



Early Childhood Investigations 2022

**Let's Play!
Cooperative Games
In Early Childhood Programs**

With Suzanne Lyons MA, MA, author, educator & founder CooperativeGames.com

Agenda


- Introductions: To the Speaker, to Our Group, and to Cooperative Games
- The Win-Win Way: Fostering Cooperation and Rethinking Competition
- Brief History of Cooperative Games: Playing for Peace
- Supporting Research and Theory: Why Cooperative Games Are Essential in Early Childhood Education
- Fitting Cooperative Games Into Your Curriculum
- Guidelines for Facilitators


We Can Win Together!

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Thank You for Being Here and for the Work You Do!
Educators...
Child Care Providers...
Administrators...
& Friends ...




Cooperative Games
Playing our way to a better world 

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Hello! My name is...

Suzanne



Suzanne Lyons
Educator, Author, Founder CooperativeGames.com, Educational Consultant
B.A. Physics UC Berkeley, M.A. Earth Science Sacramento State University, M.A. Education Stanford University
Teaching Credential (California Single Subject)



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Do You Know...



What *is* a Cooperative Game?

Two Defining Features:

1. Games based on cooperation not competition
2. No one can be eliminated from a cooperative game.

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All Kinds of Cooperative Games



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A Thought Question:

How are cooperative games different from "teamwork"?

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-The Win-Win Paradigm-

Everyone wins.

Why is this important?

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The Psychology of Competition is Profoundly Different from the Psychology of Cooperation.

Let's Be Clear...

Cooperation: Two parties work to achieve a mutually desired goal. Everyone can win.

Competition: Two parties attempt to achieve a goal that cannot be achieved by everyone. It is zero-sum: For someone to win, someone else must lose. It's us-versus-them and me-versus-you.

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The Theory of Universal Gravitation, The Theory of Evolution, The Atomic Theory, and...

The Theory of Social Interdependence
Morton Deutsch
1949


Social effects of competition: *Unhealthy group dynamics characterized by mistrust, anxiety, and a slippery slope that starts with resentment and can lead to outright aggression. Also, for most kinds of goals, competition diminishes goal achievement*

Social effects of cooperation: *Productive and peaceful group dynamics characterized by trust, productivity, mutual support, open communication and feelings of appreciation and affection*

A profound theory, with far-reaching consequences...

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Morton Deutsch's Long and Productive Life

- Eminent social psychologist and professor at Columbia University
- Deutsch's dedication to peace followed the horrors of World War II. Flew 30+ bombing missions over Nazi Germany during World War II
- Died in 2016 at the age of 97
- Pioneer in the field of conflict resolution; developed the theory of cooperation and competition, called *Social Interdependence Theory*
- Hundreds of empirical research studies back up his conclusions
- Findings widely applied in peace & conflict studies, international relations, political science, social justice initiatives, business, education, and in other fields that depend on people getting along with each other.

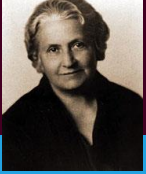
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Maria Montessori summed it all up:

Everyone talks about peace, but no one educates for peace. In this world they educate for competition, and competition is the beginning of war.

--Maria Montessori



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The California Preschool Framework concurs:


Overly competitive games can work against community, caring, and collaborative learning and should be avoided.

-See California Preschool Framework, 2013, p.81

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With all its downsides, we better be careful about how we handle competition. Shouldn't we be looking for ways to increase cooperation as an antidote to excess competition? Especially in the schools? And especially with young children?



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...REPLACE STRESS AND STRIFE WITH PEACE, PRODUCTIVITY AND JOY THROUGH COOPERATIVE GAMES!!!

A Brief History of the Cooperative Games Movement

- Theo Lentz and Ruth Cornelius (1950's)
- New Games (1960's)
- Terry Orlick (1970's+)
- Family Pastimes (1970's+)
- Arnold Goldstein (1970's-2000's)

Today: Gaming! (2010+)

- Digital
- Online
- Table-Top
- Escape Rooms
- Etc.



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The time is right to bring back and expand the use of cooperative games in education!

Children Learn Through Play.

If we want them to learn how to cooperate, it only makes sense to teach them cooperative games!

Good games are fun, inexpensive or free, and easy to implement across the curriculum for all ages and stages!



Play is the way!

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The 4 Features of Good Cooperative Games*

- Cooperation
- Inclusion
- Positive Feelings:
Acceptance & Respect
- Fun

* Terry Orlick, 2006. *Cooperative Games and Sports, Joyful Activities for Everyone*, Human Kinetics

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Anatomy of a Cooperative Game: Max the Cat

Designed by Jim Deacove,
Family Pastimes

1 to 8 Players, Ages 4 to 7

Players roll the dice to advance the Little Creatures around the board, back to the Home Tree. But on a roll of two black dots, Max is on the hunt. How can players use tokens of milk, cheese, and catnip to lure Max back to the porch before he catches them? Max is a natural hunter; everyone needs to find a way to coexist. If all the players get back to the Home Tree before Max catches them, everyone wins.



Resources and decision-making are shared in this and all good cooperative games.

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Anatomy of a Cooperative Game: Beanbag Freeze

Thanks to Terry Orlick PhD for this game.
See *Cooperative Games and Sports*, Human Kinetics, (2006).



This game works for 4 or more players, ages 9 and up. You need one beanbag per student and a music source.

1. Give each student a beanbag and ask them to balance it on their head.
2. Turn the music on and ask students to move slowly about the play area keeping the beanbag on their head. They can walk or move in a silly way as they please.
3. Now ask the students to pick up the pace, all the while balancing the beanbag on their heads.
4. If a player loses their beanbag, they freeze until another player picks it up and puts it back on their head. If the helper also loses their beanbag, they too are frozen until another friend comes to thaw them by putting the beanbags back on their heads. (Very young children can hold their beanbags on their heads while they help their friends.
5. Be sure to tell the players that the object of the game is to help their classmates by replacing their beanbags so they can stay in the game.
6. It's game over when everyone has been thawed or everyone is frozen or everyone is tired.

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What is the evidence that cooperative games foster prosocial behavior?

See for example:

* Bay-Hinitz, A.K., Peterson, R.F., & Quilitch, R.H. (1994). Cooperative games: A Way to Modify aggressive and cooperative behaviors in young children. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 27(3), 434-446. <https://doi.org/10.1901/jaba.1994.27-435>

CONCLUSION

"Cooperative behavior increased and aggression decreased during cooperative games; competitive games were followed by increases in competitive behavior and aggression and decreases in cooperative behavior."

*Cooperative behaviors included: sharing, assisting, or executing a task with another child, working toward a common goal, sharing material, or explicitly helping another child; (b) physically supporting another child (for example ... helping another child off the ground or over a barrier, or engaging in physical contact of an affectionate nature (for example linking arms, holding hands, embracing, kissing, or patting a child on the back); or (c) verbal behavior such as giving a child instruction on how to do something, verbally offering to help or to share, or agreeing to request made by another child." (pp 437-438)

Cooperative Behavior in all its glory—a prize children win by playing together!

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More Research

See Studies by Terry Orlick

See Studies by Arnold Goldstein

Additional Studies on the Social Effects of Cooperative Games

Consider:

There is ample evidence from research, a strong theoretical foundation, and a long history of practice to justify much wider implementation of cooperative games. We might extrapolate from the more copious literature on play and cooperative learning as well. Still, the practice is in its infancy. More studies are needed and warranted! We are all on the forefront of what can become a contemporary professional practice of cooperative play and games in the schools.

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But Wait! Haven't we played cooperative games all along?

Yes!

For example, *Ring Around the Rosie*, *London Bridge Is Falling Down*, etc.
And games developed by:

- * Froebel
- * Montessori
- * And many others, too

It's just the intentional use of cooperative games as a replacement for competitive games that's new. Cooperative games and play are completely normal, natural, and free!



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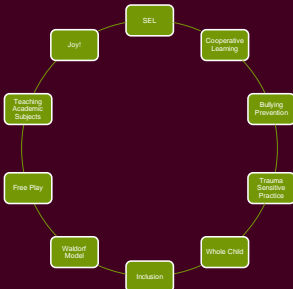
What Educational Theory Supports Cooperative Play & Games?

- Dewey: cooperation & democracy
- Piaget : intellectual development
- Vygotsky: play
- Froebel: DAP Kindergarten
- Montessori: peace
- Noddings: caring
- Cohen: cooperative learning
- Parten: social development

All in all, theory tells us that cooperative games are important for healthy social, intellectual, physical and moral development; they prepare children for collaborative

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Finding a Place for Cooperative Games in the ECE Curriculum



Cooperative Games Serve Many Educational Purposes

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Guidelines for Facilitators

Part 1. The Facilitator's Job

- Choose Appropriate Games
- Frame the Activity
- Lead the Games
- Guide Reflection
- Have Fun! Your happiness is contagious.



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Focus: Choosing Appropriate Games

Be Sure to Choose Developmentally Appropriate Games and Play Activities:

Toddlers: Adult-directed cooperative play activities such as peekaboo and simple catching, clapping and chasing games. Simple sharing activities such as passing items around in a circle, taking turns with twos, lending and sharing resources, and being gentle to animals and plants.

3's and 4's: Group projects allowing parallel or associative play including creating a mural or imaginary pot of stew.

4's, 5's and beyond: The Cooperative Play Stage (Parten) arrives! Encourage cooperative free play with toys such as tea sets, blocks, and teeter-totters. Also, rely on sociodramatic play for classic cooperative play. Games with rules are okay now. Simple board games, active games, circle games, and educational games in a guided play format nurture social, emotional, physical, and moral development and joy.



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Focus: Choosing Appropriate Games

Various Considerations

- Remember Terry Orlick's Criteria: Cooperation, Inclusion, Respect, and Fun!
- Be sensitive about the game narrative. Look for a gentle and inclusive tone or story.
- Cultural responsiveness is key. Choose games and themes that are relatable to everyone and free of hurtful cultural references.
- Play different kinds of games that speak to different tastes, talents, and abilities. But never choose a game that is too difficult for anyone.



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Focus: Choosing Appropriate Games

Consider Converting Competitive Games to Cooperative Ones



Cooperative Musical Chairs

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Guidelines for Facilitators

Focus: Framing the Activity

- Discuss the word cooperation (respecting, sharing and helping others)
- Contrast cooperation and competition (focus on feelings) but avoid criticizing competition
- Emphasize fun rather than winning
- Be sure to have enough equipment or board games for all
- Encourage kids to play but don't force them. Observing or a quiet activity is ok.
- Let the kids know what the "freeze" signal is for them to stop and listen
- Have kids sit down and make eye contact with you while you explain the rules
- Remind children about safety
- Discuss any special intentions e.g. test a new game, learn names of others

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Guidelines for Facilitators

Focus: Leading the Games

- Feel free to participate. You'll really see if the game is working.
- Observe, observe, observe. Are the 4 basic attributes of a good cooperative game in evidence?
- Have helpers for complex games or simultaneous games
- Be flexible. If children are confused, stop and sort out the confusion. Reduce challenge if necessary.
- No elimination. If someone is disruptive, talk it out. Give them a role that works for them. Exception is for deliberate attempt to injure another player.

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Guidelines for Facilitators

Focus: Guiding Reflection

Reflection is an important step.

Why? Two Reasons:

- Closure: This is where kids can develop concepts and take away new values and norms by reflecting on their experience.
- You can find out if a game was successful or not from the kids' perspective.

Sample Questions:

Did you like the game? • Was it fun? • Did you feel included? • Did everyone have the chance to participate? • What was the most fun part? • How did you include someone else when you were playing? • Did you find anyone you had the chance to help? • How did it feel when you were able to help someone else • Did you receive help from others if you needed it? • Would you like to play again?

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Now, Let's Go Out in the World and... Play Together!



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Resources



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To Get in Touch:


Suzanne Lyons

Email me at:
Suzanne@CooperativeGames.com

OR: Visit my website CooperativeGames.com to shop for books and games or inquire about workshops and trainings on cooperative games.

To purchase my new book, *Cooperative Games in Education, Building Community Without Competition PreK-12* Please visit the Teachers College Press website.

Thank You!



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