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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...

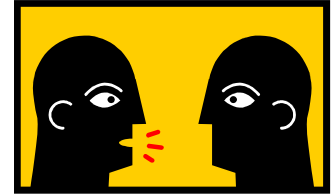
Think about the hardest class you took in college. Did you ever feel like everyone else “got it” quicker than you? I certainly did! Sometimes our students feel that way too. This ESL Tip of the Month works for *ALL* students, fits seamlessly into CSCOPE lessons, and requires *NO* preparation. It is called “**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. If we include it in the next newsletter, you might win a prize...or at least be CSCOPE famous!



4th Six Weeks Lesson Preview



Kindergarten: The first unit of the 4th six weeks is all about communities. We will be learning about the physical and human characteristics of what makes a community. Students will learn the basic needs of communities as well as compare communities to each other.

1st Grade: In our new unit, Celebrating Who We Are, students will have an understanding of how ordinary citizens can do extraordinary things. Students will learn about the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King, and will take a look at what identifies us as Americans.

2nd Grade: This six weeks focus is how individuals from our past have shaped our communities through their actions. Students will also look at current local leaders and how they are influencing change within their own community and will identify what it means to exhibit good citizenship.

3rd Grade: Our third grade students will be delving into the world of economics. Students will have an understanding of what it means to spend versus save. Students will have a fun hands on unit with how to operate a business through a lemonade stand. This unit will give students a practical understanding of how economic concepts work in everyday life.

4th Grade: The aftermath of the Civil War and consequences are our focus in this unit. Students will look at reconstruction and the development of Texas after the war. We will be learning about events such as Western Expansion and researching the settlement patterns in the development of Texas cities. In the 19th Century, students will learn about the important concept of free enterprise and how geographic features influence the movement of people to new industries. Students will also be looking at the diversity of cultures in Texas and learning about their heritages.

5th Grade: This unit's focus is all about how our country expanded its borders. Students will first look at the purpose and result of Lewis and Clark's expedition as well as the Louisiana Purchase. Then students will study about Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion and the reasoning behind settling in the West. We will end this unit by exploring the impact of inventions and sectionalism in America.

6th Grade: Our destination this six weeks is the Middle East and Europe. Students will first explore the Middle East through its physical features and its culture. We will take an in depth look at the people of this region, their customs, religion, way of live and government. In the second unit this six weeks, we will travel to Europe. We will begin by looking at the impact of European Explorers across the globe, which gives way to large scale migration. We will also take a look into the unique countries that make up this region by studying their political systems, social and economic ways of life, culture and geographical boundaries. Students will research how these factors have led to today's modern Europe.

7th Grade: Our unit begins with Texas making the transition to statehood. Students will learn about the importance of this event from a state level to personal with reading about individual accounts. Students will have hands on activities such as making famous Texan trading cards in this lesson, as well as designing a newspaper. Students will also learn about the role Texas had in Manifest Destiny and the reasons and impact of immigration to our state.

World Geography: This six weeks we are exploring the globe from the Middle East to Africa to Central Asia. These unique areas of our world have had a diverse history filled with both discoveries and turbulent change. Students will look at the diversity of the lands, the peoples of these regions, their conflicts and challenges.