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Everyday Mathematics 4 and the Workshop Model

Everyday Mathematics was engineered to enhance students' access to mathematics to better enable them to learn mathematics. Each lesson addresses a variety of skills, concepts, and goals, which are all clearly outlined in the materials. Planning for differentiated instruction in *Everyday Mathematics* involves considering the current readiness of individual students in relation to those goals, then selecting accessibility strategies so that each student is supported in learning the core concepts, skills, and practices in the lesson.

Everyday Mathematics lessons involve both whole-class and small-group instruction, and time is allocated for students to work in small groups, in partners, and individually. This structure allows teachers many opportunities to regroup for different purposes. This flexible grouping allows teachers to align activities with students' needs, while providing additional instruction or experiences to specific groups of students (Heacox, 2012).

Everyday Mathematics was designed to accommodate a variety of instructional formats, including a workshop approach. In this model, teachers to work with small groups put together according to by students' needs, allowing them to provide extra support and attention where it is needed (Sammons, 2010). While the teacher meets with small groups of students, the other students are engaged in meaningful work.

One of the first steps in implementing a workshop model is to identify the small groups. To ensure all students have equal access to the full range of mathematics content in the curriculum, it is important to avoid static groupings based on student ability. Groupings should be fluid, change regularly, and be based on specific student needs in relation to the content to be learned. For many activities, teachers will want to group students who need more scaffolding with those who have a better understanding of the concept involved. For other activities, teachers might create groups of students with similar levels of understanding of a concept. For differentiation to work students need to experience themselves in different contexts and the teacher needs to observe them in these various contexts (Tomlinson, 2003). Most important here, teachers need to know how to create the groups that most effectively address both student access and lesson content.

The authors have worked with many *Everyday Mathematics* teachers who use the workshop model. Although there are many individual variations, most teachers typically use one of the following overall approaches:

- Implement both the Focus and Practice parts of the lesson in small groups, with the teacher typically conducting the Focus portion with one small group at a time, while the other groups rotate through centers with different activities from the Practice part of the lesson and/or Differentiation Options.
- Implement some or all of the Focus part of the lesson with the whole class and then implement the Practice Activity (or activities) and selected Differentiation Options in different centers, with the teacher either floating across groups, pulling together small groups for targeted instruction, or rotating small groups through a "teacher center." Teachers who choose to use a teacher center usually do so for a particular activity from the lesson that they want to scaffold or stretch in a certain way, use for assessment, or otherwise take advantage of using the small-group format.
- Implement the Focus part of the lesson as above with the whole class and then, instead of using centers, follow an independent "work plan" approach in which tasks are assigned for children to complete when they are not with the teacher.

In any of the workshop variations, teachers often tailor activities, whether at centers or in the work plans, according to the needs of individual students or small groups, using options from the *Everyday Mathematics* Teacher's Lesson Guide. For example, using a Game Center, they might provide different versions of a game or with work plans specify different games for different students, or they might have one group do the Enrichment activity from the Differentiation Options, while a different group does the Extra Practice activity. Similarly, depending on the needs of the students at the Teacher Center at any given time, they might use suggestions from the Adjusting the Activity notes.

Although teachers using earlier editions of *Everyday Mathematics* have successfully implemented these options, EM4 has been redesigned to even better accommodate a workshop approach. For example, this edition includes Activity Cards at every grade, which function well as center activities. Every regular EM4 lesson includes a Readiness, Extra Practice, and Enrichment activity, and these assist teachers with workshop planning. EM4 also includes a wider variety of suggested grouping options for many activities. For example, the Focus activity is often listed as a Whole Group or a Small Group activity to more clearly give teachers the option of implementing it as part of a workshop model.

The structure of the workshop format varies widely from classroom to classroom. Some teachers use the workshop model on days when they have a longer math block but not on shorter math days. Others use it for some lessons but not others, depending on content. Teachers should change what goes into the centers and when they use them should depend on the lesson, in particular on what is in the Practice section. The number of centers should also vary according to class size and length of math block. We recommend no more than four rotations.

The *Everyday Mathematics* author group has observed many classrooms with teachers using the workshop model, and note the following points you may wish to consider when exploring this approach:

Potential advantages

- Teachers tend to naturally differentiate/tailor their instruction better to the students in front of them when they are teaching to a smaller group. These often involve more subtle, embedded differentiation moves than moves like substituting or supplementing with completely different activities for different students.
- A workshop model allows teachers to make sure all students experience the Focus part of the lesson, but still have some autonomy to differentiate/tailor the distributed practice according to individual needs.
- Students tend to develop their math confidence and "voice" better in smaller groups, and this is particularly true of struggling learners.
- Some students seem to become less passive about doing math in settings where they work independently of the teacher and classmates for some part of the period.
- To makes centers work well, teachers need to set up their room for more independence/student autonomy (making sure tools are accessible, displays are useful, etc.), which often helps beyond just center time.
- Adopting the workshop model has helped some teachers find time and create structures in which more of the Differentiation Options can be used.

Potential disadvantages

- Students have less overall time with a teacher, and time away from the teacher runs a higher risk of being spent unproductively.
- Kids tend to get less exposure to the ideas of other kids who may think differently than themselves, and there can be unsatisfactory peer modeling.
- There are lots of moving parts, which can become a management nightmare.
- Some teachers don't vary their group composition often enough, so it can start to feel like tracking.

For more information and resources on differentiation see the white paper: *Differentiation in EM4*.

Resources

Heacox, D. (2012). *Differentiating instruction in the regular classroom: How to reach and teach all learners.* Free Spirit Publishing.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2003). *Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom: Strategies and Tools for Responsive Teaching*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Sammons, L. (2010). *Guided Math: A Framework for Mathematics Instruction.* Shell Education.