Instructional Grouping in a Differentiated Classroom

Marcia B. Imbeau, Ph.D.
Professor
University of Arkansas
mimbeau@uark.edu

Grouping is......

• Take a moment and talk to folks who are sitting near, how would you define grouping and what should it include?
• Note the concept map on the following slide and discuss where this topic is located and how that location has meaning. What do you and your discussion group conclude?
Differentiation

is a teacher’s proactive response to learner needs

shaped by mindset

and guided by general principles of differentiation

Building Community  Quality Curriculum  Teaching Up  Respectful Tasks  Ongoing Assessment  Flexible Grouping  Flexible Management

Teachers can differentiate through

Content
The information and ideas students need to grapple with in order to reach the learning goals

Process
How students take in and make sense of the content

Product
How students show what they know, understand and can do

Affect/Environment
The climate or tone of the classroom

Readiness
Relative standing to the learning goals

Interest
Passions, affinities, kinships that motivate learning

Learning Profile
Preferred approaches to learning, intelligence preferences, gender and culture

Through a variety of instructional strategies such as

RAFTS…Graphic Organizers…Scaffolding Reading…Tic-Tac-Toe…Learning Contracts…Menus……Tiered Assignments… Learning/Interest Centers… Independent Projects… Intelligence Preferences…Orbitals…Expression Options…..Varied Homework…..Small Group Instruction…..Complex Instruction… WebQuests & Web Inquiry…etc.

Purposes of Flexible Grouping
Baseball Partners

---

**Make** sure you have 4 different partners!  
**Remember** that your partner must put your name at the same base!!!
Flexible Grouping

Consistently fluid working arrangements

- Whole class, individuals, pairs, triads, quads, etc.
- Student selected, teacher selected, randomly selected
- Based on interest, learning profile, readiness
- Homogeneous, heterogeneous

Key Concept: Flexible Grouping?

- Students consistently working in a variety of purposefully planned groups…
- …based on different elements of student learning…
- …and both homogeneous and heterogeneous in regard to those elements…

Flexible Grouping

BUZZARDS
BLUEJAYS
WOMBATS

WOMBATS
BUZZARDS
BLUEJAYS

WHOLE GROUP
SMALL GROUP
INDIVIDUAL
PAIRS
Readiness
If tasks need to be a close match for skills

Interest
If tasks ignite curiosity or passion

Learning Profile
If the assignment encourages students to work in a preferred manner

Flexible Grouping Options

- Readiness
- Interest
- Learning Profile

Group Arrangements (like/unlike/size)

- Teacher Choice
- Student Choice
- Random
Classroom Instructional Arrangements

Whole Class Activities
- Pre-assessment
- Readiness/interest
- Troubleshooting
- Planning
- Discussing
- Sharing
- Wrap-up of Explorations

Small Group Activities (pairs, triads, quads)
- Sense-Making
- Targeting Skills
- Directed Reading
- Planning
- Investigation

Individual Activities
- Compacting
- Sense-Making
- Practice & Apply Skills
- Interest Centers
- Independent Study
- Testing
- Planning

Student–Teacher Conferences
- Assessment & Assessment Review
- Tailoring & Planning
- Guiding
- Evaluation

INTEREST

Self-selected
- Alone
- Pairs
- Small Group
- Large Group

Assigned by teacher
- Alone
- Pairs
- Small Group
- Large Group
Some Important Questions Teachers in a Differentiated Classroom Routinely Consider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will students work alone or in groups?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If alone, will students choose the task or will you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in groups, what size group would be best?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in groups, will they be heterogeneous or homogeneous in terms of interest?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in groups, will you assign students to groups or will you let them choose?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Curriculum and Instruction

- Interest
- Content
  - Have students become experts in one area of content and teach others (Jigsaw method).
  - Design interest centers for the classroom.
  - Allow students to study content from a range of perspectives.
  - Assign independent research on a topic of choice (an endangered animal, a sports legend, important freedom fighter)
  - Assign novels with the same theme/genre but different titles (survival, adventure, biography, etc.)

Curriculum and Instruction

• Interest

• Process
  • Let students work with friends (when appropriate).
  • Provide mentoring opportunities.
  • Let students choose a lens through which they work (e.g., suggest they examine environmental issues as a landowner, an activist, the farmer, or medical person)


Curriculum and Instruction

• Interest

• Product
  • Allow students to show what they know through a lens of interest (e.g., show they understand the value of money based on the number of toys they can buy for a particular amount, show they understand how simple machines work based on how they work in building a dog house, etc.)

What’s Important in this Clip?

1) How does this teacher use grouping?

2) What differentiation principles do you think are evident in this quick look into this teacher’s classroom?

3) About what’s going on for the students?

Learning Experiences Using Flexible Grouping

Examples
**Interest Centers: Pathways to Differentiation**

**Why Interest Centers?**
- Enrich the curriculum
- Opportunity to apply skills in authentic ways
- Invite in-depth inquiry and explorations
- Provide opportunities to go beyond the curriculum
- Allow for differentiation
Elements of Differentiation

- Acknowledgement of individual differences
- Expect all children to grasp concepts at some level
- Challenging curriculum
- Clear articulation of curricular goals as they align to standards or outcomes
- Multi levels of understanding (concrete to abstract)

Differentiation Points

- Varying levels of complexity/tiering
- Open-ended
- Multiple entry points
- Varying exit points
- Interest related
- Variety of resources
- Choice
Topics, topics, topics

- Your interest
- Students’ interests
- Curriculum unit
**What’s in my center?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Video and DVDS</strong></th>
<th><strong>Artifacts</strong></th>
<th><strong>Print Materials</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The national Pastime: A</td>
<td>Baseball cards</td>
<td>Sports Illustrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history of Major league</td>
<td>Uniform, glove, baseballs</td>
<td>Baseball digest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>Model of stadium</td>
<td>On the Mound with Greg Maddox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Subway series</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Matt Christopher books on baseball,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rookie of the Year</td>
<td></td>
<td>can also be found on tape)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Music**
- The Baseball ballads
- Baseball songs, Sports heroes

**TASK CARD 1**

Baseball uniforms have evolved throughout the years. Using Graphic Organizer#1 to compare and contrast baseball uniforms of 2013 to those of the 1920s. Refer to *Baseball Uniforms of the 20th Century* in the center.
TASK CARD 2

Give both positive and negative opinions of modern and old fashioned uniforms. Based on the trend over the past 20 years, design a new and updated baseball uniform for your favorite team.

Be a baseball statistician

- www.sports.yahoo
- www.baseball.com
- www.baseballamerica.com.today

Baseball is a competitive sport in which statistical information is crucial to comparing team and player status. Track the scores of two rival teams over a one week period using the New York Times or the following internet sites: Create graphs to represent the data.
Curriculum and Instruction

- Learning Profile
- Content
  - Provide simultaneous options for accessing content that appeals to varied styles (e.g., lecture, small-group instruction, individual readings, reading buddies, books on tape, explorations)
  - Match topics to student intelligence preferences when possible (e.g., allow a musical student to focus on patriotic songs of a particular time and a student who is highly visual to study photographs from the time). Jigsaw the content so all have access as appropriate.
  - Give the option to read text about the content before or after direct instruction.
  - Provide the option to turn and chat or stop and think about the content as they listen or read.

Curriculum and Instruction

• Learning Profile

• Process
  - Allow student to work along or in small groups (when appropriate).
  - Assign group roles according to learning profile preference.
  - Provide a choice of graphic organizers (e.g., some that are more sequential in nature, others that are more complex).
  - Give students the choice of competing against others or themselves.
  - Allow students to keep pace while they read or listen (as long as it is not disruptive to others).
  - As much as possible, honor student requests about where to sit (e.g., up front, near the heater).
  - Allow students to debrief activities via journals or small-group discussions.


Curriculum and Instruction

• Learning Profile

• Product
  - Allow students to work alone or in small groups (when appropriate).
  - Allow for a wide range of product choices that represent varied styles, intelligence preferences, and cultural values.
  - Provide options for sharing products that respect student differences (e.g., allow students to present in front of the class, in small groups, or one-on-one).

Curriculum and Instruction

- Readiness
  - Content
    - Scaffold reading and find advanced texts.
    - Provide mini-lessons on above level content.
    - Provide mini-lessons on prerequisites.
    - Provide note-taking tools and/or vocabulary support (word banks).


Curriculum and Instruction

- Readiness
  - Process
    - Allow students to dictate journal entries or other writing tasks (when appropriate).
    - Ask advanced students to work at higher levels of expertise or use more authentic materials or processes. (Remember, that all students should work with authentic materials in ways similar to professionals in the field).
    - Provide a set procedure for students to get extra help while working in the classroom.
    - Model the process and/or provide additional practice time for students who need it.
    - Provide practice opportunities (both in-class and as homework) at various levels of difficulty.
    - Break down the directions for students who need extra guidance.

Curriculum and Instruction

- Readiness
- Product
  - Require advanced students to work on products that are more expert-like or at a level of expertise appropriate for their growth.
  - Provide models of and rubrics for high quality work.
  - Adjust the time lines or check-in points for long-term projects.
  - Other “polish your products” seminars for different levels of expertise.
  - Provide mini-lessons on aspects of the product.
  - Vary the audience for the product (e.g., some students might “present” their work to the local nature club while others “present” to a team of designers)


Using Groups...

How do I ensure that groups are productive? That they are working for each student? That they are flexible?
Teacher Checklist for Group Work

- Students understand the task goals.
- Students understand what’s expected of individuals to make the group work well.
- The task matches the goals (leads students to what they should know, understand, and be able to do).
- Most kids should find the task interesting.
- The task requires an important contribution from each group.
- The task is likely to be demanding of the group and its members.
- The task requires genuine collaboration to achieve shared understanding.
- The timelines are brisk (but not rigid).
- Individuals are accountable for their own understanding of all facets of the task.
- There’s a “way out” for students who are not succeeding with the group.
- There is opportunity for teacher or peer coaching and in-process quality checks.
- Students understand what to do when they complete their work at a high level of quality.

Assigning Groups

- Clothes pins with student names to assign them to a particular task.
- Color code children to certain groups (a transparency with student names in color works well).
- Pre-assigned groups.
- Be sure to include groups by readiness, interest, learning profile, by student choice, teacher choice, random, homogeneous and heterogeneous.

Tomlinson • 2000
Flexible Grouping Chart

Date: Monday, Feb 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computer</th>
<th>Invitations</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy</td>
<td>Tonya</td>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Steven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Chloe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi</td>
<td>Gwen</td>
<td>Katie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Regan</td>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This teacher used the term “invitations” for permanent folders inside of which she gave students assignments based on readiness, interest, or learning style.

Pre-Assigned “Standing” Groups

Grouping By The Clock

- 10 O’Clock Groups
  - Interest/Strength-Pairs
  - Mixed Readiness Quads

- 11 O’Clock Groups
  - Interest/Strength-Based Quads
  - Student - Selected Triads

- 1 O’Clock Groups
  - Interest/Strength-Based Quads

- 2 O’Clock Groups
  - Student - Selected Triads

Tomlinson - 03
I am writing my rough draft. I am meeting with my Peer Review Partner.

I am ready for a conference with the Editor; in the meantime, I will work on an Anchor Activity.

I am working in the publishing stage.

I am working with my oral dialogue I am working with vocabulary.

I am working on my culture project I am working with my teacher choice assignment.
I am working on the problem of the day.

I am doing computer math.

I am working at the math station.

I am working at Lab #1.

I am doing homework checkers.

I am working on Lab #2.

I am ready for a conference with the teacher; in the meantime, I will work on an Anchor Activity.

I am working on my lab report.
Giving Directions for Groupwork

- If the whole class is doing the same activity then give the directions to the whole group.
- Do not give multiple task directions to the whole class.
- For small group work, record directions so students can listen to them repeatedly.
- Use task cards to give directions to small groups.
- Give directions to a group member the day before.
- A general rule is that once the teacher has given directions the students can't interrupt while he/she is working with a small group.
  - “Ask Me” Visors
  - Expert of the Day
  - Consultants
  - Keeper of the Book

TALKING CHIPS

Each student gets a certain number of chips (e.g., 3)

1 chip = 1 turn (to talk, to contribute, to write)

The group leader or teacher monitors the discussion or task and redistributes chips according to predetermined rules or guidelines.

Rules for Group Discussion

1. One person speaks at a time.
2. Surrender a chip at the beginning of your turn. You lose a chip if you speak out of turn.
3. Address other discussion members directly—not in the third person (e.g., “Rob, I respectfully disagree with your point,” not “I don’t agree with what Rob said.”)
4. Tangents are okay, but begin by making a connection to the current focus of the discussion, or to an earlier focus.
WHAT OTHER QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT USING GROUPS?

WHAT STRATEGIES CAN YOU SHARE WITH COLLEAGUES FOR MAKING GROUPWORK SMOOTH & EFFECTIVE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light Bulbs</th>
<th>Lightening Bolts</th>
<th>Blips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Ideas you picked up)</td>
<td>(Insights you had)</td>
<td>(Questions you still have)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>