Welcome to *Hidden Sparks Without Walls.* We will be starting shortly...

- If you are using a speaker phone, the rest of us will hear everything going on in the room you are in. Speaker phones can also cause echoes and other extraneous sounds. Please avoid using them if possible. If that is not possible, make sure you are in a quiet room, and keep electronic gadgets as far from the phone as possible.

- While we are waiting to begin please practice using the chat feature by sharing your name, school and location. Activate chat by clicking the “Chat” tab below the attendees list on the right of your screen. Enter your communication and click on “Send.”

- If you have any clarifying questions about the format or the topic, you may click on the “Q&A” tab below the presenter list and enter your questions. Feel free to use the hand raising feature, by clicking on the little yellow hand on the right side of the screen.

- Don’t hesitate to engage as active, full participants. Your contributions may help others.

- Be aware of your air time.
Welcome & Conference Etiquette

• Below are some tips that will help make this conference call successful.

• **Use the right phone.** - Cell phones can be included in conference calls, but some can also cause static on the lines. Try to use a landline phone if possible. Speakerphones pick up a lot of background noise. If you use one, mute it whenever possible.

• **Participate in a quiet, undisturbed room.** – Background noise can be heard through the phone and will disturb others in the conference. If you can’t find a quiet room, use your phone’s mute button until you want to speak – and avoid distracting noises such as humming, scraping chairs, tapping a pencil, etc.

• **Never Put a Conference Call on Hold!** - Participants will be forced to listen to your on-hold music or they will not know that you have stepped away and may continue to address you while you’re gone.

• **Call Waiting** - The sound of your call-waiting beep can be disruptive and confusing to conference call participants. Quite often the Call Waiting function can be temporarily suspended by touching *70 prior to the call.

• **Identify Yourself** - When you first enter the call and when you ask a question please identify yourself by name and school or state on-line.

• **Chat Room & Question/Answer Box** – Those participating on line may use the chat room and question/answer box on the lower right of their screen to enter questions and comments at any time. We will offer regular opportunities for those joining by phone only to participate as well.
The Role of the Teacher in a Cooperative Learning Classroom

with Harriet Lenk PhD

May 3, 2010
Our Guest

Harriet Lenk has taught and been an administrator in New Jersey public schools and Jewish Day Schools in New Jersey and New York City. She has a doctorate in curriculum and teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University. Using the skills acquired in each of these settings, she has been a member of the graduate Faculty of Bank Street College of Education for 19 years. In that capacity she has served as co-chair of Teacher Education, and continues to teach several courses focused on group process and cooperative learning, developing advisories, and curriculum development. She has been a national trainer in cooperative learning for 20 years and has continued to work with children and new and experienced teachers on the pre-school, elementary school and middle school level. She is also a senior facilitator for Groupworks, a NYC organization that focuses on developing group skills in public schools.
Good evening. I’m very pleased to join you for this opportunity to begin an exploration of Cooperative Learning, a topic that has become increasingly important in schools all over the world.

This is because solid research, focused in classrooms, suggests that what teachers do in the classroom, how they interact with students, and how students interact with each other, impacts motivation and academic learning.

I hope you will participate actively in this session. Your “cooperative” engagement with the ideas we will examine and your questions and comments will help each of us think about this in deeper, more meaningful ways.
Overview of the session

In this introductory session we’ll examine

- what cooperative learning actually looks like in the classroom
- the role of the teacher in using cooperative learning
- the 5 essential elements that must be in place for success in cooperative learning
- how to introduce cooperative learning in the classroom
Cooperative Learning can make a difference

Cooperative learning is specifically intended to support high levels of academic engagement within carefully designed small groups of learners.

- Students work together in small heterogeneous groups
- By helping one another master the various aspects of a particular task, students will be more motivated to learn and they will learn more than if they had to work independently.
- Students will forge stronger interpersonal relationships than they would by working alone.
- Students are encouraged to verbally articulate their academic understandings, a process which encourages thinking aloud, providing oral explanation and elaboration, defending ideas, and building a coherent, cognitive synthesis.
What do teachers and students do in cooperative learning?

- Cooperative learning puts the teacher and students at the heart of the classroom environment.

- The teacher organizes and monitors the key components of the curriculum and the various learning activities so that students need each other to complete assigned tasks and assume individual responsibility.

- Students both talk and work together cooperatively in small groups and learn how to take responsibility for their learning and develop critical social skills.

- Teachers and students actively reflect on their learning and cooperative interaction.
However, before we examine the details about what is involved in creating a successful cooperative learning classroom, it may be useful to focus on what you already know about group work.

- What is challenging about working with groups in general?

- What is challenging about working with classroom groups?
Supports for group functioning?

- What is challenging about working with groups in general?
- What is challenging about working with classroom groups?

Let’s begin our work by engaging in one of my favorite cooperative learning activities. It’s called “a 1 minute paper”. You can use this (or a “2 minute version”) any time you want your students to think deeply about a question.

Participants reply to a question by rapidly writing as much as they can in response. Just write quickly in phrases rather than sentences. Although papers are not handed in, discussions are better because everyone has written a response.

Please take a minute now to write down your response to the second questions. Call in or write your ideas now in the space for chats.
Contributed Ideas

Questions and Contributions
Successful cooperative learning requires careful planning. Cooperative learning is more than just “grouping.”

You just collaborated around these questions, providing insights about how you think about grouping. Although there were different concepts, we can agree that simply putting learners together in groups and expecting them to work together successfully is unrealistic.

Wonderful, creative group projects or activities may be designed, but unless students work together cooperatively, it won’t work so that everyone succeeds. Too many problems emerge as a result.

However, that does not mean that we should discard the idea that group-work is a good idea.
Learning how to work cooperatively is one of the keys to successful group work (and life).

Many youngsters have little experience working well together. As a result, they often need help in listening to each other, taking turns, and working together successfully.

In a well-planned cooperative learning lesson

- Children are encouraged to face each other as they communicate.

- In order to complete a task they need to listen carefully.

- For the task to be successful, they must assume responsibility for their own learning as well as that of others in their group.
Cooperative learning strategies are designed to teach learners how to work well together.

We can identify and learn how to use effective teaching strategies that actually can help group members work well together.

We were not born with the social skills needed to work well together. We either learned them from our families and teachers and peers as we grew up. Or, we still are learning them as adults. In addition, we can learn how to teach them to others.
What does successful cooperative learning look like in a classroom?

If you were to come into a classroom in which cooperative learning strategies have been adopted, you would probably see small groups of students working together on a particular academic assignment.
More ideas about what occurs in cooperative learning classrooms

If you sat closely to one of these groups, you might hear students discussing an aspect of the task, helping a group member understand something, encouraging another student to explain his or her understanding of a problem.
Outcomes of cooperation

As a result of successful cooperative learning activities, students demonstrate profound effects including:

- Providing each other with efficient and effective help and assistance
- Exchanging needed resources such as information and materials and processing information
- Providing each other with feedback in order to improve academic performance
- Advocating the exertion of effort to achieve the group’s goals
- Acting in trusting and trustworthy ways
- Being motivated to strive for mutual benefit

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The role of the teacher

Now, let’s turn our attention now to the all important role of the teacher, who is already the leader of an existing group, the students in a classroom.

You already do a lot of things to organize your learning program and you already make a lot of decisions.

Just a few examples:

• You plan a schedule and decide on what will occur within the times allotted to different subjects and activities.

• You organize individual lessons, present concepts, assign tasks, and evaluate student understanding.

• You keep track of students and materials.
Research and the role of the cooperative learning teacher

Successful group-work requires additional steps and decisions beyond the academic content.

Decisions include

how students are prepared to work together
how parts of the lesson are organized
how the lesson is implemented
and how the lesson and the interaction is processed or assessed

In this view, the challenge in teaching is not covering the material for the students. It’s uncovering the material with the students.
The Role of the Teacher #1

Does this mean that a teacher needs to be a “wonder woman”?

Well, you probably already are a “wonder woman” or “wonder man”. Cooperative learning requires focused attention on that all important interaction between the learners.

Although this can be a challenge, there are well-developed strategies that can help you succeed.
Changing the emphasis

Instead of emphasizing “how?” teachers can “work harder” and “do more”, we need to focus on learning the better approaches that concentrate on “where” and “when” the burden of learning shifts to the learner.
Another aspect of the role of the teacher is understanding that time at part of the least, s/he is a “guide on the side instead of a sage on the stage”.

This involves some direct teaching when academic content is being introduced and explained, and facilitating the interaction within the groups during group work time.
Everything in the classroom is connected

Each of the parts of a successful cooperative learning classroom are connected.

Like parts of a jig-saw puzzle
Providing time to talk, a precious and limited classroom resource, is a critical part of cooperative learning.

This emerges from the important research of Lev Vygotsky who worked with special needs children in Russia in the 1930’s. Among his findings was the idea that when learners explain their thinking to each other, in their own words, everyone deepens their knowledge and understanding. He had the interesting idea that if you can’t explain something to another person, you may not really understand it.

So, let’s stop and use another simple cooperative learning strategy:

- Identify 2-3 key ideas about cooperative learning you’ve noted.
- Prioritize them according to their significance to you.
- Then, either call in or write your first idea so that it can be shared with others.
The Five Basic Elements of Successful Cooperative Learning

- Positive Interdependence
- Face-to-Face Interaction
- Individual Accountability
- Teaching Social Skills
- Processing

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The Five Elements: Positive Interaction

Positive Interdependence

A task is organized so that a group of students need each other to complete it.

“One for all and all for one”

Students are shown how to help each other overcome problems and complete whatever task has been assigned. This may involve episodes of peer tutoring, temporary assistance, exchanges of information and material, challenging of each other's reasoning, feedback, and encouragement to keep one another highly motivated.

Examples include:

- One set of resources that must be shared
- One paper is completed and signed by every group member
- Each group member has a role in the group task
To establish positive interdependence among the students, the teacher has to provide face-to-face interaction.

Some examples include:

- Students are encouraged to sit facing each other as they work together. Eye contact is enhances communication.

- The verbal and non-verbal responses from other group members is a source of continuous feedback for a student.

- Silent students are seen as uninvolved ones who do not contribute to the learning process of others nor to that of themselves in an effective way.
Individual Accountability

“This feature stipulates that each member of a group has to make a significant contribution to achieving the group’s goal.

- Students learn together in order to perform better as individuals.
- Students are held individually accountable for their work and learning.
- Common ways of ensuring this are
  - giving an individual test to each student
  - randomly selecting one student’s product to represent the entire group
  - asking each student to explain to classmates what s/he has learned.
The success of co-operative learning requires inter-personal and small-group skills.

- Positive Interdependence is not likely to occur if students do not know how to make the most of their face-to-face interactions.

- You can safely assume that the “Interpersonal Skills” most students possess are probably not highly developed.

- As a result, they have to be taught such basic skills as leadership, decision making, trust building, clear communication, and conflict management.
The Role of Group Processing

Group processing involves reflecting on both the social skills and academic achievement in the groups. This is one of the keys to successful progress in co-operative learning.

Some examples include:

- Asking individuals to respond to a short questionnaire about how they interacted with their group-mates.

- Asking the group to reflect on 2 things they did well together and 1 thing they need to work on to improve their group functioning. Both the strengths and areas that need work are shared with the entire class.
Additional reasons for integrating cooperative learning into the classroom

A cooperative learning classroom can offer systematic and focused opportunities to learn important skills about working with other people.

- It’s vital for students to have peer support and be active learners
- It enables more students to learn the material
- It also helps them get to know other students in the class
- It builds a sense of community that centers on the academic side of school.
- It builds important life skills in talking through material with peers, listening with real skill, knowing how to build trust in a working relationship, and providing leadership in group efforts.
Introducing cooperative learning to your students

It is usually recommended that you introduce cooperative learning at the beginning of the academic year so that you can establish classroom routines, introduce the 5 elements and support group learning in a systematic way.

- You can introduce group work now in a preliminary way through **two steps**.

- These steps can let you experiment with group work in small doses, learn about your own comfort level in turning some aspects of learning over to your students, and gain confidence in this approach.

- You can follow these suggested **two steps** in September with your next class.
Step 1: Start “small” with random pairs of students

As the first and most important step in promoting cooperation among students, consider structuring positive interdependence. It exists, when each student has a feeling that s/he is linked with other—one cannot succeed unless others do and vice versa.

At the beginning or end of the day, provide 3-5 minutes for randomly chosen pairs to exchange information about one of the following informal topics. Directions should include speaking to each other in quiet voices, making sure each person gets a chance to talk, and how much time is available.

Examples of topics:

Hobbies, a favorite book, a recent trip, a favorite tv program or movie
Step 1: The teacher’s role

- After giving clear task directions, ask students to sit close and “face to face” so that they can talk quietly.
- “Monitor” the group interaction by moving from group to group. Stop to listen for “positive interaction” and “intervene” to encourage cooperation only if there is off task behavior.
- Take notes on the “positive interaction” you observe and share these with your students.
- After the allotted time, “process” what occurred by asking students whether they liked this activity and why they had this feeling.
Step Two: Continue process

Step 2 as you and your students are comfortable.

- Continue with this next informal activity for 2-3 consecutive days, set up new random pairs each day, and choose a different topic each day.

- Incorporate positive ideas from the students, if possible, and provide time to process after each time.

- Provide 5 minutes for random pairs of students to exchange views and then share ideas with the class. The pairs might take on roles: 1 a “recorder or writer and one a “reporter” who reports the information.

  - review academic content prior to a quiz
  - look over the homework for the next day
  - Identify key concepts from a lesson
In this first session, we’ve started our exploration of Cooperative Learning, focused on the role of the classroom teacher, and examined some significant concepts and strategies to introduce this process in the classroom.

I’ve enjoyed working with you and look forward to continuing the process of deepening understanding about this wonderful learning approach next week.

Please come prepared to talk about your initial steps with your students. If you decide to wait before introducing this in your own classroom, join us anyway as we continue to collaborate. Do bring your questions.

Support will also be provided for managing groups in the classroom, for individual learners, and enhancing teacher skills for successful group work.
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<td>Monday, May 3, 2010</td>
<td>Cooperative Learning: A Way to Differentiate Your Instruction and Enhance Your Students’ Engagement, with Harriet Lenk, Ph.D.</td>
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For more information visit: www.hiddensparks.org
Hidden Sparks is a non-profit fund whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that by helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences, ultimately all students will benefit. Hidden Sparks’ programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one on one coaching. The Hidden Sparks model and program is currently in 21 Jewish Day Schools/Yeshivot in New York and 7 in Boston, through a partnership with Gateways: Access to Jewish Education.
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