INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF COOPERATION IN EDUCATION

http://www.iasce.net

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November 2008

Dear Colleagues,

IASCE is pleased to bring you our final member newsletter of 2008.

The array of abstracts, articles, reviews, and announcements remind us that cooperative learning continues to expand both geographically and conceptually and continues to present researchers and practitioners with opportunities to address both large challenges and subtle nuances.

In this issue are abstracts from an action research project implemented by a student seeking a master's degree, a monograph by David and Roger Johnson, and a research article by IASCE board member Robyn Gillies. The continuum represented by these abstracts reinforces the picture that cooperative learning is an area of rich and varied inquiry. John Myers' article, celebrating and analyzing the longevity and influence of GLACIE, and IASCE board member Yael Sharan's review of Culture and Cooperation present an interesting commentary on cooperative learning implementation. Together they emphasize the need for deep and broad knowledge and understanding coupled with cultural relevance, networking, and worthwhile work for both teachers and students.

I am pleased to announce that the IASCE website now includes links to papers from both the 2008 Torino and 2008 Nagoya conferences plus links to two upcoming conferences—the 2009 International Association for Intercultural Education Conference in Athens, Greece and the 2009 Latvian Association for Cooperation in Education conference in Riga, Latvia.

As always, we hope you find this issue of our newsletter helpful. Our conferences, newsletters, and website are supported by your membership dues. Please use the IASCE newsletter to create an opportunity to network with colleagues. If you send me your networking stories and strategies (lbaloche@wcupa.edu), we will share them in a future issue of the newsletter. Thank you for your support.

Cooperatively yours,

Lynda Baloche

Lynda Baloche
Co-president IASCE

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IASCE Cooperates on IAIE Conference in Athens, June 2009

IASCE will be coordinating a strand on, you guessed it, cooperative learning, at the IAIE (International Association for Intercultural Education) conference, to be held June 22-26, 2009 in Athens: http://www.iaie.org/0_home.htm

The conference theme is "Intercultural Education: Paideia, Polity, Demoi," and the keynote speakers are Jim Banks, Director of the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington, and Jagdish Singh Gundara, UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Studies and Teacher Education and President of IAIE. IASCE will be responsible for selected pre-conference workshops and main conference sessions in the IASCE strand.

Papers from Jan 2008 IAIE-IASCE Conference Now Online

In January 2008, the IAIE (International Association for Intercultural Education) and IASCE successfully collaborated on an international conference, "Cooperative Learning in Multi-Cultural Societies," held in Torino, Italy. Almost all the contributions to that exciting conference have now been put on the IAIE website, http://www.iaie.org/1_turinpapers.html. They can also be accessed through the IASCE.net home page.

Latvian Association for Cooperation in Education Conference April, 2009

Our friends in the Latvian Association for Cooperation in Education (LACE) are holding their 10th anniversary conference, April 26-29, 2009, in Riga, Latvia. The conference theme is Cooperation in Ensuring Sustainable Education: Management, Research, Practice, and Theory. For more information, please contact indra.odina@lu.lv

Keynotes Speakers include:

- Lynda Baloche, IASCE, West Chester University, Pennsylvania, USA
- Yael Sharan, IASCE, Tel Aviv, Israel
- Indra Odina, LAPSA

Abstract submission deadline: January 31, 2009

A HISTORY OF GLACIE:
PART TWO: THE EXPLANATION

By John Myers

THE POWER OF VOLUNTARY NETWORKS

Editor's Note: Part One of this article presented a history of **GLACIE** (Great Lakes Association for Cooperation in Education), a regional affiliate of **IASCE**. In Part Two, John Myers looks more deeply at what makes **GLACIE** tick by discussing the organization's composition as a network of volunteers.

GLACIE is an example of a network of volunteers, unpaid people with no official status in any specific organization. This contrasts with state or provincial subject councils connected to official curricula (though run by volunteers), and with large teacher professional bodies, including unions and networks such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and Phi Delta Kappa, who have paid staff handling head office administration, marketing, and professional development.

Little has been written about voluntary teacher networks until recently when Case and Werner (2005) analyzed the power of a new network on critical thinking. How does GLACIE measure up to their criteria of the motivation of a powerful idea combined with important conditions to enable a network's growth and maintenance around such an idea?

The Power of an Engaging Idea

To be successful, any voluntary teacher network needs to focus around a big idea. The idea can only take hold if it meets the following conditions:

A) The idea must be engaging so that its perceived power can provide motivation and glue its many advocates. Cooperative learning meets this criterion. Hundreds of studies, over the past 100+ years, have looked at the impact of cooperation on learners of all ages.

B) It must meet a perceived need. In the case of GLACIE, the network serves to meet the professional growth needs of teachers. Cooperative learning, - when GLACIE was founded and again in recent years, - was and is seen as a means to meet a number of new and pressing learning needs. These include:
   - promoting literacy through purposeful talk
   - fostering a climate conducive to developing critical thinking classrooms
   - modeling citizenship and character

- providing a major tool for teaching the diversities in every classroom: linguistic, cultural, racial, and cognitive.

C) It is inclusive in that, within cooperative learning, there are variations teachers can use that nevertheless fit with this model of teaching, and there are practical means to implement each of these variations, even though some are easier to implement than others. For example, among the contributions of the early work in GLACIE, resulting in the publication of Together We Learn, was the thoughtful integration of cooperative learning and the collaborative approaches from the U.K. and the recognition of the power of purposeful talk.

D) Cooperative learning has both conceptual and practical clarity. This may result in what Case and Werner suggest is a necessary exclusiveness, notwithstanding the previous point. In the case of cooperative learning, this necessary exclusiveness involves key attributes common to all cooperative learning approaches that clearly distinguish them from "groupwork." For example, cooperative groups stress interaction among group members that goes far beyond any physical arrangement in the classroom. Indeed, virtual groups separated in time and space may meet requirements for being cooperative. Unlike some innovations, cooperative learning is not so vague as to be unrecognizable (even though many still confuse it with groupwork).

E) Cooperative learning has generative potential in that it may motivate teachers both to think about their teaching differently and to demonstrate their new thinking about teaching in their classroom practice. Articles written by teachers and published from time to time have attested to this potential.

One Powerful Idea + Enabling Conditions = Success

Powerful engaging ideas are necessary but not sufficient for ensuring the long-term success of a voluntary network. GLACIE has also lasted because of what Case and Werner have identified as "enabling conditions" which include the following.

A) Rich exemplars including useful resources and powerful stories from real teachers working in real classrooms. In the case of the former, there are many books and articles on the various approaches to cooperative learning and many additional resources teachers and other educators have shared across the internet through www.glacie.ca and www.iasce.net, and in teacher magazines as well as peer-reviewed journals.

B) The tasks of network building and network participation also rely on credible advocacy. The history of cooperative learning and the GLACIE network has been built on credible

advocates of both. The regional chapters of the IASCE and a number of important research and teaching centres attest to these individuals. Credible advocates "walk the talk," and GLACIE has been particularly fortunate throughout its history having its share within the network. In addition to local advocates in Ontario, including teachers, consultants, and administrators, GLACIE has also enjoyed input from organizations, such as the Durham District School Board, and from teacher educators from OISE/UT and Niagara University. Beyond this, there are some key advocates who have consistently supported the network since early in its development. Changing the pedagogy in mathematics, especially at the secondary school level, has - benefited by the active participation of Neil Davidson, professor of mathematics and past president of IASCE. The ongoing support of Spencer Kagan and his Structural Approach has proven to be a great attraction for busy teachers looking for rich yet simple exemplars of practice that they can incorporate into their busy days.

C) Teachers also need to see that there are clear benefits for belonging to a network. Case and Werner note the importance of diverse incentives including:

- the power of the idea itself
- the pursuit of a common vision— the sine qua non of any collaborative endeavour
- opportunistic piggy-backing of cooperative learning through linkages promoting the attainment of other goals such as literacy, critical thinking, and curriculum differentiation
- the power of collaboration itself since, as Fullan noted, "There is a ceiling effect to how much we can learn [or accomplish] if we keep to ourselves" (1993, p. 17).
- the existence of useful materials and routes to quality professional development.

D) A final condition leading to success for the organization has been its responsive leadership over the years. GLACIE has been responsive in that it has

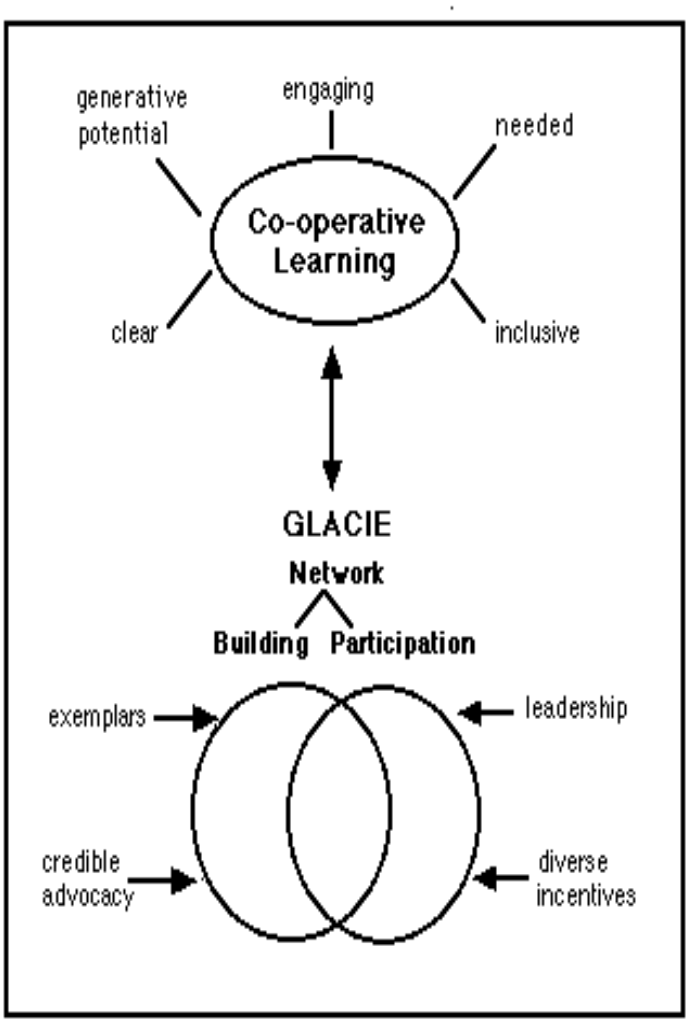
- promoted a flexible group of network builders to change with the times and allowed us to move between building and participation tasks (represented by the Venn diagram below)
- been conscious of monitoring the quality of its meetings and ensuring appropriately democratic decision-making
- monitoring the quality of our conference through careful needs assessment of participants and matching sessions to these perceived needs; this includes food and hospitality
- reviewing the entire network operation from time to time to ensure renewal of its mandate and vision
- keeping our egos in check by recognizing the many variations of cooperative

learning, by not being dogmatic about our preferred approaches, and by keeping the professional needs of classroom teachers at the top of the agenda.

In my view, this last aspect was perhaps the most challenging due to clashing personalities and the inevitable conflicts that happen when people work together over the years. The fact that membership in the executive has changed over the decades has kept the organization fresh.

In Conclusion?

There are, of course, future concerns for the network; perhaps none as important as inviting a new generation of building to take their place to promote what Judy Clarke once called the "hidden treasure" of cooperative learning, by linking our actions as a network to our belief in this powerful idea with important links to other powerful ideas (Clarke, 1991). The arrow in the diagram below also has a second direction to indicate that GLACIE has influenced the implementation and acceptance of cooperative learning in our part of the world.



Based on Case and Werner, 2005

It once was thought that in order to implement anything, you gave a workshop to train people to do the thing you wanted them to do. They, seeing the rightness of your cause, would faithfully carry out your bidding. Curriculum scholars have called this "curriculum fidelity." Teachers call it the cardiac method: "We believe it in our hearts. Therefore, YOU do it." Many policy makers and advocates of all sorts of innovations still act in this way (Myers, 2005). Bandwagons and crusades without substance and support can make teachers wary at best and cynical at worst. There have been many educational ideas, initially sound in theory, but poorly understood, grossly oversold, badly implemented, and ultimately discarded. If cooperative learning has resisted this fate, it is in part due to the efforts of a group of teachers trying to do their best for the students in their charge.

References:

Case, R., & Werner, W. (2005). *Building voluntary teacher networks*. Retrieved May 8, 2008 from http://tc2.ca/about/about-critical-thinking

Clarke, J. (1991). The hidden treasure of co-operative learning. *Cooperative Learning, 12*(1), 2-3.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. New York: Falmer Press.

Myers, J. (2005). Inside the black box of curriculum reform, *Orbit, 35*(1). 1-2.

John Myers - jmyers@oise.utoronto.ca - is a curriculum instructor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and was the first chair of GLACIE (1985-6).

GLACIE Conference, May 2009, in Toronto

IASCE Board member, Kathryn Markovchick, along with her colleagues Corda Ladd Kinzie and Pamela Flood, will be featured presenters at the 24th annual GLACIE (Great Lakes Association for Cooperation in Education) Conference, May 21-23, 2009 in Toronto: http://www.glacie.ca

The conference theme is ***"Achievement through Active Engagement."*** The keynote address will feature presenter Matthew Boyle from the Argyll-Bute School District in Scotland. Plenary sessions on topics include Increasing Achievement, Literacy, Student Success, Brain-Based Instruction, Anti-Bullying Strategies, Classroom Management and Team-Building Strategies. For more on GLACIE's history and accomplishments, see John Myer's articles in this and the previous issue of IASCE Newsletter.

How to Subscribe to the CL List

Want to dialogue with others about your use of CL? Not receiving enough email (hahaha)? Then, you might wish to join the CL List, an internet discussion group about cooperative learning. Well-known CL experts as well as “just folks” belong.

Currently, the CL List isn’t a busy group, but when discussions do take place, they are often enlightening. Furthermore, you can receive updates on CL related events.

To subscribe, send an email to CL_List-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You should very quickly receive an email reply with simple instructions. If that fails, just send an email to george@vegetarian-society.org, and he’ll do the necessary. Talk to you soon!

Review of Culture and Cooperation: Cooperative Learning in Asian Confucian Heritage Cultures – The Case of Viet Nam

"Banes and Blessings":
What happens when we implement Cooperative Learning?

by Yael Sharan

We can proudly claim that wherever educators and ministries of education want to modernize their country's education they introduce and often mandate cooperative learning. Readers of this newsletter are certainly not surprised by this; indeed, many of us have been diligent ambassadors and have done our best to carefully, gradually, and faithfully teach CL to all the hopeful "newcomers." We have all attempted to be sensitive to the fact that CL is perceived as a Western (even an American) pedagogy and have made honest efforts to understand the culture of the teachers, schools, and systems we are working in, be it in Armenia, Finland, Thailand, Lithuania, or Italy, so as to find the best way of conveying the essentials of CL.

The fact that we still have a lot to learn about how to carry out these well meaning efforts with sufficient consideration for the host culture's heritage is highlighted in Phuong Mai Nguyen's book, "Culture and Cooperation: Cooperative learning in Asian Confucian heritage cultures – the case of Viet Nam" (2008). To illustrate the intricacy of developing a culturally appropriate pedagogy centered on CL, Phuong Mai Nguyen, who was born in Viet Nam and lives in the Netherlands, studied the application of group learning strategies in a Confucian Heritage Cultural context in secondary schools in Viet Nam, and closely examined both the educational

and cultural issues involved. The results reveal a complex of cultural conflicts and mismatches that are likely to happen when any educational methodology is applied in another context without a rigorous attempt to improve compatibility with the host culture. In this case the host culture is thoroughly rooted in the ancient Confucian Heritage that cannot be easily displaced. Essential to this heritage are a highly respectful attitude towards teachers, conformity to "groupness," the emphasis on hard work and discipline and a high level of parental aspirations and commitment to their children's learning.

Phuong Mai Nguyen's research is indeed valuable, but what intrigued me most were her conclusions. Noteworthy is the fact that Phuong Mai Nguyen takes into account the diverse contexts of her potential audience and, true to her belief in the principle of appropriateness, she is careful to couch conclusions in words like "consider," "be aware," and "try," so as not to have them sound like monolithic dictates (p. 210):

1. Consider including a mechanism for appointing a group leader.
2. Be aware that interpersonal competence is a leadership trait that is highly valued.
3. Consider applying reward structures on the basis of equality.
4. Consider using teacher approval as a valuable form of reward.
5. Consider avoiding the use of public disapproval towards individuals.
6. Consider the use of groupings based on friendship or other types of positive social relationship.
7. Try to develop new and cohesive groupings for students who do not share a high degree of social attachment before undertaking CL activities.
8. Consider creating sufficient face-confirmation for each individual in a group.
9. Consider creating milder types of face-confrontation between groups.

Looking at this list it strikes me that these recommendations are as appropriate for teachers in Tuscaloosa, Heidelberg, Tel Aviv or Athens, just as they are for Viet Nam. Although this book is a vivid reminder of how important it is to understand the cultural context of the host country (and of the local teacher and school culture) it mainly got me thinking about how CL is perceived today, not only in "new" countries, but everywhere. Something has happened to the implementation of CL on the way to fame, and along with the blessings it brings, there are "banes," which Phuong Mai Nguyen points out. In this book the blessings and banes are tied to the specific cultural context of Viet Nam, whereas I see them as universal. Following are some of my thoughts on this issue.

CL's "celebrity" status

One of the "banes" may be CL's "celebrity" status, which may cause people to view it as a "thing," an entity, with magic properties. This may in part account for the fact that so many ministries of education import CL as a package without closely examining what and how it suits their particular context.

This perception is understandable as CL practice has always been supported by research, whose outcomes served as the basis for the constant refining of CL practice, earning it the title of "best practice" in education. Research support may be one of the reasons for teachers' and educational ministries' initial confidence that it is indeed a successful pedagogy. How can we argue with the reported success of Jigsaw or STAD, Complex Instruction, or Group Investigation? Teachers and teacher educators may "buy into" a model and bring it to their classrooms as finished products, expecting instant success. It's almost as if CL is viewed as a commodity, like a car. Drivers normally don't take the trouble to find out how the car works and we're happy to have it start once we turn the key, without much thought of what goes into making that happen. And it wouldn't dawn on us to remove parts before we start the car.

But CL as a whole, and the different models in particular, are not commodities to be bought and used as is. To extend the above metaphor, CL models and methods have been extensively "test driven" by their developers before placed on the showroom floor. All assume that simply placing students in groups and telling them to work together will not succeed without careful, gradual and appropriate preparation. Advance student preparation is so important that it has been the topic of many studies, such as the one carried out by Ashman and Gillies (1997). Many teacher educators for CL, such as Baloche (1998) and Gillies' in her recent book (2007), have explicitly written about how to prepare students for the social interaction and learning behaviors required for working in groups. To this end, there are many short term cooperative structures, which are "separate cooperative activities designed to aid in the implementation of CL," (Kagan and Kagan, 2008) and are known world wide. Therefore it remains a puzzle why some teachers implement models and/or techniques without heeding the need to lay the groundwork for successful social interaction and cooperative behaviors, as is universally recommended.

One reason may be that, due to the reported success of CL, teachers may be so enthusiastic and hopeful of its promises that they rush into it and overlook the need to prepare themselves and their students, like the teacher whose misadventure with CL is described in the vignette that Phuong Mai Nguyen presents in the opening of her book. Phuong Mai Nguyen tells of how an English teacher from America handed out "some English exercise" and asked the class to work in groups. You can imagine the ensuing chaos, which could be expected in any class where

students were not sufficiently prepared and presumably the task was not designed according to the level of the students' experience with cooperative behaviors. As confused as the students were, we can fully sympathize with the teacher, who may have thought " 'this is great, I can get my students talking right away,' without carefully considering how difficult it can be to get students to cooperate…" (Sharan, Gobel & Sim, 2006).

"Transmission" approach

In my search for explanations of the anomalies of CL implementation I found a possible insight in Brody's discussion of teacher's beliefs about CL and pedagogy (1998). Perhaps teachers who do not set the stage for cooperation, before implementing a model or technique, have an approach to education known as the "transmission" approach. According to this approach CL "is a technique to be mastered primarily to extend one's tools for managing groupwork," (p.28), used mainly for mastery learning and review. Content is relatively fixed and there is little room for possible contributions to learning that result from group interaction.

Preparing teachers

No doubt preparation of teachers is also crucial to successful implementation. The marked change in the teacher's role in CL has been written about extensively and reflects the understanding that implementing cooperative learning methods requires teachers to learn new behaviors, not just new teaching techniques. Organizing and leading a CL classroom successfully requires time, commitment, repeated practice, and a network of support, encouragement, and feedback. The major changes in the way teachers are prepared for CL include a base of experiential learning and systematic, continuous reflection on the experience (Cohen, Brody, & Sapon-Shevin, 2004).

What do we mean when we say CL?

CL is such a complex pedagogy that it was intriguing to learn how Phuong Mai Nguyen perceives it. She states that "Johnson and Johnson's theory of CL … dominates Vietnamese literature" (p. 28). Nevertheless, in her analysis of CL and her conclusions, she generalizes about CL as a whole. We find this in other researchers' work, like in Evelyn Jacob's important book, **Cooperative Learning in Context** (1999). Jacob based her study on one or two specific CL methods but generalizes about CL as a whole. This is in contrast to Jacob's description of CL as "a diverse group of instructional methods" (p. 13) and to Phuong Mai Nguyen's statement that CL is made up of "diverse practical procedures, structures, and principles for instructors" (p. 206). The result is that readers may be misled to think that all methods are the same and that the research results about the effects of how one model is carried out in one particular context

apply to each and every method of CL. Yet perhaps, if another method or technique had been used in the same context, there would have been different effects.

The very complexity of CL may cause confusion. To guide us in this complexity there have been several attempts to categorize CL methods. One such helpful tool is the tentative taxonomy presented by Sharan (2002) from which the following three sub-groups are inferred, each of which emphasizes different skills: 1. models that *emphasize* mastery of knowledge and motivation (STAD, CIRC, Jigsaw); 2. models that *emphasize* social skills and interpersonal communication (Learning Together); 3. models that include all the above and *emphasize* long-term intellectual inquiry, intrinsic motivation and equal status interaction: Complex Instruction and Group Investigation.

Another helpful "map" to CL methods and approaches is the list of the common and varying attributes among major cooperative and collaborative learning approaches offered by Brody and Davidson (1998).

Observing the dynamic development and evolvement of CL over the years has led me to the perception that the essential principle on which all CL is built is positive interdependence, from which derive other elements - individual accountability and cooperative and mutually helpful behaviors. These are interpreted and realized by a variety of methods, structures and techniques, each of which structures a different blend of these elements. Central to the successful realization of any method or technique is the design of the task assigned to groups, which activates the particular blend of elements that make up the method or technique in use. Phuong Mai Nguyen's conclusions may certainly be taken into account when designing a cooperative learning task.

The above are but a few issues which come to mind when reading Phuong Mai Nguyen's stimulating book, issues that concern the implementation of CL in any classroom, in any country. We learn the specifics of the Vietnamese case, but are reminded that the "blessings and banes" of implementing CL are universal. I thank Phuong Mai Nguyen for inspiring me to return to questions that have been nagging teacher educators for CL for as long as we've been at it. This short article is in no way intended to offer a comprehensive treatment of all the pertinent questions regarding what happens to CL on the way to implementation. Readers who have questions or perplexities of their own are welcome to join in the discussion, and those who may have a few answers are doubly welcome!

Thanks to Professor Mario Comoglio and Celeste Brody for many stimulating discussions in preparation for this article, to Pasi Sahlberg for his comments and to George Jacobs for his thoughtful editing.

References

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Sharan, Y., Gobel, P., & Sim, T.H. (2006, October). Why do teachers begin at the top? *IASCE Newsletter,* 10-14.

Sharan, S. (2002). Differentiating methods of cooperative learning in research and practice. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 22*(1), 106-116.

From the Journals

Ke, F., & Grabowski, B. [bgrabowski@psu.edu] (2007). Gameplaying for maths learning: Cooperative or not? *British Journal of Educational Technology, 38*(2), 249-259.

This study investigated the effects of gameplaying on fifth-graders' maths performance and attitudes. One hundred twenty-five fifth graders were recruited and assigned to a cooperative Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT), interpersonal competitive or no gameplaying condition. A state standards-based maths exam and an inventory on attitudes towards maths were used for the pretest and posttest. The students' gender, socio-economic status and prior maths ability were examined as the moderating variables and covariate. Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) indicated that gameplaying was more effective than drills in promoting maths performance, and cooperative gameplaying was most effective for promoting positive maths attitudes regardless of students' individual differences.

Pate-Clevenger, R., Dusing, J., Houck, P., & Zuber, J. (2008). *Improvement of off-task behavior of elementary and high school students through the use of cooperative learning strategies.* Retrieved July 10, 2008 from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/3d/4e/f9.pdf

This Action Research Project Report was conducted at one elementary school and two different high schools from August 20, 2007 to December 14, 2007. The purpose of this research was to decrease student off-task behavior in the classroom. There were four teacher researchers and 94 students at the beginning of the research, but during the action research process two students transferred schools, leaving the final total of students researched at 92. The teacher researchers consisted of two 3rd grade teachers, one 10th grade health teacher, and one 11th grade English teacher. The teacher researchers defined off-task behavior as any time a student was not working on classroom activities, demonstrated a lack of self-control, exhibited rude behavior, was poorly motivated, or any other social behavior that negatively impacted academic performance in the classroom. The three tools that were used to establish this problem were

teacher surveys, student surveys, and a behavior checklist. In the teacher survey, 93% reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed that off-task behavior interferes with their students meeting their learning objectives. Furthermore, 79% of the students responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed that they thought that being off-task in class has negatively affected at least one of their grades. From the teacher researchers' own behavior checklists used in observing their classes, they reported 165 incidents of off-task behavior. One solution that the teacher researchers chose to reduce off-task behavior was implementing cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is a method that uses cooperation within student groups to involve all students, increase interactions among students, and promote collaboration in the solution of assigned tasks (Miglietti, 2001). Often times there is an emphasis on improving social skills within these groups. This solution strategy was chosen because it offered students a structured yet interactive environment. Additionally, the students were taught specific social skills when working with their peers and their teacher. After teacher researchers used cooperative learning as the intervention, the incidents of off-task behavior were lessened, according to the behavior checklists. Additionally, 85% of the students reported in the post-intervention survey that they either agreed or strongly agreed that working in groups helped them focus on the assignment at hand. Clearly, off-task behavior was curbed by using cooperative learning. The teacher researchers recommend that cooperative learning be used an intervention to keep students on task. The following are appended: (1) Student Survey; (2) Teacher Survey; (3) Off-Task Behavior Checklist; (4) English Lesson Plan; (5) Health Lesson Plan; and (6) Fractured Fairy Tales Lesson Plan. Master of Arts Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University.]

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. J. (2005). New developments in social interdependence theory. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs, 131*(4), 285-358.

Social interdependence theory is a classic example of the interaction of theory, research, and practice. The premise of the theory is the way that goals are structured determines how individuals interact, which in turn creates outcomes. Since its formulation nearly 60 years ago, social interdependence theory has been modified, extended, and refined on the basis of the increasing knowledge about, and application of, the theory. Researchers have conducted over 750 research studies on the relative merits of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic efforts and the conditions under which each is appropriate. Social interdependence theory has been widely applied, especially in education and business. These applications have resulted in revisions of the theory and the generation of considerable new research. The authors critically analyze the new developments resulting from extensive research on, and wide-scale applications of, social interdependence theory.

Gillies, R. M. (2008). The effects of cooperative learning on junior high school students' behaviours, discourse and learning during a science-based learning activity. *School Psychology International, 29*(3), 328-347.

The study investigated the effects of structured and unstructured cooperating groups on students' behaviours, discourse and learning in junior high school. One hundred and sixty-four grade 9 students participated in the study. The students were videotaped as they worked in three to four person, mixed-gender and ability groups on a science-based categorization activity. The results show that the students in structured cooperating groups demonstrated more cooperative and helping behaviours such as giving more elaborated help and guided directions to assist understanding than their peers in the unstructured groups. Moreover, they demonstrated more complex thinking and problem-solving skills both in their discourse and their responses on the follow-up learning probe. These findings are discussed in the context of the importance of structuring cooperative learning experiences if students are to attain the benefits widely attributed to this approach to learning.

Law, Y. K. (2008). Effects of cooperative learning on second graders' learning from text. *Educational Psychology, 28*, 567-582.

Two studies were conducted to investigate the effects of cooperative learning on second-graders' motivation and learning from text. In Study 1, students (n = 160) in cooperative learning groups were compared with their counterparts (n = 107) in traditional instruction groups. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with more favourable perceptions of teachers' instructional practices and better reading comprehension in the instructional intervention [cooperative learning – inserted by editor of this newsletter] groups than in the traditional instruction groups. In Study 2, 51 second-graders participated in the instructional intervention programme. The results showed that students' positive cooperative behaviour and attitudes were related to their motivation and reading comprehension. When students perceived that their peers were willing to help each other and were committed to the group, they tended to be more motivated and performed better in reading comprehension.

Excerpt from the article: The results of the present study suggest that student-led activities can be conducted effectively in second-grade classrooms. Observation and analysis of group discussion revealed that the children showed significant improvement in regulatory activities. These regulatory activities included inviting members to engage in discussions, checking members' responses to discussion topics, keeping focused on the completion of tasks, and

actively participating in group decisions. However, the children in this study showed no improvement in the other two elements of successful group cooperation - that is, positive interdependence and individual responsibility to help others achieve the group's goal. They probably found it difficult or lacked the awareness to be able to improve interactions among group members or to offer help to other members. More support from teachers may help them learn to be more productively engaged in group discussions and to assist others to complete tasks. Training students in goal-directed leadership may also improve the quality of these cooperative learning activities (Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001).

Slavin, R. E., Cheung, A., Groff, C., & Lake, C. (2008). Effective reading programs for middle and high schools: A best-evidence synthesis. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43*(3), 290-322.

This article systematically reviews research on the achievement outcomes of four types of approaches to improving the reading of middle and high school students: (1) reading curricula, (2) mixed-method models (methods that combine large- and small-group instruction with computer activities), (3) computer-assisted instruction, and (4) instructional-process programs (methods that focus on providing teachers with extensive professional development to implement specific instructional methods). Criteria for inclusion in the study were use of randomized or matched control groups, a study duration of at least 12 weeks, and valid achievement measures that were independent of the experimental treatments. A total of 33 studies met these criteria. The review concludes that programs designed to change daily teaching practices have substantially greater research support than those focused on curriculum or technology alone. Positive achievement effects were found for instructional-process programs, especially for those involving cooperative learning, and for mixed-method programs. The effective approaches provided extensive professional development and significantly affected teaching practices. In contrast, no studies of reading curricula met the inclusion criteria, and the effects of supplementary computer-assisted instruction were small.

Poole, D. (2008). Interactional differentiation in the mixed-ability group: A situated view of two struggling readers. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43*(3), 228-250.

This article investigates the practice of heterogeneous grouping for reading and literacy instruction through a detailed interactional analysis focused on the least proficient readers in two mixed-ability group contexts. The resulting analysis suggests that struggling readers in heterogeneous groups may encounter the same problems often associated with their placement in homogeneous ability groups. The mixed-ability groups examined in this study were characterized by pervasive interactional differentiation, which for some students may lead to the

kind of stigmatizing effects thought to result from long-term participation in low-ability groups. In addition, the low-ability students in these heterogeneous groups read less and were interrupted more often than the other students-two differences in the treatment of low-ability students that have also been associated with homogeneous ability grouping. The study thus points to the difficulty that teachers face in promoting simultaneous reading development among multiple proficiency levels. It also suggests the need for renewed research efforts focused on current instructional alternatives to traditional ability groups, as well as the experience of struggling readers within them.

Wittwer, J., & Renkl, A. (2008). Why instructional explanations often do not work: A framework for understanding the effectiveness of instructional explanations. *Educational Psychologist, 43*(1), 49-64.

Although explanations are a common means of instruction, research shows that they often do not contribute to learning. To unravel the factors giving rise to the ineffectiveness of instructional explanations, we propose a framework that brings together empirical work on instructional explanations from a variety of research fields, including classroom instruction, tutoring, cooperative learning, cognitive skill acquisition, learning from texts, computer-supported learning, and multimedia learning. In our framework, we identify the distinctive characteristics of instructional explanations, present general guidelines for designing instructional explanations, and describe factors influencing both the generation and use of instructional explanations. It is argued that future research should uncover in more detail the interrelations between the different aspects of providing and using instructional explanations and their specific effects on learning.

Haenen, J., & Tuithof, H. (2008). Cooperative learning: The place of pupil involvement in a history textbook. *Teaching History, 131*, 30-34.

Almost every history teacher uses cooperative learning techniques such as 'think-pair-share' or 'word webbing' and various issues of Teaching History showcase examples of cooperative learning tasks. However, in the Netherlands, this practice is not systematically reflected in the commonly used traditional textbooks. Of course, these textbooks contain instructional materials mentioning and widely utilising cooperative learning, but not in a way that ensures cooperation pervades the educational experience of pupils throughout the course.

Van Horn, R. [rvhorn@btc.ctc.edu], & Freed, S. (2008). Journaling and dialogue pairs to promote reflection in clinical nursing education. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 29*(4), 220-225.

Since nursing students spend two thirds of their class time in clinical practice, it is important that their practical experience be connected with their theoretical learning. The challenge for nurse educators is to develop tools for clinical education that actively involve students in learning experiences, with faculty serving as facilitators. The purpose of this research was to describe students' clinical reflective processes as they worked individually and in pairs, solving problems while caring for patients. Participants were 39 nursing students enrolled in a seven-credit Nursing III course offered through the department of nursing in a liberal arts college as part of an Associate of Science degree program.

Berry, W. (2008). Surviving lecture: A pedagogical alternative. *College Teaching, 56*(3), 149-153.

Lecture is the approach traditionally used to teach music theory courses. Although efficient in the delivery of large amounts of information in a short period of time, lecture lacks the effectiveness of an active learning approach. "Theory Survivor" is a unique cooperative-learning method based on the Student Teams-Achievement Divisions technique created by Robert Slavin. It combines the efficiency of lecture with the effectiveness of active learning. Using the motivational forces of group cohesion, extrinsic rewards, and positive peer pressure to its advantage, Theory Survivor provides a rich educational environment in which students thrive.

Watts, M., & Becker, W. E. (2008). Economics courses. *Journal of Economic Education, 39*(8), 273-286.

In 1995, 2000, and 2005, the authors surveyed U.S. academic economists to investigate how economics is taught in four different types of undergraduate courses at postsecondary institutions. They especially looked for any changes in teaching methods that occurred over this decade, when there were several prominent calls for economists and postsecondary instructors in other fields to devote more attention and effort to teaching and to make greater use of active, student-centered learning methods, with less use of direct instruction (chalk and talk). By 2005, although standard lectures and chalkboard presentations were still dominant, there was evidence of slow growth in the use of other teaching methods, including classroom discussions (especially teacher-directed discussions), computer-generated displays (such as PowerPoint), providing students with prepared sets of class notes, and computer lab assignments in econometrics and statistics courses. Internet database searches were used by a small but

growing minority of instructors. Classroom experiments were used by a small share of instructors in introductory courses. Assignments or classroom references to the popular financial press, sports, literature, drama, or music were used somewhat more often. Cooperative learning methods were rarely used.

Goleman, D., & Boyatzis, R. (2008). Social intelligence and the biology of leadership. *Harvard Business Review, 86*(9), 74-83.

The authors describe how the brain's mirror neurons enable a person to reproduce the emotions she detects in others and, thereby, have an instant sense of shared experience. Organizational studies document this phenomenon in contexts ranging from face-to-face performance reviews to the daily personal interactions that help a leader retain prized talent. Other social neurons include spindle cells, which allow leaders to quickly choose the best way to respond to someone, and oscillators, which synchronize people's physical movements. Great leaders, the authors believe, are those whose behaviors powerfully leverage this complex system of brain interconnectedness. In a handy chart, the authors share their approach to assessing seven competencies that distinguish socially intelligent from socially unintelligent leaders. [The following section was not part of the original abstract] The seven competencies range from intrapersonal skills to organizational leadership attributes, and include a wide variety in between. It is natural for the reader to expect categories like empathy and teamwork; some surprising ones include attunement and skills of developing other people. As a cautionary tale, the authors have diligently outlined the impact of working with leaders who lack competencies of leadership. “When someone who is very important to a person expresses contempt or disgust toward him, his circuitry triggers an explosion of stress hormones and spike in heart rate by 30 to 40 beats per minute. Then, because of the interpersonal dynamic of mirror neurons and oscillators, the tension spreads to other people” (p. 80). Sound leadership prevents destructive emotions from infecting the entire group and stifling its collective performance.

Merrill, M. D. [mdavid.merrill@gmail.com], & Gilbert, C. G. (2008). Effective peer interaction in a problem-centered instructional strategy. *Distance Education, 29*(2), 199-206.

This article suggests that peer interaction is most effective when orchestrated around a progression of problems. Problem-centered learning is enhanced by carefully structured peer interactions. Problem-centered instruction is a form of direct instruction wherein instructional components are taught in the context of problems. An effective problem-centered instructional strategy involves (a) facilitating learners' activation of relevant mental models, (b) demonstrating problem solutions to learners, (c) enabling learner application to the solution of new problems,

and (d) facilitating integration into activities beyond the classroom by critique, discussion, and reflection. Instruction is most effective when there is appropriate peer interaction during each of these instructional phases: peer-sharing during activation, peer-discussion during demonstration, peer-collaboration during application, and peer-critique during integration.

Ciani, K. D., Summers, J. J., Easter, M. A., & Sheldon, K. M. (2008). Collaborative learning and positive experiences: Does letting students choose their own groups matter? *Educational Psychology, 28*(6), 627-641.

This study used self-determination theory as a framework to examine the relationship between choice regarding group membership and student motivation within classrooms that use collaborative learning as an instructional tool. Data were collected from over 500 students across seven classrooms from a large university in the Midwestern United States. In three of the seven classrooms, students were allowed to choose with whom they worked; in the remaining four classes the professor formed the groups. Using hierarchical linear modelling, the choice condition was a positive and significant predictor of students' intrinsic motivation and classroom community, even when accounting for autonomy support and class size. The practical implications of affording choice during collaborative learning are discussed.

Writing for This Newsletter

There are so many things happening world-wide related to cooperative learning! Help others find out about them by writing articles or short news items for inclusion in this newsletter, and by submitting abstracts of published work for inclusion in the *From the Journals* section of the newsletter. Short pieces (1000 words or less) are preferred.

The newsletter appears three times a year. Please email submissions or questions about them to the editor of the IASCE Newsletter, George Jacobs, at george@vegetarian-society.org. Put "IASCE Newsletter" on the Subject line of the email, please. Thank you for your submissions.

Request for Ideas on Developing a Teacher Education Course on CL

Have you had experience in developing a cooperative learning teacher training course? If so, Jill Clark and Trish Baker from New Zealand would love to hear from you! Here is their request.

We are new members of the IASCE although we have given papers at 2008 conferences in Turin and Nagoya and have met many of you. Quite apart from the academic benefits of joining the IASCE, we wanted to become members because you run the friendliest conferences we have ever attended!

We have always been positive about cooperative learning but we have been particularly interested recently in researching the issues that New Zealand faces in implementing cooperative learning with diverse groups of domestic and international students. From 2000 New Zealand has had large numbers of mainly Asian international students who come from totally different cultural and educational backgrounds; this has meant therefore that cooperative learning groups have presented a real challenge for both students and staff.

We became interested in 2005 because the international literature on heterogeneous group learning was so positive and yet anecdotal evidence suggested that staff and students in New Zealand disliked it and that many believed that it was an unfair and stressful teaching and learning technique. Consequently we ran focus groups with staff and students and carried out surveys and interviews over the next two years to try to identify if there was a problem and, if there was, what could be done about it.

Our results indicated that most staff and students believed that cooperative learning groups were socially enjoyable and beneficial; this confirmed the literature on cooperative learning. The results also, however, identified areas of concern: staff and students found assessment a problem and the cultural and language issues of international students did not seem to be being addressed. Most students did not seem to cope well with group problems and staff did not appear to have the skills or the time to design appropriate group assignments or to help groups with group management issues. One honest staff member answered, “I hide!” when asked how he dealt with group problems! There were significant differences between the responses of New Zealand European students and the replies of other ethnic groups over the benefits of working in culturally diverse groups: a matter of concern when the literature indicates that cooperative learning enhances intercultural understanding and acceptance.

We also surveyed employers and recent graduates to identify whether students who had worked in cooperative groups in their tertiary study had developed the interpersonal skills

required by industry. Our results suggested that students had not generally been trained to deal with group management issues and that their priority was attaining high marks, not developing interpersonal skills. Again, this is a matter of concern when international literature suggests that one of the main benefits of cooperative learning is that it develops work ready skills in students.

Our research has led us to the conclusion that if New Zealand tertiary institutions intend to achieve the positive results promised by international research, staff must be trained in implementing cooperative learning techniques effectively. Staff indicated in survey results and in interviews that half had not received any training in cooperative learning at all; this meant, of course, that they did not know how to prepare students to deal with group management issues. Staff were generally unaware of the importance of structuring cooperative assignments differently from individual assignments and tended to blame the students for the problems that arose from poor assignment design.

We have just been given a government project to design a cooperative learning teacher training programme for tertiary staff in New Zealand; we are delighted, of course, to have the chance to put our ideas in to practice! We have realized from talking to other IASCE members at Turin and Nagoya that many of you have had experience in this area and we are hoping that you will be willing to share your ideas and experience with us!

If you have a similar training programme that would be helpful for us, and which you are willing to share, would you contract one of us by email please? (Obviously we will formally acknowledge any help that we get!) If you haven't designed a programme but you have ideas about what should go into a training programme or how it should be structured we would love to hear from you too! Maybe you could point us in the direction of useful books or papers or other people who could help us? Many of you specialize in primary training, but the principles and issues are the same whether you are training primary, secondary or tertiary teachers; we would be so grateful to be able to benefit from your experience and ideas.
Hoping to hear from lots of you!

Jill and Trish

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IASCE Executive Board of Directors

The IASCE, established in 1979, is the only international, non-profit organization for educators who research and practice cooperative learning in order to promote student academic improvement and democratic social processes.

What does IASCE do?

- ★ Supports the development and dissemination of research on cooperative learning, particularly educator research and inquiry that fosters understanding of the effects of context on implementing cooperative learning.
- ★ Helps organizations develop structures that enhance cooperation in education, working through the inclusion of people of diverse backgrounds in our schools and society.
- ★ Works with local, national, and international organizations to extend high quality practices of cooperative learning.

- ★ Sponsors collaborative conferences and projects that extend the understanding of cooperative learning principles in different settings.

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Our international and regional conferences bring together cooperative educators from around the world to share ideas, compare successes, discuss challenges, and review the latest research.

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The IASCE website, which is supported by membership dues, offers many links to sites related to cooperative learning and announces opportunities for face-to-face learning with internationally recognized leaders in cooperative learning.

- ★ IASCE also offers a membership directory (upon request) for the purposes of networking.
- ★ A list of board members, who are veteran experts in the field, to contact for consultation and professional assistance.
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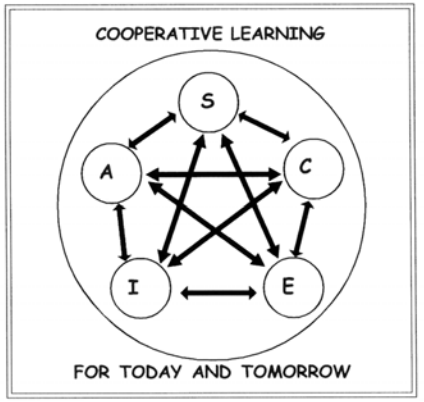

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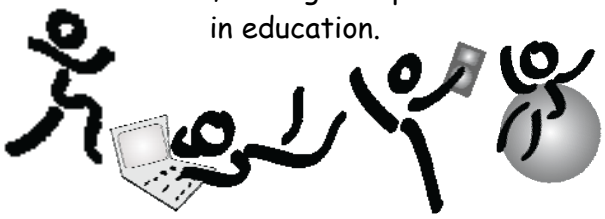

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