

## Are We a Group or a Team?

Complete the following ten steps to understand the differences between cooperation and collaboration.

1. Give the following directions to teams: "I will show you a triangle graphic comprised of twenty-five randomly placed capital letters (twenty-five out of twenty-six—none repeated). You have ten seconds to study the triangle, and you may *not* write during those ten seconds. When I remove the triangle, record as much as you can remember. Score your work based on the number of correct letters in the correct location on the triangle."
2. Show the first triangle for ten seconds, and then remove it from view (see the sample triangles).

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

3. When everyone is finished looking, show the triangle again. Have individuals score their recordings and find the average for their table team. Report out and chart the averages.
4. Using the same data, direct teams to determine their team score by compiling their individual results into a team total—there is still a total of twenty-five possible, so each letter only counts once, even if all team members got it correct. But every letter counts, even if only one member got it correct. Report out and record team scores. Point out the positive impact of cooperating—more heads are better than one.
5. Give the following directions to teams: "I will now show you a new triangle—same format, different letter placement. You have ten seconds to view it. The difference this time is that you only need to create one triangle as a team, and you will have one minute to figure out how you want to do it."
6. Monitor planning time (one minute). Give a cue, show the second triangle for ten seconds, and then remove it from view. Tell teams to compile their recordings for their team triangle.

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

7. Once everyone is finished, show the second triangle again. Have teams determine their team scores—report out and chart.
8. Ask participants to look at data and point out the significant gains between team totals and team results. Ask them to briefly talk about how and why their teams improved. Ask for individuals to share and chart their responses. Be sure to probe for ideas such as: clear, common goal; clear individual expectations; individual strengths factoring into work division; data used for reflection and improvement; trust; accountability to teammates; communication; and strategies for sharing.

1. Once you chart all responses, ask participants to reflect on a team that they currently work with and answer *yes* or *no* to each question you are about to pose. Using the charted responses, ask a question based on each response. For example, “Does your team have a clear, common goal?”
2. Finally, suggest that the responses on the chart reflect the differences between cooperative teams and collaborative teams to conclude the activity. Highlight the potential of increasing student achievement (getting results no one is able to get when working alone or in cooperative groups) when educators understand and commit to true collaboration.

*Source: Buffum, A., Mattos, M., & Malone, J. (2018). Taking action: A handbook for RTI at Work. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.*