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*Welcome to the first CSCOPE newsletter! This newsletter is written specifically for teachers and will include news and information to help you implement the CSCOPE curriculum. In it you will find tools for managing cooperative groups, explanations of CSCOPE documents, easy-to-implement and highly effective instructional strategies, along with a preview of the upcoming six weeks. We hope you enjoy this newsletter and find it useful and informative!*

## Tips and Tools for Managing Cooperative Groups

"All right. Everyone get in a group and discuss the War of 1812." "I said to discuss the War of 1812, not talk about what you did last night!" Sound familiar? Sometimes it seems like putting students in groups is a recipe for disaster! Here are some simple tips for managing groups that will help quiet the chaos.

- Keep group size small. Groups of 3-4 have been shown to be the most effective group size, followed by pairs of students. (Marzano, 2001) Groups of 5 or more make it too easy for students to "opt out" of learning.
- Be specific about what you want students to do while in the group and how long you want them to do it. "I want you to create and label a diagram of the process of photosynthesis. Each person in your group should be able to explain at least one part of the process."

- Assign students to groups instead of letting students choose. Why? You can ensure that groups are heterogeneous, both socially and academically.
- Give students a specific amount of time to accomplish the task, starting with a shorter amount of time than you think it will actually take. "You must finish the first three problems in 10 minutes." This provides a sense of urgency. You can always extend the time. If students are given too much time, little work will be accomplished.

## ESL Strategy of the Month...

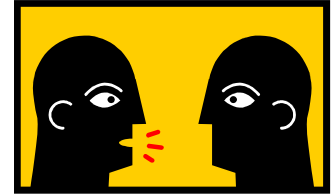
Think about the hardest class you took in college. Did you ever feel like everyone else “got it” quicker than you? I certainly did! Sometimes our students feel that way too. This ESL Tip of the Month works for *ALL* students, fits seamlessly into CSCOPE lessons, and requires *NO* preparation. It is called “**Think-Pair-Share.**”

**When do you use it?** Any time you want students to discuss something in a group—especially if it is a new or difficult concept. It will be particularly useful in the *Explain* part of CSCOPE lessons.

**How does it work?** The teacher teaches students the process for a Think-Pair-Share and then asks a question. Students think for 30 seconds. (You have to time them.) Then they pair up and share their thoughts for 1-2 minutes. (Again, give a specific amount of time for the discussion.) Then ask groups to share their thoughts.

**Why does it work?** ESL students are so busy trying to understand the language that sometimes they don’t get the opportunity to think about what is being said. Thinking time gives them a chance to think about content, not just the spoken words. Pairs work very well

because both students can contribute to the conversation. Sharing in pairs is *much* less scary than in a larger group. Being wrong as a pair isn’t as intimidating as being wrong alone. Finally, if students are talking in pairs, half the class is processing the question at once. If students are in groups of 4, only 1/4 of them are processing. And if only one person is speaking, then one person is processing.



**Does this only help for ESL students?** No way!! This works for ANY student who needs a little more time to think about new concepts!

**How do I implement this?** With any new instructional strategy, you will have to specifically plan when to use this and will have to use it often. Tucker (2004) says that adults have to practice a new skill 21 times to establish a pattern.

**As always,** students must be taught this process. Teach the process and then ask the question. Tightly control the time you allow for thinking, pairing and sharing.

## CSCOPE Doc Spot...IFDs Exposed

**What is it? What is its purpose? How do you use it?**



The Instructional Focus Document (IFD) is the “why” for a unit of study. In the IFD, TEKS, concepts, key understandings and guiding questions connect to provide meaning and purpose to the unit. The IFD helps teachers and students understand how this content connects to the past and future units, as well as to what students learned the previous year. Key understandings and guiding questions provide focus for classroom discussion and help students make sense of the new knowledge. The rationale lets the teacher get in the mind of the lesson writer giving context to the unit.

Where is this powerful, meaningful document? When you open a unit, the link to the IFD will be about half-way down the screen under the Author box and above the Unit Assessment. How do you use it? About two weeks before you start a unit, print the IFD and discuss it in your team meeting. Discussing it ahead of time gives you time to process the concepts you’ll be teaching helping you to bring powerful learning to students. After IFD discussion, check out the VADs. The VADs bring a vertical perspective to the unit. And then, finally, check out the lessons.

### **In the next CSCOPE Doc Spot...Exploring Vertical Alignment Documents...**

*Have a general CSCOPE question that you think would be a good article for the newsletter? Send it to [jennifer.shinners@esc13.txed.net](mailto:jennifer.shinners@esc13.txed.net). If we include it in the next newsletter, you might win a prize...or at least be CSCOPE famous!*



## 4th Six Weeks Lesson Preview



### Science

**Kindergarten:** The first unit of the 4th six weeks is all about making objects work. Students will gain opportunities to explore the motion of objects and investigate the importance of parts to whole relationships in systems. Students will then venture into looking at patterns of change in the environment around us.

**1st Grade:** Students will conduct hands on investigations into everyday objects. The focus of this unit is to provide students with an understanding of how systems work and the essential parts of systems. Students will see the importance and function of everyday objects such as can openers, and will be able to design and test their own objects. Our last unit of this 4th six weeks will focus on the patterns, cycles and changes we see in the weather around us. Students will make observations on plants, animals and gather data about local weather.

**2nd Grade:** Natural resources is the focus this six weeks, with emphasis on the properties of rocks, soil, water, plants and gases in the atmosphere. Students will also investigate the characteristics of living and non-living things. A lesson students will enjoy is making observations using stuffed animals!

**3rd Grade:** The importance of the natural world around us is the focus of our new six weeks. Students will investigate how forces such as earthquakes change our Earth's surface. Through hands on investigations, students will explore rocks and minerals, soil, and the sources of erosion. Students will also learn about renewable, non-renewable, and inexhaustible resources and the importance of protecting and conserving resources.

**4th Grade:** We will be exploring ecosystems for the whole six weeks. Students will conduct hands on investigations and research, such as creating a model of an ecosystem. Important concepts such as the roles of organisms within the ecosystem, how organisms get their energy, and the impact of removing parts from a system will be introduced in this unit.

**5th Grade:** This unit will be out of this world! Students build an understanding of our solar system and the influence of gravity upon it. Patterns and cycles, such as, seasons, the phases of the moon, and tides will be introduced through kinesthetic activities.

**6th Grade:** The importance of how organisms respond to environmental factors around us is the focus of the first unit this six weeks. Students will study how organisms react to internal and external stimuli. We will then move focus to the water cycle. Students will complete a variety of activities to illustrate how water moves through the water cycle using heat, energy and gravity.

**7th Grade:** Force and motion—We will begin looking at balanced and unbalanced forces and how they affect motion. We will explore Newton's First Law of Motion through hands on investigations. The following lessons in this unit focuses on potential and kinetic energy, as well as simple machines. Our last unit this six weeks will be about the relationships between the Earth and the moon. Observing the motion of these objects, we can explain such phenomena such as day and night and tides.

**8th Grade:** It's all about change, and my how our Earth has changed! Students will explore how events over time have led to some amazing consequences. Through investigating the rock cycle, it shows us the important impact it's had on landforms. Students will also research and create their own topographical maps. We then move focus from the effects of change on landforms to our changing climate. Students will explore our ever changing global climate by studying the sun's and oceans influence on weather around our planet.

**Biology:** There are two units this six weeks. How does the classification system work? That will be the question we pose to our students in the first unit. Students will learn about how the classification system works and the characteristics of our six kingdoms. We will then shift our focus to the world of microorganisms. Students will explore the roles that bacteria, viruses, and protists and fungi, and their relationship to diseases.

**IPC:** Students will have a front seat in learning about motion in everyday life! Hands on activities and real world examples allow students to relate these investigations to Newton's Laws of Motion, and also lay the foundation for understanding of future units.

**Chemistry:** You have to love a unit that starts with cake! This unit centers around teaching the mathematics of chemistry—stoichiometry, a concept that can be very challenging for students, in a practical, hands-on approach. In our second unit, look for great group investigations such as Mapping the Mole, and Mathematics of Latent Fingerprinting.