

Edgewood Academy Then and Now: The Kagan Difference

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Kim Mannari
Assistant Principal.

**Principal Lorie Trombetti and Assistant Principal Kim Mannari
share Edgewood Academy's journey with Kagan.**

We want you to visualise walking into a classroom, the desks in rows, some students are talking, the teacher says, "I'm waiting until you're ready". When the teacher gets the attention of most of the students, she begins the lesson. Students open their books, the teacher begins posing questions. Students raise their hands to answer questions; she calls on one. This is what a typical classroom looked like at Edgewood 5 years ago.

As in many cases of mandatory summer trainings teachers filed into their first cooperative learning training from a Kagan certified trainer with mixed emotions, doubts, and resistance. That week of training proved to be a thought provoking one for our staff. The majority of our teachers embraced the structures, the research-based methods, and the mentality behind true cooperative learning presented in the 5 Day training. However, it would be many years before full acceptance and confidence in implementation would be found throughout Edgewood Academy.

At the start of the next school year, administrative Walk-Throughs evidenced classrooms with desks still in rows and students raising their hands to answer. The evidence of Cooperative Learning Structure implementation was very limited. Administration saw the need to provide our students with a highly engaging and rigorous classroom environment. In order to do that, we knew that the teachers needed support and follow-up trainings to successfully "restructure" their classrooms.

We believed that it would be a powerful tool to have a group of fifteen teachers to be mentors in the school and to be a point of contact for other peers in their grade levels. So the administrative team designed the following plan to support the mentors by sending them to the following trainings at the 2008 Kagan Summer Institute: **Advanced Cooperative Learning, Classbuilding and Teambuilding, Elementary Math that Counts, Cooperative Learning for Little Ones.** A couple of our mentor teachers wanted to attend the 5-Day Cooperative Learning again to refresh and strengthen their learning. These leaders absorbed best practices, management methods, and appropriate applications of structures to state standards and curriculum.

The fall of 2008 proved to be a turning point for the school. Teacher Mentors brought back a whole new tool box of structures and management tips from the Summer Academy. During Pre-Service Week, mentors were responsible for modelling the structures and then allowing brainstorm opportunities where teachers could use the new tools in their class. An Ah-Hah moment during this school year was visiting the Kagan model schools in Tampa and Auburndale. Seeing classrooms seamlessly integrating Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures throughout their school day, and in all subject areas, provided a deep and relevant understanding of the methods. At this time we also saw a shift in the mentality of teachers throughout our school as they saw the possibilities and implications of cooperative learning.

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That same year, our assistant principal was trained to become a building coach. With that endorsement she was able to provide immediate support and feedback as teachers demonstrated structures in the classroom. This assured the frequent implementation of structures and continued progress toward our school goal of student engagement.

During the 2009-2010 school year, Edgewood realized that even with all of these steps to success in place, we continued to have a gap in full implementation. Administration recognized the need to bring in a formal coach from Kagan Professional Development.

During coaching visits, the administration walked with the Kagan Coach. Teachers were given an opportunity to sign up for structures and were given immediate feedback in the moment. From the moment the coach walked in the room, an effort was made to put teachers at ease and show teachers that this was a learning opportunity, not an evaluative one. To culminate the visit, the coach sat down with the administrative team to develop an action plan with next steps to ensure successful implementation. Our school quickly realized that a single coaching visit from a Kagan certified trainer was not going to be enough. We put together a long range plan which included 2-3 coaching visits a year. Within a couple of coaching visits, it was evident that teachers were using structures more purposefully and engagement was beginning to become a culture on our campus. Edgewood has continued its promise to quality implementation and continues multiple coaching visits each year.

Another piece of implementation that teachers were struggling with was selecting the structure they should use to meet their learning objective and where in the lesson the structure should go. Administration then invested in multiple sessions in Structure to objective alignment and specific placement of Kagan Structures. This lesson planning session provided teachers with the foundation for purposeful and fluid engagement in their classrooms, vs simply inserting an activity. Teachers also worked collaboratively with the Kagan Trainer to create a chart of structures to be mastered at each grade level to ensure continuity from one stage of learning to the next. Teachers then began putting the Structures into their lessons plans.

During the Summer of 2012, four of our teacher mentors attended the **Kagan Coaching Training**. This training gave our school four additional coaches at the building level to support their colleagues.

We will continue to advance our knowledge of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures to increase active engagement for every child in the classroom through further trainings. It will be a continued expectation for new staff to attend Kagan Training. Edgewood Academy is proud of what our teachers are doing for their students on a daily basis. After many years of training and coaching our teachers are engaging students and holding them individually accountable for their learning. There has truly been a school-wide acceptance based on our personal experiences within the classroom. Kagan has become a culture in our school.

Let's return to a classroom at Edgewood Academy today. The objective is posted on the board. When you enter, the desks are now in teams, children are talking and the teacher gives the Quiet Signal to get all students attention. The teacher quickly has every student's attention and she begins the lesson. When the teacher poses questions, she asks them to turn to their shoulder partner and she allows 30 seconds for Partner A to answer the question. She then gives Partner B 30 seconds to answer the question. Today, she calls on everyone. Engagement isn't an expectation for a select few, but for every student: every day, every lesson.

THEN	NOW
Management	
	Quiet Signal
Desks in Rows	Desks in Teams, Labelled A/B Partners and Numbered
Teachers Ask Students to “Talk to a Partner”	Teachers Ask Students to “Turn to Their Face or Shoulder Partner”
	Appropriate Noise Level
Supplies in Random Places and in Student Desks	Supplies in Team Tubs
Student Behaviours	
Students Hold Up Q-Q-T Cards- No Words	Students Phrase Questions and Answers in Complete Sentences
Students Give Answers only	Students Give the Why/ Explanation
Students Telling Answers	Students Coach each Other
Teacher Behaviours	
Using Round Robin	Using Round Robin Variations
Teachers Using “Big”/ Complex Structures	Teachers Using “Bread & Butter” Structures
Teachers Gave Multiple Directions	Teachers chunk directions.
Structures Used As “Extra” Activities	Structures Used in All Content Areas
Teachers Don’t Have the Extra Time for Kagan	Structures Used to Teach
Cheers Used for Everything	Gambits and Authentic Praise Added
Music Being Used Every time Students move in a Structure	Music used to "Mix"
Teachers Using Structures just to Use Structures	Teach Use Structures for Specific Purposes: Teach or Review Content
Structures in Isolation	Linking Structures