Cooperation in the Classroom

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Abstract

Originally published in Contemporary Psychology: APA Review of Books, 1991, Vol 36(12), 1106–1107. Reviews the book, Cooperative Learning: Critical Thinking and Collaboration Across the Curriculum by Dennis M. Adams and Mary E. Hamm (see record 1990-97476-000). Adams and Hamm have written one of the latest books encouraging teachers to begin using cooperative learning. Adams and Hamm have put together an interesting and useful book for teachers. Broad generations, with quotes from both popular and scholarly sources interspersed, are used to highlight the conclusion that cooperative learning is an important instructional procedure. The authors build a case that cooperative learning should be used because of its relevance to work, citizenship, and critical thinking. They present a rationale for using cooperative learning in language arts, science and mathematics, mainstreaming, and computer-assisted instruction. They give practical suggestions and examples of how to do so. This combination of why and how may be especially helpful and interesting to teachers. Although teachers will find the book interesting, it falls somewhat short of its aims. The book is aimed at being a practical guide to issues, ideas, trends, and instructional procedures for structuring cooperative learning. Too little practical advice is given to help teachers get started with (and sustain) cooperative learning in their classrooms. The book is more a series of essays with practical suggestions added. Finally, the price of the book seems high for its number of pages. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2006 APA, all rights reserved)

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When implementing cooperative learning in the classroom and the school, one major issue becomes, “How well do group members manage conflicts?” Cooperation and conflict go hand-in-hand. The more group members care about achieving the group’s goals, and the more they care about each other, the more frequently conflicts will occur. The second is peer mediation in which all students are taught how to negotiate solutions to their conflicts with schoolmates and faculty and how to mediate conflicts among their peers (Johnson and Johnson 1991). When conflicts are managed constructively within a group, class, and school, the stage is set for cooperative learning and the cooperative school to reach their potential. The Cooperative School.