

Is cooperative learning present in your work environment? If yes, please share when it is used in your company? If no, what conditions are present that inhibit the use of cooperative learning?

I'm sure that cooperative learning takes place at the college where I teach, but since I don't sit in on any of the classes of my peers I can't say for sure. In my own classes I have used cooperative learning as a teaching method a few times without much success. In one of my Microsoft Certification classes I broke students into groups and had them build their own functioning networks based on the subjects they were learning in the class, things like DNS servers, Domain Controllers, DHCP servers, Web servers, and FTP servers; pretty easy stuff if you've read the assigned chapter in the textbook. The problem was that students were not motivated to read the necessary text outside of class so that they would be prepared when they came to class. I spent most of my class time running between groups showing them how to do what they should have read about prior to class. Since each group needed my help to perform even the most menial tasks, while I helped one group the others had to wait until their turn came around to be able to move ahead. Last semester I tried pairing up my ActionScript students so that they could help each other learn how to perform certain coding tasks. I paired up the students who were working on similar projects thinking that they would be attempting the same types of procedures and running into similar roadblocks. With this attempt I ran into several problems. A couple of students had not turned in their assignments the week prior so they didn't get paired into a group and ended up missing out on a week's worth of activity. Those that were paired into groups didn't appear to take advantage of the situation and got very little accomplished as a result.

I have found that my students, in general, are much more successful when I take them through tasks, step-by-step, during class. In fact I see more students helping other students using this method, then when assigning them into groups. One of the biggest problems I see in community college students is that it is very difficult to get them to perform any type of activity, reading or projects, outside of class. I find that in order to get the majority of my students to complete assignments and be successful in class that I must hold them by the hand and take them through each assignment. Getting these students to take on responsibility for their own education, getting them to be self-motivated, and realizing the consequences for their actions (or lack thereof) is nearly impossible. I think that students also realize that the only way that they will be successful in class is to participate in the class sessions, which makes them more focused during class and has increased class attendance rates.