



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Managing Differentiation With Small Groups

Tri-Community Elementary School, Pennsylvania • November 2009

Topic: Response to Intervention in Primary Grade Reading
Practice: Progress Monitoring and Differentiation

Highlights

- Autumn LaPenta, second-grade teacher at Tri-Community Elementary School, talking about how to differentiate instruction through working with small groups
- Need for flexible intervention groups
- Differentiating instruction daily for four skills groups: above benchmark, benchmark, strategic, and intensive
- Coordinating instructional groups with a paraprofessional
- Skill instruction aligned with the core curriculum
- Small-group intensive instruction focused on phonics, sound substitution, and short vowel sounds with an example of how to use letter cards to teach these skills
- Examples of scaffolding instruction and providing corrective feedback
- Strategic small-group instruction focused on vocabulary and evaluating
- Monitoring student progress through frequent informal and formal assessments, and adjusting instruction based on that data

About the Site

Tri-Community Elementary School
Steelton, PA

Demographics

38% Black

37% White

19% Hispanic

5% Asian

1% Other

53% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Response to Intervention and Instruction (RtII) was introduced at Tri-Community Elementary School six years ago. Since then, the school has moved from lowest performing in the district to successfully meeting Adequate Yearly Progress targets. Strong leadership and a partnership with a regional technical assistance network have helped to sustain:

- Data-driven differentiation of instruction in the core curriculum and tiered interventions;
- A teaming structure that manages data, assesses progress, and plans interventions;
- Collaboration between special education and teaching staff;
- Instructional planning that consistently integrates explicit teaching strategies, continuous progress monitoring, and a focus on teaching to mastery.

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Managing Differentiation With Small Groups.

Slide 2: Introducing Autumn LaPenta

My name is Autumn LaPenta, and I teach second grade at Tri-Community Elementary, and I am working with some flex groups, or what used to be known as guided reading groups. But they are ability-grouped according to how they scored on IRIs* at the beginning of the school year. And they are flexible, though, so that students can move between the groups as needed, depending on what skills they need to continue to work on.

*Informal Reading Inventory (IRI): An informal assessment consisting of graded word lists and passages that is administered individually by teachers to determine and record a student's reading skills and instructional needs.

Slide 3: Four tiered groups

I actually have four groups, and I do what I consider an above-benchmark, a benchmark, a strategic, and an intensive group. Each of those groups are met with every day. And part of the way that is possible is that we have a paraprofessional that pushes into the classroom during that time. So I will have two groups and she will have two groups.

Often the students will be reading on their own at their seats, but I do also have them partner reading, practicing retelling with one another.

Slide 4: Intensive group

The two groups I worked with today were strategic and intensive groups. And with the intensive group, I'm focusing a lot on phonology and using phonics, substituting sounds and words, the short vowel sounds. With that group, I'm using Tier 1 vocabulary words, high-frequency words, and the activity we did, we did a building words activity.

Slide 5: Scaffolding

I'm going to direct instruction and plan instruction that I know they are going to be successful with, and I also am scaffolding it so that we will be able to build on this activity. So we were only working with three-letter words—consonant-vowel-consonant words—but in the future, we will be able to build that into some multisyllabic words that are using short vowels.

Slide 6: Letter sounds

We were focusing on the short *e* sound, because the story was called *I Want a Pet*. So I took the consonant-vowel-consonant word *pet* and we talked about the short *e* sound. We reviewed what sound it makes. And we also have a gesture that goes with it.

We what's called finger-spell the word. So we're doing each sound, and as we do each sound we put up one finger.

Slide 7: Letter cards

And then they have letter cards. Then they built the word *pet*, we point at each letter and say each sound, and then we sweep under it and blend the word together. And then I said, “OK, now we’re gonna only change one letter and the next word is *get*.” What I’m trying to build there is a phonemic awareness of how words are connected, how substituting sounds changes a word, and especially some of the kids are still working on consonant sounds.

Slide 8: Feedback

If I am going to provide feedback to a student or if I need to give them a correction, I try to be very specific so it’s not just a “Good job,” it’s “I like the way that you knew that it was the final consonant that needed to be changed there.” I want them to know exactly what they did correctly so that they repeat that behavior.

When we were doing the word-building activity, if a student did not have the correct letters, we stopped, pointed at the letters that they did have and sounded it out, and then repeated the word that we were trying to make.

Slide 9: Strategic group

In my strategic group, we focused on some Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words that they would come across in the story, and we also did a picture walk. And our strategic focus for that group today was evaluating.

And to get them started, as we do the picture walk, I have them just looking at the illustrations and using their evaluating skills to decide, well, do the illustrations show us that there are wild animals in the city.

Now that’s going to be continued when the students actually read the story. When they’re done reading, they’ll have the opportunity to talk to a partner and they’ll have to let us know one specific way, using examples from the story, that the author showed that there are wild animals in the city. They’ll have their text with them, and they’ll be able to discuss with their partner and refer back to the text to use their evaluation skills.

Slide 10: Gathering data

With the Tier 2 intervention with the children who are scoring below benchmark, we are going to make sure that we are bringing them up to speed on the skills they need to be successful learners so that they can go from learning to read, to reading to learn. And in order to do that, we need to constantly gather data on

the students, which I do by listening to them read. I have an evaluation form that I use when they read, which looks at different skills of phonics, and letter sounds, and picture clues, re-reading, are they able to summarize and sequence.

Slide 11: Adjusting instruction

And as we are doing that, when we notice that students in our Tier 2 groups, our strategic and intensive groups, are not able to do those skills, then we can change the instruction that they're getting. For example, if my intensive group had not been able to understand that they had to change the initial or final consonant in a word, then I would know that we need to do this activity again. And if I had to structure the learning, then we would have built the words together, several times, until they were more comfortable, before I had them work on their own.

Slide 12: Summative information

Summative information will guide what skills I'm going to focus on in their future stories. With my more intensive group and the word-building activities, we will be able to build that into some multisyllabic words that are using short vowels. And then we'll be able to break those words apart and talk about the syllables and how it still has the short vowels and why it has the short vowels. With my strategic group and the evaluation, I may be asking them to write their opinion and not give them as much guidance.

Slide 13: Aligned to core curriculum

All the skills that we are working on go along with our core reading curriculum. There are practice book pages that go home with the students or that the students will work on independently. We focus quite a bit on Learning Focused Schools, so I have acceleration and summarizing activities where I might be using response cards, I might be using exit slips, different graphic organizers. And all of it connects together, though, so what they hear during our core reading time they're going to hear in their flex group time. So it goes back to what we'll be doing with whole group.

Slide 14: Learn More

To learn more about Managing Differentiation With Small Groups, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.