



Planning Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Sessions



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Planning Literacy/Reading Sessions	2
Planning Numeracy/Math Sessions	6

Introduction

The Teaching at the Right Level Approach (TaRL) aims to accelerate learning and improve the reading and math levels of children in primary grades, usually Grades 3 and above. The primary focus of this intervention is to help children apply skills like listening, observing, reading, writing, doing, and thinking. The goal is to ensure that children ultimately gain foundational reading and math skills.

The following sections on creating a session plan provide guidance on planning TaRL sessions¹ and include several TaRL activities (some of which are available as videos online). For more information about the session plans and activities, contact us at international@pratham.org

What is a Session Plan? And why is it important?

TaRL sessions are designed to be non-linear and interactive. Unlike regular curriculum delivery or use of scripted lesson plans, significant autonomy is given to the instructor (teacher) on deciding how the session will be conducted, and what activities will take place during the session.

The session plan is made by the instructor (teacher) based on her observations of the children and data collected from formative assessments on basic reading and math. It is an important resource for conducting TaRL sessions efficiently. The session planning process helps to:

- Set achievable learning goals and plan the activities accordingly.
- Prepare the activities and appropriate materials in advance.
- Track progress and identify if children are ready to move to another level²
- Create future plans and make any necessary changes as needed.
- Reflect on what is going well and where to make changes during the week time and the end of the week.

How should an instructor plan a session?

- After conducting the baseline assessments, the instructor should understand children's learning levels and group them accordingly.
- The instructor should then define the learning goals per session and determine expected learning outcomes for each week.
- Learning goals can be broken down into milestones. This can help instructors determine a weekly or daily session plan.
- By taking note of the children's learning levels and the expected learning goals, the instructors can decide and make a detailed list of appropriate activities, which can be conducted in the class.
- Children may progress to the next level based on the instructors' observation. The instructor does not need to wait for the midline test to initiate this process.

¹ TaRL intervention in the classrooms use a combination of different activities to accelerate children's foundational literacy and numeracy skills. Therefore, the teaching-learning episodes in TaRL are called sessions to help teachers to distinguish the intervention from regular classroom instruction.

² In TaRL programs, children are assessed and grouped by their learning levels for reading and math. Grouping children by their learning levels allows teachers to understand which competencies need to be built, and what learning-related challenges the children might be facing.

- While planning a session, it is also important to ensure that sufficient and appropriate materials are available to conduct activities with the children.
- During each session, each child should get the opportunity to participate and practice the activities with the whole class, in small groups and individually.
- If needed, make the necessary changes to the plan

Planning Literacy/Reading Sessions

For literacy session plans, we need to consider six competencies. These competencies include listening, speaking, observing, reading, writing, and doing. Remember that all six competencies are incorporated at each learning level as per the needs of the level:

Beginner and Letter Levels: Children at beginner and letter levels face significant challenges in reading letters, syllables, words, sentences, and simple paragraphs. Therefore, ideally, sessions for this group should focus on introducing the basics of reading including a focus on letter sounds/names and making words. While it is very important that the instructor carefully selects activities that help children read, it is also important for the instructor to carefully decide how much time should be allocated for other activities that help to build children’s competencies in listening, speaking, and more. Once the children’s reading improves, activities can be added or adapted.

Word and Paragraph Level: Children at word and paragraph levels face challenges in reading sentences and simple texts fluently. The instructors should thus ask them to participate in reading activities. This could include reading a variety of materials ranging from short and simple paragraphs to long stories with difficult words. Note, that the emphasis on reading does not mean ignoring other competencies. As children progress, the focus on competencies can shift and activities can be reconsidered accordingly.

Story level: Since children at this level have fluency in reading, we will focus on all competencies that improve the children’s comprehension, analytical and inferential skills.

To make a session plan, we need to understand:

- a. Learning levels vis-à-vis number of children in the class
 - This will give you an idea about which group of children needs more attention to achieve the learning goals in a stipulated time.
- b. Total number of hours for learning activities
 - Clarity about this will help you understand how to break down learning goals into milestones, and how these goals can be achieved in a given amount of time.

Let’s understand how to make session plans for different classroom settings i.e., homogeneous, or heterogeneous classrooms with the help of examples of session plans for reading (based on the classroom characteristics in the following table:

Classroom Type	Heterogeneous Grouping	Homogeneous Grouping														
Learning goals and lesson hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The learning goal is that 90% of the children should become fluent readers at the end of the program. The stipulated time to achieve this goal is 45 hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The learning goal is that 90% of the children should become fluent readers at the end of the program. The stipulated time to achieve this goal is 45 hours. 														
Total no. of children and group	<p>In school 'X', there are a total of 100 children from grades 3 to 5. Among them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginner and Letter level (B+L): 80 Word and Paragraph level (W+P): 15 Story level (S): 5 	<p>In school 'Y', there are a total of 150 children from grades 3 to 5. Among them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginner and Letter level (B+L): 120 Word and Paragraph level (W+P): 25 Story level (S): 5 														
Instructors' (Teachers) availability	Two instructors are responsible for 140 students (Grade 3 to 5).	Three instructors are responsible for 150 students (Grade 3 to 5).														
Group Allotment	<p>Heterogeneous Grouping:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="545 1361 909 1785"> <thead> <tr> <th>No. of teachers</th> <th>Group</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>B+L: 40 W+P: 7 S: 3 Total: 50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>B+L: 40 W+P: 8 S: 2 Total: 50</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	No. of teachers	Group	1	B+L: 40 W+P: 7 S: 3 Total: 50	1	B+L: 40 W+P: 8 S: 2 Total: 50	<p>Homogeneous Grouping:</p> <p>Since out of 150 children, 120 are in the B+L group, 2 teachers can take care of this group of children. 1 teacher will be responsible for 30 children at W+P+S levels.</p> <p>So, the grouping will be:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1043 1650 1423 1868"> <thead> <tr> <th>No. of teachers</th> <th>Group</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>B + L: 60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>B + L: 60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>W+P + S: 30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	No. of teachers	Group	1	B + L: 60	1	B + L: 60	1	W+P + S: 30
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1	B + L: 60															
1	W+P + S: 30															

Points to be remembered for creating the session plan

Focus Group:

Heterogeneous Class

- Two teachers have an equal number of children in their class and the number of children at B+L level is greater than W+P+S level.
- So, to achieve the goal of helping 90% of children to become fluent readers in 45 hours, we should focus more on B+L children as compared to W+P+S.

Homogeneous class

Though three teachers are handling three different groups (each teacher has one group), focused and intensive work must be done with B+L level children to achieve the 90% goals at the end of the program.

Progression:

Heterogeneous Class

- Children will shift from one group to another with the same teacher.

Homogeneous class

- There can be two situations: One, where children will be with the same teacher throughout the implementation of the program; Two, where children will be sent to the next level and perform group-specific activities up to fluency with another teacher.
- E.g., after 20 days of intervention, B+L level children will be able to create simple words and simple sentences. These children will be moved to the word or simple paragraph levels, and hence to the next teacher.

Breaking down goals:

- In 45 days (1 hour per day), 90% of children should reach the story level in both heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping.
- In both types of groupings – the children in W+P can be given a continuous reading practice of simple paragraphs and stories. This helps these children to become story readers within around 15 to 25 days of reading practice along with other related activities.
- Focused attention is needed for the children in B+L level children as mentioned here:

1 st – 15 days	2 nd – 15 days	3 rd – 15 days
Focus on letters, sounds, and syllable recognition activities. Work towards building children's skills in creating simple words by using the syllable chart. Help them acquire good reading skills through practice.	Focus on helping children to make simple words. Start introducing simple sentences and simple paragraphs for them to read.	In this last phase, focus on giving children reading practice with a variety of reading materials. Help them to build their writing skills with self-writing exercises.

Examples of session plans:

Let’s look at a session plan for a homogeneous group. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Diverse activities are to be conducted for different levels. All activities do not need to be conducted daily unless required.
- Instructors/teachers have the liberty to choose which activities should be conducted each day, based on the children's pace, and their ability to grasp concepts.

Note: Remember that this is just an example of how to create a session plan. Session plans will differ as per the context, class situation, and availability of resources.

Beginner + Letter Level	
Sample Procedure 1	Sample Procedure 2
<p>1. Start with a whole class activity such as Informal chat, storytelling, or picture reading. (10-15 minutes).</p> <p>2. Syllable chart reading (10-15 minutes).</p> <p>3. Choose either the basket game or the flipping flashcard game. The instructor should consider including syllables learned in the previous lesson along with the ones to be introduced on that day (10-15 minutes).</p> <p>4. Choose either the mind map activity, rhyming words activity, or a word game with a beginning/ending letter/sound (E.g., Fruit, which begins with ‘f’ and Calf, which ends with ‘f’). These activities can be alternated daily. (15-30 minutes).</p> <p>5. Optional: once the teacher is convinced that the learners have improved, they can be asked to copy the text and practice writing.</p> <p>Alternatively, the instructor can use the other procedure for beginner and letter levels.</p>	<p>1. Start with a whole class activity such as Informal chat, storytelling, or picture reading. (10-15 minutes).</p> <p>2. Simple paragraph reading (10-15 minutes)</p> <p>3. The instructor will then ask the children to provide any short two-syllable words from the paragraph that was read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For instance, the children choose the word ‘bana’* from the text that was read. ● The instructor should then write the syllables/sounds from the word on the board. <p style="text-align: center;"> <i>ba be bi bo bu</i> <i>baa bee bii boo buu</i> (If there are long vowels in the language) and <i>na ne ni no nu</i> <i>naa nee nii noo nuu</i> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● After this, the instructor should ask the children to read the letter strings above. ● Subsequently, the children should be asked to make words from the letter strings. ● It does not matter if the words do not have meaning, as in this activity they are just practicing the ability to put two syllables/sounds together. <p>Note: As children progress, the instructor can ask for three- or four-letter words and follow the procedure above.</p>

* ‘Bana’ is a two-syllable word from Kiswahili.

Word + Para Level	Story Level
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select a whole class activity such as Informal chat, storytelling, picture reading (10 minutes). 2. Choose one of either simple paragraph reading or story reading (20-30 minutes). 3. Choose one of the following activities: mind map, correct the incorrect or story-making (20 minutes). 4. At these levels, children may also be able to do some writing activities. If there is time, children can be asked to copy text and practice writing. They may also be given a dictation activity (10 minutes). 	<p>Children at this level can read fluently but might have challenges with comprehension. So, the instructor can use the lesson-based activity and follow all the steps.³ After 5-6 sessions of the lesson-based activity, the instructor can use the procedure below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Choose one whole class activity like Informal chat, storytelling, and picture reading. 2. Conduct the Mind Map activity with the children. 3. The next day, the instructor can repeat the lesson-based activity.

Adaptation for Heterogeneous Grouping

Note that instructors can also use this plan for heterogeneous grouping by tweaking the beginning of the sessions. They can start the TaRL session with whole class activities, where children belonging to all levels sit together. After conducting this whole class activity, the children should be divided as per into smaller level-wise groups. Subsequently, the session plan can be used keeping in mind the allocated time, the context of the classroom, availability of materials, etc.

Planning Numeracy/Math Sessions

After conducting the foundational math assessment, the instructor can divide the children according to their learning levels. At Baseline, one may observe that most of the children are unable to recognize 2-digit numbers. Many may not be able to solve basic math operations.

The TaRL approach aims to build and strengthen children’s foundational math skills. As such, TaRL numeracy sessions seek to help children recognize at least 2-digit numbers, understand different mathematical operations, and solve basic operation problems.

Remember that while planning numeracy sessions, it is thus imperative to understand the learning levels of the children in the class. This will help estimate which group may need more attention to achieve the learning goals in the stipulated time. Take note of some of the common challenges faced by different groups of children and seek to address them accordingly:

³ The lesson-based activity is a level-specific activity designed for children at story level. For more information on how to create and implement this activity contact us at international@pratham.org.

Beginner + 1 Digit Number Recognition Level: Children at beginner and 1 Digit Number Recognition levels face challenges with identifying and recognizing numbers and solving basic operations. Therefore, TaRL sessions should first focus on developing these children’s number recognition skills through various activities. However, this does not mean ignoring other competencies like developing their understanding of basic operations.

- Select activities that can help children with recognizing numbers and develop number knowledge carefully.
- Also, decide how much time should be allocated for number knowledge and operation activities.
- For this group, it would be good to provide more time for number knowledge than other skills so that they improve. Once they improve, this could be reconsidered.

2 Digit Number Recognition Level: This group can recognize 2 digit numbers but struggles with basic operations. Therefore, the first focus should be on developing their skills to recognize 2 digit numbers through number knowledge activities (a variety of activities focusing on place value and expansion concepts). This does not mean that other competencies are ignored. However, they should receive less time during initial TaRL sessions. As children strengthen their number knowledge skills, more time can be allocated to other activities.

Addition and beyond: This group can recognize 2 digit numbers and solve basic addition operations. The focus will thus be on building other basic operations competencies and strengthening their number knowledge. Calculate the total number of lesson hours for learning activities: This will give better clarity to understand how to divide the learning goals into smaller milestones and achieve them in the stipulated time.

Example: If we have 45 hours for math activities, we can divide our goals on a monthly or an hourly basis.

1 st -15 Hours	2 nd -15 Hours	3 rd -15 Hours
<p>The children should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize 2 digit numbers up to 99 with place value. • Read, make, write and expand 2 digit numbers with their place value. 	<p>The children should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize 2 digit numbers up to 99 with place value. • Read, make, write and expand 2 digit numbers with their place value. 	<p>The children should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize 3 digit numbers up to 999 with place value. • Read, make, write and expand 3 digit numbers with their place value.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve addition problems involving carryover and subtraction problems with borrowing up to 20. These skills can be developed with activities involving bundles and sticks. • Learn and recite the multiplication tables of 2, 3, 4, and 5. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve addition problems with carryover and subtraction problems with borrowing for numbers up to 99. • Solve multiplication and division of 1 digit by 1 digit numbers. • Learn and recite the multiplication tables of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve multiplication and division up to 3 digit by 1 digit. • Learn and recite the multiplication tables up to 10.
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To achieve the above goals

- Choose goal-specific activities. Conduct these activities in the given period.
- These goals can be further divided into smaller weekly goals. Make session plans accordingly.

The weekly plan must be prepared by the instructor based on observations of children in their class.

How to create a daily session plan for Math:

1. Define the learning goals.
2. Decide the list of activities and expected outcomes for the end of each week. Based on the outcomes, list the activities to be conducted in the class.
3. Divide each lesson into two parts: Number Recognition and Basic Mathematics operation activities.
4. Follow each activity with the process of demonstration in the whole class, practice in small groups, and individual practice.
5. Ensure availability of enough material depending on the classroom size.
6. Prepare the lesson plan based on Math grouping:
 - Beginner and 1 digit Number Knowledge
 - 2 Digit Number Knowledge
 - Addition + Subtraction + Word Problem
7. Ensure that each child gets a chance to participate and practice activities. If needed, make changes to the plan.
8. Consider the planning as per your class grouping – Homogeneous vs Heterogeneous.

Sample plan for Heterogeneous grouping

- 1) Spend more time to build number knowledge of the children at the beginner and 1 digit level along with conducting some activities on basic operations. Here is a sample plan:

Activities	Time
Choose any one number knowledge activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number with Bundle & Sticks/Number Chart reading/Number Wheel	35-40 minutes
Choose any operation activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fine with Nine/Oral Addition & Subtraction	10-15 minutes
Recitation of multiplication table on alternate days	5-10 minutes

- 2) Once the children are comfortable with recognizing numbers, then allocate more time for math operations activities.

Activities	Time
Choose any one number knowledge activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number with Play Money/Expansion Chart reading	10-15 minutes
Choose any operation activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addition/Subtraction/Multiplication/Division	30-40 minutes
Recitation of multiplication table on alternate days	5-10 minutes

Conducting numeracy activities in a heterogeneous classroom

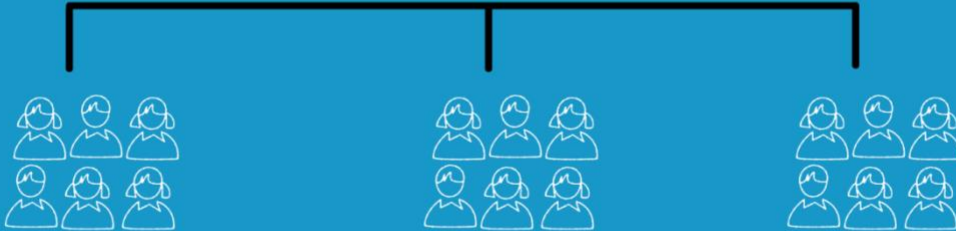
In a heterogeneous classroom, learners who are at different levels sit together. It is very important to understand how to conduct one activity for the whole class (with all children) and then ask children to practice in small groups as per their learning levels.

Example 1: Number with Bundle & Sticks in a heterogeneous classroom

The number with Bundle & Sticks activity will be demonstrated in whole class
(with all level learners)



Divide the learners into small groups according to the learning level



(Beg +1-digit)

Give them some sticks so that they can practice numbers up to 20 and later give more sticks so they can practice numbers up to 99

(2-digit)

Give them some sticks so that they can practice numbers up to 99

(Addition and above)

Give them some sticks so that they can practice numbers up to 99

Example 2 Addition with bundle & sticks activity in a heterogenous Classroom

Addition with Bundle & Sticks activity will be demonstrated in Whole class
(with all level learners).



Divide the learners into small groups according to the learning levels like this



(Beg +1-digit)

Give them 1-digit by 1-digit word problems at the beginning. Once they get enough practice, give them 2-digit problems

(2-digit)

Give them 2-digit by 2-digit addition word problems for practice

(Addition and above)

Give them 2-digit by 2-digit addition word problems for practice

Conducting activities in a Homogeneous Classroom

In a homogeneous classroom, children sit according to their learning level. It is very important to understand how to conduct one activity for the whole class as per level and then ask learners to practice in small groups by giving all the groups similar examples which were conducted in the whole class.

Example 1: Number with Bundle Sticks activity in a homogenous Classroom



Teacher -1: (Beg. + 1 digit)
The Number with Bundle & Sticks activity will be demonstrated in whole class



Teacher -2: (2 digit)
The Number with Bundle & Sticks activity will be demonstrated in whole class



Teacher -3: (Addition and above)
The Number with Bundle & Sticks activity will be demonstrated in whole class

Divide the learners into small groups according to the learning levels like this



(Beg +1-digit)

Give them some sticks so that they can practice numbers up to 20 and later give more sticks so they can practice numbers up to 99



(2-digit)

Give them some sticks so that they can practice numbers up to 99



(Addition and above)

Give them some sticks so that they can practice numbers up to 99

Example 2: Addition with Bundle & Sticks activity in a homogeneous classroom



Teacher -1: (Beg. + 1 digit)
The Number with Bundle & Sticks activity will be demonstrated in whole class



Teacher -2: (2 digit)
The Number with Bundle & Sticks activity will be demonstrated in whole class



Teacher -3: (Addition and above)
The Number with Bundle & Sticks activity will be demonstrated in whole class

Divide the learners into small groups according to the learning levels like this



(Beg +1-digit)
Give them 1-digit by 1-digit word problems at the beginning. Once they get enough practice, give them 2-digit problems



(2-digit)
Give them 2-digit by 2-digit addition word problems for practice



(Addition and above)
Give them 2-digit by 2-digit addition word problems for practice