

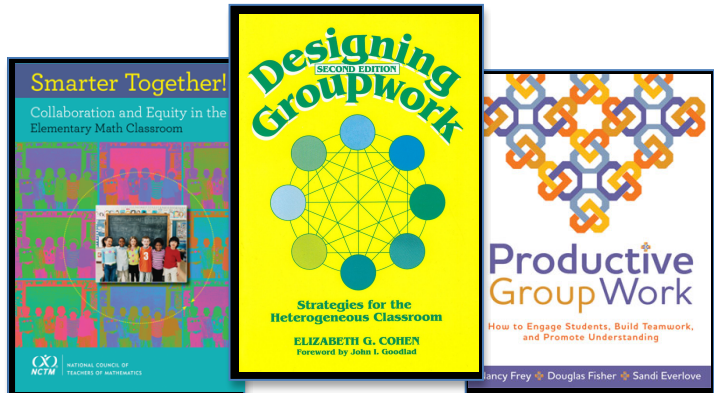
# WE ARE SMARTER TOGETHER!

Utilizing *Complex Instruction* to Promote *Equity* and Engage Students in the Common Core *Math Practice Standards*

## MY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Amy McDonald  
International School of Tucson  
[mcdonald@internationalschooloftucson.org](mailto:mcdonald@internationalschooloftucson.org),  
[amylynnm@email.arizona.edu](mailto:amylynnm@email.arizona.edu)

## A FEW OF MY FAVORITES:

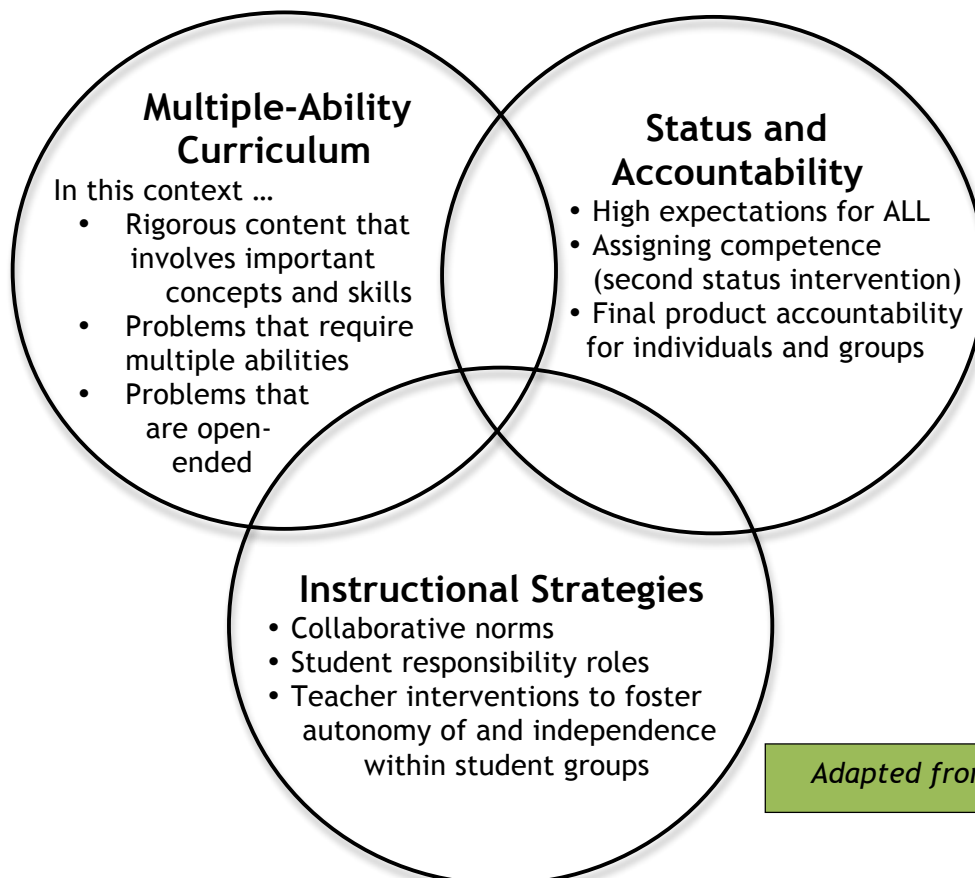


Cohen, Elizabeth. *Designing Groupwork*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Teachers College Press, 1994.

Featherstone, H., Crespo, S., Jilk, L., Oslund, J., Parks, A. & Wood, M. (2011). *Smarter together! Collaboration and equity in the elementary math classroom*. Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Everlove, S. (2009). *Productive group work: How to engage students, build teamwork, and promote understanding*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

## WHAT IS COMPLEX INSTRUCTION?



Adapted from Cohen, 1994

## EXAMPLES OF ROLES

(MY BIAS REVEALED... NO ONE RIGHT WAY...)

### Facilitator

Gets the team off to a quick start  
Makes sure everyone understands the task  
Organizes the team to complete the task  
Keeps track of time  
Keeps the team on track/ focused  
Substitutes for absent roles  
“Who knows how to start?”  
“Does everyone understand what to do?”  
“We need to keep moving...”  
“I think we’ve gotten off track...”

### Reflection Leader

Helps the group reflect on their work throughout the class and most certainly at the close of the session  
Asks variations of at least three reflective questions about the group’s activity (math and collaboration strategies both considered):  
“What strategies did we use?”  
“What worked well?”  
“What didn’t work so well?”

### Resource Manager

Makes sure the team is using all resources well, ESPECIALLY one another!!!  
Collects supplies for the team  
Calls the teacher over for a team question  
Makes sure the supplies are cared for/returned  
Organizes clean up  
“I think we need more information. What do you think?”  
“Should I call the teacher over?”  
“We need to clean up. Can you... while I...?”

### Recorder / Reporter

Gives update statements on team’s progress to those outside the group  
Makes sure each member of the team records the data as appropriate  
“Did everyone get that in their notes?”  
“Well, our first strategy was...”  
“Then David thought we should...”  
“But then Maria said...”

## WHAT IS STATUS AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A focus on **status** is not only imperative to CI, it sets the model apart from other cooperative learning (CL) models documented in the literature. *Status characteristic theory* provides the basis for this focus as well as for the CI interventions designed to equalize status within the groups, known as status treatments (Lotan, 2006; Berger, Cohen, Zelditch, 1972). In simple terms, the status of a student is his or her perceived smartness as evaluated by his or her peers in accordance with societal norms. A student may be high status, then, as a result of his or her reading level or because he or she excels in sports. Particularly troubling is a phenomena known as *status generalization*. Regardless of the reason(s) a student has been assigned a particular status by the general populous, research has shown that the social evaluation often comes to affect all student interactions. What this means in the classroom is that a student who is high status because he is sought out for company on the playground will be more trusted by his or her peers when asked to work on some mathematics problem in a small group than someone with lower status, even though popularity has nothing to do with mathematics. As Lotan (2006) puts it, regardless of how a student has become high status, the research behind this theory demonstrates that very often the net effect is that when a task is presented, the high status student will be expected by all to be more competent whereas the low status student will be expected to have nothing to offer.

Perhaps the most important thing to recognize about status is what Cohen and colleagues argued: These status generalizations TAKE PLACE IN ALL CLASSROOMS, WHETHER TEACHERS CHOOSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEM OR NOT. When there is no teacher intervention to prevent them, not only are low status students prevented from accessing academic tasks, but the group is not exposed to the valuable contributions and ideas of all of its members.