

Not “Me,” But “We”

Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Teamwork and Cooperation

Top sports organizations know this truth about cooperation: a team of people working together toward a common goal is more powerful than a single superstar. Help your students learn how to be effective team members and collaborators with the following lesson.



Why It Matters

In a world where celebrities and sports stars seem to dominate the news, it's become even more important to teach children the value of teamwork. The benefits of learning to cooperate and collaborate extend to both school and home:

- Students who regularly work on a team improve their communication and listening skills.
- Children who learn how to be part of a team learn to respect others' abilities, opinions and ideas. They also learn to appreciate their teammates for what they contribute.
- Cooperating with others helps children feel like they are part of a community, improves relationships and widens their circle of friends.
- Being a contributing member of a team builds a child's self-esteem and confidence.
- Working on a team improves students' abilities to resolve conflict, manage their emotions, negotiate and compromise, and take turns.
- Cooperative learning can increase retention and on-task behavior, as well as improve attitudes toward school.
- Research shows that classes where cooperative learning is employed achieve higher test scores than traditional classes.
- Today's employers are looking for employees who can work with others to achieve results.

Bottom line: Knowing how to be an effective team member is critical to being successful at school and in life. Time spent helping students cultivate a teamwork mindset will always be time well spent.

Goal for the lesson: Teach students strategies to use in fostering teamwork and cooperation in school, at home, and in social situations.

Grade levels: Kindergarten–Grade 5

Suggested time needed: 60 minutes

Materials: large sheet of chart paper for each group of four or five students, markers, paper, class supply of the self-evaluation form

Advance preparation: Label each large sheet of chart paper at the top with, “What does a cooperative person look like?”

Teacher Directions

Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Write the word *cooperate* on the board before class starts.
2. As students enter the classroom, ask them to write a definition in their notebooks of what they think the word on the board means. **For younger students**, ask them to draw a picture that illustrates someone who is cooperating with another person.
3. Provide time for students to share their definitions as you list their ideas on the board. Then let students know they're going to get active to show if they feel the definition is a good one. If students feel the definition is accurate, have them stand and do three jumping jacks. If they think the definition needs work, have them do three deep knee bends. (Depending on the class and the age of the students, you can decide if the definition is a good one as a group or let each student decide individually.) End the activity by sharing that a good definition for *cooperate* is "to work together with others in order to get something done."

Whole-Group and Small-Group Activity

1. Share with students examples of tasks that require you to cooperate with others. For example, perhaps you plan lessons with other teachers on your grade level or take turns walking laps around the playground to supervise students. Ask students to suggest why it might be important for you to cooperate with people you work with. List their ideas on the board.

2. Divide the class into groups of three. Direct one student in each group to make a T-chart like the one shown. Then give groups five minutes to fill in the chart with examples of things that require cooperation to accomplish. Designate the student who drew the chart as that group's recorder, who will fill in the chart once group members agree on examples.
3. Provide time for groups to share their charts as you compile their ideas on a T-chart you've drawn on the board. When the list is complete, point out to students that it is important to learn how to be cooperative because so much of life requires us to work with others. Then ask students, "So, what does a cooperative person look like?"
4. Divide the class into new groups of four or five students each. Give each group a sheet of chart paper you prepared earlier and a marker. Designate one student as the group's recorder. Then challenge each group to fill their paper with actions or characteristics of a cooperative person.
5. After all groups share their completed posters with the class, tape the posters to a class wall. With student input, create a class list of traits that you and your students can refer to whenever they participate in cooperative learning activities.

Things That Require Cooperation

At School	At Home

Small-Group Activity

1. Organize students into groups of three to four children.
2. Direct each group to plan a short skit that shows an example of cooperation at school. Encourage originality and efforts to include each group member in the skit.
3. Provide time for groups to practice their skits; then have each group perform its skit for the class. After each skit, have an audience member explain how the skit illustrated cooperation.
4. Wrap up the activity by having each student complete a copy of the "Pulling Together" self-evaluation form

provided. Collect the evaluations; then return them to students after the next cooperative group activity so they can check their progress on the goals they noted on their evaluations.

Exit Activity

Ask each student to share one way he or she will cooperate with another person during the next 24 hours. See how many different examples the students can share before dismissal.

Take-Home Task: Have each student write a journal entry to respond to this writing prompt: *Describe a time when you had difficulty cooperating with another person. What did you do? What would you do differently if this happened to you today?*

Quick Tip

Throughout the school year, work in team-building games such as the Human Knot, Two-Person Tag (student pairs are "it" and both students have to tag the same child), or parachute games to keep team-building top of mind. (Hint: Students too old for parachute games? Cut holes in an old tarp. Drop a ball on the tarp and challenge students to work together to keep the ball from dropping through the holes.) Use those games as opportunities to remind students about the cooperative skills they've developed.



Teacher Notes

Pulling Together

Cooperative Group Self-Evaluation

How did you do in terms of cooperating with your group members during the activity?

Write a symbol from the code in each box.

Then answer the question.



- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stayed on task | <input type="checkbox"/> Communicated well with my group members |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shared my ideas | <input type="checkbox"/> Showed appreciation to my group members for what they contributed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shared in the work | <input type="checkbox"/> Took turns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helped others | <input type="checkbox"/> Helped my group complete the assignment on time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Showed respect for the ideas, abilities and opinions of my group members | |

CODE

- + Good job!
- 4 Satisfactory
- Needs improvement

How can you improve your cooperation skills? _____

signed

date