

Small Group Instruction

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Some Questions Teachers Ask

- What kinds of small groups are possible?
- How often do small groups meet?
- How do you form different types of groups?
- What kinds of things can you teach in small groups?
- How do you manage small groups and keep track of students' progress and needs?
- What are the rest of the students doing when you meet with small groups?

Types of Small Groups

1. *Comprehension Strategy Groups*
Focus on Reading Strategies
2. *Literature Study Groups*
Focus on Literature / Interpretation
3. *Book Clubs*
Focus on Building a Community of Readers
4. *Inquiry Groups*
Focus on Content Areas / Research

Group Roles

Groupings

Whole Group

Small Group

Independent

Teacher

Presenter

Facilitator

Observer

Student

Observer

Participant

Reader

Small Groups I

Comprehension Strategy

- **Focus on Strategies**
- Based on teacher observations and assessments of need
- Teacher decides objective of specific lesson
- Teacher selects texts
- Teacher focuses attention
- Students attempt strategies

Literature Study

- **Focus on Literature**
- Based on students' interests
- Students choose from available / selected texts
- Teacher *facilitates* discussion
- Students determine pace of reading
- Students determine focus of discussions – with help

Small Groups II

Book Clubs

- **Focus on Building Community**
- Based on student selected texts and interests
- Just want to read a book for fun with friends!
- Less focus on deep study of literature
- Fosters student independence

Inquiry Groups

- **Focus on Content**
- Based on content area topics
- Multiple Sources of Information
- Questions drive selections
- Notetaking skills

Comprehension Strategy Groups: Focus on Reading Strategies

Comprehension Strategy Groups: Purposes

- Recognizes difference among readers' needs, interests, and abilities
- Provides explicit instruction – focuses attention
- Extra support for readers not able to independently apply strategies demonstrated in whole group settings
- Resources can be matched more specifically to readers
- Teach towards independence – not the book in hand but the next book!

Comprehension Strategy Groups: Goals

- Make appropriate selections for reading
- Become engaged with texts while reading (lost in books)
- Read with enthusiasm
- Read strategically
- Know when a book is too hard
- Engage in meaningful, invigorating conversations about books
- Read fluently (oral and silent)
- Read increasingly more challenging texts

Types of Strategy Groups:

Shared Reading

- Teacher responsible for initial reading
- Students decide how much to contribute (ie. choral reading)
- Classroom “Lap”
- Big books, chants and songs, charts, audiobooks

Guided Reading

- Students practice with instructional-level texts
- Texts selected by the teacher.
- Reader responsible for initial reading

Small Group Procedures

- Book introduction
- Reading along
- Teaching points / discussion

Instructional Decisions

- Group Formation
- What basis are groups formed?
- Focus of the Lesson
- What are we teaching?
- Selecting Resources
- What will we use to demonstrate strategies?

Teaching Approaches

- How do we teach the lessons?
- Assessment of Impact
- How will we know if our teaching is successful?
- Forming Groups
- Teaching with a Specific Purpose

Small Group Instruction

- **Teach:** Teacher states purpose for group and reinforces a strength. Teacher quickly demonstrates, gives an example, serves as facilitator or partner
- **Engage:** Students are actively involved in trying the strategy (teacher gives individual scaffolding as needed)
- **Link:** Connect the work from small group to the work they do during independent reading/work time

Forming Groups

- Using assessments to determine needs
- Knowing skills and strategies required for reading texts at this grade level
- Know resources available
- Make connections between needs and strategies
- Including all students in the class

Classroom-Based Assessment

- Formative - ongoing, longitudinal
- Teacher observation is key
- Done during the act of reading real texts
- Attitudinal as well as diagnostic

Variety of Assessment Windows:

- Running Records – Miscue Analysis
- Observational Records
- Reading Response Notebooks
- Conferences and Interviews
- Writing Samples

Making Teaching Intentional: Possible Lessons

- **Close Reading** – Literal elements and meanings
- **Inferential Thinking** – generating interpretations
- **Elements of Literature** – plot, setting, character, theme, mood...
- **Comprehension Strategies** – summarizing, visualizing, asking questions...
- **Literary Strategies** – character motive, plot twists, flashback-foreshadow

Selecting Resources: Making Instruction Obvious

- What are the supports and challenges in a text?
- How does the text call forth a particular strategy?
- Is this an appropriate text for teaching this particular strategy?
- Does the text make the strategy obvious?
- What experiences have students had with texts?
- How will this text scaffold other texts?

Strategy Lessons

- **Introduce Lesson:** Teacher states purpose for group and introduces the strategy to be taught.
- **Demonstrate Strategy:** Teacher demonstrates strategy use and gives an example – makes strategy visible.
- **Guided Practice:** Students are actively involved in trying the strategy (teacher gives individual scaffolding as needed).
- **Connect:** Teacher links the work from small group to the work students do during independent reading.
- **Reflect:** Teacher allows students time to talk about the lesson and what worked for the students.

Assessing Impact: Instructional Trajectory

- **Range** – strategies should be helpful in a variety of contexts – teaching forward
- **Relevance** – strategies for reading in real world settings and texts (not just school-based)
- **Focus** – strategy should always lead towards comprehension
- **Evidence of Impact** – discussions, reader response notebooks, observational records

Literature Study Groups: Focus on Literature

What Should You Get from Reading a Novel?

- *Willingness to Read Another*
- Enjoyment – Sense of Adventure
- Knowledge of World and Self
- Basic Literal Comprehension
- Cultural Capital
- Sense of the Novel as a Genre
- Ability / Willingness to Discuss the Book
- Connections to Other People

Literature Study Groups

- Books selected from teacher offerings
- More intensive than extensive
- Coding and preparation for discussion
- Teacher facilitated discussions
- Expectations for presentations

The Literature Study Cycle

Community of Readers

- Reading Aloud Daily
- Whole Class Interactive Discussions
- Knowledge of Elements of Literature
- Quotes/Poetry/Picturebook Groups
- Chapter Book as a Model
- Whole Group Book Log

Preparations

- Book Talks
- Reviews and Recommendations
- Choosing Books - Signing Up
- Signing a Contract
- Reading the Book
- Coding Literature
- Checking for Challenges

Selecting Texts

- Based on Interest
- What is an Appropriate Text?
- What is an Appropriate Level of Challenge?
- Book Reviews and Recommendations
- Audiobooks (oral support)
- Partner Reading (peer support)
- Parent Volunteers (support from more proficient readers)

Lit Study Contract

- I agree to read the book (insert title of book here).
- I will finish the book by the time the group decides.
- I will take notes in my book log and use them to help me in our discussion of the book.
- I will bring my book and book log to class EVERYDAY!!!
- I will PARTICIPATE in the discussion of the book.
- I agree to help other students to better understand the book we have read.
- I agree to work together in a group to celebrate finishing the book by creating a presentation for the class.
- Date / Signatures

Coding Literature

- **Noticings** – things readers notice as they are reading, including illustrations, language, book design elements, or genre characteristics.
- **Connections** – things readers connect to themselves from personal experiences or connections to other literary texts.
- **Interpretations** – potential meanings associated with what the reader notices, including character motives, inferences about themes, mood, symbols, or social issues.
- **Wonderings** – questions readers have.
- **Confusions** – things readers find confusing.
- **Narrative Elements** – aspects of the plot, setting, or characters that seem relevant for understanding the story.
- **Literary Devices** – aspects of the writer's style or craft, including figurative language, metaphors and others.

Discussions

- Modeling the Process - The Goldfish Bowl
- Passionate Attention
- Moving From Conversation to Dialogue
- Teacher as Facilitator / Listener
- Taking Discussion Notes
- Supporting & Challenging
- Pulling Ideas Together
- Setting Agendas

Discussion Helpers & Blockers

Helpers:

Look at each other when speaking

Ask each other questions

Listen and care about what each other thinks and says

Talk so everyone can hear

Give everyone a chance to talk

Learn to politely disagree

Blockers:

Playing around in groups

Being rude

Interrupting others

Allowing one person to do all the talking

Not coming to the group with your own ideas

Not talking

Saying you are done when there may be more to say

Tensions

Comprehension
Teacher-Directed Topics
Consensus
Finding the Main Idea
Disagreement as Bad Behavior

Interpretation
Student Selected Topics
Ambiguity
Alternative viewpoints
Disagreement as aspect of inquiry

Presentations:

- Sharing Insights with Others
- Short: 2-3 Days Prep
- Invitations for Readers
- Creating Multimodal / Multimedia Presentation

Self-Evaluations of Lit Study

- Did group members listen to each other's ideas?
- Did members ask each other any questions?
- Was anyone rude or impolite when talking?
- Did you change any of your ideas after the discussions?
- Did you go back and look at the book for ideas?
- What big ideas did you generate from your readings and discussions?

Book Clubs: Focus on Building a Community of Readers

- Self-selected groups and books
- More extensive than intensive
- Discussions are student-led
- No expectations for presentations
- Goal is to build a community of readers willing to share ideas with other readers
- Instilling a ***Love of Reading*** is as important as teaching fluency and decoding

Partner Reading and Book Clubs

- What do your students need to understand about behaviors, routines and activities to do during partner reading or book club?
- What skills will your students be practicing when they work in partners or book club?
- What will you teach to help students be successful?
- How will you teach it?

Inquiry Groups: Focus on Content Areas / Research

Inquiry Groups

- Can be organized by areas of interest
- Framed by larger themes or areas of study: geology, Grand Canyon, Civil War
- Discuss researcher perspectives – observers, note-takers, experimenters, research reviewers etc.
- Many writing lessons can be taught in these groups and full group lessons.
- Can lead to writing, presentations etc.
- Focus on various modes of representation – photography, art, music, writing, graphs, etc

Inquiry Groups: Using Inquiry Notebooks

Things to Include in Inquiry Notebooks

- Lists
- Vocabulary Notes - Glossary
- Research Note-Taking - Paraphrasing
- Interesting Facts and Figures
- Quotes / Citations
- Outlines - Organizing Information
- Images - Sketches - Graphs
- Table of Contents -
- Draft Writing

Inquiry Notebooks

- Demonstrate how inquiry journals are used
- Share your journal / notes
- Provide time for notebooks to be used / expanded
- Bring notebooks into the “Field”
- Show how to organize Within and Outside the Notebook
- Moving from Notes to Representations (Publications)

So Where Do I Start ?

- Increase Your Knowledge of Children’s Literature
- Use Classroom-Based Assessments to Know Your Readers
- Define the Goals and Purposes of Your Various Small Groups
- Work to help Students become more Independent outside of Small Groups
- Make Your Instruction More Obvious

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Types of Groups	Teacher Roles	Student Roles	Purpose	Texts
Comp Strategy	Set Objectives Choose Members	Reader Apply Strategy	Learn Reading Strategies	Purposefully Selected to Support Strategy
Literature Study	Reader Facilitator	Choose Text Reader Participates in Discussion	Discuss Literature	Offered by Teacher - Selected by readers
Book Club	Observer Supporter	Selects texts Leads Discussion	Share Books with Fellow Readers	Chosen by Readers
Inquiry	Researcher Resource Fellow Explorer	Researcher Chooses Topics Note Taker	Engage in Inquiry about a Topic	Found by Teacher and Student

Types of Groups	Membership	Procedures	Outcomes
Comp Strategy	Determined by reading assessments and reading needs	Demonstrate Strategies Observe readers Teach into Reading Act	Application of reading strategies
Literature Study	Determined by student interest and discussion ability	Student-led Discussions Teacher facilitates discussion Meet until saturated	Deeper analysis of literature
Book Club	Determined by student interest	Students decide how much to read, when to meet and what to discuss	Enjoy a good book with friends
Inquiry	Determined by student interest and curiosity	Depends on project and possible presentations or publications	Research tools New Knowledge Ability to evaluate information