



Session 11:
Small Groups

Teacher Professional Development Series



Recap

In our last session, we spent time...

- describing how teachers can set their classrooms up for success with the science of reading.
- describing the role of sound walls and classroom libraries



Today's Objective

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ★ develop effective small group instruction plans, including how to identify gaps in learning, develop targeted interventions and extensions, and what the students who are not a part of your small group can be doing to support their reading growth.



What is small group instruction?

- Small group instruction is a time for teachers to provide targeted support to students who did not master the content or skills introduced during whole-group instruction.
- Small group instruction is **responsive**, meaning that it is provided based on the outcome of formative assessment data collected during whole group instruction or through summative assessments.
- Small group instruction is **timely** - it should be provided as soon as deficits in learning are noticed to avoid larger gaps in learning.
- Small group instruction is **inclusive** - at different points, all students may require small group instruction - to either remediate or extend learning.



What is small group instruction?

- For small group instruction to be effective, a systematic approach to collecting formative data on student learning is essential.
- As you plan your lessons, ask yourself the following (essential) questions:
 - What, specifically, do I hope students are able to learn as a result of this instruction?
 - How will I know if they learned it?



Preparing for Small Group Instruction

- Once you are clear on your specific learning objective(s) and the ways in which you will measure those objectives, you can begin thinking about small group instruction.
- Your previous instructional experiences may give you insight into how students will struggle with a given objective.
 - Consider “quick responses” that you can draw upon if students struggle in these anticipated ways.
 - You may be able to prevent the need for a student to receive small group instruction if you can address misunderstandings in the context of core instruction.



Preparing for Small Group Instruction

- Once you have collected the formative assessment data - it's time to analyze. Don't wait days to do this - remember, effective small group instruction is *timely!*
- Analyze the results of these formative assessments by grouping similar struggles together.
 - Example: If I'm teaching students to discriminate between common and proper nouns, I may discover the following groups:
 - Students who can identify nouns, but can't discriminate between common and proper nouns.
 - Students who can't even identify nouns and confuse them with other parts of speech.
 - Outliers - kids who don't fit easily into any groups.



Preparing for Small Group Instruction

- Once I've identified my groups and my outliers, I plan for targeted support.
 - The group who simply struggled to discriminate between common and proper nouns may need a refresher on the difference and an opportunity to review several examples with instant feedback.
 - The group who could not even identify nouns may need more support identifying different parts of speech.
 - The outliers will need individualized support - they may not even be able to meet in a group, or they may be able to meet with a group with a little front-loaded support.



Preparing for Small Group Instruction

- Consider meaningful interventions that are efficient and engaging. You will likely not have unlimited time for these interventions, so make use of every moment by using well-developed, targeted support.
- Your small groups may have to address several objectives in the context of one block of time. That's ok! The more focused you are in your interventions, the more effective they will be.
- Small groups may address many different skills or concepts - reading fluency, grammar, writing, decoding, etc.



Planning for Small Group Instruction

- Remember that small group instruction is *responsive* - this makes it difficult to plan significantly in advance.
- You may choose to use a [template](#) to plan for your small group instruction, but planning should be in response to how students perform during core instruction.
- Ensure alignment between core instruction and small group instruction.

What if you have support staff in your class?



- Lucky you! But be strategic in planning for how they can support your students. Don't use them simply as behavior monitors - plan interventions that they can complete.
- Create systems and procedures for how they will know what is expected of them during small group time. (Email, printed plans, brief huddle each morning if possible).
- Effectively using support staff allows you to increase the impact you have on your students. While you are the teacher, they are there to support the students, and small groups are a wonderful way for them to do it, provided they are given meaningful direction from you!

What are the other students doing?

- As important as effective planning for small group instruction, you must also consider what the other students are doing.
- In terms of what students are doing during this time, there are two goals:
 - You remain uninterrupted as you work with your small group.
 - Students who are not meeting with the small group are engaged in meaningful work related to literacy.



What are the other students doing?



- Students must be engaged in meaningful work that supports their literacy development.
 - This is not snack time, preferably not your “normal” bathroom time, nor is it time for students to be engaged in activities that require significant supervision or support from you.
 - Student activities during this time should be designed so that students can complete them independently based on their age/developmental level.
 - Expectations and procedures for this time must be clearly established with students and rehearsed many times (with feedback) before they are expected to implement them independently.

What are the other students doing?

- What type of independent work can they be doing that supports the science of reading?
 - Practicing fluency by reading and rereading from decodable readers, writing in response to read-alouds, making and writing words, listening centers where students can listen to fluent reading of stories, reading from “poetry” or “lyric” folders, sentence writing...



Final Thoughts

- Small group instruction should be responsive, timely, and inclusive.
- Small group instruction depends on coherent lesson objectives and formative assessments in core instruction.
- Effective small group instruction targets skills not mastered during core instruction by grouping students with similar instructional needs and providing efficient, targeted support.
- Students not meeting in small groups should be engaged in activities that are meaningful but do not require significant oversight or support from the teacher or support staff.



Engage!

What is something that you have struggled with when it comes to small group instruction? What will you do differently this year to address that struggle?





Questions or Suggestions?

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