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GROUPING AND REGROUPING

When creating and adjusting small learning groups, educators know the importance of being intentional. There are many different ways teachers may think about grouping students and a variety of data points that can be used to inform this process. Although groups should be flexible and responsive to student needs, there is no one right way or timing when it is best for teachers to change groups. Sometimes groups change at the start of a new unit and sometimes groups change daily depending on what data says about student needs. At times, student groups may change drastically and other times just one or two students may switch groups.

The guide below explains different ways to group students, why and when to group or regroup students and the data that can be used. This can be used as a resource for teachers to determine the best way to group and regroup students in their own classroom.

Ways of grouping students

When creating small groups, there are two primary approaches to using data to make groups: by current level of student mastery or skill and by current student struggles. Read about each in more detail below. To determine which approach will be used for grouping, consider it in combination when, why and what data is being used.

Grouping by mastery or skill level– One way to group students is by skill mastery or overall skill level. For example, grouping students based on their reading level, or grouping students based on their understanding of a specific math topic.

> To group by mastery or skill level, do the following:
> 1. Determine the skills that will be taught in small group
> 2. Look at the data and identify which students have:
>   a. Not seen/practiced the skills
>   b. Been exposed to the skill, but did not master it
>   c. Mastered and moved beyond the skill
> 3. Break students into fairly equal size groups based on their readiness for the skill

Grouping by similar struggles– Another way to group students is by similar struggles. For example, grouping students based on a similar error made during a lesson, the same failed content provider lesson or same incorrect answer on an assessment.
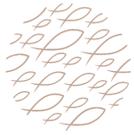
> To group by similar struggles, do the following:
> 1. Determine which students are struggling with similar skills
> 2. Break students into 2–3 fairly equal size groups based upon skills that students need additional practice with

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Data used for regrouping

When creating small groups, educators can use a variety of different types of data to inform their decisions about how many groups to make, and which group to put each student in. The type of data used can depend on when and why the teacher is creating or adjusting groups. The table below outlines different times educators might regroup, why it would be beneficial at that time and what data could be used.

When to group/regroup	Why	Data to use
Beginning of school year or marking period	The beginning of a school year or marking period may be a good time to create new groups because it is a natural time of transition in a school building. Students could be returning from a long break and have different needs than before the break.	- NWEA Map or other benchmark results - Grades from previous marking period/ school year - Results of a pre-test to gauge student understanding - Result of assigned content provider quiz to gauge understanding - Results on previous content provider lessons
Start of a unit or topic	The start of a new unit or topic is often a good time to regroup students because as the topic shifts, so will students' strengths and weaknesses. A student who struggled with arithmetic for example, may be much stronger in geometry and would benefit from being in a different group.	- NWEA Map or other benchmark results - Results of a pre-test to gauge student understanding - Result of assigned content provider quiz to gauge understanding - Results on previous content provider lessons
Mid-unit Weekly	Periodically throughout a unit, or even on a weekly basis, teachers may want to regroup students to be responsive to how different students are progressing with the unit content. A student who was originally placed in a faster paced group for example and has struggled to show mastery of a concept, would benefit from switching to a slower paced group giving them more time to practice the material.	- Results from a weekly or sub-topic quiz - Results from a mid-unit exam - Results from student work analysis - Observational data over time - Gauging student understanding from discussion contributions - Results on content provider lessons
Daily	Sometimes changes to groups may even occur on a daily basis depending on the needs of individual students. When groups change on a daily basis, they are often small changes of only 1 or 2 students based on their needs.	- Analysis of daily exit ticket - Success on 1-2 questions independently completed on problem set/question set - Observational data from the day's lesson - Gauging student understanding from the day's discussion contributions

	For example, if a student struggled to identify the main idea of a text and the rest of the group was ready to move onto supporting details, the next day, the student could join another group that is continuing to practice identifying the main idea.	
When students are struggling with online content providers	At times, it could also be beneficial to adjust student groupings in response to performance with online content providers. This is especially effective if a teacher is going to provide targeted instruction to students based on their areas of struggle on content providers. For example, if five students struggled on the same online lesson, you might put them in a group and do a small group lesson on the topic.	• Struggling alerts from content providers • Students verbalize difficulty with online lessons.