

2: Kindergarten ELA LetterSounds PostInterview

Speaker 1: At the beginning of each small group, I talked about what we would be learning. I just said, "We're going to be learning these sounds or reviewing these new sounds." Then I think too, at the beginning of the entire period when I was introducing what we'd be doing at the centers, I did talk briefly about what we'd be doing in my center as well as what they would be going over in their other centers.

It's interesting, because for a workshop that we went to we had to ask the kids what is reading. The majority of them said, "It's learning." They have realized that the purpose is to understand and get something out of it. Yeah, we've talked a lot about how, especially as they've learned new sounds and new sight words, and can read more, how more is being opened up to them, how they're able to learn new things and understand more.

The small groups, I would say, is what sticks out most. The small groups allowed us to be a lot more interactive so they're participating more. They're making connections and I can more than in a whole group, sometimes I still tell them, "Okay, let's move on," but I can respond to those connections which allows for a deeper understanding and meaning. Then in the centers they can review and go over past concepts that we've learned so that they can be practicing them to gain deeper understanding [00:02:00].

I think a huge role. In order for them to be able to work in the centers, a lot had to go into figuring out where they'll be, where I'll be, where I can still keep an eye on everyone, making it so that they can be independent in knowing where to go, but not something that would take a long time. I know some teachers have talked about putting on the overhead just like a sheet and there kids look up there and know, but knowing that kindergarten, it would take them so long to find their name, let alone, where they needed to go and if they needed something individually.

For my individual lesson, organization in just having the supplies and materials that I needed, because with small group instruction, there is less time that I have than if I were to just be doing it a whole group, it ends up being more effective time but less time in all. Having exactly what I need right there is really important because there's not a minute to spare to go grab something that I've forgotten or figuring out how to ... I think I still can and need to figure out ways, routines that allow for the passing out of materials and collecting them to be faster. I know that could be done in a better way, but just at least having something that the kids are used to so that they can ... It's not a big question where it gauge time.

They have little schedules and it has their name and it just has the five centers they go to in the order. I switched that probably only once every quarter or so depending on ... The group with me [00:04:00] is homogeneous, so depending on if there are kids who are moving up and down at different rates, and then everywhere else is heterogeneous, but then they get annoyed being with the same people all the time.

For my sanity as well as for them to be able to work together, that needs to get changed up occasionally. Yeah, just keeping the center activities, changing those out fairly frequently is also important so that they're not getting bored with in and having fun.

Management in any classroom is so important, and whatever works for the individual, I think, is what's most important because it's something that you're comfortable with and that works for your kids. I've been using my star chart since my student teaching, I think, is when that was introduced to me by my mentor.

It has worked in 3rd, 4th, 1st kindergarten, every grade, because I think it's like this immediate gratification that they get a star rate when they're doing what they're supposed to be doing, they lose it, right, when they're not. Yeah, if I didn't have that, I would have a really hard time getting the kids to do what they're supposed to be doing?

Speaker 2: Do you add some values on the board? Do they have to reinforce expectations?

Speaker 1: Yeah, they do, because it gives kids specific ideas in their mind of what they should be doing and what they shouldn't be doing. They refer to it just as much if not more than I do when tattling on somebody who is not following one of the core values. Even just at the end of the day, we'll talk about, if they [00:06:00] do get to check that day, why they got it, and they will often refer to the values, "I wasn't doing this. I wasn't listening and learning," or "I wasn't being nice and working together," that kind of thing.

I think the students were engaged well. As far as the students that were not in my group, there were definitely lots of moments when they weren't engaged, when they were just arguing with each other rather than doing the task that they've been given. That's something that I've struggled with since the start of CREDE. It's just that whole management.

I have it to a certain extent but I need to figure out how to polish it to the end, how to get them to be more self-directed to just treat each other nicer sometimes, to not be offended. I think it's a trade-off. I have high engagement in my small group. Then I think, I mean, they are engaged a lot more than if they were just sitting on the carpet the whole time and falling asleep or getting bored or daydreaming. I would still like to see that improve.

Just being able to get up and move. At this age, they know what's expected of them, but they sometimes do it when they think they can get away with it. I guess that at any age. When they're in the small group, there's very little that they try to pull because they know that I'm right here. I'm going to see whatever they do. Then also, they enjoy talking to me like they're my friends.

When we're in the small group, they have that chance to communicate, interact. They have [00:08:00] of a reason to be involved and engaged rather than if they're just expected to sit still and be silent. I think it's the activity changing frequently enough. I think it's the groupings. In some center games, they're playing with the whole group, and then they might go to another one with just with a partner, and then an iPad, so

they're independent. I think that grouping really helps. The change of grouping really helps you to just keep them excited.

I think more and more they're realizing that the more sounds they learn, the more sight words they learn, the more they can read. That's really exciting for them, because they'll me like, "Oh, I was able to read some sign when we drove by a store yesterday," or something like that, or we'll be walking in the hallways and they'll be like, "Oh, that's ..." Even if they can't read the word, "Oh, that's the letter whatever. That letter makes the wuh sound."

It's just opening those doors or opening a new ... I don't know how to describe it exactly. It's just being literate. It's an exciting thing. I remember, this is off-topic, but I remember when I was living in Japan and learning the Japanese language. Once I started to learn more characters, and same thing, then suddenly, I'm out and about and I'm reading the signs, and like, "Oh, that's say that." It was before everything was just blank. It was as if it was blank even though there are so much reaching around me. I remember that exciting feeling, so it's neat to have had that experience because now I understand what they're going through.

I [00:10:00] would like to do more preparations that can be more differentiated. My highest group, I think I needed to give them something more challenging, like maybe ... I did eventually have them right the whole word rather than just the initial sound on their whiteboards, but that was because one of the students started doing it.

I was like, "Oh." At first I was like, "No, we're just writing the ..." Then I'll say, "Oh, that's a good idea." I hadn't planned that. I hadn't prepared that. Maybe having words where the sounds were at the end of the word instead of the beginning because it's a lot easier to hear the initial sound, but it's harder to hear the ending sounds.

Then, I still do have a hard time with my lowest group trying to figure out how to make it simple enough for them, so that they're keeping pace and still learning what they need to to be able to stay on track, but yeah, maybe trying to simplify it for them a little bit more.