Abstract for Children's Small Group Communication Course

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Group learning is an increasingly popular teaching tool in classrooms of all levels and yet children aren't usually receiving instruction in the skills necessary to successfully participate and get the most out of this style of learning. Many educators advocate direct instruction in these skill sets in order to improve the group process and increase the children's chances of success. It is a surprise, then, that more schools do not make use of courses to teach children small group communication skills as a separate instructional component.

Rooted in the pedagogy and literature of communication education, this thesis presents all units and lessons that compromise a 20-day small group communication course for children. The course is designed to instruct 4th and 5th grade children in order that they might maximize their personal learning in a cooperative learning setting and includes units on language, listening, consensus and compromise. Small groups will work together daily to improve their communication skills and to solve critical thinking problems. This ongoing instruction in critical thinking, coupled with the instruction in small group communication, ensures that students have the necessary skills to act as an active and functional thinking member of the group. The course is designed to allow children to retain and transfer the skills they learn to future intellectual and social situations.