

Use the Expert Groups Strategy to Introduce Teachers to *Tonya's Flip-To Book: EL Excellence Every Day*

By Tonya Ward Singer

WHAT AND WHY?

Actively engage educators in learning what's inside *EL Excellence Every Day: The Flip-To Guide to Differentiating Academic Literacy* (Corwin, 2018), and use the flip-to organizational features to navigate the guide with ease. Help educators in any role (administrator, core teacher, specialist, pre-service, coach), grade, or content area identify the specific resources in the guide they will use to help every student thrive.

STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

Participants first sit in job-alike teams of four or more, then count off so each person has a number (1-4) corresponding to each of the four sections of *EL Excellence Every Day*. Next, people reseal themselves with their “expert groups” (all ones sit together, all twos sit together, and so on) to become experts in that single section of the book. Seated in expert groups, participants first read or skim their section, then discuss the most essential features to report back to their teams. Finally, return to the first seating configuration and have the experts from each section introduce that section to their team.

WHEN TO USE

Use this protocol when introducing the book to all teachers in a school, district, university course, or any group of eight or more that each has a copy of the book. You can start with this protocol, or build background by showing part or all of Tonya Ward Singer's EL Excellence webinar at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRIUUDfL4nI>.

PREPARE

1. Give each participant one copy of *EL Excellence Every Day: The Flip-To Guide for Differentiating Academic Literacy* by Tonya Ward Singer (Corwin, 2018).
2. Seat participants with job-alike colleagues in groups of four to eight. This is the first seating configuration.

3. Plan the best way to reseal people into four expert groups. You can use the same tables in a new way, as people will all get up and move into expert groups. With 28 or fewer participants, consider seating each expert group together at a table. With more than 28 participants, consider seating each expert group at two tables.
4. Have self-stick notes and pens or pencils available at each table.

STEP-BY-STEP DIRECTIONS

1. WELCOME participants and explain the purpose and outcomes.

2. ASSIGN EXPERT GROUPS

1. Have participants count off (4, 3, 2, 1) so each has a number. If there are more than four at a table, have them restart counting again at 4.
2. To check for understanding, ask all participants to hold up fingers to show their number. Check visually to see that each person has a number and each table group has at least one of each number 1-4.
3. Explain that each number corresponds with one section of the book (e.g., 1 is Section I, 2 is Section II, etc.), and have participants point to the tab that represents their number.
4. Visually check for understanding. Invite people to find the table of contents for their section. (Hint: It's the front of the page with the section tab.)

3. EXPLAIN EXPERT GROUP TASK

1. Explain: *We will reseal so people with the same number sit together to become experts in that section of the book. You'll first have 14 minutes of silence to read and skim your section and identify what's in it and what's relevant to you. Then you'll have time to discuss together what you found, and agree on the most essential features to report back to your original teams. Finally, we'll come back into our first teams and you'll introduce your section to your team.*

4. MOVE TO EXPERT GROUPS AND SILENTLY READ/SKIM

1. Give people 14 quiet minutes to read/skim the section to identify "what's inside" and "what looks useful." Encourage them to start with the table of contents for the section, and to flip to at least two chapters in the section before reading any one chapter. Provide and encourage the use of self-stick notes to flag useful content.
2. When five minutes remain, if you notice people are still reading the first chapter of a section, encourage them to skim the other chapters in the section to see what they contain. This is especially important in sections II, III and IV.

5. DISCUSS IN EXPERT GROUPS

1. Explain: *You now have eight minutes to discuss what you found with your expert group and collaborate to identify the most essential and helpful content in this section—the content you want to report back to your team in a one- to two-minute presentation.*
2. As groups discuss, listen in to check for understanding and support individuals or groups as needed. Make sure the groups for section II and III notice the flip-to chapters in their sections. Make sure the group for section IV notices how the green headings and content for chapters 9 through 11 align with the essentials for EL excellence.

6. RETURN TO ORIGINAL TEAMS

1. Explain: *You now have eight minutes for the experts to introduce each section to your team. Experts, as you explain what's in your section, if you give a specific example refer people to the page number so they can look in their own books, too.*
2. As the groups discuss, watch the timing to see that they transition from one section to the next on a similar pace that works within your schedule for this activity. You can structure this by visually timing two minutes for each section, or keep it open-ended and provide feedback as needed to individual teams if they spend too long discussing any one section.

7. OPTIMAL EXTENTION

1. Seat all participants in a circle and use the Build Ideas Ball Toss Strategy (*EL Excellence*, p. 53) to discuss open-ended questions such as, “What is one way you will use this book?” and “What are the ways we might collaborate in using this book?”