

# Using group work in the heterogenous classroom to support progress



- Stefan Fusenich



BISHOP  
GROSSETESTE  
UNIVERSITY

“ 'having students **work** in **groups** can be enormously beneficial or it can be of little value' (Slavin 2010)

# Introduction

- Research has shown that homogeneous grouping by classes has a very small effect size on student achievement
- Homogenous grouping of classes do little to narrow the gap between low, middle, or high ability students
- The focus of this discussion is on ways a teacher might organize students within a heterogeneous class

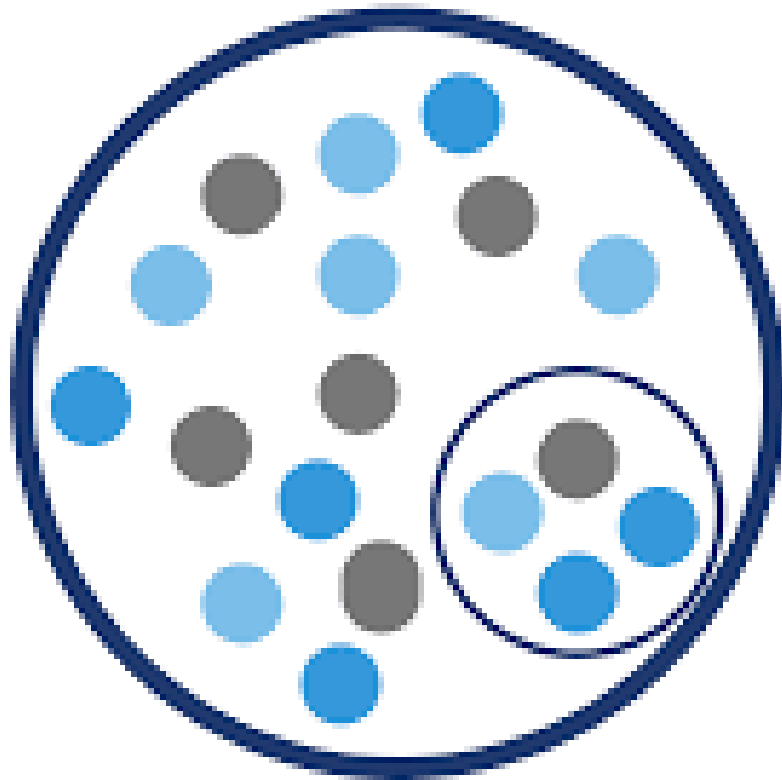
# The arguments against

*For students with disabilities, heterogeneous classrooms can prove highly challenging, as they may not be able to participate in general education programs.*

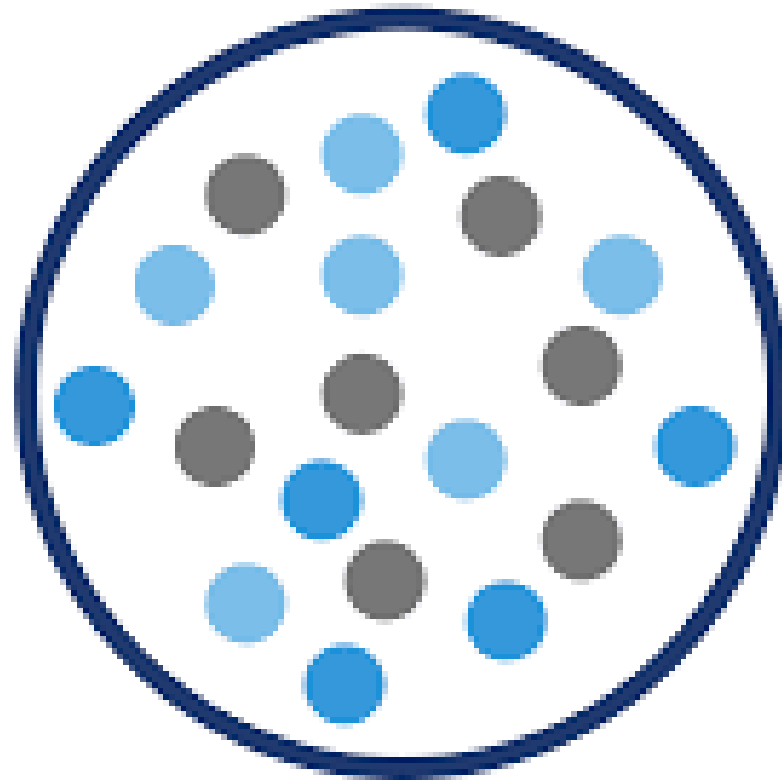
Students with conditions such as autism, attention deficit disorder (ADD), emotional disturbances, severe intellectual disabilities, or other medical conditions, may benefit from the self-contained classroom of homogeneous grouping.

This allows them to learn at their own pace, which may differ greatly from their peers.

# So why do it?



**Integration**



**Inclusion**

# So why do it

Classrooms are getting more diverse every year and instructors need a way to take advantage of this diversity to improve learning.

(Werth 2013)

Weth (2013) found cooperative learning groups were an overall positive experience for my students as suggested by Johnson and Johnson (2012)

.....there is positive effect of heterogeneous cooperative learning groups on all student learning (Gillies, 2008),

- Heterogeneous grouping allows students to learn from one another's differences and provides a chance to interact with diverse individuals. It also enables advanced students to mentor their peers.
- The advantage of this approach is that it can promote cooperation and collaboration since students must work together to achieve the group's goals. This can also lead to students feeling more invested in the material since they are more likely to see the relevance of the content to their own lives.



# Homogenous groups harm the progress of lower ability students

## Homogeneous Versus Heterogeneous Groups

<b>Ability Level of Students</b>	<b>Percentile Gain</b>
Low ability	- 23
Medium ability	19
High ability	3

Data from Lou et al., 1996

# Cooperative learning groups

Cooperative learning groups do provide an excellent means of differentiated instruction for a diverse classroom and there is a variety of different methods to grouping students that can be affective (Tomlinson, 2005)

## ***Why do it?***

Cooperative learning provides a 28 percentile gain when compared to students working on tasks individually. Organizing students into cooperative learning groups has a powerful effect on learning whether groups compete with one another or not. (Marzano 2007)

## ***How to implement this?***

Kagan (1989) and Johnson et al. (1980) suggest assigning roles to members of cooperative learning groups as a means of accounting for individual accountability, equal participation and simultaneous interaction.



# Tips for grouping

## *Cooperative Learning Tips*

- *Cooperative groups should be kept rather small in size (3-4 members)*
- *Cooperative learning should be applied consistently and systematically but not over used (suggested once per week)*
- *It is misused when not groups are not well structured*
- *It is overused when it is implemented so that students have insufficient time to practice independently*

***(Marzano 2007)***





# Tips for grouping (Slavin 2010)

- When setting up group work in your classroom, would you find it helpful to consider what you want your students to get out of working collaboratively? Are you aiming to improve the social dynamics of the groups and their speaking and listening skills? Or are you aiming to ensure that students help each other to master particular concepts?
- If you are aiming to improve your students' team working and speaking and listening skills, could you plan to use some of the informal learning methods outlined in this study, such as working in groups to make a presentation to the rest of the class?
- If you are aiming to enable students to help each other master particular concepts, could you build team rewards into the group tasks based on the learning progress of all the group members, through getting everyone to prepare for a quiz or other assessment so that everyone in the group has to contribute to the group's success?



# FINAL QUESTIONS

What do you want to  
know more about?

