

Standard III Element E

LEVEL 1 PRACTICES

THE TEACHER:

1 *Has a clear purpose for student collaboration.*

Placing students in [learning groups](#) to complete group activities differs from placing students in groups for direct instruction. Direct instruction focuses on a set of skills or knowledge that a whole group, a small group, or individual student must acquire, which is when ability grouping is appropriate (i.e., guided reading groups). In learning groups where students are completing an activity together, they process not only content but learn beneficial social behaviors, such as cooperation and [collaboration](#).

Students may be grouped in many different ways to enhance their level of engagement and learning.

- A single, large group, led by the teacher or another student
- Small groups, either independent or in an instructional setting with a teacher
- Homogeneous
- Heterogeneous
- Students can choose their own grouping — with partners, in triads, or in other configurations that they or a teacher establish.

Grouping has benefits for many aspects of teaching. One of those benefits is that it can enhance the processing of new information because interacting in groups provides students with multiple reference points. It allows each student to see how others process information, and it allows each student to see how others react to his or her processing of information. (Marzano, 2007)

Refer to this internal resource for additional information:

- [Strategies for Forming Groups](#)
Document provides examples of different grouping structures.

Misconceptions about grouping students:

- *My students sit in groups so they can work together whenever they need support.* Although classroom arrangement can support group activities, placing desks in groups or seating students at tables does not guarantee students will work cooperatively or collaboratively. Without clear procedures and clarity of purpose, classroom arrangement can result in off-task behavior and students “piggy backing” off their stronger or more motivated peers.
- *When I notice student engagement decreasing, I use a Turn and Talk response method.* A Turn and Talk can be an effective way to engage all students in responding to questions and learning from each other. However, for it to enhance student learning, teachers must provide clarity on what students are expected to talk about and how to listen and respond to each other. It is also helpful for teachers to designate which partner talks first.
- *I would like to use group activities, but my students do not work well in groups.* Working cooperatively and collaboratively with others are life skills that students need to be taught. Teachers can do this by communicating clear expectations for how students should display respect for group member’s opinions and ideas. When teachers assign roles and responsibilities and teach accountable talk, students can develop the skills needed for working effectively with others. Teachers may also need to scaffold group

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activities from partners to large groups of four or more to allow students opportunities to build trust in their peers and feel confident in sharing their thinking with others.

Planning/Coaching Questions

- How will all students be included in group activities?
- How will you decide on the instructional grouping of students during a lesson?
- How will you communicate to students their individual and group responsibilities?
- How will you hold individual students and groups accountable?
- How will you assess the learning of groups and individuals?
- How will you promote teamwork and development of leadership skills?

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