FLY FIVE®

The Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum

COOPERATION

Cooperation

It's no secret that cooperation is immensely important. We ask for and expect cooperation from students on a daily basis, and we as educators are required to cooperate with our colleagues, our students, and our students' families. As a fundamental social skill that supports academic success, cooperation has the potential to transform what learning means to students. By encouraging peer-to-peer collaboration, students build positive relationships that are linked to stronger academic performance and a more positive view of their school (Roseth et al., 2008). Cooperative learning repositions knowledge acquisition from something outside of students to a dynamic, creative, and generative skill set they already possess (Sharan, 2010). Through cooperative and active discussions with their classmates, students learn to articulate their perspectives and opinions while valuing differing ones. We can use guided interactions to help students establish trust in others' and their own abilities while forming lasting, meaningful relationships in all aspects of their lives. Perhaps most importantly, cooperation is not an inherent trait or fixed attribute; it is a skill set that can be explicitly taught and procedurally learned (Elliot et al., 2017).

Fly Five defines cooperation as "the ability to establish new relationships, to maintain positive relationships and friendships, to avoid social isolation, to resolve conflicts, to accept differences, to be a contributing member of the classroom and community in which one lives, works, learns, and plays." There are four standards within cooperation:

- Able to make and keep friends
- Works with others toward a common goal
- Resolves differences quickly
- Cooperates as a group leader or a member of the group

Cooperation is a foundational competency that serves nearly every social relationship and is essential for forming positive friendships and social units (Fehr & Schurtenberger, 2018). These relationships strongly affect many aspects of our lives. Cooperation gives students the skills to work across differences in a rapidly globalizing world, skills that are necessary to excel both academically and professionally (Gauvain, 2018; Ferguson-Patrick, 2016). When students learn to learn together, they are primed for success wherever their lives may take them. To foster cooperation in students and ourselves, virtually and in-person, consider the following strategies:

- Prepare students for teamwork by discussing what successful cooperation looks like, establishing cooperative classroom norms, and keeping groups below five members to maximize cooperation (EAICY, 2020). This is especially important when students are learning virtually, as cooperation will be less effective if it is loose or sporadic (Saunders, 2020). For virtual or hybrid learning, be strategic and clearly define how students will cooperate. Implement regular virtual check-ins with students to structure their collaboration and offer ample opportunities for connection and feedback.

- Utilize formal and informal cooperative learning structures (Brame & Biel, 2015). Formal cooperative learning involves group assignments where students work together over a period of time to complete a shared goal. Informal cooperative learning can be embedded into class time by pairing students to discuss a concept or implementing interactive learning structures to deepen student engagement with a lesson. For students learning online, informal cooperation can look like "side by side" working, where students work on separate components of a project together via video call (Saunders, 2020). Have students schedule their meeting where their team is there on the screen, even if they are all working on separate components of their project. This recreates the dynamic of working together in person, as students can keep each other focused, easily discuss progress, and communicate quickly and easily.

- Assign clear roles to each member (George Washington University, 2020). For younger students, assign members of a group clear responsibilities. For example, one student can be the leader who makes choices, one the recorder who writes everything down, one the fact-checker who double-checks the work before handing it in, and one the encourager who is in charge of asking questions and facilitating conversations. Online, students can take notes in the chat box or fact-check in real time. As students get older, they can create their own group roles with less guidance from the teacher and learn how to delegate and set their own expectations to cooperate successfully.

- Emphasize effort-based goals, where students focus on increasing competence, over performance goals, where students focus on achievement (Buchs & Butera, 2015). This minimizes competition among group members and encourages students to co-construct their learning together.

When we envision and create a classroom that supports collaborative learning, we offer students skills that will be beneficial throughout their entire lives. As students practice working together, cooperation helps them co-construct their learning, learn from their peers, and make valuable connections with their classmates and with a lesson's material. While the way that we cooperate has looked different over the past year, this competency is still of utmost importance; it gives students the tools to maintain their relationships in spite of difficulties, resolve differences quickly and efficiently, and work well together virtually and in person. Students learning to work together are primed to become lifelong learners who can build strong relationships and thrive in and out of the classroom.

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