**Strategies to Create Student Groups**

**Purpose:** Flexible grouping promotes student engagement by creating learning opportunities that consider students’ strengths, interests, and needs (Castle et al., 2005). Groups can be formed by considering factors like readiness, interest, learning profile, assigned intervention, and behavior areas of need. The table below contains examples of strategies to create mixed-ability groups (Byland, 2015).

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| **Strategy** | **Description** | **How it Works** |
| Organize interactive student folders | Use data to assign students to a specific-colored work folder. “Rainbow” the folders to group students for projects and assignments by ensuring at least one folder of every color is included within each group. | * Assign students to specific-colored folders based on data (e.g., proficiency levels). * Consider the following example color assignments: * Blue = Basic in math and reading * Red = Basic in math and proficient in reading * Orange = Proficient in math and basic in reading * Yellow = Proficient in math and reading * Green = Advanced in math and reading * Use folders to create groups consisting of at least one of every color. |
| Create desktop  index cards | Tape index cards with a secretly coded individual profile to each student’s desk. Use the index cards to vary student grouping for different activities. | * For each student, place stickers, colors, or shapes representing reading and math readiness levels, specific goals, learning styles, behavior skills, or other characteristics on an index card. * Group students by having them find their peer(s) with the same or different sticker, color, or shape for various activities. |
| Use heterogeneous student grouping wheels | Consider a characteristic that varies across students such as leadership ability, academic readiness, learning style, or personality type. Use a color-coding system that corresponds to the characteristic and assign students to a color. Create an electronic or paper wheel with rings of each color. Label students’ names accordingly and spin the wheel to create evenly distributed groups. | * Create an electronic or paper wheel with rings representing each color the color-coding system. * Assign students to colors based on a characteristic or ability level. * Consider the following example color assignments: * Blue outer ring = Advanced in reading * Red ring = High proficiency in reading * Gray ring = Low proficiency in reading * Teal inner ring = Basic in reading * Use student names, initials, or numbers to map each student on the appropriate colored ring. * Spin the wheel to create mixed-ability groups consisting of one student from each color. |

**References**

Byland, A. (2015, October 1). *5 more ways to “remove the walls” from your classroom.* Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/more-remove-walls-from-classroom-alexander-byland>

Castle, S., Deniz, C. B., & Tortora, M. (2005). Flexible grouping and student learning in a high-needs school. *Education and Urban Society, 37*(2), 139-150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124504270787>