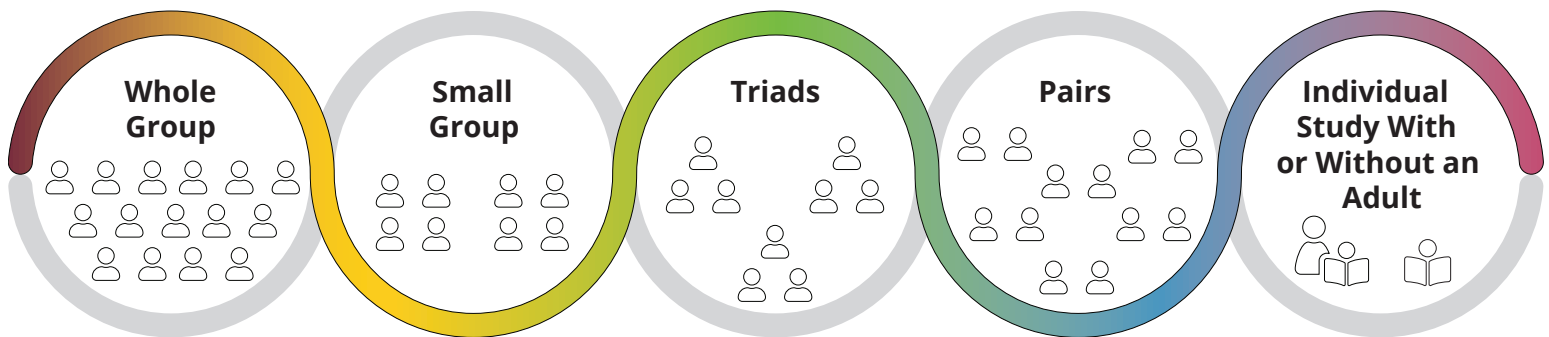


Best Practices for Flexible Grouping

What is Flexible Grouping?

Flexible grouping is important in proactive instructional planning to ensure that students have the opportunity to work with a wide variety of peers. Students should be able to work with others who share the same or different interests, readiness needs, learning approaches, or who are assigned randomly to the group by the teacher or by student choice. There are many different grouping arrangements that can be incorporated as students work towards a learning target:



Flexible grouping is an essential component in teaching diverse learners, which allows provision of in-class supports for students with disabilities.

Planning Tips and Reminders:

- ✓ Learning activities in any group structure should be carefully aligned with the learning target.
- ✓ Consider the instructional content, purpose, and length of time for each group.
- ✓ Grouping structures are fluid and flexible. Students move in and out of groups based on formative assessment information. Lack of fluidity results in tracking of students and minimizes opportunities for growth.
- ✓ Create rubrics and checklists to clearly define expectations and procedures.
- ✓ Consider the role that students will have in managing the groups and their work. Consider using a learning log or self-assessment.
- ✓ Communicate and practice rules and routines about how students will function and communicate in groups.
- ✓ Steer clear of negative group labels (e.g., label groups by color rather than ability level).
- ✓ Plan ways for groups to develop rapport through ice-breakers and team building.
- ✓ Students will have the opportunity to work with every other student in the class.
- ✓ Students should be provided with multiple means of engagement, representation and expression in group settings.
- ✓ Appropriate levels of support, scaffolding and feedback should be provided in group settings.

Flexible Grouping Planner

You can use this guide to help you think about the reasons why you are forming groups. Remember to plan for fluid rather than static groups!

Questions to Guide Planning

Possible Reasons for Grouping

Use or Purpose of Grouping

How can we meet the needs of our students through flexible groups?

- Practicing/applying skills
- Investigating new content
- Examining a data set or passage
- Extending learning
- Working on a project

Timing

Where in the lesson or unit can we create opportunities for students to work in small groups? When would it be more effective for students to work independently?

- Introducing the topic
- Applying new skills
- Relating new content to prior knowledge
- Providing additional practice
- Extending understanding of content
- Reviewing content

Duration

How long will this grouping last?

- Less than a class period/block
- A class period/block
- Less than a week
- More than a week

Student Characteristics

What characteristics matter for this task or learning experience?

- Readiness/skill level
- Interest
- Preferred way of learning or thinking
- Background knowledge
- Experience

Composition

Should the group be homogeneous or heterogeneous by student characteristic?

- Homogeneous
- Heterogeneous

Configuration for Size

What is the best configuration for this learning activity? What size makes sense given the goals?

- Whole group
- Partners
- Circles (groups of 6 – 8)
- Small groups of ____
- Split class

Formation

How will the groups be formed?

- Teacher choice
- Student choice
- Randomly

Technology

What technology might assist the group work?

- Tablet
- Manipulatives
- Communication devices
- Individual technology