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**Question:** *What does small group work look like in the phonics units?*

**Rebecca Cronin:**

Let me share one of the favorite small groups that I've been doing, and you can do this in reading or in writing workshop. You can do this at choice time, you could do it at intervention time. So I call the kids together, and a big idea is that they've been learning these high frequency words, and they have their pouch of high frequency words, and we don't just study them in phonics. We want them to be able to use them to read and to write. So to activate their high frequency word knowledge, I'm not going to just go through the cards together. I'm going to hand it over, so I'll give one pouch to one partnership, one pouch to the other partnership. And they're going to take out the words and together, in partnership, they'll pull up the words. They'll read them. I might even encourage them if they know they're strong to keep them in this side and maybe if they couldn't figure out what the word was together, maybe we would put them on this side.

So that's an opportunity for me to do more assessment right there. I can take that word and think another day, do some more work with that specific word. So kids are sorting, they're laying them out, they're reading them, they're helping each other, supporting each other. And then it's time to launch. So I launch the group, and I get behind the kids. So instead of demonstrating, I'm just getting them started right away, so they get a chance to do a lot of practice. And I might suggest we have all of these animals, and we have all of these high frequency words. I mean they could be trains, they could be things from the housekeeping center. And if I want to make sentences with my high frequency words, not just read them one at a time. So if I chose this word, I don't know. What if I chose the word here? And I wanted to say something about this zebra here. What word might come next? And then now they're working on syntax as well, to predict that next word. And then they have to find it. So, let's try "is." "Is" would sound right here is, and now what would come next? "The." Okay, find it. Put it in the sentence. When you get it, read your sentence. And then I go over to this group and get them started, and I'm moving back and forth. And the entire time I am prompting and coaching. Oh let's see. If you put this here and this there... Let me check. Let's read it together and think. Does that sound right: "here and this zebra?" And often, laughter occurs, which is really fun. Okay, well let's try it again and make it sound right. And then you have "here is a zebra." And now can you make another one? Find some other animals. Make another sentence. Go try this side.

Units of Study in Phonics, Grades K—2  
By Lucy Calkins and TCRWP Colleagues

Or it might be if kids are in an earlier stage of reading, I might do something like working with patterns. So, what if I took the zebra away, and we put this giraffe. You read the sentence now. What if we take the zebra away and put the gorilla. Read the sentence again. Go back to the other partnership. So I'm moving back and forth, coaching, prompting, directing, redirecting, having them listen to the sentence if it sounds right. And then one of my favorite things is a big test of my small group. Could I walk away? I'm going to stop, and I'm going to pull you back together for a minute, and then teach towards tomorrow. So boys and girls, anytime that you're reading, if we're doing this in reading workshop or writing workshop, we're not just learning these words so we can read them one at a time. We want to be able to use them and recognize them when we read, and we want to use them when we write.

And then I leave them there to continue. And I have a lot of information now to think about next steps. Would I redo this? Next time, might I take a few of these words away? Would I add more in? Should I teach this, reteach this word and do some more explicit teaching with the word? So, lots of ideas with the small group work.