

Building the Sprint Routine

Because there are so many stages and directions, building the Sprint routine can be very challenging in the lower grades. It's common for K-2 teachers to see Sprints delivered in a professional development and then find it difficult to execute when they return to their classroom. Melanie Gutierrez, a kindergarten teacher at FACT Charter School in Philadelphia, has the process of building up the routine down to a science.

She begins building up the routine in October.


















Before giving the students a Sprint, she models how to do one. "Role play and error detection are effective," she says.





























First, she has her classroom assistant deliver a sprint to her. Melanie puts a portrait of herself as a five year-old on her desk and projects the image of a Sprint on the board. "They see that I don't finish and don't get upset about it either," she says. "I make intentional errors and they know this beforehand. I tell them to be ready to explain what went wrong – which they love. I just have to be careful to do this in a way that doesn't make me look foolish." Students "sky-write" the checking answers procedure along with her.

She then gives the students practice on stopping when she says "Stop!"

"They draw circles on scrap paper," she says. "I ring the bell and they put their pencils up, which is similar to their 'Quiet signal'. We do this over and over, and over again. It sounds like a lot of time being wasted, but it is well worth it. It helps with self-regulation too."

Below are the first two Sprints she delivers each school year:

 1 2 3	  1 2 3
  1 2 3	  1 2 3
   1 2 3	 1 2 3
   1 2 3	   1 2 3

   1 2 3 4 5	   1 2 3 4 5
    1 2 3 4 5	     1 2 3 4 5
     1 2 3 4 5	 1 2 3 4 5
    1 2 3 4 5	   1 2 3 4 5

Notice that they are not A and B. She just gives one and then the students check their answers. The students who are lagging behind in handwriting/pencil grip skills use a highlighter to *swipe* the correct answer. The students congratulate each other for following directions and making a good effort. Even though the Sprints are short, she doesn't let them finish. This conditions them to getting used to not being able to finish. The next day, she delivers the same Sprint again and the students try to beat their score. Because it's exactly the same, the students are almost guaranteed to beat their score from the previous day.

To get the students used to working down the columns, she directs the students to do all of the hearts and then all of the stars. By making the second Sprint consist of only flowers, she's able to assess whether or not the students understand how to work down the columns. If the students struggle to pick up on this, she sometimes draws a green stripe down the left side and red stripe down the right side to guide them.