Why do Collaborative/Cooperative Learning?: A Rationale
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The average adult attention span is 10-12 minutes. A lot of information is lost during a traditional lecture because students “tune out”.

Under normal circumstances, a student remembers 70% of a lecture three hours later. Three days later that student remembers 10-20% of the lecture. When visuals are added to reinforce a lecture, the retention improves to over 50%. When students explain or teach a concept to others in a cooperative learning situation, the average rate of retention will improve to 90%!

Who learns the most in the typical college classroom? Who is organizing, summarizing, and presenting? Who is elaborating and providing rationale and justification? In other words, who is actively involved? Who is having the most fun in the typical college classroom? Perhaps no one. Most likely, however, the instructor is learning the most and having the most fun!

It is important that when people graduate they have developed skills in talking through material with peers, listening with real skill, knowing how to build trust in a working relationship, and providing leadership to group efforts. Without developing and practicing the social skills required to work cooperatively with others, how can faculty honestly claim that they have prepared students for a world where they will need to coordinate their efforts with others on the job, skillfully keep a marriage and family functioning, and be a contributing member of a community and society?

Three things make a difference in students’ gains in thinking skills: (1) student discussion, (2) explicit emphasis on problem-solving procedures, and methods using varied examples, and (3) verbalization of methods and strategies to encourage development of metacognition.

Knowledge and skill are of little use if a student cannot apply them in cooperative interaction with other people. The most logical way to emphasize cooperative competencies as learning outcomes is to structure the majority of academic learning situations cooperatively. Cooperative learning is not something new. It is one of the most thoroughly researched instructional methods. Since 1898 over 1207 research studies have been conducted on cooperative, competitive, and individualistic efforts.


4 Smith, Karl.

In lecturing, quite frequently the information passes from the notes of the instructor to the notes of the student without passing through the mind of either one!6

Teamwork is making its way into businesses. Many businesses have taken out middle management positions. Work teams have been established to work out problems and seek answers.

ASU uses cooperative learning extensively in upper level courses. By using it at the community college, we will better prepare our students to succeed if they transfer to ASU.

Students don’t sleep in my classes.

Below are the results I obtained when I switched to collaborative learning in my CIS105 classes. I had 285% more A’s and 28% more B’s on the first Unit Test. I had 108% more A’s and 34% more B’s on the second Unit Test.

Changes Made to the Class between Fall and Spring Semesters

• **Students** prepared notes on every chapter.

• CL activities were used on every chapter (jigsaw, thin/pair/share, buzzer game, etc).

• Same review sheet was given to the fall and spring semester classes, but I required that it be completed in the spring. (In prior semesters, I gave them the review sheet and told them if they had any questions to just ask. Naturally no one did the review sheet until the night before the test, if then.)

• Formal, fast-paced review for test in game-show format.

The final grades were:

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<th>Grades</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>+22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
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<td>-17%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0</td>
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6 Johnson, Roger; Johnson, David; Smith, Karl