

The First 15 Days

During the first few weeks of school, students should learn what the Guided Math framework is and how it helps them study mathematics. During these first weeks, they begin to collaborate with their peers and develop a robust and productive mathematical learning community. Furthermore, teachers introduce the behavioral expectations for math workshop to their students and give them opportunities to practice those behaviors. A fully functioning math workshop cannot be implemented successfully until students demonstrate an understanding of the expectations, a capacity to meet those expectations, and the ability to work successfully at math workstations.

Although the first weeks of implementation are spent teaching students about Guided Math and their responsibilities, this in no way implies that mathematics is not being taught. Only part of the class period is spent teaching students the routines and procedures during those first 15 days. Most teachers teach a whole-class lesson each day while also setting aside time for students to learn about Guided Math and to develop the capacity to work independently.

As students practice working at workstations, teachers often assign workstation tasks that provide a review of mathematical concepts and skills learned in previous grades. Instead of several weeks of whole-class lessons spent in reviewing these previously taught concepts and skills, the review is accomplished with practice workstation tasks completed by students who are also engaged in building the stamina they need to work independently. In this way, the time students spend practicing how to work at workstations serves as a review of the essential background knowledge for the new mathematical content they will be learning.

Teachers from other grade levels are good sources of ideas for games or other tasks that offer students valuable review and practice of important math concepts and skills. As students work, the teacher should observe their work and provide feedback. This feedback can be given immediately or later during debriefings. During these times, teachers are not teaching small-group lessons or conferring with

students, but students should know that teachers are not available for questions. This is a time when students rehearse their workshop behavior. They have to learn how to make decisions independently. What do they do if they finish their work? What if they need additional materials or if they do not understand their task? How can they work productively without interrupting the teacher? The practice specified for the first 15 days gives students the experience they need to become adept at handling problems according to the workshop routines and procedures.

Teachers who are introducing Guided Math, whether it be at the beginning of the school year or whenever they are ready to begin its implementation, can follow this plan for the first 15 days (Sammons and Boucher 2017). Even teachers who decide to ease their way into Guided Math through partial implementation should teach their students the essential routines and procedures for a full fifteen days before expecting their students to work independently in math workstations.

Week One: Establishing Routines and Procedures

The instructional focus of the first week is teaching students exactly *what* Guided Math is and *why* it is so important to them personally as students. Traditionally, teachers do not share the rationale for instructional strategies. However, it is important to explain the Guided Math framework and why it is important to students. Whole class instruction has many limitations. Students who have mastered the content are often bored. Other students may feel lost or disconnected, especially those with gaps in their background knowledge. Shy or reluctant students may have trouble sharing their ideas with the class (Sammons and Boucher 2017a). Most students are eager to move away from “one-size-fits-all” instruction. During the first week, students learn to appreciate that Guided Math provides “just right” mathematics instruction for them—instruction that targets their immediate learning needs.

After being introduced to Guided Math, the class works to develop a set of routines and procedures. Teachers explicitly teach the Guided Math components, particularly math workshop, and students are

encouraged to consider how their behaviors impact those components. Next, teachers brainstorm what math workshop should look like and sound like, as well as how mathematicians work. As a class, students compile a set of routines and procedures they will follow as they work. Of course, teachers should already have in mind clear ideas regarding the behaviors to be addressed. If needed, teachers steer the discussion to ensure the inclusion of the targeted behaviors. The compiled routines and procedures are then recorded on an anchor chart and prominently displayed in the classroom for future reference.

Teachers with more than one math class may choose to develop unique routines with each class or combine the class-generated routines and procedures into a single set for all classes. Even if a teacher prefers to have only one set, students from all classes should be included in developing the routines and procedures. The inclusion of students in this process does more than increase student buy-in and sense of ownership. The thinking and reflection also lead students to a better understanding of the framework, their responsibilities when working within the framework, and their roles as mathematicians.

Figure 9.4 (pages 340–342) offers a sample plan for developing routines and procedures during the first week of Guided Math. For specific lesson ideas for Week 1, see *Guided Math Workshop* (Sammons and Boucher 2017a).



Figure 9.4—Week 1—Establishing Routines and Procedures

Day 1	
Focus	What is math workshop?
Learning Outcomes	Students describe what math workshop is and why it is important.
Activities	Class discussion and creation of an anchor chart identifying what math workshop is and why it is important.
Teacher Notes	<p>Math workshop is important because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students develop better mathematical understanding and skill • students learn to work independently • students learn to work with partners • teachers can teach small groups and confer one-on-one with students
Day 2	
Focus	What does math workshop look like and sound like?
Learning Outcomes	Students identify how math workshop should look and sound.
Activities	Review and further clarify what math workshop is and why it is important. Discuss what successful math workshop should look like and sound like. Add to anchor chart.
Teacher Notes	<p>Math workshop looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students working as mathematicians • students using manipulatives • students writing about math • students playing math games <p>Math workshop sounds like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students talking about math • students talking at appropriate volumes

Day 3	
Focus	What do good mathematicians do as they work during math workshop?
Learning Outcomes	Students know the routines and procedures for math workshop.
Activities	Review and clarify math workshop anchor chart. Discuss expectations for student behavior during math workshop. Create an anchor chart with no more than six criteria for routines and procedures. Explain to students that they are expected to follow routines and procedures, but that problems may arise. Discuss possible problems that may occur and how to solve those problems independently.
Teacher Notes	<p>Examples for routines and procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staying on task and in your workspace • cleaning up your workspace when finished • speaking in a soft voice about the math • what to do if you are unsure of your work • using math materials appropriately
Day 4	
Focus	What do good mathematicians do as they work during math workshop?
Learning Outcomes	Students know routines and procedures for independent work during math workshop.
Activities	Review and clarify what math workshop is and why it is important. Revisit routines and procedures anchor chart. Focus on the first few routines. Examine each routine in detail.
Teacher Notes	<p>For each routine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model how it looks and does not look • have students role-play examples • have students role-play nonexamples • have students role-play correct behavior

Figure 9.4 (cont.)

Day 5	
Focus	What do good mathematicians do as they work during math workshop?
Learning Outcomes	Students know routines and procedures for independent work time during math workshop.
Activities	Review what math workshop is and why it is important. Revisit the routines and procedures anchor chart. Focus on the last few routines. Examine each routine in detail.
Teacher Notes	For each routine: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• model how it looks and does not look• have students role-play examples• have students role-play nonexamples• have students role-play correct behavior

(Sammons and Boucher 2017a, 135–137)

Week Two: Workstations: The Nuts and Bolts of Math Workshop

When students understand what Guided Math is and have a set of routines and procedures to follow as they work, the focus shifts to practical information about how math workshop functions. Students now learn specifically about designated workspaces, workstation containers, and workstation tasks. Students will still need some review of what they learned during Week 1 and should have opportunities to practice the routines and procedures developed in Week 1.

In Week 2, students learn how to retrieve a workstation and put it away properly. They discover that each workstation contains a menu of tasks, task cards with a list of materials, Talking Points cards, and often, but not always, the materials needed. Students learn to use the workstation menus to find out what tasks the station contains, which must be completed, which tasks are optional, and which have options for differentiation. To ensure that students can work independently,