

Newsletter No. 7

Workshop in November

Date: November 8th, 2025 10:30-14:30

Venue: NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)

Title: "Handing Students the Proverbial Fishing Rod: Using Cooperative Learning to Develop Deeper Learning"

Presenter: Prof. Joël Laurier (Keio University)

Joel Laurier is co-director of the Intensive English Program in the Faculty of Law at Keio University. He is in the final stages of writing his PhD on Cooperative Learning in Japan, conducted through Sophia University. He is the father of three wonderful boys.



Abstract:

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT)'s call for the use of cooperative learning (CL) in its schools gives hope for transformative changes in Japan through its schools. While there is confusion over the meaning of the term and the essence of CL, the shift is notable.

This two part workshop aims to help attendees gain a basic and working knowledge of cooperative learning. The first session introduces the background behind the MEXT's decision and distinguishes the term from similar terms. The second session focuses on practical educational activities that will help students develop social skills while heightening their learning ability.

This presentation is open to teachers of all levels of students and all teaching subjects, as well as administrators looking to find solutions for classroom management strategies.

The number of participants: 30

1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- I liked the PIES activity when the members of the group had to learn from the other group's members, then go back to their own group to explain the concept.
- I think dividing into toles and separating into groups to discuss the task, coming back to the original group and sharing was



excellent.

- Almost all activities done today caught my attention so I plan to use them all in a classroom setting. I work at elementary, kindergarten, junior high so it is so encouraging to learn that cooperative learning can be done and we can do it in a way that is fun. It is very important for me to make sure classes are fun. Because I believe learning should be fun, too.
- I lived small team-building activities like high-fiving. It was easy and made us smile instantly. I'd definitely love to try it in my class.
- Making my classroom group work more effective by giving out roles used for cooperative learning.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- I learned that cooperative learning is different from teamwork and collaborative learning. And that it is doable in the Japanese setting.
- I learnt how cooperative learning can benefit students by giving them the opportunity to succeed at their role, while shoring in a common goal.
- Collaborative learning and cooperative learning is different. We often do pair work or group work, but usually we don't care that those learning methods are different. I'll be careful about it and try cooperative learning in my lessons.
- I've been practicing CC for a while, but this workshop helped me review the topic deeply and encouraged me to try more.
- The clear difference between cooperative learning and collaborative learning, and also how important a teacher's role is.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): Asian countries get high score in PISA test, but these countries have Confucian Culture and some or many teachers don't like to do cooperative learning (not all teachers). On the other hand, Western countries don't get high score in the test but cooperative learning is common there. Am I right? What do you think?

A: In general, you have the facts correct. CHC countries are doing well in PISA tests recently. However, it cannot be understated that the PISA test, as a result of its impact on economic development, has become a measure of affluence. As a result, more and more effort is being placed on the test. This does not always reflect the level of learning of the test takers. This is more a sign of the competitive element of education.

Q (2): What should we do for the Japanese students to get better English skills?

A: One of the biggest obstacles to language learning is the anxiety associated with it. Reducing the stress to answer, talk, debate in English is key. I find CL is a great way of doing this. As you saw in the presentation, students who have time to think about their answer, then share it with their team, then share it with the class have opportunities to support each other. This help reduces anxiety and eventually increases progress.

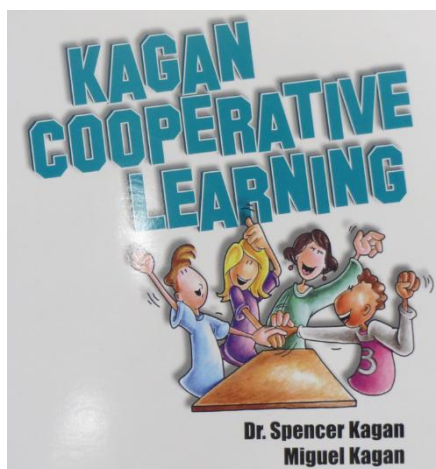
Q (3): When I first saw the words ‘deeper learning’ in the title of your presentation, I thought you learned it from Joseph Shaules who was a presenter of the last NUFS Workshop. Am I right?

A: Interesting deduction. While I know Joseph as he is a part time teacher at Keio University, I did not learn it from him. We do share the opinion that deeper learning is a goal that should be a bigger focus in language classes as it does help students develop language as well as gain knowledge.



Q (4): I learned today that it depends on academic level of students as for cooperative learning. It doesn't work well if participants level gap is too big. It doesn't mean 'teaching a man to fish.' Any other advice?

A: Cooperative Learning is intended to reduce the education gap. However, its basic focus is to help students learn in a structured environment that involves peer support and individual accountability. A wide education gap is not necessarily terrible, but it would run counter to Vygotsy's Zone of Proximal Development. With scaffolding, progress is attainable. The bigger the need for scaffolding, the bigger the risk of losing the merits. The best advice I can give here is to set up your teams so that less well performing students are paired with students who can provide academic support. To increase the chances of success for all, also add members to that team who can provide diversity of thinking as well as social support.



AR Discussion

Date: November 8th, 2025, 14:30-17:00 (Room MW01, 02)

Title: Action Research Discussion

Advisors: Duane Kindt, Kevin Ottoson (NUFS)

The number of participants: 9



Next workshop will be held on December 6th, 2025.

Detailed information is here:

<https://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/news/>

NUFS Workshop

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