

# SMALL GROUP LEARNING

**EFFECT SIZE:** 0.46

## High-Quality Instruction Cycle Connection:

Step 2: Planning Instruction  
Step 3: Instruction

## Utah Effective Teaching Standards Alignment:

- Standard 1, Element 1
- Standard 2, Element 3

## Personalized, Competency Based Learning Framework Essential Component:

Customized Supports

## WHAT?

**Small Group Learning** is an instructional approach where students are grouped into smaller groups within the class to facilitate collaborative learning. Students work together and receive customized supports from the teacher to achieve a shared learning goal, but unlike cooperative learning, they may not necessarily have specific roles or tasks assigned to them.

## WHY?

The effect size of small group learning is 0.46 which is a little over one year of growth for one year of learning. Small group learning encourages active participation and engagement as students work together. Teachers are able to provide more personalized attention to each student in smaller groups. Teachers can provide customized supports to students with various needs, and students have increased opportunities to develop social and emotional skills.

## HOW?

Teachers can implement small group learning in their classrooms through forming groups based on a variety of factors, including interests and skill levels. As teachers clearly define learning goals for each group and communicate those goals to students, they can support students in achieving the intended learning

outcomes. Teachers should monitor the progress of each group and provide customized supports to individual groups as needed..

### **PREPARATION:**

- Define the learning intentions/success criteria that students will be working towards in their small groups.
- Determine which students will be grouped together based on student data.
- Plan engaging, interactive and scaffolded activities to support student learning based on the needs of the students and the learning intentions/success criteria.

### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

#### **Teacher Actions**

- Introduce the learning intentions/success criteria by providing clear instructions and guidelines.
- Communicate the assigned groups to students.
- Monitor the groups and provide customized supports, feedback and guidance.
- Encourage students to collaborate and communicate effectively with each other.

#### **Student Look-Fors**

- Work together toward the common learning intentions/success criteria.
- Engage in learning, communicate and collaborate with their small group members.
- Communicate, listen, problem solve and critically think.
- Focus on the task at hand, avoid distractions and demonstrate self-regulation skills.

#### **Reflection**

- Did the small group learning activities align with and support the specific learning intentions/success criteria?
- Did the students achieve the learning intentions/success criteria as a result of the small group learning activities?
- Did the students receive the appropriate customized supports?
- Were the groups well-composed?
- Were the guidelines and expectations clear?
- What went well and what could be improved in future cooperative learning opportunities?

#### **Go Deeper—Resources to learn more**

Turn Small Reading Groups into Big Wins: <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/>

(Continued)

[turn-small-reading-groups-into-big-wins](#)

Building a Culture of Classroom Collaboration: <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/building-culture-classroom-collaboration>

Using Small Groups to Engage Students and Deepen Learning: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Academic%20Dean%27s%20Office/Guide%20to%20Small-Group%20Learning.pdf>



## HOME CONNECTIONS

- Communicate the importance of small group learning and why it is an effective strategy.
- Provide feedback to parents about their child's participation and progress in small group learning activities.
- Encourage parents to help their child feel more confident in working on teams by discussing the small group learning activities.

For further information, please contact:  
Jennifer Throndsen, Director  
Teaching and Learning  
[Jennifer.Throndsen@schools.utah.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Throndsen@schools.utah.gov)