

Small-Group Learning Configurations

Promoting engagement, inclusion, and social-emotional learning

By Tudor Bucataru



Small Group Configuration Overview

Adapted from Moreland University Small-Group Instruction Graphic Organizer

Homogeneous

Students of similar achievement levels are grouped for guided instruction, skill-based practice, remediation, or extension.

Heterogeneous

Students of diverse backgrounds, interests, or abilities are grouped strategically in ways they might support one another.

Peer Tutoring

Students are paired with peers in mixed-ability groups based on achievement levels to support one another

Cooperative

Students choose their own roles in a project or task that is usually assigned by the teacher.

Free-Choice

Students work on activities of their choice from a series of options with peers who also choose that activity.

Passion-Centred

Students group themselves based on shared interest, preference, skills, or knowledge of a certain subject.



Peer Tutoring Groups

Increased student engagement is achieved in the mixing of academic strengths and weaknesses which enables students to learn from one another cooperatively.

Stronger students will benefit from being “teachers” with increased comprehension and confidence while the less advanced students who might otherwise be left behind are supported and included in the learning process. Additional benefits from peer tutoring groups include increased social cohesion and cooperation, increased confidence for all levels, and a sense of accomplishment.

This configuration can promote student success in classroom, virtual, and hybrid settings. For classrooms, fostering a cooperative learning environment will greatly enhance student social-emotional wellbeing. Students learning in virtual environments will greatly benefit from increased engagement with peers and material, both of which can suffer in the virtual world. All learning environments will benefit from minimizing knowledge gaps through cooperative learning.

Cooperative Groups

- Student-centered learning
- Engagement from agency
- Inclusion through choice
- Social-emotional learning with like-minded peers

Cooperative groups are characterized by student choice, fostering independence and ownership which promotes student success.

Adaptable for classroom, virtual, and hybrid environments, but especially powerful for in-person collaboration.



This group configuration is an ideal blend of teacher-directed and student-centred learning. Assigned tasks keep students on topic while choice of roles within the group allow students to exercise their creativity and feel they are making a worthwhile contribution. Highly inclusive, allowing all students to make a significant personal contribution to the group's success.

Free-Choice Groups



Sliding further toward student-led learning, this group configuration greatly minimizes teacher control in order to harness students' natural curiosity, leading inevitably to high engagement.

Inclusion is maximized in this configuration and students attain greater social bonds with like-minded peers through shared interests and passions.

An excellent choice for hybrid learning environments allowing for individual inquiry coupled with peer group collaboration.

Passion-Centred Groups

At the extreme end of student-led, this configuration allows for maximum inclusivity by allowing students to group themselves by shared interests or knowledge.

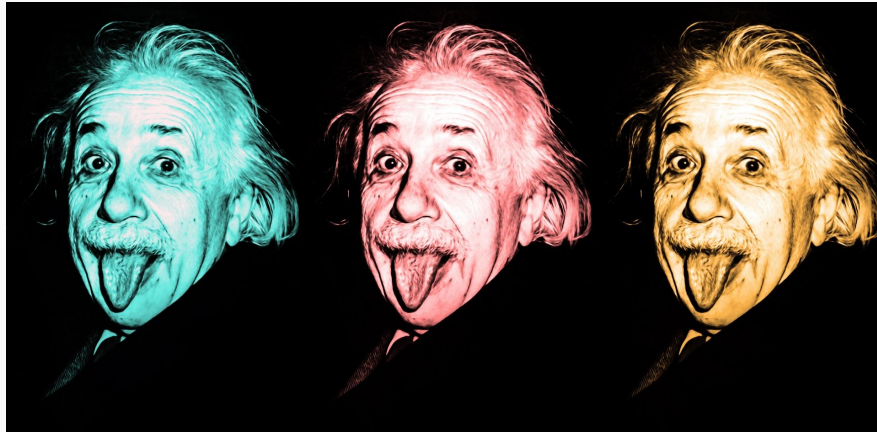
Engagement is assured by virtue of interest, students are likely already spending their time engaged in their passions.

An interest-based inquiry style, this approach promotes social-emotional well-being and positive feelings towards schooling.

Although an excellent choice for all environments, it lends itself to particularly well to virtual learning because students are more likely to remain engaged with minimal supervision.



“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid”



Small Group learning is
an invaluable tool for
engaging students,
fostering inclusivity, and
promoting success in
the classroom.

Thanks!

Created by Tudor Bucataru

for Moreland University's

*Strategies to Innovate Small-Group
Instruction, PD114*

Tudor Bucataru

IPTC, BBA, TEFL, MSC (2023)

English as a Foreign Language Instructor

tudor.bucataru@learningenglish.ca

www.learningenglish.ca

