

Managing Small Group Reading Instruction in Kindergarten



From Understanding to Implementation

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What is differentiated instruction?

- ❑ The Literacy Dictionary (p. 60) defines differential reading instruction as “the provision of varied learning situations, as whole-class, small-group, or individual instruction, to meet the needs of students at different levels of reading competence.”
- ❑ Put simply, differentiated instruction involves matching instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners in a classroom. After a whole group core reading program lesson, reading centers provide time for teachers to effectively differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. This can be accomplished by the teacher working with an individual or with a small group of students at a teacher-led center while the other students practice, demonstrate, and extend skills independently at other student led reading centers. This is an ideal time to keep students actively, yet academically, engaged and moving during the 90 minute reading block in a half day kindergarten.

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What is a Reading Center?

- A Reading center is a place where students practice, demonstrate, and extend learning independent of the teacher (student center) or with the assistance of the teacher (teacher-led center).
- Reading centers contain meaningful, purposeful activities that are a reinforcement and/or extension of what has already been explicitly taught by the teacher during whole group instruction. Each center activity must be pre-taught before it is placed in a center for independent practice.
- It is recommended that teachers not bring in material from other content areas (e.g., from science or math) unless the activity specifically focuses on a skill that is being addressed in reading instruction. Usually students work at reading centers while the teacher is conducting teacher-led small group reading instruction.

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What is a Reading Center?

- Students practice phonics skills at the phonics center; sort word cards at the vocabulary center; listen to taped books, record the reading of a book, or read in pairs at the reading practice center. The Reading Center should contain a variety of books clearly marked at various reading levels to meet the needs of all students.
- Reading Centers provide a system for accountability. Monitoring progress on a daily basis is an important part of instructional time and helps teachers determine student engagement and mastery. When an effective classroom management system is in place feedback can be provided to students in a timely manner to help prevent them from practicing errors.

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READING CENTERS OF THE PAST

- Were used by teachers to keep students busy so they could plan or complete paperwork
- Were only for students who finished their assigned work
- Incorporated only theme-based activities
- Engaged all students in the same activities
- Often included only worksheets
- Incorporated a lot of non-academic and trivial projects

READING CENTERS OF TODAY

- Are utilized by teachers to provide systematic, explicit, small group instruction that meets the needs of students
- Are for all students
- Incorporate activities that reflect previously taught reading skills
- Engage students in specific activities that are selected to differentiate instruction for each student (or a small group of students)
- Keep students academically engaged in meaningful activities that reinforce and extend learning

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Implementing and Managing Student Centers in the Classroom

There are eight elements that need to be considered in developing and implementing an effective small group instruction management system. The following are considered pre-planning activities for the teacher:

- **Form Flexible Groups Based on Assessment**
- **Identify Appropriate Center Activities Based on Assessment**
- **Design Center Management Systems**

