

# National Farmers Union

## *“Cooperatives: The Business of Teamwork”*



## Section 2: Grades 3-5

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# Lesson 1: A Cooperative of Our Own

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- Unit Objective:** Students will organize their own Popcorn Cooperative.
- Grades:** 3-5
- Length:** 1 hour: 10 minutes for the introduction and discussion teamwork, 10 minutes to outline the need for a Popcorn Co-op, 10 minutes to pop popcorn, decorate bag, fill the bags and add butter, salt, and seasoning, 15 minutes to review the types of co-ops, 10 minutes for the worksheet and 5 minutes for your concluding comments.
- Materials Needed:** White board or flip chart, tables with adequate work area for each student, a popcorn popper, soft butter (preferably Land O' Lakes), salt, a bag of popcorn kernels, flavored seasonings as appropriate, washable markers, small paper bags, enough play money so you can provide each student with one \$20 bill and one \$5 bill, paper napkins, juice or water, small drinking cups.
- Preparation Needed:** Arrange three standard 6-foot conference tables in a "U" shape (if you have only round tables available set them up in a triangle formation). Place a popcorn popper on the center table from which you will teach the class. Make sure this table is close to an electrical outlet. Tape the electrical cord to the floor to prevent children from tripping on it. At the table to one side of the center table, place a bag of popcorn kernels in front of one student's chair. Place a small container of soft butter in front of the next chair, and place a saltshaker in front of the third chair at this table. On the opposite table place a stack of small paper bags in front of one chair, washable markers at the next student's chair, and cooking oil at the next student's chair. NOTE: Adjust these items as necessary to accommodate the number of students you have in class. For more students, have them share one or more of the items above or set up additional tables and break them into two or more learning groups; for fewer students, provide each student with two items. Another possibility is to add flavored seasoning shakers such as cheese, caramel, and barbecue. Print out or copy the sheet of \$20 bills and \$5 bills and cut them apart so that you can provide each student with one \$20 and one \$5 bill of play money.

## Background:

Children this age have a working knowledge of the business world. Their parents may be employed by a variety of businesses, and they have been on shopping trips to different retail stores. They are unlikely to know what a **cooperative business** is, however, so your students will form one specifically to understand how such a business actually works. In doing this, they will **organize** and **capitalize** a **service co-op** and learn how to work together to run it. They also will learn about **marketing** and **purchasing** co-ops.

## Teaching Strategy:

1. Begin by asking your students to share with you what activities they do alone, and what activities require a team. On the whiteboard or flipchart, write down side-by-side headings of "alone" and "team." Below each heading, write in the answers they provide. Examples for "alone" might range from home chores such as setting the table and feeding or walking pets to reading or playing electronic games. Examples of team activities may include playing basketball or Wii, and doing yard work, making dinner, or house cleaning. Offer your own observations if they are not providing good examples.
2. Ask them why some activities require a team. Listen to their responses. *The main reason we need to work or play in teams is because we cannot do some things by ourselves. Our families, our communities,*

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and our country depend on individuals who are willing to work together to make life better for all. When people need a job done they cannot do themselves, they may form a **cooperative business**. How is a cooperative business different from other types of businesses? Pause to see if anyone has an answer. The people who form a cooperative do so because they have need for a business that as yet does not exist and they want to control it. These people become customers of the co-op they form. Put another way, the customers of the co-op also are the owners. They are sometimes known as patrons.

3. Ask the student who has the popcorn kernels if he or she can make popcorn with just the bag in front of him or her. The answer will be no. *Popcorn does not make itself. We need several items to make popcorn. What else do we need?* Let your students offer comments, based on what they see in front of them. *To make popcorn, we need popcorn kernels, cooking oil, salt, butter, bags to put it in, and a popcorn popper. Each one of you has one of these items. Can you make popcorn by yourself? No. What ingredients do you need to make popcorn? The kernels, of course. And we usually add butter and salt. We also need cooking oil and sacks in which to put the popcorn. Each of you has one of these items, yet you cannot make popcorn with just your item.* Pause and let them consider this situation.
4. *What could we do?* Expect the children to figure out they will have to share their items to accomplish this goal. *Remember, people form cooperative businesses to accomplish something they cannot do on their own.* Every student has an item to contribute to the Popcorn Co-op. What are they missing that you have? The popcorn popper. Explain that popcorn poppers cost money to buy. Each of the students might be able to afford to buy butter, popcorn kernels, or salt. But alone they may not have the money to buy a popcorn popper. *When people form cooperatives, they contribute money to become members. This money is used to buy equipment and hire employees. This is called **capitalization**. Capital is the money co-op members contribute when they organize the co-op.* Tell the students they need to use their \$20 bills to get the co-op started. This money will “buy” the popcorn popper and you will be their employee and manager.
5. Ask all of the students to bring their respective items to the main table, along with their \$20 bills to capitalize the cooperative. Tell them you will make the popcorn. While you do this, they will need to decorate the paper bags with the Popcorn Co-op name. Using the cooking oil and popcorn kernels and popcorn popper, make popcorn.
6. Once the popcorn has popped, ask the students to bring their paper sacks to your table. Pour the popcorn into one sack for each student, and make sure you have enough popcorn to have additional sacks for “inventory.”
7. Line up the bags of popcorn and add small amounts of melted butter and salt (however, if students want only butter or salt, or neither, make sure they have popcorn seasoned to their tastes). Pass out the popcorn and give your students a few moments to snack. Also, hand out small cups of juice or water at this time, along with paper napkins.
8. *Each of you started with one item that could help make popcorn. The only way for each one of you to actually have popcorn was to share your items equally. You did this through cooperation. Cooperation is like teamwork. It is one way to create a business.*
9. *There are three common types of cooperatives: **service, marketing, and purchasing** (also known as **supply or buying**). Some co-ops may do all three of these activities, although many still specialize in one area. Rural electric cooperatives and credit unions are types of service co-ops that provide electricity to rural farms and communities or offer loans and savings accounts to members. A service co-op provides its members with what? A service, of course. Purchasing co-ops allow members to buy large supplies of products and then share the savings. Many people belong to purchasing co-ops. These co-ops may buy food for their members or they may buy fertilizer for farmers. Marketing co-ops sell things for their members. Farmers formed marketing co-ops so they could sell their crops for better prices. Artists have formed cooperative art galleries to sell their paintings and sculptures.*
10. Time for discussion. *What kind of co-op did we create? Did we sell anything?* Allow them to answer. The answer is no. *Did we buy anything?* The answer will be yes, a popcorn popper. *However, did we buy this so we could split it up and each use a part of the popper?* No. *That means we formed a service co-op. The co-op provided the popcorn popper we all needed. Separately, we each contributed both money and materials to the co-op. Most of all, we worked together – cooperatively – to make everything*

*work. This was a service co-op. Popping popcorn was the service we needed. Our goal was to keep our costs low so each bag of popcorn cost us less than if we had to buy it from another business or each one of us bought our own popper.*

11. *We have extra popcorn left over. We could get into the business of selling popcorn. If our Popcorn Co-op sold bags of popcorn and we kept the money, it would mean we changed from service co-op to a marketing co-op. As a marketing co-op, our goal would be to sell our popcorn at a fair price that would allow profits to come back to us as owners. If we were farmers growing popcorn, we would want this kind of co-op. Then each of us as farmers would deliver popcorn kernels to the co-op, which in turn would make and sell popcorn. We would earn more income from our crop than if we sold it to another company and let them make popcorn. What if we were in the business of making popcorn, but wanted to buy cooking oil and salt and butter in bulk. We might get together with other popcorn companies and form a buying cooperative in order to buy these items in large amounts at a discount. That would be a buying cooperative. As you are learning, cooperatives can help their members save money, others help them earn money because the members work together to achieve common benefits.*
12. *If our co-op made a profit at the end of the year, those dollars would be returned to you as members. This is known as a patronage refund. Pass out a \$5 bill to each student.*
13. *What happens when you no longer need the co-op. As people get older, they retire. This means they may no longer need to be members of some co-ops. Here is how it can work for you. Your original \$20 investment to help buy the popcorn popper will be returned to you. Hand out one \$20 bill to each student. This is sometimes called a stock retirement.*
14. Pass out the worksheets and ask your students to fill in the answers as you go along. The answers, in order, are: Cooperative, Capitalization, Service Co-op, Marketing Co-op, Purchasing Co-op, Patronage Refund, Stock Retirement. Given the age of your students and size of the words, you will want to help them fill out their worksheet.
15. Close by reviewing why your students formed a cooperative business: they each had a resource to contribute, but this resource had no value on its own. Only by using teamwork could the students actually create bags of popcorn. Teamwork often is the best answer to solve challenges. However, teamwork also means that everyone has to work together and that each person on the team is as important as any other team members.
16. If you have extra popcorn and bags, please invite your students to give a bag of popcorn to their parents or other adults who will pick them up after the class.

**Sources:** KnowledgeStorehouse

# The Co-op Quiz

A business owned by its members is called a \_\_\_\_\_

When members put money into forming a co-op it is known as \_\_\_\_\_

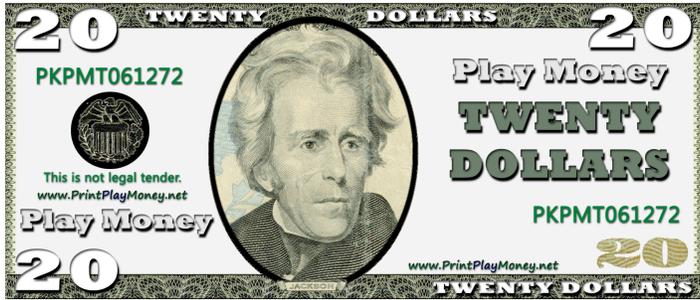
A cooperative that provides its members with a convenience is a \_\_\_\_\_

A cooperative that sells things provided by members is a \_\_\_\_\_

A cooperative that buys things to save money for members is a \_\_\_\_\_

When a co-op returns the profits to its members it is called a \_\_\_\_\_

The investment in a co-op is returned to members as a \_\_\_\_\_



# Lesson 2: Coming to Terms with Co-ops

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- Unit Objective:** Students will learn key terms of cooperative businesses.
- Grades:** 3-5
- Length:** 1 hour: 40 minutes for the discussion, 5 minutes for the snack, 10 minutes for the word search, 5 minutes for closing comments.
- Materials Needed:** Pencils, whiteboard or flipchart and markers, enough copies of the “Co-op Word Search” worksheet, snack items such as Land O’ Lakes milk, Tillamook Cheese, Florida’s Natural orange juice or Ocean Spray cranberry juice made by cooperatives. To learn of other marketing co-ops that provide food items, go to [www.ncfc.org/member-directory/ncfc-members](http://www.ncfc.org/member-directory/ncfc-members)
- Preparation Needed:** Make sure you have enough copies of the Cooperative Word Search available for each student. NOTE: You may want to convert the word search to a larger wall poster and let your students take turns or work as a group to circle the terms.

## Background:

The concept of a **member-owned cooperative**, or business ownership in general, may not be easy for some students to grasp. This session will explore the different type of cooperatives, especially ones with name brand recognition such as Land O’ Lakes, Cenex, The Associated Press, and REI. NOTE: This activity will be more effective if you tailor it to include the names of local co-ops including rural telephone and electric co-ops, credit unions, and, of course, Farmers Union. This session is more of a standard classroom presentation: it does not use activities or demonstrations to illustrate learning points.

## Teaching Strategy:

1. Assemble all your students into one group. Ask each of them to name a business or company. Write down their answers on a white board or flip chart. Now ask them to name a **cooperative business**. Listen to their responses. Write down any correct answers they may mention.
2. Ask them what makes a cooperative a special type of business. Do not expect any of them to have the answer. This will open up the opportunity for discussion. *A cooperative is a business owned by its customers. These customers are called members or patrons. Why would customers want to own their own business?* Again, listen to the answers your students may provide.
3. *A cooperative is formed by a group of people who have the same needs. They may live where there is no existing business meeting those needs. Also, the cooperative can do things that the individual customers cannot do on their own. Cooperatives are businesses that use the same type of teamwork you see in your lives. When do you see teamwork being used at home, at school, or somewhere else?* Write down their answers on the whiteboard or flipchart. Erase or remove the sheet of previous answers, if necessary. Examples of cooperation at home might include everyone in the family having certain chores to keep the whole house clean, sharing yard or garden work, and cooking dinner, setting the table, and washing dishes afterward. Use these examples to prompt student responses. At school, teamwork might show up in games and sports, craft projects, or accomplishing homework or studying for tests. Other examples of teamwork in life might be building a float for a parade, sandbagging before a flood, or collecting items for the local food pantry.
4. *The first co-ops were created by people who lived in the same community and who had similar careers such as farming or similar interests such as protecting their homes from fire. One of the first co-ops formed in the United States was the Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire back in 1752. This co-op was organized by Benjamin Franklin and it is still operating today. At that time, there were no fire trucks or firefighters. There were no fire departments. If your business or home started on fire, you had to put it out by yourself and all you had was a water bucket. With the formation of the fire co-op, all the*

*members would bring their buckets and help you put out a fire. Teamwork made it possible for an individual to count on others to help him or her. The benefits worked for all members. For one, each member knew they would have help in putting out a fire. And, other members knew that if the fire were put out it could not spread to their own businesses or homes.*

5. Pause to let your students absorb your comments. *In a business setting, a cooperative is formed by people who understand that they need teamwork to accomplish their goals. By working together, the co-op's members will all benefit. Why would people form a cooperative? They may need a service that currently is not available. In the 1930s, very few farms had electricity. Companies that provided electricity in big cities said it was too expensive to put up power lines to a few farm homes that were many miles from their power plants. Farmers had to contribute their own money to form electric co-ops to provide this service. There are three main types of cooperatives: **service**, **marketing**, and **purchasing (or buying or supply)**. An electric co-op provides a service. Other service co-ops are credit unions and rural telephone co-ops. For each of these examples and for the subsequent types of co-ops, mention area co-ops by name that best fit the example being given.*
6. *A marketing cooperative is a business that sells things for its members. A good example is a grain elevator that sells large amounts of wheat to a single customer. Farmers pool their crops into large volumes which the co-op will sell for a better price than if the farmers tried to do this themselves. One co-op that does this is CHS through its grain elevators. Other marketing co-ops include Land O' Lakes, Ocean Spray, and Sunkist.*
7. *The third major type of cooperative is a purchasing or buying cooperative. Cooperative grocery stores, Ace Hardware and REI are among the purchasing cooperatives that buy products for their members. By buying as a group, the co-ops can get products at lower prices and higher qualities. Some of the first buying cooperatives were begun by farmers who as a group would place an order for a railroad boxcar full of twine at a big discount and then share the savings. Twine is used to hold hay bales together. CHS also is a purchasing co-op. It provides farmers with Cenex-brand fuel.*
8. *One of the best early cooperatives was the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society organized in England in 1844. It was an urban consumer cooperative that sold food and clothing to its members. As such, it really was a purchasing cooperative. This co-op was formed because its members believed the store owners at that time were treating them poorly. Cooperatives sometimes are formed because the existing businesses meeting those needs are treating their customers unfairly, such as charging very high prices and not offering good service.*
9. *Farmers Union organized this class for you. Farmers Union is a type of service co-op that works for farmers. Educational classes are one service Farmers Union delivers to members. Some of you may have had grandparents or great-grandparents who helped start a Farmers Union cooperative or rural electric or credit union. Many farmers worked together to organize Farmers Union oil and elevator cooperatives. The oil co-ops bought fuel and farm supplies for their members. Today, many of these co-ops sell Cenex brand fuel. The elevator co-ops sold crops for their members. These marketing co-ops often use the name CHS.*
10. *As a business, cooperative managers and employees want the business to succeed for its members. When co-ops earn a profit or make money, that money is returned to members in the form of a **patronage refund**.*
11. *Cooperatives also follow seven business **principles** or rules that make them special. One of these principles is "Concern for Community," meaning even though the co-op provides benefits to members, it also wants to make a positive contribution to the entire community.*
12. *Gather the students around a table with the snack ingredients. Wow, we learned a lot. Our snacks were made by cooperative businesses. The milk and cheese come from (NAME) cooperative, the juice is made by (NAME) cooperative.*
13. *While the students are having their snack, pass out the Co-op Word Search and allow them time to fill it out. We mentioned all of these terms during this class. See how many you can find going up, down, diagonally, and sometimes backwards.*
14. *Close by making sure your students have the answers to the word search. Ask your students as a group to show you where they found each word.*

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture, National Cooperative Business Association, and KnowledgeStorehouse.

# Cooperative Word Search

C R Z G V R D A E X S M V V S  
X I O E V V R E H D E E P A D  
N J R C T Q I D F B T M Z Q N  
Q O F T H M N E N D A B E M E  
Y C I T C D E J Q X T E P O D  
D L R T N E A E G E S R A T I  
Y H P E A T L L S N T O T U V  
S Y A P D C L E E E S W R G I  
C I F A U I U T L C E N O S D  
G S Q O P S T D F A V E N X X  
Q J T Q T D D U E M R D S F X  
V M A R K E T I N G A U V F Z  
E C I V R E S O X I H K R N S  
F A R M E R S U N I O N F L Q  
S E L P I C N I R P X N J Z N

CENEX

CREDITUNION

DIVIDENDS

EDUCATION

FARMERSUNION

HARVESTSTATES

MARKETING

MEMBEROWNED

PATRONS

PRINCIPLES

ROCHDALE

RURALELECTRIC

SERVICE

SUPPLY

# Lesson 3: Cooperative Cups and Claps

- Unit Objective:** Students will experience teamwork through interactional activities.
- Grades:** 3-5
- Length:** 1 hour: 15 minutes for introduction and discussion of competition compared to cooperation, 15 minutes for the cup stacking activity, 10 minutes for the clapping activity, 10 minutes for the snack and worksheet, 10 minutes for closing discussion.
- Materials Needed:** White board or flipchart, stackable plastic drinking cups, a textbook, a basketball, the “Ways To Cooperate” worksheet.
- Preparation Needed:** Obtain enough stackable plastic drinking cups for the number of students you expect, have enough snack items available, print out enough worksheets for each student.

## **Background:**

Depending on many circumstances, your students have been exposed to both **competition** and **cooperation**. This lesson focuses on developing cooperation and why it differs from competition. The discussion topics will encourage students to consider the value of contributing toward common goals in a group setting.

## **Teaching Strategy:**

1. *There is a difference between competition and cooperation. In competition, the goal is to win, which means someone else has to lose. In cooperation, the goal is for everyone to win. Hold up a textbook. Consider this: school is about cooperation. Teachers, principals, parents, and you as students want everyone to do well. All of these people want good grades and the opportunity to move ahead to the next grade. If education were just about competition, it would mean some students would have to lose. In school, we want everyone to win. Of course, this means you, too, have to do your best. You are responsible for your own actions when it comes to study.*
2. Now hold up a basketball. *Does a basketball team represent a form of competition or cooperation? Listen to their answers. Some will say competition. Basketball as a game is a form of competition. One team wins, the other loses. However, each team is using cooperation. The team players pass the ball to each other, the coach helps each player and the entire team works well together, the fans support the team by cheering. A basketball team is a cooperative effort. Teamwork and cooperation often mean the same thing. People work together to achieve common goals. As a team, they can do things that they could never accomplish just by themselves. Yet, it is important to recognize basketball as a game is very competitive and some players, coaches, and fans want to win no matter what it takes.*
3. Show your students a product from a cooperative. Examples may include milk from Land O’ Lakes, oil from Cenex, cheese from Tillamook, and juice from Ocean Spray or Sunkist. *Some businesses are like the basketball team. They are called cooperatives. Why? Because they use teamwork that benefits everyone. The co-op managers, employees, board, and members all benefit by cooperating with instead of competing with each other. These co-ops may compete with other businesses in their area.*
4. Break the group into teams of three. Provide each team with 14 plastic drinking cups. Tell them they have to stack the cups at least three high, but it is up to them to figure out how. Give them a few minutes to discuss it in their teams and agree to a common solution. Then let them build their stacks. Watch to see how well the students work in their teams. Some teams may choose to build a triangle shape, others a pyramid, and others may stack their cups in the shape of a wall. As you gave them no specific directions, they will have no sense of whether one way is better than another. The truth is, there is no one best way. This is an exercise in reaching and then employing team consensus.
5. Look at their examples and acknowledge the accomplishments of each team that met its goal of stacking the cups three high.
6. Ask (or assign) students to shift to another team. All you want to do is mix the groups so the students get a sense of working with new people. Ask these teams to again stack the cups so

they are three high: however, also request that they make sure to use nine cups on the bottom. Encourage them to discuss this task before they start. Let them work as teams to figure out how to accomplish this. Once they are done, walk through the classroom and look at their solutions.

7. For the final exercise with cups, ask them to stack all 14 cups so they are at least three high, again using nine cups on the bottom. Make sure that the bottom has just three cups on each side, forming a square shape as seen from above. Each team should come up with the same structure, which will look like a pyramid. There will be nine cups at the base (in a square shape using rows of three), four cups in a square pattern in the middle row, and the final cup by itself at the very top.
8. *The purpose of this activity is to show how you may come up with different ideas to achieve the same goals by working in cooperation with each other. In a cooperative, you as a member have a right to share your ideas. Every member has one vote in a cooperative. Each member is treated the same. No one person has more control than anyone else.*
9. Ask your students to sit in a circle or a line and count off. Help them set up a 1-2-3-4 rhythm by having the first student slap his or her knees and say “one,” the second student will snap his or her fingers and say “two,” the third will clap his or her hands and say “three,” and the fourth will slap his or her chest and say “four.” If you have more than four students, begin a new group. Have each student do his or her own action (knee slapping, snapping, clapping and chest slapping) in unison. Once the rhythm is established, the first player calls his or her own number on the first count and someone else’s number on the second count. On the next sequence of actions, the person whose number was called must say his or her own number and someone else’s. Players who miss their turn, say the numbers too early, or say a nonexistent number must move to the end of the line. Everyone’s number will change as the players move up and down the line, but their actions remain the same. Watch to see how well they do this activity and whether they improve as they get practice.
10. Have your students return to their seats. Ask them to tell you why cooperation can be better than competition. Using the white board or flipchart, list their answers. Use these answers to create a discussion of cooperation with your students.
11. Provide your students with a snack that includes milk, cheese, or juice made by a co-op, along with fruit slices.
12. Pass out the “Ways To Cooperate” worksheet and ask your students to fill out the answers as they have their snack.
13. Ask each student to give you one example they wrote down. Write each response on the flipchart or whiteboard. Use these examples to reinforce the concept and value of cooperation.

Sources: KnowledgeStorehouse, eHow.com

# **Ways to Cooperate**

**At Home**

**With Friends**

**At School**

# Lesson 4: Putting The Pieces Together

- Unit Objective:** Students will engage in organizing a cooperative effort.
- Grades:** 3-5
- Length:** 1 hour: 10 minutes for the introduction and discussion of leaders and teams, 10 minutes for discussion of resources and why cooperation works, 20 minutes for the project-building activity, 10 minutes for the snack and worksheet, 10 minutes for discussion and closing comments.
- Materials Needed:** Whiteboard or flipchart and markers, Tinkertoys, LEGO's or Lincoln Logs, or a picture puzzle or another game or toy that requires multiple different pieces that go together to form a singular item. This could range from a racing car track or toy train set to a farm or ranch set. You will need to adapt this lesson and its language to the example you choose to use. Also, make sure you have enough appropriate snack items such as milk, cheese, and juice from cooperatives including Land O' Lakes and Ocean Spray, along with fruit or vegetable slices.
- Preparation Needed:** In advance of this lesson, use plastic Ziploc bags and/or rubber bands to group identical pieces. If you use Tinkertoys, put all long rods together, all the medium rods together, all the short rods together, and all the circular "joints" together. If you are using LEGO's put all the eight-nib rectangular blocks together, all the six-nib rectangular blocks together, all the four-nib square blocks together, and all the two-nib short blocks together (package all the windows, doors, roof pieces, thin/long pieces the same way). This applies to whatever example you choose to use in your class. For example, if using a racing track set-up, put all the straight pieces in one bundle, curves in another, cars in another, guard rails in another, and the controller by itself.

## **Background:**

Adults form cooperative businesses to meet a common need. It may be the work of a group, or the effort of one individual who organizes others. The reasons to form cooperatives are many, such as to obtain products or services, to reduce costs, to create or expand marketing opportunities, and to improve bargaining power. Regardless of the specific business purpose of the cooperative, the people who organized it recognized an unmet need (and opportunity) that no one person could solve. They used the business of teamwork to find a cooperative solution.

## **Teaching Strategy:**

1. Open the lesson by asking your students who they admire and why. Write down their answers. This first activity will provide an opportunity to discuss the topics of individuals and teams. By drawing from their examples (president, parent, teacher, coach, friend, other) discuss how each of these individuals is successful because he or she has a team of people with whom they work to achieve success. A president has a cabinet and staff. A parent may have a spouse, children, siblings, and others on whom to rely. Teachers work with other teachers, principals, parents and students. Coaches have team players, assistant coaches, and others who help them prepare for games. Make sure they know that the individuals whom many of us admire and respect in turn depend on teams of people who all contribute to an effort.
2. Explain to your students that in life circumstances may give them specific talents, abilities, and interests. This is why some people are musicians, others are farmers, and yet others are

teachers. Pass out to each student a bag or bundle of similar pieces from the toy you chose to use in this class.

3. *Each of you has been given an item that can be put to good use. Another name for this item is a resource. A resource can be something you make, a talent you have, or money you earn. So, a resource has a value. What is your resource good for?* Let your students consider this question.
4. *Resources by themselves have a lot of potential, but to have real value you need to put them to work.* Select a couple of students and ask them what their bag or bundle of items can be used for. They should be able to say how that item is used, but that it can only work when used with all the various items held by other students. *What is the solution?* Listen to their answers. Expect one of your students to say the only way to make all these “resources” work is to share. This notion may come from the entire group as well. Lead or encourage this discussion. *Whether we play basketball, build a house, or pass a test in school, so many things we do in life depend on cooperation.*
5. *In the business world, there are several approaches proven to be successful. The most common one is known as competition. Another one is cooperation. Competition in its purest form means winning and losing. Competition can be good when it pushes companies to make better products and keep prices low. However, when one company drives all the competition out of business, it becomes a monopoly. Just like the game Monopoly, one company can control its market and can charge higher prices because customers have no choice. One or two companies can (and have) become big enough to eliminate competition. These companies want to make the most money possible for their owners. This may be good for a few people but can be harmful to others.*
6. *Cooperatives are businesses that follow a different approach. They are in business to be successful. Yet unlike other businesses, cooperatives return the profits to the customers. Although we are not going to set up a business today, we will use the cooperative approach of teamwork.*
7. Using the whiteboard or flipchart, write the heading “Need” at the top. Ask the students to tell you what their need is based on what they have in front of them. The need will be to combine and use the items they have in bags and bundles. How can they achieve this? *For us to use all these items, we will have to share. We will form a cooperative. Each one of you will be a member of this cooperative. And each one of you will agree to share the resources you have with others for a common benefit.*
8. Have each student bring their item to a separate table at which you will combine all the items. *A cooperative encourages all its members to share their ideas. What will work best: for everyone to jump in and put all these parts together, or to have a plan so we don’t get in each other’s way?* The obvious answer will be to have a plan that outlines the order and each student’s role in assembling the items. Invite your students to share their comments on the best way to move forward using teamwork. If they are using LEGO’s, will they build a house? If they are using Tinkertoys, will they build a windmill? They all should be in agreement on the final plan. Older children are more likely to take control at this point, so be sure to create opportunities for all ages to participate. You will need to serve as the project manager or advisor during the discussion process. Although they are not aware of it, they will be actively involved in developing a strategy plan, just as a real co-op board might do.
9. Guide (and help, as necessary) the students assemble the items into the project they agreed to build. Encourage communication among the students as they coordinate their efforts. As the project takes shape, remind the students that this is possible because each of them shared a resource to make this possible. *Each of you agreed to use teamwork to combine your resources for the common good.*
10. Once the project is complete, allow the students to appreciate their accomplishment. If the items you have chosen to use for this project actually operates let the students take turns running the equipment.
11. Have the students return to their seats. Serve them snacks and mention the items that were made and marketed by cooperatives.

12. Pass out the “Discussion Questions” worksheet. Allow the students a few minutes to review the questions and write down their answers.
13. Close the session by asking the students to tell you how they answered the questions. Use their comments to reinforce why cooperation is a great way for people to solve common challenges.

**Sources:** KnowledgeStorehouse

# Why Cooperate?

In what new way could you and your family cooperate at home?

Does cooperation happen naturally when you are playing with friends?

What might make it difficult to cooperate with others?

How might you overcome these difficulties?

How do you help others who cannot do things by themselves?

How do others help you with things you cannot do alone?

## Optional Activities

*The following activities could be incorporated at the end of any lesson to fill extra time.*

1. Ask your students in advance to bring an item to donate to the local food bank. As a group, make a cooperative donation to the local food bank. Use this example to show how each individual's small action can add up to a big change when done as a group.
2. Bring a variety of co-op products to class, especially ones that have a connection to your area such as a dairy co-op. Review the history of these co-ops and why they were first formed. Make a list of cooperatives that provide services in your area.
3. Invite a Farmers Union leader who is a member of a cooperative to talk to your class. Have him or her tell the students of the benefits of belonging to a cooperative.
4. Teach some Farmers Union songs.