

Conquering Large Class Size - Split Classroom Strategy

Introduction

In order to meet the needs of diverse learners in large classrooms, Penda can serve as an integral part of the daily classroom structure. In large classes (25+ students), students can be split into two groups based on their individual data. The group that needs extra support receives teacher-led instruction first, then has the opportunity for individual practice on Penda. Meanwhile, the accelerated group can first gain their own understanding of the standard using Penda, and then drive the teacher-led instruction once the class has switched groups. Using this structure for large classes allows teachers to use their time more wisely, while also meeting the best instructional practice of differentiated instruction in order to meet student's individual learning needs. Studies have found that "small group instruction has robust effects on attitude, persistence, and student achievement" (Cooper and Robinson, 1998). Therefore, teachers will be able to use Penda to provide meaningful small-group instruction while minimizing their time planning two separate lessons to meet the needs of their diverse learners.

Classroom/Instructional Practice

If integrated as part of the daily classroom structure, the use of Penda for a split learning environment not only provides inherent differentiated instruction but also a consistent classroom routine that empowers students. Using this small group setting allows teachers to check in with each individual student and cater to their instructional needs. Instead of teachers planning multiple different activities for different levels of learners, a split classroom using Penda can serve as daily differentiated instruction that is driven by the students themselves. Furthermore, student groupings can be flexible as more data assessments are given throughout the year (as students progress through individual standards and are assessed through Penda's assessment activities), allowing teachers to also demonstrate their responsiveness to their classroom's ever-changing instructional needs.

Impact on Student Learning

A split classroom structure can encourage students to take ownership of their own learning by assessing their understanding during their independent Penda group and then clarifying misunderstandings during teacher-led instruction. This differentiated classroom structure can foster student ownership of their own learning by giving them the opportunity to ask more insightful questions that reveal their thought process and level of comprehension after being exposed to working independently on Penda. Accelerated students can drive the teacher-led lesson by coming with a general understanding and questions based on what they have learned in Penda or even use their understanding to apply to lab and experimental activities. Students in need of more support will go into independent work with already a basic comprehension of key points and ideas they should be looking for. This structure gives students the opportunity to be exposed to the same standard twice within a class period through different methods in order to further increase comprehension.

Give It A Try - Here's How:

1. Use multiple data points (including diagnostic and/or formative assessment data) to separate your class(es) into two groups (group 1 - extra support needed, group 2 - accelerated).
2. Start the group needing extra support with teacher-led instruction first and the accelerated group completing Penda activities assigned. Once students are assigned to a group, they can come into class and start on either a warm-up in teacher-led, or dive right into the "Developing" Penda activity on the assigned standard.
3. Instruct students to take notes on key ideas and vocabulary while completing Penda activities (alternative: create thinking map) as well as generate any questions they may have (to be addressed during the teacher-led group).
4. Halfway through the class period (in 90 min period, or each day for 45 minute periods), switch the groups.

Artifact/Example:

