**Techniques to Use with Mixed-Ability Groups**

**Purpose:** Mixed-ability groups are designed to include students with varying strengths and needs. Mixed-ability groups can be used by teachers to increase student engagement and improve interpersonal relationships among students (Castle et al., 2005). The table below lists five activities to maximize and balance participation in mixed ability groups.

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| **Activity** | **Learning Format** | **Number of Students** | **Steps for Implementation** |
| Jot Thoughts | Peer Collaboration | 2-4 | 1. Students are assigned to groups and given paper slips or sticky notes. 2. The teacher poses questions or discussion prompts. 3. Students in each group take turns writing new ideas or answers on notes and placing them on their group’s table. 4. Students discuss their ideas or answers as they place them on the table. |
| Sage-N-Scribe | Peer Tutoring | 2 | 1. Students are assigned to partners. 2. The teacher poses questions or problems. 3. Partner A (Sage) shares a response (e.g., answer or solution) with Partner B (Scribe). Partner B (Scribe) writes the response. 4. Partners may help each other and switch roles for each question or problem. |
| Showdown | Peer Tutoring | 2-4 | 1. Students are assigned to groups and given a printed set of questions. 2. The teacher selects one student per group to begin as Showdown Captain*.*    1. Each group determines what signal they will use to indicate members are ready to answer (e.g., thumbs up, raised hand, pencil down).    2. Captains read the first question to their group.    3. Group members think about their answers and display the signal when ready to share.    4. Captain says, “Showdown!” once the signal is given by all group members.    5. Group members share and discuss their answers. 3. Roles rotate and a new student becomes the Showdown Captain for the next question. |

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| **Activity** | **Purpose** | **Number of Students** | **Steps for Implementation** |
| Around the World  *Version 1* | Peer Collaboration | 4 | 1. Students are assigned to groups. 2. The teacher poses a problem or question with multiple answers. 3. Students take turns providing their group with answers or ideas in the order of how they are seated (e.g., clockwise around the table). 4. Students share ideas, one at a time, until the group runs out of ideas or the teacher calls time. |
| Around the World  *Version 2* | Peer Collaboration | 4 | 1. Students are assigned to groups. 2. The teacher gives each group a printed question that lists multiple answer options and tokens to use for voting. 3. Students use their tokens to vote on options featured on the list. 4. The choice with the most votes is the group’s final answer or decision. |
| Fan-N-Pick | Peer Collaboration | 2-4 | 1. Students are assigned to groups. 2. The teacher assigns students within each group a number (1-4) and explains the group jobs that correspond to each number.    1. Student 1 fans the cards.    2. Student 2 picks a card and reads the question on the card.    3. Student 3 answers the question.    4. Student 4 uses the answer key to provide feedback (e.g., praise or correction) to Student 3. 3. The teacher gives each group the set of question cards and an answer key. 4. Students perform the group jobs corresponding to their assigned numbers as they work together. 5. After the question is answered, jobs rotate and students perform the next group job (e.g., Student 1 becomes Student 2, Student 4 becomes student 1). |

**Acknowledgements**

This resource is adapted from:

Colon, G., Zgliczynski, T., & Maheady, L. (2022). Using flexible grouping. In McLeskey, J., Maheady, L., Billingsley, B., Brownell, M. T., & Lewis, T. J. (Eds.), *High leverage practices for inclusive classrooms* (2nd ed., pp. 263-283). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003148609-23

**Reference**

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>