7. What do I typically do to organize students to interact with new knowledge?

The teacher organizes students into small groups to facilitate the processing of new information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Evidence</th>
<th>Student Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Teacher has established routines for student grouping and student interaction in groups.</td>
<td>□ Students move to groups in an orderly fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teacher organizes students into ad hoc groups for the lesson:</td>
<td>□ Students appear to understand expectations about appropriate behavior in groups:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pairs</td>
<td>• Respect opinions of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Triads</td>
<td>• Add their perspective to discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Small groups up to about five students</td>
<td>• Ask and answer questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Am I Doing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Innovating</th>
<th>3 Applying</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Beginning</th>
<th>0 Not Using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizing students to interact with new knowledge</td>
<td>I adapt and create new strategies for unique student needs and situations.</td>
<td>I organize students into small groups to facilitate the processing of new knowledge, and I monitor group processing.</td>
<td>I organize students into small groups to facilitate the processing of new knowledge, but I do so in a somewhat mechanistic way.</td>
<td>I use the strategy incorrectly or with parts missing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Element 7: What do I typically do to organize students to interact with new knowledge?

**Strategies**

*Grouping for active processing*

When students process new information in groups, the teacher exposes them to ways other students process information, some of which might enhance their own information processing. Groups can consist of as few as two students and as many as five. Groups might have operating rules such as the following:

- Students should be willing to add their perspective to each discussion.
- Students should respect the opinions of other group members.
- Students should make sure they understand what others are saying.
- Students should be willing to ask questions if they don’t understand something.
- Students should be willing to answer questions that other group members have about their ideas.

Groups can convene for a specific purpose (ad hoc groups) or form as long-term partnerships. The teacher can assign students to groups randomly or based on current levels of understanding, mixing students who appear to understand something quite well with those who don’t.

*Group norms*

In order to ensure that student groups (especially long-term groups) function smoothly, the teacher asks students to create a list of norms (common attitudes and beliefs) to govern the group’s functioning. The teacher might give each team member several index cards and have them write down the norms that are most important to them. Students then aggregate and classify them to create a list of the beliefs and attitudes that will help guide the behavior of group members.

*Fishbowl demonstration*

The teacher gives students a visual representation of what effective group work looks like by asking students to form a circle (“fishbowl”) around a group that demonstrates what effective group work looks like. The demonstration group might model behaviors such as paraphrasing, pausing, clarifying, questioning, brainstorming, and using respectful language.

*Job cards*

The teacher uses job cards to designate specific roles that students are to take within their groups. Examples of different jobs include facilitator, summarizer, questioner, and note-taker. This strategy can also help equalize participation when students work in groups.
Predetermined “buddies” to help form ad hoc groups

The teacher gives students a blank chart showing a clock (with twelve blanks, one for each hour), the seasons (with four blanks), or another theme-based graphic with blanks. The teacher asks students to find a partner for each blank and fill in the partner’s name on their chart. For example, if Maddie and John agreed to be “summer” partners, Maddie would sign the summer blank on John’s chart, and John would sign the summer blank on Maddie’s chart. When the teacher wants to form quick, ad hoc groups, she asks students to find their summer (or, for example, “two o’clock”) buddies, and students quickly pair up.

Contingency plan for ungrouped students

The teacher designates a meeting spot for “singles” and can then help those students pair up or join existing groups. This helps avoid some students being left ungrouped when groups are student selected.

Grouping students using preassessment information

After administering a preassessment, the teacher uses the information gained about individual students’ prior knowledge to assign students to groups. In some cases, the teacher might want to mix students with high prior knowledge and students with low prior knowledge together. In other cases, the teacher might want to differentiate by grouping students with high prior knowledge together and creating separate groups of students with medium and low prior knowledge.

Technology Links

- Use websites that allow students to collaborate while working in groups. Some websites are designed to facilitate online conversations, while others allow students to collect information and work together to produce papers and presentations (for example, www.wikispaces.com or https://docs.google.com).
- Use technology tools like dice and spinners (available in interactive whiteboard software or online) to assign students to groups.