



Connecting Practice and Research
in Mathematics Education

Professional Learning Guide

Flexible Groupings

Flexible Groupings

Flexible grouping is the practice of varying grouping strategies based on short-term learning goals shared by the students, then regrouping once they meet their goals. Students can work in partners, in student- and teacher-led small or large groups, or as a whole class.

Students need opportunities to learn from each other in small groups and pairs, to try ideas, practise new vocabulary, and construct their own mathematical understanding with others.

In your classroom, this means:

- thoughtfully designing groupings that will contribute to achieving the lesson goals, address individual student needs, and enhance a Math-Talk Learning Community.
- employing a variety of groupings so students of all ability levels can learn mathematics effectively in a heterogeneous class. Some grouping examples are:
 - Individual: to develop understanding and skills through independent learning, to provide students time to develop their own ideas.
 - Whole class: to establish the learning environment, legitimize errors as part of the learning process, allow expressions of ambiguity.
 - Partners or small groups: to try ideas, practise new vocabulary, construct and explain their own mathematical understanding with others.
 - Large groups: engage in differentiated tasks including enrichment, remediation, filling gaps for students who are absent.

Considerations

The small- and large-group design should consider homogenous groups (e.g., high achievers with high achievers) versus heterogeneous groups (e.g., high achievers with low achievers) both of which create different group dynamics and different results.

- Homogenous groups allow for collaborative thinking and greater cognitive interaction.
- Heterogeneous groups create optimal learning opportunities for some while others profit from hearing well-reasoned explanations.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentssuccess/lms/files/tips4rm/TIPS4RMDDevMathLit.pdf>
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My Personal Reflection and Plan

I include a variety of flexible groupings in my lessons throughout the week:

- occasionally fairly often at every opportunity

What are two reasons I do not use flexible groupings at every opportunity?

What opportunities were there for students to work in groups recently where I didn't use this strategy?

What is preventing me from using groupings more often?

Other ideas and thoughts I have after hearing the comments of my peers:

Next Steps

Lesson from TIPS4RM that I will teach to focus on flexible groupings:

Lesson Goal:

I can use groupings during the following parts of this lesson:

The grouping type and its purpose are:

Type	Purpose
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How I will address the concern(s) I have about using groupings in this lesson:

How will I determine if the grouping resulted in the expected learning?

Other notes:

Lesson Debrief

Lesson I taught:

Describe the effectiveness of the grouping strategies for student learning, including how it may have contributed to developing a Math-Talk Learning Community:

Explain the reason(s) for changes you might make to any of the grouping strategies you planned for this lesson.

If I were to teach this lesson another time, using this grouping strategy, I would:

Other ideas and thoughts I have after discussion with my peers: