

Using Small-Group Mini-Lessons for Targeted Instruction

As an approach to expanding **opportunity and access** for all students, *“the small-group mini-lesson allows the teacher to provide a short, narrowly focused lesson to a small group of students who are ready to learn a particular skill at the same time”* (Sulla, 2011).

Small-Group Mini-Lessons provide focused support to students who require clarification or reinforcement of specific concepts and skills. They are equally effective for extending the learning of high-achieving or gifted students. By allowing students to **sign up** for a mini-lesson, teachers encourage learner agency, responsibility, and metacognitive thinking—empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey.

Key Considerations for Effective Small-Group Mini-Lessons

- Duration: Approximately 10–15 minutes (no more)
- Limited to 6 students
- Focused on a specific, clearly defined skill
- Student sign-up system empowers learner choice and ownership
- Tightly structured with clear expectations
- Conducted in a quiet, focused environment conducive to collaboration
- Held at a table or small-group space to foster discussion
- Supported with visual aids and manipulatives as needed
- Stay focused—avoid digressions to maintain impact
- Goal: Objective and time are announced in advance



Connection to Executive Function Skills

Small-group instruction naturally strengthens executive function (EF) skills by helping students:

- Self-monitor and reflect on their progress toward mastery.
- Sustain attention within a structured, time-bound format.
- Apply cognitive flexibility as they transfer skills from the small-group context to independent tasks.