



part 1 of 2—

Cooperative Learning and Competition

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Cooperative Learning Defined

Cooperative learning is an approach where children work in small learning groups and are responsible for learning and helping their teammates learn. Since the late 1800s, teachers have used cooperative learning in educational settings. Studies show that effective learning takes place within a supportive community of learners.

The longer children work together and the more responsibility they take, the greater their learning will be. In fact, research shows that cooperative learning leads to higher achievement for all children involved. Since Junior Bible Quiz builds around the concept of cooperative competition, use cooperative learning for practice and learning sessions. Cooperative learning is a win-win situation for everyone—coaches, quizzers, teams.

Encourage Cooperative Learning

Junior Bible Quiz is an opportunity for children to learn cooperatively with a team. The way the coach structures practice sessions, and how the coach prepares quizzers for their roles in matches can greatly influence how the children feel about their

individual growth and place on the team.

The main steps for this approach in practice is that the coach:

Q identifies the questions each child and team will be responsible for learning for upcoming matches;



Q teaches them group and study strategies; and

Q lets the group work together to help one another learn their questions.

Through this cooperative learning approach, the children develop a sense of interdependence. They learn to care about the success of others on the team as well as their own. The

whole team wins only when individuals do well. The team benefits when individuals help each other be their best. This learning approach reduces peer pressure, which results when individuals rate only their own achievements. Sometimes, negative peer pressure can keep children from doing their best. On a quizzing team, children should encourage each other to do better since they will all benefit as a team.

Cooperative learners share leadership responsibilities since each member has a job to do. No one person becomes the formal leader. Look for ways the children can help one another on the team learn the material and remember it. Ask the children for ideas to help others learn the questions. Talk about what each family is doing at home and share these ideas with the other families. Suggest the children get together on their own time to study and review the questions. Be sure to celebrate together when individuals learn their assigned questions. Continue to acknowledge the achievements of the team.

The cooperative learning process will help build committed relationships among the children. You will see how they care about and help each other. Another benefit you'll see from

this approach is the development of self-confidence among the children. Success in helping other children do well will boost their confidence, which helps the team excel.

Even you as a coach will reap the benefits of cooperative learning since the children take more responsibility for practice and learning sessions. As they work with the questions and help each other, they, not you, will manage the material.

Four Aspects of Cooperative Learning

The children need to believe they are in this together, and they need to care for each other's learning.

Basic social skills needed for this approach must be cultivated,

such as verbal communication, explaining, and sometimes resolving conflicts.

Since the success of the team relies on the best efforts of the individual, each person needs to be accountable for the information he is assigned to learn.

The team needs to periodically review how well they are working together and find ways to do better.

The Controversy of Competition Between Children

The use of competition with elementary-age children has been a controversial subject in both the church and in public education. Some believe that competition has a negative effect on the proper growth of a child.

Many picture children's sports coaches fighting it out on the field or shouting at their players. Negative experiences happen in competition, but other educational experiences can also be negative.

You may have memories from your own education of the spelling bee. Remember being singled out and given a word to spell? If you missed the word given to you, you were out of the competition. It didn't matter how many of the other words you knew. No one would ever find out what you did know. They only knew you missed the one word you were given. Children who are singled out for what they don't know can feel embarrassed and bad about themselves. Competition like this can have negative results.

Questions for Further Study—

1. What is cooperative learning?
2. What characteristics does cooperative learning help to build in children?

This article appears in the *Junior Bible Quiz Manual*, a how-to book containing everything you need to know to start, run, and improve a Junior Bible Quiz team. The *Junior Bible Quiz Manual* contains information for quizzers, parents, coaches, and area coordinators, and includes several reproducible pages. This and other JBQ products are available from Gospel Publishing House, 1-800-641-4310, or visit gospelpublishing.com.

