Navi Squads is a grouping model that hones students’ leadership skills and enhances their ownership over learning through student-led small-group instruction.

**OVERVIEW**

Navigator Learning created a student grouping model that supports the development of leadership, interpersonal relationships, and collaborative problem-solving. Its mission is rooted in a belief that if students are to be successful in college, the workplace, and beyond, they need so much more than traditional, teacher-led instruction. The aim of Navi Squads is for students to master their own learning through student-centered group work. In small, structured groups, students rotate through distinct roles. Some students act as leaders and some as facilitators, and others offer operational and logistical support. Squad members learn together by navigating work that’s challenging and engaging.

Navi Squads is being piloted in three Navigator Schools in California and three partner schools. This model reaches 630 students across two states. Navigator Learning hosts learning communities and workshops dedicated to sharing learnings and improving on Navi Squads. For a more comprehensive collaboration, it also offers partnerships or consultations to those interested in implementing this or other Navigator Learning models. ▶ [Navigator Schools Middle School](#)
What Makes This Model Innovative?

**Active Self-Direction**
Navi Squads encourages learners to share ownership and responsibility with their peers in order to achieve a common goal with minimal teacher intervention. Learners get many opportunities to practice directing their group’s learnings.

**Connection & Community**
Navi Squad learners work together in small groups and rotate through roles to lead and facilitate learning. By working together, students develop their interpersonal relationships and join in community with one another.

**Rigorous Learning**
Rigor is at the core of Navi Squads—teachers ensure group work is developmentally appropriate and that students are learning essential knowledge and skills as they master learning objectives as a Squad.

**DESIGN**

**Goals**
Navi Squads provides a supportive learning environment in which students can develop Navigator’s graduate aims, which envision students as collaborative change-makers who are ready to lead and support one another. Navigator Graduate Aims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continual Improvers</th>
<th>Students continuously learn about themselves and others while trying out different roles in group work activities.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Scholars</td>
<td>Students hone their academic content knowledge and skills within every learning activity and group assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Problem-Solvers</td>
<td>Students work to solve challenging and complex problems by relying on their own expertise and skills as well as those of their group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courageous Change-Makers</td>
<td>Students step outside of their comfort zones and try out new challenges related to solving problems through group work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Teammates</td>
<td>Students develop their interpersonal skills, work through challenges with teammates, and learn to share and lead in developmentally appropriate ways.</td>
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Experiences

Experiences in Navi Squads flip the learning styles found in traditional classrooms and center student-led teaching, practice, and discussion. Students in the classroom are in charge of their own learning as well as their fellow Squadmates’ learning. The Squad student experience involves taking on various roles over time in order to learn about collaboration and problem-solving from different perspectives. Explore Navi Squad’s Vision of Excellence

To ensure the model works as intended, every experience in Navi Squads is designed around a set of grounding principles:

1) Intentional grouping;
2) Teacher as a guide from the side;
3) Intellectual prep with a Squad’s model lens;
4) Positive behavior interventions and supports;
5) An explicit focus on pursuing graduate aims.

Squad Roles & Responsibilities

Students in Navi Squads are assigned specific roles for an extended amount of time to allow them to learn from and master their responsibilities. Student-Facing Squads Training Presentation

After each academic quarter, students rotate through each role in order to experience each throughout the school year. At Navi, students participate in Squads in ELA and Math, and often have different roles in those classes. Teachers predetermine groups based on academic, socio-emotional, and other factors. The roles include the following:

- **Team Leader:** This is often the role of one or two students who have mastered the content and who have previously been a Squad Leader. Their responsibilities include training and coaching new Squad Leaders, ensuring instruction is accurate and relatively consistent across groups, and working with the teacher to support their assigned Squads.

- **Squad Leader:** This role involves guiding the group’s instruction. Squad Leaders lead 4-5 students through their work by facilitating discussion, asking targeted questions, ensuring that there is shared participation across the group, and updating work
● **Quality Controller:** This role involves upholding classroom management routines. Quality Controllers keep time, ensure and encourage their peers to use rubrics to edit work, offer positive praise, and manage materials for their Squad.

● **Presenter:** This role involves presenting their group with materials for learning. They arrive to class quickly, organize materials for the group at their work stations, and share out their Squad’s work during whole-group discussions.

### Daily Goal-Setting

Squads set goals both as a team and individually to ensure they are meeting learning objectives and can hold each other accountable during group work. At the end of class, groups take 2-3 minutes to reflect on how they did individually and as a team. At the beginning of each class, Squads engage in a mini goal-setting discussion. In 3-5 minutes, students:

- Review their learning objectives as a group;
- Set individual goals related to each learning objective;
- Decide together what they would like to cultivate in order to meet their learning objectives.

### Student-Led Work

Each Squad role uniquely supports structured learning exercises for Math and ELA. During class time, Squad Leaders assign completion and mastery scores to the Squad’s work products. In both ELA and Math, Leaders facilitate a discussion with their Squad members to decide on scores between 0 and 3. A 3 signifies that classwork is complete and meets all requirements. A 2 means that work is mostly complete and meets most requirements. A 1 means that the work was simply started. Finally, a 0 means that work has not been started. In ELA, students use a RACE rubric to evaluate written responses. ⌨️ RACE Rubric ⌨️ Squads Tracker (ELA) ⌨️ Squads Tracker (Math) ⌨️ Squad Mastery Tracker

Quality Controllers ensure a timely and organized learning session, utilizing different evaluation rubrics per content. In ELA, Quality Controllers use RACE to evaluate answers from the group. In Math, Quality Controllers review homework in collaboration with their Squad to ensure any misconceptions have been addressed. To evaluate group work, Quality Controllers use a CASE rubric to ensure students are getting the right answers. During Math and ELA, Presenters ensure all work and materials are ready and available for their groups’ learning activities as soon as they enter class. ⌨️ RACE One-Pager ⌨️ CASE One-Pager
Supporting Structures

The Navi Squads model benefits from specifications around classroom-level supporting structures. These can include implementing student-centered curricular designs, specific teacher training, and learning around interventions, as well as building a positive classroom culture, to name just a few. Implementing this model will likely require making some changes to your classroom structures.

**Navi Squads benefit from student-centered instructional practices as well as curricular activities made for small group work that includes discovery-based problem-solving activities.**

Navi Squads’ ELA and math curriculum leverages standards-aligned, rigorous content. Learning objectives promote self-direction and relevant content that supports meaning-making.

- **Math:** Navi Squads leverages Illustrative Math’s Grades 5-8 curriculum. Content ensures that students develop language around math concepts and procedures. Lessons include strategies that are culturally responsive to students’ lived experiences and help build a safe and respectful classroom culture around learning.

- **ELA:** Navi Squads ELA curriculum strengthens students' reading comprehension and fluency. Students explore rich, engaging texts through class discussions centered around complex questions. Students are encouraged to make connections across many topics and experiences. Students also practice proving their thinking, leveraging textual evidence and extending their understanding through written responses. [Sample ELA Teacher Guide, The Giver](#)

For Squads, teachers must master key instructional moves—for both ELA and Math—to support student learning during Squad work time:

- **Framing:** The teacher frames the lesson activity, states the expectation for student collaboration, sets a visual timer, and communicates the time period in which students will work collaboratively in squads with minimal teacher interjection.

- **Circulating, monitoring, and taking data:** During student collaboration, the teacher tracks learning while they circulate around the room, monitoring and supporting student collaboration. Teachers also ensure all students understand the content and track data, and specifically focus on a few students who need extra support. Data
tracking is often shared with the team leaders. ▶ How Kids Coach Kids with Navi Squads

- **Pre-established check-ins:** Teachers and team leaders have pre-established check-in times to discuss misconceptions and how to address them in Squads. Teachers circulate, monitoring progress and understanding. Once the teacher has established that every Squad has a team member who understands the content, the teacher focuses on their target scholars.

- **Addressing misconceptions in-the-moment:** When there is a whole-class misconception (80% or more of students) around the learning objective, the teacher may interject and use guided questioning and scaffolding to support students. When possible, a student who has mastered the concept should support their peers instead of the teacher. □ Tracking Not Watching + Pivot □ Tracking Not Watching Workshop

- **Whole-class re-teach:** When appropriate, the teacher addresses common misconceptions as a whole class and encourages Squads to share their takeaways from their small groups.

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**Navi Squads works best when teachers enact positive behavior management practices that support student leadership and encourage self-reflection.**

Navi Squads aims to harness critical peer influence and use it as a tool for student learning. To do this, teachers set up classroom environments that leverage positive peer influence in various ways:

- Teachers work to implement *positive behavioral intervention and support* throughout classroom instruction, ensuring a special focus on providing positive rewards for Squad collaboration and teamwork in addition to positive individual behaviors. □ Navigator’s PBIS One-Pager

- Teachers and Squads give one another *shout outs* throughout the class period, especially before and after group work lessons, for students and teams that embody the Navi Graduate Aims. These various rituals build community and encourage students to continuously learn from one another. □ Navigator Graduate Aims

- Students also receive positive praise by the teacher in the form of a *table tracker*. Teachers leverage this to give positive praise to...
students who are fulfilling their roles and displaying Navi values throughout the lesson. Teachers use stamps or draw stars to award table points. Positive Praise Table Tracker

- As a class, students also participate in periodic “step back” meetings where they revisit their classroom agreements and Squad roles. Together, they spend time planning for next steps as a learning community and participate in retraining when necessary.

Navi Squads requires teachers to be trained on student-centered instruction as well as on best practices for rigorous group work.

It is critical that teachers develop their mindset around student-centered classroom practices where students are the instructors and teachers are the “Guide on the Side.” Teachers frame lessons, collect data during Squad work, address misconceptions with Squad Leaders, and reteach concepts whole-class as needed.

To prepare for Navi Squads, teachers engage in intellectual preparation (IP) from a Squads Model lens. Teacher PD: The Power of Student Teams This approach involves engaging in the Navi Learning IP process, assigning a Squad role to every student, pacing instructional slides, and planning for communication systems between Squad Leaders and Team Leaders. Navigator’s Intellectual Preparation Process Intellectual Prep: The Data Cycle Teachers also conduct frequent checks on understanding, to measure individual student mastery of lesson objectives.

This model can be adapted into any schedule with classes of varying duration.

Navigator Schools’ schedules consist of morning and afternoon sessions divided into four 1.5-hour learning blocks. Sample School Schedule

On Mondays and Thursdays, some scholars focus on ELA for their morning blocks, while others focus on Math. The second block consists of self-directed learning through online platforms and either social studies or science. Classes then switch the order of their core content schedules on Tuesdays and Fridays. On Wednesdays, classes focus on either ELA and math
interventions or accelerations, and students participate in their electives.  
A Day in the Life, ELA  A Day in the Life, Math

**Navi Squads can be adapted into almost any classroom or learning environment, though the model benefits from spaces where multiple Squads can work alongside one another.**

Classrooms at Navigator Schools look like traditional classroom spaces but are arranged to accommodate group work. Classroom tables—which can accommodate 3-4 students each—are arranged in clusters, each housing a few Squads. Squad Leaders monitor their Squads’ work at their own tables, while Team Leaders circulate across Squads in their cluster.  
Sample Squad Classroom Map

**SPACE & FACILITIES**

It is most important to arrange Squad tables in ways that can make it easy for teachers and Team Leaders to circulate throughout the classroom. Teachers must also determine an appropriate place for Team Leaders to sit. They can sit either at a center table, so they can complete their pre-work together, or join a Squad that’s struggling and serve as support.

**TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE**

Navi Squads works best with at least a 1:3 ratio of shared devices, which allows all students to access technology and digital materials during Squad work.

Navi Squads blend much of their curriculum and instruction with technology and digital learning platforms. Small groups often work best when students can all work or view content (such as presentations, materials, videos, and slide decks) on a shared device.

Navigator Schools use a 1:1 device-to-student ratio. However, Navi Learning believes that most lessons and the overall design principles can work with analog materials as well. Navigator Learning is actively considering how the model will support non-tech or low-tech implementation.
**IMPLEMENTATION**

**Supports Offered**

*Navigator Schools* offers the following support to help you implement their approach.

### Learning and Implementation Cohorts

Navi Learning offers virtual and in-person learning communities—or cohorts—of teachers, academic coaches, and leaders, who learn about implementing this model alongside one another. Currently, Navi Squads is offering a cohort opportunity called “Critical Friends.” There are still a few spots left!  

[ Critical Friends Information and Application ]

Join a community and engage in:

- Personal and group reflections on successes and areas of improvement;
- Building action plans incorporating clear next steps, with support from experienced educators;
- Training and professional development around student-centered teaching and learning;
- A network rich with resources, expertise, materials, tools, and more.

### Direct Partnerships with Schools

Navigator Learning works with partner schools that are interested in implementing Navi Squads and other Navi Learning principles. [ Navi Works with Catalyst ] Navi would offer the following direct critical key supports:

- 1:1 partnerships with schools dedicated to implementing the Squads model;
- Site visits and observations;
- On-site professional learning sessions;
- Weekly or bi-weekly Zoom meetings to track progress and goals.

### Get in Touch
Reach

7 Schools
2 States
540 Students Served

Impact

[Coming soon in the 2023-2024 school year]

Contact
Crystal O’Rourke
Director of Model Implementation
crystal.orourke@navigatorschools.org

RESOURCES

Navigator Schools Middle School
This video shows how students at Navigator Schools participate in Squads.

Navigator Schools Squad Model
Vision of Excellence
Why

In most traditional classrooms, the teacher stands front and center. Their main role is to talk and deliver key learning, while the students take it in, listen, and learn. But at Navigator, we know that our students are more than just students; they are learners who need to be engaged, challenged, and supported in their own learning. That’s why we’ve developed Squads, a unique and innovative approach to teaching and learning that empowers students to take ownership of their education.

Student-Facing Squads Training Presentation
This is a sample student-facing presentation to train students on the Squad roles and types.
Squads and its implementation at a high level.

**RACE Rubric**
This document is a sample rubric that students leverage during their ELA Squads learning activities.

**Squad Mastery Tracker**
This document is a sample tracker that teachers can use while tracking mastery during Socratic seminars.

**Squads Tracker (ELA)**
This document is a sample teacher-facing tracker for ELA.

**Squads Tracker (Math)**
This document is a sample teacher-facing tracker for Math.

**RACE One-Pager**
This document describes RACE use in classrooms at a high level.

**CASE One-Pager**
This document describes CASE use in classrooms at a high level.

**Tracking Not Watching + Pivot**
This document details how Navigator Schools leverage

**Tracking Not Watching Workshop**
This presentation details the professional development teachers receive at Navigator Schools around “Tracking Not

**How Kids Coach Kids with Navi Squads**
This video shows how students engage in coaching and collaboration during their Squads learning time.
this strategy across their classrooms.

Watching.”

Sample ELA Teacher Guide, The Giver
This document shows how a sample curriculum and pacing calendar can be adapted to Navi Squads.

Navigator Schools Core 3
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
Classroom Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>What</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Break It Down</td>
<td>How</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBIS Strategies</td>
<td>Break It Down, the PBIS framework and the expectations are clear, and the students are engaged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Navigator's PBIS One-Pager
This document describes Navigator Schools' implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports.

Positive Praise Table Tracker
This is a sample table tracker used with Navi Squads to track positive praise and feedback.

Navigator Graduate Aims
This document describes Navigator Schools graduate aims.

A Vision for Success in Middle School
Navigator Schools

Teacher Professional Development Session: The Power of Student Teams
This presentation is a sample professional development session designed to invest instructional staff in Squads learning.

Intellectual Prep
This document describes the Navigator Schools instructional preparation process and expectations.

Sample School Schedule
This is a sample middle school schedule that leverages Navi Squads during their longer work blocks.

A Day in the Life, ELA
This document is a student-facing presentation for a day in the life of an ELA student in grades 6-8 who

The Data Cycle
This presentation is a sample professional development session around data cycles
and the importance of tracking student learning.

A Day in the Life, Math
This document is a student-facing presentation for a day in the life of a math student in grades 6-8 who participates in Navi Squads.

Sample Squad Classroom Map
This is a document that details how classrooms can be configured to best encourage productive group work.

Navi Works with Catalyst
The Navigator team visited a pilot Squads partner to observe classrooms, modeled lessons implementing team leaders, and designed and delivered a PD based on observed needs.

participants in Navi Squads.

Critical Friends Information and Application
This website links to the application for a cohort learning opportunity.