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Using cooperative learning for biology revision

Aim

(i) to take a different teaching approach to revision of genetics and
(ii) to enhance the learning of students in a mixed ability class by encouraging peer teaching.

Method

The class was divided into groups of three or four. Initially it was on basis of where they were sitting but later I planned who would work with whom.

A mixture of the following were used:
- A worksheet – fishbone diagram
- Exam Question
- Activity Sheet
- DNA jigsaw
- Question on the blackboard

Teacher Comments:

- Students were initially very positive about this approach especially when the Principal spoke to them about the idea of being involved in a project. Most students like working in groups.

- However, a number of the ‘A’ students did not appear to like this type of class work.

- If a number of students in the group did not understand the topic there was a negative atmosphere in the group. If a group finished before the others they chatted which distracted the others.

- I had to ensure that the best combination of students and that there was enough but not too much work so that all groups were kept busy all the time. The planning became very time consuming. But many of the work sheets can be used with other classes therefore in the long term it was very useful.

- Two students improved their grades in the class test that followed the group exercise.