

# MULTICULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER

A collaborative project of Saint Paul Public Schools Office of Educational Equity and the East Metro Integration District

"The Problem Solver"  
Nzila Fetis h from Congo



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## Rethinking Cooperative Learning

Our society and schools are becoming increasingly diverse. Cultural, social, socioeconomic, and other personal differences play an important role in our lives. Individuals experience the differences and similarities between themselves and others and attach meaning to these based on the nature of these experiences. For school age children in the United States, many of their social interactions, especially those outside of their family, occur in a school setting. Curriculum and instructional strategies in schools need to be intentional in promoting a variety of social interaction experiences as part of the learning experience. Complex Instruction (CI) is a distinct form of cooperative learning that comes from the perspective that diversity is a normal social and cultural phenomena and that the interaction amongst diverse individuals is a significant strategy for effective learning and in creating equitable classrooms.

Differing from traditional forms of cooperative learning, Complex Instruction targets all students in the classroom. It aims to help students develop higher order thinking skills and improve their social skills and relations in the classroom. There are three main components to CI. The first of these is a curriculum that uses open-ended tasks that revolve around a central theme or big idea and addressing multiple abilities. Students encounter this concept or idea in different contexts and have multiple opportunities to grasp and/or deepen their understanding of the material. These tasks encourage students to interact with each other as a source for learning and connect learning to their everyday lives. The second aspect of CI is the delegation of authority through differentiation and cooperative rules and roles. As the groups are heterogeneous, there is a greater pool of experiences and learning strengths to draw on. Tasks are interdependent, but individuals are held accountable individually through their assigned group role. Teachers pay particular attention to unequal participation of students and employ strategies to address such problems. The third aspect of CI is the intentional status treatments to benefit pupils with perceived low status in the group through equalizing participation rates. Status is an equity issue. High status students tend to do most of the work and hence learn more, further increasing their status. Low status students are not that way because of some deficit due to low self-esteem or shyness. It is situational. Change the social situation and change the status.

The management system of CI is such that it provides a model and practice for accepting multiple ways of doing something and valuing the experience of others. Students can observe that different types of skills and behaviors contribute to being a "good and competent student." Multiple ability tasks give teachers the opportunity to give recognition to students who generally do not excel at paper and pencil tasks for their academic and intellectual accomplishments.

Multicultural classrooms should be equitable classrooms. Complex Instruction takes the position that fundamental change of the social system of the classroom can produce a more equitable situation where each student makes valued intellectual contributions and where teachers intervene to overcome status differences that impede learning. Teachers must find ways to provide access to intellectually challenging instruction and grade-appropriate curriculum for all students.

### MRC Steering Committee

Aric Babbitt, SSD 006  
Kathy Griebel, EMID  
Kathryn Maron, ISD197  
Lana Mahoney, ISD 625  
Yusef Mgeni, ISD 625  
Lynn Mucciacciaro, ISD 832  
Janet Nelson, SSD 6  
David Olson, ISD 624  
Dianne Olson, ISD 833  
Patrick Romey, ISD 625  
Jim Shey, ISD 622  
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Carl Wahlsrom, EMID  
Debra Watson, EMID  
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Larry Wren, ISD 625

*Materials from the MRC have given some of our teachers a "starting" point in looking at diverse perspectives.*

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*The MRC has really helped my students become inquirers and helped me promote multiple perspectives. I don't know what I would do without it!*

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*Kids love seeing and touching actual artifacts. It helps us address more learning styles. Your objects, books, music, and resources are helping kids make connections to themselves, their peers and people and places they knew nothing about.*

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*I have loved checking out the objects! It has been wonderful to have real objects to share with them to illustrate various cultures. The professional development resources (books from the MRC) have helped our school study group add strategies for working with urban learners.*

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*Awesome resource!*

## Exciting Events Coming Up @ the MRC

**Back by popular demand...MRC Movie Nights.** Each month during the 2006-2007 school year, the MRC will host a *free* community film screening. Students, staff, and community members are welcome to join us. Films have been selected to compliment monthly staff development offerings. Discussions will follow the films. Lemonade, snacks, and CEUs will be available. See below for a listing of featured films and dates. Check our website for complete descriptions of the films. While registration for the Movie Nights is not necessary, an RSVP would be appreciated.

***Last Chance for Eden, Part 1***, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2006

***Poetic License***, Tuesday, January 23, 2007

***Rize***, Wednesday, February 28, 2007

***Paperclips***, Tuesday, March 27, 2007

***Two Homes, One Dream***, Wednesday, April 25, 2007

***I is Hmong***, Tuesday, May 16, 2007

The MRC offers monthly, evening staff development workshops focusing on a variety of issues. These classes are *free* to staff in Saint Paul Public Schools and other EMID-member districts. A light supper and CEUs will be available to participants. To register for these workshops, complete a registration form (available on our website) and mail or fax to the MRC by the Friday before the workshop. Workshops will be held at the MRC.

A listing of the remaining workshops for 2007 are below.

***Simulation Activities in Education*** Wednesday, January 17, 2007

***African American Issues in Education*** Tuesday, February 13, 2007

***Engaging Families of Color*** Wednesday, March 7, 2007

***Somali Issues in Education*** Tuesday, April 17, 2007

***Asian American Issues in Education*** Tuesday, May 8, 2007

## Learn More About Cooperative Learning Online...

[http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=RecordDetails&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=ED360877&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=eric\\_accno&objectId=0900000b8011f8a9](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED360877&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_accno&objectId=0900000b8011f8a9) Article on the role of cooperative learning in the multicultural classroom.

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/> British website on collaborative learning with lots of lesson plans.

<http://cgi.stanford.edu/group/pci/cgi-bin/site.cgi> Program for Complex Instruction at Stanford.

<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/coopcollab/index.html> Online workshop on cooperative and collaborative learning.

## MRC Curriculum Resources Utilizing Complex Instruction Methodology:

Distant Train. ***The Big Myth*** [CD-rom].

Chan, Adrian. ***The Concept of Order in Ancient China : A Curriculum Unit for History and Social Studies.***

Brown, Waka Takahashi. ***Ethnic Minority Group In China.***

Lucia Nunez. ***Visions of History : The Aztecs and the Spanish.***

More resources to be added soon...

Additional Resources Available through SPICE @Stanford University at

<http://spice.stanford.edu/>

## Check It Out...Resources on Cooperative Learning Available at the MRC

### ***Teaching Cooperative Learning: The Challenge for Teacher Education* by Elizabeth Cohen.**

Teacher educators from ten institutions and programs in the United States, Canada, and Germany describe the ways in which they have changed teacher preparation to more fully incorporate cooperative learning concepts. Analytical commentaries on the programs highlight the learning experience of these programs as well as underlying issues of needed reforms in teacher education. Included among best practices in education, cooperative learning may require a shift in program philosophy and disciplinary areas to meet the challenge of complex organizations and diverse student populations.

### ***Learning Together in the Multicultural Classroom* by Elizabeth Coelho.**

This book is about methods of classroom and curriculum organization that promote effective cognitive and affective development in a linguistically and racially diverse setting. The book focuses on developing practical approaches to and techniques for small group work that can be implemented in the classroom.

### ***Groupwork in Diverse Classrooms : A Casebook for Educators* by Judith Shulman.**

Sixteen teachers describe their experiences with groupwork in vivid detail, focusing on both their successes and failures. Their compelling stories are excellent discussion catalysts that will lead teachers to examine their own views, prejudices, and attitudes toward typical dilemmas on groupwork in their classrooms.

### ***Cooperative Learning in Mathematics: A Handbook for Teachers* by Neil Davidson.**

These essays suggest realistic, practical strategies for using small groups in math teaching and learning. Educators such as Marilyn Burns, Roberta Dees, and Calvin D. Crabill tell why cooperative learning involves much more than "just putting students together... and giving them a task. Grades 1-12

### ***Cooperative Learning Activities in the Library Media Center* by Lesley Farmer.**

This book helps you understand, develop, and implement cooperative learning activities with middle and high school students. Recent findings about cooperative learning are incorporated into the strategies, as well as such trends and developments as team planning, outcome-based assessment, information literacy, and the new national guidelines for library media programs.

### ***Multicultural Mathematics: Interdisciplinary Cooperative Learning Activities* by Claudia Zaslavsky.**

Collection of 58 cooperative math activities based on representations, calculations, and geometric designs used by people throughout the world.

### ***Cooperative Learning, Cooperative Lives: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities for Building a Peaceful World* by Nancy Schneidewind.**

A collection of classroom activities that utilize cooperative learning strategies for social justice learning.

### ***Get-it-Together: Math Problems for Groups, gr. 4-12* by Lawrence Hall of Science.**

A collection of over 100 mathematics problems for groups of 26 students. The problems cover a wide range of math topics such as logic, functions, algebra, geometry, measurement, and number patterns at various levels of difficulty. Each problem has the same format: six clue cards provide the information needed to solve a problem. Since each member of the group has a different bit of information, everyone works together to arrive at a solution.

### ***Designing Groupwork : Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom* by Elizabeth Cohen.**

Detracking students is a moral imperative for many, but there are few guides for the development of democratic learning communities. Cohen begins with a carefully crafted rationale for groupwork and moves through steps in the structures, processes, and challenges teachers and students face as they learn to work together.

### ***Expanding Cooperative Learning Through Group Investigation* by Yael Sharan.**

Focusing on a methodology called cooperative inquiry, the authors give tips on how students can be active participants in a rewarding learning process and develop social skills. Detailed examples of class projects for elementary and upper grades are outlined as are training programs for pre-service and in-service teachers.

### ***Cooperative Learning* by Spencer Kagan.**

This comprehensive book introduces a variety of structures for using cooperative learning in the classroom. Pitfalls, tips, and assessment ideas are offered.

**Browse our on-line catalog to discover more great resources for your classroom!**

<http://mrc.spps.org/Catalog.html>

## Multicultural Resource Center

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See us at:

[www.mrc.spps.org](http://www.mrc.spps.org)



## About the Multicultural Resource Center...

Multicultural education is a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education. It is grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally. Multicultural education acknowledges that schools are essential to laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice. ~Paul Gorski (<http://www.edchange.org>)

The Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) facilitates access, for teachers, to the necessary tools to infuse learning experiences with Multicultural Education. The MRC is part library, part museum, mostly a place where educators can come to build their capacity in working with diverse students and find resources to support this new capacity.

The goal of the MRC is to promote the creation of equitable learning environments infused with multiple, authentic viewpoints that confront the norming of whiteness. Through curricular support, lending out materials to support such an environment, and providing modeling through class visits and staff development opportunities, social change will occur. Please explore our website to gain a better understanding of the MRC's various roles.

### Browsing Hours...Stop On By!

While the MRC is available for class visits and meetings during the day, we have set aside the specific times below for patron browsing and check-out. It is best to call before you come to ensure that someone will be available to assist you.

***Mondays and Thursdays, 1 pm-4 pm***

***Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 2 pm-6 pm***

***All other times, by appointment only.***

Check out our website for policies and procedures for reserving the MRC.

### From the Inter-district Partnership Coach...

The SPPS Interdistrict Classroom Partnership Office facilitates classroom partnerships and collaborations with nine suburban districts that surround Saint Paul. The Interdistrict Partnerships are a voluntary cooperation of SPPS teachers (K-12 classrooms) and administrators for the purpose of fostering understanding, cultural awareness and respect through enriching academic classroom/student exchanges. Please feel free to email or contact my office for further information.

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