

Inspiration for Group Formation

During the lessons in Network, the students will take part in changing buddy pairs and groups, just as they will be a part of groups all the way through school.

In the following, you will find inspiration on how to form groups. The first time you form buddies and pairs, it will be done randomly, since you do not know the students, but afterwards there will be more possibilities.

We recommend that you as a teacher should always be the one to form buddies and buddy groups that are to be used during Network. In this way, the students will have the possibility to get to know other people than those they would choose themselves. At the same time you can – after the first weeks – pair up students that you think will be especially good together.

When the buddy program ends it does not mean that the need is no longer there. The reason for ending them is that it can be difficult to get the students' support to continue. If you do not have the students' support, the buddy program does not make sense – it might even be counterproductive. A student who feels lonely or does not thrive in other ways may feel defeated if their partner no longer lives up to the expectations of the partnership, because the buddy no longer feels the need.

The buddy program has both a social element, where you keep an eye out for each other's wellbeing, and a professional element, where you work with a buddy.

We recommend that you keep using working groups formed by the teacher after the end of the buddy program, but the students should have the chance to decide for themselves every once in a while. However, it is important that the teacher decides when the students can choose their own groups. The social element of the buddy program is formally over, but it might still make sense to remind the students that they should pay attention to each other in the class.

You can apply different principles when forming groups. Here you can find inspiration for some approaches.

Randomly

By forming groups randomly it can be done relatively quickly by counting the number of groups that you want. You can also turn group formation into an activity for the students. You can for example make the students stand in line based on their heights, alphabetically by first or last names – use your imagination or let the students make suggestions). Then you can form the groups by letting the students work with those they stand next to.

Selection

When using the principle of selection, you form the groups based on a more or less conscious strategy. When using selection, you will often aim to form groups that mirror the composition of the class in relation to e.g. gender, ethnicity, learning style or academic level.

The principle of selection can help create a healthy class culture and give the students an opportunity to experience new sides of themselves by being in different groups. New patterns of collaboration can tie the class together socially and create a healthy teaching environment.

A widely used method is Cooperative Learning, where you can find inspiration for different strategies in the area of student activation, learning and group formation¹.

Letting the students choose

In some cases it may be nice for the students to choose who they want to work with. It is your responsibility as a teacher to make sure that it goes well. This might be by letting the students send you the names of those they want in their group. This can make it easier to spot if there are some who may have a hard time finding a group.

You decide

You are the one to decide when the students get to choose their own groups, when you decide, or when it is chosen at random. The different principles have their good and bad sides and they should be adapted to the teaching situation and environment. The randomized formation of groups may be good for short working processes or in social situations. When working on exam projects it may be best to let the students influence the groups.

¹ Raae, Peter Henrik (2006) "Kommunikation i undervisningen". I Erik Damberg, Jens Dolin og Gitte Holten Ingerslev (red.) *Gymnasiepædagogik: En grundbog*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag samt Slavin, Robert E. (1994) *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York, NY: Pearson.