



Small-Group Shared Reading

Small-group shared reading is a transitional teaching approach that allows additional teacher support for students who require more literacy experiences to develop book handling, print tracking, and other print concepts. Small-group shared reading bridges the whole group approach of shared reading and the small-group instructional approach of guided reading. As students work with texts in small groups, they develop confidence and the skills to take on the reading task themselves.

Small-group shared reading follows three developmental phases. The format is similar to whole-class sessions; however, in small-group situations, instruction can be focused on the specific needs of group members. During the introductory phase, students are involved in a small-group sharing of a big book. As in whole-group sessions, fluent reading of the text is modelled by the teacher and students join in as the text becomes familiar. The focus is on comprehension first and then moves into vocabulary, text features, and print concepts. A big book that is being read in whole-class sessions can be used so that students have additional experiences with a familiar text or a big book that is not being read to the class can be used so that students transfer learned skills to new contexts.

At the next phase of development, group members move from the shared reading of a big book to shared reading the same text, using individual, small copies of the book. Reading together with the teacher remains the focus, but as the group develops familiarity with the text, the control of book handling and print tracking begins to move to the individual group members.

During the final phase, students read aloud individual copies of the same text, managing the print tracking and page turning by themselves. They can also listen to a recording of the text as they follow along in the text.

Small-group shared reading is a transitional stage that allows teachers to narrow and focus instruction for early literacy learners. These small-group experiences are invaluable opportunities to stimulate language development, build vocabulary, and develop the essential skills of reading. Once the children can read and write at least 5–7 sight words and solve words using both the initial consonant and picture clues, they may be ready for guided reading.