

Module: ECAD7004

Research Title: How does implementing Small-Focused Group Teaching
affect student learning in a Year Six classroom?

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Word Count- 4921

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	- Synthesise a wider range of sources to make points hold more validity.	I have read a wide range of sources and aimed to validate my points more explicitly.
Targed/Target 2	- Consider how a school could overcome limitations, referring to case study.	Although this target is more specific to my previous assignment, I have aimed to consider limitations to all aspects of this assignment, including when giving my recommendations.

Introduction

This study examines whether focused small-group instruction is more effective than whole-class teaching for Year Six students. It aims to identify the best approach for enhancing learning outcomes in a primary school setting. The primary question is straightforward: Does teaching in small groups lead to better student performance than traditional whole-class methods? This investigation is crucial because educators constantly seek ways to optimise teaching methods to improve student understanding and achievement. By comparing these two approaches, the research aims to guide teachers in adopting strategies that enhance learning. The study's design involved rigorous data collection and analysis, ensuring reliable and applicable findings. It offers insights into evidence-based teaching practices, which can be valuable for educators seeking to refine their classroom strategies. The study also has broader implications for teacher training, providing student teachers with helpful information on effective instructional methods and data-driven decision-making. Conducted in a Year Six classroom at a coastal primary school in Wales, the research involved twenty-seven students, with fourteen parents consenting to their children's participation (See appendix 1). This focused context allowed for an in-depth analysis of teaching techniques and their impact on student outcomes. The study aims to provide educators with practical insights to improve teaching effectiveness. By shedding light on the benefits and drawbacks of small-group versus whole-class instruction, the research can help teachers create more engaging and successful learning environments for their students (for the initial research plan, see Appendix 6).

Literature Review

The debate between small-group instruction and whole-class teaching has been ongoing within education, with proponents advocating for each method's efficacy (Chambers, Slater 2022). Both approaches offer distinct advantages and drawbacks, and understanding their nuances is essential for educators striving to create dynamic and effective learning environments.

Small group teaching fosters intimacy and personalised learning experiences in keeping with the vision of the Curriculum for Wales and, subsequently, schools in adopting its values (Welsh Government 2022). This curriculum emphasises a holistic

approach to education, focusing on developing learners as individuals and members of a broader community. Central to this vision is the concept of "personalised learning pathways," which recognises that students have diverse needs, interests, and strengths (NDNA, 2024). In these settings, educators can tailor instruction to meet individual students' diverse needs and learning styles. Small group teaching promotes active engagement and critical thinking skills by facilitating peer collaboration and discussion (Gokhale, 1995). Moreover, students often feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts and asking questions in smaller settings, leading to deeper comprehension and retention of the material (Darling-Hammond, 2019).

One of the primary benefits of small group teaching is its ability to address the unique challenges faced by students with varying academic abilities. By grouping students according to their skill levels, educators can provide targeted support and interventions to ensure that all learners are adequately supported. Additionally, small group settings enable teachers to provide timely and constructive feedback, helping students track their progress and identify areas for improvement (Ismail *et al.*, 2022). However, when considering the research of Vygotsky and his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), grouping children by academic ability doesn't allow for incorporating the 'more knowledgeable other' (MKO) theory (Galton and Williamson, 1992; Dunne and Bennett, 1994). Yes, the teacher is the ultimate MKO in the classroom setting; even in small groups, their focus is still split between those in the group. Therefore, the teacher cannot sustain being the MKO for all group members for the whole lesson. Also, there will still be others in the class completing independent tasks requiring support and monitoring, again distracting the teacher's attention (Galton and Williamson, 1992).

Furthermore, when used effectively, small group teaching encourages the development of essential social and emotional skills. Through collaborative activities and discussions, students learn to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and work cooperatively towards common goals (Schreiber and Valle, 2013). These interpersonal skills are invaluable in academic and professional settings, where teamwork and collaboration are often essential for success. (Brownell *et al.*, 2006) However, it would be remiss to overlook the potential drawbacks of small-group teaching. One of the most significant challenges is the logistical complexity of

managing multiple groups simultaneously (InnerDrive Team, 2024; University, 2024). Educators must carefully plan and coordinate activities to ensure each group receives adequate attention and support. Moreover, small-group teaching requires additional resources and staffing, making it less feasible for schools with limited budgets or staff.

On the other hand, teaching in a whole class offers certain advantages that cannot be ignored. In these settings, educators can simultaneously deliver content to a large group of students, maximising instructional efficiency and consistency. Whole-class teaching is particularly well-suited for introducing new concepts or topics, as it allows teachers to provide a comprehensive overview to the entire class (Powell, 1997).

Robin Alexander's research critically examines whole-class teaching's efficacy across diverse educational settings. His work underscores the intricate dynamics of teacher-student interactions and the development of classroom discourse when strategies are not utilised effectively (Alexander, 2008). By scrutinising the role of teachers as facilitators, Alexander emphasises their ability to foster critical thinking and collaborative learning. Moreover, his research highlights the potential of whole-class teaching to promote social cohesion and equity by providing inclusive learning opportunities for all students, specifically when utilised in part with other teaching methods, such as group work and individual tuition (Alexander, 2018).

Additionally, whole-class teaching can foster community and camaraderie among students. By learning together as a cohesive unit, students develop a shared understanding of the material and can support each other's learning. Piaget's and Vygotsky's constructivist theory emphasises that learners actively construct their knowledge of the world through their experiences and interactions. While Piaget's work is commonly linked with individualised learning and discovery-based activities, his ideas also provide insights into whole-class teaching approaches. In these approaches, students engage in collective sense-making through discussion and exploration, fostering a collaborative learning environment where they can construct knowledge together (McLeod, 2024). This further aligns with Vygotsky's belief in the importance of social interaction and dialogue in building knowledge, demonstrating how his theories support small-group teaching, focusing on individualised exploration, and whole-class teaching, which emphasises collective sense-making and collaborative learning experiences (McLeod, 2023). Furthermore, whole class

discussions foster the exchange of diverse perspectives and ideas, enriching the learning experience for all participants (Black, 2007).

Despite its benefits, whole-class teaching also has its limitations. One of the most significant concerns is the potential for students to disengage or feel lost in large group settings. In classrooms with a wide range of academic abilities, some students may struggle to keep pace with the rest of the class, leading to feelings of frustration or alienation (Adelman and Taylor, 2017).

Therefore, the literature tells us that small-group and whole-class teaching offer distinct advantages and drawbacks, and neither approach is inherently superior. Educators must carefully consider their students' unique needs and preferences when selecting instructional methods. By leveraging the strengths of each approach and incorporating a diverse range of teaching strategies, educators can create dynamic and inclusive learning environments that meet the needs of all learners (Moyle, 1992). Dewey's progressive education philosophy advocates for experiential learning and hands-on activities that engage students in real-world contexts. While Dewey did not explicitly discuss small-group or whole-class teaching, his emphasis on student-centred learning and active experimentation has influenced pedagogical approaches that prioritise student engagement and participation, whether in small groups or as a whole class (Pring, 2017).

Case Studies

Case studies are a widely utilised form of education research. They offer a detailed examination of specific instances, situations, or phenomena within their natural contexts. This method involves in-depth analysis and exploration, often employing various data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. While case studies offer numerous strengths, they also possess specific weaknesses, as outlined by relevant theorists in the field of education. One significant strength of case studies is their ability to provide rich, contextualised insights into complex educational phenomena. According to Yin (2018), case studies allow researchers to investigate real-life situations in their natural settings, facilitating a deeper understanding of the factors at play and their interconnection. This in-depth exploration can uncover nuances and intricacies that may not be evident through other research methods, enabling researchers to generate detailed and

comprehensive explanations. (Yin 2018).

Furthermore, case studies offer opportunities for theory development and refinement. Stake (1995) suggests that by carefully examining individual cases, researchers can identify patterns, themes, and theoretical constructs that contribute to advancing knowledge within the field of education. By grounding theoretical frameworks in practical evidence derived from case studies, researchers can strengthen the validity and applicability of their theories (Stake, 1995). Additionally, case studies are particularly well-suited for exploring rare or unique phenomena that may lend themselves to something other than experimental or survey-based research methods. As Merriam (2009) highlighted, case studies allow researchers to delve into specialised topics or instances that are not easily replicated, providing valuable insights that can inform theory and practice within education.

However, despite their strengths, case studies also exhibit several weaknesses. One limitation is the potential lack of generalisability inherent in single-case designs. Critics argue that findings derived from a single case may not apply to broader populations or contexts, limiting the external validity of the research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Consequently, researchers must exercise caution when concluding case study findings and consider how their results can be generalised to other settings or populations. Moreover, case studies may be susceptible to researcher bias and subjectivity, particularly during data collection and analysis. Stake (1995) acknowledges that researchers bring their perspectives, assumptions, and interpretations to the study, which can influence the findings and conclusions drawn from the case. To mitigate this weakness, researchers employing case study methods must maintain transparency and rigour throughout the research process, use multiple sources of evidence, and engage in reflexivity to acknowledge and address their biases (Jamieson, Govaart and Pownall, 2023). In conclusion, case studies are a valuable form of education research, offering unique strengths such as in-depth exploration, theory development, and investigation of rare phenomena (Zainal, 2007). However, they also possess weaknesses, including limited generalizability and susceptibility to researcher bias. By acknowledging these strengths and weaknesses and applying rigorous methodological practices, researchers can leverage the power of case studies to generate meaningful insights and contribute to the advancement of knowledge within the field of education.

(Quintao, Andrade and Almeida, 2020).

In this case study, which focuses on year six children, the participant group comprises six individuals selected to represent a spectrum of academic abilities, including lower, middle, and higher ability levels. Purposeful sampling methodology was employed to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample. This method involved several key steps to guarantee diversity across ability groups: Collaboration with educators and administrators to identify students across the ability spectrum, drawing on academic performance assessments and teacher evaluations.

Establishment of clear inclusion criteria outlining specific characteristics necessary for participation, such as academic performance indicators or standardised test scores. The participants from each ability group were selected systemically, ensuring that the sample accurately reflected the diversity of abilities in the year six cohort.

Informed consent was obtained from participants and their guardians before participation, emphasising confidentiality and anonymity to maintain ethical standards. Data collection procedures were implemented once participants were selected and consent was secured. By employing purposeful sampling, the researchers ensured that the case study included representatives from lower, middle, and higher-ability groups, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the academic landscape among year six children. This methodological approach was adopted to enhance the findings' validity and reliability, enabling a deeper understanding of educational dynamics within this demographic.

Research Methods

To understand the effects of small-focused group teaching on student learning in a Year Six classroom, a combination of research methods has been carefully selected to provide a comprehensive analysis. These methods include observation and semi-structured focus group with open ended questions, each offering unique strengths and insights into the student experience. Lesson observations, a distinctive process in educational research, provide a unique perspective on teaching and learning (Mcber, 2000). They allow researchers to directly witness classroom dynamics, providing a distinct lens when studying the impact of small-focused group teaching in a Year Six classroom. This method, while presenting its own set of challenges, also offers valuable insights.

One of the primary benefits of lesson observations is the direct insight they provide into teaching practices. Researchers can closely examine how educators implement small-focused group teaching, noting the interactions between teachers and students, the organisation of classroom activities, and the instructional techniques used. This real-time view helps researchers understand the nuances of teaching methods and how they influence student learning outcomes (Abdella and Reddy, 2021). The contextual understanding offered by lesson observations is another strength. Researchers can gauge student engagement, peer interactions, and the classroom climate by observing the classroom environment. This context is crucial for assessing the impact of specific teaching strategies, as it provides a broader understanding of how these strategies function within the unique setting of a Year Six classroom (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Moreover, lesson observations are adaptable, allowing researchers to focus on emerging themes or unexpected patterns during observation. This flexibility ensures the method can capture a wide range of data, contributing to a more holistic analysis. Additionally, observations can be combined with other research methods, such as focus groups and surveys, to triangulate data, increasing the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

Despite these strengths, lesson observations have notable weaknesses. Observer bias is a significant concern (Mahtani *et al.*, 2018). The presence of an observer in the classroom can alter the behaviour of both teachers and students, leading to a distortion in the observed data. Teachers might change their instructional style, and students may behave differently, undermining the authenticity of the observation (Elliott, 1988). Another limitation is the lack of generalisability. Observations are typically limited to specific classrooms and groups of students, making it difficult to draw broader conclusions from the findings. This specificity requires researchers to exercise caution when extrapolating results to other contexts or settings (Connett, 2020). Lesson observations are also time-consuming and resource-intensive. Conducting comprehensive observations demands multiple visits, requiring significant time and effort. This constraint limits the ability to observe many classrooms, which may affect the overall scope of the research (Roberson, 1998). Finally, subjectivity in interpreting observational data can be a source of bias. Observers bring their perspectives and experiences, which can influence how they interpret classroom dynamics and teaching effectiveness. This subjectivity

necessitates careful analysis and cross-checking to ensure the reliability of conclusions (Connett, 2020).

While lesson observations offer a direct and flexible method for assessing the impact of small-focused group teaching in a Year Six classroom, researchers must adopt a critical approach. This approach balances the insights from direct observation with the risks of observer bias, limited generalisability, and subjectivity. By combining observations with other research methods and maintaining a rigorous analytical framework, researchers can leverage the strengths of lesson observations while mitigating their weaknesses, ensuring robust and valid findings.

Supplementing observational data, a semi-structured focus group with open ended questions offered a personalised exploration of individual student experiences and perceptions. The structure came from an established Oracy technique already trialled within the classroom. The children are assigned a role within the discussion either as the instigator, the builder, the challenger, the clarifier or the summariser and are provided with cards with sentence starters to help them build the conversation (see appendix 2). This technique had previously shown success in allowing the children to hold a sustained and open debate, therefore, it was utilised in this research to foster familiarity for the children. The order of questions in an interview or focus group is critical to the questioning process. A well-organised structure can help participants feel more comfortable and facilitate the collection of valuable information. A common approach is to begin with an introduction that explains the purpose of the study and describes how the interview will be carried out (Winwood, 2019). Open-ended questions enable respondents to freely articulate their thoughts and feelings regarding small-focused group teaching versus whole-class teaching (Hobson and Townsend, 2010). This qualitative approach allows for a deeper understanding of student preferences, learning styles, and the perceived effectiveness of different instructional methods. The opening question put to the children in this research was 'Do you prefer learning in small groups or as a whole class?', it was subsequently followed up with 'How is the interaction between you and your teacher different in small focus groups compared to the whole class?' and 'Can you share an example of when you felt you learned a lot during small group teaching or whole-class teaching?'.

However, there was consideration to the limitations such as the reliance on self-

reporting in interviews which may introduce social desirability bias, where respondents provide answers perceived as socially acceptable rather than genuine opinions (Ho *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, the time and effort required for conducting and analysing interviews and focus groups must be considered. While observation and a focus group interview with open-ended questions form the core of this research methodology, additional methods such as focus groups and academic performance assessments may further enrich the analysis. Focus group discussions provide a platform for exploring shared experiences and collective opinions among students, shedding light on peer dynamics and group learning interactions (Akyildiz and Ahmed, 2021).

To summarise, the combination of observational research, interviews, and questions presents a robust methodology for investigating the impact of small-focused group teaching on student learning. By leveraging qualitative and quantitative approaches, researchers can begin to comprehensively understand student experiences, perceptions, and academic achievements in the Year Six classroom context.

Data Presentation and Analysis Methods

The analysis of this research's results utilised qualitative and quantitative methods to present and examine data from classroom observations and children's discussions. A thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data, identifying recurring themes related to the learning experience in small groups and whole-class settings. These themes included "Support in Small Groups," "Choice of Friends," "Teacher Interaction," and "Preference for Activities in Small Groups." As advocated by Braun & Clarke (2006), such thematic analysis allows researchers to systematically categorise and interpret qualitative data, facilitating a clearer understanding of students' perspectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The quantitative analysis involved descriptive statistics in measuring the frequency of behaviours observed during classroom sessions (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Nasir, 2023). Children's engagement and focus levels were compared between whole-class and small-group settings. This quantitative approach, as suggested by Creswell & Creswell (2018), provides empirical support for qualitative findings, reinforcing the credibility of the conclusions.

Multiple strategies were used to establish trustworthiness. Triangulation enhanced credibility by cross-referencing classroom observation data with feedback from discussions with the children (Bhandari, 2022). Member checking, a method suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985), involved asking the children to verify the accuracy of the interpretations, further strengthening credibility (Roller, 2021; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A comprehensive audit trail was kept to ensure dependability, documenting each step of the research process. Peer review by the class teacher was used to promote confirmability, offering an objective examination of the data analysis from the observations and helping to reduce potential biases (Kelly, Sadeghieh and Adeli, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

In conducting a research study on the comparative benefits of small-group teaching versus whole-class teaching in a year six class, several ethical considerations must be meticulously addressed. Paramount among these considerations are anonymity and confidentiality, both of which are vital for safeguarding the privacy and rights of participants. Anonymity entails assigning unique identifiers or codes to each participant to prevent their identification from the collected data, thereby ensuring their privacy (Bhandari, 2022). Similarly, confidentiality involves storing all collected data securely and making it accessible only to authorised personnel, reassuring participants that their responses will be treated with utmost privacy (BERA, 2018). Additionally, by anonymising personally identifiable information (PII) it also ensures compliance with GDPR guidelines (ICO,).

Equally critical is gaining pupil assent, which requires careful attention to ensure informed participation and voluntary consent from the children. This process involves several key steps. Firstly, children are provided with a clear and age-appropriate explanation of the study, outlining its purpose and procedures. They are assured that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw without repercussions (Cotrim *et al.*, 2021). Opportunities are provided for children to ask questions and express concerns, ensuring they fully understand the study's implications.

Subsequently, children are asked to indicate their agreement to participate through an assent discussion, reiterating the critical points of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw. Throughout the study, continual checks for ongoing consent are conducted, verbally reminding participants of their right to cancel during observations

and interviews and through written reminders on study materials (for example of pupil assent see Appendix 7). This rigorous process ensures that children's assent remains informed and voluntary throughout the study (BERA, 2018).

By adhering to these ethical considerations and procedures, researchers can uphold the principles of respect, autonomy, and privacy, thus safeguarding the rights and well-being of the child participants. Such ethical conduct not only ensures the integrity of the research study but also fosters trust and cooperation among participants, contributing to the validity and reliability of the findings (BERA, 2018) (For the completed Ethical Consideration form see Appendix 3).

Research Results

This report summarises a discussion with six children, identified only by numbers, who shared their preferences and insights on working in small groups versus whole-class teaching. The aim was to understand their perspectives on how these different teaching formats impact their learning experience, teacher interaction, and overall classroom dynamics.

Two lesson observations explored the impact of teaching formats on student concentration and engagement, comparing whole-class teaching with small-group activities. The first observation involved a whole-class mathematics session with 25 students participating in a traditional teacher-led style format. The topic of the lesson was a refresher of previously learned mathematical topics, in preparation for upcoming national examinations. During this session, Child 1 and Child 2 displayed high levels of concentration and engagement, actively answering questions and participating in discussions. However, the other four children, Child 3 through Child 6 - showed varying levels of focus. Child 3 and Child 4 were attentive initially but became distracted, with wandering eyes and fidgeting. Child 5 showed intermittent interest, sometimes engaging but losing focus during the lecture. Child 6 seemed disengaged, rarely responding to questions and often looking around the classroom instead of paying attention.

The second observation also involved a maths lesson in which the same topic was taught, however, the students were divided into smaller groups for ability-differentiated activities. Children 1 through 6 were grouped, allowing a closer examination of their behaviour in a smaller group setting. In this environment, Child 1

and Child 2 maintained high concentration levels, actively leading discussions and guiding their peers through the research. Notably, Child 3 and Child 4, who had struggled with distraction during the whole-class session, showed greater focus and enthusiasm, asking questions and engaging in the research task. Child 5, who had exhibited inconsistent interest during the whole class teaching, became more attentive and contributed to the group discussion. The most significant change was observed in Child 6, who was mostly disengaged during the class session. In the smaller group, Child 6 appeared more comfortable and even contributed some ideas to the task, following along with the group's activities (see Appendix 4). These observations suggest that smaller group settings can foster greater concentration and engagement for most children, especially those who struggle with focus in larger groups. This approach encourages collaborative learning and allows children less comfortable in whole-class environments to thrive.

Following the lesson observations, the children participated in a detailed conversation about their thoughts on small groups and whole-class teaching. The following sections encapsulate the key points raised during the discussion (for the full transcript, see Appendix 5).

Support in Small Groups

All six children agreed they felt more supported when working in small groups. They mentioned that small groups allowed them to focus on their work without the distractions often encountered in whole-class settings. They also highlighted the benefits of peer support in small groups, noting that it is easier to help each other and share ideas in a more intimate setting.

Choice of Friends

An interesting point raised by the children was the desire to have at least one friend in their small group. They believed that having someone they knew well and trusted could make the group work experience more enjoyable and productive. This factor seemed to contribute to a sense of security and camaraderie within the group, fostering a better learning environment.

Teacher Interaction in Small Groups

The children unanimously agreed that small groups provided better opportunities for teacher interaction. In smaller settings, teachers were more accessible and could

give more individualised attention. The children found this beneficial, especially when they needed clarification on a topic or additional guidance.

Whole-Class Teaching for Topic Introduction and Sharing Ideas

While the children favoured small groups for most activities, they acknowledged that whole-class teaching had advantages. They felt that whole class sessions were practical for introducing new topics, allowing the teacher to provide a comprehensive overview to everyone at once. Moreover, they appreciated the whole class teaching as a platform for sharing ideas and hearing different perspectives.

Preference for Activities in Small Groups

The consensus among the children was that small groups were preferable for classroom activities. They felt that working in smaller groups enabled them to engage more deeply with the material and collaborate more effectively with their peers. The children noted that activities could become chaotic in whole class settings, and staying focused was harder.

The discussion with the six children revealed a clear preference for small groups regarding classroom activities and teacher interaction. However, they recognised the value of teaching the whole class to introduce topics and share ideas. The children also expressed a desire to have some choice in group composition, indicating that having a friend in the group could enhance their overall experience. The research results suggest that small-group learning environments may strengthen student engagement and focus compared to traditional whole-class teaching. Through classroom observations and discussions with six children, this study explores the benefits of different teaching formats and their impact on learning dynamics, drawing on various educational theories and concepts. The observations demonstrated that smaller groups often lead to higher concentration levels among students, especially those who struggle with focus in more extensive classroom settings. Only two of six children remained consistently engaged during a whole-class lecture-style session, while the others displayed varying degrees of distraction. However, in smaller group settings, all six children showed improved focus, with some previously disengaged students actively participating in discussions and activities. This finding aligns with the constructivist learning theory, where knowledge is constructed through social interaction and collaborative experiences.

The children's feedback highlighted that small groups fostered a more intimate and collaborative learning environment, facilitating better peer support and individualised teacher-student interaction. This observation strongly supports the concept of differentiated instruction, where teaching methods are tailored to meet the diverse needs of students (Learning, 2024). Moreover, the idea of small groups nurturing a 'community of practice' became evident, as children could freely share ideas and work together, fostering a sense of belonging (Brown, 2016). An intriguing insight shared by the children was the significance of having at least one friend in their small groups. This preference for familiar peers could enhance their comfort level and overall group dynamics, contributing to a more positive learning experience. This notion aligns with the literature that underscores the importance of peer relationships in learning environments.

While small groups were generally preferred, whole-class teaching was acknowledged for introducing new topics and promoting idea-sharing among a broader audience. This supports the traditional approach where whole-class sessions deliver core content, while small groups allow for deeper exploration and collaborative learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from this research suggest that both small-group and whole-class teaching in a Year Six classroom have distinct advantages and disadvantages, each contributing differently to the learning experience. This study revealed that small-group teaching promotes higher student engagement, personalised instruction, and improved teacher-student interaction. Classroom observations indicated that students in smaller groups demonstrated greater focus and participation, including those who struggled to concentrate in whole-class settings.

Student focus groups supported these observations, with many expressing a preference for small-group sessions due to their more supportive environment, opportunities for peer collaboration, and easier access to the teacher. This aligns with educational theories advocating differentiated instruction and collaborative learning, suggesting that small groups can cater to a wider range of learning needs. However, whole-class teaching remains valuable, particularly for introducing new topics and encouraging broader group discussions. These sessions can build a sense of community among students, though they may lead to disengagement for

some, especially those with varying academic abilities.

Based on this research, it is recommended that a balanced approach to teaching that incorporates both small-group activities and whole-class instruction. This balance enables students to benefit from comprehensive topic introductions while receiving individualised attention and collaborative learning opportunities.

Another suggestion would be adopting flexibility in group composition to allow students to choose their small groups, fostering a more comfortable and supportive learning environment. Continuous assessment and feedback should be integral to the teaching process, allowing educators to adapt their strategies based on student performance and preferences (Juwah *et al.*, 2004).

Finally, educators should engage in ongoing professional development focused on differentiated instruction and collaborative teaching methods. Collaboration with colleagues can further enhance teaching practices and improve student outcomes (Dixon *et al.*, 2014). These recommendations will enable educators to create dynamic and inclusive learning environments, improving student engagement and achievement.

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