

Small Group

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action

We know that 4 year olds have developmental needs and we all want to “meet children where they are.” Small groups are an ideal format to provide differentiated instruction. Smaller groupings allow teaching teams to individualize strategies to assist each child in learning concepts and skills. Using formative assessment data, teachers intentionally group children by skills and knowledge particular learning objective. These groupings will vary as children grow over time within- and across different areas.

What it looks like in action:

- Brief activities (10-15 minutes)
- Flexible groupings that are based on assessed needs (as well as child choice)
- Hands-on learning around a concept that was introduced at whole group.
- Varied materials that children can select
- Teachers and teacher assistants facilitate different groups at the same time
- Teachers challenge children at every developmental level, modifying activities and providing assistance as needed



Avoid:

- Large blocks of time (>15-20 minutes)
- Same children kept in the same groupings
- Teacher-directed with limited child choice
- Limited or few materials (e.g., worksheets, small number of writing tools)
- Two groups of children doing the same thing, in the same way, at the same time
- Only one teacher conducts small groups
- Teaching “looks the same” for all children, without individualization based on what children show that they know and can do

- What are some benefits of small group relative to whole group?
- How does your teaching team work together to individualize your instruction, so all children are supported and challenged?
- In what do you use different modalities and materials during small groups to engage children in learning?



Intentional Teaching

- Teachers who maximize benefits of small group understand the intent of small group – individualizing instruction around a learning objective. (It’s not just a smaller “whole group”)
- Ongoing formative assessment is key!
 - Data helps teachers choose the learning objective and plan differentiated groupings.
 - Teachers’ in-the-moment observations help them immediately individualize instruction.
 - The data teachers collect during small groups informs the next small groups/groupings ...and the cycle continues