

## Forming Groups (Developed by Carnegie Math Pathways)

**What is it:** Faculty state that a part of the course is to work together and support one another collaboratively. Faculty then choose one of the following group structures and place students into groups.

**Rationale:** Many instructors have found that through collaborative learning experiences, students teach each other by addressing misunderstandings and clarifying misconceptions. In addition, having students collaborate in groups helps increase social ties to peers and faculty.

**Student Outcomes:** Students feel like they belong in the class.

**When to use:** You will need to put your students in groups for the Day 1 activities and for completing Quantway<sup>o</sup> lessons. Form student groups after the Getting to Know You activity to keep building students' sense of belonging in the class.

**Forming Groups Guideline:** Here are some ideas for organizing students in groups.

| Strategy               | Description   | Advantages  | Disadvantages   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| Random Grouping        | A quick method for instructors to form student groups.<br>Examples:<br>1. counting off<br>2. colored dots on cards  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quick</li> <li>2. Groups will probably function well.</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unbalanced groups</li> <li>2. May take a while for students to become comfortable</li> </ol>                                  |
| Self-assigned Grouping | Students choose their own groups.   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quick</li> <li>2. Students may initially be more comfortable.</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unbalanced groups</li> <li>2. Groups may not function well over time.</li> <li>3. Some students may feel left out.</li> </ol> |
| Structured Grouping    | Students fill out a survey the first day of class and use the results to form the initial groupings.<br><u>"Turning Student Groups into Effective Teams"</u> has a sample survey. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Balanced groups based on students' self-reported strengths</li> <li>2. Groups may function well over time.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Time intensive.</li> <li>2. Will still need to use one of the methods above for Day 1 activities.</li> </ol>                  |

**Tips for forming groups from experienced faculty members:**

- Most sources state that the effective size for long term groupings is three to four members.
- Record the groupings to get to know your students and to plan for subsequent groupings.
- We recommend using the Group Roles and Responsibilities for effective collaborative learning.
- **Changing student groups throughout the term:**
  - Student groups work best if they are kept together over a period of time.
    - We recommend that you keep students in a group for at least one module before changing the student groups.
  - When forming subsequent groups, you can use your knowledge of students' work habits and performance to form balanced groups or continue to place them randomly.