

**“EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY” ...SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES THAT  
PROMOTE READING GROWTH**

**(a.k.a. “What the rest of the class is doing...”)**

**GOAL: DURING SMALL GROUP WORK IN THE CLASSROOM, ALL STUDENTS ARE ENGAGED IN BENEFICIAL LITERACY ACTIVITIES.**

**Dazzling Idea #1:** *“It is worth emphasizing that the most important single activity to promote reading is reading. It is even better if this is done with a purpose, and if we regularly write about and discuss what we read.”* Mike Schmoker’s research (2001) indicates that students are often asked to “color” during small group time. Instead of having the “rest of the class” color, let’s find effective literacy-building activities for them!

**Dazzling Idea #2:** Every child, every day, needs to engage in the following activities:

- Read something they choose.
  - Read something accurately.
  - Read something they understand.
- Write about something that is meaningful to them.
  - Talk to peers about their reading and writing.
- Listen to a fluent adult read aloud. (Allington & Gabriel, 2012)

In October, we discussed how to effectively teach children to manage their behavior during small group time. In November, we introduced discussions about individual students to the RtI Teams. In December, let’s examine the activities “the rest of the class” is doing during small group time. To be the most beneficial, these activities need to be:

- **Interesting and Engaging**
- **Involve some student choice**
- **Able to be done without (much) assistance**
- **Interactive**
- **Involve some kind of student accountability, but NOT something the teacher has to correct every day.**
- **Easy for the Teacher to Change or Revise Week to Week.**

Remember...

***The most important single activity to promote reading is reading.***

**EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY (What the Rest of the Class is Doing While You Teach Small Groups)**

**Instead of:**

**Try this:**



**1. Independent Reading Center (student choice of books):**

- Teach students how to choose a “good fit” book. (See attached for strategies.) Students need to be able to read these books accurately and with understanding.
- Set up individual student book boxes in the classroom (cut-off cereal boxes covered with tack paper work well for this). Boxes should be easily accessible so the student can “grab and go”. Either you and/or the student can add books to the boxes.
- For accountability purpose, have students keep a reading log or journal. Check it periodically. (See attached for example.)

**2. Partner Reading Center (student choice of books):**

- Students can take their independent book boxes to the partner reading center. Partners should be given directions for how often to switch reading (every paragraph, every page...)
- As long as students behave and are reading, there’s really no reason a formal accountability measure is needed.

**3. Writing Center (student choice of writing topic):**

- Have young children do **Word Work**:
  - Practice writing and tracing letters
  - Make words using cut-apart letters, stamps, letter tiles, magnetic letters, etc.
  - Write words using previously taught spelling patterns (e.g., use dry-erase boards)
  - Sort words, or
  - **Journal** about a chosen topic using invented spelling.
- Have older children journal about a chosen topic, use the time for writer’s workshop, or write a response to something previously read.

**4. Listening to Reading Center:**

- Usually this is a “book on tape/computer” type of center, but you could bring in guest readers or have some of the students read to others.
- For accountability, students could be asked to respond in writing to the book or take an AR quiz.

## Strategies for Helping Students Choose “Good Fit” Books

### Five Finger Rule

1. Choose a book that you think you will enjoy.
2. Read the second page.
3. Hold up a finger for each word you are not sure of, or do not know.
4. If there are five or more words you did not know, you should choose an easier book.
5. If you aren't sure, use the five finger rule on two more pages.

### Good Fit Questions

Read two or three pages and ask yourself these questions:

#### **Will it be an easy, fun book to read?**

1. Do I understand what I am reading?
2. Do I know almost every word?
3. When I read it aloud, can I read it smoothly?
4. Do I think the topic will interest me?

If most of your answers were "yes", this will be an easy book to read independently by yourself.

#### **Will this book be too hard for me?**

1. Are there five or more words on a page that I don't know, or am unsure of?
2. Is this book confusing and hard to understand by myself?
3. When I read it aloud, does it sound choppy and slow?

If most of your answers were "yes," this book is too hard. You should wait awhile before you read this book. Give the book another try later, or ask an adult to read the book to you.

### I PICK Good-Fit Books

1. **I** choose a book.
2. **P**urpose – Why do I want to read it?
3. **I**nterest – Does it interest me?
4. **C**omprehend – Do I understand what I am reading?
5. **K**now – I know most of the words.

Weekly Reading Log – Reading Strategy Practice Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Check off the Reading Strategies you reported using this week. Try to check off as many as you can, and get a good variety. Make sure you write about the strategies used in the boxes.

Reading Strategies

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Predict what will happen next                | <input type="checkbox"/> Find some interesting details in the reading                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask myself questions while reading           | <input type="checkbox"/> Write a summary of what I read or retell the story            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use a judgment while reading                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Find cause and effect in the reading                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a connection to my life while reading   | <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor and “fix up” my reading                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determine the main idea                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Use nonfiction text features (titles, headings, graphs, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determine the meaning of a word I don’t know | <input type="checkbox"/> Visualize and use sensory images                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find facts and opinions in the reading       | <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust and apply different reading rates                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determine some traits of a character         | <input type="checkbox"/> Reread when I don’t understand                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |

Explain how you used reading strategies in the boxes below. Tell exactly what you did.

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Reading Strategy Used: \_\_\_\_\_

## Literacy Center Ideas

- **Reading Activities center** (independent reading, song and poetry cards, big books, other book type reading)
- **ABC centers** (flash cards, ABC books, song and poem cards, and other ABC activities, alphabetizing)
- **Write the Room** (small clipboards -- about 6x9 -- students copy any print they see anywhere in the room. They must fill one side of a page, even if they can't read everything they wrote. Beginning writers draw pictures to help them remember the words). Students can pair up & one may even use a pointer and tell the other what to write.
- **Read the Room** - reading anything that is posted in the room
- **Rainbow Spelling** (Post the week's spelling words on a half sheet of chart paper, students write them 3 times each with colored markers or colored pencils.)
- **Word Sort Center:** Provide word cards of many words containing the phonograms, prefixes, suffixes, or roots you've been studying. Have students sort the words in as many ways as they can think of, jotting down the "titles" of each sort or group.
- **Spelling Activity Center** - using their word lists create tongues twisters, sentences, stories, word scrambles...
- **Pocket Charts** (Read/do the activities in a pocket chart - (story sentence sequencing, making words challenge, etc).
- **Stamp a Word** - take a tub with rubber alphabet stamps, stamp pads, and large sheets of paper to a work area and stamp any words they want to stamp.
- **Book Bins** - independent, silent, or small group reading
- **Star Authors** - A place to read student-created work
- **Listening Centers** - Record the books you read to the class. Have parents help out - have students record for others. How nice to hear your friend, mom, dad, sister or brother read a story at center time!
- **Magnetic letters/Magnetic Poetry** for Kids - Make use of your metal file cabinet!
- **Stamp and sticker stories** - Students use the stamps or stickers (appropriate to the unit) and write rebus type stories using stamps/stickers and words. Put a limit of stickers to be used or photocopy sheets of stickers they can cut apart.
- **Making Words Centers** - Throughout the week students can go up to a pocket chart when they have a few minutes and try to make as many words as they can out of the scrambled Mystery Word. On Fridays - students share all of the words that they came up with and decode the mystery word. It's a great activity for your average and high students.
- **Overhead Journals** - Have one student write their journal entry on the overhead. The student reads the journal and gives the group permission to edit the entry. The student gets to correct the errors and the group rereads it out loud.
- **Making Greeting Cards** - have samples of greeting card verses, titles, etc - cut them up for students to refer to for ideas. Encourage students to make cards for their family, teachers around the building, and students within the room.
- **Game Center** - word games - Scrabble, Story Scramble, Silly Sentences (cards)
- **Computer Center** - reading of living books or student created e-books; using educational websites, composition websites, etc.
- **Message Centers/Student Post Office** - for writing to others - a mailbox for each student is a good idea to avoid note passing in class.
- **Reader's Theatre** - provide scripts for students, and have them read the script as a group, changing roles after each read
- **Word Hunt** -- kids get a letter or digraph and see how many words they can find in a magazine or newspaper

that start with or contain it.

- **Browsing Box/Familiar Read Box:** Each guided reading group takes the books read during GR group and puts them into a browsing box. They can look at the books as a group. This is effective because the students are dealing with familiar text independently. Each day "special" students choose books to read from their browsing box to the entire class.
- **Literature Circle:** A group of students will read a literature selection together and discuss their favorite part. Once they are comfortable with this process, they can map the story on large chart paper or put on a play for the class, etc. This allows children to "own" literature.
- **Buddy Reading:** Place duplicate copies of books at all levels in the room. The students can read with a partner with familiar or unfamiliar texts. Then they work with their buddy to discuss or write about their favorite part.
- **Journal Writing:** Give students content-related pictures to glue in their journals as writing prompts, or provide written prompts at the center
- **Handwriting Center:** Use laminated alphabet cards for the class to practice handwriting either by tracing over them in a marker or play dough. They can also use wikki sticks or pipe cleaners to make letters.
- **Overhead:** Place a cloze paragraph on the overhead or let the kids map out their stories on the overhead, stories they have read or will be writing. Encourage students to use graphic organizers such as plot graphs, Venn diagrams, and T-charts to gain understanding into story reading or creation.
- **Content Area Reading Center:** Provide books written about topics you are studying in social studies or science. Allow students to independently or buddy-read them.
- **Sight Word Center:** Students can make sight words with rubber stamps, magnetic letters, paint baggies, sand trays...
- **Vocabulary Center:** Provide vocabulary cards, dictionaries, paper, and writing utensils. Have students sketch or act out vocabulary words, or write sentences or stories with the words. Students may also categorize (sort) words, make word webs, or make lists of interesting words.
- **Poetry Box:** Provide copies of poetry anthologies. Have students independently or buddy-read favorite poems.
- **Researcher's Lab:** Change this space with each science unit. Provide some clipboards, science materials, and instructions of things for students to observe or explore. Students should write their observations in a log or journal.

The above ideas are from: <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/guided/others.html#centers>

Find more ideas at: <http://www.canteach.ca/elementary/beginning10.html>