

# Grouping without Fear

facilitated by Lisa Van Gemert

## Let's Connect!



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**Remember:** Lead by example. [connectededucators.org](http://connectededucators.org)

**1. Decide.** Consider carefully if grouping is ideal for the situation (or not!).

- different perspective benefit?
- new to everyone?
- tutor opportunity?
- able to give teacher support?

If grouping IS right, which kind?

- temporary? for a project? which size?
- casual cluster? in and out jigsaw with expert?
- make sure you have reasonable expectations of the group

**2. Teach the skills.** Do your students know how to...

- listen when someone else is talking?
- ask questions when they don't understand?
- explain something with a how and a why?
- share reasoning, not just opinion?
- be concise? (tip: use graphic organizers to teach this and the one above)
- take turns?
- come to a consensus?
  
- make sure to allow time for self-reflection
- facilitate positive feedback, giving student stems of prompts for feedback  
I like the way you....  
it really helped the group when you...
  
- start small (not ten test grades)
- no group work outside of class

**3. Roles and resources.**

- divide deliberately  
One way to balance groups is to rank students from highest to lowest and divide in two (students 1-15 would then be on one list, students 16 – 30 on the other). The teacher would then partner student 1 with student 16, student 2 with student 17, and so forth. Groups of four would look like this: 1, 2, 16, 17; 3, 4, 18, 19. If you use groups larger than four your quiet ones will never say a word. Set multiple group options up ahead of time.
- decide ahead of time what to do about absent students
- create a team dynamic (see below)

- use timelines for assignment deadlines (support executive function)
- identify who does what and who has what (what is my role? what is our goal?)

### Creating Team Identity:

- When you utilize the team for the first time, have them create a team identify by finding shared likes and dislikes (see chart below) and then create a name from those. For example, a team that all liked pizza and Monopoly and gum but not liver or American Idol could name themselves the “Monopoly on Pizza” or the “Liver-hating Gum Chewers.” They don’t need to use EVERY like or dislike in the name – just a couple. You don’t need to offer all the options in the chart every time, either. Just giving a couple of categories is fine.
- Alternately, you can generate random names from various and sundry things like topic, color, and location for free here <http://bit.ly/randomnamegen>
- You can do this for the entire class to help create a team identity within the classroom.

Categories	We All Like	None of Us Like
TV Show		
Food		
Movie		
Song		
Game		
Color		
Snack		
Candy		

### Strategies for Forming Groups (from Mel Silberman of Active Learning)

1. Grouping Cards. Code groups using a colored dot (red, blue, green, and yellow for four groups), decorative stickers (different stickers in a common theme for five groups, such as lions, monkeys, tigers, giraffes, and elephants), and a number (1 through 6 for six groups). Randomly place a number, a colored dot, and a sticker on a card for each student. When you are ready to form your groups, identify which code you are using and direct the students to join their groups in a designated place. You may want to post signs indicating group meeting areas to make the process even more efficient.
2. Puzzles. Purchase six-piece children's jigsaw puzzles or create your own by cutting out pictures from magazines, pasting them on cardboard, and cutting them into your desired shape, size, and number of pieces. Select the number of puzzles according to the number of groups you want to create. Separate the puzzles, mix

up the pieces, and give each participant a puzzle piece. When you are ready to form the participants into groups, instruct the participants to locate others with the pieces to complete a puzzle.

3. Finding famous fictional friends and families. Create a list of famous fictional family members or friends in groups of three or four. (Examples are Peter Pan, Tinkerbell, Captain Hook, Wendy; Alice, Cheshire Cat, Queen of Hearts, Mad Hatter; Superman, Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, Clark Kent.) Choose the same number of fictional characters as there are students. Write one fictional name on each index card. When you are ready to form groups, ask the students to find the other members of their "family."
4. Birthdays; Ask students to line up by birthdays and then break into the number of subgroups needed for a particular activity.
5. Playing cards. Use a deck of playing cards to designate groups. For example, use jacks, queens, kings, and aces to create four groups of four. Use additional number cards, if necessary, to accommodate a larger group. Shuffle the cards and deal one to each participant, and then direct the participants to locate others with similar cards and to form a group.
6. Favors. Give each student a wrapped sugarless candy of a different flavor to indicate groups. For example, your groups may be categorized as lemon, butterscotch, cherry, and mint.
7. Toys. Select toys (get bags of cheap toys at the dollar store) of a common theme to indicate groups. For example, you might choose transportation and use cars, airplanes, boats, and trains. Each participant would draw a toy from a box and locate others with the same toy to form a group.
8. Handouts. Code the assignments or instructions with colored paperclips or dots. Students gather by color.

#### 4. Ideas

- use the technology
- fun first, then projects
- testing
- rubrics

Want more?

<http://bit.ly/ssgroups>

<http://bit.ly/kagan-list>

*Productive Group Work: How to Engage Students, Build Teamwork, and Promote Understanding* by Nancy Frey, Douglas Fisher, and Sandi Everlove

## Testing:

Directions: A group of three students is formed. Each student is to complete his or her own test after each person is designated as team member 1, 2, or 3. Be sure to follow directions carefully, so that you complete the tasks individually that say "individual" and those tasks as a group that say "group."

1. Write out your own definition of tornado by completing this statement:

A tornado is \_\_\_\_\_.

Now, talk with your team members and write a group description of a tornado, making certain to include one idea from each person's work. Write your group definition below:

A tornado is \_\_\_\_\_.

2. On your own, list three facts about tornadoes. Share your ideas with your team members and put a circle around the fact the team thinks is the most important fact.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of the following tools is most important to use when predicting tornadoes? Rank them in order from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important. Do it by yourself first, and then with your group.

My rank order is:

- \_\_\_ computer models
- \_\_\_ observation
- \_\_\_ weather balloons and satellites
- \_\_\_ hand-drawn analysis
- \_\_\_ weather data tables

My group's rank order is:

- \_\_\_ computer models
- \_\_\_ observation
- \_\_\_ weather balloons and satellites
- \_\_\_ hand-drawn analysis
- \_\_\_ weather data tables

4. Work with your team to record individual responses to each of the questions below. You may discuss each topic with one another before recording your specific answer.

Group Member 1: What would you do if you heard a tornado siren?

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Group Member 2: What is the role of radar in tornado forecasting?

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Group Member 3: What are the different categories of tornadoes?

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5. Does your group agree or disagree with this statement: It is the responsibility of the National Weather Service to protect people from tornadoes.

\_\_\_ we agree                      \_\_\_ we disagree

Write down one reason for the agreement or disagreement from each of your group members.

Group Member 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Member 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Member 3: \_\_\_\_\_

(adapted from *The ABCs of Evaluation* by Sandra Schurr)

### **Teams-and-Tournaments** adapted from *Motivating Students and Teachers in an Era of Accountability* by Richard Sagor

- Teacher assigns heterogeneous teams with mix of top, middle, low students
- Form team identity (see above).
- Work on assignment with teammates.
- For quiz/test, assign kids to ability-based tables.
- Deck of cards with questions.
- Roll dice to see who goes first.
- Pick up card and answer question. If correct, keep card. If incorrect, card returns to pile. Keep going until every card is won.

### **The Team Stands Alone** adapted from *Motivating Students and Teachers in an Era of Accountability* by Richard Sagor

- Teacher assigns heterogeneous teams with mix of top, middle, low students.
- Form team identity.
- Practice as teams.
- Give test individually.
- Points given for difference between average test score and current test score, rewarding kids who significantly improve performance.
- Bonus for perfect score.

### **Fan-N-Pick** (Kagan Cooperative Learning Strategy)

- Student 1 holds question cards in a fan and says, "Pick a card, any card!"
- Student 2 picks a card, reads the question out loud and allows five seconds of think time.
- Student 3 answers the question.
- Student 4 restates the answer.
- For right or wrong answers, Student 4 checks and then either praises or coaches.
- For higher-level thinking questions which have no right or wrong answer, Student 4 does not check for correctness, but praises and paraphrases the thinking that went into the answer.
- Students rotate roles one clockwise for each new round.
- Note: if you have a group with only three students, combine pick & read and tutor/praise (students 1 & 4)

### **Find My Rule** (Kagan)

- Teacher prepares identity cards, related to an overall theme and to each other by a "rule" (one per student).
- Teacher announces that students will need to form groups of a given size by circulating throughout the room to locate students who have identity cards that are connected or related to their own by some commonality or "rule."
- Teacher gives an example and checks for understanding.
- Teacher passes an envelope containing all identity cards around the classroom.
- Students take one card each and circulate around the room to try and find others who have identity cards that are related to theirs.
- Once all members of the group have been found, the group will find a place to sit together.
- Group members will articulate the rule that connects all their identities and will try to guess the theme to which all the groups are connected.

## Numbered Heads Together (Kagan)

- Students count off numbers in their groups.
- Teacher poses a problem and gives wait time (Example: "Everyone think about how rainbows are formed. [Pause] Now make sure everyone in your team knows how rainbows are formed.")
- Students lift up from their chairs to put their heads together, discuss and teach.
- Students sit down when everyone knows the answer or has something to share or when time is up.
- Teacher calls a number. The student with that number from each team answers question individually, using:
  - response cards
  - chalkboard response
  - manipulatives
  - dry erase boards

For more information on Kagan Strategies, see: Kagan, Spencer. *Cooperative Learning*. Kagan Publishing, 1994. [www.KaganOnline.com](http://www.KaganOnline.com)

## Rubrics

	Excellent	Average	Needs Work
<b>Time on Task</b>	The group forms immediately to work on activity until the teacher indicates otherwise; if group finishes early, members discuss topics related to TL. <b>10 9</b>	The group forms fairly soon to work mostly on activity until the teacher indicates otherwise; if group finishes early, members are either silent or discuss topics not related to TL. <b>8 7 6</b>	The group takes a long time to form; they do not work on activity (unless the teacher walks by); if group finishes early, members discuss topics not related to TL. <b>5 4 3 2 1 0</b>
<b>Participation</b>	All group members participate equally throughout the entire activity. <b>5</b>	All group members but one participate equally throughout the activity. <b>4 3</b>	More than one group member does not participate equally throughout the activity. <b>2 1 0</b>
<b>Group Cooperation</b>	All members cooperate to help each other learn; if anyone has been absent, the group helps him/her; no one acts "superior." <b>10 9</b>	Most members cooperate to help each other learn; if anyone has been absent, the group sometimes helps him/her; no one acts "superior." <b>8 7 6</b>	Members do not cooperate to help each other learn; if anyone has been absent, the group does not help; some members act "superior." <b>5 4 3 2 1 0</b>
<b>Use of TL</b>	Members use as much TL as possible (also to greet and say farewells). <b>5</b>	Members use some TL during activity (also to greet and say farewells). <b>4 3</b>	Members rarely use TL during activity (neither do they greet nor say farewells). <b>2 1 0</b>

from: <http://www.carla.umn.edu/assessment/VAC/Evaluation/rubrics/types/figPetersen.html>



# Inner/Outer Circle Observation form



Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ partner: \_\_\_\_\_

*Directions: each time your partner does one of the following, put a check in the box.*

Asks a question:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Responds to another speaker:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Makes a comment in the general discussion:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Looks at the person who is speaking:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Refers to the text:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Interrupts another speaker:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Engages in side conversation:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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## After the discussion:

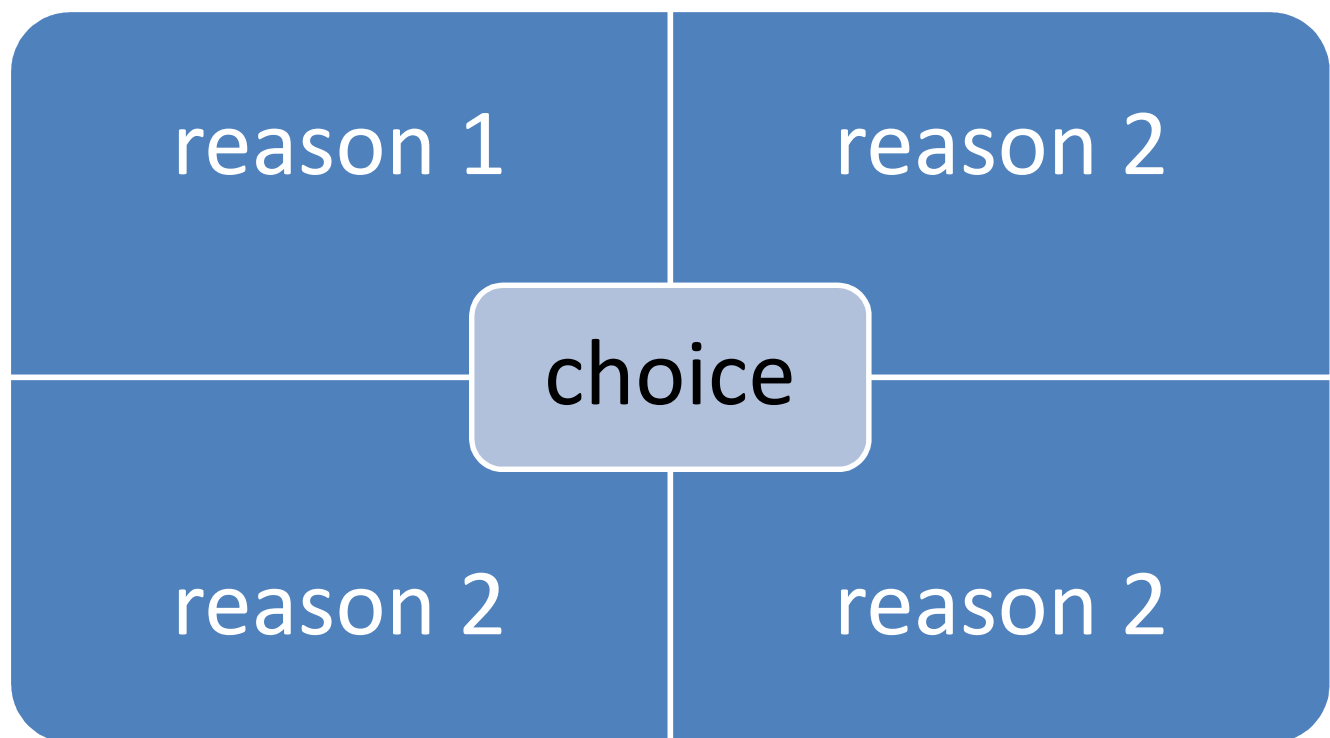
What is the most interesting thing your partner said?

What do wish you'd said in the discussion?



Getting ready to support my opinion:

1. What is my choice? Place that in the center.
2. What are my reasons? Place one in each box. You don't have to have four, but don't use more than four - that sounds pathetic.
3. Circle the strongest, most compelling word in each reason.
4. Put a star next to the reason you think could stand on its own. Start with that one.
5. When it is your turn:
  - State your position clearly and with few words without judgment.  
This: I believe we should....because....  
Not this: Anyone with half a brain knows we should do it this way...
  - After you share your reasons, LISTEN to the thoughts of others without comment. Take notes to show respect and keep track of their thoughts.  
This: Nod. Take notes.  
Not this: Talk.



Pro

1

2

Con

1

2

Position

Good because

Good because

Less good because

Less good because