Rotation Chart
Creating a rotation chart will help you clearly communicate to students how they will participate in activities during time periods for small-group work. Students will learn to look at the chart, locate their names on a list that identifies their group assignment, and then look to determine where their group is located.

A rotation chart is a visual road map that illustrates the instructional order in which students participate in various activities. Quickly glancing at a rotation chart helps students know:

- what activity they will do first;
- when they will participate in each activity, including working with you in a small group;
- which other students will be working with them in their small group.

Making a Rotation Chart
You can create a rotation chart using the following inexpensive materials:

- a piece of poster board
- a permanent marker
- small pieces of paper to list students’ names and indicate group membership
- a photograph, picture, or sticker that identifies groups
- hooks or a type of material with a sticky surface that may be used to attach lists to the chart

Homemade rotation chart
Some items on the rotation chart need to be easily detachable, including the lists of students' names that indicate group memberships and the group identification at the bottom of the chart that show where each group will work during small-group time. The pictures at the bottom of the rotation chart should also be detachable so that they can be moved in a clockwise rotation to allow every small group to take part in each activity.

Examples of rotation charts are provided to guide your thinking and help you develop a chart that works for your classroom. The chart may be used differently according to the number of small-group time periods created, though the format of the chart remains the same. Rotations should always be made clockwise to ensure that all students meet with you daily for small-group instruction.

Use these examples to guide you in creating and assembling your own rotation chart. Decide on a format for your chart, formulate groups of students, and construct your chart.

**Using a Rotation Chart**

Now that you have your own rotation chart, you can establish a procedure for its use in your classroom. Assign one student to be the Chart Caller, or the person who will use the rotation chart to direct students to the teaching table and workstations. You may want to model this procedure at first, although the Chart Caller will very quickly be capable of performing this task unassisted.
When it is time to begin small-group instruction, have the Chart Caller point to each group on the rotation chart and read the names of the groups. For example, the Chart Caller might say, "The Blue Group is at the teaching table, the Red Group is at the workstations, and the Green Group is working individually."

Then the Chart Caller should direct each group to their work area, using the rotation chart as a guide. Starting on the left side of the chart, the Chart Caller should send a group to the teaching table, then a group to work individually, and then a group to the workstations. The Chart Caller should direct students in the group to assigned workstations or allow each student to choose a workstation. Once every student is settled, the Chart Caller should join his or her group.

Note that when you first begin implementing this procedure, it is best not to allow each student to choose a workstation. Once students understand the procedure and it becomes routine, you may wish to allow students to choose a workstation.
Help students quickly assess the availability of workstations. Place a large, colorful plastic cup or athletic orange cone at each workstation, labeled with the name of the workstation and the number of students allowed at the workstation at one time. This will help students determine which workstations are available. Have students rotate the order in which they select a workstation, and ask them not to select the same workstation twice in a row.

Because the chart-calling procedure is so repetitive, your students will internalize the routine quickly, enabling you to avoid spending instructional time repeatedly explaining the procedure to them. When the Chart Caller is able perform his or her duties without your assistance, go to the teaching table immediately and begin teaching the lesson.

Once you begin instruction at the teaching table, set the kitchen timer to 20 minutes so you can monitor your use of small-group time. Have the Time Keeper provide you with a five-minute warning when it is almost time to make a transition. At the end of each small-group activity, the Chart Caller should return to the rotation chart and change the locations of the groups, rotating each one to the next position—in other words, moving each picture or group name to the next place to the right. The Chart Caller can then begin the entire procedure again, calling the groups to the different stations and directing them to their locations.
Use the following chart to guide you in addressing issues that arise during the Chart Caller's procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Possible Resolutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A student does not choose a workstation when the Chart Caller asks him or her to do so.</td>
<td>The Chart Caller can ignore the student’s non-compliant behavior and call upon another student. Later, the Chart Caller can allow the student to choose to try again. If the student refuses again, the Chart Caller can enlist the help of another student helper or simply reply, “You did not make a choice so I will choose for you,” and name a workstation for the non-compliant student to attend. Teacher assistance may be required at that time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student refuses to go with his or her assigned group when asked to do so by the Chart Caller.</td>
<td>The Chart Caller can try to redirect the student or enlist the help of another student or the teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use the rotation chart to help you assign groups and plan rotations such that students who are socially less compatible are placed in two groups that never interact. This can be accomplished by assigning them to groups participating in activities located side by side on the chart (i.e., one group attends the teaching table, and the other group goes to the workstations). Carefully selecting each group’s membership will result in fewer interruptions at your teaching table.

Use the following chart to guide you in addressing issues that arise once you begin to implement your rotation chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Possible Resolutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are concerned that students who need special services are not receiving sufficient teacher-led instruction in their small groups.</td>
<td>Coordinate your schedule and rotations with the special service provider so that the student receiving special assistance is in the room and available to attend the teaching table and work table, if that is where homework is started.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are having difficulty including flexible grouping without changing group memberships while still using the rotation chart.</td>
<td>Allow students to pick a workstation so that they mix with students from other groups. Be aware, though, that allowing students to choose workstations can create opportunities in which students with incompatible behaviors may choose to be in the same place at the same time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student leaves his or her workstation before the time period ends.</td>
<td>Emphasize to the student that he or she selected that workstation and is responsible and accountable for that choice. Remind students that they must remain in a workstation until that period is over and they have cleaned up.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3
Implement Effective Instruction

There are many tools that can assist you in efficiently and effectively managing behaviors, the environment, and your instruction. Key tools include collecting and interpreting data, evaluating students’ progress, and utilizing effective communication strategies.

Make Grouping Decisions
Grouping students creates opportunities for differentiating instruction and is a highly effective way to address each student’s individual learning needs. Delivering a lesson in smaller groups may not require a change in the content that you teach, but it does demand a change in instructional purpose and the level of difficulty of your lesson delivery.

The purpose of differentiating instruction is to ensure that your lesson is meaningful to every student. When all students are doing the same activity at the same time, regardless of the grouping format used, they are not benefiting from tailored, targeted teaching through differentiated instruction. In addition, simply assigning students to small groups without making adjustments to the lesson will not make the content more meaningful to every student. However, when implemented methodically, differentiated instruction can provide opportunities for every student to receive the type of instruction that benefits his or her needs and ensures academic progress.

Differentiated instruction cannot be delivered through whole-group lessons. Small-group lessons are crucial to successful differentiated instruction, because they allow for the instruction to be individualized and directed toward specific needs. Constant re-evaluation of students’ needs and progress will enable you to tailor group assignments to students as they progress and their needs evolve. Your teaching and student groupings should remain flexible so that instruction and small-group memberships can constantly align with student progress.
The following chart outlines grouping practices that may be used to differentiate instruction through teacher-led whole-class and small-group lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Grouping Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Type</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Whole                  | ■ Introduce and model new concepts  
                        ■ Practice concepts not yet mastered  
                        ■ Review concepts                   | ■ All students in class (may use partnering activities to group within whole class) |
| Small                  | ■ Provide instruction that is data-informed and that aligns with student-specific needs  
                        ■ Administer explicit skills instruction with immediate corrective feedback | ■ Groups of 4–8 students created through data-informed grouping  
                                                                            ■ Partnering activities may be used to group within a group |
| Mixed-ability (collaborative) | ■ Practice previously taught concepts  
                        ■ Organize partnering activities | ■ Based on students’ skills or interests  
                                                                            ■ Peer partners  
                                                                            ■ Small study groups |
| One-on-One             | ■ Provide intensive instruction tailored to specific student needs | ■ Based on assessment data |

**Data Collection**

In order to evaluate your students’ initial academic comprehension and skills, you must gather and review data that measures their achievement. Study any formal data that is available, including program and state assessments. Look for common skill strengths and needs. Then review the district, state, and national achievement standards. Your instructional journey should begin where your students can perform successfully and end with mastery of state achievement standards.
Once students are grouped at the beginning of the academic year, their progress should be monitored frequently to determine when changes in grouping need to be made. This requires a different kind of data collection, in which you actively observe and reassess their needs and progress. This can be accomplished through the following two methods.

**Making Informal Observations**

Use informal observations, such as a quick check, to determine whether students understand the skill, strategy, or concept being taught. Select an activity that allows students to demonstrate the skill you want to observe. Model and clarify expectations to ensure that students understand the task at hand. By observing students engaged in an activity or assignment, you can determine the degree to which students understand the content presented. Informal observations will allow you to gather information about which standards students have met as well as what instructional needs students still have.

Informal observations should not be conducted at random. They should be planned, and you should select certain students you particularly feel need to be observed at that time. Your observations should reflect your evaluation criteria for those specific students, and your criteria used as your basis for observation should stem from the content standard being taught.

Informal observations can be performed in several ways. For example, you may use a skill checklist to determine whether students can identify the main idea of a passage. Alternatively, you may use a graphic organizer or word sort to ascertain whether students are developing an understanding of key vocabulary terms associated with the content. You may also use brief writing prompts to check for understanding.
Use the following questions and suggestions to help you formulate your own plan for making informal observations in your classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Consideration</th>
<th>Suggestions for Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why am I observing students? What is the purpose of the observation? What will I do with the information I gather?</td>
<td>Consider the expectations, via content standards, for students in this grade. Then determine what those expectations would look like in the classroom. Observe students to determine whether they are displaying the behaviors, skills, or strategies expected in the standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often will I informally observe students?</td>
<td>Make informal observations part of your daily routine. However, do not attempt to observe every student every day. Rather, observe a specific number of students daily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will I record my informal observations?</td>
<td>Chart your observations in a notebook, keeping your observations divided by student, or record your comments on mailing labels. Store the notebook or set of labels in a secure location where students will not have access to it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conducting Weekly and Unit Assessments**

In addition to informal observations, such as quick checks, weekly and unit assessments can be used to inform you, your students, and their parents about content mastery and instructional needs. Weekly assessments should be aligned with the content standards and skills being taught. There are numerous tools that can be used for weekly assessments—from writing prompts to projects. Unit assessments are often conducted in conjunction with established curriculum guidelines. This type of assessment should typically be made every six weeks. Conducting weekly and unit assessments can provide you with a strong indication of students' strengths, as well as skills that still need to be mastered.
Data Interpretation
Once you have collected data, you must interpret your assessments and draw conclusions that will help you identify your students' needs and academic achievement. Review your notes, highlighting common strengths or needs among students. Consider whether students would benefit more from homogeneous (similar-skill) groups or heterogeneous (mixed-skill) groups. Based on students' needs, one of these options may be more useful in strengthening their skills or helping them grow academically.

Consider the following factors as you examine your data and determine the needs of your students:
- What skill, strategy, or concept is being taught?
- How much time is available?
- Through which type of instruction method will students be able to more easily absorb difficult concepts—similar- or mixed-skill grouping?
- What types of activities will be most academically profitable for each type of group?

Evaluating the Needs of Similar-skill Students
If you detect that many students have a similar skill set or are struggling with a similar skill, you may determine that they share common skill needs. Creating homogeneous groups allows you to introduce information and gather limited information quickly.

Although similar-skill identification and grouping may allow you to work quickly and efficiently, avoid isolating these students into such groups all the time. Homogeneous grouping has been criticized for lowering self-esteem and motivation, restricting friendships, and widening the gap between high and low achievers (Labo and Teele 1999; Vaughn et al. 2001). If you do decide to form homogeneous groups, you may choose to offer an opportunity for mixed-ability grouping during workstation periods.
Understanding the Benefits of Mixed-skill Grouping

If you conclude from your data analysis that your students have diverse academic needs, you may group students by similar skill needs, although they may have other skill sets that differ. Heterogeneous groups are excellent for practice activities because students can serve as peer tutors and provide constructive feedback when you are working with other students. You can observe, listen, and assess students’ progress as members in mixed-skill groups serve as peer tutors.

Teaching in small groups in which students provide input and assistance as tutors to their peers improves all students’ comprehension (Mathes and Fuchs 1994; Mathes et al. 2005). Multiple data points collected based on diverse settings provide a wider view of students’ performance. However, additional information is crucial to determining the type of instruction and evaluation method that will best benefit every student.

Group Assignment

Gathering and interpreting data are the first two steps in planning for differentiated instruction. Assigning students to small groups is the third step, and it requires perhaps the most meticulous preparation of all of the steps, because grouping students, when done effectively, can greatly enhance academic comprehension and achievement.

Once you have decided whether you will proceed with a homogeneous or a heterogeneous group, based on your data analysis, you can begin assigning students to small groups. At the beginning of the academic year, it is often easier to assign group memberships that are more homogeneous, or similar in skill proficiency and needs. After observing your students closely and determining which students work cooperatively and which students share similar needs, you can incorporate mixed-skill and flexible groupings that include more student choices to increase interactions within small groups.
Incorporating Flexible Grouping
As you prepare to assign students to small groups, keep in mind that group compatibility is critical. The students assigned to each group must be capable of working together with minimal teacher supervision when you are working with a small group. They must be capable of and willing to provide assistance to one another. Behavioral concerns and academic needs must be considered simultaneously when assigning group memberships. You can increase your probability of success in assigning effective groups by defining your expectations for performance from the very first day of class.

Use the following guidelines to help you as you consider group assignment options:

- Assign students who do not work cooperatively together to different groups if possible.
- Assign a leader to each small group, and have the leader serve as a coordinator.
- Have students complete practice activities as a group assignment at the Homework Table or other workstation. Ensure that the grouping represents a variety of skill levels so students can discuss possible solutions for applying a skill or strategy.
Groups Comprised of Homogeneous or Heterogeneous Skill Sets
As previously discussed, the decision regarding the implementation of homogeneous versus heterogeneous groups should stem from your analysis of gathered data. The following charts illustrate how homogeneous and heterogeneous groups can be employed for a variety of instructional purposes.

### First Grouping—Homogeneous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Number</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Competency or Skill Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reading above grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reading fluently on grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reading on grade level, need skill review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low-performing, reading below grade level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart illustrates how to divide a classroom of 24 students into four small homogeneous groups for reading instruction.

### Second Grouping—Heterogeneous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Number</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Competency or Skill Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Three students reading above grade level and three students reading on grade level, needing skill review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Two students reading fluently on grade level and two students reading on grade level, needing skill review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Three students reading above grade level and three students reading on grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low-performing, reading below grade level, working with the teacher in pairs of two students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart illustrates how to group the same 24 students in small heterogeneous groups for reading instruction.
**Group Sizes**

In addition to membership, group size is a contributing factor to the success or failure of small groups. Group size should vary according to the skill, strategy, or concept to be taught. Groups of four to eight students are preferable to larger groups, because small groups increase the opportunities for student engagement and peer interaction for students at risk for reading failure (Elbaum et al. 1999). Smaller teacher-led groups have been associated with better instruction and have therefore been supported as a system for intensive reading intervention (Thurlow et al. 1993).

Group sizes for students working at or beyond grade level are usually larger because the students need less teacher direction and support than groups comprised of students needing intensive intervention. Smaller groups of one to three students should be formed to allow more opportunities for students who require intensive intervention (Vaughn and Linan-Thompson 2003; Vaughn et al. 2001). Determining how many students can be assigned to each group involves understanding what your students need and how much teacher-led instruction is needed.

Use the following tasks to help you make group assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calculate the total number of students with whom you will work during your instructional period.</td>
<td>Assume that there are 24 students in a class for reading instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculate the amount of instructional time allotted.</td>
<td>Assume that there is a 90-minute period of time in which to teach reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the number of small groups that can be taught based on the time allotted for reading instruction.</td>
<td>Four small groups that meet for 20 minutes each may be scheduled in a 90-minute reading period, with 10 to 20 minutes allotted for opening and closing the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine which activities work best for the skill, strategy, or concept that will be taught.</td>
<td>Students will partner, allowing the teacher to “group within a large group,” thus providing increased student interaction. Responses will be in unison so larger group sizes can be used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applying Flexible Grouping to Different Subjects

Many students’ skill levels vary across academic subjects. For example, some students who are less proficient in reading do not struggle in math. Therefore, you may need to review your data interpretation before assigning students to small groups for lessons in specific content subjects such as math or science. Typically, larger, more diverse groups are used to teach content areas that allow students to manipulate materials to enhance their comprehension.

Making Final Grouping Decisions

Use the following questions and suggestions to guide you as you assign your students to groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Consideration</th>
<th>Suggestions for Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When will you use homogeneous groups?</td>
<td>Use homogeneous groups for activities that provide explicit skill instruction, assessment, or intensive intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When will you use heterogeneous groups?</td>
<td>Use heterogeneous groups comprised of high/medium- and medium/low-skill groupings so that students can assist each other when you are working with another small group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When will you use flexible grouping?</td>
<td>Use flexible grouping when a particular practice activity allows students to work together in a different format or your data indicates that students’ needs changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will you make flexible grouping work in your classroom?</td>
<td>Change group memberships by reassigning some or all students, or change the way in which some small groups work together so that students have more opportunities to interact with others not in their small group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4
Monitor and Sustain Change

The skills required to succeed in school and perform according to school standards are not innate. Students must be taught crucial school-related behaviors, such as self-monitoring, organizational planning, time management, and pacing, to complete their work. Procedures and routines can help students complete assignments and perform to your expectations, but only if these processes are reinforced, monitored, and consequently modified as needed on a regular basis. This chapter provides ways to help monitor your students’ performance and enable them to assume more responsibility for their work.

Monitoring students’ progress is skills-focused, just like instruction, and demands an understanding of what to observe, how to identify performance that defines mastery, and how often to monitor students’ progress. Creating a system for collecting and interpreting data to determine your students’ comprehension, as presented in Chapter 3, is a crucial step in monitoring students’ progress and guiding students to academic success. There are also other actions that can be taken simultaneously to gain a better understanding of students’ academic achievement and enable students to evaluate their own progress through their own system of assessment.

Monitor Change
It is important that you implement a realistic timeline for acting on the conclusions drawn from the data you gather and interpret, as well as a way to quickly make new assessments.
Timeline for Acting on Evaluation Conclusions
Flexible grouping requires that assessment data be used in making decisions about which students have similar needs. The interpretations of student performance data—tests, assessments, observations, and quick checks—can be used to group and regroup students based on their current learning profiles and instructional needs. Regular assessments also indicate when students have mastered a skill, strategy, or specific concept and are ready to change groups.

In general, group composition should be evaluated every six weeks. This schedule will allow the groups to remain flexible rather than permanent and fixed. Fixed groups, also known as ability groups, do not improve student performance. Documented studies (Reutzel 2007) have shown that placing students in permanent ability groups can be harmful to student achievement, motivation, and interest in learning.

As new needs are identified or some students progress, minor group membership changes should be made more frequently. This may involve shifting the group membership by one or two students but should not affect every student in the class. Significant changes to small groups should be made on an approximate six-week cycle.

Student Contracts as a Form of Student Self-Evaluation
Using student contracts to communicate expectations is an effective method for teaching organizational planning and self-monitoring. Student contracts help students recognize what is expected of them and what they must do to perform successfully. Contracts also enable students to visually organize through the use of a contract with stated due dates.
Students can use contracts to establish and understand the purpose of instruction, accept responsibility and be accountable for meeting or exceeding expectations, and prioritize their time to complete assignments with the earliest deadlines first. They can also use contracts to help them self-direct their use of instructional time and allocate more time for difficult assignments, budget their time across several days or a week, monitor their progress and develop a pace that works for them, honor due dates and complete work on time, and organize materials to complete assignments.

The use of student contracts will also benefit you. Since less of your time will be spent reminding and constantly checking with students to ensure that they complete their work on time, you will gain teaching time. Transferring the responsibility for personal management to students while still offering them support will enable you to step back and monitor student progress from a distance, allowing them to assume a greater role in their own academic success. Have students keep their contracts in their Do-Done folders or mailboxes, thereby giving you an opportunity to take a glance at their progress as regularly as you deem necessary.

You can create a contract by listing daily, weekly, and monthly assignments and due dates. Organize the contract by academic subject or simply list assignments and include a space where students can place a date or checkmark to indicate when each assignment is completed. Add space for students to monitor ongoing projects or assignments and make comments about their work. Have students track their progress from rough draft to completed assignment and develop work plans for completing long-term projects.

Once students routinely begin to use contracts, have them help you develop contracts tailored to specific projects. This will teach students to organize the tasks they need to complete and will help them solidify their prioritization abilities. If you wish to avoid spending time to create these contracts, you can obtain pre-established contracts from the Macmillan/McGraw-Hill reading program's *Weekly Contracts* book.
Sustain Change
Implementing change is only half of the struggle in the quest to teach effectively. Successful teaching ultimately stems not only from your effective decision-making skills and evaluation methods, but also from your ability to sustain change over time.

Allocation of Time to Sustain Change
Change cannot be sustained if time is not dedicated to reviewing and modifying practices in the classroom. Make a concerted effort to consistently allocate time for modeling and teaching students how to follow procedures and make them routine, organize their space and respect the space of those around them, and monitor their progress and self-regulate.

Review procedures and evaluate their application and usefulness on a regular basis, taking into account your responses to the following questions:

- Does this procedure still address a specific need that my students have?
- Is this procedure as effective as it could be at accomplishing the goals set forth?
- As a result of these procedures, are my students comprehending the subject matter more readily and easily?
- Are some procedures becoming routine while others are not? If so, how can I ensure that all procedures are becoming routine?
- Now that students have incorporated classroom procedures into their daily routine, are there new routines that would help them learn?
Allocation of Resources to Sustain Change
Change can also be sustained through the use of resources and verbal encouragement. Students are often more amenable to sustaining change if they feel that they have an active role in its long-term outcome.

Encouraging Student Feedback
Solicit student feedback to encourage students to share suggestions and concerns regarding the policies and procedures that are in place. Consider creating a form that students can complete and fill in to give you their feedback. Provide them with a secure box or other container in which to drop their comments, and read students' feedback on a regular basis.

Offering Support to Students
Some students may feel that they do not understand a procedure or are not receiving the amount of help they need to succeed academically. Provide support and an open forum for these students to voice their concerns. Consider giving them the opportunity to submit a Request for Help form if they would like additional assistance or clarification from you or from a peer.

Joining a Professional Learning Community
One of the best ways to sustain your effort to provide quality instruction for all of your students is to become a member of a professional learning community. Professional learning communities can take a number of different forms—from professional memberships to teachers' meetings after school to discussions about curriculum and instruction. Regardless of the form of involvement, becoming involved in a professional learning community ensures that you have constant access to ideas, information, instruction strategies, and resources.

Refer to the Appendix for specific information about joining a professional learning community in your neighborhood. Participating in a professional learning community can enhance your teaching and your students' education.
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  Student Jobs in the Classroom ... R8

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Resources for Support
All teachers encounter challenging situations in their classrooms on a daily basis. In addition to using the methods laid out in the previous four chapters, you may find it helpful to consult additional resources for further instructional support.

Web Sites
Whereas books used to provide teachers with nearly all of their teaching support, teachers in the twenty-first century are looking to the Internet and its vast supply of resources to support their instruction in the classroom. Below are some highly recommended Web sites that are frequently used by teachers to supplement their regular teaching tools.

- www.macmillanmh.com The Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Web site is teeming with additional lesson plans, educational Web site links, teaching tools, and interactive (computer-based) and paper activities for all major subjects.
- www.garlicpress.com This site provides materials pertaining to American Sign Language (ASL).
- www.fcrr.org This site contains reading activities and research articles pertaining to best practice.
- www.starfall.com This site provides resources and teaching suggestions to maintain student engagement during practice activities.
- www.teachers.net This site contains classroom management ideas, lesson plans, and other useful preparation materials.
- www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/teaching This site offers theory-based pedagogical resources for all teachers.
- webquest.sdsu.edu This site serves as a resource for teachers who are using the WebQuest model to teach with the Web.
Books and Other Publications

Countless books have been written on the subject of teaching. A few particularly innovative and insightful books are mentioned below.

- *Classroom Management That Works: Research-based Strategies for Every Teacher*
  by Robert J. Marzano, Jana S. Marzano, and Debra J. Pickering
  This book serves as a guide to utilizing research to improving student achievement. The authors provide “action steps” that can be used to create a conducive learning environment and foster strong relationships.

- *Differentiating Instruction: Grouping for Success*
  by Vicki Gibson and Jan Hasbrouck
  This book provides additional suggestions for and insight into differentiated instruction and the ways in which to effectively implement it in the classroom.

- *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children*
  by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell
  This book contains suggestions to support teachers, particularly those teaching kindergarten through third grade, during their first several years of teaching.

- *How to Be an Effective Teacher: The First Days of School*
  by Harry K. Wong and Rosemary T. Wong
  This book provides a step-by-step approach to teaching during the first days of the school year. Geared toward new and veteran teachers alike, it provides a foundation for establishing procedures and routines.

- *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-ability Classrooms*
  by Carol Ann Tomlinson
  This book presents differentiation strategies and offers suggestions for classroom management, grouping, and planning at multiple grade levels.
- **Research-based Methods of Reading Instruction: Grades K–3**
  by Sharon Vaughn and Sylvia Linan-Thompson
  This book provides informative reviews of best practice, assessment, instruction, progress-monitoring, and student achievement. It reports research as evidence for changing practices to increase student outcomes.

- **Small-group Reading Instruction: A Differentiated Teaching Model for Beginning and Struggling Readers** by Beverly Tyner
  This book contains information about grouping, classroom management, and modifying lessons to differentiate lesson content.

**Professional Communities**
Joining a professional learning community is a powerful way to sustain your teaching efforts and continue to grow and develop as an educator.

- **Join a professional organization.** When you join a professional organization, you become a member of a larger community. You receive member benefits, such as newsletters and journals, and have access to the organization’s Web site. Professional organizations often extend offers to its members to attend conferences as well. Consider such organizations as the International Reading Association (www.reading.org), the National Council of Teachers of English (www.ncte.org), and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (www.ascd.org).

- **Participate in a book club.** Groups of teachers who are interested in validating and extending their understanding of the complex learning process look to book clubs for additional materials, information, and support. Members of professional book clubs read journal articles and professional books and discuss them during scheduled meetings.

- **Collaboratively analyze student work.** Arrange or attend regular meetings for a group of teachers in your region. This will allow you and the other teachers to collaborate and examine student work as a group. Consider reviewing student writing, encouraging all members of the group to bring samples of their students’ work. Doing so will enable all of the members to identify trends and gain instructional insight.
Mentoring
There is perhaps no better resource than a veteran in your own field. Mentoring is highly interactive and is the ideal forum for seeking advice, honing your teaching skills, and offering guidance to newer teachers.

- **Find a mentor.** Approach an experienced colleague, a teacher at a nearby school, or a retired teacher, and ask him or her to serve as your mentor. Teachers are usually flattered to be asked to serve as a mentor, and are often willing to set aside time to meet weekly with a less experienced teacher to offer support and guidance.

- **Become a mentor.** If your school has a mentoring program, speak to its director (typically the principal) and express your interest in serving as a mentor to new teachers. If your school does not have a mentoring program, approach a new teacher and offer to help by checking in with them a few times a week or in any other way that is needed. In either situation, be sure to stress that your relationship is confidential.

Communication Strategies
There are many strategies that you can use to enhance communication with your students.

**American Sign Language**
Use simple signs from American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate positively and efficiently with your students by:

- using ASL to cue behaviors: listen, look, read, work, start, stop, and line up.
- using ASL to provide repeated engaging practice opportunities.
- implementing ASL to help maintain students' interest level and your instructional pacing during a highly interactive lesson.
- using ASL to differentiate instruction by allowing students with a higher skill level to increase the number of words they study per week while reinforcing instruction for those with a lower skill level through ASL.
**Additional Attention-calling Approaches**
You can also gain your students' attention through the use of these approaches:

- **Stop – look – listen.** Pair this verbal command with hand signals.
  1. Stop – raise the palm of your hand in a "stop" gesture.
  2. Look – point to your eyes.
  3. Listen – point to your ear.

- **Give me five.** This signal is delivered with a raised hand and steps announced.
  1. Stop what you are doing.
  2. Keep your mouth quiet.
  3. Look at the teacher.
  4. Keep your hands still.
  5. Listen for directions.

- **Silent hand signal.** Teach your students that, when you want their attention, you will raise your hand. They will be expected to look at you and raise their hand in response.

- **Call and response.** Use catch phrases to signal that you need students' attention. For example, you could say, "One, two, three, eyes on me," to which your students can reply, "One, two, three, eyes on you."
Student Engagement
Consider the following suggestions for increasing student engagement:

- Assign students to small study groups to organize a response to a question.
- Assign partnerships of 1–4 students who serve as team members, solving a problem and presenting their solution to the class.
- Have students gesture with a thumbs up to indicate approval or agreement or thumbs down to indicate disapproval or disagreement.
- Hold and wave a card with the word “yes” or “no” printed on it so that students can identify statements that represent fact or fiction.
- Group students within a group to encourage collaboration and peer tutoring in whole- and small-group lessons.
- Allow and encourage students to talk to and teach each other during activities whose instructional purpose is for practice or review, thus ensuring that instruction is flexible and responsive to students’ needs.
### Types of Workstations

Below is a chart that lists some of the types of workstations that can be implemented in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Workstation</th>
<th>Student Activity at Workstation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Select and read library books, retelling cards, and additional reading material to develop fluency and improve retelling and independent reading skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Study</td>
<td>Sort words, match word cards, and practice using new words through language to build phonics, spelling, grammar, and language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Write letters, informational paragraphs, stories, and poems to develop language and writing skills. Share compositions to enhance communication skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Literacy</td>
<td>Create posters, stories, summaries, and maps to explore science and social studies concepts while strengthening reading and writing skills, integrating lessons, and incorporating state standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Complete practice assignments collaboratively at first, then independently once the new skills are mastered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework Table</td>
<td>Work collaboratively on practice activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Student Jobs in the Classroom

The following chart contains names and descriptions of some of the most useful jobs that can be assigned to students, as well as assignment suggestions to help you make assignments that will be most beneficial to students.