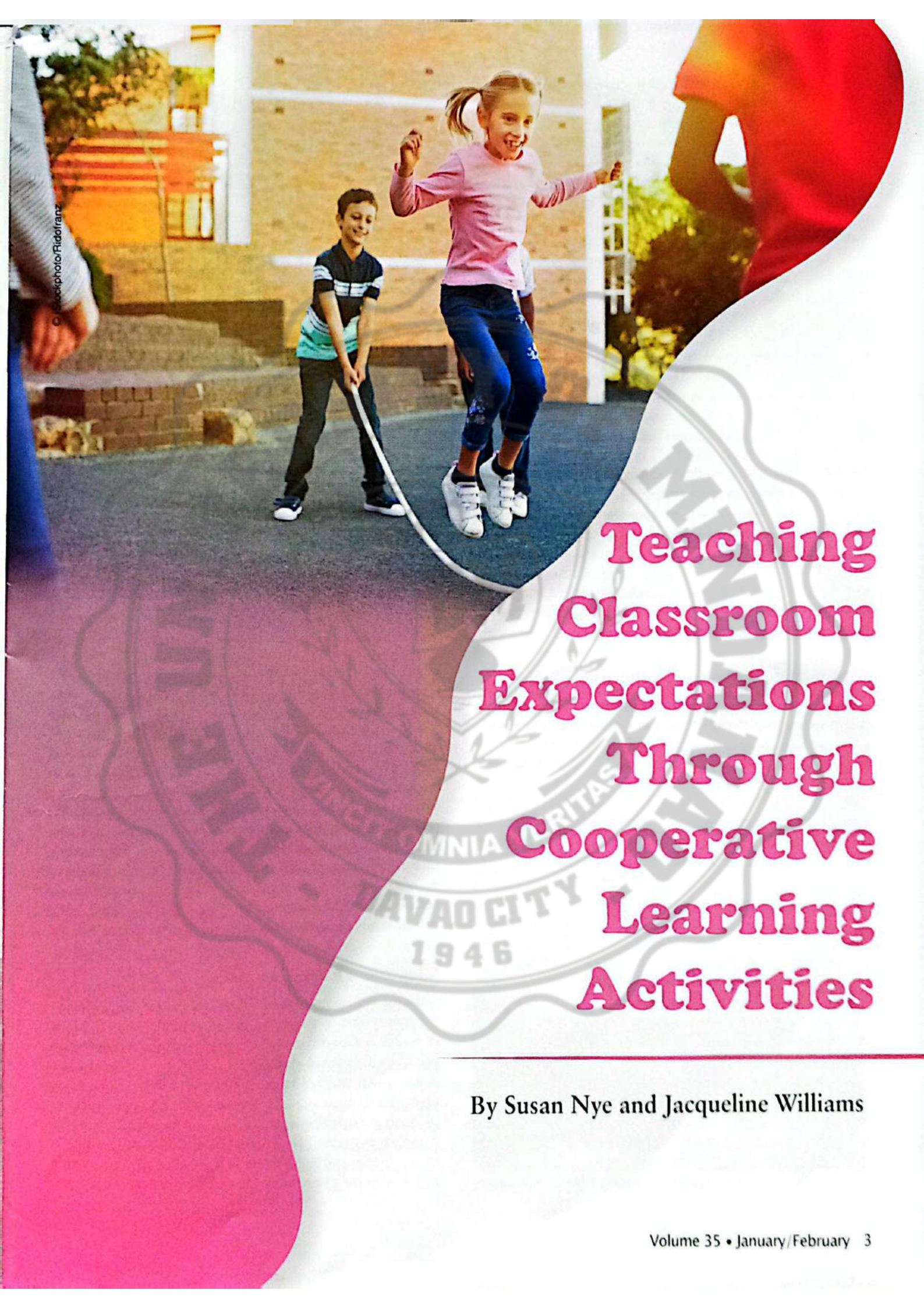


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# Teaching Classroom Expectations Through Cooperative Learning Activities

By Susan Nye and Jacqueline Williams

**D**uring a pickleball lesson the teacher notes that a student is having a difficult time with the backhand; very inconsistent and rarely contacting the ball with the paddle. Should the teacher reprimand the student for being inconsistent with the striking skills? Obviously no; it is the teacher's responsibility to provide feedback on the swing mechanics to help the student improve their skill. Later in the same lesson, another student is swinging the paddle in an unsafe manner. Should the teacher reprimand the student for being unsafe? Too often a teacher will reprimand a student, place the student in time out or send them out of the class, instead of teaching that student the appropriate way to act in class. Just as it is important in the psychomotor domain for teachers to provide feedback on skill, so too is the teaching in the affective domain to provide feedback on classroom expectations.

The importance of having students learn, follow and value classroom expectations cannot be understated (Locke, 1974; McCaughtry et al., 2008). Without effective classroom management, student learning and achievement are minimized (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). It is important that teachers go beyond just telling students the expectations of the classroom, and actively engage students in activities that highlight expectations. The use of cooperative learning strategies and activities can help students understand and value expectations, all while developing prosocial behaviors. The purpose of this article links cooperative learning activities to the development of prosocial behaviors while reinforcing classroom expectations to create a smooth, consistent and positive learning environment.

### Cooperative Learning Activities

Using cooperative activities to help students develop prosocial behaviors and understand classroom expectations involves students in the learning process, helps students gain personal meaning, and develops a deeper understanding of the expectations. The goals of cooperative learning are to form group cohesion, mutual support, and collaborative participation, to successfully complete a task as a group (Johnson & Johnson, 1990). When students participate in cooperative activities, there is a collaborative unity exhibited between students. An important element within cooperative learning is group processing. Dyson et al. (2010) described group processing as a student-centered discussion with teacher facilitation. These discussions involve both affective and cognitive tasks that are often considered in physical education as strategizing. When students utilize group processing within a physical education setting, they learn to create meaning regarding the task, learn how their group can function more effectively together, and then are able to transfer the meaning of the task into other parts of their lives (Sutherland et al., 2014).

By participating in cooperative activities, at the beginning and throughout the school year, students then learn to work together toward the completion of a common task using listening, communication and consensus decision-making strategies. Cooperative activities support real-world critical thinking and decision making among students, and students can implement the ABCDEs of problem solving (Kreidler, 1994). Each activity

Cooperative activities allow students the opportunity to participate together, respect each other when trying to solve a problem, include all members of the team, and be safe both emotionally and physically when dealing with success or failure.

begins by the students "Asking" about the problem or challenge presented. Then students "Brainstorm" or plan strategies to solve the problem. Next, students use critical thinking skills to "Choose" the best and most logical way to complete the task. Then comes the trial and error to "Do" their strategies to see if they are successful. Finally, the students "Evaluate" their plan to see if they were successful completing the task. At the conclusion of the activity the teacher can aid in the students' evaluation process by leading them through a series of debriefing questions. Cooperative activities allow students the opportunity to participate together, respect each other when trying to solve a problem, include all members of the team, and be safe both emotionally and physically when dealing with success or failure. Table 1 provides a number of online cooperative activity resources.

### Classroom Expectations

In the beginning of a school year, a teacher designs a management system to direct and guide student behavior (McLeod et al., 2003). Classroom management involves the review of expectations that help a classroom run smoothly and avoid uncertainty, which can lead to classroom chaos. Rules are classroom expectations regarding appropriate and inappropriate behavior, such as respecting others, doing your best, and playing fair. Management protocols are procedures that provide a smooth class operation, such as how to: turn in assignments, take attendance, enter the gymnasium, and distribute or collect equipment.

**Table 1. Web Site Resources for Online Cooperative Activities**

1. <http://www.games-wiki.org/wiki/>
2. <https://bizfluent.com/info-8142941-group-games-teach-respect.html>
3. <https://www.teampedia.net/wiki/>
4. <http://mrgym.com/Cooperatives/>
5. [www.learningforlife.org/exploring/resources/99-720/x07.pdf](http://www.learningforlife.org/exploring/resources/99-720/x07.pdf)
6. <https://www.education.com/activity/>
7. <https://icebreakerideas.com/cooperative-games/>
8. <https://financesonline.com/10-team-building-games-ideas-try-company/>
9. <http://physicaleducationandmore.blogspot.com/2012/08/responsible-personal-and-social-behavior.html>
10. <https://www.pecentral.org/lessonideas/cooperative/cooperativeindex.asp>
11. <https://www.flaghouse.com/pages/project-adventure/activities/>
12. <https://kidactivities.net/41-fun-cooperative-games-for-kids/>

Establishing the learning environment through active experiences that reinforce protocols and expectations can promote prosocial behaviors and a smooth-running educational climate.

The foundation for any efficient and effective classroom, where student learning and achievement are abundant, is having well-established classroom expectations. Effective classroom management has been demonstrated as one of the key variables in student achievement (Kounin, 1970; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). An effectively managed classroom environment establishes smoothness and consistency within the class setting (Kounin, 1970). The beginning of the school year is the time when expectations are established to create consistency within the flow of the classroom (Kounin, 1970). Classroom expectations can be aligned with Hellison's teaching social and personal responsibility model (Hellison, 2011). This model highlights levels associated with student behavior, which are self-control, involvement, self-responsibility and caring, which can provide a foundation or underpinning for most classroom expectations. Established expectations guide student behavior and provide clarity for the boundaries of the classroom. These boundaries help students understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Students who do not understand the classroom expectations can become off task, cause disruptions, and hinder themselves and classmates with learning. The following themes within classroom expectations align with Hellison's teaching social and personal responsibility model: responsibility (self-control), participation (involvement), safety (self-control and responsibility) and respect (caring), hence classroom expectations can help reinforce prosocial behaviors.

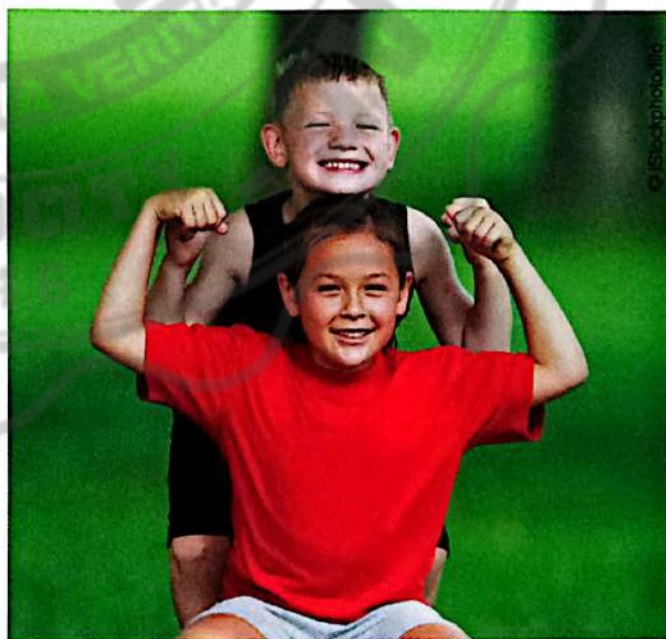
Responsibility is the state of being responsible, trustworthy and reliable ("Responsibility," 2020). Responsibility in the classroom focuses on students being held accountable for their actions. This includes their interactions with others as well as what students do or say in the classroom. In an educational setting students are expected to be prepared, on time, and trustworthy when they are engaged in individual or group activities (see Table 2).

Participation, effort and engagement in learning can fall in either the cognitive or the psychomotor domain. In physical education, students need to cognitively process information and physically perform activities. Both are important to aid in student learning of psychomotor skills and activities. Involvement in classroom activities and group tasks in-

volve each person to actively engage and physically perform if success is to be accomplished. Teachers need students to actively participate and put forth effort to enhance learning object control and locomotor skills.

Physical safety is an outcome of students being in self-control and taking responsibility for their actions. Physical safety is a key element in a physical education environment due to the interactive environment, different types of equipment used, different-sized playing spaces and areas, and varying degrees of student skill levels. To help students understand how to be responsible for their own physical safety and how it affects others, teachers need to engage students purposefully in activities that illustrate and directly address the issues of safety.

Respect is an essential character trait that can be reinforced within class expectations. This trait can be difficult for students to grasp; however, recognizing the worth of a person or thing is highly valuable ("Respect," 2020). Respect in physical education includes thinking and acting in positive ways toward classmates, teachers, self and equipment. At the same time, teachers model caring for students regardless of socioeconomic status, gender identity; race; ethnicity; religion; physical, emotional and mental abilities; sexual orientation; or skill level. Respect



**Table 2. Cooperative Activities Aligned With Prosocial Behaviors and Classroom Expectations**

Name of Activity	Activity Objective and Prosocial Behavior	Activity Directions	Debriefing Questions and Classroom Expectations
Commonalities (Rohnke & Butler, 1995)	To help students learn to respect their differences and similarities. Prosocial behavior: Caring	Students (5–6) are in groups. On one piece of paper the students write two unique qualities for each person in the group. These qualities are not common characteristics such as hair color or eye color. On the other piece paper they write qualities that everyone in the group has. Equipment: Two pieces of paper per group.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What differences did you find among the group members?</li> <li>2. What similarities did the group have?</li> <li>3. What are ways in which you can respect the differences of each person in the group?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Respecting self and others
Have you Ever?	To learn about each classmate. Prosocial behavior: Caring	Polypsots are positioned into a circle. Each student stands on a polyspot. The person in the middle of the group asks a question, such as, “Have you ever been on a hike?” If a student on the outside side can say yes to the question they would move to a new polyspot that is not occupied by another student. If a student would say no to the statement they would stay on their polyspot. Equipment needed: 1 polyspot for each student	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the similarities and differences among the classmates?</li> <li>2. How do you accept differences between yourself and other students?</li> <li>3. What is something that you learned about your classmates?</li> </ol> Classroom Expectation: Respecting self and others
Tarp Flip	To work cooperatively and communicate together to complete the flipping of the tarp. Prosocial behavior: Self-control and involvement	Students (10–15) are in groups. The students want to maneuver on the tarp so that the tarp can be folded in half without one of the team members stepping off the tarp. The students will continue to see how small they can get the tarp by folding it in half and then in half again. Equipment: 6 × 8 tarp or newspaper taped together	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What strategies did you use to include all members of the team to be successful flipping the tarp?</li> <li>2. How did you make sure each person was heard when discussing strategies?</li> <li>3. How did each of you hold yourself responsible to be a productive member of the team?</li> <li>4. What if a team member did not want to participate?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Responsibility and participation
Slow and Steady	For students to work together to move objects. Prosocial behavior: Self-control	Students will be with partners. All students will be given a noodle and each partner pair will be given either a small ball or another small object. The partner pairs will be working together to lift the ball or small object off of the ground, using both of their noodles, to waist height (both noodles must be touching the object at all times). They can try to transport the object, without dropping it, to a designated area. This activity can be extended by adding people or by changing the type or size of the object. Equipment: Noodles for each pair of students and small objects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the group work together?</li> <li>2. What would you do differently if you could do this activity again in the future?</li> <li>3. How did you listen to your partner or classmates?</li> <li>4. What might change with the activity if a few individuals didn't put forth their best effort?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Responsibility

(Continued)

**Table 2. Cooperative Activities Aligned With Prosocial Behaviors and Classroom Expectations**

Name of Activity	Activity Objective and Prosocial Behavior	Activity Directions	Debriefing Questions and Classroom Expectations
Shape it Up	To communicate with classmates to form different shapes. Prosocial behavior: Self-control	Students (5–6) are in groups. Have the students form a circle. The teacher will say a shape or letter (for example, square) and the teams must quickly form the shape in five seconds (adjust the time for larger groups). Start with simple shapes in the beginning and then progress to more complex shapes like “a circle on top of a square” or “square intersects a triangle.” Option: Can create larger groups of 10–12 Equipment: None	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did you have to do to help your team be successful making the shapes?</li> <li>2. How well do you feel you contributed as an individual to the task?</li> <li>3. What were your roles when performing the activity?</li> <li>4. How did you listen to your teammates to be able to do the activity successfully?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Responsibility
3...2...1 Ups	To communicate with the group when trying to catch as many objects before they touch the ground. Prosocial behavior: Involvement	Students are in groups of 10 to 12. The tosser is a part of the group but the tosser cannot catch an object, they only toss. The tosser begins by tossing one ball 8 to 10 feet in the air. Anyone from the group can catch the ball before it hits the ground. If this ball is caught, the tosser then tosses two balls or objects into the air. Play continues by adding a ball each time. If a ball hits the ground, the tosser goes back to tossing only one object. Equipment: 1 to 2 bean bags, small balls, or soft objects per participant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you have each person in the group participating?</li> <li>2. What strategies did you use to make sure all the objects could be caught?</li> <li>3. Why is it important to have all students participating in this activity?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Participation
Group Juggle (Rohnke, 1984)	To communicate with classmates to complete the pattern. Prosocial behavior: Involvement	Students (5–6) form a circle. The students work together to create a pattern. For the pattern, the object cannot be thrown to the person that is to the right or left of you on the circle. Students toss the object to each other in the pattern. Once the pattern is learned another object is added. Equipment: 5 to 6 balls or other objects that can be tossed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you make sure everyone is included?</li> <li>2. How do you hold yourself accountable in the activity?</li> <li>3. How can you encourage other classmates?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Participation
Circle the Circle (Rohnke, 1984)	To work cooperatively with each member of the group to get the hula hoop around the circle in the least amount of time possible. Prosocial behavior: Involvement	Students (5–10) will be in groups. The students will stand in a circle holding hands or wrists. One hula hoop will be around a student’s arm. Each student must step through the hoop until it is passed back to where it started. The students cannot use their fingers to pass the hoop. The teacher will keep track of the time it takes the students to get the hoop completely around the circle. The students can try several times to improve their time. Equipment: 2 to 3 hula hoops per group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you improve your time?</li> <li>2. What did you need everyone in the circle to do in order to improve your time?</li> <li>3. What kind of encouragement was provided to the group?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Participation

(Continued)

**Table 2. Cooperative Activities Aligned With Prosocial Behaviors and Classroom Expectations**

Name of Activity	Activity Objective and Prosocial Behavior	Activity Directions	Debriefing Questions and Classroom Expectations
Knots (Rohnke, 1984)	To have the students join hands and be able to work together without breaking hands to form a circle. Prosocial behavior: Self-control and responsibility	Students (5–6) form a circle. First, tell everyone to reach their right arm toward the center and grab someone else's hand. Make sure no one grabs the hand of the person right next to them. Next, have everyone reach their left arm into the circle and grab someone else's hand. Again, make sure it's not the person right next to them. The students need to work together to untangle the human knot without letting go of any hands. The goal is to end up in a circle. They can go over or under each other's arms, or through legs if needed. Equipment: None	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you communicate with each other to complete the task?</li> <li>2. How well do you think the group worked together?</li> <li>3. During the activity, what are some skills you needed to be successful as a group?</li> <li>4. How did you make sure everyone was safe when performing the activity?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Safety
Everybody Up (Rohnke, 1984)	To work with a classmate to stand up without falling. Prosocial Behavior: Self-control and responsibility	Students are with partners. They sit on the floor with their toes touching. The students interlock their hands and try to stand up as a pair. The teacher can combine groups to have 4 to 5 students in a group. The group interlocks hands and tries to stand up together. Challenge: Have partners sit back on the floor with their arms interlocked and try to stand up together. Equipment: None	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you trust your partner when you were trying to stand up?</li> <li>2. What did you say or do to make sure the group could stand up?</li> <li>3. How did you keep each member of the group safe during Everybody Up?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Safety
Yurt Circle (Rohnke, 1977)	To support each student while they are creating a circle. Prosocial Behavior: Self-control and responsibility	Students (10–12) will form a circle. Everyone will hold hands and expand the circle until they feel a slight pull on their arms from the people on each side. The teacher will number the students off as a 1 or 2 around the circle. While emphasizing slow and careful movements, the teacher will ask the #1s to lean in toward the center of the circle, and the #2s to lean out (without bending at the waist). Each person should have their feet shoulder width apart and in line with the circumference of the circle. If the group cooperates with each other, each person can exert quite a strong pull on their supporting partners and accomplish a substantial forward/backward lean. Equipment: None	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How did the group work together to make sure everyone was safe?</li> <li>5. Did you think you would accomplish the task?</li> <li>6. Did you encounter any problems?</li> <li>7. How did you get the group to be successful?</li> </ol> Classroom expectation: Safety

“Educators who engage students in interactive activities, such as cooperative activities, will enable students to more likely retain, embrace and comprehend the importance of a positive learning community.”

for all members ensures a positive learning environment that promotes emotional safety of all and includes treating others with care and courtesy. Respect is a belief that all people have worth and harming others or equipment is inappropriate and unacceptable behavior, not only in our classrooms but in all aspects of our communities.

### Activities to Reinforce Expectations

The cooperative learning activities discussed in this article help students understand classroom expectations. These activities promote cooperating with their classmates to accomplish a task. Students learn to listen and trust each other, communicate accurately, support and accept differences, be persistent toward task completion, and resolve conflicts. Common classroom expectations, such as responsibility, respect, safety and participation/effort, will be taught through the cooperative activities. What follows describes how to deliver the cooperative activities and what cooperative activities could be aligned to help students understand and apply these elements.

Each of the cooperative activities has an objective aligned with a classroom expectation. An educator will provide the students with the objective for the cooperative activity, allow the students time to perform the activity, and then at the conclusion of the activity provide debriefing or reflection questions. These reflective questions will provide the connection for the students between the objective and the classroom expectation. Table 2 describes the cooperative activities that are aligned with prosocial behaviors and classroom expectations.

### Conclusion

Educators who engage students in interactive activities, such as cooperative activities, will enable students to more

likely retain, embrace and comprehend the importance of a positive learning community. The combination of teaching classroom expectations through cooperative learning activities could be one method implemented by teachers to help students understand the expectations of the classroom. As Confucius (1999) stated, “I HEAR and I forget, I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

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