

First 15 Days of Small Group Learning

Here's another way to get small group learning off the ground. You can use this plan at the beginning of the year, or you can start at any point in the year.

Day 1 (Whole Group Focus)

Time: 10 minutes

What to Focus On:

Teach: Tell your students that the word *text* can mean a lot of things.

Show: Provide a few examples (books, newspaper articles, text messages, etc.).

Anchor: Co-create an anchor chart of ideas titled "What Is a Text?" while students brainstorm different examples of texts. Review or create an anchor chart called "Different Ideas for Holding Your Thinking" focused on different ways kids can make their thinking visible in their Reader's Notebooks.

Assess: Survey students by giving a quick formative assessment to determine student reading/learning interests. Hand them an index card and ask them to write a top 10 list of the things they like to read (topics, genres, authors, etc.).

Materials: Examples of different types of texts, chart paper, student interest survey

Teacher Homework/Action: (approximately 15–20 minutes) Look at student survey results. Group students together (groups of two or three or four to six) based on results. Find one short text that each group could read tomorrow.

Day 1 (Small Groups During Independent Work Time)

Time: 25 minutes

What to Focus On:

Say: "Let's get together in the smallest small group there is. Find a partner or a trio. Grab a text or two from the choices on top of the bookshelf. Your small group can read the same text or a different one. Decide if you will read together or alone."

Explain: "Make sure you have your Reader's Notebook handy. While you read, or after you finish the selection, hold your thinking. If you need a boost, look at our anchor chart 'Different Ideas for Holding Your Thinking.'"

Materials: Text(s), students' Reader's Notebooks

Day 2 (Whole Group Focus)

Time: 15 minutes

What to Focus On:

Share: Share some examples of survey results with students. For example, say, "I'm so excited because five kiddos are interested in nature-related topics and three kids want to learn more about Judy Blume and her books."

Teach: Explain that you broke the class into small groups based on the interest surveys. Some groups have four, five, or six students, while others have two or three. Explain that for the next week or so, the students will be meeting with their small group.

Say/Talk About: “You will each have a two-pocket folder to store your texts individually. Your group will also have a bucket or bin to store all of your folders and any texts that there is only one copy of. You can then share that one copy with the whole small group. Let’s talk about the different ways your group might work.” You could

- Read the same text together, aloud, and hold your thinking in your Reader’s Notebook
- Read the same text together, independently; discuss what you read; and hold your thinking in your Reader’s Notebook

Anchor: Co-create an anchor chart while students brainstorm different examples of how they could go about their reading in the small group.

Get Organized: Give groups time to find a meeting spot, gather supplies, and make decisions about today’s small group reading routine.

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader’s Notebooks

Day 2 (Small Groups During Independent Work Time)

Time: 25 minutes

What to Focus On:

Decide: Choose two groups to join today.

Pay Attention To: Small group volume meter. Help students make adjustments as needed.

Attend to Small Groups and Note-Take:

- Who is doing the talking?
- How did students decide to approach the work?
- What do you see or hear? What are you wondering?
- What texts could this group read next?

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader’s Notebooks

Teacher Homework/Action: (approximately 15–20 minutes) Find one or two texts that the members of each group could add to their two-pocket folders.

Day 3 (Whole Group)

Time: 7 minutes

What to Focus On:

Say/Talk About: “How did yesterday’s small group go? What worked? What was clunky?”

Teach: Teach into and address some of the reflections shared by students.

Explain: “Today’s small group routine is the same as yesterday’s. When you meet, decide if your group wants to make any adjustments to how you will go about your work today. Once you make some decisions, dig in and get to work.”

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader’s Notebooks

Day 3 (Small Groups During Independent Work Time)

Time: 30–40 minutes

What to Focus On:

Decide: Choose two or three groups to join today.

Attend to Small Groups and Note-Take:

- Who is doing the talking?
- How did they decide to approach the work?
- What do you see or hear? What are you wondering?
- What texts could this group read next?

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks

Day 3 (Small Group or Reading Workshop Debrief)

Time: 5–10 minutes

What to Focus On:

Share Out: Choose one or more of the following prompts to stir up conversation:

- What did your group look, sound, and feel like the past two days? How did you approach the work?
- What did your group learn from your text(s) that is worth sharing?
- How did your group members hold their thinking about what they read?
- Do you know of any texts at home or here at school that would be a good addition to your small group's bucket? If so, please bring them for our small group work tomorrow.

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks

Student Homework/Action: Look for one text (short or long) that could be added to your group's bucket of texts.

Teacher Homework/Action: (approximately 15–20 minutes) Find one or two short texts that the members of each group could add to their two-pocket folders, *or* longer texts (individual copies of picture books, chapter books, anthologies, etc.) that could be added to the small group's bucket.

Day 4 (Whole Group)

Time: 10 minutes

What to Focus On:

Teach/Say: "You are going to share out what you brought to add to your text set." Show the text to the group and read the title and author. "Remember, you didn't have to read this for homework, so you don't have to share what the text is about. If anyone in your group wants a copy of the text for his or her folder, please use a sticky note and tell me how many copies you need."

Share Out: Small group members sit near one another and share out, using a sticky note to mark any copies that are needed.

Explain/Say: "Today's small group routine is the same as yesterday's. After 15 minutes, I'm going to hit the chime, and I'd like for you to stop and share out. I'll explain more when we come back together. Dig in and happy reading."

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes

Day 4 (Small Groups During Independent Work Time)

Time: 35 minutes

What to Focus On:

Decide: Choose two or three groups to join today.

Attend to Small Groups and Note-Take:

- Who is doing the talking?
- How did they decide to approach the work?
- What do you see or hear? What are you wondering?
- What texts could this group read next?
- How are students holding their thinking? Are there examples from students' work that you should share with the whole group during the debrief?

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes

Turn In: Say, "Mark one or two pages where you've held your thinking where you'd like me to take a peek. Use a sticky note to mark the place(s) in your Reader's Notebook. Feel free to write me a note if you want me to know anything specific."

Day 4 (Debrief)

Time: 10 minutes

What to Focus On:

Share: Put two or three student examples of *holding your thinking* under the document camera. As you display the students' work, ask them to join you. *Share the mic* with each student (that's when the teacher and student share the "stage" to explain or show an idea or some type of thinking), display the text that was read, and support the student as he or she explains how thinking was held.

Ask/Share: If other students have examples they'd like to share, invite them to join you. If time doesn't permit, you can begin tomorrow's whole group by continuing the debrief.

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes

Teacher Homework/Action: (approximately 10–20 minutes) Look across Readers' Notebooks. Find one or two short texts that the members of each group could add to their two-pocket folders or longer texts (individual copies of picture books, chapter books, anthologies, etc.) that could be added to the small group's bucket.

Day 5 (Whole Group)

Time: 5 minutes

What to Focus On:

Say: "Today your group is going to make some decisions about how your small group will work for the next week. Your end goal is to determine how often your group will meet next week and what the focus will be when you meet. Some questions to guide you are

- How many days will you meet during independent work time?
- On the days you are meeting, how much time will you meet? The whole work time or just a portion? If just a portion, will you meet at the beginning or at the end?
- What will your group read, discuss, or share during each of your small group sessions?
 - Will you read together?
 - Will you read individually?

- Will you read the same text(s)?
- Will you read different texts?
- Who will be the captain or team leader of your group?"

Explain: Hand students a blank calendar and explain that they will meet to talk through their small group meeting calendar and determine if they are going to meet together in a small group today or read independently. Remember, some students are choosing to read other texts for independent reading while some students are continuing to read the texts from their small group. Either is a good choice.

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Turn In: Completed small group meeting calendar for your team.

Day 5 (Small Groups)

Time: 30 minutes

What to Focus On:

Decide: Choose two or three groups to join today.

Attend to Small Groups and Note-Take:

- How are they using the planning calendar?
- How did they decide to approach the work?
- What do you see or hear? What are you wondering?
- Did the group use the remaining time to read the small group text set or read independently?

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Teacher Homework/Action: (approximately 10–20 minutes) Look across the small group planning grid. Determine which groups you will meet with next week based on needs. Create your schedule based on small group planning grids: When are they meeting? How often and for how long? Some other considerations for meeting with groups include

- The small group plan is unfinished, or the group may need to revise the plan.
- The small group is meeting all week, all of the time. Meet with these students to determine how independent reading will play into their work since that is also a priority.
- The small group is in need of more or different texts, and you need the group members to help determine the next direction so that you can curate new texts with their interests and ideas in mind.

Day 6 (Whole Group)

Time: 5 minutes

What to Focus On:

Say: "This is the day you launch your small group plan. As a group, revisit your plan and get to work!"

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Day 6 (Small Groups/Independent Work Time)

Time: 40 minutes

What to Focus On:

Decide: Choose two or three groups to join today.

Attend to Small Groups and Note-Take:

- Are they following their plan?
- Who is doing the talking?
- How did they decide to approach the work?
- What do you see or hear? What are you wondering?
- What texts could this group read next?
- How are students holding their thinking? Are there examples from students' work that you should share with the whole group during the debrief?

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Day 7–10 (Whole Group)

Time: 5–10 minutes

What to Focus On:

Consider: If there are management suggestions that you need to share, take time to do that before launching into small group work (e.g., ways to work together, productive conversations, and sharing ideas).

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Day 7–10 (Small Groups)

Time: 35–40 minutes

What to Focus On:

Decide: Choose two or three groups to join today.

Attend to Small Groups and Note-Take:

- Are they following their plan?
- Who is doing the talking?
- How did they decide to approach the work?
- What do you see or hear? What are you wondering?
- Is there a text that you want the group to read together with you?
 - What will you need to teach into?
 - Where will kids get tripped up (vocabulary, background knowledge, making meaning, etc.)?
 - What do you want to show or model for them?
 - What new skills, strategies, knowledge, or understandings do you want to focus on?
- What texts could this group read next?
- How are students holding their thinking? Are there examples from students' work that you should share with the whole group during the debrief?

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Day 7–10 (Debrief)

Time: 10 minutes

What to Focus On:

Consider: The debrief time can be related to students' independent reading or small group work. As you meet with groups, study students, and attend/respond to the learning in the room, determine whether students will debrief

- As a whole group
- In their current small groups
- In mixed small groupings in order to cross-germinate ideas across groups
- In pairs or trios

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Teacher Homework/Action: (approximately 10–20 minutes) Look across Readers' Notebooks. Find one or two short texts that the members of each group could add to their two-pocket folders, *or* longer texts (individual copies of picture books, chapter books, anthologies, etc.) that could be added to the small group's bucket. Look to see how students are holding their thinking. Are there examples from students' work that you should share with the whole group during the debrief?

Day 11 (Whole Group)

Time: 15 minutes

What to Focus On:

Teach: Tell your students that there are lots of ways to “show what we have learned or what we know” and that part of our job is to figure out what we can make, create, or design to show our reading muscles.

Show: Provide a few examples (a series of notebook entries tied together, a reflection journal of big ahas, a top 10 list of important knowledge and understandings related to the texts, a reflection of how thinking has changed over time and across texts, etc.). Explain that these are examples of work products that the students can create to demonstrate their understanding.

Anchor: Co-create an anchor chart of ideas titled “How Can We Show What We Know?” and ask students to contribute ideas to the chart.

Explain: During work time this week, there are several options. Note that by the end of the week students will each turn in at least one work product that demonstrates their understandings of the small group texts read the past two weeks:

- Continue to read small group texts as a group or independently
- Work on work products as a group or independently
- Read independently (small group texts or independent reading choice)

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar, anchor chart “How Can We Show What We Know?”

Day 11–14 (Small Groups)

Time: 30 minutes

What to Focus On:

Decide: Choose two or three groups to join today.

Attend to Small Groups and Note-Take:

- How are the group or individual students using their time?
- How did they decide to approach the work?
- What do you see or hear? What are you wondering?
- Is there a text that you want the group to read together with you?
 - What will you need to teach into?
 - Where will kids get tripped up (vocabulary, background knowledge, making meaning, etc.)?

- What do you want to show or model for them?
- What new skills, strategies, knowledge, or understandings do you want to focus on?
- Are any new interests or inquiries coming to the surface that could fuel curating texts for future use?
- How are students using their thinking in their Reader's Notebooks to make, create, or design a work product to show their reading muscles or demonstrate understanding of the texts they read?
- Are there examples of students' work products that you should share with the whole group during the debrief?

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Day 11–14 (Debrief)

Time: 5 minutes

What to Focus On:

Consider: Give opportunities for students to share out:

- How are you using your work time this week?
- How are you using your thinking in your Reader's Notebook to make, create, or design a work product to show what you know or demonstrate understanding of the texts you read?

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Day 15 (Whole Group Gallery Walk)

Time: 40 minutes

What to Focus On:

Explain: Explain to students that a Gallery Walk is a time where they can display their work at their table and invite others (today it's our classmates) to take a look at the work they have created. This is a judgment-free time about celebrating success, not a time to provide feedback.

Gallery Walk: Students will showcase their work product(s), even if they are still in draft form, to their classmates by displaying their work in the "classroom gallery."

Invite: Ask students to enjoy roaming through the classroom gallery and looking at Reader's Notebooks, two-pocket folders, and buckets/bins.

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks

Day 15 (Debrief)

Time: 10 minutes

What to Focus On:

Share Out: Students can share out noticings and big takeaways from the Gallery Walk.

Materials: Two-pocket folders, bucket/bin, texts, Reader's Notebooks, sticky notes, small group planning calendar

Teacher Homework/Action: (approximately 10–20 minutes) Listen carefully to students as they share out and look for patterns or insights related to

- New/repeat texts you could put in front of students
- Opportunities related to new small group configurations
- Students' insights about what they need next