Using ESSER Funds for Targeting Attention Through Small Group Instruction in Early Literacy
Conclusion

Introduction

What does the research say?

How can districts and schools invest sustainably?

What does strategic scheduling and staffing look like?

Conclusion
Our Shared Challenge

• Students — especially students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, English language learners, and students with disabilities — have experienced months of disrupted learning.

• The unprecedented infusion of federal stimulus funds (ESSER) provides an important opportunity for districts to equitably meet students’ needs and lay the foundation for meaningful, long-term change. With careful planning and investments, leaders can ensure changes are sustainable beyond the three-year ESSER funding period.

“
It’s time to redefine what ‘going back to normal’ means and use learnings from the pandemic to innovate and rethink the student learning experience.

-Elementary school dean of students in Minnesota

Source: Educators for Excellence, Voices from the Classroom, 2021
“Do Now, Build Toward”

District and school leaders can best navigate ESSER investment decisions by taking a “Do Now, Build Toward” approach — choosing doable starting points for the 2021-22 school year, while designing changes with a long-terms sustainable vision in mind.

This overview lays out a long-term, “Build Toward” vision for key strategies district and school leaders are prioritizing in elementary schools this fall.

These guides offer a blueprint for organizing resources this school year and beyond.

See the full “Do Now, Build Toward” toolkit.
IN THIS SERIES:
How can district and school leaders use stimulus funding to make “Do Now” investments that respond to urgent student needs, center equity, accelerate student learning, and also sustainably “Build Toward” long-term improvement?

IN THIS GUIDE:
What could it look like for my district or school to organize resources in ways that help all students access grade-level learning through targeted support in small groups?
What does the research say?
Right now, small group instruction is an important component in supporting all students to access grade-level Tier 1 instruction.

Effective tiered instruction requires...

- **High-quality Tier 1 instruction for all students** that is differentiated to address students’ unique needs and enable access to grade-level content.

- **Frequent data collection and monitoring** to identify students who need additional support, to adjust student groupings, and to inform instruction.

- **Additional small group instruction for students** who require more targeted and intensive support to address gaps in the foundational skills needed for accessing Tier 1 instruction.

Note: This guide addresses structures for providing academic supports.
Research shows that small group instruction can be an effective Tier 2 & 3 support.

• Small group instruction as part of Tier 2 & 3 supports, in addition to core instruction as part of Tier 1, is effective for early elementary students in math and reading, for students with disabilities, and for English language learners.

• Small group instruction to address unfinished learning is most effective when there is sufficient time and attention for each student.
  - **Group Size:** 2-6 students
  - **Duration:** 20-40 minutes per group, within a 40-60 minute intervention block
  - **Frequency:** 3-5x/week per group

• Significant achievement gains are made when grade-level teams of teachers are provided with consistent meeting times, schoolwide instructional leadership, and explicit protocols that focus meeting time on students’ academic needs and how to address them through instruction.

• **High-quality curriculum** is an essential component.

• Intervention that replaces part of core instruction may be less effective.

Sources: RTI Network; EdResearch for Recovery; Reading Rockets; IES; American Educational Research Journal; Ed Reports; MDRC; Instruction Partners
This guide will support districts and schools in investing in small group instruction for either approach.

FROM: TRADITIONAL INTERVENTION FOR SOME

- Targeted support for students in Tiers 2 & 3 to access grade-level instruction.
- Typically a separate program.
- Students are identified and regrouped every 4-12 weeks.

TO: SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION FOR ALL

- All students receive small group instruction for foundational reading skills.
- Small group instruction is an extension of differentiated, high-quality Tier 1 instruction, rather than a separate program.
- Regrouping is more frequent based on granular student data and observations.

We’re working in one district to move from a conversation about which students are ‘red’ on our screener to a much more specific conversation about which five-letter sounds he’s missing, what support will look like in small groups, and when we will know he has gotten to mastery.

-Instructional Expert

As part of COVID-19 response, districts and schools are expanding small group instruction beyond traditional Tier 2 & 3 structures.
We are still learning about how small group instruction can help address widespread unfinished or disrupted learning.

- Addressing unfinished learning likely requires different approaches depending on the subject.
- It is essential to learn foundational reading skills to access future grade-level content, so experts recommend schools prioritize small group instruction time for early literacy.
- It has yet to be determined what the exact role of common intervention programs within Tier 2 & 3 will be if all or most students receive small group support as part of Tier 1 instruction.

What About Math?
Math curriculum often progresses in a spiral, so there are more opportunities for gaps in foundational knowledge to be addressed with intentional data analysis and planning.

Sources: RTI Network; EdResearch for Recovery; Reading Rockets; IES; American Educational Research Journal; Ed Reports; MDRC; Instruction Partners
How can districts and schools invest sustainably?
Federal stimulus funds provide an opportunity to **address students’ current needs and build toward lasting improvement.**

To plan ESSER investments with **long-term sustainability** in mind…

- **Size the full cost of implementing strategies over time.**
  
  Consider *all* the cost components associated with implementing the strategy well, including those that address intensified needs and those that build long-term capacity. Understand which costs will need to be sustained over time.

- **Plan out how spending and organization will shift to sustain critical investments over time.**
  
  To avoid fiscal cliffs, have an exit strategy where possible. Carefully monitor and plan for what needs to be sustained.

- **Invest in building bridges to new ways of organizing.**
  
  Pilot and evaluate new approaches that lower future costs or redirect resources to sustain this strategy.

- **Define success, measure, and adjust.**
  
  Investing in a continuous improvement system is critical for ensuring that strategies evolve and improve over time. For more on this, see [Uncharted Waters](#).
To invest sustainably, districts and schools will need to size the full cost of key components of their approach to small group instruction.

- **Additional Staff for Small Groups**
  What are the options for leveraging new and/or existing roles to reduce group sizes?

- **Dedicated Time**
  How will we find sufficient time for a dedicated small group instruction block? How will we minimize tradeoffs?

- **Educator Professional Learning**
  What investments should be made in professional learning for small group instruction, particularly in early literacy?

- **Educator Collaboration Time**
  Which investments should be made to ensure educators have sufficient time for collaboration to plan small group instruction?

- **High-Quality, Aligned Materials**
  Are materials in place to enable high-quality small group instruction?

- **Assessments & Monitoring Systems**
  What data do we need to collect to better target instruction? What systems will we set up for continuous improvement?
ESSER investments should balance investing in immediate student needs with building lasting capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address intensified needs</th>
<th>Build system capacity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Staff for Small Groups</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dedicated Time</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Educator Professional Learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Educator Collaboration Time</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High-Quality, Aligned Materials</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessments &amp; Monitoring Systems</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Investments in these areas increase the amount of small group instruction that is possible but can also build capacity if done strategically. For example, piloting new roles or uses of time to create small groups.

Investments in these areas build the capacity of the system to be able to provide more effective small group instruction.

Plan out how spending and organization will shift to sustain critical investments over time.
While some investments will decrease, other investments will need to be sustained in order to continue providing small group instruction after ESSER.

**Illustrative investment needed**

Offer significantly more small group instruction in the near-term due to pandemic-related needs. Monitor to see what is needed to meet ongoing levels of student need.

**Key Question:** How can districts and schools sustain increased student supports and teacher collaboration — without increasing long-term costs?

More staff learning and collaboration opportunities are needed to improve small group instruction and deliver it coherently. Many districts and schools will want to maintain increased learning and collaboration time to sustain improvement.

Possibly reduce investments in these areas back to baseline once curriculum and monitoring systems are in place.
Districts and schools can pilot ways to sustain more small group instruction than was provided pre-COVID.

For now, schools might...

- Hire additional teachers or interventionists for small groups.
- Hire teaching assistants to monitor larger groups, while teachers pull small groups.
- Provide stipends to staff to meet after school and during additional professional learning days.
- Add staff to increase teacher release time.

...while piloting and evaluating ways to provide more and better small group instruction, even without stimulus dollars.

- Pilot using **lower-cost roles** such as teaching assistants and teacher residents as part of small group support.
- Build **partnerships with community organizations** who can provide programming while teachers lead small group instruction.
- Explore **shifts to funding systems** that will increase staffing at higher-need schools. For example, reduce administrative staff to instead allocate interventionists based on students’ needs.
- Pilot ways to embed more **staff collaboration time** during the school day.
Districts and schools will need to monitor progress and learn from experience to plan and improve on future investments.

Districts and schools should invest in rapid cycles of continuous improvement to answer questions such as:

- Where is small group instruction being implemented with fidelity? Where it isn’t, what are the barriers? How can we address them?
- Which schools are bright spots where small group instruction is improving students’ learning and reducing the number of students who need additional support? What effective practices can we try?
- What challenges are arising? How can we address them?
- As more students are reaching grade-level achievement, how should we adjust our structures for small group instruction?

A whole-system approach to continuous improvement...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes a clear set of priorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowers practitioners with evidence-based strategies and logic models</td>
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<td>Assesses the fidelity and equity of implementation across the whole district</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tracks costs and compares them to the ROI of other potential approaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relies on cross-functional system leadership to dismantle barriers, address inequities, and support schools</td>
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</table>

ERS, Uncharted Waters
How can districts and schools target ESSER dollars now?
Investments in all components of small group instruction are strategic and allowable uses for ESSER dollars.

The CARES Act (ESSER I) includes allowable uses of funds related to preventing, preparing for, and responding to COVID-19.

Note that the ‘additional’ LEA allowable uses of funds under the CRRSA Act (ESSER II), such as addressing learning loss, preparing schools for reopening, and testing, repairing, and upgrading projects to improve air quality in school buildings, already are permitted under the CARES Act.

- US Department of Education
Investments in small group instruction will vary across districts and schools based on student and staff needs and context.

For more support in estimating the true cost of implementing small group instruction sustainably in your specific context, see our ESSER Strategy Planner & Funding Calculator.

- This interactive tool allows you to see a breakdown of potential ESSER spending (SY 2021-22 – SY 2023-24) and the implied spending commitments post-ESSER (from SY 2024-25 and onward).

- For small group instruction, select the tab at the bottom labeled “#2 Time and Attention” and scroll left or right within the sheet to view the different strategies.
Districts and schools will need to invest in a variety of roles and find sufficient, dedicated time.

How do we find **sufficient time for a dedicated small group instruction block**? How will we minimize tradeoffs?

What will we invest in **new and/or existing roles** to reduce group sizes? Estimating staffing costs is an iterative process, including:

- Determining whether any additional roles will be used to reduce group size and the FTE needed to reach the desired group size.
- Estimate compensation based on role types.

See the “**Scheduling & Staffing**” section to explore options.

See our **ESSER Strategy Planner & Funding Calculator** to estimate staffing costs.
Districts and schools will need **additional collaboration and professional learning structures.**

To implement small group instruction (particularly in early literacy), what investments should be made in professional learning and ensuring teachers have sufficient collaboration time?

- **Create 90 minutes of content-focused, expert-led collaborative planning time per week.** Analyzing student data and lesson-planning together during this time can help inform responsive, data-driven instruction — including regrouping students based on their specific needs. For this time to be most effective, it should be led by instructional experts, such as teacher-leaders.

- **Create longer blocks for teacher collaboration time.** For example, early release days every six weeks to every quarter can be used to review student data, plan units, and deepen teachers’ understanding of the curriculum.
Continued: Districts and schools will need additional collaboration and professional learning structures.

To implement small group instruction (particularly in early literacy), what investments should be made in professional learning and ensuring teachers have sufficient collaboration time?

- **Build in additional professional learning days or provide stipends to teachers for attending professional learning throughout the year.** This can help grow the capacity needed to effectively deliver small group instruction. External and online professional learning opportunities can also be leveraged. Note: Due to disrupted learning, 3rd- and 4th-grade teachers may also need professional development on how to embed foundational reading skills into their content.

- **Invest in structures for supporting other staff.** This includes investing in training and learning opportunities for support staff (such as paraprofessionals) who can help reduce group size, as well as investing in professional learning and planning time for instructional leaders (including teacher-leaders) to plan their support for teachers.
Effective small group instruction requires high-quality, aligned curricular materials.

**Are materials in place for high-quality small group instruction?**

- If not already adopted, prioritize a high-quality, grade-level Tier 1 curriculum.
- If materials are not already included in the core curriculum, invest in aligned small group instructional materials in one of the following ways:
  - Purchase externally
  - Provide stipends to teachers who have deep content expertise to create materials
  - Invest district team time to develop materials
- If needed, purchase a technology-based intervention program for students to use during small group instruction blocks when they’re working independently.

High-quality instructional materials for K-2 include small group materials that address foundational reading skills. This is less common in third-grade and above — so districts and schools should consider the investments they need to make in upper elementary school grades [too].

-Instructional Expert
Assessments and monitoring systems are needed to both track students’ progress and evolve the approach.

**What data do we need to collect to better target instruction?**
- Track students’ progress.
  - Purchase and/or develop assessments to measure skill-specific student learning. (See guidance from ANet or Instruction Partners.) This could include:
    - Purchasing a core curriculum with formative assessments or having qualified district staff develop them.
    - Purchasing a universal screener and diagnostic assessments to identify students who need additional support, and the specific skills they need to work on. Note: Students may need to be assessed on skills from earlier grades.
    - Purchasing external interim assessments, such as MAP or STAR.
- Facilitate data collection and monitoring by integrating these processes into existing data management systems.

**What systems will we set up to continually improve our approach to small group instruction?**
- Determine whether the strategy is being implemented with fidelity and if/where adjustments need to be made.
  - Build continuous improvement structures at the school- and/or district-level(s) to evolve practices and identify proof points.
What does strategic scheduling and staffing look like?
Scheduling and staffing for small group instruction centers around four key decision points.

Decision Point #1: **Find dedicated time** for small group instruction blocks.

Decision Point #2: **Leverage staff** and/or technology-based instruction to reduce group sizes.

Decision Point #3: **Align or stagger small group instruction blocks** within or across grade levels, depending on priorities for leveraging staff or grouping across sections.

Decision Point #4: Find the time and expert support to **plan, target, and differentiate small group instruction** to meet each student’s distinct needs.
# Decision Point #1

**Find dedicated time** for small group instruction blocks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To find time for small group instruction...</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce time in other areas</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reduce <em>non-instructional time</em> (that is currently not well-leveraged).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reduce time in <em>enrichment</em> to create the time needed for small group instruction block.</td>
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<td>• Reduce a small amount of time for each <em>block</em> to create a new block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extend the school day for all students</strong></td>
<td>Tier 1 ELA and math instructional time should not be reduced. Research shows that effective small group instruction is supplemental to Tier 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This is typically the most <em>expensive</em> option. But it could be achieved in a few different ways:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Increase teacher and staff <em>compensation</em>.</td>
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<td>• Stagger <em>teachers’ schedules</em>. For example, teachers could be present from 8:00-3:00 or 9:00-4:00. Note: It is challenging to have sufficient staffing with this approach at the elementary level without combining classrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Leverage <em>community partners</em> to provide enrichment opportunities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The day could be extended for all students at <em>select schools</em>, depending on needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RTI Network
## Decision Point #2

### Leverage staff to reduce group sizes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To reduce group size…</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Hire an interventionist** | • This is likely the most **expensive** option, especially if hiring multiple interventionists to support all grade levels.  
• If supporting multiple grade levels, you will need to build **content expertise** across.  
• An interventionist can be hired for or trained to also have expertise in implementing **data cycles**, which they could bring across multiple grade levels. |
| **Leverage ELL or special education teachers** | • Scheduling small group ELL or special education services during small group instruction blocks can ensure sufficient time in Tier 1 instruction and supports **alignment between supplemental services and Tier 1 instruction**.  
• To extend their reach, special education teachers may be able to create small groups that **mix students** with and without IEPs. **Note:** ONLY if locally allowed; in some districts, this may require moving away from a caseload definition of a special education teacher work day to a direct service definition. |
| **Hire additional support staff** | • Support staff can supervise students who are doing independent or computer-based instruction, while teachers pull small groups. With **training, support, and accountability**, these staff can also facilitate small groups when structured materials are available (as is often the case in early literacy).  
• Can be temporary or **part-time staff** (see **Appendix** for note on part-time staff in this moment). |
## Continued: Decision Point #2

### Leverage staff to reduce group sizes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To reduce group size…</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Leverage teacher residents** | • Teacher residents can begin by **supervising students** in Tier 1 who are doing independent work or computer-based instruction, and eventually facilitate small groups where appropriate and locally allowable.  
• Successful teacher residency programs give pre-service and rookie teachers opportunities for **shelter and development**.  
• This approach requires **close collaboration** between mentor teachers and teacher residents. |
| **Work with community partners** (such as Citizen Schools or City Year) | • Community partners can supervise students in Tier 1 (such as by providing **additional enrichment**) or provide **tutoring** to students who receive Tier 2 & 3 supports.  
• This approach can provide **additional staff at scale**.  
• This approach can potentially enable an **extended school day** for all students. |
| **Leverage technology and independent work** | • This can enable teachers to pull **small groups within a classroom**, without having additional staff.  
• This can also be helpful when leveraging **non-instructional staff** to monitor students in Tier 1, while instructional staff are providing tiered support.  
• There is some **initial evidence** that **adaptive software** can support early literacy instruction, though more **research** is needed.  
• This approach can be used in combination with an “**all hands on deck**” approach where all available staff support small group instruction blocks. |
Decision Point #3

**Align or stagger small group instruction blocks** within or across grade levels, depending on priorities for leveraging staff or grouping across sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small group instruction takes place...</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **In a staggered block across the grade level**  
(EX: Each 2nd-grade homeroom has small group instruction at a different time) | • This approach means there will be less flexible groupings within grade levels.  
• This will enable additional staff (such as a dedicated interventionist and/or support staff) to support multiple homerooms and/or grade levels. For example: by pushing into homeroom 3A at 1:00 and homeroom 3B at 2:00. |
| **During a grade level-wide small group instruction block** | • This approach allows for more flexible groupings within each grade level.  
• This will enable ELL and special education teachers to provide small group services to students in multiple homerooms, which may allow for more diverse homerooms.  
• Compared to a schoolwide block, an interventionist can support more grade levels. For example: by pushing into a 3rd-grade block at 1:00 and a 2nd-grade block at 2:00. |
| **During a schoolwide small group instruction block** | • This approach allows for flexible groupings across grade levels.  
• This will enable all instructional and non-instructional staff to push in as part of an “all hands on deck” approach. |
Decision Point #4
Find the time and expert support to **plan, target, and differentiate small group instruction** to meet each students’ distinct needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To find planning time…</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Early release or community partner enrichment | • One day per week, adopt a **half-day calendar** so that teachers have extended time for expert support and collaboration after students go home.  
• Collaborate with **external partners** to provide student programming during early release or during the school day so that teachers are free to meet for expert support and collaboration. |
| Stack planning time with other non-instructional blocks; cover regularly | • Schedule **daily planning time next to non-instructional blocks** that can be covered by support staff once per week, such as lunch/recess, community circle, and/or arrival/dismissal — this will help make time for an extended block once per week.  
• Leverage **temporary or part-time** staff (see **Appendix** for note on part-time staff in this moment). |
| Extend enrichment time on one day | • Increase **enrichment time** for coverage or redistribute existing individual planning time to create an extended block once per week. |
| Hire a floating teacher | • Hire a **multi-grade floating science or social studies teacher** who provides coverage; stack with enrichment block to create an extended-release block for teachers. |

For more information and support, see the **Professional Learning & Collaboration for Teachers guide**.
Additionally, there are district-level enabling conditions that can either expand or limit how effectively schools can staff and schedule small group instruction.

### Role Flexibility

- **Teacher-of-record policies** that encourage teaming and/or collaboration among experienced, rookie, and pre-service teachers.
- **Compensation policies** that enable pay to be based on differentiated roles and increased responsibilities.
- Ability to **contract with third-parties** — such as local organizations and community colleges — to provide tutoring or enrichment to enable teachers to pull out small groups.

### Schedule Flexibility

- The ability to **develop schedules** that take into account students’ needs, interests, and progress.
- The flexibility to schedule long **collaborative planning blocks** during the school day for shared-content and shared-student collaboration among teachers and staff.
The following pages show **concrete examples** of these decision points in action.
Example #1A

Dedicated interventionist with flexible within-grade grouping.

KEY DECISION POINTS

- Reduce group sizes by hiring an interventionist to lead small group instruction, along with homeroom, ELL, and special education teachers.
  - Students receive small group instruction in rotating groups.
- Align small group instruction block so all homerooms across a grade level have small group instruction at the same time, allowing for regrouping across classrooms.
  - Small group instruction has been stacked with the literacy block to deepen content integration.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Interventionist needs content expertise across multiple grade levels.
- Clear division of responsibilities for lesson planning for small groups, especially if regrouping across homerooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd-Grade Homeroom A</th>
<th>2nd-Grade Homeroom B</th>
<th>2nd-Grade Interventionist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>Kindergarten, Small Group Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment</td>
<td>Enrichment</td>
<td>2nd-grade, Small Group Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch &amp; Recess</td>
<td>Lunch &amp; Recess</td>
<td>1st-grade, Small Group Instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Not all periods shown.

The interventionist, homeroom teacher, ELL teacher, and special education teacher each lead rotations of instruction with groups of six students.
Continued: Example #1A

Dedicated interventionist with flexible within-grade grouping.

TRADEOFFS

- In this example, students have a few minutes less of each other block to create time for small group instruction.
- There is no cross-grade level grouping.

ALSO CONSIDER

- Scheduling small group instruction at the same time across multiple grade levels to enable flexible grouping across.
- Purchasing a technology-based curriculum for students to use during independent time.

SEE HOW OTHER SCHOOLS APPROACH THIS

- Guilmette Elementary School aligned team schedules for an intervention block across grade levels.
- Brookside Elementary School added dedicated afternoon for targeted intervention, independent learning, and specials.

The interventionist, homeroom teacher, ELL teacher, and special education teacher each lead rotations of instruction with groups of six students.
Example #1B
Embedded collaborative planning time.

STRATEGY FOR GETTING COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TIME
• Create 90 minutes of collaborative planning time one day per week for grade level teams and interventionists by stacking small group instruction and enrichment, and having teaching assistants supervise students on technology-based instruction.
• Align the interventionists’ schedules so that they can attend collaborative planning time for all the grade levels they support.

KEYS TO SUCCESS
• Clear guidance and protocols for how to use collaborative planning time effectively.
• High-quality, technology-based instruction program.
• Teaching assistants with strong classroom management skills.
Example #2
Embedded grade-level teaching assistant and teacher resident push in to staggered small group instruction blocks.

KEY DECISION POINTS

• Reduce group sizes by having a homeroom teachers, grade level TAs, and teacher residents lead rotations of small group instruction.

• Stagger small group instructional block so homerooms in a grade level have small group instruction at different times. This allows the TA and teacher resident to lead small groups in each homeroom, creating more small group time.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

• Teacher residents can develop classroom management skills through teaching classes when not in small group instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd-Grade Homeroom A</th>
<th>2nd-Grade Homeroom B</th>
<th>2nd-Grade Teacher Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>Homeroom B, Small Group Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td>Homeroom A, ELA Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Homeroom A, Small Group Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment</td>
<td>Enrichment</td>
<td>Collaborative Planning Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch &amp; Recess</td>
<td>Lunch &amp; Recess</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The homeroom teacher, grade level teaching assistant, and teacher resident each lead a rotation of instruction with six groups of students, while other students work independently.

Note: Not all periods shown.
Example #2
Embedded grade-level teaching assistant and teacher resident push in to staggered small group instruction blocks.

**TRADEOFFS**
- Limits ability for flexible groupings within a grade level.

**ALSO CONSIDER**
- This model can only work with a TA or teacher resident, with fewer small groups created.
- This schedule can also be used to create periodic release time for teachers to do peer observations.

**SEE HOW OTHER SCHOOLS APPROACH THIS**
- Brooke Charter School uses an associate teacher model to achieve reduced group sizes in priority subjects and grade levels.

The homeroom teacher, grade level teaching assistant, and teacher resident each lead a rotation of instruction with six groups of students, while other students work independently.
Example #3A

Integrating small group instruction and tutoring.

KEY DECISION POINTS
- Reduce group size by having the interventionist, homeroom teacher, and tutors provide small group instruction.
  - All or most students have 30 minutes of small group instruction and/or 30 minutes of tutoring.
  - Stagger small group instruction blocks across the grade level so tutors can support all homerooms in a grade, and multiple grades if needed.

KEYS TO SUCCESS
- Tutors have access to high-quality, aligned instructional materials.
- Tutors need additional training and clear guidance.

TRADEOFFS
- Interventionist plays multiple roles and has additional responsibilities.
- This model limits the ability for flexible groupings across the grade level.

ALSO CONSIDER
- Partnering with community organizations who recruit and support tutors, so that the interventionist can focus on providing small group instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd-Grade Homeroom A</th>
<th>Interventionist</th>
<th>Tutor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeroom A, Small Group Instruction / Tutoring</td>
<td>Homeroom A, Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>Homeroom A, Tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing Tutors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Homeroom B, Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>Homeroom B, Tutoring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Not all periods shown.

The homeroom teacher leads instruction in small groups of six while supporting a larger group of students who are working independently...

...While an interventionist leads instruction in small groups of six students, and tutors work with one or two students at a time.
Example #3B  
**Interventionist supervises and supports tutors.**

Effective tutoring programs require supervision and coordination. In this example, an interventionist plays that role. This allows...

- Interventionist role has further reach.
- Training and supervision of tutors is embedded within school systems.
- Tutors consistently receive observations and feedback.

**THIS LOOKS LIKE...**

- Interventionist leads small group instruction and supports tutors.
- Homeroom teacher and interventionist both lead small groups, enabling interventionist to observe and provide feedback to tutors.
- Each tutor has weekly coaching session with interventionist.
- Tutors cover lunch duty to provide release time so that teachers and the interventionist can have collaborative planning time one day per week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interventionist</th>
<th>Tutor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Community Circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Tutors</td>
<td>Feedback Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st-Grade, Homeroom A, Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>1st-Grade Homeroom A, Tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd-Grade Homeroom A, Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>2nd-Grade Homeroom A, Tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing Tutors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd-Grade Homeroom B, Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>2nd-Grade Homeroom B, Tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Planning Time</td>
<td>2nd-Grade Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>3rd-Grade Homeroom A, Tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st-Grade Homeroom B, Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>1st-Grade Homeroom B, Tutoring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Not all periods shown.
Continued: Example #3B

Interventionist supervises and supports tutors.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Interventionist ensures alignment between small group instruction, tutoring, and core instruction, and collaborates closely with homeroom teachers.
- Interventionist attends collaborative planning time for all grade levels they support.
- Interventionist is a strong teacher and a strong coach.

TRADEOFFS

- Students get less direct support from the interventionist when that person is also serving as a coordinator for tutoring.
This guide was authored by Gayatri Mehra (Principal Associate), Crystal Chu (Associate), Eddie Branchaud (Manager), and Kristen Ferris (Partner). It is the result of collaborative efforts among numerous people, both within and outside of ERS. We would like to acknowledge the following ERS team members who contributed to this work: Mark Heath, Gloria Samen, Torrie Mekos, Daven McQueen, and Karen Hawley Miles.

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As your team weighs the possible tradeoffs associated with different approaches, makes decisions about how to organize resources, and plans for how to evolve and scale your approaches over time, we encourage you to adapt these guides to meet your unique needs and context.

To share your work or get help navigating your “Do Now, Build Toward” approach, contact us.
Note: In this moment, hiring **part-time staff** may offer flexibility and options that strategies requiring additional, specialized, full-time staff may not.

- Enables **schedule flexibility** (for example, two part-time staff members can cover all elementary school blocks in the morning).
- Likely **more affordable** option, since part-time staff are working fewer hours and not specialized.
- Enables **concentrated expertise and lower caseloads** if the part-time staff is only responsible for a small number of students.
- Provides more **individualized attention and support** for each student to feel known by at least one adult given potentially lower caseloads.
- Allows for **hiring from a greater and non-traditional talent pool**, which is key in this moment given school staffing needs.
- Can be **added to existing structures or used in combination** with any of the other strategies.
- **Clear exit plan** as the need for additional professional learning and collaboration time decreases.