

TRANSCRIPT: Teacher Commentary

Independent Reading Grade 1: Find Important Facts

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Before the Lesson

I'm at Meadowfield Elementary . We have a wide variety of learners. I have 19 children. It's very girl-heavy – I have 16 girls in my classroom and 3 boys. Those 3 boys hold their own. I will say it's a little bit easier as far as when you're picking your books, their interests are kind of the same, but I still have to make sure I'm incorporating the boys. We have RTI here, and I have a few children who are getting RTI.

I have about 75% of my class is on or above level, and about 25% is below. That was flip-flopped at the beginning of the year. I had about 75% that was below and 25% that was on. We've been working very hard this year. I'm very proud of them.

Building my kids' stamina is a big challenge. So therefore I had to get them on a reading level where they'd have more texts to read. And then managing it into my schedule so they'd have that time to stop and read, because there are so many other things you have to do, teachers are required to get so much in. So just stopping and saying we're going to do this every single day. You're not going to take away from that time, I think is a really big challenge.

We start off with our mini-lesson, 5-10 minutes really quick, IR comes after that, 25 minutes, sometimes 30. Transitions take about 5 minutes, going in and out, and then they have a 5-minute buddy share, and then I have a 5-minute wrap-up.

I will do maybe 2 weeks of guided reading nonstop, and I'll do some conferring after my guided reading groups. You saw that my chunk of time is about 25 minutes, so I can usually get through a guided reading group in about 15 minutes. So I'll be able to pull one kid. So I'll do that for about 2 weeks, and then, OK, let's stop with the guided reading and just do 1 week of just conferring, so I have a chance to meet with each child, make sure they're getting what I'm teaching during mini-lessons, make sure they're getting what I'm teaching during guided reading, and then I'll go back into my guided reading sessions.

Mini-Lesson: How do you choose your mini-lesson?

It's a combination of their interests, so the book that I chose, Neil Armstrong, we've been learning about biographies, they're really fascinated with them. We've been doing research projects. So I try to pick a book that is going to interest them, and we kind of follow along with the district reading workshop units, and right now it's nonfiction. So that was the genre. Then I pull what they're fascinated in for the book. As far as the mini-lesson, the skill we're working on – I follow along as closely as I can with the district, but I'm looking at, when I'm pulling them in guided reading groups, what do they need more help with? When I listen to them read 1-1, what am I noticing? What skills do most of my children need some help with, what do I need to reteach? So it's a combination of a lot of things.

Independent Reading: Conference 1 (How do you decide which children to confer with?)

I don't have a systematic plan, I'm more organic. I know some teachers have a clip system and meet with certain kids on certain days. I do keep their names in my notebook, so that way I can flip and see who I have met with and who I haven't.

So a lot of it is what I've noticed before. If I haven't done a lot of conferring, it's what I've noticed in guided reading groups. So if I'm noticing that certain children are struggling with certain skills that I'm teaching, then all right, tomorrow or next week when I'm conferring I'm going to make sure that I pull you, like yesterday I noticed during share time that C__ was making a lot of sticky notes in his book. So I made a mental note that tomorrow I want to pull him 1-1 to see if he's really understanding what he's putting on those sticky notes, or if he's just having fun with the sticky notes. That's kind of a new concept for us. They're wanting to write everything down on the sticky notes.

He's working really hard. He's made some major leaps and the fact that he's – I noticed that he's using word attack strategies on his own, he's pulling information from the text and he was also drawing his own diagrams and labeling them, I see that he's picking up on the lessons that I've been teaching. He still needs a little bit more work on, when I asked him some questions about what he put on the sticky notes – I don't know if he was just a little shy, because he is a little shy, to get some deeper thinking and deeper understanding. I was pushing him to make a bit of an inference – well, why is that tail spotted? And he kind of looked at me, and as I helped prompt him to go back and find it, he could find the answer. So with him, it might be with his group we might do some more lessons on inferring, and going deeper into the text and not just pulling those wow facts.

Independent Reading: Conference 2

L__ chose – we are in the process of finishing our biography research, and she chose someone she didn't do her project on, she pulled it out of the basket. I notice that she wrote the heading, "Life in the South" and she wrote down his birthday, because we talked about that's one of the important facts in biographies, when they were born because that tells a lot about that time period. And I kind of prompted her what else was important on that page and she said that he was a minister, that was his profession. So she was pulling those important facts. And when I met with her, she wanted to share her sticky notes, and I'm glad I stopped and listened to her, because I noticed that she jotted down a bunch of facts but then she took it and she found what was the most important fact for him, that he wanted equal rights for everybody. So now I need to go back and add to my notes that she got the aha. Yes, she wrote down all these little details, but she was able to pull the main idea of the book. So that was awesome.

Sometimes it's just helpful just to be there to listen to their thinking and kind of organize their thinking, especially with nonfiction text, because like with L__, there's a lot coming at her, this book is a little bit higher. So I was there to help scaffold with some of the more difficult words, and I was also there just to ask questions. I'm not saying, "That's an important fact, write that down," but I'm there to guide their thinking and get them on the right track. So I don't sit there and listen to the whole thing, OK, you did this here, now keep doing this through the rest of the book. And she did it. So I was able to just give her that little boost that she needed so that she could keep practicing those skills.

Buddy Sharing

When they come, they have to sit around the rug, and that allows them to have to focus on me for a second. Sometimes I give them a purpose for their sharing, and sometimes I don't, just share whatever strategies or things that you learned that day, sometimes it's what was the important information from your book that day. So sometimes there's a focus and sometimes there isn't. They're able to quickly turn eye to eye and knee to knee. I keep them on the carpet so I can rotate around and sit in and listen, and they're able to turn back quickly and listen to me, so we don't have that lost time with transitions.

It builds on their learning, because they learn from each other. One, it keeps them accountable during their reading time, and then it gives them the opportunity to ask each other questions, which is an important part of reading and learning, and to help each other find answers, and to maybe guide them with certain skills, like, hey, you could put a sticky note here, or do you remember what Ms. Whitman said. So they kind of become the teacher to each other.

Closure

When I see kids doing either things I taught in the mini-lesson or, oo, that's something we can all practice on, that's why I chose L, because she summarized, and that's something that we all need to be working on, and that's my look to the future, is the summarization of nonfiction texts, and writing a summary of the whole book that we have read, and taking all the information and putting it together. So the fact that she's already done it kind of gives me a catalyst into our mini-lessons that are to come. So I'm pulling kids who have had that aha moment, and are either implementing something that I taught in a mini-lesson then, or they're doing something that I can go ahead and teach the next day. You heard me reference, oh, this person did this yesterday, we're going to do that today. That kind of thing.