactive story experiences
• Cooperative outside play to develop gross motor skills
Participants will take part in peer interaction to create engaging interactive activities that they can use with their students.

Encouraging Cooperative Learning in Early Childhood Education
Facilitated by **Meera Oke**
Centre for Human Growth and Development, Pune, India

Preschoolers, in a way, are apprentices and, although egocentric, also learn by participating in activities done with peers and others around them. In this workshop, participants will be taken through a process enabling them to experience performing arts activities that encourage cooperative learning. The activities include use of drama and other arts, which are multi-sensorial. Participants will also discuss the organizing of such learning experiences. The facilitator will share information from the Indian situation and help participants to relate and plan, keeping their own individual work contexts in mind.

Kids & Maths: Developing Mathematical Literacy through Group Activities
Facilitated by **Yeap Ban Har**
Mathematics and Mathematics Education Academic Group,
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Participants will engage in a range of learning activities for pre-schoolers that harness group and play processes to develop mathematical literacy. The learning activities include the use of concrete materials, children's literature, and games, as well as interdisciplinary tasks to help children develop concepts, solve problems, and develop good habits of mind. Participants will concurrently acquire an understanding the different facets of mathematical literacy.

"I Move, I Feel, I Learn:" A Multi-sensory Physical Play Experience
Facilitated by **Carmee Lim**
Jumpstart Kidsports, Singapore

Much of the learning during the early years is through play and movement. Current neuroscience research confirms that movement and physical play contribute significantly to the cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and physical development of children. Participants will learn some basics of early brain development and will engage in a range of multi-sensory activities which integrate fundamental motor skills, language, math concepts, adventure, and music. (Participants should dress in PE attire.)

Using Group-based Learning to Develop Social Competence in Preschool Children
Facilitated by **Linda Gan**
Specialised Education Academic Group
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Participants will be introduced to a variety of group learning activities which afford children the opportunity to develop a positive self-concept, appropriate pro-social behaviour, and crucial interpersonal skills to help them effectively interact with peers and adults. Model lesson plans which include a wide range of developmentally appropriate activities will be presented for participants to discuss and modify according to their own social settings. Tools for evaluating and assessing children's ability to work in collaborative group settings will also be examined and discussed.

My Friend Taught Me to Read: A Cooperative Learning Strategy for Preschool
Facilitated by **Patricia Koh**
Pat's Schoolhouse, Singapore

Young children are capable of successfully and happily learning language in a collaborative manner. Children learn not only vertically, from teachers and other adults, but also horizontally. Indeed, children benefit from interacting with peers as part of a discovery process in which all children are responsible for helping their team members learn. Workshop participants will discuss the philosophy underlying this approach to early childhood literacy. Participants will then have opportunities to experience activities used in implementing the approach.

Strand B: General Education

Group Investigation: Linking Project Work and Cooperative Learning
Facilitated by **Yael Sharan**
GRIP (Group Investigation Projects), Israel

The goals of the workshop are to create a mini-"inquiring community" to explore the essential features of Group Investigation and its application. In a Group Investigation project, students ask questions, seek answers to their questions, and interpret information in light of their knowledge, ideas, experiences, and abilities. Group Investigation is the most extensively researched of the task specialization cooperative learning methods. In this workshop, teachers will learn how to guide students through the stages of Group Investigation and how to integrate other cooperative learning methods and structures in the project.

Managing Conflict for Cooperative Groups and Learning
Facilitated by **Dean Tjosvold**
Department of Management
Lingnan University, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong, China

Conflict is the most misunderstood aspect of cooperative work and learning. Conflict not only pervades cooperation, it can very much contribute to relationships and learning. Recent research in Asia confirms previous North American findings that a cooperative approach to discussing differences, opposing views, and other conflicts stimulates the exploration and integration of opposing ideas to create quality solutions. Participants will discuss and debate the role of conflict in cooperation and how Asian values might promote constructive conflict. They will also practice cooperative conflict skills and discuss how they can help others develop these skills.

Collaborative and Problem-based Learning
Facilitated by **Tan Oon Seng**
Psychological Studies
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Problem-based learning (PBL) has been infused into school curricula to enhance lifewide skills such as multidisciplinary inquiry, problem-solving, self-directed learning, collaboration, meta-cognition, and learning how to learn. Whilst PBL appears to be a promising methodology, successful implementation entails effective design of the PBL environment and facilitation of collaborative learning. This workshop will provide practical insights on the why, what, and how of collaboration in PBL curricula. Participants will learn cognitive and emotional coaching skills, facilitation skills, and mediation skills for collaborative learning in PBL. The e-learning aspect of PBL collaboration will also be covered.

The ABCs of Complex Instruction (CI): An Introductory Look at the Strategies and Components That Make Up This Cooperative Learning Model
Facilitated by **Joan Benton**
California International Studies Project
Stanford University, and the Claremont International Studies Education Project, Pitzer College

In Complex Instruction, developed at Stanford University, groups of students do challenging tasks that involve a variety of abilities in addition to language and computational abilities. Workshop participants will be introduced to the use of Complex Instruction strategies and materials. Activities will include interactive exercises to build competence in cooperative learning process skills, cooperative engagement in CI content that has participants experience what students actually do in the classroom, and attention to features in the CI model that make it a powerful mediator in the relationship between status, expectations for competence and the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Cooperative Learning Structures, Enhanced Student Outcomes, and Brain Science
Facilitated by **Spencer Kagan**
Kagan Publishing and Professional Development San Clemente, California

Participants experience and process a range of cooperative learning structures and evaluate evidence that enhanced student outcomes are explained via theory and empirical findings from brain science. Participants view active brain imaging plates demonstrating enhanced activation during cooperative learning, and examine empirical evidence indicating different cooperative learning structures activate specific and different brain regions. Five principles of brain-friendly

instruction are derived and structures to implement those principles are presented. Among the cooperative learning structures experienced and processed are Listen Right! Logic Line-Ups, Find My Rule and Boss Secretary.

Collaborative Approaches to Professional Learning and Reflection
Facilitated by **Carole Cooper**
School District U-46, Elgin, Illinois, USA

Participants will understand the importance of working collaboratively to improve student learning. They will participate in several reflective models, such as collegial coaching, study groups, lesson study and professional dialogue groups, to develop their skills. A menu of collegial reflective practices and ways to establish organizational structures to support them will also be developed. Participants will then plan how they can transfer these ideas, practices and skills to their own contexts.

Celebratory Learning and Differentiated Instruction: What are they? How do I do them?
Facilitated by **Dr. Kathryn Markovchick and Dr. Corda Ladd**
Maine Support Network, Readfield, Maine, USA

We will explore the elements for optimum "Celebratory Learning" and "Differentiated Learning" environments for teachers. Celebratory Learning and Differentiated Learning combine positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation, play, humor, connections to previous learning, and theme-and need-based learning in a brain compatible environment. Participants will leave with many strategies to incorporate into their work. This session emphasizes the changing role of staff developers. We will move you beyond the realm of a one expert-based delivery system. On this journey, learners will be involved in their own learning, and we will celebrate the expert in all of us.

Fish Banks and Beyond: A simulation exploring resource management, and cooperation and competition
Facilitated by *Pavla Polechová*
Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Fish Banks is a computer-assisted participatory simulation game developed by a team including Dennis Meadows, co-author of *Limits to Growth* and *Beyond the Limits*. The participants (from 11+ to adults) explore the behaviour of a dynamic complex system that includes environmental, economical and sociological structures of which the participants themselves become a part. The game provides insight not only into the management of renewable resources - whatever they may be - but also into participants' co-operative and competitive behaviours. There is one computer operated by the facilitator, up to six teams of players and a common sea, which is represented by a joint game board.

Cooperative Learning Is Not Just for During Class: Strategies for out-of-classtime academic cooperation
Facilitated by **George Jacobs**
JF New Paradigm Education, Singapore and
Lam Fook Hoe and Low Chai Chee
Queensway Secondary School, Singapore
Most people think of cooperative learning as students learning together during class sessions. However, student-student learning can also take place beyond normal class time. Such out-of-classtime academic cooperation (OCAC) can be organized by the school or university, by individual teachers or instructors, or by students on their own. Forms of OCAC include cross-age tutoring, study groups, extended library hours, and online collaboration. Purposes include exam preparation, assignment completion, and enrichment. The workshop leaders provide a rationale for OCAC and describe forms that it can take. Then, participants work together to plan how to apply the concept to their own educational contexts.

IASCE Forum

Pasi Sahlberg describes how cooperative learning developed in Finland and the challenges it faces today. Unlike other countries we heard about from Forum members, in Finland, the initial push for cooperative learning, in the 1970s, did not come from universities, but from centralized school reforms.

Cooperative Learning in Finland
Pasi Sahlberg
The context

Finland is the northernmost member of the European Union with just over 5 million inhabitants. It is known for its world-class high-

tech industry, democratic governance, the lowest level of corruption in the world and the most competitive economy. Schools are independent and teachers are free from external control such as inspection, testing or assessment. The most common mode of instruction remains the traditional presentation-recitation method, flavored by occasional use of alternative teaching methods, including cooperative learning.

One atypical feature of the Finnish school system is that teachers at all levels are required to hold a Master's degree. Their courses provide a substantial theoretical framework so that they can comfortably discuss and construct deeper understandings of pedagogy, including cooperative learning. However, this is not to say that cooperative learning is more prevalent in Finland than in any other country. Scientifically oriented teacher training has also created skepticism among teachers, especially among the most experienced ones. Many of them believe that cooperative learning is nothing but another fashionable movement in the long history of education reforms.

Teachers are free to choose the most appropriate teaching methods in their classrooms. Class sizes are rather small and classrooms are well equipped. All schools enjoy the freedom to design school-based curriculum. The majority of parents are liberal in terms of their expectations from teaching methods. Representatives of labor markets, student associations and individual educational theoreticians continuously encourage teachers to move towards focusing on cooperative attitudes and skills. There are no external or administrative obstacles to prevent Finnish teachers from using cooperative learning in their work.

Early years of change

When the unified nine-year (grades 1 to 9) comprehensive school was created in the early 1970s, the leading pedagogic principle behind it was 'groupwork', based on ideas initially developed by Professor Matti Koskenniemi two decades earlier. The majority of teachers were quickly trained to use small group teaching. It was believed that in this way, pupils with different abilities and socio-economic backgrounds could be socialized to achieve desired educational objectives. By the beginning of the 1980s, the entire education system was transformed and all teachers were trained in 'groupwork'.

It is easy to guess that this simplified thinking about educational change and about small group learning did not lead to the intended outcomes. Experienced teachers in particular were cynical about pedagogical innovations and quickly reverted to conventional teaching cultures.

Cooperative learning re-emerged 15 years later, through universities, with the help of researchers and teacher trainers. The 1980s were years of pedagogical innovations that included the introduction of project work, new sets of teaching methods and connections with international education development networks, such as UNESCO's INISTE and The Baltic Sea Project.

In the early years of the 1990s, Professor Viljo Kohonen and his research associates from the University of Tampere became acquainted with the work of David Johnson and Roger Johnson, Elizabeth Cohen and Spencer Kagan. This period in Finland was an era of intensive development of alternative teaching methods in schools. Cooperative learning appealed to teachers who began to realize that traditional instructional practices were not helping to achieve the more complex goals of schooling. Professor Kohonen published articles and organized the first cooperative learning courses in Finland during that time. Soon, an active group of teachers, researchers and teacher trainers formed a small professional community focused on cooperative learning. Some of them began to develop Finnish applications and models of methods, many of which were originally developed in North America.

Cooperative learning and the New Curriculum of 1994

Cooperative learning quickly became a fashionable and desirable topic in in-service training courses as well as in various school development projects. The first book on cooperative learning in the context of Finnish education was co-authored by me and Asko Leppilampi in 1994. At that time, thousands of teachers in all parts of the country took part in 2- to 8-day cooperative learning

training programs. International cooperative learning specialists, such as Yael Sharan and Shlomo Sharan, Elizabeth Cohen, David Johnson and Roger Johnson, came to train teachers and teacher educators.

At the same time, the New National Curriculum (1994) emphasized the development of social skills, using student-centered teaching methods to raise the quality of learning. Many believed that cooperative learning was the way to realize these expectations. Indeed, the curriculum reform and the dissemination of cooperative learning were interconnected. Teachers also used cooperative learning methods to work out curriculum issues in schools.

However, earlier experiences and memories of the education reform of 1970s began to divide teachers into two ideological camps. Teachers who had experienced those new ideas 20 years ago still remembered the promise that 'groupwork' would solve the problems of teaching. On the other hand, many recently trained teachers with their shining new Master degrees, joined by some senior teachers, seriously believed in the idea of learning together rather than competing and working alone. The former camp raised its voice to say that cooperative learning had nothing new to offer. Teachers in the second camp understood the complexity of change from traditional teaching. Teachers' growing competence in cooperative learning gave them the understandings and power to deal with conceptual conflicts in the field.

Present situation – issues and dilemmas

As a consequence of globalization, competition has increased in Finnish schools. Teachers are trying to balance the competitive world and the more cooperative life in schools. Yet cooperative learning remains one of the best known single pedagogical ideas, and also the most frequently requested topic in school development projects. Thanks to policy-makers, the Finnish schools are still relatively free from high-stakes testing and external student assessment. Teachers may still design their teaching as they see fit.

There have been several small-scale experiments on the different methods of cooperative learning. One is the use of Complex Instruction in foreign

language teaching. This initiative was based in the University of Tampere under the supervision of Viljo Kohonen and has been greatly influenced by the thinking and work of Elizabeth Cohen and her associates. The conceptual framework of cooperative learning developed by the Johnson brothers is widely adopted. Group Investigation is used in several primary schools and in some universities due to active support from Yael Sharan and Shlomo Sharan.

Since the beginning of 1990s, my colleagues and I have been trying to promote a more comprehensive perspective of cooperative learning, free from any separately identified school of thought but rather focused on an understanding of the basic principles and on the mastering of fundamental skills. This perspective has been developed under various school improvement projects that I have had the pleasure to lead. Furthermore, we have expanded the ideas of cooperative learning to school leadership, educational administration, and to the world of corporate management.

Cooperative learning remains a challenging area of educational development in Finland. The following three issues are among the most burning ones at the moment.

Issue 1. Lack of in-depth training. The majority of teachers think that they are able to learn how to implement cooperative learning by attending short training courses or workshops only. Consequently, most teachers have a superficial 'knowledge' of cooperative learning and lack an extensive and in-depth understanding of how to use cooperative learning in their teaching.

Issue 2. Cooperative learning is inadequately included in pre-service teacher education programs. Most university-based teacher preparation programs still underestimate the role of cooperative learning in teaching and in teacher education. When it is included in the teacher education curriculum, it is handled mostly as a theoretical issue. Consequently, newly trained teachers have 'heard about' cooperative learning but are not sufficiently trained to use these methods in teaching and learning practice.

Issue 3. Weak research base. There is practically no serious research on cooperative learning in

Finland, despite some work done by Viljo Kohonen (2001) and his colleagues, and myself with John Berry (Sahlberg & Berry, 2002; 2003). For example, not a single doctoral dissertation has been written on cooperative learning in Finland despite its prevalence and popularity among teachers.

One of the dilemmas concerning the better use of cooperative learning in schools is related to availability of instructional materials. In 2002, we edited, with Shlomo Sharan, the Finnish version of the Handbook of Cooperative Learning (2002) for Finnish teachers and trainers. However, teaching materials, such as worksheets, games, project manuals, and so forth, do not yet exist. Many teachers find it hard to make the transition from the Handbook to the classroom. Book publishers are not interested in producing materials for any one methodology.

Finally, the flourishing of cooperative learning in schools depends on the extent to which teachers teach primarily for students' social and cognitive development rather than for tests and exams. Until now, cooperative learning has had fruitful soil in which to grow. Results of the recent PISA study (Program for International Student Assessment) indicate that the Finnish way of respecting and trusting teachers will not only bring about good learning results but also motivate teachers to try out new educational ideas without fear of making mistakes nor of blame for 'failure'. Yet more research and longer-term teacher development programs are needed to enable cooperative learning to become a permanent pedagogic approach in teachers' and teacher educators' professional repertoires. According to our research on students' ideas and teachers' beliefs, cooperative learning has all that it takes to become a central approach among schools who seek to educate citizens for knowledge-based societies and a more peaceful and tolerant world.

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Conference in Scotland Highlights Cooperative Learning

Thanks to Bill Sadler of SSLA for the information in this report.

November 6-8, 2003, the Scottish Support for Learning Association (SSLA) sponsored a conference which highlighted three themes:
- Co-operation and Partnership in Learning
- Citizenship and universal participation
- Multiple Intelligence - linking the mind and body

Actually, the more than 100 conference participants enjoyed three conferences in one. The three conferences were free-standing but inter-related, designed to celebrate, share and explore the best ways of working together to promote participation, good citizenship and effective learning for all our learners. Each day, the conference was held in a different location to take advantage of the natural beauty for which Scotland is famous.

Conference activities promoted positive teamwork and the development of strategies for an education system that is inclusive, welcomes diversity and provides an equal opportunity for all children to develop their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Among the keynote speakers was Mervyn Wilson, a featured speaker at the 2002 IASCE conference and Head of the Co-operative College in Manchester. Mervyn enthused delegates with an optimistic picture of a Co-operative future based on 150 years of successful co-operative educational activity.

For more information on the conference and on SSLA, go to http://www.ssla.org.uk and then click on the conference report.

From the Bookshelf

Based on this issue of the IASCE Newsletter, it looks like it's getting to be time to add another row to our bookshelf, given the five new books we have to cram in somewhere. In no particular order, here they are.

Book #1 is represented by its Table of Contents. #2, #3, and #5 are reviewed by the IASCE Newsletter editor. Book #4 is reviewed by an educator who will be presenting at the IASCE Conference June 21-25 in Singapore.

1. **Cohen, E. G., Brody, C., & Sapon-Shevin, M. (Eds.) (2004).** *Teaching cooperative learning: The challenge for teacher education.* **Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.**
   http://www.sunypress.edu/details.asp?id=60874

   Table of Contents

   Foreword: A Teacher Educator's Perspective
   Yael Sharan

   Introduction
   Mara Sapon-Shevin

   Part I: The Cases

   1. Practices in Teacher Education and Cooperative Learning at the University of Toronto
      Carol Rolheiser and Stephen Anderson
   2. Teacher Decision Making for Cooperative Learning in a Preservice Master's Program
      Celeste M. Brody and Nancy G. Nagel
   3. Educating Teachers for Socially Conscious Cooperative Learning
      Nancy Schniedewind
   4. Cooperative Learning in Teacher Education: A Four-Year Model
      Joellen Harris and Bob Hanley
   5. Cooperative Learning in Preservice Teacher Education at the University of Maryland
      Frank Lyman and Neil Davidson
   6. Preparing Secondary Teachers to Use Cooperative Learning Strategies
      Chandra J. Foote, Paule J. Vermette, Jennifer Wilson-Bridgman, Thomas J. Sheeran, Robin Erwin, and Mary Murray
   7. Cooperation and Collaboration in a Foreign Language Teacher Training Program: The LMR-Plus Model
      Claudia Finkbeiner
   8. The Integrated Semester: Building Preservice Teachers' Commitments to the Use of Cooperative Learning as Essential Pedagogy
      Frances Slostad, Lynda Baloche, and Daniel Darigan

2. **Gillies, R. M., & Ashman, A. F. (Eds.) (2003). Co-operative learning: The social and intellectual outcomes of learning in groups. London: RoutledgeFalmer.**

This book, edited by Robyn Gillies and Adrian Ashman of the University of Queensland, brings together work by researchers from Australia, Israel, the Netherlands, the UK, and the US. Many of their names are familiar ones in the area of cooperative learning (CL), while others may be less well-known.

In the book's opening chapter, the editors review the history and theory of the use of groups to promote socialization and learning. They begin with the work of Dewey, Lewin, and others in the first half of the 20th century, before moving on to more recent work. The rest of the book's chapters offer a look at current developments in CL. What is noteworthy about the chapters is how they review relevant research and theory with a keen eye for how these can inform practical decisions made in the classroom and elsewhere.

Chapter 2, by Victor Battistich and Marilyn Watson, focuses on pre-school and early elementary school students, providing ideas on why and how they can benefit from interacting in CL settings. Chapter 3, by Gillies, emphasizes the careful effort needed to help elementary school students interact successfully. Issues discussed include training for CL, the size and composition of groups, and tasks which the groups undertake.

Chapter 4, by Jan Terwel, provides us a look at CL in secondary school mathematics learning. The focus is on the positive effects, particularly for low achievers, of instruction in the use of social and cognitive strategies. In Chapter 5, by Katherine McWhaw, Heidi Schnackenbert, Jennifer Sclater, and Philip Abrami, tertiary education provides the context. More specifically, the chapter explores CSCL (Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning). Somewhat unique is the inclusion of social loafing theory - e.g., Sheppard, J. A. (1993). Productivity loss in performance groups: A motivation analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 113*(1), 67-81 - in the discussion of theories related to CL.

Chapter 6, by Adrian Ashman, addresses how CL can help students with special learning needs. The author notes that "While many teachers support the principle of inclusion, the practicalities associated with its implementation find many teachers ill-prepared … ." In Chapter 7, Hanna Shachar reviews eight studies and finds that CL benefits both low and high achievers in terms of academic and social variables. Participants in the studies included students from the fifth to the eleventh grades.

Involving students in assessment when CL is used fits well with the student-centered paradigm of which CL is a part. In Chapter 8, John Ross and Carol Rolheiser discuss relevant issues and offer research-based advice. The focus of Chapter 9, by David and Roger Johnson, lies in the issue of motivation in CL groups. The authors use social interdependence theory to explore many facets of this issue.

Most of the work on CL looks at the contexts in which people are learning standard academic content. In contrast, Chapter 10, by Hugh Foot, Andrew Tolmie, James Thomson, Kirstie Whelan, Sheila Morrison, and Pepi Sarvary, reports on research into CL in a less formal context in which students were using a computer-based training package to learn pedestrian skills, such as how to safely cross a street. Chapter 11, by Robyn Gillies and Adrian Ashman, offers an overview of the many formal and informal setting in which CL can be beneficially employed. The role of culture and society receives particular attention.

Teaching large classes confronts teachers with a difficult challenge whether or not CL is used. In Chapter 12, entitled "Large classes, small groups", Shlomo Sharan uses a social systems approach to explore this issue, including a section on variables which have been largely ignored in the research on class size. The book's final chapter, Chapter 13, by the editors, provides an overview of key factors that must be accounted for when implementing CL. These factors include the learners, the setting, the curriculum, and the facilitator.

Those involved in CL will find much of interest in these chapters because of the book's broad and up-to-date coverage of matters of theory, research, and practice. At least one of the book's editors, Robyn Gillies, plans to attend the IASCE conference, June 21-25 2004, in Singapore. The conference organizers are attempting to have presenters' books for sale. Thus, the conference could be an opportunity to meet Robyn and other authors on CL and discuss their books with them.

3. **Boud, D., Cohen, R., & Sampson, J. (Eds.). (2001).** *Peer learning in higher education*. **London: Kogan Page.**

The structure of this book is that the three editors, David Boud, Ruth Cohen, and Jane Sampson, of University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), wrote the first five chapters introducing peer learning including such matters as design, implementation, management, and assessment. The next six chapters are examples of peer learning in practice in a wide variety of tertiary courses, mostly at UTS. The final chapter, by Boud, concludes the book with a discussion of challenges and new directions.

What is peer learning and how does it differ from various other types of student-student interaction? In Chapter 1, Boud attempt to explain this. Peer learning is more reciprocal than peer teaching or tutoring, in which a more advanced/senior student helps a less advanced/junior student, and perhaps peer learning is less structured and more open-ended than CL, although Boud acknowledges "considerable overlap" (p. 7). He defines peer learning as "students learning from and with each other in both formal and informal ways" (p. 4).

Indeed, we seem to have another example of great minds thinking alike in seeing a need for teacher-facilitated peer interaction.

The book is based on the premise that peer learning – that is, learning with and from each other – is a necessary and important aspect of all courses. The role it plays varies widely and the forms it takes are very diverse, but without it students gain an impoverished education (p. 2).

Furthermore, while not wanting to impose too much structure, Boud notes with dismay that

When such [peer learning] practices are used unsystematically, students unfamiliar with this approach become confused about what they are supposed to be doing, they miss opportunities for learning altogether, and fail to develop the skills expected of them. Much peer learning occurs informally

without staff involvement, and student who are already effective learners tend to benefit disproportionately when it is left to chance (p. 3).

Reasons are given for why peer learning benefits from teacher input. Part of the rationale lies in the changing nature of tertiary level students who are no longer predominantly 18-22-yr-old full-time students living on campus. Thus:

a. Students have less time to meet informally after class.
b. Individual students tend to design their own program rather than belonging to one large cohort all taking the same courses.
c. Tutorials/lab sections have become larger.

Other reasons why teachers need to encourage peer learning include:

a. Students may not appreciate the valuable skills they can develop when learning with others.
b. The often competitive nature of academic life and the work world makes students averse to cooperating with each other.
c. Students may not recognize that they actually can learn from each other.
d. Peer learning is unlikely to occur outside of class or to be inclusive of all students.
e. Devoting time to preparing for and debriefing the peer learning process helps student understand and implement it better.
f. Peer learning during a course – in or out of class – promotes a culture of cooperation that can be sustained in future courses and beyond.

Chapters 2-5 provide many useful nuts-and-bolts suggestions for organizing peer learning, e.g., "A timetable listing only periods of staff-student contact can be very misleading. It is sometimes useful to formally schedule peer learning periods and list them on timetables to acknowledge them as part of normal student workload" (p. 33). It is unfortunate that the authors of the various chapters provided few examples of the instruments, guides, and other materials that were used by teachers and given to and/or developed by students.

What impressed me about the case study chapters was that while the authors are optimistic and enthusiastic about peer learning, they freely display the warts that developed and festered as they implemented the approach. For instance, in Chapter 6, Ray Gordon and Robert Connor describe peer learning in an MBA course on organizational behavior. Their rationale for adapting the approach was to promote learner autonomy, which would serve students well after graduation. However, differences among students in terms of work experience, age, proficiency in English, national origin, and gender caused imbalances in power and other problems. The authors discuss how they sought to address the situation but, with a touch of understatement, they acknowledge that "our invitation to students to use peer learning to develop and practise group facilitation skills was not always taken up the way we intended" (p. 97).

Joyce Toynbee Wilson and her colleague in teaching Design had a more practical reason for using peer learning: the staff-student ratio suddenly ballooned from 1:30 to 1:45, and there was no way the two of them could provide students the individual feedback needed. The only ones who could step into the breech were the students' peers. However, Toynbee Wilson and her colleague's reasons were not only practical; they also believe in self-directed learning. She quotes Malcolm Knowles (1975) as stating that "creative leaders make a different set of assumptions (essentially positive) about human nature from the assumptions (essentially negative) made by controlling leaders" (p. 101). In line with this thinking, students self-selected their groups, but many problems existed, as exemplified by the student who is quoted as saying "As far as I'm concerned. . . working with a group just sucks!"

In his concluding chapter, Boud notes some of the difficulties faced in promoting peer learning but stresses the progress embodied in the mere fact that the issue is now receiving a great deal of

attention at the tertiary level. He concludes by stating, "Learning with and from each other is not easy; learning how to do this is a central outcome of higher education" (p. 177).

References

Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. New York: Associated Press.

4. **Mandel, S. M. (2003). *Cooperative work groups: Preparing students for the real world*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.**
Reviewed by Seah-Tay Hui Yong, Nanyang Girls' High School, Singapore

In the introduction, the Scott Mandel makes a convincing case that there exists an urgent need to prepare our young for the challenges of "the real world" where increasingly, people need to work with other individuals on long-term projects. To meet this need, teachers should to create opportunities for pupils to be involved in such collaborative activities.

Happily, this message is not unfamiliar to teachers here in Singapore, with the institution of Project Work throughout all schools, including primary schools. Nonetheless, most readers in Singapore and elsewhere will find the first part of the book a useful instructional manual with very practical "Dos and Don'ts" on basics such as group formation, group functioning, materials, teacher's role, critical thinking, assessment and classroom management. I find the last item refreshing as it addresses one of the biggest fears of teachers trying out Cooperative Learning for the first time. If only he had also addressed the other major grouse of our teachers in a system under the pressure of high-stakes testing: time.

I also like the way the writer finishes each chapter with a description of theory being actualized in Mr. Washington's American History class. Whether he is just a fictional character to give coherence to the book is irrelevant. The story narrative helps readers visualize how the theories flesh out in practical classroom situations.

The writer's concept of Cooperative Work Group incorporates Multiple Intelligences and the use of the Internet with Cooperative Learning. So, in Part II of the book, he explains the concept of MI. I particularly like the MI Self-Assessment provided at the back of the book under Resources which provides a quick test to help both students and teachers identify students' intelligences. But while I agree that we should give pupils more opportunities to work at their stronger intelligences, I can also see a case for helping pupils get away from their preferred modes and working on improving their weaker ones. After all, sadly, a pen-paper examination system places a high premium on the verbal-linguistic intelligence.

I found the Internet part of the book slightly disappointing. I was looking forward to seeing how the writer resolves the apparent conflicting demands of working with others (in a group) with working alone (in front of the computer). However, Mandel basically sees the Internet as a provider of online curricular material and goes on at length about how various Internet sites can be used. While this may be useful for those who have just begun exploring the Internet as a resource, I would have preferred him to have described how the resource material can be organized for Cooperative Learning group work, for example, using Webquests where different students investigate assigned sites listed or take on different roles investigating the same sites. Then, they get together as a group to pool information and insights into the problem.

In fact, ultimately, the biggest flaw of the book is that it fails in its claim of integrating the three concepts: Cooperative Learning, Multiple Intelligences and the Internet. The lesson plans provided in the last part of the book do not show clearly how the three come together. While it is mentioned that the cooperative work groups will take on roles to solve a problem or perform a task, I would argue that these tasks could also have been performed by one individual without much loss. There is not enough

focus on how group interaction and dynamics can be harnessed to produce something that is beyond the capacity of an individual (not in terms of scale but of depth).

In addition, though the units are listed as for grade ranges 4-10, 5-12, etc, I find the tasks too simple for the higher grades. Perhaps, the higher grades should have more challenging authentic tasks based on real-life problems. Instead of trawling the internet for information about some distant rainforest, the students, for example, here in Singapore can be set the task of designing a walking trail based on some part of our actual forest reserves, with the aim of promoting nature walks as a more wholesome weekend activity for teenagers instead of hanging around shopping malls. Such open-ended activities also minimize the problem of "cut-and-paste" products, a common complaint regarding internet-related projects.

In all, the book is a helpful introduction to the three individual aspects of Cooperative Learning, Multiple Intelligences and the Internet. It can serve as a useful starting point for teachers new to these areas. Furthermore, by calling our attention to the interface of these three key aspects of education, the author reminds us that often innovations are best implemented in combination rather than alone.

5. **Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2004).** *Assessing students in groups: Promoting group responsibility and individual accountability*. **Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.**

Those educators new to cooperative learning have an experience somewhat akin to the joy felt by those people new to rock and roll music: a whole library of golden oldies exists waiting to be discovered, for example, the music of the Beatles. However, those new to CL are more fortunate because while many rock groups, such as the Beatles, are no longer together, many of the founding names in CL are still pumping out the hits. A case in point is the dynamic group of educators formed by brothers David W. and Roger T. Johnson and other family members and colleagues who continue to produce valuable work in the areas of theory, research, and practice.

Their present volume on assessment belongs to a larger series – The Experts in Assessment – edited by Thomas Guskey and Robert Marzano. Assessment, for better and for worse, is receiving increased attention these days. While CL is seen mostly as what goes on before the test, everyone realizes that instruction and assessment cannot be separated. Indeed, new methods of assessment, sometimes known as alternative assessment, encourage a blurring of distinctions between instruction and assessment.

The book's first chapter provides a rationale for combining CL and assessment. The Johnsons explain that traditionally teaching has focused on individuals: an individual (the teacher) teaching to a class of individuals (each student), with the "assumption that individual assessment requires individual instruction" (p. 3). However, CL research has highlighted the potential of group-to-individual instruction. The Johnsons state, "The purpose of cooperative learning is to ensure that all members learn and are, therefore, better able to perform on subsequent individual assessment measures as a result of their group experience" (p. 3).

The authors argue that students should collaborate not only prior to assessment, but they list eight reasons why assessment should also involve student-student collaboration. Here are some of them.

1. Assessment can become a more valuable, deeper learning experience as students learn by assessing one another.
2. Assessment can be conducted more frequently without overburdening teachers.
3. Assessment can be more wide-ranging, because one teacher is quite limited as to what they can observe in an entire class of students, whereas groupmates are in a better position to observe for outcomes such as collaborative skills and work habits.
4. Teacher bias can be reduced by bringing in student perspectives.

5. The same students who assess each other can also collaborate on remediation and enrichment.
6. Group, rather than only individual, outcomes can be assessed, such as assessment of projects. Such group outcomes may be particularly important in real world contexts.

Chapter 2 discusses how to structure groups according to CL principles. This will be familiar, although nonetheless valuable, ground for those who have read other of the authors' books. Chapter 3 offers a general overview of assessment. Chapters 4-7 held the most interest for me.

Chapter 4 deals with the role of groups in individual assessment. In other words, "learn it in a group, perform it alone" (p. 53). The authors reiterate an important aspect of their perspective on the use of groups in education: "The basic purpose of a cooperative group is to make each member a stronger individual in his or her own right" (p. 52). Not all practitioners of group activities share this perspective. The chapter presents many practical ideas as to how groups can be involved in the assessment of their individual members. These include:

1. conferences (goal-setting, progress, and post-evaluation) and contracts
2. group-individual-group testing, weekly group tests followed by individual final exams, group discussion tests, and academic tournaments
3. observation of student behaviors
4. questionnaires done by students
5. interviews of students, either individually or in groups.

Chapter 5 turns to the assessment of groups as a whole. Student collaboration on a single product has become increasingly popular. However, promoting effective teamwork among groupmates and conducting assessment that is seen as fair and useful has proven very difficult. The authors offer many practical suggestions including:

1. Use criterion referenced grading throughout a course to avoid the situation in which students work together on an activity such as a group project but at the end of the course are assessed in a competitive, norm referenced manner.
2. Conduct diagnostic and formative, not just summative, assessment.
3. Establish clear norms both for cooperation within groups and for the product students are producing. Involve students in developing these.
4. Include individual assessment by such means as:
   a. small group size
   b. observation
   c. random individual oral examinations
   d. individual presentations to the class, groups of classmates, or others
   e. individual tests
   f. division of labor
   g. divided resources or roles
   h. one-minute papers in which, from time-to-time, students describe their project and what they have learned.

One point that surprised me in this chapter was the authors' suggestion that students form groups based on random assignment, whereas most of what I've read in the CL literature advises teacher-selected groups. The Johnsons state that random grouping increases the heterogeneity of groups. However, it seems to me that teacher selection offers the surest path to heterogeneous groups. Another controversial point is the authors' advocacy of group grades. While acknowledging objections to this arrangement, they argue that when groups are organized according to CL principles, group grades are accepted by students and can lead to higher achievement.

Chapter 6 looks at peer assessment when group activities are used and opens by stating an often overlooked prerequisite for successful peer assessment: "peer assessments need to take place in cooperative (not competitive or individualistic) learning activities" (p. 121). The authors offer a persuasive rationale for the use of peer assessment in CL, including this point: "One of the paradoxes of assessment is that students typically learn more from conducting assessments than they do from receiving them" (p. 123). The chapter supplies a number of instruments for peer assessment and discusses its use with academic assignments, such as writing assignments and presentations, as well as assessment of peers' collaborative skills.

Chapter 7, on self-assessment in CL groups, begins with a general, non-education discussion of self-awareness and self-assessment, including benefits and dangers, as well as a look at the role of comparison in self-assessment. Moving back to education, the authors offer suggestions for promoting student self-assessment. Among them are learning logs and reflective journals. Numerous instruments for facilitating self-assessment are included. Also, ideas are provided as to how interaction with peers can enhance self-assessment. For instance, self-assessment can be part of the processing students do of the quality of their group's interaction, and students can provide each other feedback on the entries in their learning logs and reflective journals.

The book's final two chapters are titled *Designing Group Experiences for Assessment* and *Putting It All Together*. The first deals with role plays and simulations. The latter discusses misperceptions about group assessment and offer guidelines for harnessing the power of groups for assessment. Among the eight misperceptions discussed are:

Misperception	Reality
Because students are assessed individually, they should learn individually	Research suggests students do better on individual assessments when CL is part of their learning experience
Individual assessment tells us what students have learned on their own	No one learns on their own – Pooling their learning in CL groups allows students to share the resources each has used in their learning
The teacher is the only person who should do assessment	Not only can students take part in assessment, but assessment by students should be take place more often than teacher assessment
Assessment should only be done when a lesson, unit, project, etc. has concluded	Ongoing assessment is best, and involving students in assessment makes ongoing assessment more feasible

Thanks to what I've learned from the Johnsons and others (those who've written books and those who share in other ways), CL has done a lot to improve the way I do instruction. However, it's my self-assessment of my own teaching that assessment is my weakest area. I hope that the book reviewed here, as well as my daily classroom experiences and especially my often painful end-of-term assessment experiences, spur me to improve this area of weakness.

 From the Web

This issue, two Newsletter readers, Keith Topping and Rashmi Kumar, have sent in some useful links.

1. Keith Topping [k.j.topping@dundee.ac.uk], of Scotland's University of Dundee, has a long history of work on tutoring, which he defines as "people who are not professional teachers helping and supporting the learning of others in an interactive, purposeful and systematic way. Tutors could include parents or other adult carers, brothers and sisters, **other students from the peer group** [emphasis added], and various kinds of volunteers."

    Keith has attended at least one IASCE conference, but informs us that he has another commitment on the dates of our 2004 conference which may prevent him from coming to Singapore this June. In partial recompense, Keith sends along these online documents he has written recently.

Topping, K. (2000). *Paired collaborative writing*. Research in Education, 67, 6-7. Retrieved: www.scre.ac.uk/rie/nl67/nl67topping.html [Dec 1].

Topping, K. J. (2001). *Peer and parent assisted learning in reading, writing, spelling and thinking skills*. Spotlight No. 82. Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Research in Education. [Online] Available: www.scre.ac.uk/spotlight/spotlight82.html [26 April].

Topping, K. J. (2001). *Peer and parent assisted learning in maths, science and ICT*. Spotlight No. 83. Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Research in Education. [Online] Available: www.scre.ac.uk/spotlight/spotlight83.html [26 April].

Topping, K. J. (2001). *Tutoring by peers, family and volunteers*. Geneva: International Bureau of Education, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). [Online] Available: www.ibe.unesco.org/International/Publications/EducationalPractices/prachome.htm [January 1] (Also in translation in Chinese and Spanish).

2. Everyone has heard of Multiple Intelligences. One of the intelligences talked about by the people at Project Zero, where much of the path breaking work on MI has been done, is Interpersonal Intelligence. Thus, it's no surprise that one of their current projects includes group learning. The project is called: Making Learning Visible: Understanding, Documenting, and Supporting Individual and Group Learning (http://pzweb.harvard.edu/mlv/index.htm).

Cooperative Learning and Group Work

When most people in the field of cooperative learning see the term "group work," we think of groups of students working together to learn. However, in the field of social work, "group work" can have a somewhat different meaning and may refer to groups of people coming together to address a common area of concern, often with a specially trained person leading or facilitating the group. Examples of groups formed and facilitated by social workers would be groups of adult survivors of childhood abuse or people who have had cancer.
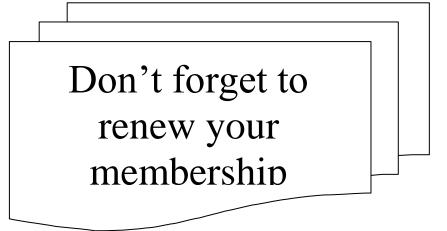
These two types of groups, those in education and those in social work, share some common roots in social psychology, such as the work of Kurt Lewin. Furthermore, students participate in both types of groups in and out of school. Indeed, Schools of Education or their equivalents at many universities often have a department, e.g., a Department of Educational Counseling, that prepares people to use social work style group work to help students. Thus, we may be able to learn from our social work colleagues. Indeed, a strong link exists between social work and some of the strands at the 2004 IASCE conference in Singapore this June, such as the strand on Equity Issues.

One way to learn more about this overlap with our social work colleagues is via journals on social work. For instance, the *Journal for Specialists in Group Work* has a section labeled *Practice: Children and Schools*. Here is information on one article from a recent issue of the journal.

Akos, P., & Martin, M. (2003). Transition groups for preparing students for middle schools. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 28*(2), 139-154.

School counselors can use groups as an effective and efficient means of helping students. Psychoeducational groups provide information and build skills to help prepare students for developmental tasks. As students complete elementary school, these preadolescents face the challenging tasks of moving to middle school and beginning puberty. School counselors can capitalize on peer influence and prepare students for the transition to middle school by using the group format. This article describes a model of a psychoeducational group aimed at preparing fifth graders for the transition to middle school. Implications and results of a pilot group are also presented.

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