



## Cooperation in the Community

**Suggested Grade Level:** K-2

**Time:** 35 minutes

**Subject:** History, Government & Social Studies, English Language Arts, School Counseling, Academic and Career Development, Kansas Agriculture

**Overview:** This K-2 lesson integrates Social Studies, English Language Arts, and agriculture by demonstrating to young students how cooperation impacts both communities and industries. Students will explore the concept of cooperation through the story "The Perfect Plan" by Leah Gilbert. After discussing how people work together to achieve shared goals, students will connect this concept to real-world examples of cooperative businesses in Kansas. They'll learn how cooperation supports farmers, rural communities, and the economy. Through a hands-on game and class discussion, students will examine the importance of collaboration in both everyday life and industry.

### Objectives:

1. Define cooperation and identify examples from personal experience.
2. Explain how cooperation benefits individuals, groups, and communities.
3. Demonstrate collaboration and teamwork by participating in a group activity.

### Background Information:

Cooperation is a vital life skill that helps individuals succeed both personally and professionally. Learning to cooperate teaches students how to listen, share, communicate, and work toward common goals, skills that are essential in school, at home, and in future careers. In the workforce, cooperation is the foundation of most jobs. This is especially true in the case of cooperative businesses, where members work together to share resources, lower costs, and achieve mutual success. By understanding how cooperation functions in real-world settings, students can better appreciate the importance of teamwork and its role in shaping their communities and the economy.

You or your students may already be affiliated with a cooperative without realizing it. If a family belongs to a credit union like Heartland Credit Union, gets electricity from DS&O Rural Electric Cooperative, or delivers crops to a grain elevator owned by Mid-Kansas Cooperative (MKC), they're part of a cooperative. These little-known businesses are common across the world, and they operate very differently compared to your average for-profit corporation. Cooperatives are based on three core principles. The User-Benefits Principle means members get rewards or savings based on how much they use the cooperative's services. For example, a farmer who sells a lot of grain

through a cooperative might receive money back at the end of the year. The User-Owner Principle means the people who use the cooperative also own it and help pay for its expenses. For instance, a family that is a member of a credit union also helps support and own that credit union. The User-Control Principle means that members have a say in decisions through voting and the selection of leaders. Just like people who get electricity from an electric cooperative can vote for the board members who make important decisions (Frederick). Cooperatives are common in rural areas with small populations because they enable communities to collaborate to share resources and services.

### **Kansas Industry Information:**

Kansas has a long history of working together. A long time ago, before Kansas became a state, many people came here for cheap land and a fresh start – but it wasn't easy. Life on the prairie was challenging every day. The soil was tough to break. Summers were very hot, winters were very cold, and storms, drought, or bugs could ruin crops. Farms were far apart, and farmers were often far from their families. Early Kansans didn't have the technology we do today – electricity, phones, farm equipment like tractors and combines, crops that are resistant to bugs and diseases – to handle these problems. They struggled to make enough money to support their farms and families. So, they began to work together. They formed cooperatives!

Did you know that there are cooperatives in nearly every Kansas county? Kansas is home to many types of cooperatives, also called co-ops, that play significant roles in supporting Kansas communities. One of the best-known types in Kansas is the agricultural cooperative. Agricultural cooperatives are groups of farmers and agricultural providers that band together to market crops and livestock and supply seed, fertilizer, fuel, feed, and transportation. They also operate grain elevators, which help farmers store their grain safely and prevent spoilage. Co-ops also provide advice on growing healthy crops, money and market tips, and tools to help avoid common risks. Working together helps them save money because they can share resources.

Cooperatives don't just help farmers! Lots of people with different jobs and interests join together to help their communities. Utility co-ops bring essential things like electricity and water to small towns and the countryside, where other businesses don't usually go. Utilities are necessities families need every day, such as electricity to turn on the lights, water to drink, and phones to communicate. Financial cooperatives, also known as credit unions, help individuals manage their money. They are like banks, but the people who use them also help run them! There are so many more types of cooperatives – consumer co-ops, business co-ops, housing co-ops, and more – that help Kansas communities by bringing nutritious food to places that don't have good options, sharing the price of expensive equipment, taking care of their neighborhoods, and bringing together people from different jobs with similar goals. According to the Kansas Cooperative Council, co-ops make billions of dollars each year – money that stays in the Kansas communities they serve. This money helps build and maintain schools,



roads, and more. Cooperatives help Kansans work together, making life easier and communities stronger.

**Materials:**

*Engagement*

- Book: *The Perfect Plan* by Leah Gilbert, published by Bloomsbury Children’s Books (A read-aloud is available if you don’t have the book).

*Activity*

Per student

- Cardstock
- Pipe cleaners
- Rubber bands
- Popsicle sticks
- Aluminum foil

Per group

- Scissors
- Tape

*Optional*

- Fuel Truck Driver Coloring Page

**Instructional Format:**

1. Review background information
2. Conduct an engagement exercise
3. Complete the activity.
4. Review vocabulary.
5. Conduct an assessment exercise.

***Start Teaching Here***

**Engagement:**

Ask students: Have you ever built something with your friends or family (e.g., a fort, a puzzle, or a game)? How did it feel to work together? What do you think is important when working together?

Explain to students: In the book, “The Perfect Plan,” cooperation takes center stage through the story of Maya, who cooperates with forest animals to build her dream fort. Followed by reading the book “The Perfect Plan” by Leah Gilbert, or play this read aloud for the class. Story adventures with Ms. Dolores: The Perfect Plan [The Perfect Plan](#)

Ask students about the story:

1. Maya had an idea for a fort. Why couldn’t she finish it all by herself?
2. Each animal helps in a different way. Can you name what some of the animals did?
3. How did Maya’s plan get better once everyone worked together?
4. What might have happened if the animals didn’t want to cooperate?
5. What do you think “cooperation” means after hearing this story?



### **Procedures: Activity**

Introduce the cooperative game to your students, in which they will first build a tower individually, then work together to make another tower, and compare the results.

1. Inform students that they must compete to build the tallest tower using only a few items. You may use virtually anything you have access to, but avoid materials that are too similar (e.g., printer paper and cardstock).
1. Pass out the materials so that each student receives only **one type** of item.
2. Instruct students that they **may not share** their materials during this round.
3. Give students five minutes to build the tallest, strongest tower they can using only their assigned item.
4. After the timer ends, form a few small groups, ensuring each team has access to all types of materials.
5. Start a new five-minute timer. As students build, encourage teamwork and communication. Everyone should participate!
6. At the end of the round, measure each tower. Whichever group has the tallest and sturdiest tower wins. Test this by lightly blowing on the towers or shaking the table.
7. Compare the towers the groups constructed with the created by individuals.

### *Discussion*

8. Explain to your students that cooperation is all around us – and a significant part of Kansas’ history and identity. Say, “In Kansas, we cooperate with each other. We cooperate in our classrooms to make learning easier, we share equipment on the playground, we work together at home to complete chores faster, we cooperate at our jobs to do better work, and we even form businesses called *cooperatives* that are made up of individuals working together!” Think about working by yourself to build a tower. Now think about working with a team.
  - a. ‘What happened?’
  - b. Did working together help you do more or finish faster?
  - c. Was it tricky to decide the best way to work together?
  - d. Did you disagree on anything? How did you handle it?”
9. Read the first paragraph of the Kansas Connections section of this lesson aloud to the class. If time permits, read the rest of the section (about 2-3 minutes long).

“Kansas has a long history of working together. A long time ago, before Kansas became a state, many people came here for cheap land and a fresh start – but it wasn’t easy. Life on the prairie was challenging every day. The soil was tough to break. Summers were very hot, winters were very cold, and storms, drought, or bugs could ruin crops. Farms were far apart, and farmers were often far from their families. Early Kansans didn’t have the technology we do today – electricity, phones, farm equipment like tractors and combines, crops that are resistant to bugs and diseases – to handle these problems. They struggled to make enough money to support their farms and families. So, they began to work together. They formed cooperatives!”



- a. “Did you know there are cooperatives in almost every Kansas county? Cooperatives don’t just help farmers. People with many different interests and kinds of jobs form cooperatives to support their communities.”

Explain that cooperatives are particularly important to Kansas communities because about half of Kansans are farmers or live in a rural area, which means small towns and the countryside where there aren’t many people. Just like you worked together to build a tower, people work together in cooperatives to help their communities. They have to respect everyone’s point of view and be responsible – that’s a big part of cooperation. When people cooperate, they can do things they couldn’t do alone, and communities become stronger and happier places to live.”

- a. “Do you know anyone who works at a cooperative? What other jobs do you think you could find at a cooperative?” (Take a few answers from the class.)

Explain that there are many different types of jobs at a cooperative, just like any other business. One example is a fuel truck driver. This person drives a big truck filled with fuel to local farms. They ensure tractors, harvesters, and other machines have the energy they need to perform important work.

Supporting activity: Distribute the Fuel Truck Driver coloring page. As students color, remind them that jobs like this are essential in cooperative businesses. Fuel truck drivers help farmers keep their machines running, which helps the whole community succeed.

**Vocabulary:**

- **Cooperation:** working together to help each other.
- **Cooperative:** a group of people who work together and share what they need.
- **Community:** a place where people live and work.
- **Rural:** places in the countryside where there are farms and fewer people.

**Career Information:** Fuel Truck Driver

Fuel truck drivers employed by Kansas cooperatives deliver fuel to farms and rural businesses. Their daily responsibilities include loading fuel at co-op depots, driving to various locations, and safely refueling equipment such as tractors, combines, and storage tanks. These drivers often follow regular routes and build strong relationships with local producers. By ensuring farmers have the fuel they need to operate essential machinery, fuel truck drivers play a key role in keeping agricultural operations running smoothly.

**Assessment:**

Exit ticket: Have students draw a picture or verbally respond to each question below.

1. What does “cooperation” mean? “Cooperation means...”



2. Give an example of cooperation. “One time I cooperated when...”
3. How do cooperatives help people in Kansas? “Cooperatives help Kansans by...”

## **Kansas Standards:**

### **History, Government, and Social Studies**

Standard 3: Societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups

3.1 The student will recognize and evaluate how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups.

3.3 The student will investigate and connect how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups with contemporary issues.

3.4 The student will use their understanding of how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups to make a claim or advance a thesis using evidence and argument.

Standard 5: Relationships among people, places, ideas, and environments are dynamic

5.1 The student will recognize and evaluate dynamic relationships that impact lives in communities, states, and nations.

5.4 The student will use their understanding of dynamic relationships to make a claim or advance a thesis using evidence and argument.

### **Language Arts**

#### Kindergarten

Reading: Literature

RL.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL.K.2 With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key events.

RL.K.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings and major events in a story.

Range of Reading and Text Complexity

RL.K.13 Listen to high quality drama, prose, and poetry to expand language comprehension.

Language in Reading: Informational

RI.K.11 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases in reading and content to expand language comprehension.

RI.K.11.a Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing duck is a bird and learning the verb duck).

RI.K.11.b Use the most frequently occurring inflectional endings and affixes (e.g., -ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less) to determine the meaning of an unknown word.

RI.K.12 With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

RI.K.12.a Sort common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.

RI.K.12.c Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at school that are colorful).

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.K.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Speaking and Listening

SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups to expand language comprehension.

SL.K.1.a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).

SL.K.1.b Extend a conversation through multiple exchanges.

SL.K.2 Confirm sequence of events of a read aloud or media presentation by asking and answering questions about key details or requesting clarification of what is not understood.

SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions to seek help, get information or clarify what is not understood.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL.K.4 Use details to describe familiar people, places, things or events with prompting and support.



SL.K.6 Speak with appropriate volume, enunciation, and rate to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

### 1st Grade

Reading: Literature

RL.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL.1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of the lesson or central message (main idea).

RL.1.3 Describe character, settings and major events in a story, using key details.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RL.1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting or events.

Reading: Informational

RI.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RI.1.2 Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

RI.1.3 Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas or pieces of information in a text.  
Craft and Structure

RI.1.4 Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

RI.1.6 Distinguish between information provided by illustrations or other graphics and information provided by the words in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RI.1.7 Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

RI.1.8 Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

Language in Reading: Informational

RI.1.11 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and multiple-meaning words and phrases to expand language comprehension.

RI.1.12 With guidance and support from adults, demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

RI.1.12.c Identify real-life connections between words and their uses.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.1.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Speaking and Listening

SL.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups to expand language comprehension.

SL.1.1a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

SL.1.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud, information presented orally or through media.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL.1.4 Use relevant details to describe people, places, things and events, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

### 2nd Grade

Reading: Literature

RL.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

RL.2.2 Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures and determine their lesson, moral or central message.

RL.2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RL.2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting or plot.

Range of Reading and Text Complexity



RL.2.13 Read and comprehend high-quality dramas, prose and poetry of appropriate quantitative and qualitative complexity for second grade.

Reading: Informational

RI.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

RI.2.2 Identify the main topic of a multi-paragraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.

Craft and Structure

RI.2.6 Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain or describe.

Language in Reading: Informational

RI.2.11 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases to expand language comprehension.

RI.2.12 Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

RI.2.12.a Identify real-life connections between words and their use.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Speaking and Listening

SL.2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups to expand language comprehension.

SL.2.1.a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL.2.4 Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking with appropriate volume, enunciation and rate in coherent sentences.

Speaking and Listening

SL.2.7 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when speaking.

## ***Counseling***

Academic Development

Standard 1: The student will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.

Benchmark 1: The student will demonstrate academic self-confidence and skills and attitudes to enhance learning.

PreK-2.1. The student demonstrates creative thinking and questioning skills.

PreK-2.3. The student accepts challenges as essential to the learning process.

PreK-2.4. The student identifies use of time management, organizational and study skills necessary for academic success.

PreK-2.5. The student demonstrates a sense of belonging and self-confidence in achieving high-quality results and outcomes.

Benchmark 2: The student will achieve school success.

PreK-2.1. The student demonstrates creative and critical thinking skills that include questioning necessary for academic success

PreK-2.2. The student demonstrates effective cooperative and collaborative skills.

Career Development

Standard 1: The student will acquire the skills to investigate careers in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

Benchmark 1: The student will develop career awareness.

PreK-2.3. The student identifies and becomes aware of occupations in the school and community.

PreK-2.4. The student recognizes that all work has value.



Standard 2: The student will employ strategies to achieve future career goals with success and satisfaction.

Benchmark 1: The student will acquire career information.

PreK-2.1. The student identifies workers in various settings and their tasks.

Standard 3: The student will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training, and career success.

Benchmark 2: The student will apply skills to achieve career goals.

PreK-2.2. The student develops interpersonal skills

PreK-2.3. The student develops teamwork skills.

Social and Emotional Development

Standard 1: The student will acquire knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to understand and respect self and others.

Benchmark 2: The student will acquire and use interpersonal skills.

PreK-2.3. The student recognizes the differences between cooperative and uncooperative behaviors.

### **National Agricultural Literacy Standards:**

#### ***Culture, Society, Economy, and Geography***

- Explain why farming is important to communities (T5.K-2 b.)
- Identify places and methods of exchange for agricultural products in the local area (T5.K-2 c.)
- Identify plants and animals grown or raised locally that are used for food, clothing, shelter, and landscapes (T5.K-2 d.)
- Identify the people and careers involved from production to consumption of agricultural products (T5.K-2 e.)

### **Supporting Resources:**

The Mr. Saad Show: Cooperation for Kids | Working Together to Get Things Done

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lQRmw7cvUU>

Laura's Adventurer Resources

<https://laurasadventurerresources.com/cooperation-award/>

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## Types of Cooperatives

### Agricultural Cooperatives

As of 2019, there are 62 farmer (agricultural) cooperatives in the state of Kansas. These member-owned organizations enable local farmers to collaborate on marketing, storage, and processing of their crops and livestock. They also supply essential inputs, such as seed, fertilizer, and feed, and provide services, such as equipment sharing and agronomic support.

Examples:

Servi-Tech, Inc., Dodge City  
Mid-Kansas Co-op, Moundridge  
American Plains Co-op, Great Bend

### Utility Cooperatives

Utility co-ops were formed in the early 1900s to provide certain essential services to rural, underserved areas. They typically offer electricity, telecommunication, and water/sewage services. Members of a utility cooperative collectively own the cooperative that serves them and influence decisions regarding infrastructure and service quality.

Examples:

Nemaha-Marshall Electric Cooperative, Axtell  
Flint Hills RECA, Council Grove  
DS&O Rural Electric Cooperative Assn., Inc., Solomon

### Financial Cooperatives

Financial cooperatives, such as credit unions, are similar to banks. They provide personal and business banking, lending, and investment services. However, unlike traditional banks, their primary focus is on serving the needs of their members and community, rather than generating profits for shareholders.

Examples:

Golden Plains Credit Union, Garden City  
Azura Credit Union, Topeka  
Credit Union of Emporia, Emporia

### Consumer Cooperatives

Consumer cooperatives enable individuals to pool their purchasing power, thereby enabling them to access goods and services at lower prices and higher quality. One example of a consumer cooperative is a food cooperative, which is like a grocery store. Food cooperatives can help address food deserts, which are regions without easy access to nutritious food.

Examples:

KC Kosher Co-op, Kansas City  
The Merc Co+op, Lawrence

### Business Cooperatives

Business cooperatives are formed by organizations or companies in the same sector to



purchase supplies, share services, or collaborate on projects. By collaborating, members reduce operational costs and gain greater market influence.

Examples:

Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, Hays  
Kansas Electric Power Cooperative Inc. (KEPCo)

### **Housing Cooperatives**

Housing cooperatives enable residents to collectively own and manage residential properties, including apartments, single-family homes, or senior housing. Members contribute to operating expenses and participate in the decision-making process.

Examples:

People's Owned and Operated Collective Housing (POOCH), Lawrence  
Prairie Glen Townhouses, Manhattan

### **Worker Cooperatives**

Worker cooperatives are owned and run by the employees. Members share profits and make key decisions together, thereby giving workers greater control over their work and the direction of the business. These cooperatives are less common – according to the United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives, there are no documented worker cooperatives in the state of Kansas as of 2025.

Examples:

Ward Lumber, Jay and Malone, NY

### **Multi-Stakeholder Cooperatives**

Multi-stakeholder cooperatives bring together diverse members (such as producers, consumers, and community members) who benefit in different ways. By collaborating, these groups address shared challenges, support local economies, and create value for all participants.

Examples:

Farm and Home Cooperative, Kansas and Missouri

