

## **Workshop, Grades 2-3**

### **Introduction**

#### **Workshop, Grades 2-3**

This course demonstrates the use and organization of Workshop. Workshop is the period of time each day set aside for students to work collaboratively or independently, practicing and reviewing material taught in the lessons or completing their own projects. As the students gradually take on more responsibility during Workshop, they learn to set learning goals, make decisions about the use of time and materials, and engage in collaborative conversations with their peers. During Workshop, you can work with individuals and groups of students to reinforce learning, provide extra help for those having difficulty, extend learning for those who are ready, or assess the progress of the class and individual students.

As we see in the first teaching example, third grade teacher Lori Day introduces the concept of Workshop to her students and explains its organization and routines. While some of the students are familiar with Workshop from previous years, Mrs. Day does not assume that the students know what they should be doing. She reintroduces Workshop and familiarizes the students with her rules for Workshop and the materials they will be using.

Students need structure, repetition, and routine in order to feel comfortable and confident. Providing students with clearly defined parameters helps them make maximum use of Workshop time. The Workshop routine encourages students to work productively, alone or in small groups, to make choices within limits, to solve problems, and to work independently.

#### **Teaching Example 1**

In this teaching example, Mrs. Day introduces the students to the concept of Workshop. As when introducing other concepts, she takes the time to find out what the students already know about Workshop and what their expectations might be. Workshop will continue throughout the year and plays an important role in developing student independence and in providing time for individualized help and assessment. Mrs. Day does not rush the introduction, making sure all of the students know what is expected of them. As the year progresses, the students will be given more leeway in their choice of activities during Workshop. In addition, Workshop will become the primary time during which students work on their investigation projects.

#### **Introducing Workshop**

The introduction of Workshop should take place at the beginning of the year. It is a valuable time and should begin as early as possible. Mrs. Day uses the students' experience with Workshop to introduce the rules they will be working with in her class. Mrs. Day:

- Has the students read each of the rules.
- Asks the students to explain what each rule means.
- Models desired behaviors with the students.
- Reviews the rules again before allowing students to start working.

Since there will be many activities going on at the same time during Workshop, it is essential to establish agreed-upon rules of behavior. If there were constant confusion and discussion about how to proceed with Workshop, neither the students nor the teacher would be able to accomplish their goals.

#### **Teaching Example 2**

Continuing with the introduction of Workshop, Mrs. Day introduces two independent activities from which the students can choose. As the year progresses, many more opportunities for independent work will be added. Mrs. Day slowly adds alternatives, allowing her students to practice some independence without becoming overwhelmed with choices. Many students have never experienced this kind of freedom of choice. Giving the students time to acclimate and function in the absence of direct guidance takes time and patience.

## Workshop Continues

With each Workshop period, Mrs. Day revisits the rules and makes sure all students know what they are expected to do. She has them model behaviors she expects of them. At this point, they have only two choices for independent work. She does, however, introduce them to the use of a tracking sheet. All of the independent work choices are listed on this sheet. The students clearly see that their choices will become much more varied. Again, Mrs. Day has the students practice using the tracking sheet to make sure they know how they are expected to use it. As the year progresses, this also provides Mrs. Day with an ideal tool for monitoring Workshop.

## Teaching Example 3

Teaching Example 3 takes place in the second week of the school year. Mrs. Day has been carefully and systematically introducing the students to Workshop and the available options; they already have ten choices for independent work. The variety of activities available to the students depends upon the teacher's ability to use activities suggested in the *Open Court Reading Teacher's Editions* or *SRA Imagine It!*, the teacher's ability to create unique activities based on his or her own experience and knowledge, and the students' demonstrated needs.

## Expanding Workshop

Although the students have now had two weeks of Workshop, Mrs. Day still starts each Workshop by reviewing rules and materials. In addition, she actively works with individuals and small groups during Workshop. She:

- Reviews rules and previously introduced materials.
- Introduces a new activity.
- Reminds the students that they need to complete their must-do assignments.
- Makes sure all students are working.
- Calls individuals and small groups to the back of the room to work with her.

Successful use of Workshop time in individualizing instruction depends on Mrs. Day's ability to identify areas of weakness exhibited by the students during their language arts class. Small groups formed during Workshop are fluid and change continually depending on each student's needs each day.

## Teaching Example 4

One of the most valuable aspects of Workshop is that it allows time for the teacher to meet the needs of his or her students. Teaching Example 4 takes place about two-thirds of the way through the school year, when the students are thoroughly used to Workshop and know what is expected of them. This enables Mrs. Day to work with individuals and small groups on the needs they exhibited earlier in their reading and language arts lesson.

## Independent Workshop

At this point, the students have numerous (17) activities from which they can choose, or they may choose to work on their unit investigations. The students work quickly and quietly, and Mrs. Day is free to choose students to come to her area for extra help. Mrs. Day:

- Works with students who had been absent.
- Works with English Learners (EL) and intervention students to get them ready for the next reading selection.

Mrs. Day takes about half an hour per day for Workshop. During that time, she is able to work with several different individuals and small groups. The configuration of groups changes daily in response to student interest and instructional needs. Without clear organization, rules, and routines, this time would be far less productive. Organization and routines help Workshop become one of the most useful periods of any teaching day. It allows students to learn independence within the confines of the rules and assures those students who need extra support and help from the teacher that they will have the time they need to excel.

**Please note:** Mrs. Day is a third grade teacher and therefore, is using Level 3 of *Open Court Reading*. Although the

content is different, the instructional methods learned in this course can be easily applied to Workshop in second grade. Keep in mind that younger students may need additional support when beginning Workshop.