

Guidelines for Working with Small Groups in Prekindergarten

Young children need multiple experiences and interactions to develop a solid foundation for future learning and success. Small group instruction will help you differentiate and match your instruction to meet the different needs of learners in the classroom. Small groups provide a way to tailor instruction to a similar group of students.

WHEN AND HOW TO HAVE SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Small groups are intended to customize learning that is not needed for the whole class. A guideline is if more than 40% of your students demonstrate a “need”, you should cover this in your whole group time. Small group instruction can occur with 2-4 students during the 2 hour and 20 minute block of center time, and other times you may find suit the students’ needs.

Initially, plan to meet with one group every day beginning when you have the rituals and routines established for students working in centers for 15-20 minutes (3-4 weeks into school). Over time, you may meet with two or three groups each day. The groups should meet no longer than 10-12 minutes with students called to required groups no more than 2-3 days each week.

Small groups should never feel punitive or disciplinary; they are meant to reinforce and support class learning. Students must leave small group lessons feeling successful and excited to attend small group again.

TYPES OF SMALL GROUP IN LRSD PREKINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS

“Intentional” vs. “Invitational”

Intentional grouping is planned for a specific group of students based on evidence of learning and assessments. For example, a group of students are struggling and did not do well on required weekly assessment or a student(s) is already reading. The teacher would plan a 10-12 minute small group lesson that is focused on their needs. In contrast, a group of students who are already reading basic text should meet to begin reading texts.

Invitational grouping is open grouping and students are invited to participate in the group activities. For example, if a number of the students are not sharing or taking turns, a small group could practice how to take turns with objects and in conversation. This is also a time to complete class art projects and develop oral language through shared reading or poetry.

WHAT GUIDES PREKINDERGARTEN SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

- Teacher observations throughout the day/week
- Student interests
- Weekly assessment scores from curriculum
- ESI Results
- PKSA/P3SA Observations and results

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR PLANNING FOR SMALL GROUPS IN PREKINDERGARTEN

- Scholastic BIG DAY Curriculum and materials (Teacher’s Edition – Responsive Instruction Section behind daily lessons)
- Curriculum Map – Enrichment Activities listed at the bottom of each week
- Hatch materials (P3 Curriculum Map)

WHAT MIGHT YOU REINFORCE DURING SMALL GROUP

Social Learning

- Demonstrate how students should take turns and share. Have students practice asking and sharing items with guidance and support from the adults.
- Practice asking and answering questions with each other.
- Model how to deal with frustration and/or calm down. Ask the children to participate with you.

Oral Language Development

- Invite children to tell their own stories and begin to use a structure such as “first ..., then...”
- Help children listen to one another and respond to what another student said.
- Demonstrate how to ask and answer a question.
- Invite students to tell their own stories after listening to you tell stories from your childhood.
- Encourage the use of longer, more complex structures (move from “I go home,” to “I went home with my mom.”)
- Assist in retelling or reenacting stories and nursery rhymes using props, magnet boards, or flannel board pieces.
- Use children’s stories and ideas to launch a shared writing activity.
- Expand children’s use of vocabulary, content words, and use by encouraging children to use the word(s) when speaking, responding, and asking questions to one another.
- Invite students to join in reading/reciting poem or sing along with a recording.

Early Writing and Recording Sounds

- Demonstrate how stories and ideas are recorded with pictures, letters, and words.
- Model writing based on the level of the children (i.e. if they only know how to draw, demonstrate using drawing to tell a story; if they know a few letters, draw a picture and label the picture with known letters). Do not required conventional writing as this becomes copying and does not promote early writing behaviors.
- Observe students, and when students know more letters and can identify consonants in words, you may demonstrate how to say a word slowly, listen for a sound you know, and record this sound (this will not be conventional and it should not be).
- Create “writing together” by sharing the pen where students write parts they know and the teacher writes other parts to demonstrate how ideas are talked about and then recorded.
- Demonstrate directional movement (top/down; left/right) when recording words or word parts. Be explicit in stating, “I start at the top; I write across the page...”

Letter Recognition/Letter Writing

- Assist children in forming parts of letters or whole letters beginning with large body movements (whole arm) and gradually shifting to writing with a pencil or marker on paper.
- Incorporate various mediums to create letters and letter forms including sand, shaving cream, etc.
- Provide children with a model (magnetic letter or letter card) when learning a letter or how to make a letter and use 3-dimensional models (magnetic letters) to emphasize the feel, shape, and form.
- Help students connect particular or interesting letters to their lives (names, names of family, environmental print).
- Ask students to name or describe letter features (i.e. sticks, tall parts, curls, curves; student directed names are important for this). Then ask them to sort other letter using their categories or names.
- Ask students to find a letter in print (ensure print is large, not cluttered with many other features, and the print is similar to the way they are learning – i.e. a is not the same as α to a developing learner).
- Support children in finding letters in their name and writing these letters.