

Classroom Management: *Making Small Group Instruction More Effective*

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TE 842

“Well-structured small-group work raises kid’s academic achievement as well as nurturing effective work habits, attitudes, and skills” (Harvey & Daniels, 2009, pg. 42). Small group instruction is an important component in teaching reading. When use effectively, small group instruction allows students to interact and collaborate with others, increase student responsibility and achievement, and allows teachers to differentiate reading instruction. Everyday instructional school day I begin with a 90-minute literacy block. My literacy block consists of 45-minutes of whole group instruction, and 45-minutes of small group instruction as well as independent practice. I refer to my small group component of my literacy block, as “my weakest length”. Why? The same question that many other professional educators ask, “**What do I do with the remainder of the class?**”

I currently have seven small groups (guided reading groups) that are configured based upon reading and comprehension abilities. Each small group meets anywhere from one to five times a week depending on need for instruction and intervention. I have a daily small group schedule that I follow, and meet with two groups a day (please see power point). During small group time each member brings the necessary materials (book, pencil, reading response folder) and meets me at the front table.

Throughout our meeting, we hold a discussion about the group book, summarize important events in the story, make predictions, and practice the specific reading comprehension strategy assigned for that theme (assigned through our literacy by design curriculum). We also take turns reading a small section of the reading aloud for fluency practice.

The group meets for fifteen to twenty minutes, and then returns to their seat to begin their silent reading assignment. This routine works very well, and is a routine that takes a lot of practice to implement effectively – this portion of my small group structure I feel very confident in.

While the two groups are meeting, the remainder of the class is reading silently for the first fifteen minutes (during group A). The second fifteen-minute time span, the students are working on a specific comprehension activity independently, which I give directions for before we begin our small groups – this is where my confidence in the effectiveness of my small group reading instruction falls to pieces. During the independent reading time, students are out of their seats, wandering around the room, stopping to talk to their friends, and disturbing others close by. Though the noise level during this time remains quiet, the students who are working independently -are still wasting valuable learning time.

For my focus project, I decided to create a Power Point presentation that would present a more effective way of managing students during small group Literacy instruction by implementing literacy stations. First things first! Before the redesign of my small group structure, I need to consider the physical characteristics of my classroom. My classroom is very clean and very well organized, with well-defined areas to label and designate for each literacy station. My classroom rules and expectations are clearly stated and posted for students to refer to. These expectations are also modeled and rehearsed in the beginning of the school year allowing for more effective implementation.

Using stations during our literacy block will increase the amount of “structured” time spent on academic learning, as well as offer options throughout the week as opposed to reading silently everyday. I especially like the inquiry/research den station where students can explore something they are interested in. I will explain and model the process of inquiry as discussed on page 61 in Harvey & Daniels, (immerse, investigate, coalesce, and publicize their findings). Students will feel a sense of ownership in their learning, and hopefully feel motivated to share

their knowledge gained.

After talking with several upper elementary teachers (cited in power point), I have created a list of possible literacy stations to incorporate into my daily reading instruction. The first idea is a listening station. While visiting the listening station students will have the opportunity to listen to appropriate reading level books. We will practice appreciative and strategic listening skills that meet the content standards outlined in our Literacy by Design curriculum. The next stop is, – the writing/word work station. While at the writing/word work station students will have many opportunities to practice writing through a variety of activities (again, activities will change weekly).

Activities at the writing/word work station may include writing sentences using vocabulary/spelling words, responding to a reading passage, editing/revising practice, etc. I will also have “fun materials” out at different times like correcting pens, highlighters, Gel pens, dry erase boards and markers, etc. After the writing center, we will be rotating to the technology station composed of classroom computers and a Smart Board. Using the computer and Smart Board students will have access to many interactive literacy sites, games and activities.

Next up, we will travel to the inquiry/research den where students will have the opportunity to explore a topic of interest. In this station students will be able to access computers, dictionaries encyclopedias, and content area textbooks to research a specific topic or event of interest.

Students will start out with a question or a “wonder” that they have, and investigate further.

Because students will have specific days in the station and questions of interest develop frequently, we will keep “I wonder Books.” as mentioned in Harvey & Daniels on page 147.

Anytime students come across something they are curious about, they can jot down a quick note in their I wonder book. When it is their group’s turn to visit the Inquiry/Research Den, they can pull out their I wonder book and get started researching.

The last two literacy stations are working with the teacher (guided reading group) and

independent reading. Again, guided reading groups (A-G) will meet anywhere from one to five times a week with me depending on the need for intervention. Each group will meet for fifteen minutes and I will meet with two groups a day. Students in the independent reading station will read silently, either in their seats or around the room for the first fifteen minutes. The second half of Literacy station time, the independent reading students will write in their reading response logs using the “Independent Reading Café Menu”.

Implementing these literacy stations will take planning, modeling and practice. I will start by thoroughly explaining each station and the expectations for that particular station. After explaining proper procedures and expectations, I will model expected behavior at each station. I will use a timer, as well as a “five minute warning” to signal transitions. The class will rotate clockwise through the literacy stations during the week. While at their literacy station students are expected to work quietly, remain at their assigned station, and complete their assignment. If students have a question about their assignment, they will use the “3 before me” classroom rule (ask three friends before the teacher). When students are finished with the assigned task, they will put the assignment in their station folder. They may then complete unfinished work from their folder, practice vocabulary/spelling words, write in their journals or read silently. Transition time may be difficult for some students, however using effective strategies will help minimize the struggle. First of all, I will make sure the

Implementing the literacy stations will require hard work and practice. However, there are things that will make the implementation process run smoother. First of all, all literacy station activities will be thoroughly and carefully planned out to avoid last minute scrambling around. I will frequently remind students of station expectations and transition procedures, as well as offer frequent positive reinforcements. At the end of small group and literacy station time, we will have a conference or “class meeting” discussing that particular day’s events. I will pose questions such as, “ how did your literacy station go, did you have any questions or concerns during your

station time, and what is something you want to improve upon for next time”?

Prior to taking this course and reading the assigned chapters, I was unhappy with the structure and operation of my small/guided reading groups. Honestly, I dreaded that part of my morning schedule because I felt it was ineffective, and didn't know how to fix it. After all of the readings and researching the focus question, I came up with the conclusion of implementing literacy stations. I am really excited with what I have planned and cannot wait to get started with the setup and implementation process.

Bibliography (also in Power Point)

n Video Resources

www.1.teachertube.com/viewVideo

www.vimeo.com/16432357

n Web Resources

www.Readingrockets.org

<http://thebestofteacherspayteachers.blogspot.com/2011>

www.edutopia.org

www.hotchalk.com

www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy

n Teacher Input (through question/answer):

[n](#) Tonia – 1st Grade

[n](#) Mollie – 2nd Grade

[n](#) Emily – 4th Grade

[n](#) Tammy – 5th Grade

n Book Resources

Harvey, Stephanie, & Daniels, Harvey (2009). *Comprehension & Collaboration, Inquiry Circles in Action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

McKenna, Michael, & Stahl, Katherine (2009). *Assessment for Reading Instruction*, (2nd ed). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

