

WHAT SKILLS ARE HELPFUL IN COOPERATIVE GROUPS?

Materials Needed:

- Five squares cut up as shown and sealed in envelopes¹
- Cut up five squares (all of the same dimensions) as shown in Figure 6.1 for each group of five people. Distribute the five squares among envelopes as shown.
 - Each member of the group should get an envelope. The goal is for each person in the group, *without communicating in any way* (without talking, gesturing, or writing notes), to form a square that is the same size as all the other members' squares. Members of the group may hand their own pieces to others in the group, but

they may *not* take pieces from another person or point to pieces they want. They can only wait for a person to hand them a piece. They cannot gesture that they do not want a piece; they must accept it and give it to someone else if they do not want it. When a member gives a piece to another member of the group, she must simply hand the piece to the member and not place the piece so as to help complete a square. The activity is not timed, and it may take anywhere from a few minutes to over a half hour to complete.

- When all the members of the group are finished, discuss what happened. What skills does it take to complete this task? Was it frustrating? Why? Was there collaboration among the members of the group? What skills would facilitate collaboration in elementary and middle grades classrooms?

1. Adapted from Abruscato, J., and J. Hassard. 1976. *Loving and beyond: Science teaching for the humanistic classroom*. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman.

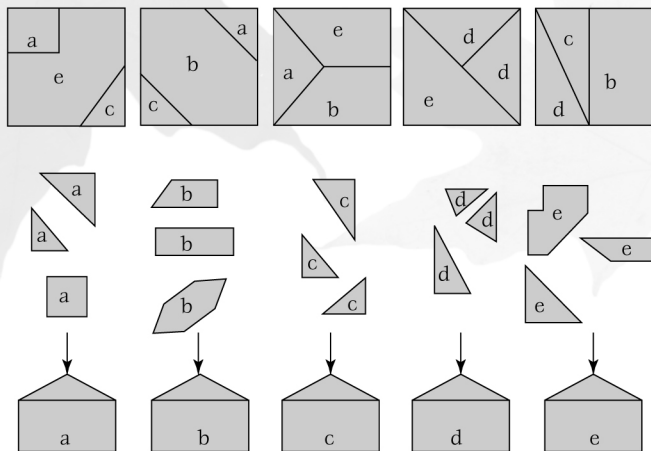


Figure 6.1
The five square activity.

