

Easy Cooperative Learning Structures for Kindergarten Students

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Think-Pair-Share (Lyman)

This is a simple structure to incorporate with favourable results but one which is often overlooked in class situations.

Takes approx. **3 minutes**.

Description: In the first part (THINK) you will be asked a question and given an opportunity to silently consider your reply. In the second & third part (PAIR & SHARE) you will be asked to turn to the person next to you and share your thoughts.

Procedure: In Kindergarten it is best to identify partners ahead of time (teacher-chosen at first) and to have partners sitting side by side so that when sharing time arrives they are ready to turn and chat. Giving the "think time" first allows for best use of talk time since the students are prepared to talk and listen.

Example: During storytime, the teacher poses a question (e.g. If reading *Goldilocks* the teacher may ask the following question: *Think about the character Goldilocks and the character Little Red Riding Hood. What mistake do you think each of them made?*) After allowing private think time, have the students turn to their partner and share their thoughts. (In Kindergarten partners can be identified as "talking partners" or "whispering partners").

Think-Pair-Share can be used regularly during the modeled reading period at any point where the teacher would normally be inclined to ask a question to check comprehension, or solicit opinions, or to initiate critical thinking. Having several students share their thoughts in the large group can be done afterwards but not necessarily.

Afterwards: Tell students ahead of time how important it is to share their thoughts but that it is **equally important** to be a good listener. (Practice what good listening looks like and sounds like perhaps using a T-Chart which can then be posted and kept for reference regularly.) In debriefing on the question asked, which students have shared with their talking partners, ask several children to **share what their partner said**. This is challenging at first because they are more interested in sharing their own thinking with the large group but it is one way to emphasize the importance of good listening skills which will serve them well throughout life. After several sessions and a reminder that at the end they may



be asked what their partner said students will become better at listening and paraphrasing.

Reflection on the Think-pair-Share structure : This procedure of having students respond to a question differs from the traditional model where the teacher asks a question of the entire group and then waits for several hands to be raised before calling on one student to respond aloud for everyone. The benefits are that everyone is called upon to prepare an answer and then share that answer aloud (in a pair). Reluctant students or shy students feel safer in expressing their ideas and get to try them out before possibly responding in a larger group.

Students practice their communication skills and harmonious interaction with peers.

Corners - (Kagan)

The teacher asks a question or proposes a topic. Each corner of the room is designated as an area representing a different response to the topic. Students then move to the appropriate corner corresponding to their own thinking.

Procedure: The teacher reads and discusses a picture book or information book. Cards with different perspectives (represented in picture form) are then posted in four corners of the room. Students are asked a pertinent question on the topic of the book(s). Students reflect on their response and then move to the appropriate corner where they meet and discuss their choice with others assembled there.

Example: The teacher reads a picture book and an information book over a couple of days on the topic of circus. Students are asked to consider the following: "If I worked in the circus, the job I would choose is..." After silent reflection, students move to the card corner which reflects their choice of job. A fifth station with the word "Other" should also be a choice. Once in their selected corner the students talk with 1 or 2 others and explain why they made this choice. Why is this job appealing? Why do they think they would be good at it? What would their second choice be? Etc.

Corners - This structure can be used to have students reflect and form personal opinions and express their understanding of the world and affirm their personality. Having several students share their thoughts in the large group can be done afterwards allowing students to hear different perspectives from other corners.

Afterwards: After the debriefing from the 4 corners be sure to call upon any students in the "Other" corner to ask what choices they made and why. Providing this fifth location allows for every child to find a place that allows him or her to express their views.



Reflection on the Corners structure : This structure allows students to move and interact in small groups. Movement and interaction are important to energize brain and body allowing for healthy concentration and performance. They take turns speaking and listening practicing good manners for interaction and respecting the viewpoints of others. It also provides the teacher with a good perspective of individuals and their ability to affirm their personality.

Students practice their communication skills and harmonious interaction with peers.

Inside/Outside Circle (Kagan)

This structure targets communication, movement and interacting harmoniously with others.

Procedure: In an open area in the classroom or yard, half of the total number of students form a circle. The remaining half form a concentric circle around the inner circle of students. The teacher then instructs the inner circle of students to turn to face a partner in the outer circle. They become talking partners. At a signal, the inside circle rotates several steps to the right or left allowing students to face a new partner for a new exchange.

Example: Before forming the circle the teacher gives each child a paper and drawing implements. The paper is folded into quarters or more sections if desired. In each section of the paper the child draws a simple picture that answers the question posed by the teacher. (e.g. draw your favourite food for one section, your best friend and you enjoying an activity that you both like in another section, your favourite story book character in a third section, etc. etc.) Once the paper is complete the Inside/Outside circles are formed and each child carries his or her paper to serve as a memory aid for the conversations they will have with different classmates.

The teacher acts as "caller" for this activity. For example: *With your partner take turns showing your picture and telling about your favourite storybook character. (Allow for 2 minute exchange.) Now inside circle people move 3 steps to the right while outside circle people stay in place without moving. Face your new partner, say hello and share what you drew for you & your best friend. Etc. etc.* Sometimes the caller will have outside circle rotate and other times the inside circle rotates. In a typical lesson several rotations will be done until all sections of the paper are discussed.

Inside/Outside Circle can be done at different times to allow for transition between activities.



Afterwards: Students may be encouraged to share in the large group something they learned about a classmate that they did not know before. This builds a sense of community and respect for differences and similarities.

Reflection on the Inside/Outside Circle structure : This structure allows students to move and interact. It also helps teach and reinforce left-right concepts. Students practice their communication skills and harmonious interaction with peers. Doing the drawing first helps them remember and serves as a kind of early graphic organizer for their thoughts

Mix-Freeze-Group

This structure targets communication, movement and interacting harmoniously with others.

Procedure: In an open area in the classroom or yard, students circulate while a lively piece of music is played. Students move freely and in any direction as long as they stay within the area defined for the activity. The teacher randomly stops the music at which point students must freeze and a command is given to form a group with a specific number of members close by. Then they must discuss a topic given by the teacher.

Example: Play music and invite students to circulate in the area defined. Students freeze when music stops. They must then form a group with those closest to them when they froze. The teacher helps them determine the group size by calling out directives such as: *number of days in the weekend (Means they will be in pairs); Once the group is formed the teacher asks a question and teams discuss. When the music resumes they break apart and circulate again waiting for the next freeze, group size directive and question to discuss, Other group size directives could include: Number of seasons in the year (groups of 4); Number of sides in a triangle (groups of 3); etc. etc.*

Afterwards: This builds a sense of community and allows for random grouping. The music and movement provide opportunity for expression of different learning styles associated with kinesthetic learning.

Reflection on Mix-Freeze-Group structure: This structure allows students to move and interact. It also helps teach and reinforce number concepts that might be related to science or mathematics, etc.

