

A Final Report –
Evaluating EnTeam’s *Operation Cooperation*
Using a Qualitative Study Design

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The Evaluator Team for this Operation Cooperation study
(Ted Wohlfarth, Dina Rinder and Peggy Neufeld)
has reviewed this written report
and accepted it as a trustworthy reflection of the process, findings and interpretations.
We look forward to review and comment from others.

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I. Executive Summary

EnTeam's *Operation Cooperation* began in 2001 with workshops for teachers, partially in response to the tragedy of 9/11. In 2002 the current format was developed with a series of four workshops using EnTeam games with 3rd graders from four diverse faith-based schools in St. Louis (Muslim, Catholic, Jewish and Christian Scientist). Over the past nine years, the same schools continue to participate annually in the program for 3rd graders; more than 1,000 students completed the workshops. Each of the schools hosts a 2-hour long workshop at their site for a series of four workshops over the school year. EnTeam organizes and teaches the programs, and volunteer parents and teachers facilitate student groups.

Operation Cooperation was created by EnTeam as an opportunity for youth to benefit from their unique games within 'win-win' (versus win-lose) competitions that engages teamwork and collaboration. Ted Wohlfarth explains that in EnTeam games, "problems (not persons) are posed as the opponents and the problems are beat by measuring cooperative game performance . . . We don't need to agree with each other about all beliefs (or even like each other) in order to cooperate and collaborate and all win" (Advisory Group minutes, 10-2010). *EnTeam's mission* is to *foster and measure cooperation through challenging activities designed to teach everyone to learn to win together*. "The outcome of Operation Cooperation is greater understanding, friendship, and skill in solving problems collaboratively with people from diverse faiths" (www.enteam.org).

Past evaluations of Operation Cooperation used brief written surveys (a few checklist questions and a few open-ended questions) to gather responses from the participating youth, parents and teachers at the end of each workshop. Many of the completed parent surveys indicated that they observed youth having fun, being friendly, interacting peacefully and problem-solving in the games, but these claims were based on brief responses to a few questions administered on-site at the end of a session.

EnTeam's aim for this study was to gain a greater understanding of the long-term effects of Operation Cooperation through a program evaluation that directly interviewed participants (youth of different ages, parents, teachers and school administrators). The study results were anticipated to be useful for ongoing program enhancement. The importance for this evaluation lies in being able to demonstrate and document Operation Cooperation's benefits for families and schools. EnTeam also wants this information to assess the merits of expanding Operation Cooperation into schools in cities outside St. Louis.

In May 2010, EnTeam's founder and Executive Director Ted Wohlfarth contracted with Dr. Peggy Neufeld to assist with an in-depth qualitative evaluation of Operation Cooperation. Dr. Neufeld, a consultant in community capacity-building with nonprofit organizations, brought skills in qualitative research and community program development and evaluation. She also had previous experience with EnTeam through mentoring occupational therapy student service learning on EnTeam projects while teaching in the Program in Occupational Therapy at Washington University School of Medicine as a full-time faculty member (for 19 years) and currently as adjunct faculty (since 2008).

Specific study questions for investigation of Operation Cooperation (OC) were:

- How do the participants (elementary, middle-school and high school youth alumni of OC, parents and school personnel) describe experiences and value of OC?
- How do participants describe benefits from their OC experiences?
- What do participants recommend to enhance the experience and impact from OC?

From June 2010 to March, 2011, Dr. Neufeld coordinated and facilitated an evaluation of EnTeam's Operation Cooperation using *qualitative and participatory methods*. Over six months, a total of 33 interviews were conducted and analyzed along with Advisory Group interactions. The Final Report describes study methods and findings, discusses interpretations of the findings and offers recommendations to EnTeam. An appendix provides interview formats, training models for interviewers, Advisory Group agendas and minutes, and other resources.

A summary of specific qualitative findings and action-oriented processes developed from this project are summarized below and elaborated in the report.

1. **Themes were identified with numerous supporting quotes and narratives from participants.** These can be useful for Operation Cooperation programming, EnTeam grant-writing, webpage text and testimonials, public reports and journal writing, and promotional materials for partnership with schools. Briefly, the themes are:
 - a. **“Reinforced for me that people of different religions can work together”.** Youth gained respect, open-mindedness and comfort in talking and interacting with students from other faith-based schools, as indicated by the youth, parents and school personnel. Parents highly valued this attitude.
 - b. **“We learned to work in teams”.** Operation Cooperation programs were enjoyable and engaging for youth, with collaboration and cooperation in problem-solving observed during the four sessions, as indicated by the youth, parents and school personnel.
 - c. **“Didn't hear as much as I would have liked about Operation Cooperation”.** Following the Operation Cooperation sessions, most youth and parents did not talk much about their experiences and reactions.
 - d. **“Extend Operation Cooperation over several years so students can remember it as they grow older”.** Youth and parents recommended additional Operation Cooperation session(s) offered to higher grade students (with games modified for the older youth) for a greater long-term impact.

2. **An Operation Cooperation Advisory Group was created** (parents, youth, school personnel, EnTeam personnel) as a tool for ongoing development. The Advisory Group provided critical input to the study process and emerging findings. Many agreed to continue as advisors for additional meetings over the following year.
3. **Relationships between EnTeam and the schools were strengthened.** These alliances can be helpful for recruiting participants for future Operation Cooperation evaluation and outcome studies, as well as for ongoing programming.
 - a. Schools provided names of potential interviewees willing to be interviewed.
 - b. Three of the four schools approved sending letters to parents through the children's backpacks, for parent information and invitation.
 - c. The fourth school (Principia) sent the parent letter through direct mailing at the school's cost.
4. **Materials were created for this EnTeam study that can be applied in future EnTeam projects.**
 - a. Advisory Group model including methods for inviting prospective individuals, facilitating meetings and preparing materials for meetings.
 - b. Interviewer Training model and materials for college student and parent volunteer interviewers.
 - c. Interview questions and scripts for adults, school personnel and youth.

This qualitative evaluation of Operation Cooperation revealed that almost all study participants (parents, children and school personnel) were enthusiastic about the program. A predominant belief of student alumni and parents was that OC enhances the children's collaborative problem-solving, teamwork, respect and comfort when interacting with other students from diverse faiths. The study also revealed that a number of participants had different expectations than was intended; they thought the purpose was to teach about religions. This misconception possibly accounted for those who expressed uncertainty about long-lasting positive effects from OC. Another issue was that parents raised the concern of not having enough information about OC to follow-up and communicate with their children. These findings suggest the program could be strengthened for a greater impact by clarifying and consistently explaining the purpose of OC in a simple, uncomplicated way for all age levels.

Recommendations to EnTeam for Operation Cooperation:

1. For OC program enhancement:
 - a. Create worksheets to augment parent, teacher and youth information about OC.
 - *A pre-workshop* sheet to describe the purpose and objectives for Operation Cooperation to all parents (not just those helping at workshops), the workshop dates and locations, and explain to parents how they could be involved in the learning. Make game-based workshop clear and tell them they will not be discussing religions.

- *A post-workshop* sheet after each of the 4 sessions to remind everyone of the overall purpose, highlight specific session objectives and activities, and provide comments and questions that parents and teachers can opt to use to facilitate discussion with youth. The worksheet can also emphasize language or the terms used in the workshop, to augment transfer of learning.
 - *A final sheet* at the end of the 4th session to reinforce learning and invite parents, youth and teachers to give feedback about the Operation Cooperation experience. Specific open-ended questions, a request for stories that show learning and attitudes, as well as Likert type survey items could be included. Invite responses either by email, written notes, phoning to speak directly to EnTeam staff, or offer an online survey method.
- b. Encourage carryover and application of OC concepts by emphasizing within the workshops specific language and ways of talking that encourage cooperation, and encouraging its use by parents and teachers.
 - c. Continue the Advisory Group for ongoing program development and evaluation and for strengthening relationships among schools, parents/families and EnTeam. Convene the group when there are specific tasks to complete and specific questions to pose for their problem-solving and input.
 - d. EnTeam could pursue a new partnership with an agency that offers cultural exchange to teens; and then negotiate use of EnTeam games to supplement their activities.

2. For education about benefits of OC:

- a. EnTeam could create a brief report about this evaluation and its implications for distribution to the families and schools involved in OC
- b. The EnTeam website could be updated with a brief report created from this evaluation and selected quotes from parents and youth. It is recommended not to put the entire report on the website due to its length; instead only place the executive summary plus selected quotes or discussion about some of the findings.
- c. Write a journal article about the theory underlying EnTeam and Operation Cooperation and report these qualitative evaluation findings on Operation Cooperation to promote awareness of the program and disseminate evidence on the program.

3. For further evaluation of OC:

- a. Use findings from this evaluation to inform development of a written survey for participants at the end of each session. Also adapt the survey for school personnel and send to teachers and administrators involved in the project.
- b. Use the qualitative findings and action processes created from this study (training workshops, recruitment process and advisory group) to inform future qualitative and quantitative research on Operation Cooperation and other EnTeam projects.

II. Methods

A. Overview of evaluation approach and methods

The goal of the Operation Cooperation program evaluation was to demonstrate the impact of Operation Cooperation through exploring its possible benefits for the youth, families, teachers and schools. *The specific study questions* were:

1. How do the participants (elementary, middle-school and high school youth alumni of OC, parents and school personnel) describe experiences and value of OC?
2. How do participants describe benefits from their OC experiences?
3. What do participants recommend to enhance experience and impact from OC?

A participatory approach with qualitative study methods (Mack, 2005; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008) was used for the purpose of this study. Participants completed semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and an Advisory Group was formed. The context for the program evaluation was inquiries about participant's experiences and views in EnTeam's Operation Cooperation games involving teams of children with parent volunteer facilitators from four different faith-based schools (Muslim, Catholic, Jewish, Christian Scientist). Refer to <http://enteam.org> for description of Operation Cooperation.

The qualitative study method was selected as a best fit for the study questions because the study issues had not been formally explored and EnTeam could benefit from participant's detailed descriptions. A participatory approach in the evaluation involved forming a committee of school personnel, parents, youth and Operation Cooperation evaluators to bring multiple perspectives that helped shaped interview questions and interpretation of findings; thus, the participatory approach helped expand knowledge and increase potential practical use of the findings.

The evaluation was based on grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss cited in Babchuk, 2009) *and a developing theory by Ted Wohlfarth based on game theory* and a game approach designed to teach or facilitate collaboration, cooperation and peaceful interactions during shared activities among youth from different backgrounds (personal communication with Ted W.). Grounded theory involves a systematic methodology that codes key data points, sorts ideas into similar concepts and categories, then identifies themes that become the basis for generating theory. *This study's qualitative data analysis* used an iterative process of constant comparisons of content from interviews and meetings throughout the study. The emerging themes were identified by the Evaluator Team (Dr. Neufeld, Ted Wohlfarth, and Dina Rinder) and then shared and discussed at the Advisory Group meetings and in follow-up communications. The Evaluator Team ultimately reached consensus on themes from the data.

The evaluation project began with forming the Advisory Group and identifying and training interviewers. In June 2010, prospective Advisory Group participants were invited by Ted Wohlfarth to attend three meetings over summer and fall (see appendix A and B). During June and July, the interviewing process and tools were determined (see appendix H and I) as the training workshops began for the interviewers. The study included a small number of interviewers, which permitted ease in training as well as monitoring the quality and rigor of the interview process.

All interviews were administered from June through November, 2010. A ‘convenience sample’ of participants (Bogdan & Biklin, 2006) was invited by school administrators or Ted Wohlfarth and given an explanation of the study purpose and their involvement. Interviewees included Operation Cooperation student alumni, parents and school personnel who indicated a willingness to participate. Parents and school personnel were interviewed first, and then a modified protocol of questions for interviewing youth was created and carried out.

B. The interview protocol and interviewers

At the start of the project, Dr. Neufeld drafted an initial list of *possible indicators* to assess (presence or absence) as potential changes in relation to the Operation Cooperation experiences. These indicators informed the evaluators when interview questions were designed. Initial indicators were based on prior communications with Ted Wohlfarth, and observations and readings related to Operation Cooperation. The initial indicators included: 1) Youth’s behavior with other students during and after the games (collaboration/working together; comfort; friend(ly) behaviors), 2) Youth’s collaborative problem-solving skills (willingness to resolve conflict cooperatively; examples of leadership over time related to projects with students from diverse faiths), 3) Relations among schools and families fostering and/or indicating successful collaboration (valuing of community interactions; comfort in collaborations), 4) Satisfaction with Operation Cooperation by students, parents and schools (willingness to participate; advocates for OC to families, teachers, youth and/or schools), and 5) Cultural affirmation (cultural awareness of others with diverse faiths; cultural exchange with youth such as examples of participating with others from diverse faiths).

Interview protocols (scripts, questions and a guide for recording and transcribing) were created for interviewing parents and school personnel, and later for the youth (see appendix H and I). The interview questions were designed to try to set up a comfortable, trusting rapport with interviewees and to query them with open-ended questions on potential Operation Cooperation outcomes. Audio-recordings of interviews were collected by using Olympus and RCA Digital voice recorders with the interviewer’s telephone placed in the speaker mode. The digital recordings and interview notes were uploaded to Dr. Neufeld and Ted Wohlfarth’s primary computers for storage and analysis. Participants had the opportunity to decline being audio recorded. Dr. Neufeld tracked all interviews by maintaining an Xcel master code list, and a separate Xcel document tracking key characteristics of interviews: code, role (parent, youth or school personnel), current grade level of child, year in OC, school affiliation, date interviewed, interviewer name, parent permission for child interview, siblings of child interviewed and if the parent interviewee attended OC. Using this tracking, Dr. Neufeld calculated monthly tallies on progress of completed interviews within categories of roles, grade levels and schools.

Interview process: Interviews were administered by telephone instead of face-to-face due to anticipated difficulties in scheduling interviewee times and sites; in-person interviews would have increased demands of driving time on the interviewer’s limited time. The first interviews were administered to some Advisory Group members to gain their feedback on the interview process and questions. The first phase of interviews was

conducted with parents and school administrators (about 20-30 minutes long), which gave interviewers the opportunity to ask parents for permission to eventually interview their children. Evaluators anticipated that adult interviewees would be more articulate in their observations and views, which would assist the study team process of preparing for youth interviews. The second phase of interviews was conducted with youth and used a modified protocol of questions. Interview lengths for middle and high school youth were typically from 20 to 30 minutes long, and elementary-aged interviewees were briefer (about 8-10 minutes long).

Interviewers created notes and partial transcriptions for each interview.

Interviewers transcribed their first full interview, then subsequently transcribed selected aspects of their interviews on responses to key questions, and made notes on other responses. Interviewers also wrote a paragraph of their overall impressions of the interview and its content. Dr. Neufeld and Ted Wohlfarth listened to all audio-recordings and Dr. Neufeld transcribed further content as needed to document interview responses.

The initial interviewers were four college students and one parent of an alum from Operation Cooperation (Dina Rinder), along with Ted Wohlfarth and Dr. Neufeld completing a few interviews to check the different interview formats. Three of the college students were summer volunteers from University of Missouri at St Louis (Nassir Balushi, Matt Phillips and Whitney Villmer) and a 4th college student (Whitney Crooks) was a Washington University summer intern from Skandalaris Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. Dr. Neufeld trained the interviewers in June to July 2010 with three 1 ½ hour sessions and suggested individual practice activities for between the training sessions (see appendix F). Interviewers were also trained in ethical survey methods and ways to safeguard against interviewer bias. During the summer, the college student volunteers completed fewer interviews than expected, requiring the interview process to continue into the fall and carried out mostly by Dina Rinder. When the college students were no longer available for interviewing in the fall, two additional interviewers were identified and received a shortened version of the training module (see appendix G). After the training, one of the interviewers declined to do the interviews and the other declined after an initial interview.

C. Participants (Interviewees and Advisory Group)

A range of *interview participants* were planned for the purpose of bringing multiple perspectives from parents and youth, teachers and school personnel, and from different religious schools; thus, the trustworthiness of interpretations was enhanced by including different data sources (qualitative study triangulation method; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Convenience and purposeful sampling of participants was used (as opposed to random sampling) and was based on participant's willingness to be involved and the resources available for interviewing. The potential pool of participants included any youth who attended Operation Cooperation's series of workshops for 3rd graders since its beginning in 2002, parents who had assisted at the Operation Cooperation workshops as well as parents who did not attend but permitted their children to go, and school personnel from the four involved schools.

Initially the plan was to collect a total of 44 interviews with fairly equal representation from youth, parents and school personnel from the four schools. More youth interviews were to be collected than adults, since the youth were direct participants

in the Operation Cooperation games. The original plan was to collect 11 interviews from each school including two parents of 4th-5th graders, two teachers, three 4th - 5th graders, two middle-school youth and two high school youth (i.e., seven youth per school). Of the proposed 44 interviews, the plan was for a total of 16 adults (36%) and 28 youth (64%). The plan for 44 interviews was considered feasible considering the availability of five interviewers and a reasonable number of persons would be within each category for this qualitative study (8 in each category except 12 elementary-aged children).

Ted Wohlfarth, EnTeam Executive Director, coordinated *participant recruitment* with the school's administrators to identify parents willing to be interviewed. In this way he could be sensitive to the sociocultural contexts for recruitment, and maintain and strengthen rapport with the schools and parents. *In the first phase of recruitment*, the school administrators sent letters written by Ted Wohlfarth to parents to inform them of the evaluation purpose and invited them to participate (see appendix J). The school administrators then provided Ted the names of those who responded and agreed to an interview. Parents were recruited initially to demonstrate the nature and intent of the interviews and foster their comfort for giving permission to researchers to interview their children. *In the second phase of recruitment*, when an additional strategy was needed to recruit more elementary-aged children, schools were asked if letters could be sent in the children's backpacks to parents of 4th and 5th graders (the most recent OC alumni). The four schools agreed with the letter outreach to parents and one school opted to mail the letter directly at their cost.

The interviewers carried out the next step of informed consent with interviewees at the beginning of each telephone interview to explain the purpose of the evaluation, anticipated topics for questioning, how the information would be used and assure them that their information would be de-identified for confidentiality in follow-up analysis and when sharing the study findings with others. On the telephone each participant was asked to give permission for recording the interview. Participants could decline the audio-recording process. At the end of parent interviews, they were asked for permission to invite and interview their children.

During the 6 months of interviewing (June through November 2010), Ted randomly assigned participant names to the interviewers. Initially the matching was assigned to compliment the cultural backgrounds of the interviewer and interviewee. Due to the limited availability of interviewers, eventually the only criteria for matching was to attempt to avoid the parent interviewer being matched with youth from the school that her children attended.

Ethical practice was assured in this study through the informed consent process during recruitment and interviewing and by researchers protecting the confidentiality of names (and identifying information) in the storage and reporting of interview data. Also, the interviewer training module included a session on ethics in carrying out qualitative interviews with children as well as adults.

The Operation Cooperation Advisory Group was created for this study. When using a participatory approach in the study, it was critical to have the views of the project stakeholders in all phases of the evaluation. An Advisory Group was created through personal invitation by Ted Wohlfarth with representatives from the four schools (including school personnel, parents and youth of different ages) and the OC Evaluator Team including Ted Wohlfarth, Dr. Neufeld and Dina Rinder (see appendix A and B).

Three Advisory Group evening meetings were held at participating elementary schools. The meetings were facilitated by Dr. Neufeld and designed to promote discussion about the evaluation process, interpretations of data and emerging themes. The Advisory Group met at school sites during on June 14, July 20 and October 25, 2010, with new participants at each meeting as well as some who attended all three sessions.

The meeting agendas and minutes illustrate the active group process used, and that the well attended sessions successfully engaged the participants (see appendix C, D and E). In the early phase of the evaluation, the Advisory Group gave input to development of interview questions. In each of the Advisory Group meetings, participants discussed available findings and developing themes. The Advisory Group discussions of the data's meanings and emerging themes brought their perspectives into the analysis process. The discussions with the Advisory Group became a form of a 'member check' for the evaluation – to concur that themes were credible and that data was representative and a good fit with the themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). At the final session, Ted Wohlfarth invited the members to continue serving on the Advisory Group for two meetings in 2011 to assist in the ongoing development of Operation Cooperation.

III. Findings

A. Participants (numbers and demographics)

A total of 35 interviews were completed, but two were not included due to insufficient documentation. Of the 33 interviews, 14 were adults and 19 were youth (see **Table 1 - Interview Participant Frequencies**), which is a greater percent of adult interviewees (42%; 14/33) than planned (36%; 16/44). The number and representativeness of interviews per participant group changed from the initial sampling plan. Recruiting and interviewing was stopped when data was becoming 'saturated' (i.e., similar findings were found that fit within the emerging themes; Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Another factor for the change in the planned interview numbers was the volunteer college student interviewers became unavailable; by the fall only one interviewer was available. Also, the 4th and 5th grader interviews tended to provide minimal responses and were less articulate in their views due to their age.

Table 1 - Interview Participant Frequencies (n=33)

Representation from schools (33 total)	12 -Principia	9- St. Monica	7- Solomon Schechter	5- Al-Salam
Roles of participants (33 total)	11 parents	19 youth	3 school personnel	---
Grade levels of the 19 Youth	4-high school	5-middle school	11 elementary	
Schools for the 19 Youth	6-Principia	5-St. Monica	5-Solomon Schechter	3-Al-Salam
• Elementary- 10	1-Principia	3-St. Monica	3-Solomon Schechter	3-Al-Salam
• Middle school- 4	2- Principia	1- St. Monica	1- Solomon Schechter	0- Al-Salam
• High school- 5	3-Principia	1-St. Monica	1-Solomon Schechter	0-Al-Salam

Although recruiting was carried out similarly across the four schools, an unequal distribution was obtained from the four schools, which may be due to participants either less willing or less available to be interviewed. During the Operation Cooperation Advisory Group meetings, advisors indicated that Al-Salam Islamic Day School had many families that were immigrants to the U.S. who may be less willing to participate in the interview. No specific data was collected in the interviews about the culture or activities of each school or the demographics of the families attending the schools. All schools are located in West County St. Louis, which as of 2011 has a median income of \$63,702 (<http://www.stlrcga.org/x409.xml>). Based on website information about the four schools from the individual school websites and www.privateschoolreview.com, all are private co-ed schools with annual fees, offer educational and religious training, have been established for a number of years, are somewhat similar in size of school enrollments, have good student-teacher ratios, and a high percent of college-educated families (see **Table 2 – School Characteristics**). The four schools differ in length of existence (two over 100 years, 2 under 30 years), the percent of students of color (2% to 51%) and the key difference is in the four religions.

Table 2 – School Characteristics (from school site websites and [privateschoolreview.com](http://www.privateschoolreview.com))

	Years established	Size of school enrollment	Grade levels	Annual tuition	Students per FTE teacher (state average of 1:9)	% Students of color	% Families with college degrees
Al-Salam	20	242	Pre-K to 8th	~\$5,000	1:9	51%	55%
Principia	Since 1898 (113 years)	500	Pre-K to 12th	Not avail.	1:7	11%	71%
Solomon Schechter	30	255	K to 8th	~\$14,000	1:85	2%	67%
St. Monica	Since 1873 (138 years)	328	K to 8th	Not avail. [~\$675 for Kinderg.]	1:13	9%	67%

Limited information was gathered about the individual interviewees. Of the 33 interviews, six parents and youth were from the same participating families; therefore 27 families in total were involved. Of note, a high percent of the adults (86%; parents and school personnel) participated or observed in the actual Operation Cooperation workshops (see **Table 3 –Interviewee Involvement (adults and youth)**). Also a high percent of the parent interviewees (90%) had multiple children who attended Operation Cooperation in the past. Of note is that the majority of the parents (70% & 20%) say their children have limited or no opportunities for inter-faith activities. Comparison on the table between parent and youth is not possible because the groups are not matching families. Most parents and youth mentioned that if they did activities with students from different faiths it was primarily through sports activities and the higher grade students had more extra-curricular that were open to the public.

Table 3 –Interviewee Involvement (adults and children)

Adults (14) (parent or school personnel)	<u>If parent or school personnel attended or helped out in OC</u>	<u>If parents (11) had more than one child in family who was in OC</u>	<u>Parent says youth does activities with youth from diverse faiths</u>	
	12 (86%)	10 (90%)	20% = None 70% = Not much 10% = More often	
Youth (19) *6 children also had parents in this eval./interview	<u>Years since participated in OC</u>	<u>Middle & High School youth (8) report if does activities with others NOT attending their school</u>	<u>Elementary school youth (11) report if does activities with others NOT attending their school</u>	<u>Total youth (of 19) who do activities with others NOT attending their school</u>
	11 = 1-2 yrs ago 4 = 3-4 yrs ago 5 = 6-7 yrs ago	No = 2 Not much = 1 More often = 4 Unknown = 1	No = 2 Not much = 8 More often = 0 Unknown = 1	No = 4(21%) Not much = 9(47%) More often = 4(21%) Unknown = 2(10%)

B. Themes with supporting quotes

As consistent with the Grounded Theory used in this study, key assertions or claims emerged from the data (see appendix K), then four main categories became apparent, which became the basis for four themes. Dr. Neufeld initially sorted quotes and comments from the interviews and the Advisory Group minutes into the categories. Then during the Evaluator Team meetings, Dr. Neufeld, Ted Wohlfarth and Dina Rinder searched for and discussed confirming and disconfirming evidence for the trustworthiness and fit in the emerging themes. In this process, all data was accounted for within the categories. The proposed themes with representative quotes and narratives were further analyzed during the Advisory Group meetings (with the Evaluator Team present). The discussions with the Advisory Group became a form of a ‘member check’ for the evaluation –to concur that themes were credible and that data was representative and a good fit with the themes.

Consensus was reached with four key themes, titled as below with words directly from the participants. Direct quotes are formatted in different font than the text of the report, and primary assertions are in italics within the theme discussions. Text in brackets are the intent of the speaker but in researcher's words to protect confidentiality or shorten the quote.

1. "Reinforced for me that people of different religions can work together".
2. "We learned to work in teams".
3. "Didn't hear as much as I would have liked about Operation Cooperation".
4. "Extend Operation Cooperation over several years so students can remember it as they grow older".

Theme #1: "Reinforced for me that people of different religions can work together".

The most frequent responses from parents and youth about Operation Cooperation (OC) benefits were that youth gained respect and open-mindedness about others who are different from them. Parents appeared to highly value these attitudes. They particularly noted (and with high regard) that children became more comfortable talking and interacting with students from other religious schools during OC. Data supporting Theme 1 is represented from the following quotes, which are sorted from youth interviewees first, then from parents and school personnel interviewees, and then from Advisory Group discussions. Of the four themes that emerged, Theme 1 had the most support from the data and no disconfirming evidence.

Youth perspectives (interviewees): Many youth shared comments that confirm Theme 1. The following set of representative quotes on what was learned from OC, came from youth of varying ages and appeared during different points in the interviews.

- a) I gained awareness of students from other religions through the OC games and snack time – and learned that we are all the same people even if have different religions.
- b) Reinforced for me that people of different religions can work together.
- c) See people from other religions as good and joyous, and not as just different.
- d) I became more comfortable with conversing with different kids and knew names, after initially was scared and unsure of the new people; and at the last time, wishing that we would see them again.

I think that definitely being able to respect them [others from different religions] for that; and be able to have a conversation and not have it be weird or awkward in any way – just being able to feel comfortable around them and

being able to do that in our everyday lives. That's definitely one of the key things that stayed with me forever.

- e) I gained more comfort with other kids after the initial awkwardness and discomfort.
- f) I'm more comfortable being around people who are not like me.
- g) [The other kids] were really friendly and would help you and talk to you regularly, not like shy or anything, and we acted like we were friends for a long time.

To further probe the youth's views on benefits from OC, they were also asked 'What do you think your teachers wanted you to learn by going to Operation Cooperation? Then as a follow-up, they were asked, 'Do you think you learned _____ (stating whatever the child answered for the previous question)? The following quotes are sorted by younger and older youth, since they appear to differ somewhat as subsets.

From 4th & 5th graders:

- h) I think our teachers wanted us to learn how to make new friends and how to be nice to other people. . . .Yeah [when asked if learned this]
- i) How to become friendly with other kids that you never met before and become friends with them. . . .Yeah [when asked if learned this]
- j) Teamwork – that's what I think because most of the games involved teamwork.
- k) Like they probably wanted us to learn how to communicate with people, that like we don't know, but in good situations – that we might have to do later in life. Like we might have to get to know people . . . They definitely wanted us to learn to work in teams [later in response to that question]
- l) That it's OK to have friends that aren't your same religion or are different from you.
- m) That we can all be part of the community and we can work together to solve things. And, if there's a problem we can solve it and have fun . . . Yeah [when asked if they wanted children to learn teamwork]
- n) How to communicate with each other, how to work together.

From Middle and High School age youth:

- o) To show us that everyone is the same, we are all kids . . . You have a different religion but that doesn't mean it has to interfere with us being friends . . .And maybe when we grow up we won't hate each so much.
- p) To show that even though we are of different religions and different schools, we are still normal people and we're not all that different. . . OC helped me realize a lot that was out there, and not assume how each different school acted—gave me a better sense of understanding of how to look at other schools. . . Definitely [when asked if she felt an effect from OC]

- q) That all religions can cooperate. . . Well I already knew that different religions can work together... but I don't know. . . I think I learned that if more religions don't cooperate like--I don't know.
- r) Just that we're all the same. I mean – you know religion doesn't necessarily ummm – you know, make you more important. I mean it makes you different but not that different that you can't work together and have fun.
- s) We learned we are all the same – religion doesn't make you more important or so different--you can work together in teams and have fun.
- t) Definitely being able to not judge people – I think, especially since the religions were so different . . . being able to see them as a person who is believing in what they want to believe in and being able to respect them for that and be able to have a conversation and not have it be weird or awkward in any way – just being able to feel comfortable around them and being able to do that in our everyday lives. That's definitely one of the key things that stayed with me forever . . . Yeah [when asked about teamwork]
- u) Probably the biggest think is that just because you're different doesn't mean you can't cooperate . . . Yeah, definitely [when asked if learned this and learned teamwork]
- v) I think the goal of our teachers was to just respect everybody no matter what culture or religion they were – to be friends with everyone and to be open to other cultures and faiths. . . I think I did [learn this] – Yeah
- w) Probably how to work with other people and not like become all bossy and solitaire or something like that . . . No [when asked if learned this] [Note – this is only youth that expressed dislike of the OC experience]

In comparing the elementary-aged children with older youth (middle and high school), both groups talk about OC fostering youth becoming friends, although the younger children primarily talked about teamwork and friends, and the older youth focused more on tolerance of differences from religions. This view by the older youth is more in concurrence with the parent's comments, as indicated in the next set of quotes.

Parent and school personnel perspectives (interviewees): The parents and school personnel were first asked, 'How do you feel about Operation Cooperation? Was it a good or valuable experience for your family and children, and in what ways? Then parents were probed about what their children learned, and if their child, family or school benefited from Operation Cooperation. *Many attributed Operation Cooperation as a factor in enhancing their youth's awareness and respect for others who differ in religious beliefs. Their comments demonstrated that parents value their children interacting with students from other religious schools, and that OC is valuable because of the youth interactions with the others.* Following are representative quotes:

- a. Absolutely valuable. Children did not have much exposure [to others] and . . . the program helped them realize that they were kids just like them even though they dressed differently. The program helped them not be intimidated by them.

- b. It was important for children to interact with others [from different religions]; Children could recognize that people and kids who look different are basically the same – just still are kids.
- c. This was a valuable experience, especially after 9/11. The program teaches tolerance of others [with different faiths]. . . It is good [for the children] to see kids of other religions and especially those who dress differently.
- d. Youth meet kids who aren't from their tiny homogenous group.
- e. It got them [the kids] exposed to different people and different points of view.
- f. It was valuable by kids gaining comfort talking to and interacting with students from other faiths.
- g. Children felt more at ease interacting with others from different religions as the games went on.
- h. I think it is very valuable – in this day we need to learn more about each other, find out what we share and celebrate our differences, and realize we are all here together. That's what we're called to do – whether you are Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, whatever, you are called to relate and to be respectful and live on this planet with everyone as peacefully as you can. Definitely! OC is a great tool. I hope - I would like to think - most people think that way.
- i. The teachers use the OC experience as a springboard to talk about religions and in social studies.
- j. The school benefits from OC because as a religious school there are misperceptions about other people, and it helps break down those misperceptions. I think my kids benefited from getting to know other kids from other faiths.
- k. It was a valuable experience to my family by building bridges with neighbors that led to more interaction with youth in the participating schools close by.
- l. Yes. I think just the education is really beneficial, knowing what things mean to other religions, for the long term – it just demystifies it a little. It opens up the world a little more. There's a big world out there with people of different beliefs and different traditions. It's OK; it's nothing to be frightened of or concerned about. Just to know that you have more in common than we think

A few parents shared that OC was a valuable experience because it played more of a role in “solidifying” their children’s values. Children from those families were already in activities for the purpose of exposing them to religious differences (such as summer camps from public schools) and to “see other kids and realize they are just kids”.

Some parents and school personnel demonstrated uncertainty about long-term benefits from Operation Cooperation. In most of these comments of uncertainty, they also said that OC was a good experience for the youth.

- m. It was a unique experience [for her child], but I did not feel my family or school 'significantly' benefited [from a parent who told interviewer that purpose of OC was "to learn about different people and different cultures"]].
- n. It was a good and valuable experience . . . I don't hear them [the children] talking about it one way or the other. . . I do not feel that it left a lasting impression on them.
- o. I do feel that they learn something at the time, the question is do they carry it with them into other experiences. I see them reach out to others at these schools, but they come back to our school and do not treat each other kindly on our playground" [the children don't apply cooperative behavior strategies learned at OC to interactions in own school].
- p. I think the attitudes they are developing are important, and exposing them to different people with different backgrounds and different religions will help them overcome any bias. I don't have any concrete evidence that that is happening.
- q. Do not think that OC changed son's interactions with others from different faiths.
- r. Not that it wasn't enough; it's just what do we want the children [to get out of it]. It ended up to be a 'taste' of it, just to see from the outside [Earlier this parent said "the children were observers and not really immersed into the different settings [the religious schools], but just exposed to it"]. I'm still not sure what I would have liked [from Operation Cooperation]. . . And maybe they weren't there long enough to get close to the other children.
- s. The students always have a positive take when they come back [from OC], but I don't know how long-lasting it is.
- t. If goals were for children to work collaboratively, peacefully and respectfully – that was achieved. Definitely. If the goals was to learn religions, that was not part of it. So that is something to think about since children are naturally curious.
- u. It's hard to say what the main thing is [the benefit].

The interview used an additional approach to understand views on benefits from Operation Cooperation by asking parents and school personnel 'What long-term benefits would you LIKE to see from Operation Cooperation? *As the quotes demonstrate, parents and school personnel highly valued learning about different religions and culture. Some would like to see this as a primary OC benefit for youth, as well as learning about cooperation and teamwork. Representative quotes from parents follow:*

- v. To understand other cultures a little bit better, to learn about different people and different cultures.

- w. On a big level . . . to see world tolerance and world peace. . . I want my kids to be really good citizens of the world they are in
- x. I would like to see tolerance for other faiths. We shouldn't hate people because of what they believe. We don't need to agree about everything, but we shouldn't have the hatred up front.
- y. I would like to see my children to respect all faiths, religions and people; respecting everyone's ideas and listening to everyone equally.
- z. I understand the purpose is Not [about religion education] but I would like to see the program branch out for a cultural exchange of knowledge. . . with still keeping cooperation with games and teams...but they are still Not mixing or interacting except for within the games; not even in the parents.I don't know how to make that intermingling better; I have no complaints [about Operation Cooperation] but I would like to see it expand...I think it is a worthwhile project.

A final set of quotes from Advisory Group discussions (among parents and youth) reported on observations of benefits from OC experiences – *from the youth's increasing comfort during the sessions and then of youth's later actions*. Quotes indicate that Advisory Group members felt that the OC experience had made some positive and possibly lasting impression on the youth. There was agreement on how it was common to see youth gain comfort with each other already within the 1st or 2nd OC session. Through interacting in the games and talking with other youth from the different religious schools, they became comfortable. The parents felt this was particularly remarkable since many youth had reported feeling uncomfortable to attend the initial OC session (child reportedly said it would be “weird and awkward since won't know others and/or unfamiliar with the place”). The parents concurred that youth gaining comfort was “important to give opportunity to see others from different backgrounds - not be so sheltered or ‘in a bubble’.” The shared perception appeared to be that “*exposing children to differences is good since children in the religious schools are somewhat sheltered from others with different religions*”. Representative quotes from Advisory Group follow:

- We remembered names of friends made during OC.
- I recognized a student from another school at the store, saying “There's my friend!
- 3rd graders would say they hoped to see someone that they had met [at the prior OC].
- Some [youth] exchanged email addresses.
- Two years later at inter-school sports, students met others that they remembered from OC and asked them if they had participated in OC.
- Four years later in a middle school classroom activity, a student shared to a teacher and classmates about the previous OC experience.

- One parent told of an incident where a child took the lead in the OC activities, which was surprising because the parent thought the child would be reluctant to join in.

The Advisory Group members' deliberations strengthened the claim for Theme #1 that OC reinforced how students from different religions could work together. Their comments also reinforced their view that OC had positive benefits for youth.

Theme #2: “We learned to work in teams”.

Operation Cooperation was enjoyable and engaging for youth, with collaboration and cooperation in problem-solving observed during the four sessions, as indicated by the youth, parents and school personnel. Overall, the 33 interviewees spoke positively (and almost all were enthusiastic) about Operation Cooperation. All children were excited about the program, except for one that explained “I don’t really like teamwork games . . . don’t like working with other people”. Although, later this same student countered the earlier remark by saying the best long-lasting effect of OC would be “getting to know new people and learning how to work with other people”. The eight parent interviewees who participated in the OC workshops described students as problem-solving, cooperating, collaborating and having fun.

Youth perspectives:

- a) Kids were willing to cooperate with each other although they were different; we learned to work in teams.
- b) The games were fun [when asked how they played the games with other students] - working together.
- c) The first time we were all nervous because we didn’t know what to expect but then every time we did it we were all looking forward to it. It was definitely a lot of fun. I wish we could have done it more. . . . I just remember so much joy and so much cooperation from everybody.
- d) I totally thought that. [the games helped learning cooperation skills] The games and the snacks afterwards were two great things that help you break in. Because you are on a team, and even if it was not to win, you wanted to do well; and in order to do that you had to work together.
- e) Oh yeah, that was definitely one of the goals too – to learn to work with others and cooperate, that was a good skill to learn in 3rd grade.

Parent Perspectives:

- f) They did quite a bit of problem-solving and they did cooperate with the people they were assigned to be with for the project.
- g) The group dynamics managed to solve problems.
- h) Kids learned that to solve problems they needed to listen to everyone on the team, and try different ideas and collaborate.

- i) They were very receptive of working with each other. . . I knew they all enjoyed doing it. On the days they were doing it, they looked forward to it...they liked it. . . A good teamwork exercise. Any activity realizing skills of listening and an opportunity to be a leader in some aspect....are things [that they learned], whether it was with a different faith or not.
- j) Yes the children problem-solved during the games. One or two kids would take the reigns....would focus....then they [the other children] would jump in. They all couldn't wait to get involved. . . The thing they really loved was the problem-solving activities.
- k) I think the children tried [to be collaborative]. I think you have some people who step up more to that role and some people who will be more followers. But yeah, I would say yes.
- l) The children worked collaboratively together and whenever they did the activity a second time, their time always improved.
- m) The thing they really loved was the problem-solving activities, which were so fun for them.
- n) It did a good job of teaching cooperation and teamwork, which would be an important skill later in life in the work place.

School Personnel perspectives:

- o) At the end of each game was a snack time, and the 1st time they only talked to own classmates, but after 3 to 4 times they reached out to talk to others...therefore more relaxed with each other.
- p) The kids worked well together – cooperated and respectful.
- q) OC is a good and valuable experience for the youth – with keeping with cooperation and teams.
- r) They cooperated in the games.

In the Advisory Group Discussions, participants discussed the evidence they observed for youth benefiting in problem-solving skills from OC experience. *They agreed that the specific structure of EnTeam Games, with its inherent process of reflection and problem-solving in the session offered a novel and playful experience that enhanced learning.* The rules of the game were new or different enough that youth were placed on a more level 'playing field'. They felt the level of problem-solving by the specific movement-based game actions was good or suitable for the 3rd grade level. They felt the volunteer-facilitated reflection in the small group dialogue helped the groups' success in problem-solving.

Theme #3: “Didn’t hear as much as I would have liked about Operation Cooperation”.

Most parents indicated they would have liked to hear more about the children’s experiences in OC. As further evidence of this theme, the responses from the youth also indicated that they did not talk much with others about their experiences and reactions, or did not talk significantly about it. Another indicator that parents felt communication about OC was insufficient was that some shared they were unsure of the purpose of OC, which could have been clarified to them if communication was enhanced. When some parents commented on their uncertainty of OC purpose, they also stated further that they were unsure about long-term benefits from OC. The representative quotes supporting this theme are sorted by youth and then parents who comment on the limited dialogue after the OC sessions, and then the parent’s responses indicating uncertainty about the OC purpose. Following these quotes, a few exceptions to Theme #3 are described, which further support the importance of this theme in relation to learning from OC.

Youth Perspectives:

- a) I don’t remember talking to many people about it [family or at school].
- b) I guess my parents [when asked who you talked with about the sessions].
- c) One of the biggest things was the dress, how other people dressed differently, the accents, and the different architecture of the other schools and what was in the schools and how each religion played a part in it. Those were the big things that I probably talked about most.
- d) [the student] talked to classmates mostly about OC [but student didn’t remember what talked about]
- e) I remember talking to my parents about it and being able to be like, yeah, it was a lot of fun
- f) I don’t remember much that they [parents or teachers] spoke about, but I remember they told us we were going to do OC again in 6th grade, but we never did.

Parent Perspectives:

- g) I didn’t hear as much as I would have liked about OC. I received a note when [the students] were going to the next school. The note detailed where they were going and what they were going to do – that’s about it. . . I would be interested to hear if it was interesting or if he met people doing other things . . . I don’t know [what he learned] because he didn’t really talk about the experience.
- h) Nothing particular [when asked if child spoke to the parent about OC]. . . I know they all enjoyed doing it. . . they looked forward to it.
- i) Actually I don’t know [when asked if child talked with parent about OC]. . . I mean just at the supper table, sure, just like, what did you do today? Oh, I did, you know Operation Cooperation.

- j) I don't hear about OC much.
- k) I think it was a good and valuable experience. I suspect what's more important is what's done in the home and at school...[my child/children] did not spend much time thinking about the lessons they learned at OC very much.
- l) The program was beneficial but 3rd graders; although they may not understand the concepts at that age, they haven't formed opinions of others yet [biases]. . . it should be repeated in middle school when biases form.
- m) If goals were for children to work collaboratively, peacefully and respectfully – that was achieved. Definitely. If the goals was to learn religions, that was not part of it. So that is something to think about since children are naturally curious.

As the decreased understanding about the purpose of OC emerged from parent's and school personnel's responses, this also related to their uncertainty about OC long term benefits. In the following quotes that indicated uncertainty, most also said that OC was a good experience for the youth.

- n) It was a unique experience [for her child], but I did not feel my family or school 'significantly' benefited [from a parent who told interviewer that purpose of OC was "to learn about different people and different cultures]
- o) It was a good and valuable experience . . . I don't hear them [the children] talking about it one way or the other. . . I do not feel that it left a lasting impression on them.
- p) I do feel that they learn something at the time, the question is do they carry it with them into other experiences. I see them reach out to others at these schools, but they come back to our school and do not treat each other kindly on our playground" [the children don't apply cooperative behavior strategies learned at OC to interactions in own school].
- q) I think the attitudes they are developing are important, and exposing them to different people with different backgrounds and different religions will help them overcome any bias. I don't have any concrete evidence that that is happening.
- r) Do not think that OC changed son's interactions with others from different faiths.
- s) Not that it wasn't enough; it's just what do we want the children [to get out of it]. It ended up to be a 'taste' of it, just to see from the outside [Earlier this parent said "the children were observers and not really immersed into the different settings [the religious schools], but just exposed to it"]. I'm still not sure what I would have liked [from Operation Cooperation]. . . And maybe they weren't there long enough to get close to the other children.

- t) The students always have a positive take when they come back [from OC], but I don't know how long-lasting it is.
- u) If goals were for children to work collaboratively, peacefully and respectfully – that was achieved. Definitely. If the goals was to learn religions, that was not part of it. So that is something to think about since children are naturally curious.
- v) It's hard to say what the main thing is [the benefit].

Although youth and parents appeared to have minimal follow-up dialogue about OC, a detailed story from an interview showed an exception to this theme. A parent showed a rich thick story and reflection during the interview that revealed how OC had a significant impact on a child and the family and demonstrated potential benefits from enhancing dialogue between children, parents and others after OC. The parent began by explaining that her two children had different comfort levels with OC, with one more resistant than the other. The following transcribed story, titled a '*Scary Story*' by the evaluator, continues here:

It was the year of the election. Kids are vocal about who their parents are voting for. One of the parents had not sent their children to Operation Cooperation, although I do not know the reasons. In a school classroom activity, my child said that he would vote for Obama (because of his parents). Another child said, 'You should not vote for Obama because he is Muslim and Muslims are terrorists'. My son came home from school scared. This was after the first Operation Cooperation session and it happened to be at a Muslim school. I felt shocked not only because it was inaccurate, but that a 3rd grade child would say that. I had a wonderful discussion with my child about it because he had just been to a school of Muslim children and adults for OC. We talked about how they were loving teachers and loving parents and loving families. They were Muslims but they were not terrorists. I was so grateful that he had the interaction with the school because we were able to talk about what is a Muslim. We had many discussions about it. Now we have a background to talk about it. That to me was the best thing that came out of Operation Cooperation. I was so grateful that OC had been to the Muslim school...

And later conversations about this came up again – many times. The news was talking about it. There was fear of Muslims. The problem was that kids, when they hear 'Muslims are terrorists'— that was what I wanted to defuse. And I was able to defuse it. I was so grateful to OC . . . *If I didn't keep it going by discussing it and referring back to it, I think it would have been forgotten.*

The above story demonstrates the potential for parent and child interactions after OC experiences to be very meaningful for both and with long-lasting effects. This story was shared at the 2nd OC Advisory Group meeting for their reflection and interpretation. The Advisory Group members were impressed with the incident and the parent-child dialogue. The members felt that the story emphasized the importance of family in learning and reinforcing ideas. They were excited that the parent in the story recognized a teachable moment about prejudice, language, relationships and community and took the opportunity for supporting the child. The Advisory Group concurred that this was evidence of a youth benefitting over time—with the parent’s help and bouncing off of the OC experience, the child learned how to state facts in response to a peer’s scary comments. They agreed that this was a significant story that showed the importance of youth talking about meanings and differences after participating in OC.

Two other stories from parents were briefer, but also showed instances when the OC experiences facilitated potential positive impact on the youth. The children in these two instances continued contact with a student met at OC, either in person after school or through an electronic social connection. Although we don’t have the youth views on these interactions, the parent stories show that due to the OC initial contact their children participated in additional activities with another student from a different religious belief. The instances also show the parent’s hope for their children in gaining further cultural awareness and respect for others. The following stories, called ‘*Friend Stories*’ by the evaluator, follow here:

1. My daughter . . . befriended a girl from [another school]. They had a couple of play dates and enjoyed each other’s company – so she definitely got a lot out of it. And, I’m sure it was a good experience for my son but he’s a different kind of kid and a little less sociable – doesn’t tell me as many things as she would tell me. . . I think she found it interesting – how different faiths – their beliefs and traditions. . . Both of my kids have, through that program [OC] and the other things they do at school, the connection of the other faiths. They can see the similarities in what they believe—similarities to their [own] faith.

2. After the first session, immediately they [the daughter and other girls] had each other’s [numbers]. That wasn’t part of the [OC] curriculum. They traded [numbers]. Immediately you knew they just bonded; they are friends. Because what I think the kids realized is they are all kids in suburban St. Louis, and they have homework, and they like a lot of the same things...they all like pizza. And you know that matters a lot more to them than you know other things. . . . The kids are of different religions and all of a sudden they are friends. *Because they realize they have more in common than what they have different from each other.*

Members in the Advisory Group concurred with Theme #3 and that “parents need to remind the students about what they did” in OC, for the students to understand the purpose” (a quote from a youth Advisory Group member). This

becomes particularly important because as members discussed, EnTeam's role was not to discuss religion at the OC game sessions. When EnTeam initially negotiated with the schools (upon the inception of OC), the four schools determined that individual teachers would provide explanations to youth in advance of the workshops, as well as inform youth about the different faith-based schools and the children they will meet. Some of the adult members of the Advisory Group shared that they felt some teachers were uncomfortable about the project. Another member shared that one school had to send letters to parents that no religion would be discussed at OC, in response to "parents being scared" about the project.

Reinforcing the importance of parent and teacher roles in student learning from OC, was a story that was told during the Advisory Group meeting about an evergreen tree planting outside of Al-Salam Islamic school after the first OC sessions. The story was *co-constructed by multiple speakers* during an Advisory Group meeting. It became clear that OC and the tree planting carry different meanings to the multiple storytellers. The story, called '*Peace Tree Story*' follows here:

At the end of the 1st year EnTeam games [just one year after 9/11], a small tree was planted in front of the Al-Salam school. The Rabbi visiting with his students from the Jewish school told everyone why the tree was planted then. Some in the room called it the 'Peace Tree'. The Rabbi said, "Today you had such fun, but some day you will have to get along with others." After the tree was planted, the adults at the ceremony "hugged tearfully and bonded". An adult Advisory Group member shares that she is still in contact with some of the adults from other schools who were at the initial tree planting. She sees them socially outside of school now. A youth Advisory Group member (an OC alum) said, "I remember the tree", but did not recall any special meanings about it. A few made the point that the tree is fairly large now, many years later.

The adults in this story were significantly moved by the act of planting and caring for a tree after 9/11, and appeared to feel this symbolized the importance and potential impact from OC. In contrast, the youth did not appear to share the same sense of importance about the tree and its relationship to OC.

Theme #4: “Extend Operation Cooperation over several years so students can remember it as they grow older”.

Almost all youth and parent interviewees recommended offering an additional OC session(s) for students in higher grades, although there was no consensus on the specific grade level that would be best for an additional session (from 6th grade to high school). As suggested in the discussions of the earlier themes, they perceived that *additional later sessions would provide greater long-term impact for participants.* However, a number of parents have a misconception of the OC purpose and seemed to have different objectives for OC, which may be driving their recommendation. Interviewees who wanted more of a focus on the religious differences and learning suggested that beyond the games, OC should include time for questions from youth, parents and teachers in a facilitated cultural exchange. School personnel interviewees suggested a “fact sheet” for teachers in anticipation of questions from students after OC. In contrast, the Advisory Group parents and educators wanted to keep kids on their own selected religious path, and therefore they were not suggesting that OC add dialogue about religion as part of their program.

Most interviewees suggested that OC games for high school students would need to be modified for older youth. Game adaptations may be needed for the “*older, less open*” youth. Youth and parents suggested adapting games that would be more fun for the older age, giving options to students for their choice in being involved and encouraging deeper conversations with high school students. The interviewees differed about wanting the games to be academic in nature—some wanted less and others wanted more academics. Some parents suggested students could do public service activities such as plant a tree, work in a soup kitchen and/or be involved in activities that usually occurred more “naturally” or typically in the lives of teens.

Youth perspectives:

- a) OC would be better to continue the activities or contacts over other years, to keep the stereotypes from solidifying as kids grow older.
- b) Yes, I would like to do OC in a higher grade. The activities would have to be harder, and maybe a bit more academic.
- c) I would like OC games in 3rd, 6th, and 10th grades, so you can come back and make friends...also learn more about religion, and OK if games were academic.
- d) I prefer the games in high school are not too academic like math, etc...and in high school, add in discussion and time to talk to each other about interests
- e) Continue OC activities through middle school to keep stereotypes from solidifying, but remember we [in HS] have busy lives [activities like sports] already in high school. You need good topics and questions. Students can just talk about everyday things.
- f) Do more OC in other grades.... have deeper conversations when in high schools and do more activities.
- g) Bring OC in higher grades, 6th, because people change over time, so they could learn new stuff about others. Have more conversations like, What your religion is like, What your family life is like.

- h) Offer OC in 6th grade, but not in 9th. Already made friends then with others of different religions, so pointless.
- i) If OC is in high school do fun stuff, not school things.

Parent perspectives:

- j) Vary activities for older kids, for example work on a project together
- k) Continue starting at 3rd grade, plus do older grades too
- l) Extend OC over more years, especially middle school; Also do different types of activities together...real life scenarios...experiential
- m) Gather different students as a more natural event and give them options if want to do it...similar to when children get to choose to do soccer or basketball
- n) The program was so valuable that it should be expanded to 5th or 8th grade because those are critical time periods [in youth development] and it would behoove schools to have their kids involved then also.
- o) The program was beneficial but 3rd graders; although they may not understand the concepts at that age, they haven't formed opinions of others yet [biases]. . . it should be repeated in middle school when biases form.
- p) More impact [from OC] will happen with 7th/8th graders because that age thinks more about social interactions . . . Recommend to add time for individual students to get to know each other – so would talk to each other more in future sessions
- q) Expand to 7th, 8th, and/or high school...with a club, social and volunteer option. Stereotypes can be discussed in high school to debunk assumptions
- r) Repeat OC in middle school due to more biases at that age
- s) Extend it over several years so they can kind of remember as they grow older. . because they can retain more.
- t) Needs more than one year [of 4 sessions] to have more of a lasting impact.

The Advisory Group discussions identified additional suggestions to enhance OC through promoting communication among all participants. One way recommended to enhance youth learning was providing at-home instruction ideas for parents and children. Classroom teachers could send home with the children a review of the day's OC activities and give parents suggested questions for the child and possible discussion points for fostering dialogue and reinforcing learning. All felt parent instructional sheets should be brief to avoid overwhelming them. Youth would benefit from knowing that competition can be achieved with a win-win experience, and that there are different types of problems and competition. Also suggested were teacher strategies to reinforce learning. Teachers could have a take-home 'assignment' for youth to write what they have learned in OC, including at least three talking points. The assignment should be simple to avoid parents stressing about the right or perfect answers and emphasize the key task is talking with a child about their learning. Members suggested that *each year OC share their philosophy, expectations and additional learning strategies to parents, youth and teachers.*

Another story, the ‘*Pothole story*’, was told in the Advisory Group by Ted Wohlfarth. When the story was told, the adult Advisory Group members nodded their heads in understanding and agreement with its intent. This story, using a common annoying situation of street potholes, appeared to simply and easily communicate the core intent of OC.

Ted began that he had told this story before when explaining the philosophy behind Operation Cooperation and EnTeam games. He began that if there were two neighbors who lived next door on a street that had a large pothole, would they need to convert to the same religion to get the pothole fixed? He pointed out that if neighbors came from very different religions, one scenario was that they could say there was no way to work together to get the pothole fixed. But Ted continued with of course they could collaborate to get help on that pothole, which was a shared community problem. *They did not have to be from the same religion to fix the problem.*

In summary of the 4th Theme, individual interviewees had few suggestions for the OC program, but within the group context of the Advisory Group many specific recommendations were offered. Most youth had no other recommendations to enhance the program other than adding another OC session for the older student. Students felt that OC was “*doing a good job*”. Parent interviewees also said they were “*pleased with OC’s games, management and organization*”. Their only other recommendations for OC were related to ways to foster more cultural exchange of knowledge, as described in Theme #1 data. As indicated above, the Advisory Group members did not concur with expanding OC with religion or cultural difference education, but offered other specific suggestions to enhance the program.

Finally, at the end of all the interviews, participants were asked if they felt other cities could benefit from OC. All agreed that OC would be beneficial for other cities and schools.

IV. Discussion

Although Operation Cooperation has succeeded in accumulating many enthusiastic alumni in support of this teaching-learning approach over the past nine years, EnTeam had not systematically documented evidence for the claim of significant benefits to participants from different religion-based schools. The aim for this descriptive study was to gain greater understanding of the participant’s meanings of OC and its impact, for the purposes of program enhancement and expansion. A qualitative and participatory program evaluation with a convenience sample was used to explore and document detailed views of participants on their experiences, perceptions and suggestions. Specifically, the study questions were, ‘How do the participants (elementary, middle-school and high school youth alumni of OC, parents and school personnel) describe experiences and value of OC? ‘How do participants describe benefits from their OC experiences? and ‘What do participants recommend to enhance experience and impact from OC?’

Through the data analysis of interviews and OC Advisory Group discussion, assertions were identified about OC (see appendix K), from which four themes emerged.

Using words from the study participants, the themes are represented by these quotes: 1) “Reinforced for me that people of different religions can work together”, 2) “We learned to work in teams”, 3) “Didn’t hear as much as I would have liked about Operation Cooperation”, and 4) “Extend Operation Cooperation over several years so students can remember it as they grow older”. Numerous quotes and stories from participants support the assertions, themes and benefits of OC.

The study demonstrates that a predominance of student alumni and parents who participate in OC feel that the EnTeam games and OC program facilitate collaborative problem-solving, teamwork, respect and comfort when interacting with other students from diverse faiths. Many believe that these immediate benefits also translate into long-lasting effects; describing *indicators* such as befriending and staying connected with other students after the sessions, building “bridges” (relationships) with neighbors, becoming less scared and more comfortable to meet and talk with others who are different from you, recognizing that you can work together cooperatively in teams with people from different backgrounds, and becoming more aware of and respectful of others with different religious beliefs. For a few the OC experience was described as a means to strengthening their parent-child communication, but this was not the norm; EnTeam could benefit from learning from such examples and developing methods that facilitate ongoing learning and family communication.

The study also revealed that some parents and school personnel were uncertain about the benefits of OC, although they regarded the program highly. Their comments included not hearing the children talk much about the program, or not seeing youth carry the learning to other experiences, or not perceiving benefits as “significant” or “concrete evidence”. When probed about what would count as a significant benefit from OC, they could not easily articulate explanations. Some uncertainty existed on the outcomes of OC, and on a more basic level there were misconceptions that the purpose of OC was to teach about religions.

Similarly when the interviewees who felt strongly about OC positive benefits were probed, they also had difficulty describing indicators for long-lasting impact. Participants who were most enthusiastic about OC wished for outcomes on a grand scale such as understanding other cultures better, gaining tolerance for other faiths and becoming “good citizens of the world”. As indicators, these would indeed demonstrate a worthy impact from OC, but further study would be required to determine observable indicators for such changes and feasible ways to assess these changes.

It is not surprising that controversies existed among participants regarding the level of religious education that *should* be included in a shared learning curriculum such as OC within different faith-based schools. These controversies are quite likely the basis for differing opinions on how long-lasting are OC benefits. Before further investigations take place on the impact and outcomes of OC, EnTeam would benefit from developing observable and measurable program objectives and communicating the objectives along with program purposes to all stakeholders (parents, youth, teachers and school personnel).

An area of almost unanimous agreement is that the use of EnTeam games was highly successful in *engaging the youth* through its design of movement-based activity steps, collaborative problem-solving and periodic group reflection and repeated performance trials. This experiential form of first-hand learning is an advantage particularly for 3rd grade learners. The novel game-based approach in OC makes the games fun and everyone is needed to successfully complete the task. With everyone participating, the children become

more comfortable. It is significant that many observed the youth gaining comfort within only four workshops with students they have never met before, and particularly with those who differ in religion and have some visible differences (in their dress and some actions and the appearance of the school settings). The OC games helped the youth gain comfort with each other, and paved the way for them to learn and become cooperative with others.

The concept of being friendly or becoming a friend was not a specific aim within this study, but these concepts surfaced frequently in the younger children's statements on benefits of OC. The youth felt that teachers wanted them to make new friends through OC. Upon close examination, friendship appears in the EnTeam website statements about OC outcomes, as well as from parents in the past brief surveys on OC that took place before this year and as probes in the youth interviews in this study. Most likely, becoming a friend has different meanings and significance for different age groups. The younger child's focus on making friends may stem from often hearing school personnel speak about the importance of being friendly, and they may even have school curriculum related to the concept.

In contrast, the older student interviewees talked less on developing friends and more on the benefits of learning religious differences and tolerance. This view aligned with the adult interviewee's perspectives. Possibly the upper grade level students talked more about this view because of their increased experience in the world and being around others from different backgrounds (more extracurricular opportunities involving others from different religions). Their responses also could come from wanting to make a good impression on the interviewer or from hearing parents say that OC is about students from different religions learning how to work together.

Another view that gained much consensus across youth and parents was the suggestion that OC should be expanded into higher grades. This suggestion may indeed give longer-lasting benefits simply by the principle of repetition for transforming awareness into learning. Of course the challenge will be how much and what kind of repetition is needed for longer-lasting learning? As indicated by the OC Advisory Group members, before planning OC expansion into higher grades and possibly reconfiguring OC games and activities for success in older youth, an essential earlier step would be for EnTeam to clarify OC purpose and objectives to participants.

Finally, and probably of most importance, is the issue of the target audience for OC. The interviewee's comments indicate that viewing the project beyond just for the students but also with and for the family and teachers/school personnel, would enhance student learning and aid achievement of OC goals. The 'Scary Story' (pg. 24) that demonstrated the possible benefit to parent-child communication from taking part in the workshops. OC could strengthen activities that explain the project and encourage parents and teachers to adopt suggested follow-up strategies for reinforced learning with their children or students.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Similar to any qualitative and participatory analysis, this study may be critiqued on its research methods if viewed from a quantitative research paradigm. Quantitative research has standards of randomized controlled methods for sampling participants and collecting data, and controlling for any investigator influence. These standards in quantitative research are established when a study purpose is to examine a large sample of participants and ultimately be able to predict, determine a cause or generalize to other populations. In contrast, a qualitative study differs in purpose, as was the case in the OC evaluation; that is, to describe

and interpret the insider's meanings and use systematic methods to understand complex, multidimensional factors. Therefore, the supposed limitations of a qualitative study can become a study's strengths.

In the qualitative evaluation of OC, participants were self-selected instead of randomly drawn from a sample pool; thus, the study could be critiqued for having a selection bias. Actually, the 'purposive' selection (i.e., purposeful sampling; Bogdan & Biklin, 2006) of a smaller size of participants was not a limitation, but rather a useful method to gain meanings particularly from people who have had much experience with the specific topic. Participants were invited to describe in their own words what is meaningful or important to them, rather than restricting them to yes/no questions or predetermined categories of less personal importance. The interviewer, as the evaluation instrument in typical qualitative studies, used probes for more details and checked that participants were understanding questions as intended. The OC study methods provided credible, dependable data in its authenticity to participants and the scenario. The sampling process provided rich, personalized detailed meanings from youth, parents and teachers as constructed from their experiences in OC.

Other strengths in this study provided rigor to the qualitative evaluation process (Bogdan & Biklin, 2006). 'Triangulation' was used in collecting and analyzing the data. Through interviewing different sources from different schools (children, parents and school personnel), data was contrasted (triangulated) to capture multiple realities and become more credible and trustworthy. The influences of sociocultural contexts (participant's background, school contexts, interviewer questions, etc.) were examined when interpreting participant's responses. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to capture details, and interviewers wrote brief ethnographic notes for each. 'Data saturation' was identified and used to terminate recruitment and interviews; that is, the evaluator noted that data was revealing similarities in content across interviewees so interviewing was stopped. Using a team of evaluators plus input from the OC Advisory Group in the interpretation process (further triangulation) enabled evaluators to search for convergence of data. Finally, evaluators strived to achieve plausibility of data through a process of searching for confirming and disconfirming evidence when developing assertions and themes.

Limitations in this study's methods must also be recognized in relation to influencing the trustworthiness of the data. Interviewing was completed over the telephone due to anticipated difficulties in scheduling face-to-face interviews and constraints for the interviewer's time. The original plan was to at least interview the 4th to 5th graders in person to help the children feel more comfortable while talking to a stranger and facilitate the interviewee's responses to the questions. The brevity of the interviews with the 4th to 5th graders (5 to-10 minutes; Average at 7 min.) could have been due to the child's comfort level, but also could be due to their decreased capacity to express themselves at the younger age. The older youth's telephone interviews were more similar in length to the adult's. Another limitation was that only a few school personnel were interviewed; therefore, evaluators missed the opportunity to hear and contrast teacher's perspectives in relation to the themes. Evaluator bias could be possible in the interview questions selected since they were based on assumptions instead of on fully developed underlying theory for OC. The nature of the interviewer's probes also could have accounted for evaluator bias due to the reduced probing skill in the newly trained interviewers. A sampling bias could also be present if the convenience sample of interviewees was not representative of the larger

population of participants. Finally, the evaluators were present as 'participant-observers' in the Advisory Group meetings and may have influenced the group discussions in their evaluator roles of creating agenda activities and writing meeting minutes that served as data.

A final method to demonstrate 'dependability' in a study or account for contextual influences in the investigation is referred to as 'reflexivity' within qualitative work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). During this study the evaluators reflected on personal experiences and perspectives that could influence their interpretations of the data. Ted Wohlfarth, with years of experience as the founder and CEO of EnTeam and Operation Cooperation, had strong beliefs in its potential positive impact on youth collaboration and a desire to demonstrate accountability for its proposed claims. Dina Rinder, trained as an evaluator for this study, also had positive experiences with Operation Cooperation as a parent of three children who were alumni of the program. Dr. Neufeld, with much experience in empowerment-based community programming and evaluation, had strong values in the benefits of participatory approaches for investigating impact. During data analysis this team of evaluators challenged themselves to search well for disconfirming evidence as well as confirming evidence for OC benefits.

Implications for Future Practice and Research

This qualitative evaluation raises a number of implications for future practice and research. The Executive Summary of this report (pg. 5) outlines specific recommendations to EnTeam developers of OC and further elaboration is in this section.

For enhancing the OC program and learning outcomes, the study findings support developing a number of educational strategies to compliment and supplement the program. OC could develop ways to increase the awareness of 3rd graders, as well as the parents and teachers, on the purpose of the program and how the OC game experience could translate to real life situations. To achieve this, the interviewees and the Advisory Group were in support of explicitly telling the youth, parents and school personnel about skills learned from OC and describing its applications to everyday lives.

One approach for explaining OC purposes and benefits to participants, and which may be most consistent with the fun engaging learning environment already in place OC games, could be using a specific story as a type of coded knowledge that becomes repeated with youth in follow-up interactions. Narratives are universal regardless of religion and age, and commonly used in education. A short relevant story can become an engaging cognitive tool for increasing awareness, clarifying concepts and aid generalization of learning. For example, the 'Pothole Story' (pg.29) told briefly by Ted Wohlfarth to adult members in the Advisory Group captured interest and quickly communicated the core intent of OC. EnTeam could create another story that would be relevant and interesting to 3rd graders and explore the meanings those children make from the story. A story could be based on a real life scenario but de-identified in names and religions, and crafted for ease and success in telling a large group of 3rd graders. These stories could reinforce the primary objective for the sessions – learning how to cooperate for a win-win among teams – and also introduce how OC is teaching them to have peaceful interactions with others who appear different than themselves. A story could model desired youth behaviors such as one about a child going to a parent to discuss something that happened at OC, or of a child recognizing someone from an OC workshop when they are in the community and says hello to show respect and kindness.

Another method for enhancing long-lasting learning in cooperation and collaboration involves encouraging teachers and parents to use some of the same language as learned in OC. Follow-up dialogues offer repetition of concepts and will increase the possibility of enhanced communication skills related to OC goals. To achieve this method, EnTeam could create worksheets to augment information about OC to youth, parents and teachers. Pre-, post- and final worksheets could be created and sent home to families in the children's backpacks.

- *A pre-workshop* sheet to describe the purpose and objectives for OC to all teachers and parents (not just those helping at workshops), the workshop dates and locations, and explain how they could be involved in the learning. Make it clear that the workshops will be using fun team games as learning tools for cooperation and that they will not be discussing religions. This may be a good place to introduce the Pothole Story.
- *A post-workshop* sheet after each of the 4 sessions to remind everyone of the overall purpose, highlight specific session objectives and activities, and provide comments and questions that parents and teachers can opt to use to facilitate discussion with youth. The worksheet can also emphasize language or the terms used in the workshop, to augment transfer of learning.
- *A final sheet* at the end of the 4th session to reinforce learning as per desired objectives, and invite parents, youth and teachers to give feedback about the Operation Cooperation experience. The sheet could include specific open-ended questions, a request for stories they may have heard or observed about youth and family learning and attitudes about OC, as well as a few Likert type survey items (scaled from 1 to 5 with descriptor terms for ratings 1, 3 and 5) to assess their agreement with a few statements. Invite responses either by email, written notes, phoning to speak directly to EnTeam staff, or offer an online survey method.

Additional methods for OC program enhancement also build on *partnering with others to strengthen learning* of EnTeam's win-win teamwork strategies. First, beyond using worksheets for teachers and families to educate about OC (purpose, workshop design and desired benefits), EnTeam could suggest additional learning methods that build on EnTeam's unique game design and assists teachers to promote cooperation and reflection within teamwork for a win-win outcome in a planned interaction within the classrooms. Second, the OC Advisory Group could be continued for ongoing advice on strengthening the program and the relationships among parents/families, youth and EnTeam. Advisory Groups can be most effective when agencies bring authentic problems or challenges to them for group problem-solving and reflection. Third, EnTeam could pursue and negotiate a new partnership with an agency that already offers cultural awareness and exchange among youth. In this way, the unique, evidence-based EnTeam game and its measurement protocol could supplement another agency's activities for youth learning about different religions as well as learn cooperation skills (which some parents desired). If this last partnership is pursued, possible grant funding could be explored to support evaluations with the new scenario for feedback on the games in another setting as well as for comparison with OC evaluations.

For education about benefits of OC, thus supporting EnTeam's goals of expanding OC to other schools and cities as well as strengthening partnerships with current schools, it is essential to disseminate the knowledge learned from this OC study. I urge EnTeam to create a brief report about this qualitative evaluation of OC and distribute to all who participated in

the study. Keeping the report brief (instead of using the full study report) would increase likelihood of it being read and emphasize the take-home points. Also the EnTeam website could be updated with the same brief report and offer a short list of revealing and persuasive parent and youth quotes that support the discussion. Another important step in disseminating information is writing a journal article. A number of journals have interests in character education, which resonates with the spirit and goals for OC. I suggest that the journal article begin with an articulated theory that underlies the basis for change possible through EnTeam games and the OC program, and reviews the literature with a synthesis of key points across related youth character education programs. This qualitative evaluation could be included as a case study approach, to demonstrate participant's benefits using EnTeam games in a workshop program with elementary aged children from different religion-based schools.

For further evaluation of OC, the recommended next steps in continued investigation include searching for available research and theory literature in related topics. Suggested research literature searches could explore cooperative behavior in youth, games-based learning, win-win competition, antecedents of collaboration in school-aged children, related experiential models for teaching cooperation in lower and higher grade level students and instructional strategies with parents of elementary youth for enhanced learning of related topics. Contrasting the findings from this study with theoretical and evidence-based knowledge would support development of the unique theory underlying OC. Next, the findings from this evaluation can inform the creation of a new written survey for participants to complete at the end of each session. The survey could also be adapted for school personnel and sent to teachers and administrators involved in OC.

Research implications from this study are that EnTeam will find that the participatory study process and its resulting relationships may facilitate development and implementation of future studies. Also, EnTeam can learn as much from the challenges that occurred during this community program evaluation, as from the successes. Lessons learned from the challenges of this evaluation include the importance of creating and refining optimum ways to interview or survey youth for collecting the most effective data, and the importance of training enough interviewers and evaluators to effectively carry out steps as needed in a project.

This study's experience in recruiting a range of interviewees (with perspectives from youth, parents and different schools) as well as creating an Advisory Group with similar representation can have utility in future investigations. The mechanism of outreach to parents through the partnerships with schools (backpack letters and inviting teacher(s) to an Advisory Group meeting) was another practical outcome of the project. Involving parents was important in this evaluation as well as in the programming. One parent said it simply, "invite parents to come and observe an OC session and see for themselves how comfortable they feel, as well as observe their child's comfort and collaboration". Program and research practices that are the most inclusive of parents and teachers may be the turning point for seeing and hearing sufficient information about OC long-lasting benefits.

In conclusion, this descriptive evaluation supports that many participating youth felt they benefited from OC, as did the parents. Additionally, the meanings they constructed from their experiences shed light on issues that OC can address in their ongoing program development. As importantly, the enthusiastic responses from youth, parents and teachers in this study are a call for EnTeam to continue investigations on the program's impact and outcomes.

VI. Appendix

A. Operation Cooperation Advisory Group Members

2010

Member	Role	Affiliation
Ted Wohlfarth	CEO	EnTeam - Op Coop
Angela Wohlfarth	Teacher	Principia
Peggy Neufeld	Researcher	WUSM
Dina Rinder	Parent & OC Evaluator	Solomon Schechter & EnTeam
Asma Raza	Parent	Al-Salam
Saad Raza	Youth	Al-Salam
Carol Freund	Board Member	EnTeam - Op Coop
Donna Bari	Asst. V.P. & Teacher	Al-Salam
Jennifer & Chris Stringer	Parents	Principia
Gabe Stringer	Youth	Principia
Grace Stringer	Youth	Principia
Michele Solar	Parent	Solomon Schechter
Penny Swank	Parent	Principia
Michele Johnson	Parent	St. Monica
Mimi Baden	Teacher	Solomon Schechter
Whitney Crook	College Student Volunteer Evaluator	WUSTL
Matthew Phillips	College Student Volunteer Evaluator	UMSL
Nasser al Balushi	College Student Volunteer Evaluator	UMSL
Whitney R. Villmer	College Student Volunteer Evaluator	UMSL

B. Email to Operation Cooperation Advisory Group and Invitation Guide

June 11, 2010

Dear Operation Cooperation Advisory Group,

Thank you for agreeing to become a member on our new Advisory Group. We feel input from those who experience Operation Cooperation first hand – students, parents and teachers—will strengthen our understanding of its impact on youth’s cooperative behavior. As you may know, the EnTeam mission is to **foster and measure cooperation through challenging activities designed to teach everyone to learn to win together.**

Our first meeting is at **6:30-8:00 p.m. Monday June 14, 2010 at Principia School, 13201 Clayton Road 63131 (see directions below and attached campus map).**

The agenda for the first meeting is:

1. Welcome and introductions (representatives from the four participating schools, researchers and EnTeam)
2. Overview of the evaluation project and the role of the Advisory Group
3. Discuss possible *indicators* that show the impact of EnTeam Games/Operation Cooperation
4. Discuss the draft interviewing plan and questions
5. Schedule and plan for future meetings (tentatively July 6th and another in August)

In advance of the Monday June 14th meeting, we would appreciate if you would reflect on the following questions and come prepared to share your thoughts.

- a) What have you observed that could be related to student’s experiences in Operation Cooperation?
 - *Recall stories* of how students interacted with each other before, during or after the EnTeam games; 'After' could be immediately after the games or years afterwards.
 - What have *you heard* about Op Coop from students, parents or teachers?
- b) What would you like to see changed in student interactions or behavior as a result of Operation Cooperation?

We look forward to meeting you next week when the Advisory Group begins. Thank you for your support of Operation Cooperation.

Sincerely,

Peggy Neufeld, Ph.D., OTR/L, Qualitative Research Consultant for EnTeam
 Email: neufeld.peggy@gmail.com Phone: 314-580-2271

Ted Wohlfarth, EnTeam Executive Director
 Email: ted@enteam.org Phone: 314-814-2000

Directions to 6/14 meeting place: - - -

>> CONTINUE

Invitation Guide - for inviting a person to be on the Advisory Group:

a) To address purpose of the new Advisory Group and why important:

- I would like to invite you to join a new Advisory Group we are forming to help us better understand the impact of Operation Cooperation. We want to be able to describe the specific types of benefits that are possible after a student participates in the 4 EnTeam game sessions. The Adv Group is one part of our new evaluation project that will give EnTeam important information for when inviting schools and other families to participate in future Op Coop session, and ultimately we expect this project to help us achieve our mission of
- We want the input from those who have experienced Op Coop first hand – students, parents and teachers. We feel this will strengthen our evaluation and understanding of Op Coop.
- Note: I suggest call it evaluation instead of research, and use more everyday language so prospective members see that they can be helpful.

b) Why inviting the particular person

- Find a way to recognize the person's particular strengths and what made you think of inviting them; make it feel personal (ex: a great volunteer during games; have heard person's insightful comments or observations after the student participated; know the person has a passion for the mission of Op Coop, etc.)

c) Their Advisory Group roles and activities to expect

- Our Advisory Group meetings will be interactive. Each meeting will have an agenda that we will send you in advance of the meeting, so you know what to expect.
- *At the first meeting we will ask you to reflect on your past experience with Op Coop and share what you have seen or would hope to see as a result of participating in Op Coop. We will also ask for your feedback on our developing interview process and questionnaire.*
- At other meetings we are interested in your thoughts on some of our findings from the interviews we will have over the summer.

d) How much work expected and how often would meet?

- We anticipate having at least 3 Advisory Group meetings from now to mid-fall. The meetings will be 1 ½ hours long and held at our offices at MIMH.OR use a West County location – library (since the 4 schools are closer to then.)

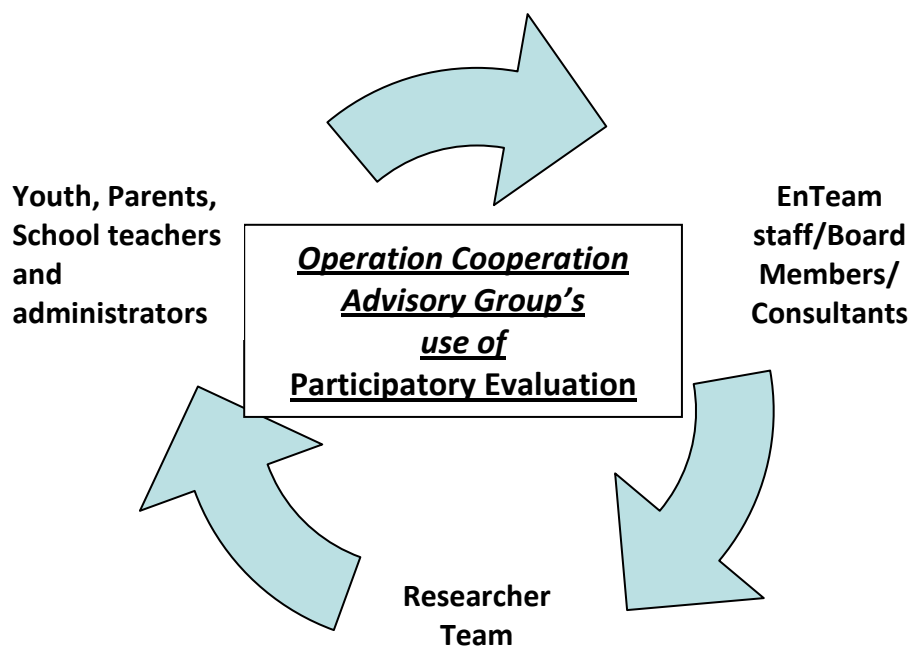
e) Who else should be on the Advisory Group?

- To this end we are planning about 12 to 15 people on the Advisory Group.
- We want to have representatives from those who experience EnTeam from each of the 4 schools (Islam, Catholic, Jewish, Christian Scientist). This means a couple each of students, parents and teachers.
- Also a few of our EnTeam board members, researchers and college interns

f) Check their availability for 1st meeting possible date/time:

- Tuesday June 8th -----or Thursday June 10th

C. Advisory Group Agenda and Minutes – June 14, 2010



The agenda for the first meeting is:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Overview of the evaluation project and the role of the Advisory Group
3. Discuss possible *indicators* that show the impact of EnTeam Games/Operation Cooperation
4. Discuss the draft interviewing plan and questions
5. Schedule and plan for future meetings

Definition of Participatory Evaluation:

Participatory Evaluation means having people who are involved in the program first-hand *take part in* planning the evaluation, the analysis and application of the new information. In Operation Cooperation, this means the youth, parents, teachers/administrators and EnTeam. This process is a collaboration of carefully exploring issues and information for its usefulness to EnTeam and the schools.

Participatory Evaluation Process for Operation Cooperation:

The *project goal* is to demonstrate benefits from Operation Cooperation through exploring its impact on the youth, families, teachers and schools. Ultimately, EnTeam is considering possible expansion of Operation Cooperation to other cities.

Forming the Advisory Group is an important first step in the project. *Advisory Group members are invited* to reflect and share ideas during the decision making of the project phases. Besides the Advisory Group meetings, some follow-up email or telephone contacts will be made.

The anticipated project phases are:

1. Determine indicators and use them to create interview questionnaires
2. Collect information from about 44 participants (youth of different ages, parents and teachers from the 4 schools) and analyze findings for themes
3. Use the findings to create a quantitative survey useful for ongoing evaluation of impact of Operation Cooperation
4. Analyze across findings from the qualitative interviews (summer) and the UMSL quantitative surveys (in the fall) to further evaluate the impact of Operation Cooperation
5. Determine best methods for reporting and distributing results.

Minutes from June 14, 2010 Operation Cooperation Advisory Group Meeting
1st Meeting - June 14, 2010, held at Principia School

Attendance (11): Ted Wohlfarth (EnTeam Executive Director), Peggy Neufeld (Facilitator), Chris Stringer (Parent, Principia), Gabe Stringer (Student, Principia), Asma Raza (Al-Salam parent), Saad Raza (Student, Al-Salam), Donna Bari (Al-Salam Administrator), Mimi Baden (Solomon Schechter teacher), Carol Freund (EnTeam Bd. Member), Nasser Al Balushi (UMSL intern), Matt Phillips (UMSL intern)

Ted W. explained purpose of this group is to assist in evaluation to answer, ‘Does Op Coop have an impact that warrants expansion to other schools. Interest has been expressed from Washington DC & Virginia. What is evidence that OC makes a difference or a positive impact? If there is little impact, how can it be improved?’

What is evidence that shows EnTeam makes any difference/impact?

- Parents/teachers observed students making connections during OC
 - 3rd graders would say they hoped to see someone that they had met
 - Some exchanged email addresses
 - Remembered names of friends made during OC
 - Child recognized a student from another school at the store, saying “There’s my friend!”
- Parents/teachers observed students recalling positive memories of OC
 - Two years later at inter-school sports, students remembered OC and asked others if they had participated in it
 - Four years later, a middle school student shared to teacher and classmates about her Op Coop experience when reminded of it by a classroom activity
- Parents & teachers/administrators feel OC is “good for the children”
 - Exposing children to differences is good since children in the religious schools are somewhat sheltered from others with different religions
 - Important to give opportunity to see others from different backgrounds; not be so sheltered or “in a bubble”
 - A parent hoped children would become less judgmental
 - Likes opportunity for children to mix and work together with others
- EnTeam has “youth collaborate while competing against the problem” in the game
- Story from Carol: One day a Mom came to an Op Coop. session and said she had kept her 3rd grader home from an Op Coop session since was not well. The daughter had really wanted to go with her friends to Op Coop. The daughter said, “I can’t miss it because --- (an older sibling) told me about it [indicated how fun it was].” When the daughter arrived at a next session, two others came over and greeted her warmly.
- Someone told of incident where a child took the lead in participation even though mother thought the child would be reluctant to join in

Meanings made of Op Cooperation:

- Student alums of Op Coop. said:
 - Op Coop shows that students of different faith schools play games together to learn about others, depend on others; have fun

- Shows that kids who are different can play together and work together
- “I don’t remember anything from it or that my friends remember it.”
- Remembered when at a different school, “could not have shoes on” (because of the custom of that religion/setting)
- Parents view:
 - Students seem to mostly view it as an opportunity to play and a field trip that is pretty cool
 - At this age they don’t understand the ultimate purpose.
 - Schools and parents are setting examples of open-mindedness to youth
- 3rd grade age when doing Op Coop may be too young to understand ultimate purpose of program (more than simply having fun).
 - Student alums of OC said, “It would be better to do at the 5th or 6th grade level”. “Parents need to remind the students about what they did”, for the students to understand the purpose
 - Parent says, “In 6th grade there is more talk about religions”
 - Parents thought students would ‘benefit’ from another EnTeam game interaction at older age and an explanation then can show the bigger reasons for the games
 - Note that the elementary schools only go to 8th grade
 - Possibly older students who participate in other groups such as service projects could use EnTeam games – to reinforce the ultimate purpose for it
 - EnTeam’s current high school age project is with students who have not experienced EnTeam before.
- Story of evergreen tree planting revealing different level of meanings from Op Coop: At end of 1st year EnTeam games, a small tree planted at Al-Salam school. Rabbi said, “Today you had such fun but some day you will have to get along with others.” After tree planted, the adults there “hugged tearfully/bonded”. An adult shares that is still in contact with some of the other adults (from other schools) who were at the initial tree planting (sees them socially outside of school now). A student alum of OC. said, “I remember the tree”, but did not recall any special meanings about it. Few commented how the tree is fairly large now (many years later).

Youth’s awareness of ultimate purpose of Op Coop; the significance of EnTeam games with youth from different faith-based schools:

- EnTeam does not discuss religion at their game sessions
- Teachers/ school administrators in the 4 schools explain in advance about the project differently (it was up to the school)
 - Some teachers talk to students before the EnTeam games to explain about the different faith-based schools and children they will meet
 - One school had to send letters to parents that no religion would be discussed at Op Coop, in response to “parents scared” about the project.
 - Some teachers reported as uncomfortable about the project
 - Teachers could invite person from other school to talk about a religion; Ex: a 6th grade social studies teachers invited school administrator to talk about Islam.

What is evidence for youth benefiting in problem-solving skills from Op Coop experience?

- Specific structure of EnTeam games has a process of reflection and problem-solving inherent in the game session (small group facilitators encourage youth reflection between rounds of the games to enhance group performance)
- EnTeam games offer a novel play/learning experience (new rules and out of the box ideas expected) so youth draw less on prior experience on a particular game; places youth on more level ‘playing field’
- EnTeam games build problem-solving through game actions/movements (good for 3rd graders); Reflection process fosters small group dialogue to problem-solve with others
- Problem has come up that some group facilitators (volunteer parents or teachers) are too directing of children, rather than facilitating (i.e., encourage youth’s active sharing of ideas)

Regarding interviewing protocol:

- Should parents be present when 3rd graders are interviewed? – for students’ comfort.
- Although youth may be more or less comfortable, best to be consistent with whichever protocol determined regarding parent presence
- Important to try to have youth answer and not the parents
- Face-to-face interview agreed as best with youth; Phone interview with parents and teachers felt would be OK for protocol
- Current research shows it is harder for youth to communicate eye to eye (since they text, etc.)

Suggested questions for Interviewers - to parents, teachers, administrators and students

1. How did you feel before and after your child participated?
 - a. Did you have concerns before participating?
 - b. How do you feel about your child’s interactions with others from different faith-based schools
2. How did the program help you?
3. What feedback did you get from talking with the children, parents, administration and/or teachers?
4. Would you take part in this program again?.(Regarding the 3rd grade experience; also if would participate for follow-up session when older)...if so, why, please elaborate?
5. Is OC a valuable experience?
6. How has this program changed your thinking about interacting with others who are from different faiths?
7. Do you feel that Operation Cooperation has a long term value? That is – did you take something from it or what did you learn that will stay with you.
8. When interview 3rd graders: Would you do OC again?
9. When interviewing older children OC alums (?9th/10th graders): Would you be interested in doing a follow-up session of Op Coop? What would you want to discuss in a follow-up session? What would you recommend for any changes to OC?

D. Operation Cooperation Advisory Group Agenda and Minutes, July 20, 2010

I. Welcome and introductions

II. Brief update on the evaluation project so far:

- A. Interview questions were created and 7 interviews completed with parents and school personnel, plus notes from 1st Advisory Group meeting in June.
- B. Beginning Observations
 - 1) Parents and school personnel appear to differ widely on what they feel is the purpose for Operation Cooperation (OC), and focus most on the religious exposure for the youth and less on learning cooperative, problem-solving behaviors with others.
 - 2) Parents and teachers differ in advance information received about Op Coop, and how they prepare youth and follow-up with them after the game sessions.
 - 3) All are positive about Op Coop as a great experience in getting exposure to others with different religions and most were either unsure or unable to describe long term effects specifically.
 - 4) Most felt offering a form of Op Coop to older children may have a stronger positive impact

III. 1st Activity and discussion

- A. Using a Hot Bowl EnTeam game, break into pairs to briefly discuss the question, *What effects (benefits) would count enough (be persuasive enough) for schools and families to fully participate in Op Coop?*
- B. Large group share/discuss ideas.

IV. 2nd Activity and discussion

- A. Use Hot Bowl paired format again for next question: *What effects (benefits) would count enough (be persuasive enough) for schools and families to permit expansion of Op Coop with the older child?*
- B. Large group share/discuss ideas.

V. 3rd Activity and discussion

- A. A story collected during the evaluation will be told
- B. Each reflect briefly and individually on the story
- C. Discuss question: *What can this story tell us about participation and non-participation of families in Op Coop?*

VI. Next Steps in the project

Minutes from 2nd Meeting of Operation Cooperation (OC) Advisory Group
July 20, 2010, held at Principia School

Attendance (11): Ted Wohlfarth, Peggy Neufeld, Asma Raza, Donna Bari, Carol Freund, Michele Silar, Grace Stringer, Jennifer Stringer, Dina Rinder, Whitney Crooks, Angie Wohlfarth. **Notes by Peggy & Angie.**

Peggy gave update on Op Cooperation evaluation project and shared 4 beginning observations from the 7 interviews completed with parents and school personnel. See Agenda for 7/20 with 4 items. Advisory Group member's comments and questions included:

- The information to parents and teachers gives the purpose for OC as about cooperation and not the religion.
- The purpose for OC is about both cooperation and exposure to others from different religions.
- Is there a different perception between parents and teachers on the purpose of OC?
- Does OC want parents and teachers to prepare students and follow-up the OC sessions with teaching?
- Do you think EnTeam should provide suggested at-home instruction ideas for parents with their children?
- Classroom teachers could send home with the children a review of the day's OC activities and give suggested ways to talk with the child and questions for fostering dialogue.

Participants worked in small groups using a 'HOT Bowl' approach with questions:

1. What effects (benefits) would be persuasive enough for schools and families to fully participate in Op Coop?

- When see children's enthusiasm and how much gained from listening and being listened to
- When parents see children play cooperatively with youth from other schools
- When children make connections from OC to everyday life
- When parents see evidence that overcomes their biases
- When they see that people outside own community are 'OK'
- When see that religious teaching is not the focus of the OC interactions
- When see children learn to be peaceful and cooperative

2. What effects (benefits) would be persuasive enough for schools and families to permit expansion of Op Coop with older grades? Advisory Group members raised issues rather than effects/benefits:

- Be sure the families know the purpose clearly behind OC
- 6th graders are not easily persuaded and like to stay within own friend circle; it's challenging to foster new friendships
- Parents need to know more about OC goals, activities and successes
- 5th graders could conceptualize more deeply to familiarize/recognize differences

- Expect deep controversies regarding religion – some adamant that we should discuss it and if not, why not;
- It is difficult to balance deep controversies regarding what religious exposure should be included or not in OC
- Provides experiential learning- first hand
- Recommend to invite parents to come and observe, saying they can remove child if parent feels uncomfortable

3. Story told from an interview; Participants discussed meanings of the story

- Shows a parent taking a learning-teaching opportunity from an OC experience
- Shows issue of difference in religious purposes in OC – it's there and to be overcome
- Parent-child dialogue after OC incident shows opportunity for supporting a child and a teachable moment about prejudice, language, relationships and communication.
- Shows evidence over time of a youth benefiting/ learning how to communicate with others relative to religion differences
- Emphasizes importance of the family; the school can introduce or teach concepts, then the family needs to reinforce or teach
- The story helped clarify parents' role in overcoming differences
- Parent made a difficult child situation as a learning opportunity
- Administrators hope to reach all students; it's sad for the child who was not involved in OC
- Good that a child learned how to reinforce/say the facts in response to a peer
- Story represented parents' hope for children to have spiritual foundation
- Many unspoken prejudices exist
- Story illustrated importance of parents in relation to OC
- Parents should participate and be required to observe OC
- Optimal if all students/classmates attend OC
- Purpose for OC is to learn to work together
- Personal observations—feelings—contacts
- A Mom chose to reinforce her beliefs with child after OC
- Students learn to respect one another
- Very sensitive story
- Important to reinforce talking together about differences

E. Advisory Group Agenda and Minutes – October 25, 2010

Agenda for Operation Cooperation (OC) Advisory Group Meeting
Monday, 7:00-8:30 p.m. October 25, 2010, at Al-Salam School on Weidman Road

I. Welcome and introductions

II. Update on the evaluation project and member discussion

- A. To date, 25 interviews completed: 11 parents, 11 youth, 3 school personnel. The 11 youth include 5 in High School, 5 in middle school, and 1 in elementary; Schools represented are 10 in Principia, 7 in Solomon Schechter, 6 in St. Monica, 2 in Al-Salam.

Of the 11 youth/parents interviewed, about 50% say the children mix with students from other religions during extracurricular activities.

B. EMERGING THEMES- (related to questions on outcomes and recommendations):

- 1) **The most frequent response from parents and youth about benefits from OC are youth gaining respect and open-mindedness of others who are different from them. They also reported that children became more comfortable talking and interacting with students from other religious schools during OC.**

Some Quotes from Parents:

- a) “Teaches tolerance of others with different faiths; Good [for the children] to see kids of other religions and different dress”
- b) “It was valuable by kids gaining comfort talking to and interacting with students from other faiths”
- c) “The school benefits from [OC] because as a religious school there are misperceptions about other people, and it helps break down those misperceptions. I think my kids benefited from getting to know other kids from other faiths.”

Some Quotes from Youth:

- a) “I gained awareness of students from other religions through the OC games and snack time – and learned that we are all same people even if have different religions.”
 - b) “I became more comfortable with conversing with different kids and knew names, after initially was scared and unsure of the new people; and at the last time -wishing that we would see them again”; “I think that definitely being able to respect them [others from different religions] for that and be able to have a conversation and not have it be weird or awkward in any way – just being able to feel comfortable around them and being able to do that in our everyday lives. That’s definitely one of the key things that stayed with me forever.”
 - c) “I’m more comfortable being around people who are not like me.”
- 2) **Parents and youth report OC sessions and games as enjoyable, engaging and resulting in cooperation and collaboration within the four sessions. Overall, all 25 interviewees were positive about OC, with many very enthusiastic about it.**

>Continued >

Some Quotes from Parents

- a) “They did quite a bit of problem-solving and they did cooperate with the people they were assigned to be with for the project”
- b) “Kids learned that to solve problems they needed to listen to everyone on the team, and try different ideas and collaborate”
- c) “They were very receptive of working with each other.” “I knew they all enjoyed doing it. On the days they were doing it, they looked forward to it...they liked it.” “A good teamwork exercise. Any activity realizing skills of listening and an opportunity to be a leader in some aspect...are things [that they learned], whether it was with a different faith or not.”

Some Quotes from Youth:

- d) “I totally thought that [the games helped learning cooperation skills]. The games and the snacks afterwards were two great things that help you break in. Because you are on a team, and even if it was not to win, you wanted to do well; and in order to do that you had to work together.”
- e) “Kids were willing to cooperate with each other although they were different”; we learned to work in teams
- s) “The first time we were all nervous because we didn’t know what to expect but then every time we did it we were all looking forward to it. It was definitely a lot of fun. I wish we could have done it more.” “I just remember so much joy and so much cooperation from everybody”

Some Quotes from School Personnel:

- t) “The kids worked well together – cooperated and respectful”
- u) “OC is a good and valuable experience for the youth – with keeping with cooperation and teams”
- v) “They [the students] cooperated in the games”

3) Although a few parents reported talking quite a bit with their children, mostly parents and youth were not talking much about OC experiences and related thoughts.

Some Quotes from Parents:

- a) “I was so grateful that [my child] had the interaction at the school [OC] because we were able to talk about what [it’s like in a specific religion]. We had many discussions about it. Now we have a background to talk about it.”
- b) “I didn’t hear as much about it as I would have liked [OC].” “I received a note when they were going to the next school. The note detailed where they were going and what they were going to do – that’s about it”
- c) When asked if child talked with parent about OC, “Actually I don’t know...I mean just at the supper table, sure, just like, what did you do today? Oh, I did, you know Operation Cooperation
- d) “I think it was a good and valuable experience. I suspect what’s more important is what’s done in the home and at school...[my child/children] did not spend much time thinking about the lessons they learned at OC very much.

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Some Quotes from Youth:

- e) “I don’t remember talking to many people about it” (family or at school)
- f) “One of the biggest things was the dress, how other people dressed differently, the accents, and the different architecture of the other schools and what was in the schools and how each religion played a part in it. Those were the big things that I probably talked about most.”
- g) ---[the student] talked to classmates mostly about OC, but didn’t remember what talked to them about nor remember talking about religion.
- h) “I don’t remember much that they [parents or teachers] spoke about, but I remember they told us we were going to do OC again in 6th grade, but we never did.

4) Almost all parents and youth recommend offering an additional OC session for students in higher grades and modify the games for the older children.

Some Quotes from Parents:

- a) “Vary activities for older kids, for example work on a project together”
- b) “Continue starting at 3rd grade, plus do older grades too”
- c) Extend OC over more years, especially middle school; Also do different types of activities together...real life scenarios...experiential”
- d) “More impact [from OC] will happen with 7th/8th graders because that age thinks more about social interactions” “Recommend to add time for individual students to get to know each other – so would talk to each other more in future sessions”
- e) “Expand to 7th, 8th, and/or high school...with a club, social and volunteer option. Stereotypes can be discussed in high school to debunk assumptions”

Some Quotes from Youth:

- u) “Yes I would like to do OC in a higher grade. The activities would have to be harder, and maybe a bit more academic”
- v) “Would like OC games in 3rd, 6th, and 10th grades, so you can come back and make friends...also learn more about religion. . . and OK if games were academic”
- w) I prefer the games in high school are not too academic like math, etc....and in high school add in discussion and time to talk to each other about interests
- x) Continue OC activities through middle school to keep stereotypes from solidifying, but remember we [in HS] have busy lives (activities like sports) already in high school. You need good topics and questions. Students can just talk about everyday things.”
- y) “Bring OC in higher grades, 6th, because people change over time, so they could learn new stuff about others. Have more conversations like, ‘What your religion is like? ‘What your family life is like?’”

>Continued >

C. Not identified as a theme, but data of interest for continued analysis; a small set of comments in contrast to above themes with more data than what is on above list.

Some interviewees were positive but unsure about long term effects or unable to define long-term effects.

- “It was a good and valuable experience but I do not feel that it left a lasting impression on (the parent’s children).”
- Parent thought purpose/benefit of OC was “to learn about different people and different cultures. . . did not feel family or school ‘significantly’ benefited from the experience”
- The children don’t apply cooperation strategies learned at OC to interactions in own school.

D. **Data collection still in process:** To collect more interviews from 4th & 5th graders who have completed Op Cooperation, letters were given to the administration at the 4 schools for approval to be sent home in child’s backpacks for parent’s permission for interviewing children. Three of the 4 schools have agreed on the process of forwarding letter to parents.

IV. Ted to introduce idea of inviting the Operation Cooperation Advisory Group members to continue as an Operation Cooperation Advisory Council - to meet as a group 2 times a year.

Minutes of 3rd Meeting of Operation Cooperation (OC) Advisory Group
October 25, 2010, held at Principia School

Attendance (9): Ted Wohlfarth, Peggy Neufeld, Dina Rinder, Asma Raza, Donna Bari, Carol Freund, Michele Silar, Michele Johnson, Penny Swank. **Notes by Peggy & Dina.**

Ted welcomed all and reviewed the purpose of the interview evaluation project of Operation Cooperation – “Does OC make ‘any difference’ in the short run and in the long run? – talking to families, the youth and the parents as to what they remember and if it makes a difference.” What are the outcomes and impact of OC?

Peggy gave update on the OC interview evaluation project.

A. To date, 25 interviews completed since June 2010: 11 parents, 11 youth, and 3 school personnel. Interviewing will continue to gain a few more elementary age OC alumni from each of the four schools.

B. **Four themes are emerging related to outcomes and recommendations for OC. These themes are still in analysis.** See appendix for agenda with supporting quotes for each theme. Meeting attendees were asked for feedback on the themes, any surprises, anything unclear, alternative interpretations from the sample comments/quotes and if see alternative themes. Each theme was read with its representative interviewee comments/quotes.

Theme 1: The most frequent response from parents and youth about benefits from OC are youth gaining respect and open-mindedness of others who are different from them. They also reported that children became more comfortable talking and interacting with students from other religious schools during OC.

Discussion:

- a) Gaining comfort with others after 1 to 2 OC sessions was a common observation across parents and youth. This short term outcome of students gaining comfort quickly is remarkable since a number of youth said or reported they felt uncomfortable (“weird and awkward since not know others and/or unfamiliar with the place”) at initial OC sessions, and that there were only 4 sessions during the year. Through talking and interacting with others, they became comfortable, which is significant since youth come from different religious backgrounds.
- b) Therefore, this theme supports that in short-term the OC games, the process and the staff effectively aid student groups with mixed cultural backgrounds to gain comfort and be respectful while interacting in the sessions.
- c) It was suggested that EnTeam communicate the purposes for OC with more clarity and in various ways for enhanced understanding by parents, youth and school personnel.

Theme 2: Parents and youth report OC sessions and games as enjoyable, engaging and resulting in cooperation and collaboration within the four sessions. Overall, all 25 interviewees were positive about OC, with many very enthusiastic about it.

Discussion:

- a) Before people can be cooperative, they must be able to be comfortable, which was supported in Theme #1.
- b) Games enable interaction; the fact that everyone has to take part helps make them comfortable and fosters cooperation.
- c) Exiting to see that all felt youth were gaining cooperation skills. How could OC program be enhanced to support the transfer of cooperation skills to other/different settings and schools? Often cooperation skills are not taught to youth and it needs to be pointed out to them. Some example strategies suggested to support transfer of cooperation skills were: (1) teach the youth how to talk explicitly about the specific skills and process (learn the language) and suggest directly to youth that they can talk about and do these things at their own schools, (2) encourage teachers to use the same language as learned in OC to promote cooperation and collaboration, and (3) use the OC games at youth's own schools so it is easier for them to apply/use cooperation skills.
- d) Ted explained the OC philosophy/rationale of competition and cooperation to Advisory Group members.

*“The opposition of competition is monopoly, which is bad. In economy you want diversity. At times the opponent of a person can be another person or can be a problem. In EnTeam and OC, **problems** are posed as the opponent (not the person) and the problems are beat by measuring the cooperative game performance. **EnTeam games are competitive versus a problem** and needs others to cooperate against the problem also. **We don't need to agree with each other about all beliefs (or even like each other) in order to cooperate and collaborate and all win.***

Society needs to offer many opportunities in win-win as well as win-lose experiences. There is a time when you are competitive against another person and time when you need to be with or collaborate with other persons.

When youth from different cultural backgrounds play EnTeam games and play together for a win-win result they see how they can cooperative with others with different beliefs can succeed to solve a problem collaboratively.”

- e) Youth don't know that competition can be achieved with a win-win experience. Youth need to understand the different types of problems and competition. Recommendation made to share this OC philosophy with parents, youth and teachers each year.

Theme 3: Although a few parents reported talking quite a bit with their children, mostly parents and youth were not talking much about OC experiences and related thoughts.

Discussion:

- a) Consider sending home a list of questions - i.e., things to ask your child; discussion points so that there is more discussion between parents and children.
- b) How can we help promote learning and talking with child?
- c) Use Ted's pothole story but relate it to something kids can understand.
- d) Parents may be overwhelmed by take home guide so keep it brief.

- e) Send home "assignment" with kids - have them write what they learned or have 3 talking points. Keep the assignment simple too so that those parents who stress about perfection with assignments will focus more on the task.
- f) Be careful with the word "assignment"- do something with bullet points so it is not overwhelming.
- g) Not all parents will read it but some will and that is a good start.

Theme 4: Almost all parents and youth recommend offering an additional OC session for students in higher grades and modifying the games for the older children.

Discussion:

- a) Youth and parents still seem to think purpose of OC is to learn about other religions, which it is not the purpose. Suggestions for expanding OC to higher grades frequently emphasize youth's readiness to learn more about religions. Also, many parents and educators want to keep kids on the religious path that they are teaching, and therefore they do not want dialogue among students about religion. Therefore, the purposes of OC need further and ongoing clarification to families and schools before, during and after the process.
- b) If OC is to plan a high school session, partnering with someone will reduce some startup effort. Is social action form of interactions feasible for OC? – and for high schools? There seems to be tentativeness in minds of school leaders for this direction. To move in this direction, a proposal is needed for schools to consider and a group to steer the process forward.

C. Ted explained rationale for the OC Adv. Group to continue meeting during the next year (2 times a year). He invited all to email him if interested in participating. (ted@enteam.org)

F. Training Program for college student Interviewers

Plans for initial workshops with student interns on the participatory evaluation/ qualitative interviewing and analysis

Interns: Nasser al Balushi , Matt Phillips, Whitney Crooks, Whitney Villmer.

Tuesday 6/15 1:00-2:30

1. Introductions
 - a. Students prior experiences in Qualitative Research and ethnographic interviewing
 - b. Student's time for different aspects in this study
 - c. Find time/date for availability for our next meeting time
 - d. VERY Brief review of the overall project (give handout on Participant Evaluation)
 - e. Research Question (to be refined): 'How does Operation Cooperation impact the youth, parents, teachers, administrators?
2. Overall plan for the 3 initial teaching sessions *includes intern's writing and reflecting between the 3 training sessions*
 - a. Ethnographic interviewing and field note writing
 - b. The specific interview questions for Op Coop evaluation
 - c. Qualitative data analysis and theme development
3. *Today's focus on ethnographic interviewing and field note writing*
 - a. Culturally responsive interviewing; Probes
 - b. Field note example
 - c. BRIEF Role-play ethnographic interviewing & probes
 - d. For practice/learning, please observe during a defined time at a specific place and later at home write a field note; Please email to me at neufeld.peggy@gmail.com 1-2 days before our next meeting
 - e. *Anything else we need to address at this point?*

2nd date (TBD; this week or next)

1. Discuss intern's field note writing and reflecting experience and writing
 - a. Discuss intern's questions
 - b. Ethics of qualitative interviewing
2. Discuss/refine the developing interview questions
3. *Today's focus is on the interview questions*
 - a. Role-play the specific interview
 - b. Plan practice session by phone with a Board member or ???
4. Discuss interview logistics (inviting, scheduling, recording, etc.)
 - a. Partner for first interviews
 - b. Digital voice recording – who has one?

3rd date (TBD; by end of June)

1. First interviews to be completed by this time
2. Digital copies of field notes sent to Peggy before this meeting; Peggy to review and give individual feedback;
3. At meeting, written copies of first field notes shared and discussed.
4. Touch base on interview logistics again and how we will keep in touch during the interviews

G. Training Program for parent or other volunteer interviewers

Plan for Ted Wohlfarth to train additional Parent Volunteers as interviewers for evaluation of Op Coop

Peggy Neufeld: 8/24/2010

1. **Before 1st meeting with each participant (partly to negotiate with volunteer as to expectations of them and partly to begin training).**
 - a. Clarify purpose of their volunteer work
 - b. Find out prior experiences: a) with Op Coop, b) interviewing with open ended questions, c) with typing notes on interview findings and/or transcribing, d) with emailing attachments
 - c. Clarify time involvement for training and analysis meetings: 2x to initially train; and then periodically meet to discuss findings (2-3x month); also, meet with Advisory Group if possible.
 - i. Expectations are for interviewers to:
 1. Use the provided interview tool and procedure as trained
 2. Complete at least 4-5 interviews over next 6 weeks; each about 30 min.
 3. Complete typed note on findings as per protocol (about 1 ½ hr each)
 - d. Ask each to do some advance suggested reading before first training meeting
 - i. Email information about Op Coop/EnTeam, and the interview surveys (parents and youth)

2. **Initial meeting/training (about 2 hrs.):**
 - a. **Provide background**
 - i. Introductions (maybe invite each person to say why they agreed to volunteer for this project); Share email addresses of all; Briefly again clarify purpose and logistics of Operation Cooperation (because each has had different experiences although participated in some way already with OC).
The Evaluation Project Questions are: a) How do the youth, parents, school teachers and administrators feel Operation Cooperation has made an impact? b) How can Operation Cooperation be enhanced?
 - ii. Find available times for future meetings
 - iii. Describe overall plans and training for their involvement in this project:
 1. Will learn how to do the interviews using the protocol we've established
 2. Do first interviews with spouse and one of children, for practice as well as collecting information, and type key responses on the survey form.
 3. Attend another meeting to further develop skills and discuss findings.
 4. Complete next interview with assigned person and transcribe it for learning purposes as well as to document findings (will only transcribe segments in future)
 5. Attend another meeting to discuss findings and further develop skills.
 6. Send weekly emails to Ted on status of interviews, along with the recordings and documents.
 7. Attend future meeting to discuss all findings and possible themes.

b. Review the interview survey questions

- i. Explain interview created through input from participants/stakeholders
- ii. Interview tool designed to:
 1. Gain specific detailed comments from interviewees and have detailed records for ongoing analysis; To identify a depth of perspectives
 2. Collect information for analysis or interpretation of meanings in each interview
 3. Eventually be used to analyze across all the interview findings to identify themes
- iii. New interviewers observe a role-play using the interview, while trainees jot notes and think of questions for follow-up discussion
 1. Discuss importance of being friendly but neutral to avoid limiting responses;
 2. Importance of creating comfort and trust at start and throughout interview.
 3. Maintain neutrality as interviewer; Avoid being overly positive or negative to interviewee's comments or it may shut down their next comments.
 4. Make interview 'conversational' within parameters of the evaluation;
 - Approach interviewees as partners not as research subjects
 5. Can skip around question sequence as needed to follow train of thought of interviewer; Avoid just getting yes/no answers and moving onto next questions (avoid robotic type of interview)
 6. Discuss importance and use of probes and pauses to encourage speaker to elaborate and clarify comments
 - a. Explore meanings of words, especially 'culturally coded' words; learn what is important to the interviewee
 7. Use active listening strategies:
 - a. Listen closely and encourage interviewee talking.
 - b. Ask: 'Can you tell me more about that?' OR, 'Could you explain more?' OR, 'Could you describe that?'
 - c. Repeat interviewee's words and comments to encourage their elaboration; Example: "So you are saying. . . ."
 - d. Share what you heard person say and ask if that is right.
 - e. Do not try to fix or solve an interviewee problem, rather listen and encourage elaboration
 - f. Also listen for what is Not said, or gaps of information
 8. Use quiet space to record your interviews (especially since on speaker phone)
- iv. Review part of a previous audio recording and/or written note from earlier interview to illustrate process further; Discuss questions.

c. Prepare them for their practice assignment to be completed by next training meeting

- i. Interviewers asked to do the interviews with their spouse and one of their youth (using the parent and the youth survey questionnaires). Would be best if done by

telephone and using recording in same way will do with future interviewees. If youth is entering 4th & 5th grade, interview face to face instead.

- ii. Explain that interviews with family are to collect information as well as for their practice.
- iii. Teach use of audio-recorder and uploading recording to computer for emailing to Ted; Explain benefits of recording for the project; Be sure to get interviewee's name and date on each recording.
- iv. After interview, Interviewers document responses/quotes directly on the questionnaire template; Also write a summary paragraph at beginning of the documentation with your overall interpretations and summary of key points. This summary paragraph is place on the note where interviewer can pose own reflective questions about the findings.

3. Second meeting/training (about 2 hrs)

a. Discuss interviewer's experience in initial interviews, use of questionnaire and writing notes.

- i. Questions from interviewers?
- ii. Each share what learned from their interviews, clarifying specific interviewee comments vs. interviewer interpretations
- iii. Ask each to reflect and share, 'What will you do differently in next interview to enhance your findings?'

b. Show previous notes and transcriptions on Power point for examples.

c. Ethics of interviewing

- i. Use confidential place where you phone/interview/record.
- ii. Rights of interviewees to be informed on who is calling/interviewing and your relationship to EnTeam, the purpose of interview and what will be done with information that interviewee shares
- iii. Respectful of individual cultures; Use words easily understood; Avoid being judgmental
- iv. Avoid causing stress to interviewee; be sensitive to topics and emotions
- v. Boundaries: Avoid asking questions that are not within project or are too personal; Example of unsuitable questions
- vi. Boundaries: Interviewer avoid answering personal questions about self; Avoid sharing names and information from other interviewees; Examples
- vii. Document questions interviewee asks you about the project; Answer questions simply and if further information requested say you will talk to Ted Wohlfarth and get back to person
- viii. Avoid interpreting comments out of context, in reporting and documenting interviewee's comments; Clarify and record specifics to ensure our findings are trustworthy
- ix. Protect confidentiality of interviewee's comments; Do not talk to others about interviewees or what they said; Do not talk about project participants when in public; NOTE for this project - findings will be stored by codes and no identifying information will be matched with specific individuals.

- x. Store and transport digital voice recorder carefully to avoid it getting lost since it will contain confidential, sensitive information on it
- xi. What are other ways to ensure ethics in the interviewing process?

d. Discuss interview logistics

- i. Give participant names and contact information to interviewers
- ii. Review policies/issues regarding contacting interviewees, scheduling, recording, sending notes & recordings to Ted, etc.

H. Interview script and questions for parents and school personnel

***Starts with Protocol; then Questions for parents; then questions for school personnel.**

The Process:

- Read through (even out loud) the specific interview questions so you are familiar with the main questions and possible probes.
- At this time only interview parents, teachers or administrators (not students yet)
- About 30 min. in length
- Use speaker phone and digital voice recorder (hopefully will be possible).

Interviewer role:

- a) Email or phone interviewee to set up a good time for interview over the next few days; CC: to TED & PEGGY on ANY emails to prospective interviewees.
- b) Use speaker phone and digital voice recorder.
- c) At the start of interview use the **intro script**.
- d) Follow questions, although go with the flow as things come up. Write just some notes during the interview, since you want to be actively listening and use probes as needed; you want not to just ask the given questions and be writing responses.
- e) Probe to encourage interviewee elaboration, and to cover additional points if they do not address those points or you need clarification.
- f) NOTE: See **final script** to ask the parent if you may interview the child (or children interviewed individually) who participated in Operation Cooperation. See the script at the end of the questions.
- g) The last question is to get feedback from the interviewee on the specific questions asked.
- h) At the end, thank the person again for their time and responses.
- i) Record time when interview ended.
- j) Write a field note that is descriptive AND interpretive for the interview. Use example from Peggy's interview note with Kathy Hunt or the example from Ted's note with Heather.
- k) Upload the digital voice recording to your computer.
- l) Email field note AND the digital voice recording to Peggy and Ted as soon as possible.

THANK YOU!

Continued >>>>

Questions for Parents:

[see following script/ questions for teachers and administrators

Script:

Hello Mrs. XX. I am _____. I am (interning or working) with EnTeam & Operation Cooperation. Thank you again for agreeing to this phone interview about your thoughts on the Operation Cooperation experience for your (child or children) and family. The interview will take about 30 minutes. I believe Ted told you that we would like to make a voice recording of this interview. This will help us recall what was said. The recorder will only be heard by our researchers. We will not share your names or any particular information about you in our final summaries. If you prefer to have the voice recorder turned off at any time you may ask me to do so. Do you give permission for me to run our voice recorder? ____ (Yes; No). Thank you.

1. To get started, I have a few questions about you & your child's involvement with Operation Cooperation.

- a. What year(s) did your child (or children) participate in Operation Cooperation?
- b. What is/are your child's/children's names? _____.

How old is (are) your child (or children) now? (who participated in Operation Cooperation)

- c. Did you attend or help out in any of the Operation Cooperation sessions?
 - If Yes, how did you help during the Operation Cooperation session? [Probe – were you a monitor for a team of students?]
- d. Does your child do activities with other youth from diverse faiths? *If yes, what types and about how often?*
- e. What opportunities do you know exist for youth to participate with others from diverse faiths?

2. If you helped at the Operation Cooperation session, how would you describe how the students worked together? IF NOT, skip to next question # 3.

If YES – PROBE: Students enjoyed the activity? Were comfortable? Were friendly? Were respectful?] ALSO ASK THESE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

- a) **Did you see the children problem-solve during the Operation Cooperation Games?** [PROBE: Please describe what made you think they were problem-solving.]
- b) **Did the students work together in a collaborative way?** [PROBE: Please describe what made you think it was collaborative]
- c) **Were there ways the students were NOT collaborating together?** [PROBE: Please describe what made you think the students were NOT collaborative.]

3. How do you think your child felt about the program? What makes you think this?

[PROBE : Students enjoyed the activity? -Were comfortable? -Felt others were friendly? -Felt others were respectful?]

- a) **Who has your child talked with about the Op Coop experience?** – and about what? - and When? -with You? -with Friends? -with Family?
- b) **Has your child kept in touch with anyone from the Op. Coop games?** – Please elaborate. IF YES – do you think your child considers that youth a friend?

- c) *How would you describe your child's feelings about people from other faith groups?*
- d) **Did You or any family or friends have any concerns about Operation Cooperation before your child participated?** IF YES there were concerns, Probe to elaborate. At this time, do you feel the same or differently in relation to any of your earlier concerns?

(1) What *feedback* have you heard from others about Op Coop (family members, teachers, or parents)?

4. **How do you feel about Operation Cooperation? Was it a good or valuable experience for your family? – In what ways?**

[PROBE WELL ON THIS QUESTION: Benefited the child, the family, the school?
What was learned? Changed your child's thinking?

- a. **Did your child, family or school BENEFIT from Operation Cooperation?**
[PROBES: What learned? Felt more at ease *interacting with* others from different religions?
- b. **What LONG-TERM benefits would YOU like to see for Operation Cooperation?**
(Something you would like to see your child gain and stay for the future)
[PROBES – *and what benefits would you like to see for the parents or schools?*]
- c. **Are you familiar with the purpose of Operation Cooperation?**
[Listen to the response, then share this: **I'd like to tell you the purpose and see if you think this was achieved.** *Your school participates in Operation Cooperation to give students, teachers, and parents the opportunity to increase understanding and respect among people from different cultures and faiths. We do this by doing EnTeam games that encourage students to solve problems collaboratively and win together in peaceful ways.*
Do you think this is achieved?

5. **How could Operation Cooperation be improved?**

6. **Currently, Operation Cooperation is serving third grade. Do you think that it would be valuable to offer an additional Op Coop experience to higher grade levels?**
[PROBE: Please explain.]

7. **EnTeam has requests from schools in other cities to expand Operation Cooperation. Do you think that other cities could benefit from Operation Cooperation?**

8. **Is there anything else you would like to tell us about Operation Cooperation and its impact on your child, family or school?**

9. **When interviewing a parent, ask following about possibly interviewing their child:**
Script:

Now that I finished asking you the interview questions, I want to ask you about the possibility of interviewing your child (or children) who participated in Operation Cooperation. As you know, we want to learn if Operation Cooperation benefits students and adults. The interview questions

would be similar to the ones I just asked you. We think it may be easier for _____ (name of child/children) if we do the interview in person, instead of on the phone. I can meet your child for the interview at a time and location that is convenient for him (or her) and you.

a. Would you feel comfortable with your child being interviewed about Op Coop?

(Yes NO)

b. Do you think your child would be interested and willing to be interviewed?

(Yes NO)

IF Yes to above on interviewing with the child, next discuss possible scheduling for you to interview with the child.

[Note to INTERVIEWER do not schedule a child interview until AFTER our team has met and discussed pointers on youth interviewing.]

10. **At the end of the interview:** *Thank you again for your time and responses*

11. **Record time** when interview ended: _____. Write length of full phone interview/contact with this person at this time _____

12. **See Interviewer Protocol for your next steps.**

Interview protocol for school personnel (teacher or administrator)

- Refer to and use the process and interviewer role as per the parent interview protocol.

Script:

Hello XX. I am _____. I am (interning or working) with EnTeam & Operation Cooperation. Thank you again for agreeing to this phone interview about your thoughts on the Operation Cooperation experience for the children in your school. The interview will take about 30 minutes. I believe Ted told you that we would like to make a voice recording of this interview. This will help us recall what was said. The recorder will only be heard by our researchers. We will not share your names or any particular information about you in our final summaries. If you prefer to have the voice recorder turned off at any time you may ask me to do so. Do you give permission for me to run our voice recorder? ____ (Yes; No). Thank you.

- 1. Interviewee's involvement with OC**
- 2. Interviewee's perceived benefits for their students**
- 3. Interviewee's perceived benefits for parents**
- 4. Interviewee's benefits for teachers and herself**
- 5. Suggested OC improvements**
- 6. Ideas about offering added OC experience to a higher grade level?**
- 7. Would other cities benefit from OC?**
- 8. What would you like a long-term effect to be for OC?**

I. Phone interview script and questions for Youth

To the Interviewer –

- See Protocol 1st Page for ALL interviews.
- **BEFORE YOU PHONE**, you should already have the
 - a. Permission of parent to interview their child
 - b. Name
 - c. Current age
 - d. School of the child when attended OC
 - e. School of child currently

Script: Hello, _____ [name of child], my name is _____. I am working with Operation Cooperation. I'm so glad I get to speak to you today. I have some questions to ask you about what you think about Operation Cooperation. The interview will take about 20 minutes. If it is OK with you, I would like to record the interview so I can catch everything that you tell me. The recording will just be heard by our evaluators and our final summary will not share your specific name with anything you tell me. Do you give permission for me to run the voice recorder now? _____ (Yes; No). Thank you.

1. To get started, I would like to know a little about you.

- a. **So, what are you doing this summer?** [If says nothing, ask if involved in camp, swimming, sports, etc.; Purpose of initial conversation is help child feel more comfortable with interviewer]
- b. **Do you do any activities with students who do Not go to your school?** YES NO
 - i. **If Yes – What kind?** (ex: sports, youth groups, camp, neighbors, etc.)
- c. **How often do you do activities with people who you know have a different religion?**

_____ (child's name), I understand you will going into _____ grade next year. [If speaking to older youth: So you took part in OC, _____ (#) years ago when you were in 3rd grade and at [name of school]. Right?

2. Let's talk now about what you remember from Operation Cooperation when you were in 3rd grade [Note – could be 3rd and/or 4th grades for Al-Salam students]. **What are some things you remember about it?** [Wait to let child answer initial question before probing]

[PROBE: Use words the child uses to encourage elaboration; Ask ALL of following questions but be sure to give child sufficient time to respond.]

- a. **Was Operation Cooperation fun? If Yes:** What made it fun?; **If No:** why was it not fun?
- b. **Do you remember any of the games you played? How did you play the games with the other students?**
- c. **What do you remember about the other people there?** [Probe and pause with each – students, teachers, parents]
- d. **Did you feel the children there were friendly to you?**
- e. **Do you remember any of the other student's names?**
- f. **Have you kept in touch with any of the other students?**
- g. **Would you have liked to keep in touch with them?**

3. Now let's talk about what happened after the Operation Cooperation game days? After Op Coop, who did you talk with about the sessions?

[PROBE and PAUSE with each: With your teachers? Your parents? Other family members? Anything else you remember talking about?

- a. Did you talk (with the person above) about what you did at the sessions?
 - b. Did you talk about other religions?
4. **After 3rd grade, did you see any of the students that you met at Operation Cooperation? - When? -Did you talk with them? Do you remember any of the things you talked about?**
- a. - Do you feel comfortable talking to students from other schools?
 - b. -And after Op Coop, did you talk with any teachers or parents who are not from your school? [Again probe when? And what? If they recall]
5. **What do you think your teachers wanted you to learn by going to Operation Cooperation?**
[Pause to give person time to respond before probing. Encourage elaboration by using their words and asking if person could describe further. PROBES: Do you think they wanted you to learn how to work in teams with others? Do you think they wanted you to learn about people from other religions?]
- 5.a) Do you think you learned _____ (whatever the child said to previous question)?
6. **a. Would you like to do Operation Cooperation again now that you older?**
- 6-b). If YES: Should it be different in any way, since you are older? How?
 - If NO: Could you explain (clarify) why you would not like to do it again?
7. **Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Operation Cooperation?** [Pause to give person time to respond before probing.
8. **This is the end of my questions. Do you have any questions about Operation Cooperation that you want to ask me?**
9. *Thank you again for your time.*

- At the end:
- 1) Thank the student and the parent.
 - 2) Record time interview completed.
 - 3) See Interview Protocol for your next steps.

J. Recruitment letters to schools and parents

Representative recruitment letter sent to principals of four schools

June 30, 2010

----- Principal

----- School

Address

Address

Dear ---Principal:

Would you please invite a few families to participate in research on Operation Cooperation?

Since 2002, students from ___School and three other schools have participated in Operation Cooperation under the supervision of parents and teachers. We have seen that giving Muslim, Jewish, and Christian children the opportunity to solve problems collaboratively is fun and empowering. Occasionally, parents, teachers and students have answered a few survey questions immediately following workshops, but we do not have expert evaluation of the long-term impact of Operation Cooperation.

Now, Dr. Peggy Neufeld, an experienced program-evaluator from Washington University, is leading a study of Operation Cooperation. The goal is to determine whether this EnTeam program benefits that last for years. Dr. Neufeld has trained interviewers to talk to parents and older students about their experiences with Operation Cooperation in the third grade.

We hope to talk with a parent and young person from 12 families for each of the four schools. Since some of the students are now in middle school and high school, we could learn about long-term impact if we can talk with them. Of course, we need parents' permission before we talk with students.

We hope that you will allow us to request permission to conduct the interviews. Attached are lists of students who have been in Operation Cooperation and a reproducible copy of this request.

Sincerely,

Ted Wohlfarth, Executive Director

314-814-2000

ted@enteam.org

Representative recruitment letter sent in parents in four schools via student's backpacks

October 19, 2010

To parents of students who have participated in Operation Cooperation

----- School Parents

Address

Address

Dear Parents:

Since 2002, students from ----- School and three other schools have participated in Operation Cooperation under the supervision of parents and teachers. We have seen that giving Muslim, Jewish, and Christian children the opportunity to solve problems collaboratively is fun and empowering. However, we do not have an independent evaluation of the long-term impact of Operation Cooperation.

Last summer, Dr. Peggy Neufeld, an experienced program-evaluator who teaches at Washington University, designed a qualitative study of Operation Cooperation. The goal is to determine whether this EnTeam program produces benefits that last beyond third grade. One step toward this goal is to interview students who participated in past years.

Dr. Neufeld has trained interviewers to talk to parents and older students about their experiences with Operation Cooperation in the third grade.

Would you allow an interviewer to ask your child who has participated in Operation Cooperation a few questions? The interview can be by phone or in person. We only need to talk with about 12 more students. Of course, we need parents' permission before we talk with students.

We hope that you will allow us to talk with your child. If so, please sign below and send this letter back to Principia Lower School to the attention of Mr. Moyle. If you have questions for Operation Cooperation, you may call me or Ted Wohlfarth, Executive Director of EnTeam Organization 314-814-2000. Operation Cooperation is coordinated by EnTeam Organization.

Sincerely,

Dina Rinder, Survey Coordinator
EnTeam Organization
314-994-1342

Permission to interview _____
Name of student

is granted by _____
Name of parent/guardian

Phone number _____

K. List of assertions from the Operation Cooperation Qualitative Study

Theme #1: “Reinforced for me that people of different religions can work together”.

Theme #2: “We learned to work in teams”.

Theme #3: “Didn’t hear as much as I would have liked about Operation Cooperation”

Theme #4: “Extend Operation Cooperation over several years so students can remember it as they grow older”

ASSERTIONS:

1. OC reinforces that students from different religions can work together.
2. OC is a factor in enhancing youth’s awareness and respect for others who differ in religious beliefs.
3. Uncertainty or different expectations exists about the purpose of OC, i.e., teaching about religious differences as opposed to the primary objective of youth learning problem-solving and collaboration.
4. Younger children primarily feel that OC supports youth becoming friends, being friendly and gaining teamwork skills.
5. Older youth primarily focus on OC fostering tolerance of differences from religions.
6. Participation in OC fosters youth’s respect and open-mindedness about others who are different from them, and gaining comfort from talking and interacting with students from other religious schools.
7. Exposing children to differences is good since children in the religious schools are somewhat sheltered from others with different religions.
8. Children in OC realize they have more in common than different from each other.
9. People do not have to be from the same religion to be able to cooperate on shared problems.
10. Youth find OC enjoyable and engaging, and conducive to collaborating and cooperating in problem-solving activities during the four OC sessions.
11. The specific structure of EnTeam Games, with its inherent process of problem-solving, physical actions and reflection offer a novel experience that enhances learning in 3rd graders.
12. Following OC sessions, youth tend to talk minimally with others about their experiences and reactions.
13. Some parents indicate they would like to hear more about the children’s OC experiences.

14. Parents need to remind the students about what they did in OC, for the students to understand the purpose.
15. Youth gain enhanced learning when parents discuss OC purpose and experiences with them and refer to it later.
16. An additional OC session(s) for students in higher grades has the potential to promote long-lasting learning and benefits.
17. Clarifying OC philosophy, purposes, expected benefits and suggested additional learning strategies for parents, youth and teachers each year—before, during and after the sessions—has the potential to promote long-lasting learning and benefits.
18. Other cities and schools would benefit from OC.

L. References cited in the Report and Additional Resources

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