

Groups size, 1 – 2 – 4 – everyone

Varying *group size* and *constellations* is beneficial in more ways than one. For one thing, it adds variety and dynamic flow to the lesson, and for another it enables students to process the material from different perspectives. Sometimes they can retreat into themselves and process things without anyone else being involved. Sometimes they can work with others and derive support, input, and inspiration from doing so.

There are some things you need to master for yourself before proceeding to cooperate with others. You may need to work out a tricky rhythm on your own to begin with. When everyone has more or less mastered it, perhaps you can go on to process it in pairs and then fours, until finally the whole group does something more advanced together – contrapuntally, perhaps. There are other things which may need to be started in a large group after which they are gradually scaled down to small groups or individuals.

If students get used to changing constellations several times during a lesson, cooperation in the group as a whole will benefit. That way, when a student is getting paired with another student and they don't get on very well, it will not create such a problem, because both students know that they will soon be changing partners again.

I think one can mostly leave it to the students themselves to divide into groups, as part of their social training. Perhaps I say:

'Split up into four equal groups', or
'Half of you sit on the floor, the other half make a circle round them.' It's then up to the members of the group themselves to sort things out. This way they learn to take responsibility for everything and to each see their own role in the group. Dividing themselves up may take a little time at first, but in my belief it's time well spent. If it doesn't work, then of course the teacher will have to intervene.

To make the formation of groups run smoothly, I sometimes issue simple instructions that help to give students the boldness to make contact with each other.

'Pair up with someone you haven't spoken to today.'
'Pair up with the person furthest away from you.'
'Now let's change partners again, and make sure you get a new partner every time.'