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Cooperative Learning in Practice

Activating Students as Instructional Resources for One Another

Four worked lesson plans across Science, Mathematics, English and History – each demonstrating how group goals, individual accountability and the four mechanisms of cooperative learning work together in a real classroom.

Based on the research of Professor Dylan William

Lesson Overview

This lesson uses a jigsaw structure to ensure every student is individually accountable for a section of content the whole group needs — making both group goals and individual accountability explicit from the outset.

Stage	Duration	Classroom Activity	Condition / Mechanism
Hook	4 mins	Teacher poses: "Your group must explain the process of photosynthesis so that every member can answer a question about any part of it." Each student is assigned a section — inputs, process, outputs, significance.	Group goal Individual accountability
Jigsaw Learning	12 mins	Students become "experts" in their assigned section by reading a short text and making notes. They then regroup to teach their section to the rest of the group — each student is the only source of that information for the group.	Individual accountability Personalisation Cognitive elaboration
Group Quiz	6 mins	Teacher randomly selects one student from each group to answer a question on any section — not just their own. The group's score depends on every member being able to answer any question.	Group goal Individual accountability Motivation
Peer Explanation	6 mins	Students who answered incorrectly are supported by their group. The student who explained that section must now explain it differently until their peer understands.	Cognitive elaboration Social cohesion Personalisation
Exit Pass	2 mins	Every student individually writes one sentence explaining the part of photosynthesis they found most difficult to understand — handed in as they leave.	Individual accountability

Lesson Overview

This lesson uses four different worked solutions to create individual accountability from the start — every student has a unique piece of information the group needs, and the teacher can call on any member at any point to explain the group's reasoning.

Stage	Duration	Classroom Activity	Condition / Mechanism
Hook	4 mins	Teacher presents four different worked solutions to the same algebra problem — one per student in each group. Each student must identify whether their solution is correct and explain their reasoning to the group.	Individual accountability Cognitive elaboration
Group Consensus	8 mins	Groups must reach consensus on which solution is correct and why. Every student must be able to explain the group's reasoning — the teacher will ask any member at random.	Group goal Individual accountability Motivation
Peer Teaching	10 mins	Students who reached the correct answer teach the method to those who did not, using the worked example as a guide. The teacher circulates, prompting explainers with follow-up questions.	Cognitive elaboration Personalisation Social cohesion
Independent Practice	8 mins	Every student attempts two new problems independently. Before handing in, they check their partner's work and must sign to confirm they have reviewed it and it makes sense to them.	Individual accountability Cognitive elaboration
Exit Pass	2 mins	Each student writes the one step in the process they found most difficult — used by the teacher to plan the next lesson.	Individual accountability

Lesson Overview

This lesson assigns each student a unique paragraph from a shared text, ensuring that every student's contribution is essential for the group to build a complete analysis. Peer feedback using the ladder of feedback structure is embedded at the midpoint.

Stage	Duration	Classroom Activity	Condition / Mechanism
Hook	4 mins	Each student in the group receives a different paragraph from the same persuasive text. Their task: identify the persuasive technique used in their paragraph and explain how it works to the rest of the group.	Individual accountability Cognitive elaboration
Group Analysis	10 mins	Groups combine their analyses to build a complete picture of the techniques used across the full text. Every student's contribution is essential — no one can complete the task alone.	Group goal Motivation Personalisation
Peer Feedback	8 mins	Each student writes a short paragraph analysing their own assigned section. They then swap with a partner and give written feedback using the ladder of feedback: clarify, value, concerns, suggest.	Individual accountability Social cohesion Cognitive elaboration
Revision	6 mins	Students revise their paragraph based on peer feedback before submitting. The group's final task is to agree on the most effective technique used across the whole text — with every member able to justify the choice.	Group goal Individual accountability
Exit Pass	2 mins	Every student writes one sentence: "The most effective persuasive technique in this text is ___ because ___." Collected individually as students leave.	Individual accountability

HISTORY

Year 9 — Causes of the First World War

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Lesson Overview

This lesson gives each student a unique primary source, making individual accountability structural rather than assumed. The random selection of presenters ensures every student prepares fully — and the peer challenge phase develops cognitive elaboration through real-time explanation under pressure.

Stage	Duration	Classroom Activity	Condition / Mechanism
Hook	4 mins	Each student receives a different primary source related to the causes of World War One. Their task: summarise what their source reveals and present it to the group as the group's only access to that source.	Individual accountability Personalisation
Source Analysis	10 mins	Groups use all four sources together to construct an argument about the most significant cause of the war. Every student must be able to explain how their source supports or complicates the group's argument.	Group goal Motivation Cognitive elaboration
Structured Discussion	8 mins	Groups present their argument to the class. The teacher randomly selects one member of each group to present — not necessarily the student who led the discussion. Groups prepare every member to present.	Individual accountability Group goal Social cohesion
Peer Challenge	6 mins	Other groups ask one question of the presenter. The presenter may consult their group before answering — but must give the answer themselves.	Individual accountability Cognitive elaboration
Exit Pass	2 mins	Every student writes: "My source showed that ____, which matters because ____." Collected individually as students leave.	Individual accountability