Interest-based student groupings

Leverage your team of educators to provide learners with voice and choice

One way Next Education Workforce teams deepen and personalize learning for students is through dynamic student grouping. Dynamic student grouping:

- Is responsive to student data. It may be driven by formative student learning data or by student interest.
- Is temporary! Whenever you update formative learning data or student interest data, groups shift.
- Balances educator experience and expertise. For example, novice educators may work with smaller groups of students.

Interest-based student groupings are groupings driven by student voice and choice. This planning protocol is an opportunity for team members to explore ways to leverage your team of educators to provide student voice and choice within a lesson or across a unit. In it, you'll identify a lesson or unit appropriate for interest-based student groupings, draft student choices and work together to plan team deployment.

▶ Prepare (5 min)

Preview the full activity as a team. Then, identify a facilitator who will move the team through the activity and a note-taker who will record the team's planning.

▶ Independently brainstorm (5 min)

Independently brainstorm lesson sequence topics or unit topics that would be a good fit for developing interest-based student groupings.

In brainstorming topics, keep in mind:

- **Shared objectives:** Choice comes in many forms but typically allows for students to work toward the same lesson sequence objectives or unit objective(s). For example, at the lesson sequence level, kindergarteners might work toward explaining how individuals contribute to the local community with a choice as to community member role (e.g., town mayor, firefighters, garbage collectors). At the unit level, high school students might work toward demonstrating their understanding of revolution with a choice about the format of the final product (e.g., podcast, video, written essay).
- **Interdisciplinary topics:** If educator team members typically specialize in different content areas, then interdisciplinary topics may be especially compatible for interest-based student groupings.

▶ Share (5 min)

Share your independent brainstorming round-robin.

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▶ Agree on a topic (5 min)

As a team, agree on the lesson sequence topic or unit topic your team will use to drive your planning for interest-based student groupings.

▶ Plan to deploy your team (10 min)

Together, draft a plan for creating student groupings that provides choice, leverages educator strengths and interests, and proposes how to deploy your team.

As you plan, consider:
- **Student learning outcomes:** At a high level, what outcomes does the team expect from all students?
- **Distributed expertise:** What are educator team members' strengths and interests? How might you provide students with choices that will ultimately leverage those strengths and interests?
- **Supporting student groupings:**
  - Student groupings may vary in size, and multiple educators may work together to collaboratively support a single group.
  - Novice educators, preservice teachers and specialized paraeducators may benefit from working with smaller groups of students and receiving coaching and support from the lead teacher or other experienced teachers.
  - There may be additional educators on your campus you can leverage to support interest-based student groupings.

▶ Draft a student interest form (5 min)

As a team, create a first draft of a brief student interest form to collect student input. The educator team will use the data from this interest form to create student groupings.

▶ Look ahead to logistics (5 min)

As a team, determine:
- **When are these interest-based student groupings likely to occur and for what duration?** E.g., Will they occur during problem-based learning time for one week in late September? Or perhaps during the seventh period for the first month of the third quarter? Add this to team members' calendars now.
- **When will the team meet to plan in greater detail?** Taking the time to align objectives, outcomes and any associated assessments will help to ensure all students build the skills and knowledge they need. Add time for planning to team members' calendars now.