

FSL

FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers

MODULE 4

Cooperative Learning

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Collaborative learning (also called cooperative learning) is an instructional approach that requires students of varying abilities to work together in small groups or teams to solve a problem, complete a project, or achieve a common goal.

A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 1 (2006), p. 96

Context

This module is intended to support elementary and secondary Core French teachers in maximizing purposeful student-centred interaction. Cooperative learning increases opportunities for students to practise their French in meaningful contexts. This module draws on relevant research and the experiences of Core French teachers, and provides suggestions for planning, teaching, assessment, and reflection.

In Core French, cooperative learning promotes the development of French language skills by maximizing the time available for student talk, while allowing the teacher to confer with small groups to provide timely descriptive feedback. When interacting with peers in pairs and small groups, Core French students may feel more willing to take risks in speaking French and to attempt new and increasingly complex language. Cooperative learning ensures that all students have a specific audience whose role is to listen attentively and respond. Students take turns to build on each other's contributions and support each other as they work toward a common goal. Students are encouraged to share ideas and opinions, discuss strategies that help them learn, give feedback to one another, and reflect on their progress as a group and as individuals.

The Core French teacher models the related language and skills and supports students with positive feedback during and after the activity. Depending on the needs of students and their experience in working collaboratively, the teacher may need to teach lessons that focus on social and communication skills.

Collaborative learning invites students to make choices, derive pleasure from their learning, take risks, practise and refine their literacy and learning strategies, and develop independence. It provides a safe and positive environment for students to engage in the social interactions that are so important ... and to explore the social nature of language and literacy.

Literacy for Learning (2004), p. 28

Planning for Cooperative Learning

To plan for successful cooperative learning, the Core French teacher considers all aspects of a given task. The Core French teacher introduces students to cooperative learning through very brief interactions with one partner. As the partners demonstrate success in communicating in French for shorter tasks, the Core French teacher gradually increases the time allotted, the complexity of the task, and the size of the groups.

Effective cooperative tasks enable students to practise their communication in purposeful, meaningful contexts. Students are also more motivated and engaged in their learning when they are involved in planning and are provided with choices. The teacher can differentiate tasks by changing the content, process, or product in response to student needs.

The Core French teacher establishes routines and strategies to maximize time on task and student talk time during cooperative tasks. The Core French teacher discusses and models the cooperative skills before students are expected to work in groups. Together, the Core French teacher and students co-create guidelines in French for appropriate and respectful behaviour. These guidelines should be realistic, stated in simple and positive language, and posted for student reference during the cooperative learning sessions.

Example

Pour un travail coopératif:

- Nous parlons toujours en français.
- Nous écoutons les autres membres de notre groupe.
- Nous posons des questions.
- Nous contribuons nos idées et nos opinions.
- Nous répondons aux idées des autres membres de notre groupe.
- Nous exprimons nos opinions dans une manière respectueuse.

Posting a visual reminder of the desired interactions helps to keep students on task.

See Module 1: *Oral Proficiency* in A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers for additional practical tips.

What helped me to speak French is that my friends in my team helped me to say the words I did not know. I was not afraid to speak French because it was only my friends in my group.

Grade 4 Core French student

See Module 3: *The Action-Oriented Approach* in A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers.

Introducing the Cooperative Learning Task

Before beginning a cooperative learning task, the Core French teacher gives instructions orally and in writing, using high frequency vocabulary and appropriate graphics as required to support comprehension, and describes the time and resources available to students to complete the task. During a cooperative task, students are expected to work together to solve problems and answer any questions that may arise. The Core French teacher explicitly teaches the language and skills required to enable students to do this in French.

The Core French teacher bases the learning goals for the task on the curriculum expectations and discusses these goals with the class using student-friendly language. Before starting the task, students are encouraged to reflect on what they know and are able to do in relation to the learning goals. The Core French teacher ensures that all students have a clear understanding of the steps and strategies needed to achieve the learning goals. The learning goals and success criteria should be posted for students' reference during the cooperative learning. Students can also record the learning goals and success criteria in their notebooks. In addition, by presenting examples of student work and authentic texts, the Core French teacher helps students gain awareness of what quality work looks and sounds like and supports them in co-creating success criteria.

Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Engages the class through questions that stimulate ideas and opinions.
- Discusses the task, deconstructing examples of student work, and checking for understanding.
- Scaffolds learning to ensure student success.
- Explicitly teaches collaborative skills and the French phrases needed for group interactions such as: taking turns without interrupting, making constructive suggestions, disagreeing politely, encouraging peers, resolving conflicts, coming to consensus, and providing assistance when needed.
- Clarifies expectations for group work and explicitly teaches students how to support one another so that all group members are successful.
- Pairs students to share and respond to ideas and opinions.

Students told me that letting them practise with a partner in a smaller group better prepares them to share with the whole group afterwards.

Grades 4–6 Core French teacher

Working in Groups

When forming groups for cooperative learning tasks, the Core French teacher takes into account students' academic abilities, personalities, and learning styles, and establishes a classroom climate that encourages student participation and builds confidence. The Core French teacher carefully considers different types of small groupings so that over time, students have multiple opportunities to work with many students in the class. Students work frequently in pairs to ensure talk time for every student. When forming groups for cooperative tasks, regardless of group size, Core French teachers think about the following:

- Groups are composed of students with different abilities and talents, enabling participants to experience the value of their particular strengths.
- Students work together to achieve specific tasks, which fosters positive interdependence and responsibility.
- Tasks are structured so that no single team member can complete them on his or her own, which fosters an appreciation of diverse strengths and teamwork.

Learning for All (2011), p. 21

To promote both individual and group responsibility for the task, the Core French teacher designates a role for each group member. Students engaged in collaboration practise shared leadership and hold themselves and each other accountable for speaking in French and for participating fully in completing the task. Tools such as anchor charts and student-generated lists of useful phrases promote the transfer of previously learned language and concepts to new situations. The Core French teacher circulates during the task to facilitate interaction, and supports students by providing descriptive feedback based on the success criteria.

Teachers provide plentiful opportunities for students to talk and interact in flexible and dynamic groupings, including small groups and pairs; they model and help students to create a collaborative learning environment where all students feel affirmed, support each other's learning, and are prepared to take chances...

Literacy for Learning (2004), p. 18

Two teachers were debriefing with their other Core French colleagues during a PLC (professional learning community) on a co-teaching lesson. One thing they shared and found very helpful was that if they modelled possible answers to their inquiry questions, the students were able to use French during group work because they knew how to say it.

Grades 7–8 Core French teachers

In using the gradual release of responsibility model, the Core French teacher:

- models the language and skills needed for cooperative learning;
- invites students to share in further exploration before transferring the leadership to them; and
- guides their use of language and skills in pairs or small groups.

With sufficient practice, students are able to use the cooperative learning skills and French language independently while interacting with peers. The Core French teacher continues to support students in refining their French language skills by providing descriptive feedback during the task.

Before my students work in groups, the expectations are established; for example, they know to speak only in French. At first, I reinforced this expectation, and now students have taken responsibility. Before I start group activities, I model, have students repeat language they will need, and scaffold the learning until all students are successful. Then I do “genou à genou.” By this point, the students are anxious to share their personal responses. Before I can release responsibility to students for group work, we do activities to build cooperative learning skills. I also tell them “Je donne les points si tu aides les autres personnes dans ton groupe et si tu parles seulement en français.”

Elementary Core French teacher

Sample Reference Charts to Support Student Collaboration in French

À tour de rôle

Qui veut commencer?
 Qui veut ajouter à cette idée?
 C'est à ton tour.
 Qui aimerait contribuer...?
 On s'éloigne un peu du sujet.
 Qui n'a pas parlé?
 Maintenant nous allons passer à la prochaine...
 Avons-nous terminé?
 Il faut terminer dans cinq minutes.
 Il nous reste dix minutes.
 On a fini./J'ai fini.

S'entraider et encourager

Qui peut expliquer notre tâche?
 Tout le monde comprend?
 Je n'ai pas compris.
 Je ne sais pas comment le dire.
 Tu veux dire...?
 C'est une bonne idée.
 J'aime comment tu...
 Merci d'avoir...
 C'est vrai.
 Quoi d'autre?
 Continue, s'il te plaît.

Clarifier nos idées

Peux-tu expliquer cette idée?
 Que pensez-vous de...?
 Qu'en pensons-nous?
 Pourrais-tu donner un exemple?
 Par exemple...
 C'est-à-dire...
 En d'autres termes...
 En plus...

Exprimer mes besoins

Je dois penser.
 Je ne suis pas prêt(e) à partager.
 Puis-je dire quelque chose maintenant?
 Je viens de penser à une autre idée.
 Je veux parler après mon ami...
 Je ne suis pas certain(e) comment le dire...
 Je vais essayer de l'expliquer...
 J'ai besoin d'aide pour expliquer...

Exprimer nos opinions

Je pense que...
 À mon avis...
 Tout d'abord...
 En premier lieu...
 Je suis d'accord...
 Tout le monde est d'accord?
 Je ne suis pas d'accord.
 Je me demande si...
 D'une part... d'autre part
 D'ailleurs...
 En revanche...
 Par contre...
 Au contraire...

Réfléchir

Notre groupe travaille bien quand...
 J'ai trouvé... facile/difficile parce que...
 Nous avons appris...
 Nous avons réussi parce que...
 Nous voulons savoir...
 J'ai bien aimé...
 Nos meilleures stratégies étaient...
 Ce qui a bien marché pour moi était...
 Quelque chose que j'ai appris de mon groupe c'est...
 J'aimerais suggérer que...
 J'aurais préféré que...
 La prochaine fois...

As students become more adept at using the language associated with cooperative learning, the Core French teacher explicitly teaches and encourages students to use more varied and complex language structures, including how to present ideas clearly, develop an argument logically, introduce causes and effects coherently, and demonstrate understanding of opposing viewpoints.

Sample Reference Charts to Support Students in Refining their Discussion Skills

<p>Développer l'idée</p> <p>À propos de ... En ce qui concerne ... À ce sujet ... Quant à la / au / aux / à l' ... Pour notre (ma) part ... Quant à nous (moi) ...</p>	<p>Pour exprimer la concession</p> <p>De toute façon ... De toute manière ... En dépit du fait que ... Bien que (+ subjonctif) ... En tout cas ... Même si ...</p>
<p>Préciser et illustrer</p> <p>Autrement dit ... C'est-à-dire ... De même ... Effectivement ... Par exemple ...</p>	<p>Indiquer les causes ou conséquences</p> <p>Compte tenu ... Du fait que ... En raison de ... Voilà pourquoi ... Par conséquent ...</p>
<p>Opposer à l'idée</p> <p>Par contre ... Malgré tout ... Néanmoins ... En dépit de ... Toutefois ...</p>	

During the Cooperative Learning Task

After confirming that students understand the collaborative process, their roles, the assigned task, learning goals and success criteria, the Core French teacher forms student groups and acts as a facilitator as students collaborate to complete the task. The teacher listens for effective communication as students create and interact. In the Core French classroom, students need ample opportunities to listen, talk, and work together in order to practise their communication skills. There is productive 'noise' when students are engaged in structured cooperative activities.

Throughout a cooperative task, the Core French teacher:

- Ensures that students are on task.
- Checks for understanding.
- Prompts students by posing questions and making suggestions.
- Models and reinforces correct language usage as necessary.
- Provides descriptive feedback.

Often, the students do not want to share their opinions in French. When I used a concept web with the class to brainstorm sentence structures related to our theme, the students felt confident to express their individual opinion in a group. I used to ask them to go into their groups and share their ideas in French, but this did not happen. I knew they could, so I have been using different organizers so that everyone can write down their ideas first and then share them orally with the group afterwards.

Grade 9 Applied Core French teacher

During cooperative learning, the Core French teacher can focus on a small number of students at a time. The teacher observes, listens, or records spoken and/or written interactions between group members, and then discusses with students their strengths, ways to improve their performance in relation to the success criteria, and suggestions for how to achieve the learning goals. The Core French teacher provides descriptive feedback during and after the cooperative learning task and gives students enough time to act upon this feedback.

Any recognition of students speaking French helps. I've had to try different things with different classes. If a student speaks English, I remove him or her from the group to have an individual conversation. I have also found that students with IEPs participate actively on a regular basis and are experiencing success. The focus on oral language, with much repetition and kinesthetic support, helps them learn French. They have a safety net and a sense of security knowing that everyone is working together and supporting each other. Everybody in the group has to finish the task and they are expected to help each other. At first, they are rewarded for helping each other, but then they develop that sense of community so it becomes a group norm. Before I did group work, I couldn't help all the students. I felt like I needed to split myself into three or four. Now, they help each other. If one group finishes first, they help other groups.

Elementary Core French teacher

If thoughtfully constructed, cooperative learning techniques can provide a framework for structured social interaction while instilling a sense of community and interdependence among learners.

Kristmanson & Cogswell (2007)

Evidence of student learning collected by the Core French teacher during cooperative tasks informs future planning as well as descriptive feedback. For example, based on observations during group work, the teacher addresses a particular point through an explicit mini-lesson, or introduces sub-tasks to scaffold students' learning so they can be more successful.

After the Cooperative Learning Task

Together, the teacher and students reflect on and discuss the cooperative learning task. They identify successes, areas for improvement, and goals for future collaborative work. By asking specific questions that engage students in thinking about their progress and how they learn, the Core French teacher leads students to take greater responsibility for their learning and gain awareness of strategies that are most effective for them. By guiding discussion with the whole class or with individual groups, the Core French teacher models and supports students in developing the French language skills they need to reflect on their learning.

For further information on cooperative learning, see *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 1* (2006).

Reflective Questions for Cooperative Learning

- Qu'est-ce que notre équipe a accompli?
- Avons-nous eu de la difficulté à accomplir la tâche? Pourquoi?
- Quand est-ce que nous avons eu de la difficulté à communiquer en français? Pourquoi?
- Qu'avons-nous fait pour régler un problème?
- Avons-nous donné de la rétroaction à nos partenaires?
- Qu'est-ce que nous pouvons faire la prochaine fois pour mieux réussir?

The Core French teacher can use observation sheets such as the following to track students' use of collaborative learning skills and to inform feedback.

Compétences de collaboration						
Nom de l'élève _____				Tâche _____		
Observation	Date				Commentaires	
• Partage ses idées						
• Utilise les expressions d'encouragement						
• Écoute les autres						
• Pose des questions de clarification						
• Joue bien son rôle en groupe						
• Suit les directives						
• Demande une clarification ou de l'aide si nécessaire						
• Aide le groupe à se concentrer sur la tâche et à réaliser ses objectifs						
• Exprime le désaccord sans être désagréable						

Reflective Practice

- ✓ Do I engage students regularly in cooperative learning as a way to increase student talk time and boost engagement?
- ✓ Do I involve students in building a respectful and risk-free learning environment?
- ✓ Do I provide students with the necessary language and structures to communicate in French during cooperative learning activities?
- ✓ Do I model what I expect students to do during the cooperative activity?
- ✓ Do I rehearse routines to maximize time on task?
- ✓ Do I explicitly teach students how to help each other?
- ✓ Do I involve students in planning and setting personal goals?
- ✓ Do I ensure students understand the learning goals?
- ✓ Do I engage students in higher order thinking during cooperative learning tasks?
- ✓ Do I differentiate cooperative learning strategies and tasks to meet student needs?
- ✓ Do I integrate the use of technology and media in cooperative learning?
- ✓ Do I model and promote group, peer and self-assessment skills?
- ✓ Do I reflect on what works well, what doesn't, and why?
- ✓ Do I collaborate with colleagues to build on cooperative learning skills previously taught?

Suggestions for Further Reading

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