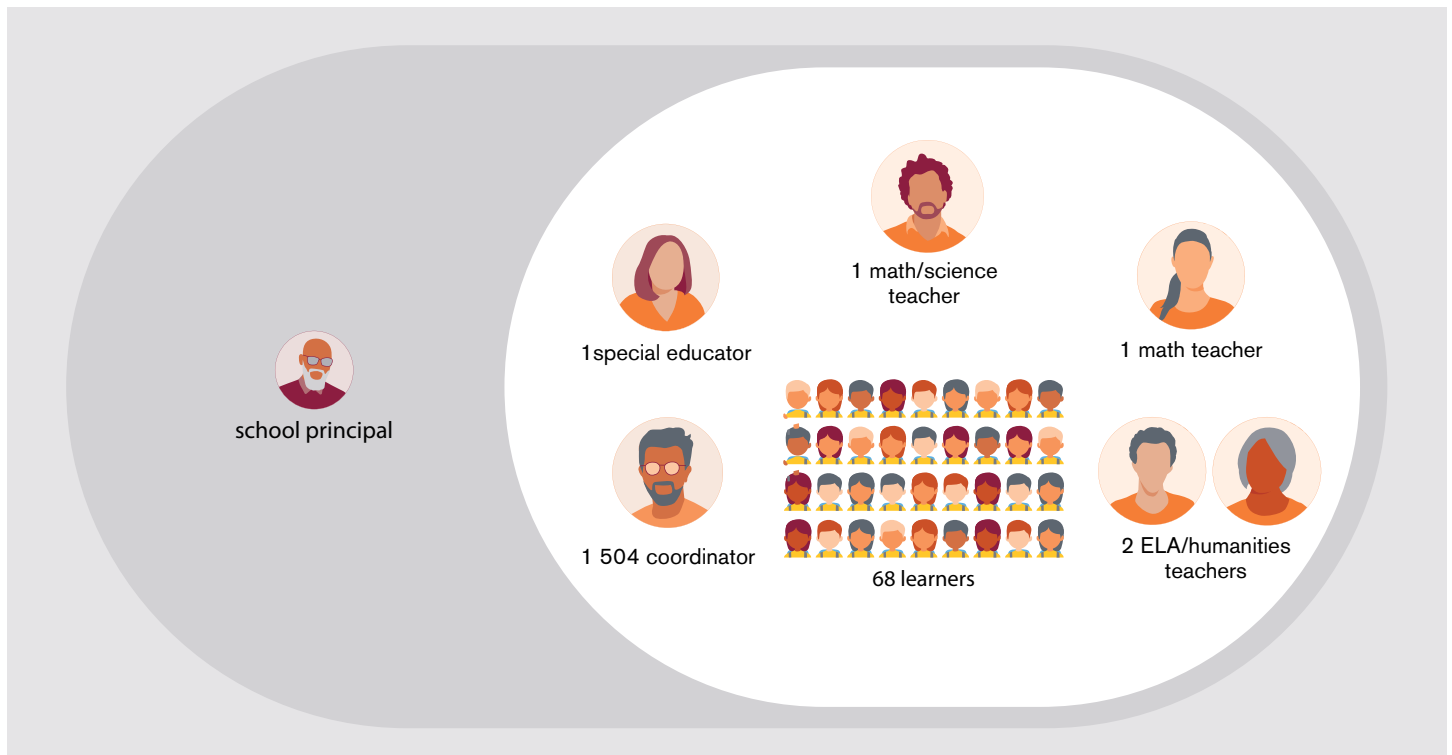


Dynamic student groupings at Paulo Freire

Explore some of the ways an educator team grouped and regrouped 68 students over the course of a single day.

Paulo Freire Freedom School is a small school that supports 68 learners in a multi-age Grade 6–8 format. They are committed to competency-based learning, and students are given voice and choice in their learning to meet those competencies. All educators in the school operate as a single educator team. The core team includes one math teacher, one math/science teacher, two ELA/humanities teachers, one special educator and one 504 coordinator. Additionally, the school principal works directly with students at set times each week.



On this particular Thursday, students followed a block schedule. Below, you'll find several snapshots from their day. As you read, consider: **What are some of the ways the educator team leverages dynamic student groupings, differentiates roles and responsibilities and facilitates fluid movement across flexible learning spaces?**

Curious to learn more about dynamic student groupings, differentiated roles and responsibilities, and flexible learning spaces? **[Check out the Elements of the Next Education Workforce.](#)**

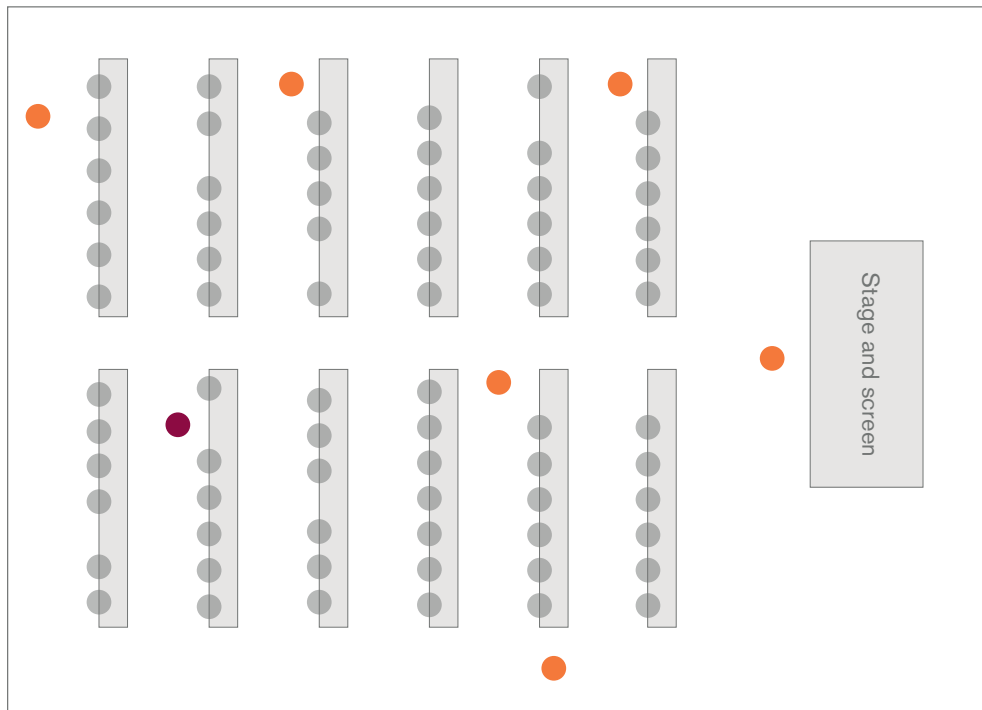
Snapshot 1: Whole-team meeting

At the start of each day, the principal and the core educator team come together with all 68 students for a whole-team meeting. During whole-team meetings, students build community, prepare for the day and engage in learning activities aligned to competencies.

Typically, students are free to choose where they sit, though educators will occasionally group students by need, working style, or behavior for specific activities during the meeting.

Core educator team members draw on their specific expertise to facilitate whole-school meetings on a rotating basis. When not facilitating, educators disperse throughout the room to connect with students and support positive relationships.

At the close of the whole-team meeting on this day, students traveled to their assigned literacy or math blocks.



● school principal ● teacher

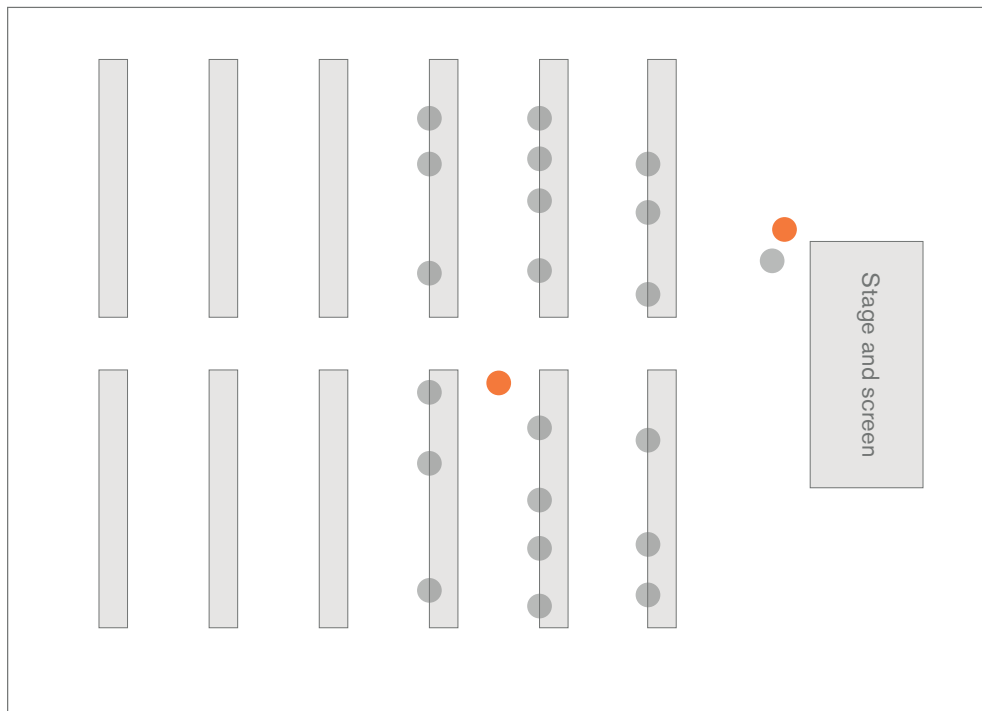
At this whole-team meeting, students selected their own seats to compete in a small-group challenge focused on animals of the Southwest. The math/science teacher facilitated, while the principal and all other members of the core educator team circulated to support students.

Snapshot 2: Math block

Following the whole-team meeting, the 68 students split into four groups based on mathematics data. Two groups attend a math block, while the two other groups attend an ELA block. Then, they switch. Rosters for the four groups change based on regular mathematics diagnostic testing and progress-monitoring.

Typically, the first half of the math block sees students engaged in a game-based online personalized learning program, while the second half of the block includes a combination of direct instruction, small-group work, independent work and intervention.

On this day, one of the two math groups was co-taught by the special education teacher and the math teacher. During the first part of the block, both educators circulated to support students as they worked on their personalized learning program. During the second part of the block, the special education teacher led large-group instruction on the distributive property while one of the math teachers circulated to support individual learners.



● teacher

The special educator and one of the math teachers worked with the highest-need math learners in one large room. The special educator facilitated large-group instruction by modeling example problems on the board with one student at a time, while the math teacher circulated to support individual learners.

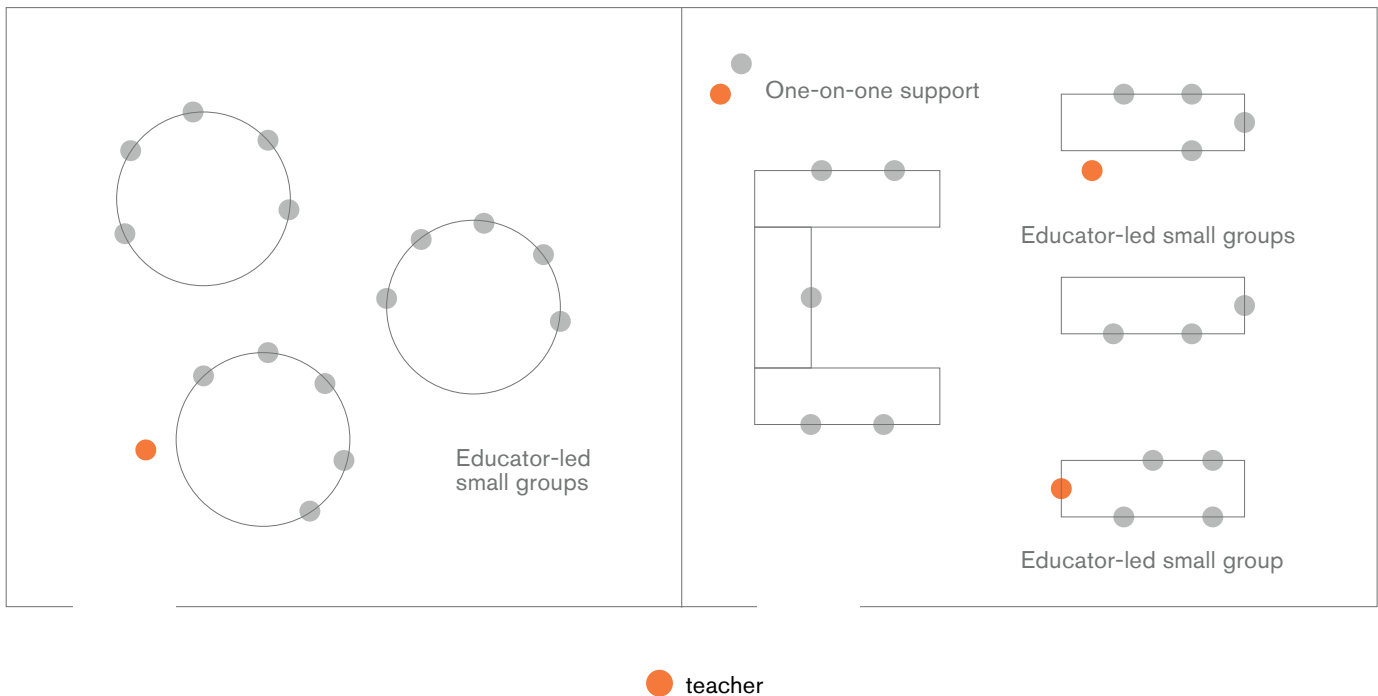
Snapshot 3: ELA block

Following the first block, all students attending math transition to ELA and vice versa.

During ELA, students are typically seated in small groups, collaboratively working together towards common goals connected to authentic performance assessments. If whole-group instruction is needed, it is typically done in short bursts and focused on skills necessary in moving students forward on their collaborative projects. At times, the two groups of students engaging with ELA are combined into a single larger group.

On this day, students were working in self-selected small groups to generate interview questions for a photojournalism project focused on untold stories in the local community. In one room, an ELA/humanities teacher supported multiple small groups of students. In the other room, the second ELA/humanities teacher supported multiple small groups, the special education teacher supported a single small group, and the 504 coordinator shared targeted instructional resources and provided positive behavioral interventions and supports while also refining students' learning profiles.

After some sustained small-group time, the special education teacher pulled all students from one room together to provide whole-group instruction on open versus closed questioning strategies.



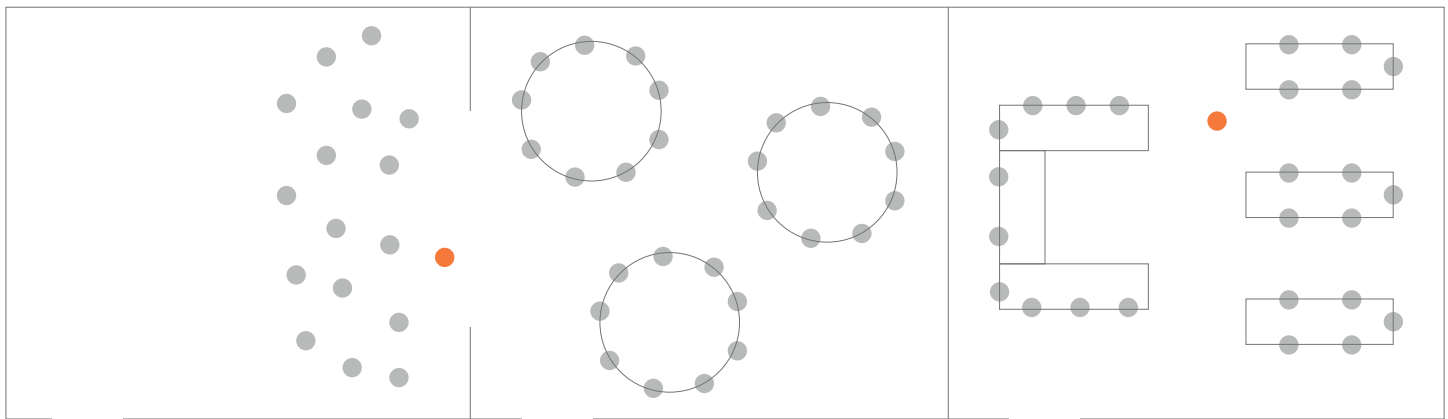
Toward the beginning of this day's ELA block, one ELA/humanities teacher supported multiple small groups in one room. In the other room, the other ELA/humanities teacher supported multiple small groups, the special educator worked with a single large group and the 504 coordinator engaged with a student on-on-one.

Snapshot 4: Independent reading time

On Thursdays after lunch, all students split across three rooms to engage in independent reading supported by two educators. The purpose of this time is threefold: It provides the remaining four core team educators an opportunity to co-plan, it provides students with voice and choice in what they read, and it helps students manage the transition from the excitement of lunchtime back to the focus of the classroom.

Students are assigned rooms for independent reading. Once they are in the room, they choose their own seats and determine which books they would like to read.

On this day, one of the ELA/humanities teachers provided support across two rooms while the 504 coordinator supported a third room.



● teacher

On this day, students read independently in one of three rooms while one of the ELA/humanities teachers and the 504 coordinator provided support. The rest of the core educator team used this time to co-plan.