

How to plan efficient and effective small group reading lessons

- with Dr. Julia Lindsey

Reach All Readers Podcast #254

Anna: Welcome back, Dr. Lindsey.

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Thank you so much for having me.

Anna: Glad to have you back on the podcast. We looked at this and realized it's been about three years since you joined me to talk about your first book, but today we're going to talk about her newest book, *Small Groups, Big Results*.

Before we do that, could you briefly reintroduce yourself and then tell us why you wrote this book?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Yeah. I'm so excited to be back. So I am a researcher and a consultant who works with schools, and I started my career in the classroom. I taught kindergarten and first grade. At that time, everybody around me and everybody at my school was kind of obsessed with guided reading, and we taught a lot of reading through the model of guided reading in small groups using our F&P levels. There were things that never made sense about that to me, but it was such a robust ladder of reading and such a strong cultural experience that there was really no room to question it.

I went ahead to get my PhD at the University of Michigan, and my mind was just, like, blown open by all of the research that we have on reading: what it is, how it develops, how to better teach it. For me, a lot of that related back to the experiences I had had teaching guided reading and teaching in those sorts of small groups.

So I've always had this real interest in that area of teaching and also, as people know who read the first book, a lot of interest in the foundational skills. That's where a lot of my research has been. Today, what I get to do is go all over the country and help different districts and schools in transforming literacy instruction and asking this question of how can we really leverage research to be more efficient and effective in our systems and in our instruction?

One of the questions that just kept coming up was, what are we supposed to do about small group instruction? Should we just cut it out? Should we just not really utilize that at all? Should we pivot to this model or this model, or should we just let teachers do whatever they're comfortable with and continue to kind of do what they want?

There are just so many questions swirling, both in the schools I was interacting with, but also on the internet about if small group instruction was even worth considering at all, or if it should be kind of gotten rid of. And so I wanted to write a book that was

really aiming at this question of what could you do to actually leverage small groups in a way that's going to serve the goals of your classroom, but also the needs of your students?

That's kind of where the book came from, this desire to have teachers have an answer for what they might try in this small group instructional space.

Anna: So what's the difference between the traditional guided reading groups that you did and that I did as a teacher, compared to the kind of small group instruction you're recommending in the book?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: So there are three kind of big differences I feel like come up.

The first is that the small group instruction that I'm talking about is really targeted and often quite brief. There's this real focus on giving precise instruction and precise practice for students in a really particular need. A lot of that idea comes from research that we have in the intervention space. It finds, especially with younger kids, that this is a really efficient and effective way to meet particular needs and to rapidly move kids' skills along.

So instead of a do-everything lesson where we're trying to hit all aspects of reading all at once, we really have a precise focus. Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't sometimes other things going on, but we are selecting routines that we know from research are likely to impact that particular area of need and move kids along.

The second is about the data. Traditional guided reading that I used was really based just on kids' text level, which is unfortunately not actually related to kids' reading development in ways that we can find in research. The research currently does not show that a kid's reading level is predictive of other reading achievement or that it's even really reliable. Kids can read completely differently in one text of the same level, so that doesn't actually give us enough information to decide what to target in a small group.

Instead, I suggest thinking about really precise instructional data that might be inclusive of screening data, but also even more precise data about exactly where a kid's decoding skills are, or where are they needing more support in prosody, and then using that to craft the right kinds of instruction and practice.

Then the last piece is the connection to whole group instruction. In guided reading, many of us might have experienced a situation where we had sort of our own scope and sequence and our own content. We used books that were totally on different topics and different genres than we might have been using in read aloud, in writing, in all of these other times of the literacy day.

Now, that's not everybody. I'm sure that there were some people who were creating strong connections, but I don't think that that was necessarily the expectation or the norm. You could think of small group instruction, and guided reading, as almost having risen to its own prominence as almost like a content area, where it needed its

own stuff to fill it up.

Instead, I suggest thinking about small group instruction really as a tool. It's a tool that we can leverage to meet the needs of students, to provide this precise practice and feedback, to really ensure that we're allowing data to drive the experiences of kids who have particular needs. It's not something that needs to have its own scope and sequence, its own goals, its own complete content.

Instead, actually, the way that small group instruction can best serve our class is if it's this tool that we're leveraging to bolster whole class experiences. So that means that we're making connections to the whole group. That might be connections directly to the same phonics lesson we just taught, and we're extending practice. That might be connections via content, where we're reading a decodable that has to do with social studies content. That might be connections via children who are struggling to comprehend a complex text in our ELA block, where we are using the small group to actually bolster understanding of that particular text and increase their access to our whole class content.

It's really thinking about how this is really a tool that bolsters our whole class experiences, not just this, like, thing on the side that's kind of running on its own path.

Anna: That was very well explained.

When I talk sometimes to schools about the difference between balanced and structured literacy, I talk about how balanced literacy often revolves around activities like guided reading. Whereas a structured literacy approach is more focused on the specific skills that we need to teach, and then we choose the avenue for communicating those.

Like you said, small group is a really good tool for that. I think we need to be careful not to do small group just for the sake of doing small group, which was, I think, guided reading.

But at the same time, I really appreciate in your book how you talk about how there are a lot of benefits to meeting with small groups of kids. Can you talk through some of those?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Absolutely. I think that, again, we have to centralize this idea of why are we even talking about small groups before we kind of distinguish all of the different details.

Small group instruction is not a term that means really much of anything. I think we all think it means something. Everybody has a meaning in their mind, and pretty much everybody has a purpose for it in their mind as well, especially if they're using it. But there's a lot of variation, and it turns out that when we really think about it and when we look at the literature, but also when we look across what teachers say, small group instruction really means just that. It's instruction in a smaller group.

And so the question that we have to ask isn't what are the benefits of small group instruction, but then we have some preconceived notion about the content or the structure. Instead, what are the benefits of meeting with smaller groups of kids compared to a whole class?

And, you know, most folks probably have a class of 20 or 30 students in the elementary grades, so there are going to be some benefits from having opportunities to meet with smaller groups of kids. The first is this ease of responding to data. Of course, you can respond to kids in that whole class environment, but when you have a smaller group in front of you, it's far easier to respond to specific data with precise instruction and targeted practice.

So for example, if you have a group of kids, say they're kindergartners, and your whole class is really working on CVC words, but you have a couple kids who are still solidifying specific letter-sound knowledge. Yes, of course, during your whole class phonics lesson, you can say, "Okay, we're reading this word cat," and then you can ask just those students, "What's just that first letter?"

But it's going to be a lot more efficient to have the opportunity to meet with them and do more activities that are precisely designed to increase their accuracy and their automaticity with the alphabet. You're just going to have a much easier time doing that in a small group, and you're going to have the opportunity to actually give feedback to those kids time and time again, which we know is essential as children are acquiring new skills.

So this idea of why small groups, why smaller groups than the whole class? Well, it's easier to respond to data. It's easier to give that precise instruction and feedback.

Then the last thing is it can't be ignored that we do actually have data that finds that when we meet with smaller groups in addition to our whole class, we do see children have better motivation and attitudes towards reading, and they tend to have deeper relationships with their teachers.

It's important to kind of keep some context towards this idea that there is something about meeting in small groups, probably related to having more choice, having more opportunity for collaboration, that does seem to bolster children's motivation and engagement. That is kind of like the final benefit of meeting with smaller groups.

Anna: So when we think about doing small group instruction, some schools use a Walk to Read model where the school has different teachers taking different levels, and that way everyone is really getting instruction at where they are. And then if they're behind, they get extra instruction later in the day so they can have a chance of catching up to their peers. But we also know that many classroom teachers would struggle to make that happen because it does require whole school buy-in.

And so it can be challenging for teachers to do lots of whole group instruction in their classroom, and that's why I looked at a quote that you had in your book, which I liked, and I'd like you to talk about it.

You said, "Small groups are always more expensive than whole class instruction, but the expense is worth it when small group instruction is carried out with care." Can you explain what you meant by that?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Absolutely. So again, a big goal of mine in thinking about how we use research to really inform reading instruction is thinking about how can research help us become more efficient and effective in our reading instruction?

When we think about this dichotomy of whole group versus small group instruction, a few things kind of come to mind within this realm of efficiency and effectiveness.

First things first, we know that teacher-led instruction is really critical, and we know that it has huge impacts, and that's probably even more true for younger children. That's like one thing to keep in mind.

The second thing is that we know that there are some studies that find certain aspects of language and knowledge-building experiences that are more impactful done in a whole group environment versus a small group environment, and that's likely because of peer effects. It's really important for children to hear peers with more sophisticated ideas and language, and that is often facilitated by a whole class environment.

Then the third is... I will be the first to admit that I would sometimes teach a guided reading small group lesson, and then I would teach the exact same thing to the next group, which is certainly not efficient, just saying the same thing twice. There's a real lack of efficiency there. Overall, we have this picture of ways in which small group instruction can be less efficient than our whole class instruction. And so we always want to balance that with the fact that in certain moments, small group instruction is going to be way more effective.

That's kind of this balance that I think we have to think about in terms of the expense of small group when I'm looking at the needs of my classroom. I have all these needs in my classroom, and I have multiple tools at my disposal to meet those needs. Which of these needs is going to be most effectively met by a smaller group experience?

That's kind of the question that can drive us, because it's not all needs that are going to be met by that in a more effective way. And if we can't say for sure this is more effective, then it might be more efficient to do different things in that whole class environment.

Anna: Yeah, and that leads us into our next question. When you talk about things that are more effective in small group, I think so much about the things you talked about earlier, like the feedback with the phonics. I was doing guest teaching in a first grade classroom, and it was whole group phonics, and we were doing CVCe words, and I was having them write their words and fill their boards.

Some of the kids were right on, but there were a few kids that were way behind, and it was just impossible for me to give them the extra support they needed when they had 20 other kids in the room that were doing just fine. This group of kids clearly needed help, and I could stand by their desk, and I could help them write the next word, but then I was ignoring everybody else.

It's very hard to give that feedback when you're in that sort of setting versus, you know, maybe language comprehension.

Can you speak to research and let us know if there's anything in there that talks about whether whole group instruction is more effective with language comprehension versus foundational skills, or what it has to say about that?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Absolutely. So right now, the research is much clearer in the realm of supporting decoding and also certain aspects of fluency about how effective a small group moment can be, particularly this idea that I talk about a lot in the book about targeting instruction. There's just a lot more clarity about how that operates within those kind of core word recognition skills.

And as we've kind of said multiple times in different ways, when a child is learning to decode, they have to receive feedback. We cannot assume that here's this class of first graders, and they're all decoding. We should not be assuming that those kids are fine because they're keeping up with my phonics lesson, and I'm never going to listen to them read all year long. Everybody who's learning to decode deserves the opportunity to be listened to and given feedback at least some of the time while they are decoding to ensure that they're not just practicing, but practicing well. There are those sorts of ideas around decoding because we have a little bit stronger research here, and also we know you have to get that feedback in order to be a great decoder.

Now, in language comprehension, things get a lot more complex, and that's quite frankly because language comprehension is more complex.

The first thing we know is that the research in small groups on language comprehension specifically is not quite as developed as the decoding research. It also tends to take much longer. Some of the runways are very long. There are decoding studies that find impacts in, like, three weeks, whereas in language comprehension, some of the really robust research on that takes a year or two. There's a lot more to kind of distinguish and talk about and what does that mean.

The second thing is that we know that not every kid is going to need language or reading comprehension small groups if the whole class environment is really strong. We're just not likely to need to give the same level of feedback to every single kid that we're going to hopefully get in that decoding phase.

So it's not necessarily the case that you should be thinking about small group instruction as always transitioning every kid from doing some alphabet and phonemic awareness work, then I'm doing some decoding, then I'm doing some fluency, then I'm doing some language comprehension.

It might be more like they're getting a little bit of alphabet and phonemic awareness. They're getting some decoding. Some kids will still need fluency support. Some kids will be served just as well by partner reading and fluency work, and then some kids will need some additional support to access grade level texts, and some kids won't.

I think that it's just a little bit more complicated to talk about because the structure doesn't quite fit as neatly. It would be nice if it did.

Anna: I appreciate what you just said, pointing out that we do know that vocabulary, comprehension, and all those things are important. Obviously, we're going to put pieces of those in our small groups even if we're working on decoding.

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Absolutely.

Anna: We'll talk about the words we're reading, et cetera. But we don't have to consider necessarily making that a large part of our small group when we're targeting it on one specific thing, which is often decoding.

I love how your book is very, very practical. All of the Science of Reading in Practice books are. And I like how you give specifics about what this might look like in terms of time, and I know that obviously every classroom is different.

In the old days, I used to do, like, you know, 15 minutes with this group, 15 minutes with that group. And so the kids were literally not with me for 45 minutes, which is the expensive piece that we talked about. So we know that it doesn't need to be that much. Every kid doesn't necessarily need to meet with you every day.

How do teachers start thinking about this in terms of how much time should I schedule for my small group every day? What should I be thinking about when I'm trying to determine how often I meet with students, and all of that?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Yes. So the big thing here is to first start with the needs in your classroom. My top suggestion is, especially if it's a time of year where you've recently done some new screening data or benchmarking, whatever you call it. Grab that data and understand kind of where is my class at broadly.

Then the first question you should always ask yourself is, in relation to the grade level content that's on my scope and sequence and the goals that we have for the end of the year, where's my class on average? Do I need to do anything to make adjustments to my whole group instruction? Because ultimately, our goal should be that, you know, 60 to 70 percent of children, maybe even more, but at least that much, are really being well-served by where I'm at in whole group instruction.

Then from there, I can think about how I am providing differentiated, needs-based supports in a variety of tools, including the smaller group setting.

So it's first taking a look at all that data and asking yourself that key important

question, and then moving into a phase of saying, "Okay, what are the existing continued needs?"

Let's say you're in a third grade classroom. You might have a handful of children who are still learning to decode. Hopefully those children are also receiving support outside of your classroom, but this book was really written to try to help folks who are in all sorts of settings. So even if you don't have support outside of your classroom, making sure that those kids are continuing to get that decoding support.

Then you might have a group of kids who need to kind of bolster their fluency work. And then you might have a smattering of children who you know that every time that we are coming up to this kind of informational text in science, they are continuing to struggle. So I need to do something to increase their access to those complex reading moments.

So you can look across those needs, and we can utilize information that we have from the types of practices that help these different groups of students, and think about how much time each of those groups might need.

I might say, "Okay, these decoding students, I'm going to meet with them as often as I possibly can." Maybe that's four or five times a week. At least 15 minutes is probably what you're going to need to sufficiently do some targeted decoding work.

Then you might say, "Okay, these fluency groups, all right, what we're really working on is increasing rate with these groups." So I'm looking at things like repeated reading, and how much time is that going to take? Again, maybe 10 to 15 minutes, probably three times a week is a reasonable goal.

And then you might get to those last groups of kids who you're saying, "Okay, they need some bolstering of access to the whole class content," so we're going to be working on really figuring out better how to leverage text structures to both retell but also to inference within texts that we're already planning to read. That's going to be a little bit more varied, but it might end up being that I need, like, 20 minutes with them maybe two times a week, but that might change depending on the text that we're reading that week.

Then you can take all of that information, and you can figure out, well, what would this look like to schedule it?

Instead of starting with a presupposed structure and saying, "I have to fill up my small group," you're saying, "I have needs in my classroom. How am I going to meet those needs, and what structure could I create to meet those needs?"

Now, I know that that's not always realistic because sometimes we work in a system where we have to do small group instruction in a very particular amount of time, or we have to, you know, use all this other time for other curricular elements, and we can only do so much.

But taking this mindset, I think, is a really different way of approaching the question. Even if you can't do it perfectly, notice kind of what this brings up for you as you start thinking through constructing your experiences like this.

Then from there, of course, we're going to have to ask ourselves, how do I organize this in a way where the rest of my class is able to function?

Here's the really good news. There is no research on things like centers or stations or any of these kind of logistical elements, and I kind of doubt there ever will be because that's not the kind of thing that gets studied in research.

Anna: Exactly. It's not.

Dr. Julia Lindsey: So you don't have to worry about it. You can do what works for you.

Some of the more radical kind of approaches, if you will, would be to say, "Okay, I am going to have one 15-minute block that happens right after phonics, and I'm going to pull the group of kids who has maybe the highest priority need, and we're doing some really targeted practice in this phonics concept. The rest of my class is all going to engage in the same task." That task might be, for example, a roll and read activity in partnerships.

And I know, because I've timed it and because I've taught them how to use this, exactly how that's going to fill up 15 minutes. Then at the end, we're all going to be stopping, and we're all moving on to something else, so I don't have to manage the kid who doesn't like to transition to the next station. I don't have to manage the group that is not doing what they're supposed to, but it's hard for me to even tell because everybody's doing something different.

Anna: Yes. Oh, that's so true.

Dr. Julia Lindsey: So I can't quite remember, are you supposed to be doing that? I don't have to manage a bunch of timers and all of this stuff, and I don't have to manage the kids who are like, "I cannot focus for 45 minutes. I'm 7."

It's thinking about other ways of organizing our time that are designed because of needs instead of designed because of structures that we as adults like.

All of this might end up leading you to similar places that you already are, but it's really about the mindset of how we're thinking through these questions.

Anna: That's helpful, very helpful.

I like the way you talk in the book about how... I mean, it's very obvious, but for so long we were trained in this idea that you had to have this center, this center, this center. They had to spend 50 minutes here. Instead of just, let's just keep our small group time short and focused, maybe have it twice a day instead of, you know, a longer block at once, and then each of those times we provide something that the rest of

the class can handle, some game or something maybe that we've taught them how to do.

We've observed it, we've worked through the kinks, so we know they can handle it with their partner, versus trying to prepare center activities every day, which is exhausting also.

Dr. Julia Lindsey: It is exhausting. Yeah. And a lot of this does come down to this idea that when we are being super targeted and we are really thoughtful about kind of triaging those needs that are the most critical for us to address in a small group setting, things can move very fast.

I mean, you can hit a really strong alphabet experience in less than seven minutes. It's not about these, like, extended times where we're like, "Oh my gosh, this child needs this and this and this and this and this. Can I do all of that in my lesson?" No. That's going to not lead us to the place we want.

And so instead, thinking about these really targeted experiences where you can say, "Okay, at the beginning of this lesson, this group of kids was not responding that B says /b/, and at the end they were. And the next day when we came back to it, they still were." That is a lot more powerful than this vague sense of saying, "I think my kids grew in reading yesterday because we had all of these experiences."

Anna: Yeah. Let's go back to the whole idea of progress monitoring. Teachers are using universal screeners now, a lot of schools are requiring that, but teachers aren't always sure what to do with it. It's using that to help pinpoint what to teach, and then because your small group instruction is targeted and not trying to hit two minutes of a million things, then you're actually going to see movement on the progress monitoring data in that particular skill.

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Absolutely.

Anna: So you also talk in the book about how sometimes you might want to assign a kid to more than one group. Can you talk about that?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Yeah, so this is another one of, I think, these ideas that sometimes seems radical to people, and it comes again from this larger concept of centering needs instead of centering logistical structures.

I think the easiest example for this is really kindergarten. If you have groups of kids who are really needing to target certain letters. Let's say you have a group of kids that's really working to focus on the vowels.

Let me pause here for a second. Notice that I didn't say you have groups of kids meeting on anything in the alphabet. One of the things that I think we get really messed up about with trying to support alphabet learning is we look at screening data and other kind of big data that says, "Okay, this kid is red in the alphabet," or, "This kid doesn't know 13 out of 26."

Then we feel like the only option is to target the whole alphabet again. That's not efficient. We want to know exactly which letters you don't know and focus our instruction there.

So we might have a group that's, say, working on the vowels, and another group that's working on some of the trickier consonants that they have not solidified. Then we might have another group that's really working on phonemic blending.

Those groups are described by the need, not necessarily the kids inside them, because you might have a kid who falls into all three of those groups. And instead of saying, "Okay, I have my pandas and my alligators and my robins," you could say, "I'm targeting these particular needs in this lesson, so I'm grabbing the kids who have this need, and they're coming into this lesson."

And so this means a couple things. The first is that it allows a little bit more flexibility because you can pivot really easily, and since you're focused on that need, kids are going to then experience different groupings, and they're not going to necessarily always have some of the same realizations that we know can plague children, like, "Oh, I'm in the low group all the time."

The second thing, this is sort of a side benefit if you will, is oftentimes those children who have the highest needs are going to have the hardest time doing an independent activity. Well, maybe they're just with you more. Maybe they're just at the small group table a lot more than some of their peers, and they're probably going to enjoy that. That's another kind of benefit there.

Then the last one is, again, particularly when we're thinking about this alphabet question, if you have kids who have really various needs in terms of the specific letters that they need, it just makes a lot more sense to have kind of letter-based groups rather than having this attempt to say, "Okay, let me see how I could split up all of this and then target this letter, but then that kid doesn't need this letter, and what am I going to do about that?"

All of this comes back to, again, the same idea of what if we centered the needs instead of the structures? Particularly if you're someone who has a lot of control over your schedule, and thinking about how that could actually lend itself to greater flexibility and could help you sometimes prevent certain behavioral challenges as well.

Anna: Yeah. Those are all such good points. And also, I think it would help you prevent yourself from reteaching the same thing, right? Because instead of having to add the same thing to all the groups, they just go to the group where they're learning that particular skill. So that makes a lot of sense.

Okay, so I really like this quote from your book. You said, "Less fidelity to one program and more fidelity to children and to data." Could you explain that?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Yeah, so most programs just can't tell you everything about how you would want to scaffold the experience for certain kids, or respond and give feedback to certain moments, or differentiate in more extraordinary ways, such as utilizing the smaller group experience.

They just can't possibly give you all of that information because there are too many options, and ultimately somebody has to write down the program in order for it to function. So we have to think beyond just the program or the curriculum that we have in front of us in almost every case. And we know from research that the moves that we make as teachers, the practices that we use, are more impactful than the curriculum.

Now, I don't want to get it twisted. Coming from a starting point of a high-quality curriculum is game-changing. That makes a humongous difference. It makes everybody's life easier, and it makes it much, much easier to implement the really strong practices that we want to. But we have to also be thinking about the places where just by, you know, reality, we're going to have to continue to bolster even the highest quality materials, which is really about how we are targeting particular needs.

And so we don't necessarily want to have fidelity to "I have to say exactly this no matter what circumstance this child is bringing to me and no matter what needs I'm seeing in my classroom," but instead say, "Okay, our priority is student learning, and that means that we are going to have to put the most emphasis on being able to respond to specific students and specific data within the context of this high-quality curricular experience."

That means having the ability to utilize small group instruction when it makes sense. That means having the ability to sometimes adjust your whole class scope and sequence when you need to because it becomes clear that your students, even if you're saying exactly what you're supposed to, aren't learning that concept, and they need more time, more dosage, and more support in order to really get there.

That means having a repertoire of really strong practices and routines that you feel confident in because they're based on clear evidence that they're going to impact your kids above and beyond, and continue on bolstering that really high-quality curriculum that you're hopefully using.

Anna: Speaking of routines, that is a wonderful feature of this book. You've got lots of routines for teaching different foundational skills in particular, and some of the others as well. Can you just highlight a few of those before we close out for today?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Absolutely. I love routines. And one thing I want to say about this book is that while I was writing it, I did kind of intentionally have this dual thing going on.

The first couple of chapters are really more like book chapters that you just can read through and that sort of thing, and the rest of the chapters might in some cases feel

more like a reference guide, where there is a lot packed into every routine. There is just tons of research. They've basically each got their own little lit review.

But you might kind of bounce around, and you might read the ones that are the most useful for you. You might even have it with you when you're planning something. There's kind of this dual experience that you might have while you're reading the book.

Another thing that I want everybody to know about the routines is they're not small group routines, because there is no such thing as a small group routine.

These are routines that are designed to target the particular need that is at the top. It might be how to improve legibility in letter formation. Here's the routine to do that. You could use that with larger groups of students.

A lot of the routines might be a little easier to do with a small group, or there are certain aspects of them that lend themselves more to small group instruction.

But ultimately, when we are leveraging evidence-based instructional moves, for example, helping kids more explicitly understand and use text structure to understand a text, that's something that can happen in any space and should be happening in multiple spaces. That's one really big important thing to know, that the way that these routines become small group routines is how we use them and why we're using them, not just because they are small group routines.

That being said, here are a couple of my favorites. The first one is actually the very first routine in the book, which is for letter-sound automaticity. It is short, it's quick, it's to the point, and I think it really drives home a really critical idea, which is if you were someone teaching the alphabet, what do you want kids to do? Letter sound, letter sound, letter sound, letter sound. Just, like, abundant practice in that. It's a very small concept, but it's a really impactful one.

Another one that I love, or there are actually kind of two routines in the book for this, one that's more focused on single syllable words and one that's more focused on multisyllabic words, is about dealing with the complexities of vowel sounds.

I really like this because it's, again, something that does not tend to always get fully addressed by your phonics curriculum, because most of the time there isn't space or structure to have that in a phonics curriculum.

You might, though, be like, "Well, what do I do with these kids who still are not getting E versus I?" Having some solutions to that in the book hopefully can bolster kind of any phonics experience.

Then finally, the last one, which I've kind of referenced a couple times, is in the final chapter, which actually is about supporting comprehension in smaller groups, and that one's about understanding and utilizing text structure.

I love that one because there's just such enormous, incredible evidence around it. Because, again, if it's something that you're not doing whole group, especially if you're teaching grades three and above, it's really, hopefully, going to pique your interest and be something that you can dive into more and understand how that could really transform your knowledge-building work in the whole group, too.

So those are some of the ones that I love, but of course I love them all. There are twenty one. And again, they're going to be useful for different grade levels and useful for different groups of kids. Please do not, like, teach them in order. That would make absolutely no sense.

Anna: That's right. That's right.

Well, I was telling you before we hit record that I don't have as much time to read for my interviews lately because I'm doing my own PhD reading, so I was sitting on this book for over a year, and I was so glad I was finally able to make the time for it because it was extremely worth it.

I can't wait to share some of this stuff with other teachers, and I hope that after people listen, they will get it for themselves because it is really, I would say, a game-changing book.

Thank you so much for all the mindset shifts you offered in today's episode. I think that was very helpful, especially for people that were trained in guided reading.

Thanks for all you do, and any more books on the horizon?

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Wow, thank you so much, first of all. I really appreciate hearing that. It's always the intention, I think, of every author to put out something that's actually useful, and that's so lovely to hear.

Yes, there's more stuff in the pipeline, but nothing that I can quite tell you about yet. But rest assured that I am continuing to write and continuing to think about how to support teachers in making these connections between the best of evidence and the best of practice so that we can all wake up tomorrow and be building better readers and writers.

Anna: Thank you so much.

Dr. Julia Lindsey: Thank you.