

The Effects of Group Composition on Gifted and Non-Gifted Elementary Students in Cooperative Learning Groups

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This research was undertaken to provide researchers, administrators, and teachers with tangible evidence as to the effectiveness of cooperative learning with gifted students. A controlled field experiment was designed to assess the effects of both heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping in cooperative learning settings on the performance of gifted and non-gifted students, including their achievement, self-concept, and attitude toward school subjects, as well as the feelings that they have toward one another. It was also designed to determine whether different types of cooperative learning arrangements implemented in different content areas yield comparable results. The study involved 786 fourth grade students drawn from 42 classrooms located in 8 school districts.

Gifted fourth grade students experienced no adverse effects as a result of interacting with non-gifted students in cooperative learning groups. The gifted student does not learn less, experience a decline in self-concept, or become less popular in his or her group. In fact, students are seen as more friendly and better leaders in these groups, and they experience a relative increase in social self-esteem in heterogeneous groups.

At the same time, the non-gifted student does not experience an increase in achievement due to the presence of a gifted student. Thus, the view of the gifted child as a teaching resource was not supported. However, the non-gifted student in heterogeneous groups suffers from a decline in self-esteem and a decline in the perception by non-gifted peers on task-relevant activities. In sum, heterogeneous grouping has positive socioemotional outcomes for gifted children and negative ones for non-gifted children.

Citation:

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