

## Group formation

Groups must be heterogeneous in order to foster an exchange, allowing everyone's ideas to evolve and contribute to the improvement of the end result.

*Forming groups is a critical moment for students. It can generate various positive or negative reactions. Some students can feel uncomfortable, fear the reactions of others and suffer group rejection<sup>16</sup>.*

Using a sociogram can facilitate the forming of heterogeneous groups. In fact, we try to strike a balance in the group in order to encourage the contribution of each student and to eventually aim to create a class where each student is equal and given the same opportunities to learn and succeed.

Cooperative working groups are usually heterogeneous to encourage diversity which enriches the representativeness of a group. It is the teacher's responsibility to form heterogeneous groups. Various diversity criteria are suggested:

- Gender
- Personal strengths
- Academic performance
- Ethnic origin
- Forms of intelligence
- Personal characteristics
- Criteria related to competency, participation, popularity
- High and low status
- Etc.

Occasionally, groups will be informal for spontaneous activities. These groups will be randomly picked. In this case, the participants will be grouped together by:

- Playing cards
- Pieces of a puzzle
- Coloured cards
- Birthdays
- First letters of first names
- Color of clothing
- Symbols
- Etc.

16- Claudette Évangéliste-Perron, Martine Sabourin and Cynthia Sinagra, *Apprendre la démocratie : guide de sensibilisation et de formation à la démocratie selon l'apprentissage coopératif*, Montreal, Les Éditions de la Chenelière, 1996, pp. 25.  
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Homogeneous groups are not generally recommended but may be formed occasionally for similar-interest groups. These groups may be formed as long as they are task related, along the lines of such topics as:

- A specific region
- A chosen theme
- A time in history
- An aspect of a project
- A choice of task
- A specific orientation
- Etc.

### **Types of groups that are used:**

#### *Informal pairs*

A pair is a meeting between two persons. It is informal if unplanned. For example, if the students' desks are set up individually, the teacher can ask the students to join the desks into groups of two in order to create informal pairs.

#### *Associated teams of two pairs*

An associated team is composed of two sub-groups. In this case, it is composed of two informal pairs.

#### *Class group*

The class group is composed of all students in a class.

#### *Home group*

It is a heterogeneous team of four students where the training is done by the teacher. It is within these groups that most of the cooperative activities take place. It is recommended that you maintain the same teams over a few months in order to promote a sense of belonging.

### *Expert group*

Expert groups are made up of students from different home groups. They are responsible for a specific topic and possess specific information which only they will know about when they return to their home groups. Therefore, the four members in their home groups become experts in four different areas. They must share their specialized knowledge with their teammates in order to work on a common task which requires the information shared by each member of the group.

### *Controversy group*

controversy groups, the class is divided into two groups: students 'for' and students 'against' an issue. Once their arguments are prepared, both groups get into two parallel rows and the members debate the particular question one at a time.

### *Interest group*

Students are grouped into teams based on a common interest.

## **Feedback**

Unfortunately, feedback on learning and the cooperation process is often spoiled due to a lack of time. However, it is during this reflection period that learning is integrated and that the teacher, along with the students, can evaluate the quality of the group work. This is why it is worthwhile to reduce the time spent on the task in order to allow time for a post-mortem on the learning and cooperative process.

When getting feedback on an activity, it is recommended that you identify the students' achievements, big or small, in order to build their self esteem. On the other hand, areas for improvement should also be addressed, treated as challenges to overcome in the next activity.