Think SMALL!

Engaging Our Youngest Readers in Small Groups

Debbie Diller

Video Viewing Guide
Contents

Introduction 3
Why Teach in Small Groups? 3
Getting Started with Small Groups 4
Forming Groups 4
Supporting Independence 5
Whole to Small Group 5
Pre-Emergent Readers 7
One Group, One Book, Over Two Days 8
Goldilocks and Book Choice 9
DVD Extras 10
  Kindergarten Small-Group Area Tour 10
  Planning and Lesson Overview 11
Resources 12
Printable Forms 13–36
DVD Chapters and Playing Lengths 37
Introduction

Think Small! was taped over three days in the late fall in a Houston-area school with a diverse population, E.A. Lawhon Elementary in the Pearland Independent School District (Texas). All children in the video speak Spanish as their first language and English as their second language. In this series, Debbie Diller—a consultant and the author of several books and videos, including Making the Most of Small Groups and Literacy Work Stations—works with kindergarten teacher Estella Pérez and first-grade teacher María Diaz-Albertini as they plan to meet the needs of their young learners at a variety of reading levels, from pre-emergent to mid-first grade. Together with Debbie, they explore how to form groups, organize for small-group instruction, choose books, write lesson plans, and support student independence so they can teach more effectively in small groups with young readers.

This guide is designed to help you maximize learning from the video in professional learning settings. Included are helpful hints for workshop facilitators, questions to guide viewing and discussion, and suggestions for implementing ideas from the video in classrooms. The CD contains printable copies of all of the forms and charts referred to in this viewing guide, including the print materials for making the flexible grouping and kindergarten folders seen in the DVD. Most of the forms and charts were taken from Debbie’s book Making the Most of Small Groups; participants’ understanding of small-group work might be enhanced if, in addition to watching the DVD, they were to have access to the book as well.

NOTE: Why the tiara? It’s a device that Debbie uses to minimize student interruptions during small-group work. When she’s wearing that tiara, students know they need to find their own solutions to their problems and not to interrupt the small-group lesson.

Why Teach in Small Groups?

In this brief introduction to the series, Debbie talks about the importance of small-group instruction. Use it to get participants thinking about the purposes of small-group instruction. Why do we teach in small groups?

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. What reasons does Debbie give for teaching in small group?
2. Compare whole group and small group. What should we teach in whole-group reading? In small-group reading? Why?
3. Using Figure 1, Overcoming Obstacles to Small-Group Instruction, have small groups fill in the three-column chart together. Why teach in small groups? What obstacles might you need to overcome to teach in small groups? How will you overcome each of those obstacles? Teachers may need support as they brainstorm possible solutions to problems. Share the charts with one another.
Getting Started with Small Groups

Estella Pérez (kindergarten) and María Diaz-Albertini (first grade), the two teachers Debbie works with in this video series, join her to provide tips on starting small-group instruction early in the year. Each of these teachers works with twenty to twenty-four students per classroom, depending on this Title I school’s enrollment. Please note that this video was filmed in November 2009, following Hurricane Ike, which caused great damage in the Houston area and closed the schools for two weeks in September. Regardless of this setback, teachers began small-group instruction early in the school year (after using the first four to six weeks to establish routines through literacy work stations).

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. When do you usually start small-group instruction? Why?
2. What tips did you get from the teachers on starting small group early in the year?
3. How did the teachers’ feelings about using literacy work stations in their classrooms change over time? What helped them?
4. You may want to have teachers work together to brainstorm literacy work stations for their classrooms. Take what they’re already teaching and have students practice using those materials at stations. Replay this section and have teachers look carefully for the literacy stations shown (pocket chart station, Big Books station, buddy reading station). Ask them how they could set up similar stations.

NOTE: Debbie has dealt in depth with the topic of literacy work stations in her book *Literacy Work Stations* and in the video series *Launching Literacy Stations* (see p. 12 for a list of Debbie’s titles). Refer to these resources if your teachers need help setting up stations.

Forming Groups

The teachers in the school system on this video use several kinds of data to form small groups. They administer the Developmental Reading Assessment, 2nd edition (DRA2) several times a year. In addition, they gather information on letter identification, rhyming, and phonological awareness. They use colors to refer to groups, such as the blue or red group, to simplify the organization of materials for small-group instruction.

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. Distribute Figure 2, Tips for Forming Groups. Have teachers view this segment and take notes on what they learned about forming groups. What did they notice? What will they try?
2. You might also use Figure 3a, When Do I Move a Student into a Different Small Group? for discussion after viewing this part of the video. When do
you move students to a different group? What did you learn from the video?

3. Gather supplies to have teachers make their own flexible small-groups folder for children who are reading. Print out Figure 3b. You will also need the following supplies to make the folders shown in this section:
   - Colored file folders
   - 1.5” x 1.5” sticky note for each child, with that child’s name on it
   - Velcro
   - Marker and ruler (for dividing folder into sections)

4. How do you keep track of what to do with pre-emergent readers in small group in your classroom? Discuss the use of the small-group folders for kindergarten. Print out Figure 3c to make folders for rhyming and phonological awareness and refer to the supply list in question 3, substituting a glue stick for the Velcro.

**NOTE:** More information on creating flexible small-group folders and the pre-emergent folders can be found on pages 24–28 of Debbie’s book *Making the Most of Small Groups*.

## Supporting Independence

Maria, Estella, and Debbie share ideas to help students work independently so teachers can make the most of small-group time. They use several management tools:

- Literacy Work Stations Management Kit by Debbie Diller, from www.reallygoodstuff.com
- Tiara worn by Debbie in the video as a visible sign to students not to interrupt her during small-group time, from Wal-Mart’s toy department
- Music wand used by Debbie to control noise, from www.treeblocks.com (available in a number of different shapes)
- Digital timer, from discount stores, to keep Debbie’s lessons from lasting too long (which could lead to off-task behavior by students)

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. Which tips were most useful to you?
2. How do you help students work more independently during this time of day?
3. Have teachers bring examples of what they have used to help students develop independence after viewing this video and trying some of the ideas.

## Whole to Small Group

At the beginning of this segment, we see Debbie teaching two whole-group lessons: 1) sight words in kindergarten, connecting the word wall words to the words in the Big Book *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*, and 2) a lesson on punctuation.
in first grade with the Big Book *Our Favorite Food*. In first grade, Debbie had noticed that students in several small groups needed explicit instruction on this skill. Other groups were not yet ready to do this on their own, but would be soon, so she modeled it in whole group.

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. How did the creation of the punctuation anchor chart with the class help them with their reading fluency? A copy of this chart is shown in Figure 4. Teachers might try making the punctuation anchor chart with their students before reading a Big Book (usually when students are approaching reading levels D–E or DRA 6–8, or early first grade).

2. How did Debbie use the students’ ideas and involve them as she taught how to read the punctuation in whole group?

3. Debbie used highlighter tape on only some of the pages. Why do you think she didn’t have students mark the punctuation on every page? *(NOTE: The card with highlighter tape was used along with this Big Book independently at the Big Book station the week after this lesson was taught.*) What tools do you use in shared reading? How do you then move these to literacy work stations for student practice?

4. What explicit language did Debbie use as she taught students to read punctuation in whole group? How will this help students later in small group, and ultimately during independent reading?

5. Debbie moved the punctuation lesson to small group the same day. The small group was ready to practice applying the skill immediately. Others would not work on it for several weeks. How does teaching lessons like this in whole group help students in small group several weeks later?

6. In small group, the lesson began with a familiar rereading of an old book while Debbie listened to Juan and took a running record. Maria had noticed that Juan needed explicit instruction on slowing down and paying attention to punctuation. Why do you think Debbie listened to just one student before introducing a new book to the group? *(NOTE: This lesson was filmed immediately after recess, during which Juan had been upset by an incident on the playground. It was that incident, and not reading to Debbie, that made him look so serious!)*

7. Although fluency was the focus of the small-group lesson here, how did Debbie also teach some phonics and comprehension?

8. How did Debbie prompt for reading the punctuation (fluency) while the students read in small group? How did she also prompt to meet other individual needs while listening in? Discuss the prompting that occurred with the girl who substituted *for* in place of the word *of* in the sentence “Can you count to see how many of us like red jelly beans the best?” Debbie said, “This is a little tricky in English,” took out a piece of paper, and wrote the words *of* and *for* to show how they are similar. What kinds of miscues do your ELL students commonly make? How do you prompt in these cases?

9. In the debrief following the lesson, Debbie and María talked about the “stuff” they use for teaching small groups. What are your thoughts on this? What next steps will they take for this group? Why?
10. Have teachers identify a small group that needs to focus on reading punctuation. Choose a book and plan a lesson together, using Debbie’s plan (Figure 5) and the lesson plan template in Figure 6. After they teach this small-group lesson, have teachers share their experiences with one another.

Pre-Emergent Readers

Planning the Lesson

Debbie and Estella plan for a lesson with pre-emergent readers who need to practice rhyming and oral language. You might watch this lesson in its entirety, from planning to the lesson to the debrief. Or, after viewing the whole, you could play it again and watch one segment at a time, stopping the DVD and using the following questions for discussion after each part.

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. How does this planning session, and the way Debbie and Estella organize, help the teaching of the lesson? What might you try in your future lesson planning?
2. How can lessons taught previously in whole group support the small-group lesson?
3. Look at and discuss Debbie’s lesson plan in Figure 7. A blank copy of this template is included in Figure 8 for teachers to use to plan their own lessons for pre-emergent readers.

The Lesson

1. What did students already know? How did Debbie connect new learning to what they know? How did she engage students in the lesson?
2. The goal of the first part of the lesson was rhyming. How did the children do? The goal of the second part of the lesson was oral language (talking in longer sentences and using the vocabulary of the book). How did the children do?
3. How did Debbie stay focused on the goals of the lesson? What helped the children be successful? What did Debbie do to scaffold the students throughout the lesson?
4. Why do you think Debbie selected The Surprise (a wordless picture book) to use in this lesson? How was it well suited to developing oral language and vocabulary?

NOTE: The Surprise, along with the props, had previously been used in whole-group instruction. To make the language consistent when “reading” the text multiple times during whole-group lessons, Debbie typed a simple text that she copied onto cardstock and glued to the bottom of each page with a repositionable adhesive. This way, Estella could use it as a wordless book again if she chose to.
Debrief

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. First, Debbie and Estella discuss the rhyming portion of the lesson. Why isn’t it critical for students to use “real” words for rhyming? What next steps will they take? Why?
2. Next, Debbie and Estella talk about the oral language part of the lesson. How did this lesson also support comprehension? Vocabulary? What might you try in your classroom after watching this lesson?
3. Have teachers bring picture books (wordless or with words) that would be good to use in repeated whole-group read-alouds for developing oral language. What props might be used with each book to support oral language and vocabulary development? Talk about how to move these books to small-group instruction. Who would you use these books with in small group? Why? Have teachers teach using one of these books in whole group and then move it to small group for some students. Ask them to bring their results back to share with their colleagues.

One Group, One Book, Over Two Days

Debbie and Estella then plan a lesson for a different kindergarten group. This group is just beginning to read at DRA level 2, a kindergarten reading level. They are learning high-frequency words and starting to pay closer attention to print. On Day 1, the focus will be on reading a new book. On Day 2, they will reread the same book and write using some of the words from the book to reinforce looking at print.

Distribute Figure 9a, Small-Group Lesson Plan for Day 1 Lesson in Estella’s Room. Then view the Day 1 portion of the lesson, and discuss:

1. How did Debbie and Estella use their observations to plan the small-group lesson? What data do you use to plan lessons? Why is taking notes on students important? Read Figure 9b, adapted from page 23 of Making the Most of Small Groups, for more information on how to manage anecdotal notes. You might take time to let teachers prepare anecdotal note cards (a 4” x 6” index card for each child, with his or her name at the top). Debbie suggests storing these in double-pocket insertable plastic dividers (available from Avery, www.avery.com, in five different colors). The index cards for each small group can be kept in the pocket for that group. The double-pocket dividers can be stored in a three-ring notebook.
2. Choosing the right book influences the success of a small-group lesson (more on this in the segment “Goldilocks Goes to Small Group”). What did you notice about book selection? How do you choose books for small group?
3. How does the word work component of the lesson help students succeed in reading the new book?
4. Discuss the new book introduction. What did Debbie do to scaffold the children before reading? How did she plan for early finishers?

5. Notice that Debbie stopped as she had the children read the book on their own. Why did she interrupt the lesson? How did she help students clear up a confusion? Talk about times that this has happened in your lessons.

6. What did you notice about the “After Reading” part of the book? What was included? Who was doing the work? What do you think children learned in this lesson?

Distribute Figure 10, Small-Group Lesson Plan for Day 2 in Estella’s Room. View the Day 2 part of the lesson, and discuss:

1. How did the lesson extend on Day 2? Why do you think Debbie continued to work with these same words and book? What review was included? What new work did the children have to do?

2. How did making a sentence and rebuilding it (cut-up sentences) help students learn the new words and pay attention to print? Why do you think Debbie wrote the sentence (rather than having each child write it)?

3. How did this lesson help second language learners?

4. In this lesson, Debbie couldn’t find uppercase magnetic letters, so she used bits of index cards with a capital I on them. How did this work? Do you ever have to substitute materials? Talk about a time you did this and how the lesson worked.

5. Have teachers plan and teach similar lessons for students at this level who need this type of work. They might videotape their lessons and bring them in to share with the team for reflection.

Goldilocks and Book Choice

This segment is about how to choose a book for small-group instruction. This takes time and planning on the teacher’s part. Use the video and then provide structured time during the school day to allow teachers to practice choosing books with the support of their colleagues.

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. How do you know a book is too easy? Too hard? Just right?

2. What can you do if a book is too easy? Or too hard?

3. Book selection is everything! What will you try the next time you’re looking for a book for small-group instruction?

Work together as a grade-level team to select a book for a small-group lesson. Have a teacher bring in data on the children in a small group, including reading levels, anecdotal notes, running records, and so forth. Review this information to choose a focus for the lesson. Use the reading levels from Figure 3c (also on pages 171–174 of Making the Most of Small Groups). Then look at several books together to find a book with that focus that works best. You may have to look at more than
one book. You might also find yourself choosing books for the next several lessons; this often happens and can be a real time-saver. It’s recommended to stick with the same lesson focus for several lessons in a row, until you see evidence of children trying that strategy more independently. When this is in place, you can move to a new strategy and a different kind of book selected for that purpose. Teachers might use the lesson planning template provided in Figure 11 to plan their lessons.

**DVD Extras**

**Kindergarten Small-Group Area Tour**

A well-organized small-group area can make lesson planning smoother and simpler and can save time in the teaching of a lesson.

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. Watch this short clip and talk about how Estella’s small-group area is organized. Then have teachers look at their small-group areas and give suggestions on how to improve these spaces.
2. Teachers may want to do small-group “makeovers” in their rooms. You might refer to pages 70–75 of *Spaces & Places* by Debbie Diller for help with this.
3. Look at placement of word walls in the classroom. Brainstorm ways to make a large-print word wall low and interactive, and near the whole-group teaching area, for grades K–1. Teachers might want to make matching mini-word walls for use in the small-group teaching space.

Items used in Estella’s small-group area include:

- Bins with colored labels to match each small group (Estella uses colors to organize her groups), where little books are placed for the groups that are doing guided reading. The smaller blue bins are the Sort & Store Book Organizer from www.lakeshorelearning.com.
- Guided reading notebook (described on pages 16–17 of *Making the Most of Small Groups*).
- Labeled containers for concepts about print (CAP), oral language, rhyming, phonemic awareness, letter ID, writing, and phonics that hold materials to use in teaching each of these lessons. The large blue containers are the Help-Yourself Book Boxes (set of six) from www.lakeshorelearning.com. Contents of the containers include:
  - CAP: “reading fingers” for 1-1 matching; Wikki Stix and highlighter tape for marking new words
  - Oral language: familiar books from read-aloud that are good for retelling; props to match the books
  - Rhyming: rhyming cards; rhyming cube; favorite rhyming books from read-aloud
Phonemic awareness: cards with phonemic awareness games written on them for quick reference; sound sorting cards; sound boxes and counters for pushing sounds

Letter ID: letter matching games

Writing: “spacemen” for putting spaces between words; sentence strips; black Sharpie pen and scissors (for cut-up sentences); alphabet chart; boo-boo tape (six-line correction tape for covering up writing errors); paper

Phonics: phonics games and picture cards


Portable word wall made of trifold project board (words are attached with Velcro). (NOTE: There is a large word wall in Estella’s whole-group teaching area, but it’s too far away from the small-group area for students to easily access it.)

Desktop Stand with Magnetic Dry-Erase Easel on one side and Desktop Pocket Chart on the other from www.reallygoodstuff.com.

Music wand from www.treeblocks.com (for getting students’ attention to switch groups or to manage noise).

Digital timer (to keep lessons on track).

Planning and Lesson Overview

This segment includes clips from a variety of small-group lessons for young readers in both kindergarten and first grade. It gives an overview of the planning and structure of small-group lessons and illustrates what teachers should include when teaching in small groups with children who are reading.

Discussion questions and workshop activities:

1. What did you learn about lesson planning and book selection from this video? Use Figure 12, Planning a Small-Group Lesson, to guide the discussion.
2. Why do you think Debbie recommends planning lessons for just one day at a time in small group?
3. How do you use assessment data for the day-to-day planning of small-group lessons?
4. Distribute Figure 13, Suggested Small-Group Reading Lesson Sequence, to teachers for note taking while watching this segment. Then ask them to compare their notes to how they’ve been teaching in small group. Ask, “What will you try as a result of watching this segment?”
5. Using the books they chose in the Goldilocks video segment, ask teachers to work with a colleague and write a lesson plan to go with their chosen book. They might use the lesson plan template in Figure 11. Also see Making the Most of Small Groups for sample lesson plans (throughout the book).
Resources
The materials you saw in this DVD appear by kind permission of the following:

Benchmark Education
It Is in a? © 2003 Benchmark Education Company, LLC
My Week © 1999 Benchmark Education Company, LLC
My Models © 1999 Benchmark Education Company, LLC
Living on the Farm © 1999 Benchmark Education Company, LLC
The Birthday Flowers © 2007 Benchmark Education Company, LLC
Reading a Graph © 1999 Benchmark Education Company, LLC
All available from www.benchmarkeducation.com

Boys Mills Press
A Splendid Friend, Indeed by Suzanne Bloom
The Surprise by Sylvia van Ommen is a Lemniscaat book, available from
http://www.boydsmillspress.com/lemniscaat/books/

Okapi
Our Favorite Food, On the Playground, and Big Brother are titles from the nonfiction series Explorations and were used with the permission of Eleanor Curtain Publishing.
Distributed exclusively in the US by Okapi Educational Publishing Inc,
www.myokapi.com

Really Good Stuff
One, Two, Buckle My Shoe from the Debbie Diller Design Line at
www.reallygoodstuff.com

Debbie Diller Bibliography
Books
Literacy Work Stations: Making Stations Work
Practice with Purpose: Literacy Work Stations for Grades 3–6
Making the Most of Small Groups: Differentiation for All
Spaces and Places: Designing Classrooms for Literacy

DVDs
Launching Literacy Stations: Mini-Lessons for Managing and Sustaining Independent Work, K–3
Stepping Up with Literacy Stations: Design and Instruction in Grades 3–6
Spotlight on Small Groups
Fluency Rubric
All are available from Stenhouse Publishers, www.stenhouse.com
## Overcoming Obstacles to Small-Group Instruction

*NOTE:* Be creative as you seek possible solutions for each obstacle!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Teach in Small Groups?</th>
<th>Obstacles to Small-Group Instruction</th>
<th>Possible Solutions to Overcome Obstacles</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
### Tips for Forming Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips</th>
<th>My Thoughts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Know your students. Use assessment data, such as reading levels,</td>
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<tr>
<td>formal assessments (DIBELS, TPRI, and other state protocols), and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>anecdotal notes from small group and independent reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What patterns do you see when you look at the data? Group</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>students with similar needs. Consider reading levels, skills</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>needed, and language levels. Be sure that everyone in the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>will have a little bit of work to do in the lesson. Too much, and</td>
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<td>it's too hard; too little, and they could do it independently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Use a flexible small-groups folder to keep track of who is in</td>
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<tr>
<td>each group and what you need to focus on with that group. Write</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>students' names on sticky notes and move the notes as you move</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>kids from one group to another. This saves time because you don't</td>
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<tr>
<td>have to recopy lists and draw arrows from one group to the next.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Meet with a colleague and talk about grouping decisions. Look</td>
<td></td>
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<td>at your data and work together to think about who to place in each</td>
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<tr>
<td>flexible group and for which purposes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Are there any students you might want to work with in two</td>
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<tr>
<td>different groups for different purposes? It's okay to sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;double dip&quot; kids in two groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Which groups will you meet with more often? Meet with two</td>
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<tr>
<td>groups per day during a ninety-minute block of time for reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>instruction. Meet with students who need the most support</td>
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<tr>
<td>more frequently than students who are reading at or above grade</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>level.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
When Do I Move a Student into a Different Small Group?

- Use the “Reading Levels and What to Focus on in Lessons” chart (Figure 3c).
  - Does the child have all those reading behaviors in place?
  - Consistently?
  - Across a variety of books?
- Use running records. Look at:
  - Fluency (Has rate, phrasing, expression, intonation, and pacing on a variety of texts)
  - Comprehension (Can retell with details on a variety of texts)
- Decoding (Reads consistently with 95 percent accuracy or above)
- Observe student during the small-group lesson.
  - Does the child finish faster than others?
  - Does the child have better comprehension than others?
  - Is the student having an easier time (working more independently) than the rest of the group?
- Listen in to the child’s reading during independent reading. Observe his or her accuracy, fluency, and comprehension, and take notes.
- Look at testing data to determine skill improvement or mastery.

Recommendations When Moving Students Up a Level

- Try easier books or tasks at the next level to start.
- Be flexible. Don’t be afraid to move the student down again if needed.
- Beware of making a big ceremony of moving up the levels (just in case you have to move down again).
Figure 3b

Flexible Small-Groups Folder
# Reading Levels and What to Focus on in Lessons

## Pre-K/early Kdg.—Pre-Level A

**Phonological Awareness**
- rhyming
- sentence segmenting
- syllable blending and segmenting
- onset-rime blending and segmenting

**Phonemic Awareness**
- phoneme segmenting and blending
- phoneme substitution and manipulation

**Concepts About Print**
- left-to-right movement
- return sweep
- 1-1 matching
- pays attention to print
- begins to self-correct 1-1 matching

**Phonics**
- starts to use beginning consonant sounds
- may start to use ending consonants, too

**Vocabulary**
- remembers and uses language patterns
- acquires high-frequency words

**Comprehension**
- uses pictures to check on words
- makes connections

**Fluency**
- moves away from finger pointing
- learning to read in phrases when rereading

## Kdg.—Levels A and B

**Concepts About Print**
- has left-to-right and return sweep
- controls 1-1 matching, even on longer words
- rereads to self-correct

**Phonemic Awareness**
- phoneme segmenting and blending
- phoneme substitution and manipulation

**Phonics**
- decodes CVC words
- uses beginning and ending sounds to figure out new words

**Vocabulary**
- uses known words as anchors
- acquires high-frequency words

**Comprehension**
- uses pictures and words to predict meaning
- can retell
- self-corrects to make sense

## Kdg./Early first grade—Level C

**Concepts About Print**
- has left-to-right and return sweep
- controls 1-1 matching, even on longer words
- rereads to self-correct

**Phonemic Awareness**
- phoneme segmenting and blending
- phoneme substitution and manipulation

**Phonics**
- uses consonants and blends to decode words
- uses parts of words (chunks) to predict and check meaning
- knows and uses most short vowels

**Vocabulary**
- is acquiring high-frequency (sight) words
- uses vocabulary of the book for retelling

**Comprehension**
- makes predictions and checks on them
- uses pictures and words to predict and check meaning
- retells
- rereads to confirm or problem-solve

## Early first grade—Level D

**Phonic Awareness**
- phoneme segmenting and blending
- phoneme substitution and manipulation

**Phonics**
- uses consonants and blends to decode words
- uses parts of words (chunks) to predict and check meaning
- knows and uses most short vowels

**Vocabulary**
- is acquiring high-frequency (sight) words
- uses vocabulary of the book for retelling

**Comprehension**
- makes predictions and checks on them
- uses pictures and words to predict and check meaning
- retells
- rereads to confirm or problem-solve

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*continued*
### Reading Levels and What to Focus on in Lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early first grade—Level E</td>
<td>- decodes slightly longer words</td>
<td>- continues to acquire high-frequency words</td>
<td>- makes predictions and checks on them</td>
<td>- finger-points only on hard words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- uses long vowel sounds, including two-letter vowels (ay, ea, ai, etc.)</td>
<td>- uses new vocabulary, especially when reading nonfiction</td>
<td>- using words more than pictures</td>
<td>- starting to read in phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- reads compound words</td>
<td></td>
<td>- makes connections across texts</td>
<td>- sounds more fluent, especially while rereading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First grade—Level F</td>
<td>- uses short and long vowel sounds more flexibly</td>
<td>- notices new words and figures out meanings, using the picture for support</td>
<td>- makes and checks predictions</td>
<td>- notices punctuation and uses for phrasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- decoding more two- and three-syllable words</td>
<td>- learns new words, especially when reading nonfiction</td>
<td>- using words more than pictures</td>
<td>- beginning to use more intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- begins to use vowel + r combinations</td>
<td></td>
<td>- makes connections across texts</td>
<td>- moves more quickly through text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First grade—Levels G and H</td>
<td>- uses short and long vowel sounds more flexibly</td>
<td>- pays attention to new vocabulary while reading</td>
<td>- deeper understanding of characters</td>
<td>- pays attention to a wider variety of punctuation and uses for phrasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- learns and uses more complex vowel patterns (funky chunks)</td>
<td>- uses new words in retelling and conversation</td>
<td>- text-to-text connections</td>
<td>- uses more intonation and expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- decoding more two- and three-syllable words</td>
<td>- rereads to get meaning of new words</td>
<td>- retells with more detail</td>
<td>- moves more quickly through longer text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- vowel + r work</td>
<td></td>
<td>- determines importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of first grade—Level I</td>
<td>- decodes most one- and two-syllable words easily</td>
<td>- pays more attention to new words and tries to figure out their meaning</td>
<td>- begins to learn how to build schema on less familiar topics</td>
<td>- reads in a more fluent, phrased way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- growing grasp of “funky chunks” (ough, eigh, au, oi, etc.)</td>
<td>- discovers specialized vocabulary in nonfiction</td>
<td>- retells with increasing detail using graphic organizers</td>
<td>- uses character voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- decodes silent letters like kn, wr, gn</td>
<td>- connects to characters and topics</td>
<td>- connects to characters and topics</td>
<td>- reads with intonation and expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- begins to transition to silent reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*continued*
### Reading Levels and What to Focus on in Lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Level</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Early–mid–second grade—Levels J and K** | - decodes longer words (two–three syllables)  
- decodes two–four vowel combinations (ou, igh, ough, etc.) more easily on longer words  
- decodes silent letters on longer words (kn, wr, gn, etc.)  
- may use pronunciation guide in nonfiction | - pays attention to new words and uses context of words and pictures to determine meaning  
- starting to read and understand idioms and figurative language  
- understands meanings of homophones and homographs  
- uses prefixes and suffixes to determine word meanings | - moves more flexibly from fiction to nonfiction  
- summarizes and extends text  
- comprehends text read over several days  
- infers, predicts, and analyzes characters  
- uses text features to aid comprehension in nonfiction | - processes the text more smoothly  
- reads in phrases and with expression over longer text  
- reads silently most of the time |
| **Mid-second grade—Level L** | - decodes more multisyllabic words and many words with two–four vowel combinations within those longer words (eigh, augh, etc.)  
- decodes words with chunks like tion, ance, cial, etc.  
- decodes more quickly, which aids fluency | - understands more difficult vocabulary  
- understands idioms and figurative language in text  
- prefixes and suffixes used to figure out word meanings | - figures out who’s talking when reading more complex dialogue  
- deeper understanding of multiple characters  
- comprehends longer chapters  
- greater range of genre understood  
- uses text features and structures | - sustains fluency while reading longer sentences and longer texts  
- reads more rapidly with phrasing and limited self-correcting  
- reads character voices with greater intonation |
| **End of second grade—Level M** | - decodes longer words with more complex phonics patterns  
- can decode most two–three-syllable words  
- uses letter sounds flexibly and fluently (sounds of c, g, and vowels, etc.) | - understands more sophisticated vocabulary and more complex language structures  
- prefixes and suffixes used for determining meaning  
- reads and understands many new vocabulary words, especially in nonfiction | - understands subtlety of plot and humor  
- builds schema for unfamiliar topics when reading  
- infers, reads critically, makes more connections  
- deeper understanding of multiple characters  
- expands reading in a variety of genres  
- visualizes as pictures are included less | - sustains fluency while reading longer sentences and longer text  
- reads more rapidly with phrasing and limited self-correcting  
- reads character voices smoothly and with greater intonation  
- varies reading rate depending on the type of text read |
## Reading Levels and What to Focus on in Lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third grade—Levels N, O, P</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ decodes most two–four-syllable words</td>
<td>■ understands more sophisticated vocabulary and more complex language structures in longer text</td>
<td>■ infers, reads critically, makes deeper connections</td>
<td>■ sustains fluency on longer texts with more complex sentences and wider range of punctuation and text nuances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ uses letter sounds flexibly and fluently</td>
<td>■ wider range of prefixes and suffixes used to determine meaning of new words</td>
<td>■ asks more questions as reading</td>
<td>■ reads more rapidly with phrasing and limited self-correcting on longer text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ may miscue simple words (like <em>a</em> and <em>the</em>) when reading more fluently—words that don’t change the meaning</td>
<td>■ is exposed to many new words in both fiction and nonfiction and determines meaning</td>
<td>■ answers higher-level questions with increasing depth</td>
<td>■ uses intonation and expression to match mood, characters, type of text, etc. (interpretive reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>■ visualizes most of the time</td>
<td>■ reads across a wider variety of genres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3c

Kindergarten Small-Group Folders

Rhyming Groups Folder
can’t hear/can’t produce rhymes

can hear but can’t produce rhymes

can hear/can produce some rhymes

can hear and produce rhymes consistently
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Complex Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rhyming and alliteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cat/hat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cat/cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentence segmentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The/cat/is/furry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syllable blending and segmenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cat/nip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### More Complex Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onset and rime blending and segmenting</th>
<th>Individual phonemes, including blending and segmenting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin phonemic awareness activities here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3c (continued)

Phonological Awareness Groups Folder
Punctuation Anchor Chart Sample

Punctuation

- stop

; slow down

! show excitement
Small-Group Lesson Plan for Focusing on Reading Punctuation

1st grade

Group: Red - Devany, Angel, Noemi, Juan
Date: 11-13-08

Focus: FLUENCY
- [ ] fast decoding
- [ ] HF words
- [x] punctuation
- [ ] phrases
- [ ] intonation and expression
- [ ] dialogue
- [ ] adjusting rate

Warm-Up: Familiar Reading
Listen to: Juan
Title: The Best Hats

Today’s Book: Reading a Graph
Level: B (NF)

BEFORE READING

Book Intro:
- Read title & make connection to graphs. What do you know about graphs? What kind of info can we get from graphs? How do you read a graph?
- graph (ph says f)
- sight word - our
- There’s lots of punct. in this book, commas & ?s. (use punct. chart)

Model w/p. 2-3 & how to read it. Connect back to big book lesson. (If the book asks you a ? answer it on a sticky note)

Read to find out:
- about different kinds of graphs & what they tell us

DURING READING

Prompts:
- Stop at the punctuation.
- What did you notice?
- You sound just like you’re talking.

Notes:
- Noemi

AFTER READING

Discuss:
1. What different kinds of graphs were in the book?
2. What did you learn from the graphs?
3. What answers did you get to the questions?
4. What could we graph?

- Discuss fluency & punctuation. How did you do? Did you use the chart?

REFLECTION
- Juan got so much better w/punct. today! He slowed down a bit. The chart & whole group lesson helped him.
### Small-Group Lesson Template for Fluency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus:</td>
<td>FLUENCY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ fast decoding</td>
<td>☐ HF words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ intonation and expression</td>
<td>☐ dialogue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Warm-Up:** Familiar Reading  
**Listen to:**  
**Title:**

**Today’s Book:**  
**Level:**

### BEFORE READING

**Book Intro:**

Set purpose for reading:

Read to find out:

### DURING READING

**Prompts:**

Notes:

### AFTER READING

**Discuss:**

### REFLECTION
### Small-Group Lesson Plan for Pre-Emergent Readers

**Group:** Yellow  
**Date:** 11-10-08

**Focus:** PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
- [x] rhyming  
- [ ] syllable blending and segmenting  
- [ ] alliteration  
- [ ] sentence segmenting  
- [ ] onset and rime blending and segmenting  
- [x] oral lang.

**Activity 1:**
- Use rhyming cube & play game to have them produce rhymes

**Activity 2:**
- Oral language - retelling of *The Surprise*. Have them take turns telling about one page at a time.
  
  purpose: to expand oral lang. to longer sentences (4-5 words, instead of 2-3) & to use vocabulary of the story

**Prompts:**
- Use props & pictures to go w/ book

**Notes:** Eduardo & Isaiah - some producing rhymes; move them on rhyming folder - improved w/ practice

**Reflection**
- Continue retelling & taking turns on each page. Move the *Surprise* to a station for independent practice. Use another book from whole group  
- Keep playing rhyming games, esp. for Eduardo
# Small-Group Lesson Plan for Pre-Emergent Readers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus: PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ rhyming</td>
<td>□ alliteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ syllable blending and segmenting</td>
<td>□ sentence segmenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ onset and rime blending and segmenting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity 1:**

**Activity 2:**

**Prompts:**

**Notes:**

**REFLECTION**
Small-Group Lesson Plan for Day 1 Lesson in Estella’s Room

Kindergarten -

Group: [Green] - Cecilia, Rissa, Jose, Andrea
Date: 11-12-08
Focus/Goal: sight words & paying atttn. to print (1st & last sound)
Title: It Is in a? -(Day 1) Level: 1-2

BEFORE READING
Running Record with: ____________________________
Title: ____________________________
Book Intro:
* build w/ magnetic letters - It, is, in
* This book is about animals and where they live.
* Build lang. structure for It is a ___. It is in a ___.
* p. 3. “hive”
* Point to each word. Look carefully at end of each word.
Read to find out about the animals & where they live.

DURING READING
Prompts:
* Make your finger match.
* Read the sounds.

Notes: Rissa - working independently?

AFTER READING
Discuss:
1. What are some of the animals in this book? Where did they live?
2. Why do you think a spider lives in a web & not a hive?

REFLECTION
confusions It/it; Is/is. Could recognize capital & lower-case, but didn’t get Is in text w/ other words surrounding it. I forgot to introduce it! Try cut up sentence tomorrow using this book again.
Managing Anecdotal Notes

Anecdotal notes seem like a good idea but are sometimes difficult to keep up with. One idea is to use a clipboard assessment tool on which to take notes during independent reading and literacy work stations. You might even jot down notes while doing your formal testing.

But once small group begins, it’s hard to use this clipboard tool because of time constraints and flipping from card to card. Some teachers take notes on sticky notes or address labels during small group, but these often get misplaced. Others write notes on notepads or directly on their lesson plans, but it’s hard to transfer these observations to individual students’ folders.

One possibility is to keep an index-card file with ABC dividers, and file a card for each student behind the first letter of that child’s first name. Then pull the cards needed for that small group. Put each child’s card at his or her place at the table so it’s ready for you to write notes on it while listening in to individuals. Or you might keep a small-group planning notebook with double-pocket insertable plastic dividers (available from Avery in five different colors). The index cards for each small group can then be kept in the pocket for that group. When the card gets filled up, place it in the index-card file box for storage. Use these cards and notes both for planning lessons and for parent conferences.
Small-Group Lesson Plan for Day 2 Lesson in Estella’s Room

Kindergarten

Group: [Green] - Cecelia, Rissa, Jose, Andrea  Date: 11-13-08
Focus/Goal: sight words & looking through them from 1st to last sound
Title: It is in a ? (reread) Day 2 Level: 1-2

BEFORE READING

Running Record with: Title:
Book Intro: Review: a build is, is, it, it, in, in. Use capital I's.
• Reread It Is in a? together.
• Write a sentence together using sentence frame:
  It is a ___. It is in a ___. Use desktop pocket chart. I scribe. Cut up & they rebuild & read the sentence.

DURING READING  WRITING

Prompts:
What do you hear?
Look closely. Look at the 1st & last sound.

Notes: Mario

AFTER READING  WRITING

Discuss:
Be sure to read "it" when you see this: It or it...
Look for "it" everywhere today!

REFLECTION

This really helped. They were looking through the words from beginning to end. Keep working with this task in several more books.
Small-Group Lesson Plan Template

Group: ______________________________ Date: ______________________________
Focus/Goal: ______________________________
Title: ______________________________ Level: ______________________________

BEFORE READING
Running Record with: ______________________________ Title: ______________________________
Book Intro:

DURING READING
Prompts:

Notes:

AFTER READING
Discuss:

REFLECTION
Figure 12

Planning a Small-Group Lesson

1. Pick a group. Know the reading level.

2. Choose a focus. Use your data and the reading level strips on the flexible reading-groups folder for help.

3. Pick a book. Find the LEVEL and match the FOCUS.

4. Plan the lesson.

5. Teach the lesson.

6. Reflect.
### Suggested Small-Group Reading Lesson Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Segment</th>
<th>What the Teacher Does</th>
<th>What the Students Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Familiar Rereading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>