

WORKSHOP
“The cooperative school”

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Leading The Cooperative School: Introduction

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**LEADING THE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL:
KEY MESSAGES**

1. **Be a leader, not a manager.** The required change in organizational structure requires leadership.
2. **Challenge the status quo** by pointing out and demonstrating the inadequacies of (a) the old paradigm of teaching and (b) the mass-production, competitive, loosely-coupled structure of the school.
3. **Inspire a mutual vision** of (a) the new paradigm of teaching (cooperative learning is the key) and (b) the team-based, high-performance, cooperative organizational structure. There is considerable research supporting the desirability of cooperative over competitive or individualistic efforts.
4. To be cooperative, a team effort must be characterized by five basic elements (positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, appropriate use of social skills, group processing). Not all teams are cooperative. Each cooperative effort must be carefully structured.
5. Continuous improvement must become a way of life for students and faculty.
6. **Empower students** through cooperative learning (formal, informal, base groups). High-quality training must be provided to teachers on how to use cooperative learning and work in collegial teams.
7. **Empower faculty** through teams:
 - a. Teachers' expertise is promoted through collegial teaching teams.
 - b. All serious schoolwide issues need to be assigned to task cooperative forces.
 - c. Schoolwide decisions are made through a small-group, large-group cooperative, site-based decision making procedure that involves all faculty.
8. Use the controversy procedure to ensure high-quality decision making.
9. **Lead by example** by using cooperative procedures in faculty meetings and any other meeting you lead.
10. **Encourage teachers' hearts** to persist in using cooperative learning by recognizing and celebrating their instructional efforts.

The Cooperative School

The **cooperative school** is a team-based, high-performance organizational structure in which teams are used at all levels to increase the productivity and effectiveness of administrators, faculty and staff, and students.

Administrators

Collegial administrative teams made up of principals and assistant principals who meet in a small group (four to six members) whose purpose is to increase each others' expertise and success in leading a cooperative school.

Meetings in which a variety of cooperative procedures are used. In faculty meetings, for example, teachers may meet in schoolwide base groups, consider important issues in triads, engage in a two minute discussions in pairs before voting on a routine issue, participate in “jig-saw” assignments in which materials are divided among faculty members, and engage in structured controversies to ensure high quality decision making on important issues.

Supporting and coaching teachers using cooperative learning to ensure that cooperative learning is used with fidelity, is flexibly adapted to the teachers' students and specific circumstances, and is continuously improved.

Extending cooperation to the community so that the school, parents, and community are working together to achieve mutual goals.

School Faculty And Staff

Collegial teaching teams in which two to five faculty members meet to increase their instructional expertise and success in using cooperative learning.

Collegial study groups in which two to five faculty members meet to read and discuss materials on instructional and assessment procedures that will increase their effectiveness and enhance their use of cooperative learning.

School-based decision-making:

- a. A **teacher task force** is formed to consider a school problem, gather data about the causes and extent of the problem, consider a variety of alternative solutions, make conclusions, and present a recommendation to the faculty as a whole.
- b. **Ad hoc decision-making teams** meet during faculty meetings to (a) listen to the report of a task force, (b) discuss the report and consider whether to accept or modify the task forces' recommendation and (c) inform the entire faculty of their decision.
- c. **The whole-faculty decides** on the actions to be taken to solve the problem. The reports of the ad-hoc decision-making teams are combined, the three most recommended plans are identified, the faculty votes on which plan to adopt, and then implements the plan.

- d. **The task forces monitor the implementation of the decision** and assess whether or not the problem is solved.

Faculty committees are formed to monitor and continuously improve procedures dealing with school life.

Students

Formal cooperative learning groups: Students work together for one or several class sessions to achieve shared learning goals and complete specific tasks and assignments.

Informal cooperative learning groups: Students work together in temporary, ad hoc groups that last only for one discussion or class period to achieve joint learning goals.

Cooperative base groups: Students work in long-term groups to give the support, encouragement, and assistance members need to progress academically and develop cognitively and socially in healthy ways.

Conflict training (academic controversy and peacemaking) to (a) teach students how to manage conflicts constructively and (b) capitalize on the many positive outcomes of conflict.

Civic values are taught to students and promoted by the actions of the faculty and emphasized in the curriculum.

The Five Steps Of Providing School Leadership

Challenging The Status Quo

The status quo is the competitive / individualistic structure that dominates schools and classrooms. In the classroom, it is represented by: (a) listening to lectures, (b) participating in whole-class discussions, (c) completing individual worksheets, and (d) taking the test on Friday. In most classrooms this represents 80 - 90 percent of the students day. In the school, the competitive / individualistic structure is represented by individual teachers working in their own classroom, instructing their own students, at their own pace, striving toward their own goals and priorities, while being worried about where they rank in teaching effectiveness in their school. **Leaders challenge the effectiveness of these current instructional and organizational practices.** Leaders are pioneers who are willing to take risks and experiment to find new and better ways of instructing students. Leaders inspire staff members to recognize that if they are not working to increase their expertise, they are losing it.

Inspiring A Mutual Vision Of What The School Could / Should Be

Leaders enthusiastically and frequently communicate the dream of classrooms and the school being places where individuals share, help, encourage, and support each other's efforts to achieve and succeed. Places where **we** dominates **me**. Where working together to get the job done creates caring and committed relationships that propel people forward in their mutual search for excellence. **Every excellent school begins with a dream.** It is a dream **shared** by most staff members and students. The dream is rational in that it is supported by theory validated by research. The leader is the **keeper of the dream** who inspires commitment to work hard toward actualizing a common vision. It is the common vision that creates a basic sense of sink or swim together (i.e., positive interdependence) among staff members and students.

Empowering Individuals Through Cooperative Teamwork

Leaders empower the students, faculty, and staff by creating cooperative teams. This is the most important of all leadership activities. Individuals often feel helpless and discouraged. Having

them work with learning partners or colleagues provides hope and opportunity. It is social support from and accountability to valued peers that motivates committed efforts to achieve and succeed. In the classroom this means using three types of cooperative learning groups:

1. **Formal cooperative learning groups:** Students work together for one or several class sessions to achieve shared learning goals and complete specific tasks and assignments. Formal cooperative learning provides the foundation for all other cooperative learning procedures. Teachers make a set of pre-instructional decisions, communicate the task and cooperative structure, monitor the groups while they work and intervene to improve taskwork and teamwork, and assess and evaluate student learning and ensure groups process how effectively they are working.
2. **Informal cooperative learning groups:** Students work together in temporary, ad hoc groups that last only for one discussion or class period to achieve joint learning goals. They are used to focus student attention on the material to be learned, create an expectation set and mood conducive to learning, ensure students cognitively process the material being taught, and provide closure to an instructional session.
3. **Cooperative base groups:** Students work in long-term groups (lasting for one semester or year) with stable membership whose primary responsibility is to give each member the support, encouragement, and assistance he or she needs to progress academically and develop cognitively and socially in healthy ways.

What is good for students, is even better for faculty. In the school empowering individuals through cooperative teamwork means using three types of staff teams:

1. **Collegial teaching teams** are small cooperative teams (from two to five faculty members) whose purpose is to improve continuously teachers' expertise and success in using cooperative learning and other instructional procedures. Collegial teaching teams need to be safe, enjoyable places where there is support, caring, camaraderie, laughter, and celebration, but the primary goal of improving each other's competence in using cooperative learning is never obscured.
2. **Task force groups** are small problem-solving groups that meet to plan and implement solutions to schoolwide issues and problems, such as curriculum adoptions and lunchroom behavior. In a task force, faculty diagnose a problem, gather data about the causes and extent of the problem, consider a

variety of alternative solutions, make conclusions, and present a recommendation to the faculty as a whole.

3. **Ad hoc decision-making groups** are used during faculty meetings to involve all staff members in important school decisions. Ad hoc decision-making groups are part of a small-group / large group procedure in which staff members listen to a recommendation, are assigned to small groups (usually three members), meet in the small groups and consider the recommendation, decide whether to accept or reject the recommendation and why, report to the entire faculty their decision and rationale, and then discuss and decide in the staff as a whole. Such a procedure maximizes the participation and involvement of all staff members in the school's decision making.

What is good for teachers, is even better for administrators. **District administrators** are also structured into collegial support groups, task forces, and ad hoc decision-making groups at the district level.

Each of these cooperative teams needs to be structured to include the basic elements of positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, social skills, and group processing. The amount of research validating the power of well-structured cooperative efforts is staggering. Working cooperatively to get the job done builds trust, open communication, and caring and committed relationships among students and staff members. Cooperative efforts tend to result in greater productivity and achievement, more frequent higher-level reasoning and critical thinking, more positive attitudes toward work and learning, higher self-esteem, and greater social skills. The real world involves working with and through many different people to get the job done. Schools should not be different.

Leading By Example

Leaders model the use of cooperative procedures and strategies and take risks to increase their professional expertise. Leaders actions must be congruent with their words. They are role models that exemplify the strategies and attitudes required to accomplish the vision. Every exception leader is (a) able to structure and inspire joint efforts to achieve the vision and (b) a learner. The self-confidence required to lead comes from trying, failing, learning from mistakes, and trying again. From making your own journey to actualize your vision, you model the way for staff members and students.

Encouraging The Heart

Long-term committed efforts come from the heart, not the head.

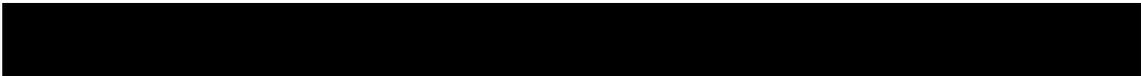
It takes commitment and persistence to continuously improve one's use of cooperative learning throughout one's teaching career. Striving for increased expertise is an arduous and long-term enterprise. Individuals become exhausted, frustrated, and disenchanted. They are tempted to give up. Commitment and persistence is enhanced by recognizing individual contributions to the common vision and frequently having group celebrations of individual and joint accomplishments. Leaders search out "*good news*" opportunities and orchestrate celebrations of how well cooperative learning is being implemented in classrooms and how well cooperative teaming is being implemented in the school.

From: Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. (1994). **Leading the Cooperative School** (2nd Edition). Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.

School Leadership Worksheet

Your **tasks** are to (1) define each step of providing leadership in your own words, (2) give a colloquial definition of each step, and (3) list two ways you can engage in each step in your school.

Step	Definition	Practical Advice
Challenging The Status Quo		
Inspiring A Mutual Vision		
Empowering Through Teams		
Leading By Example		
Encouraging The Heart To Persist		



My Leadership Plan

Your task is to create an implementation plan for engaging in each step of leadership in your school.

Step	Implementation Plan
Challenging The Status Quo	
Inspiring A Mutual Vision	
Empowering Through Teams	
Leading By Example	
Encouraging The Heart To Persist	