

Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction

“New Teacher Mondays”
Monday, January 13th, 2025





Session Norms

- Engage.
- Collaborate.
- Focus on solutions.
- Demonstrate a growth mindset.

Agenda

- ✓ Defining effective and engaging small group instruction
- ✓ Identifying key elements of small group instruction
- ✓ Planning and preparing for small group instruction
- ✓ Gradual release of responsibility during small group instruction
- ✓ Assessing learning and instruction during small groups



Outcomes

As a result of today's session, you will be able to:

- Effectively plan and prepare for purposeful and engaging small group instruction.
- Effectively implement purposeful and engaging small group instruction.
- Effectively assess the learning and instruction during purposeful and engaging small group instruction.



New Teacher Mondays



The “Why”

- Crafted for 1st and 2nd year Pre-K Teachers.
- Designed to provide foundation for key elements of a successful classroom and school year.
- Opportunity to ask questions and get answers from experts.



“Small groups are a highly effective instructional method that allows you to target your instruction to meet the needs of each student in your classroom.”

*–Vanessa Levin,
Preschool Teacher and Consultant*

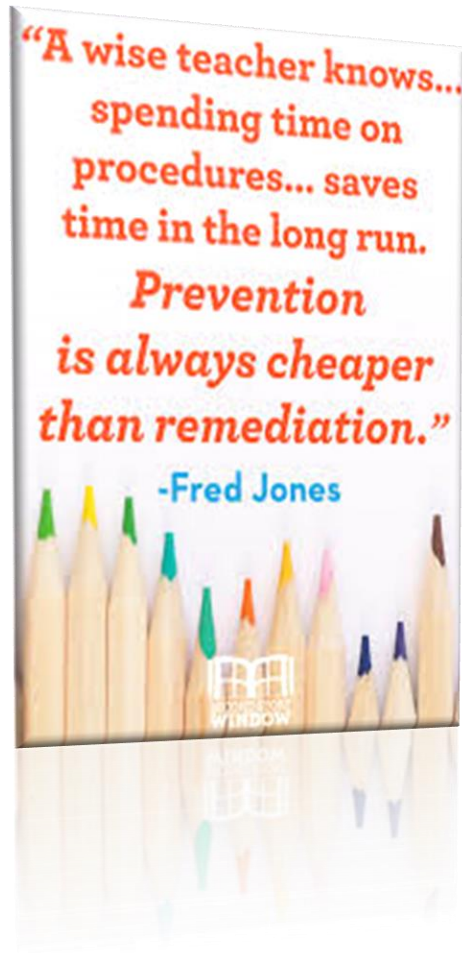


Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction Begins with Effective Management!



Routines and procedures for small group instruction include:

- establishing a clear signal to gather students
- rotating group membership based on needs
- setting expectations for behavior and participation
- using visual aids
- incorporating active learning activities
- ensuring a smooth transition between activities
- maintaining a positive and engaging environment for young learners...The ULTIMATE!



Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction...What is it?



Effective and engaging small group instruction involves a teacher:



- Using data to strategically plan, prepare, and provide instruction to 3-5 students based on their instructional needs.
- Facilitating active participation in the learning through modeling and the inclusion of multiple and various opportunities to engage in practice of the skill.
- Fostering a supportive environment where students feel safe to take risks, make mistakes, persevere, and progress in their learning.
- Providing immediate, targeted, and quality feedback to help students progress towards mastery of their learning.
- Assessing students' progress in order to plan and prepare for the next steps in the learning continuum.

Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction...What it is NOT!



Effective and engaging small group instruction is NOT:

- Narrowly or non-focused instruction to pass time.
- Entertainment with games that focuses on a skill without purpose or regards to the students' grade-level learning needs.
- All students in each group completing the same task, the same way, with NO differentiation.



Key Elements of Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



- **Differentiated Instruction**
 - Instruction tailored to the needs of the students (academic, social, emotional, and learning styles)
- **Student-Centered**
 - Active participation from students
- **Strategic groups of 3-5 students based on data**
 - Brigrance
 - Anecdotal notes from whole group/small group instruction
 - Report card skills
- **Clear learning objectives**
 - Objective-driven by grade level standards
 - Objective is stated by teacher; repeated by students; reoriented throughout the lesson
- **Structured activities**
 - Well-planned objective-driven activities that promote thinking and move students towards mastery of the objective
- **Explicit teaching and facilitative teacher role**
 - Implement the gradual release of responsibility
 - Shift the responsibility of learning from teacher to students

Small Group
INSTRUCTION



Planning and Preparing for Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



Planning for Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



Steps to planning effective and engaging small group instruction:

Analyze student data (Brigance, anecdotal notes, report card, etc.) to identify deficit skills, students who share the same deficit skills, and the learning objective.

Create flexible groups of 3-5 students.

Identify at least 3 different hands-on activities that will help students master the objective at the grade level expectation. Know how the skill is assessed on Brigance and for report cards.

Decide the progression (from simple to complex) in which students will engage in the activities to demonstrate the grade-level expected outcome. Anticipate misconceptions, and plan scaffolds to address them. Anticipate mastery and plan how you will challenge students beyond their current levels.

How will students practice the skill in writing?

What activity will be used to assess student mastery of or towards the objective?

What is my matrix for mastery? (Ex. 2 of 5; 3 of 5; 4-5 of 5; 5 of 5)

What's next...reteach, remediate, or move to next skill?



Preparing for Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



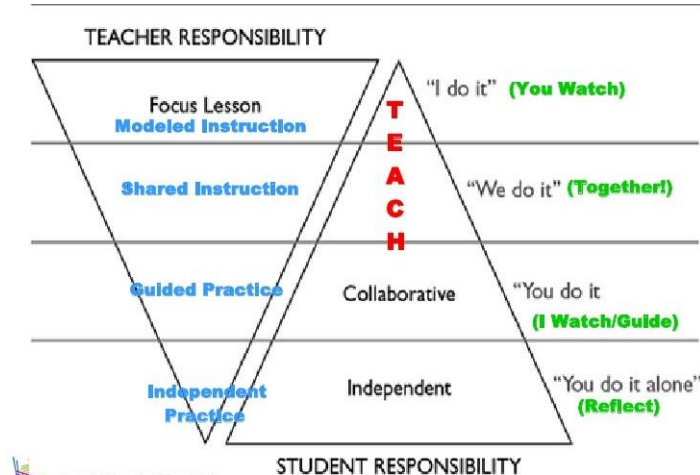
To prepare for effective and engaging small group instruction the teacher must:



- **Gather all resources and materials prior to meeting with the students.**
 - Each student must have his/her own copy of the activity and/or set of manipulatives. (writing utensils, paper, dry-erase markers, letters, pictures, ABC chart, numbers chart, number line, counters, game pieces, etc.)
- **Pre-plan questions to ask students.**
 - assessing questions to check for understanding (Why? How?)
 - advancing questions to challenge students beyond their current level of understanding (What will happen if...?)
 - connecting questions that will allow students to make real-world connections and connections to prior learning (Activate prior knowledge!)
- **Determine the activity/assessment tool that will be used to assess students' progress towards mastery of the skill.**

Internalize the lesson! Know what you are teaching! Know the EXPECTED outcome! Have fun!

Implementing Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model



Implementing Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



1. Activating Prior knowledge



**This reminds me of...*

**I am remembering...*

**I have a connection to...*

**I can relate to....*

When students build on the what they already know, connections are made to the new learning, and students are more likely to retain the introduced or reinforced information. This helps to move concepts to a student's long-term memory.

Implementing Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



2. Communicate the objective.

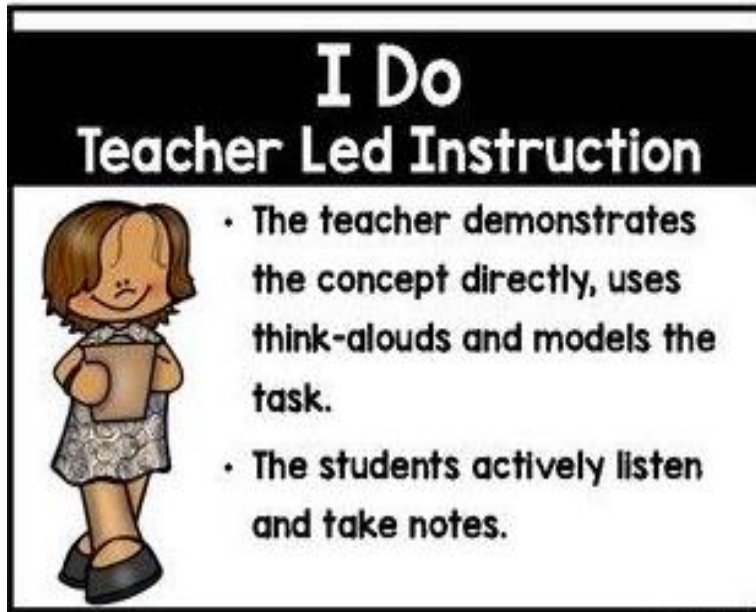
- The objective is stated/reoriented by the teacher and repeated by students. The objective provides clarity for what students will be able to do by the end of the lesson. This allows students to monitor their own progress toward the learning goal.

3. Explain or teach the skill.

- During the explicit teaching, the teacher provides a direct explanation of the skill or concept. This may include student-friendly language of the objective or step-by-step instructions.

4. Model examples.

- During the modeling portion of the lesson, teachers demonstrate the skill exactly as they want students to replicate. Teachers use think-alouds (self-talk/narration of teacher actions) to verbalize the process and steps to successfully complete the objective-driven activity. Student interaction during the model is limited to observing and listening.



Implementing Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



We Do Guided Instruction

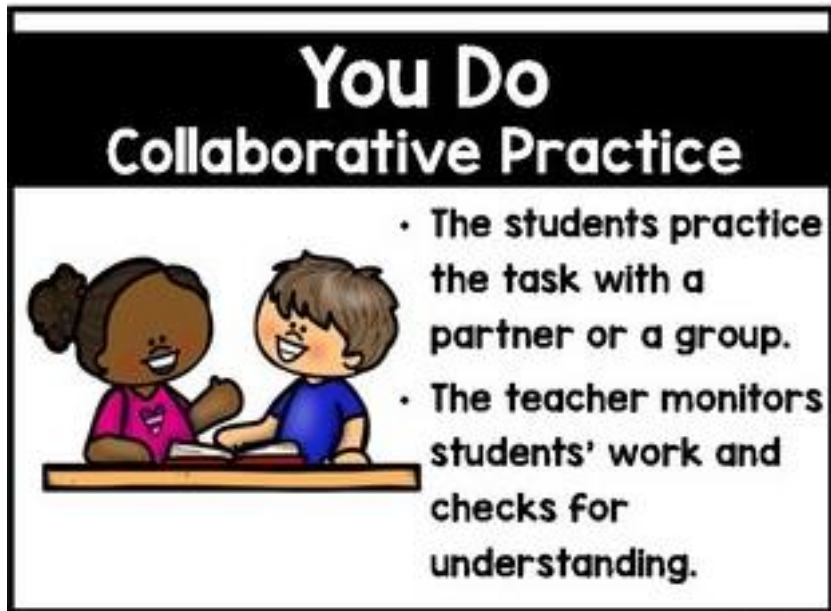
- The teacher works with students and provides interactive modeling.
- The students work with teacher and other classmates while asking clarifying questions.



5. Guided Practice

- The guided practice portion of the lesson invites students to replicate the skill the same way that the teacher has modeled but includes teacher support.
- Both the students and the teacher share responsibility during guided practice.

Implementing Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



6. Collaborative Practice

- During collaborative practice, students have the opportunity to try it with a partner. The responsibility is released to the students, with very little to no teacher support.

7. Independent Practice...THE ULTIMATE GOAL!

- During independent practice, students have the opportunity to try it on their own. The responsibility is released to the students.

Assessing Learning and Instruction of Effective and Engaging Small Groups



Assessing Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction

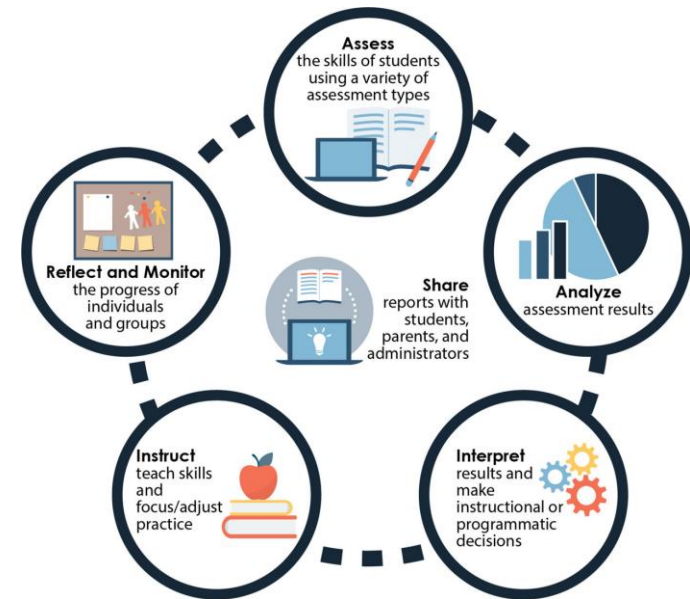


Assessing small group instruction in a preschool classroom involves the teacher/TA observing children's:

- level of engagement
- active participation
- understanding of the learning objectives
- individual progress towards mastery

Assessing small group instruction in a preschool classroom also involves the teacher/TA reflecting on:

- How well did I differentiate instruction and cater to diverse learning needs?
- Were the students actively engaged and enthused about the learning?
- Did the students follow instructions and respond accordingly?
- Did I engage students in sustained back and forth exchanges to ensure they understood the skill?



Assessing Effective and Engaging Small Group Instruction



Assessment Tools

- Observation checklists
- **Anecdotal notes**
- Student summaries...share what they have learned
- **Alternatives to verbal response**
 - Allow students to demonstrate learning with a drawing/writing
 - Teacher response cards
- **Teacher-made assessments (in testing format)**
- **Progress Monitoring and Assessments (Pre-K Website)**
 - Assessment Guidance and Procedures
 - Letter Bundle Assessments
 - Small Group Observations and Notes Record Forms
 - Optional Report Card Assessment Resources



Your Turn!

What questions
do you have?



Upcoming PD



January 14th

Hands On with the Brigance IED-III

4-5:30pm, 3030 Jackson Ave.

January 15th

Integrating Literacy Throughout The Instructional Day

4-5pm, virtual

January 21st

Literacy Learning Through Hands-On Experiences

4:15-5:45pm, 3030 Jackson Ave.