

Visible Random Groupings: Improving Student Collaboration

Summary: The idea of using "visibly random groups" (VRGs) came from Chapter 2 of Peter Liljedahl's book, [Building Thinking Classrooms](#). In his book, Liljedahl reports that creating random groups of 3 (in grades 3-12) led to the "perfect balance of redundancy and diversity" whereas self-selected groups ended up with "too much redundancy, not enough diversity" (p. 45). The students also needed to see the groups being randomly constructed for the groupings to be effective (p.44).

School Connection: As of February 2023, I have been using VRGs daily with great success. More students are sharing ideas and students tend to stay on task longer in these groups (compared to the self-selected groups I used earlier in the year). Also, I have noticed students are more attentive to each other during whole class discussions since I have implemented VRGs. I use the random group generator from the website [Flippity](#) to create my random groups. I like this website because you can enter the students' names in a google sheet file and reuse it every class period. This website also lets you temporarily edit the list (e.g., to remove absent students) right from the webpage which makes it very easy to use.

Connection to Equity: Placing students in VRGs aligns with being "Critically Conscious" (the first "C" in the [ICUCARE equity framework](#)) because it can erase the effect of negative stereotypes by assigning competence to all students: When all classmates are asked to work together, it provides opportunities for more voices to be heard and appreciated. Additionally VRGs "leverage multiple math competencies" (from the "[Five equity-based practices](#)") by structuring activities that promote student collaboration.