

**Small Group Instruction**  
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**Some Questions to Start**

- 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**

***Comprehension Strategy Groups***

Focus on Reading Strategies

***Literature Study Groups***

Focus on Literature / Interpretation

***Book Clubs***

Focus on Building a Community of Readers

***Inquiry Groups***

Focus on Content Areas / Research

**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
- Usually focuses on connections to writing workshop

### **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

### *Typical structure:*

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

### **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

## 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

## 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

## **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

## **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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