

Skills-based student groupings

Leverage your team of educators to differentiate instruction for learners

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.

Skills-based student groupings are groupings based on formative student learning data. This planning protocol is an opportunity for team members to explore how you might leverage your team of educators to differentiate instruction for learners. In it, you'll identify the objective(s) of your choice, draft a check for understanding and work together to plan team deployment for skills-based student groupings.

▶ 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 objectives that would be a good fit for creating skills-based student groupings. We recommend that you consider selecting:

- A single objective at the heart of a unit or a few scaffolded objectives from the same content area
- Objectives that might merit several days of targeted small-group re-teaching, practice and extension
- Objectives that lend themselves to interdisciplinary teaching, as all members of the educator team will support skills-based student groupings

Examples:

- SWBAT add and subtract within 10 using at least two different concrete strategies
- SWBAT paraphrase and cite sources using APA formatting
- SWBAT generate a thesis statement that introduces their position on genetically modified foods

▶ Share (5 min)

Share your independent brainstorming round-robin.

▶ Agree on objectives (5 min)

Agree on the single objective (or small set of objectives) your team will use to drive your planning for skills-based student groupings.

▶ Draft a check for understanding (5 min)

As a team, develop the check for understanding you will use to drive skills-based student groupings. Your check for understanding should:

- **Fully align with the objective(s).**
- **Be short** (i.e., 1-4 prompts).
- **Be formative:** You will be pulling small groups for re-teaching, additional practice and extension based on the results of your check for understanding.
- **Set the team up to easily identify common student misconceptions:** Consider how you might phrase prompts and design answer choices to give you data on the specific errors and pitfalls that will drive the need for re-teaching.

Note: If appropriate, feel free to leverage formative assessment questions or checks for understanding recommended by your school's curriculum.

▶ Plan to deploy your team (10 min)

Collaboratively draft a plan for deploying educator team members and creating student groupings to provide differentiated instruction for learners.

As you plan, consider:

- **Student groupings may vary in size:** Learners with the highest need may benefit from the smallest group sizes and the most experienced educators.
- **Distributed expertise:** Consider how to leverage your educator team's various strengths (e.g., an educator's knowledge of how to use manipulatives to teach math concepts) to best support learners.
- **Supporting student groupings:**
 - Novice educators, preservice teachers and specialized paraprofessionals may benefit from working with smaller groups of students and receiving coaching and support from the lead teacher or another experienced teacher.
 - Two or three smaller groups may be able to meet in one learning space.
 - There may be additional educators on your campus you can leverage to support skills-based student groupings.

▶ Look ahead to logistics (5 min)

As a team, determine:

- When will the check for understanding be delivered, and by whom?
- When will the educator team analyze the data from the check for understanding, adjust the plan for team deployment and create small-group rosters?
- When will the educator team plan the re-teaching lessons, additional practice or extension lessons they will deliver during skills-based student groupings?
- When will the associated skills-based student groupings be held?
- How and when will student learning relative to the objective(s) be re-assessed?