A Practical Guide to Understanding Cooperative Play in young children

What is cooperative play?
Cooperative play is when two or more children are playing together with common materials and a common goal. Children also have assigned roles.

Why is cooperative play important?
- Children learn to communicate with others
- Provides an environment for children to collaborate and work effectively towards a common goal

Begins in the late preschool years and continues with adult support

Cooperative play promotes the development of:
- cooperation,
- confidence,
- more complex play,
- effective communication,
- empathy,
- problem solving,
- and much more!

How does cooperative play support children's development?

How can adults support cooperative play?
- Provide age appropriate toys children can play with together
- Ensure the toys can be easily shared (ex: multiple parts, roles)
- Provide games that involve working towards a common goal (ex: a puzzle)
- Rotate toys to keep the experience new and fun for children
- Join in play with children. Ask questions and support problem solving

This work was funded in part by the Caplan Foundation for Early Learning. For more information on the Play to Learn project click here.