

### Module 3-Instruction for Active Learning

**CCT Performance Profile Indicator #2:** Using differentiated instruction and supplemental interventions to support students with learning difficulties, disabilities and/or particular gifts and talents. *Note: differentiated instruction applies to all students (tier one) and supplemental instruction applies to students in tiers two and three.*

**Professional Growth Goal:** I would like to meet with guided reading groups on a more consistent basis. I would also like to develop differentiated guided reading lessons that meet the needs of the learners in each of my groups. During guided reading lessons, I would like students to be reading appropriate texts at their instructional reading level while demonstrating reading strategies and behaviors reflective of their current developmental stage. By consistently providing differentiated instruction for my students, they will make growth as readers and will have more impactful opportunities for small group, targeted instruction. While meeting with groups I will learn to record observations of student successes and challenges, data that will help determine focus strategies for later meetings. (Based on Indicator 2)

**Initial Summary:** Currently, I am meeting with my guided reading groups on an inconsistent basis. Each day I am finding I can only meet with two groups, and the timing of my lessons often goes beyond what I have allotted for. Students have difficulty sustaining their focus for the duration of a lesson. I also feel that the lessons I am utilizing in my groups do not address the diverse needs of my students. Currently I am utilizing Mondo guided reading materials that have been provided by my district. I often find that the lesson plans do not address the learning needs of my students, especially my English Language Learners because the number of reading strategies addressed are too numerous. Vocabulary in the text is not often discussed until after reading and I feel that frontloading vocabulary would help my English Language Learners to better understand the text. My instruction is not reflecting the strengths and challenges of my students' reading skills. I have found it challenging to document my students' understanding during Guided Reading on a consistent basis. This reflection will help me to monitor their progress and decide on focus strategies for later lessons.

To start I consulted a chapter from The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK-8 by Fountas and Pinnell. I examined their Framework for Guided Reading to help me in structuring my guided reading lessons (Fountas and Pinnell, 240). What I noticed, was that a majority of the lesson format provides students with the opportunity to process text independently with understanding. I wanted to make this a focus of my lessons. To address the issue of differentiating the content of my lessons I first examined my district's online SRBI resources, Differentiation Central. There I found multiple definitions of "differentiation" and an interview with Carol Ann Tomlinson. I also spoke with my grade level partners to see what their method for guided reading entailed. These resources helped me to develop my own plan of action.

I quickly realized that in order to have successful guided reading groups a good amount of advance planning is involved. I first created a weekly scheduled rotation for guided reading based on my students' DRA2 data and classroom observations. The number of times we were to meet each week was contingent upon the needs and levels of my students. I planned to meet with my struggling readers five days each week, my on grade level students four days each week, and my above grade level students three days each week in fifteen minute increments over the course of our hour reading block. After

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three weeks of implementing this schedule I realized that I was having difficulty meeting with all the groups I wanted to meet with each day. Students did not have enough time to independently read and apply the strategies I wanted them to practice and at times I went over the allotted fifteen minute time frame for my groups. I decided to reformat my schedule to add an extra five minutes to each group I was meeting with during our hour block. Even though this meant that I could only meet with three groups each day, I felt that an extra five minutes with each would give my students the time to apply and practice the reading skills and strategies they were learning. I decided to meet with my struggling readers four days each week, my on grade level students three days each week, and my above grade level students two days each week. Once I restructured my groups, I also met with a reading tutor who supports my class and created a plan for her to help support individual students' growth and practice in phonics, reading, and vocabulary skills during the times I was not meeting with them.

In addition to the structure and timing of my lessons, I spent a lot of time learning about the characteristics of texts by level, as defined by Fountas and Pinnell (252). When selecting a text Fountas and Pinnell suggest considering the follow characteristics in planning your instruction: Genre/Forms, Text Structure, Content, Themes/Ideas, Language and Literary Features, Sentence Complexity, Vocabulary, Words, Illustrations, and Book and Print Features. Understanding these characteristics helped me to recognize what my students were secure in and what they were missing in their understanding of the text. Based on my students' needs I chose to pick specific features to help focus my instruction during guided reading. I noticed that early on in the year, the lesson plans I was utilizing from our guided reading program (Mondo Bookshop) did not meet the needs of all of my students. For my English Language Learners in particular, the suggested lesson plans did not introduce key vocabulary and conceptual understanding until after the students were asked to read and understand the text. I wanted to help these students access the meaning of the text as they read by introducing and discussing key conceptual vocabulary before, during, and after reading. For my two below grade level groups (with pockets of English Language Learners in each) this became our focus for thinking within the text. While I did want to include this focus for my on grade level and above grade level groups, I also noticed that they had difficulty cross-checking one source of information with another (Using both the words and the pictures to help them make meaning of the texts they were reading; Fountas and Pinnell, 266). This became my instructional focus for this group of students. After listening to my students' independently read and respond to my prompts within a small group I used Fountas and Pinnell's characteristics of texts to select goals within, beyond, and about the text based on observed reading behaviors.

Throughout this process I learned more about the three parts of guided reading, such as strategies for thinking within the text, about the text and beyond the text, and how each group I taught needed a different focus for learning. I also learned about the structure of guided reading and differentiation. When I started planning my guided reading lessons I quickly realized that planning for these short groups takes a lot of time and thought. Planning for guided reading is time consuming in that you have to know your readers, their strengths, as well as their struggles. I revisited Fountas and Pinnell's Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK-8 daily, and considered how it would help me to understand my students and help them to grow. This resource supported my growing understanding of my students' instructional reading levels. Learning the characteristics of text associated with readers at

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each of the levels (A-Z) helped me to identify and assess my students' reading behaviors, and in turn helped inform my focus and goals for each lesson. Not only did this information help with planning, it also allowed me to reflect on the next steps I needed to take instructionally. As I worked to create a more consistent and meaningful guided reading schedule for my students, I noticed their reading behaviors began to change. Before I began this module, my guided reading groups did not have a definitive structure and purpose, often resulting in student disinterest and difficulty staying on task for a given period of time. By restructuring my groups to include a consistent routine of an introduction to the text, reading of the text, and a discussion of meaning, my students know the routine and are engaged in the whole reading time. I especially noticed this change in my struggling group of readers, who have moved two DRA2 levels in in just ten weeks! Each day, my students look forward to their reading group and are disappointed when changes to our schedule prevent groups from meeting. Consistency has been one of the most challenging parts of this module as I realized that weather, school holidays, and unexpected changes all impact our daily schedule. Having a flexible plan for guided reading has allowed me to keep consistently meeting with my groups when these challenges arise. As the year progresses I know that I may need to vary the length of time that I meet with my readers. The flexible schedule I have created allows me to modify the timing of group meetings depending on the goal and instructional focus for the lesson as well as my observations of student learning.

Perhaps the most beneficial part of this module has been learning simple ways to differentiate the content of my lessons for my students. I have learned that differentiation really means knowing each of my students and how they learn best, as well as their successes and challenges in reading. Attending to my students' diverse needs has allowed me to naturally differentiate the content and the focus of my guided reading lessons. After consulting my student's Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA2) data and my own informal observations, I placed students in groups based on their instructional level of reading. After beginning this module, I quickly modified the focus for my English Language Learners and struggling readers to focus on introducing key conceptual vocabulary before reading a text. This has made a huge impact on their understanding as is demonstrated by discussions we have before and after reading the text. For my students who are above grade level, I have focused on teaching them to think beyond and about the texts we read. This focus has helped them to gain a deeper understanding of the texts that we read and has helped them to synthesize more challenging texts. When working with these students I have noticed that they are making more connections between the text and their own prior knowledge and are beginning to see pictures as an important part of reading. At the beginning of this module, I realized that I had difficulty consistently recording anecdotal observations of my students. I decided to create a guided reading notebook to organize my lesson plans, group observations and notes, and resources all in one place. Each time I meet with a group I record my observations in that section of my book, and return to those notes each week to use for planning future meetings. I often use this data to modify my guided reading groups. Over the course of the past 10 weeks, I have moved four students to different guided reading groups based on my observations and their understanding. For example one student was moved to another group because she was reading with fluency and understanding at an independent level and was ready to work on comprehension strategies and cross-checking at a more challenging instructional level. These modifications have helped support these students' development as readers. As I move forward, I would like to learn more about different

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assessments (in addition to the DRA2) I can utilize, along with my anecdotal notes, to help me identify when my students are ready to move to a new focus and reading level.

Over the course of this module, I have made great growth as a teacher of reading. I feel more confident in my ability to consistently meet with groups of students and foster their growth as readers. All of my students are in appropriate reading groups based on their skill level and I feel comfortable modifying my groups as is needed to support my students' development. Choosing this module to work on this fall has been extremely helpful in helping me adjust to teaching first grade. Spending the time to learn about and observe the reading behaviors of my first grade students has helped me to better adjust my plans and lessons to meet their needs. As a result, all of my students have made growth as is evidenced by their January DRA2 scores. 5% of my students have grown by 1 DRA level, 53% of my students have grown 2 DRA levels, 31% of my students have grown by 3 DRA levels, and 11% of my students have grown by 4 DRA levels! Even though I have made much growth as a teacher, I know that I have much more to learn about instruction and Guided Reading. Now that I have a flexible and working structure for guided reading, I would like to continue to learn about different assessments that I can use to help me know when my students are ready to move to a new area of their reading development. Gathering and analyzing this data will help me to make informed decisions about future reading goals and choose appropriate levels for my students, which will help to foster the growth of my first grade readers!