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

Part 2

with Harriet Lenk Ph D
May 10, 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 preschool, 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.
Welcome to part 2 of our study of cooperative learning.

**Key Topics:**

- Respond to 3 key questions posed last week

- Collaborative interaction related to your experiences with short, paired student interactions.

- Review and deepen understanding of the role of the teacher in utilizing the five elements of cooperative learning

- Teaching social skills and extending understanding
Responding to 3 questions from last week

- Chavi wondered what to do when a group member dominates the group.

- Marcia requested information about how to provide for effective group interaction when one group member needs a differentiated curriculum.

- Another participant was interested in learning specific student tasks, academic and non-academic high interest, during cooperative learning for grades 5 and middle school. He also asked if I could provide specific Judaic studies examples?

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Introducing cooperative learning in the classroom

Now, let’s turn for a few minutes to the suggestion that it’s really a good idea to begin using cooperative learning strategies by starting “SMALL”.

This means that you work with randomly selected pairs of student for short periods of time on high interest topics.

Then, you process the activity, listening to student responses about how they are working together.

Stay with these short interactions for at least 3 weeks. Leave students wanting more.
Focusing on the Interaction of Paired Students

Together, let’s watch this short video of two children working together cooperatively. Then, we can use this as a basis for comments about what you tried with pairs of students in your own classroom.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2G46ahbLslw
Sharing Responses to Initial Pairing Activities

Let’s begin by taking some time to collaborate on your efforts to implement suggestions for paired interactions. I think you’ll find that hearing these ideas will generate new possibilities for your own teaching practice.

Please call in or write in your ideas about these initial efforts. Tell us the grade level, what you attempted, and your thoughts about the process. We’ll have time to listen to 3-4 verbal comments and read 2-3 written comments.

Tell us about one or more of these steps:

- What you tried with your initial pairs
- What you noticed when you moved around the class during the interaction
- What you noticed in the follow-up processing and how students responded.
Teacher Decisions

Last week we began to explore some of the teacher's additional decision-making responsibilities in a successful cooperative learning classroom.

For example: The teacher decides how the 5 essential elements of successful cooperative learning will be established within a particular lesson or task.

Extensive research has found these elements are present in classrooms in which all children are actively engaged and learning.
The Five Basic Elements of Successful Cooperative Learning

Let’s take time now to review these elements and deepen understanding about each of them. They involve complex concepts and classroom teachers have developed numerous ways to use them effectively.
Inter-personal Skills

As noted last week, 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.

- Not all students will be able to collaborate skillfully and not all groups will be able to function effectively.

- The key to improving both the individual collaborative skills of group members and the effectiveness of learning groups is having the groups examine (through **processing**) how well they are functioning.
Teaching social skills requires special attention

Simply working or sitting in on a meeting does not mean high quality collaboration will take place. It takes more than participating in cooperative learning groups to increase collaborative skills.

Even after a learning situation has been structured cooperatively, the learning groups will not function effectively until students master and use appropriate collaborative skills.

Here’s an activity that will help clarify my meaning: Can you recall some skills that were needed recently in arranging a recent family event?

- While some interaction leads to rejection and/or defensive avoidance of influence, all important social skills, include cooperation, helping, and encouraging.
- Try to recall a time you were juggling too many tasks and someone stopped to help and encourage you.
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.
- In addition to enabling more students to learn the material, cooperative learning 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 also 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.
Teaching of Social Skills

There are 4 categories of social skills that have been identified as important for successful learning in cooperative group work.

- **Forming skills**: the most basic or beginning skills, like moving quietly into groups, using quiet voices, staying with the group, using names, looking at the speaker, and avoiding put-downs.

- **Functioning skills**: skills needed to achieve working relationships, like expressing support, listening effectively, asking for help, offering to explain or clarify.

- **Formulating skills**: skills for higher level reasoning and retention, like summarizing aloud, seeking accuracy, seeking elaboration, asking members to plan out loud.

- **Fermenting skills**: highest level skills of reasoning and re-conceptualization skills like criticizing ideas not people, integrating ideas into single positions, probe by asking in-depth questions.
A question that teachers often ask is “How do I know where to start teaching social skills”? Start with where the students are after you watch them in several paired interactions.

Can they do the forming skills well? Identify what they are struggling with.

Forming skills: the most basic skills needed like moving quietly into groups, using quiet voices, staying with the group, using names, looking at the speaker, and no putdowns.

If your students have difficulty listening effectively to each other when they get together in small groups, start there.
Teaching social skills

Teaching social skills in ways similar to teaching any skill. Identify a needed skill and teach it, one skill at a time.

Here are the first two key steps in teaching a social skill:

1) Develop awareness of the need
2) Define the expectation on a chart
Using a Chart to Define and Explain the Skill of Effective Listening

Dictionary: “make a conscious effort to hear” and “to pay attention
Listening means paying very close attention to what someone is saying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looks Like</th>
<th>Sounds Like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heads nodding</td>
<td>Only one voice speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>Words like “yes”, “mmm”, and “that’s interesting” to support the speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing with my face that I’m interested in what the speaker is telling me</td>
<td>Polite language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrating</td>
<td>Quiet voices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Steps in Teaching Social Skills [continued]

1) Awareness of the need
2) Define the need on a chart
3) Identify what it looks like in practice
4) Conduct role plays
5) Provide guided practice: experiences to use the skill
6) Constructive feedback and encouragement
7) Consistency is critical
Teaching a Skill involves a Complex Change Process

- Systematically learning the process until it becomes automatic
- It differs from simply learning facts and acquiring knowledge. In skill building we rely heavily on feedback about performance and modify our implementation until the errors of performance are eliminated.
- It’s a gradual process—one’s efforts to perform the skill will fail to match the ideal of what one wishes to accomplish for a considerable length of time until the new strategy is over-learned at a routine-use automated level.
- Failure is part of the process of gaining expertise and success is inevitable when failure is followed by persistent practice, obtaining feedback, and reflecting on how to perform the skill more competently.
Stages of Skill Building

Learning cooperative skills results from a process of

1. Engaging in the identified skill

2. Obtaining feedback

3. Reflecting on the feedback.

4. Modifying one’s enactment and engaging in the skill again.

5) Repeating steps 2, 3, and 4, again and again and again until the skill is used in a more and more automated fashion.
Teach a skill in context

- Teach one skill at a time, going back as needed, moving to the next identified skill when the first is almost automatic.

- Learning skills completely apart from the context where they will be used is of very limited value. The cooperative skills need to be taught in the context of science, math and the academic setting.

- So, teach and reinforce social skills as you ask your students to work together to complete academic tasks.
Strengthening positive interaction can provide a framework for helping students develop their small group skills. One strategy for improving students' group skills is to assign a specific role need for good group functioning to each group member.

- In addition to the roles noted below, there will be other possible roles. The roles you choose for a specific assignment will vary, based on the degree of structure required and the aspect of group process you wish to emphasize.

- It is important to rotate roles from one assignment to the next. Everyone can learn to be a good leader, encourager, or clarifier, especially if you explain how to fulfill this function.

- For awhile, however, start with these basic roles and, if necessary, explain each to students. More complex roles can be added later.

Reader and Writer

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Informal Cooperative Learning Groups

Two Ideas to use in Informal Cooperative Learning Groups

- Engage students in focused discussions for a few minutes on a “Turn-to-your-partner” -basis, which can be used every 15 minutes throughout a traditional lecture.

- Think/Pair/Share is a cognitive rehearsal structure that can be used to help students recall events, summarize, stimulate thinking or share responses and ideas.
  - The teacher sets a problem or asks for a response to a reading.
  - The students think alone for a specified time.
  - The students form pairs to discuss the problem or give responses.
  - Some responses may be shared with the class.
More about “Starting out Small”

“Starting out small” means that you are using cooperative learning for random pairs for 5+ minutes a day.

“Starting out small” means building your capacity until you are more comfortable organizing cooperative learning pairs for 20%-25% of the time. That may take a couple of months or more.

It is not expected you will use this approach more than 25% of the time until you and your students have achieved the forming and functioning skills and can work well together for longer periods of time. Take your time!

Use cooperative learning when you want your students to go deeper in any subject, to really understand complex ideas, to hear diverse opinions, to explain and to elaborate understandings.
The Role of the Teacher (continued)

Last week, we began to consider the important role of the teacher as the group leader of the classroom. This role has been clarified as we have considered the decisions the cooperative learning teacher makes in order to facilitate successful group work. Let’s continue to build on this foundation.

Before the lesson:

The teacher plans a sequence of activities designed to enable the presentation and learning of academic content curricular goals.
The teacher also decides when and how different activities within a lesson will be structured: cooperatively, individually or competitively.

This decision on how to structure the lesson has a very important impact on how students will go through the learning process.

There are various instructional alternatives that teachers can select for this function.
### Instructional Alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large group or whole class instruction</th>
<th>One to one teacher/student interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher directed and small group instruction</td>
<td>Independent or individual seat work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group learning</td>
<td>Cooperative learning groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner learning or peer tutors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you decide which structure to choose?

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Criteria for choosing the structure of a lesson

Choose an individual structure
When you want students to work alone on material specifically designed for their learning needs and when you want to limit peer influence and interaction.

Choose a competitive structure
When you want well-matched competitors to compete in the absence of a norm-referenced grading system. If not used too frequently, it can be an effective way to motivate students to cooperate with each other.

Choose a cooperative structure
When you want students to explain and elaborate, dig deeply into complex concepts, consider diverse perspectives, and help each other.
In this brief video segment, you can see what occurs in a music lesson within a cooperative learning group.

Notice too, how actively the teachers in this class are monitoring and intervening as they interact and work with students.
There are three types of cooperative learning groups

Building on your ideas about instructional options, let’s examine some additional possibilities about group instructional design developed by cooperative learning teachers.

- The Johnsons find that there are three types of cooperative learning groups that should be used in an integrative way: cooperative base groups, informal cooperative learning groups, and formal cooperative learning groups.
Cooperative learning base groups are usually long-term, heterogeneous cooperative learning groups in which the members stay together on a permanent basis from 5 to 10 months.

- Many teachers start these within the first few days of school with random pairings that is followed by putting together two sets of pairs, creating a group of 4.

- The purpose of the base group is to give support, help, feedback and any kind of assistance to its members.

- Teachers often end the day with a 5 minute base group interaction focused on helping each other review and pack up material needed for homework.

- For example, if a group member is ill, members of the base group are encouraged to call, bring home assignments, stay in touch.
A Formal Cooperative Learning Group

In **formal cooperative learning groups**, students are working together for durations of one class period to several weeks to achieve shared learning goals and complete specific tasks and assignments.

- A formal group is put together very carefully by the teacher for a specific academic activity that requires a week or more of working together.

- Group members should achieve the basic social skills prior to interacting in formal groups.

- It is recommended that you form heterogeneous or mixed ability formal groups.

Let’s pause again, this time to provide an opportunity to consider the advantages of mixed ability formal groups.
Formal Group Size and Heterogeneity

There’s plenty of time for students to learn basic social skills before moving the recommended size of four students for formal group projects.

- This kind of group task is more complex since the work involves activities that require time, effort, a lot of interaction and significant learning.

- The size of cooperative-learning formal groups is relatively small (4 is considered ideal) and as heterogeneous as circumstances allow.

- If possible, formal groups should contain both males and females and students of varying strengths and learning levels.
Informal Cooperative Learning Groups

In informal co-operative learning groups, students work together on a temporary basis to achieve a joint learning goal.

- These ad hoc pairs or randomly organized small groups last from a few minutes to one class period.
- Informal cooperative learning can be used to focus students’ attention on the study material or topic of the class.
- They may be involved in collaborating for a specific activity, like a review for a quiz, or working with a particular skill.
- Membership changes frequently, giving students the opportunity to work with everyone, at least part of the time.

The small groups you’ve used for pairings are an example of informal groups.
Here are some ideas about why cooperative learning works

- According to Lev Vygotsky, collaboration promotes cognitive growth because students model for each other more advanced ways of thinking than any would demonstrate individually.

- According to Jean Piaget, collaboration among peers hastens the decline of egocentrism and allows the development of more advanced ways of understanding and dealing with the world.

- We’ve learned from neurodevelopmental research that new information that is elaborated (restructured and related to existing knowledge) is more easily retrieved from memory than is information that is not elaborated. A particularly effective means of elaboration is explaining something to someone else.

Now it is time to consider for yourself how the information and speculations you've learned can be converted into classroom practice.
Resources for Further Investigation

- **The New Circles of Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom and School** (1994), by David Johnson, Roger Johnson, and Edythe Johnson Holubec is a brief (105 pages) and readable description of the basic elements of the authors' version of cooperative learning.

- **Group Investigation** (1994) Yael Sharan and Schlomo Sharan systematically sets up group studies

- **Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the heterogeneous classroom** (1994) Elizabeth Cohen involves notable respect for every student regardless of background and academic abilities.

Books that describe cooperative methods for specific grade levels

- **Cooperative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom** (1991) by Harvey Foyle, Lawrence Lyman, and Sandra Thies

- **Cooperative Learning in the Elementary Classroom** (1993), by Lawrence Lyman, Harvey Foyle, and Tara Azwell

- **Cooperative Learning in Middle-Level Schools** (1991), by Jerry Rottier and Beverly Ogan

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More Resources

Four books that describe how to use cooperative methods for specific grade levels are

- *Cooperative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom* (1991) by Harvey Foyle, Lawrence Lyman, and Sandra Thies
- *Cooperative Learning in the Elementary Classroom* (1993), by Lawrence Lyman, Harvey Foyle, and Tara Azwell
- *Cooperative Learning in Middle-Level Schools* (1991), by Jerry Rottier and Beverly Ogan
Finally, a collection of forty-eight articles that originally appeared in the *Journal of Educational Leadership* between 1985 and 1991 can be found in *Cooperative Learning and the Collaborative School* (1991), edited by Ronald Brandt.
The following url is a video from YouTube. If we don’t get a chance to view this together, I recommend it to you. It contains some good tips on using cooperative learning.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LWE2HF1v1Y
About Hidden Sparks

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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Contacting Hidden Sparks

Contact Harriet Lenk:
hlenk@bankstreet.edu

Contact Hidden Sparks:
www.hiddensparks.org
margaret@hiddensparks.org
(212) 767-7707