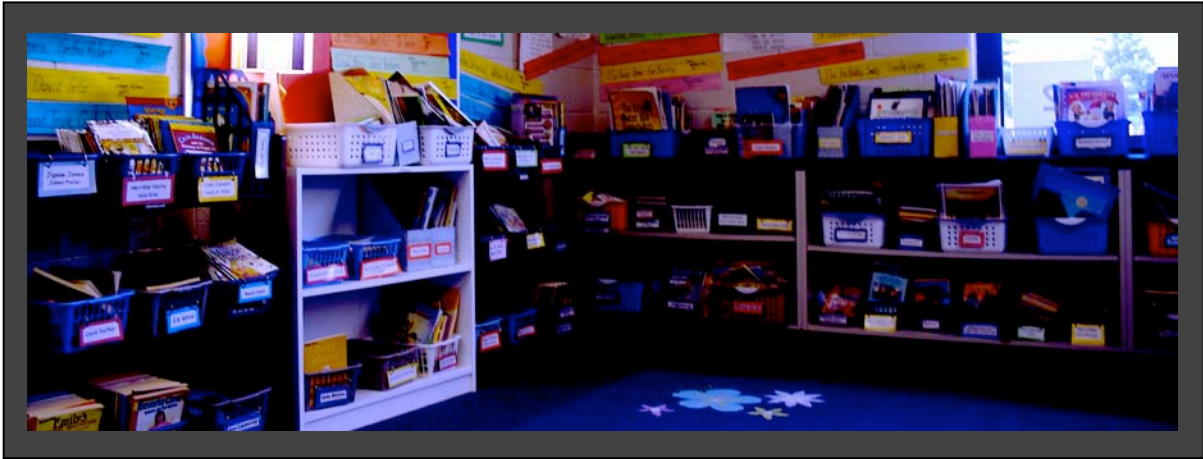


# BALANCED LITERACY



In the Ann Arbor Public Schools



## Acknowledgments

*This literacy manual is dedicated to all the hardworking administrators, consultants and classroom teachers within the Ann Arbor Public Schools who are committed to ensuring that all our students receive effective literacy instruction and become highly literate and successful citizens of our community.*

*With our sincere appreciation....*

*The Instructional Division  
Ann Arbor Public Schools*

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*“No subject of study is more important than  
reading....all other intellectual powers depend upon it.”  
Jacques Barzun*

*“If students are to make knowledge their own, they must struggle with the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw information and dimly understood concepts into language they can communicate to someone else. In short, if students are to learn, they must write.”  
National Commission on Writing, 2003*

*“Underdeveloped literacy skills are the number one reason why students are retained, assigned to special education, given long-term remedial services, and why they fail to graduate from high school.”  
Vincent Ferrandino and Gerald Tirozzi, 2005.*

Revised, September 2008

# BALANCED LITERACY GUIDE

## *Chapter One*

### **Balance in Literacy Instruction**

*“Good first teaching is the foundation of education and the right of every child.”*

Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

The term **balanced literacy** refers to a set of instructional literacy practices, which encompass methods for teaching to the whole class, small groups, and individuals according to need and interest. Indeed, any effective instruction can be characterized by differentiation and we will refer to this process in detail in subsequent chapters.

“Balance” also refers to the inclusion of instruction in reading, writing, and word study. Language processes are reciprocal; that is to say that knowledge and skills in reading promote similar knowledge and skills in writing. Words are the currency that a writer and reader exchange. Understanding of the phonetic principle, semantic and morphological understandings such as word-part meaning, grammar, spelling and punctuation need to be included in an effective and balanced literacy program.

Finally, the understanding of balance also applies to the gradual release of support from the teacher to the learner as skills become more proficient and the learner becomes more independent.

### **Differentiation**

The balanced literacy teacher understands the need for instruction, which is targeted to the whole class or a significant portion thereof. Because the ability to effect learning is limited to the specific needs of the learner, whole group instruction is limited in terms of instructional time. The skillful teacher delivers **whole-group** instruction that is distinguished by the following hallmarks:

- Instruction that is carefully defined in language and understood by all or most students.
- Instruction that includes modeling a specific text example, or explicit principle.
- Application of the principle in an authentic reading or writing activity.

**Whole-group instruction** occurs most frequently in mini-lessons, which usually require 5-15 minutes and follows the characteristics outlined above.

**Small-group instruction** occurs with 5 or fewer students and is delivered according to assessed instructional need. The balanced literacy teacher is able to understand the proficiency level of individual learners and forms groups according to similar needs. The configuration of the group is intended to be short-term and flexible in order to increase or extend as students gain proficiencies.

**Differentiated small-group instruction** is best accomplished using such strategies as guided reading and guided writing; delivered in segments of 20 to 30 minutes while the rest of the class is engaged in meaningful and authentic reading and writing activities.



The effective literacy instructor also incorporates **one-on-one teaching** within the instructional setting. Brief, conferring conversation within the reading and writing workshop are delivered by the teacher according to the student's assessed and specific needs and occur in a "just in time" manner.



Individual conferring conversations are given across the achievement continuum in order to assure continual progress for all students. The overriding principle of differentiation is best understood through the lens of scaffolding, the *gradual release of responsibility* of the reading and writing process from the teacher to the learner.

### **Balanced in Support: Gradual Release of Responsibility**

Central to the Balanced Literacy Model is the concept of scaffolding learners so that the level of responsibility and control of reading and writing is gradually released from the teacher to the student.

## Gradual Release of Responsibility

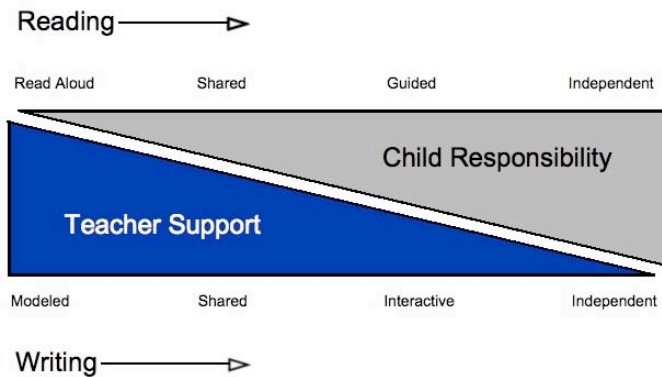


Fig. 1

will gradually assume a greater role in the completion of the skill as he acquires more competencies.

Vygotsky gives us the concept of the *zone of proximal development*. This is defined as the maximum level of development the child can reach with assistance in carrying out a specific task. Learning activities, which take place within the child's zone of proximal development, assure that maximum learning takes place. As the child acquires more skills, the teacher assumes a more passive role. This dynamic interplay between student and teacher is a key element in Balanced Literacy. If the zone is not "just right", students may report that they are bored and/or frustrated. Either way, the student begins to disengage.



The gradual release of responsibility model can be seen in the kinds of activities the teacher leads in reading acquisition (*Fig. 1*). Read-alouds are at the top of the continuum with respect to teacher control. Through read-alouds, the teacher models aspects of literacy the emerging reader is not yet proficient in his literacy journey. With Shared Reading, the teacher begins to relinquish control of some aspects of the reading process, always striving to provide support within the child's zone of proximal *development*. The child begins to share the text with the teacher. During Guided Reading, the teacher provides explicit teaching and demonstrates some component of the reading process as the teacher works with the child in a small group setting. The child soon begins to attempt the task on his own.

The teacher is near to provide support through explicit teaching interaction when the child falters. Finally, during independent reading, the child applies what he has learned during the above activities with a text that is "just right" for him, that is, within his zone

The concept of gradual release of responsibility comes from the work of Gallagher and Pearson. It builds upon the work of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist. Vygotsky asserts that learning is constructed through social interactions with a more capable teacher or peer. In a learning setting, the adult models the skill to be learned and the child

of proximal development. He begins to use the strategies and demonstrations he has been taught in order to tackle text on his own.

The “art” of teaching is highly evident in this model of Balanced Literacy as the teacher must be a careful observer of her students so that she is aware of when to offer support and when to step back and let the child continue on his own. She must be knowledgeable of the reading process so that she understands what explicit teaching the child needs at any given point in time.



The same model is evident in writing. Through modeled writing, the teacher demonstrates some aspect of the writing process as the children watch. Through shared writing, the responsibility for composing and creating the text is shared between students and teacher. In guided writing, the teacher works with a small group of students with similar needs and provides explicit teaching while remaining close by for immediate feedback.



Finally, during independent writing the child has the opportunity to practice and apply the techniques and skills he has been taught in whole group and small group settings.

## *Chapter Two*

### **The Classroom Environment**

#### **A Community of Readers and Writers** *The Teacher as a “First Among Equals”*

The balanced literacy classroom is characterized by the interplay students and teacher have with one another. The traditional learning environment has often been defined as a value-exchange model. The student completes reading and writing assignments for the instructor who then, in exchange, reciprocates with a grade or other evaluative score.

Instead, the balanced literacy classroom is composed of a community of readers and writers who are engaged in inquiry of text and the reading and writing process. The teacher is the first among equals as the community creates understanding and proficiency with text in order to communicate and celebrate meaning. The teacher makes his or her personal literacy transparent to the classroom by modeling reading and writing, thinking aloud, and the careful use of egalitarian language.



For this reason, balanced literacy instruction often begins with the teacher and class seated in a circle. After a time in small group instruction and independent practice, the community reconvenes and shares learning and discovery that have occurred.

Value is not awarded according to delivery of product by the student to the teacher but rather by the growing skillfulness and understandings that members of the group demonstrate to one another.

The orchestration of this process requires skill and maturity on the part of the instructor as well as a developed understanding of constructivist learning within the workshop model.

#### **The Constructivist Environment** *Learning as a Socially Constructed and Language Based Phenomenon*

In traditional school models, the didactic imparting of content and the assessment of understanding of the content is often seen as a completion of the teaching/learning cycle.

While hearing and seeing can be characterized as the beginning of the learning process, it is only by engaging in reading/writing and having careful conversations about the process that the cycle of learning is completed.

Cognitive psychologists and other educational theorists, have long understood that immediate and practical application is fundamental to learning and that the ongoing refinement of knowledge requires skillful use of language on the part the learner and instructor over a period of time.

In the constructivist model, content is presented in clear and concise language which is, modeled by the teacher, and then applied, with guidance, by the learner. It is in the application of the principle or skill to be learned and the careful exchange of language about the application process, that content is turned into meaning for the learner.

Figure 2.1

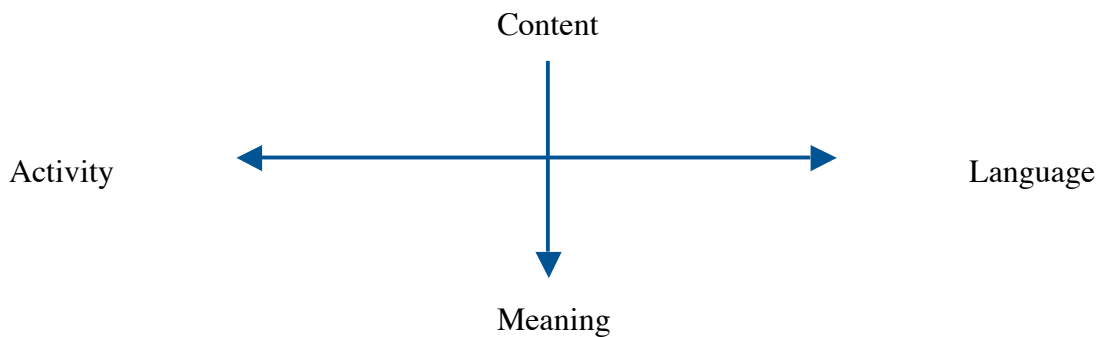
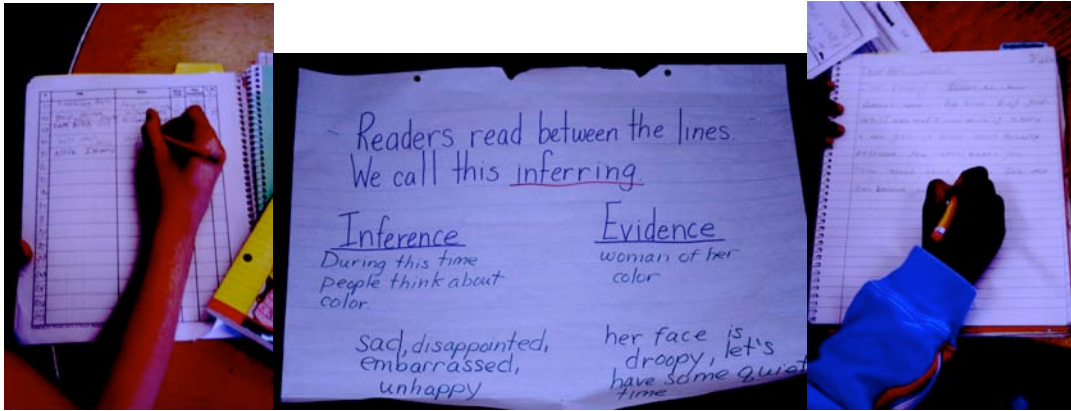


Figure 2.1

As an example, consider this lesson on literacy character development, which would be appropriate for an intermediate, elementary classroom:

<b>Content</b>	The teacher presents a mini-lesson titled “ <i>Readers learn about characters by paying attention to the way that the author describes them.</i> ” She gives an example from a recent read-aloud and then asks students to respond to the example by inferring about the character described. She then asks students to look for language, which describes important characters in their self-selected, independent reading.
<b>Activity</b>	Students then engage in reading text, which is self-selected, and within their range of proficiency.
<b>Language</b>	The teacher confers with individuals or small groups about the text they are reading, guiding them to discover language that describes character and infer meaning from it. At the end of the workshop, as the class reconvenes, the students share with each other (with teacher guidance) the language which they have found about characters and the understanding of characters they are able to infer from the language.
<b>Meaning</b>	Over time and with practice students grow in proficiency to identify language, which describes characters within text and the ability to infer character attributes from the language. The lesson is then extended to include other ways in which authors develop characters and enable deeper character analysis on the part of the reader.



As a further example, consider this lesson on compound words, which would be appropriate for a primary elementary classroom:

<b>Content</b>	The teacher presents a mini-lesson on compound words. <i>“Compound words are two words put together to make a new word. Knowing about compound words helps you to solve unknown words. You can look for small words you know and put them together.”</i> She gives examples from a big book, and invites the students to generate their own examples. She invites the students to look for examples in their “just right” reading of self-selected texts.
<b>Activity</b>	Students then engage in reading their individual texts.
<b>Language</b>	The teacher confers with individuals or small groups about the text they are reading, asking them to find examples of compound words, and share the meaning. Students are invited to keep a list of compound words they find. At the end of the workshop, as the class reconvenes, the students share with each other (with teacher guidance) the words they have found. The class generates a list of compound words.
<b>Meaning</b>	Over time and with practice students grow in proficiency in solving more complex words. They become more adept at analyzing words, inferring meaning from parts they know, and using this skill to make meaning of the text as a whole.

### The Workshop Model

Most teaching and learning within the balanced literacy framework occurs within a workshop model. The workshop model allows for differentiation in instruction. Careful pacing by the teacher offers the essential elements of choice and self-direction for the student.

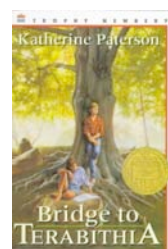
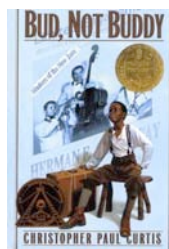
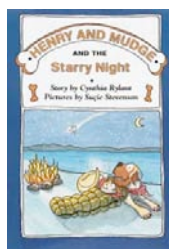
In the workshop model, the teacher begins a brief segment of whole-group instruction, known as mini-lessons. This instruction is based on scope and sequence appropriate to grade level and also on students’ assessed need. As previously explained, the mini-lesson

has a single learning principle articulated in student-friendly language and modeled with an authentic text example. Students are expected to apply the learning principle to their reading and writing behavior. At the end of the session, students return to the whole-group setting in order to share their learning. This provides important feedback to the teacher. Was the instruction successful? Did students learn intended outcomes? Should the teacher re teach or reinforce a particular skill?

Portion of Workshop	Teacher Behavior	Student Behavior
<b>Whole-Group Instruction</b>	Teacher presents mini-lesson with careful language, clear /modeling of skill or proficiency, and application task.	Student responds to mini-lesson, which is conducted in community-meeting format by engaging in discussion.
<b>Application</b>	Teacher differentiates instruction to small groups and/or individuals.	Student applies lesson in reading, writing, or word work activities.
<b>Sharing</b>	Teacher reconvenes the group in order to orchestrate discussion of learning, eliciting examples of student work and meta-cognitive thinking for the whole group.	Student returns to the circle ready to share, listening to and commenting on the work of others or offering examples of their own learning.

### Use of Authentic Literacy and Authentic Literacy Tasks

Imagine an adult asking a public librarian for a novel assigned to 42 year olds along with five pre-determined comprehension questions. The idea seems silly, yet representative of some school practices. Instead of this scenario, adult readers learn about books in published reviews, on television, in magazines, and from other readers. They respond to text on a personal level by exchanging understandings and wonderings with friends and acquaintances. They express likes and dislikes of author’s craft, fall in or out of love with characters, and clarify confusion or ambiguity for each other. Real-life readers have tastes in authors, re-read favorite texts and are free to select and abandon books based on personal preference and choice. Authentic literacy is self-directed.



A literate adult reads many types of text for a multiple of purposes. They read to be informed of world events, to research personal or political choices, to increase expertise

about hobbies or past-times, or simply for leisure and escape. A literate individual reads food labels, op-ed pages, catalogues, magazines, invoices, web pages and novels. If we expect our students to become facile and life-long readers we must expose them to authentic text in multiple genres.



### Types of Text Appropriate for Use in the Primary Grades

- Feature Articles in Children's Magazines
- Informational Text About Science Topics
- Informational Text About Sports
- Informational Text About Social Studies Topics
- Series Books
- Fantasy
- Age-appropriate Web Pages
- Short chapter books
- Simple biographies
- Big books with enlarged text both fiction and nonfiction
- Poetry and rhymes
- Alphabet books
- Classic fairy tales and folk tales

### Types of Text Appropriate for Use in the Intermediate Grades

- Feature Articles in Children's Magazines
- Biography
- Informational Text About Science Topics
- Informational Text About Sports
- Informational Text About Social Studies Topics
- Short Stories
- Realistic Fiction
- Age-appropriate Graphic Novels
- Series Books
- Fantasy
- Science Fiction
- Historical Fiction
- Age-appropriate Web Pages



As in reading, we must invite and train our students to write in multiple and authentic genres as well. Adults do not continue to write book reports after they leave formal school settings yet they frequently discuss their reaction to books, both conversationally

and in book reviews. It's hard to find published anthologies of five paragraph essays or animal reports yet feature articles exist in myriad publications pertaining to just about every subject under the sun. Too often our writing activities are specific only to the schoolhouse. Children can be taught more effectively by having them create text they encounter in the wider world. Again we ask, "Is the task I am asking this child to perform something that a real-life reader will read or a real-life author will write?" Is it authentic writing?

In order to develop our students as effective writers it is important to develop their skill and understanding with multiple genres and authentic writing tasks.



### **Appropriate Genres and Writing Tasks for the Primary Grades**

- Personal Narrative
- Poetry
- Persuasive Essay
- Reader's Response Letters
- Peer Review of Writing
- "How To" document
- Recap of personal experience

### **Appropriate Genres and Writing Tasks for the Intermediate Grades**

- Personal Narrative
- Feature Article
- Poetry
- Persuasive Essay
- Beginning Fiction
- Reader's Response Letters
- Book Reviews or Book Talks
- Peer Review of Writing
- Constructed Response in the Content Areas
- Web Page or Blog
- Email

## Structures that Support Teaching and Learning:

### Classroom Set-up in the Primary Grades

The physical environment is a necessary support in a K-2 Balanced Literacy classroom. Certain features need to be in place in order to facilitate the three types of instruction that take place: **whole group**, **small group**, and **individual**.

Whole group instruction is a key piece of balanced literacy instruction. The teacher models how readers and writers think and problem solve. She demonstrates to young children what proficient readers and writers do. Therefore, it is essential that she has a space to do this. Classrooms must be set up so that the entire class can be seated together in a comfortable space. The children must be able to see enlarged text in a Big Book format, in a pocket chart, and on a white board. There is a screen for viewing texts from a computer or digital projector. The teacher has a large easel on which to demonstrate features of print. There is a ledge for the big book. Materials such as dry erase markers, large chart paper, and writing utensils are stored close by. There is adequate wall space to display a wall of words students are currently studying.

The desks or tables are grouped to facilitate conversation and interaction between students. A primary balanced literacy classroom is not a quiet place. Central to its philosophy is the idea that understanding occurs through language. Children need to be able to talk with each other about texts or about a piece of writing.



The teacher meets with small groups of children with similar strengths to guide them in their reading and writing process. She uses a kidney shaped table so that she can be physically close to each child. This area is a bit removed from the rest of the classroom so that children can focus as they are guided to new understandings.

A key feature of the primary balanced literacy classroom is center work. While the teacher meets with small groups, the rest of the class is engaged in meaningful work in literacy. Children work in various “centers”. The physical environment of the classroom supports this notion. There are defined areas where children work. Materials are organized and stored so that children have access to what they need, and know the procedures for returning materials properly. All classrooms have a writing center. It can vary from a table with various writing tools and paper to a corner with shelves, a room to display student work, and many kinds of paper and tools. What is important is not the complexity of the center, but the availability of a place to practice emerging competencies in writing.

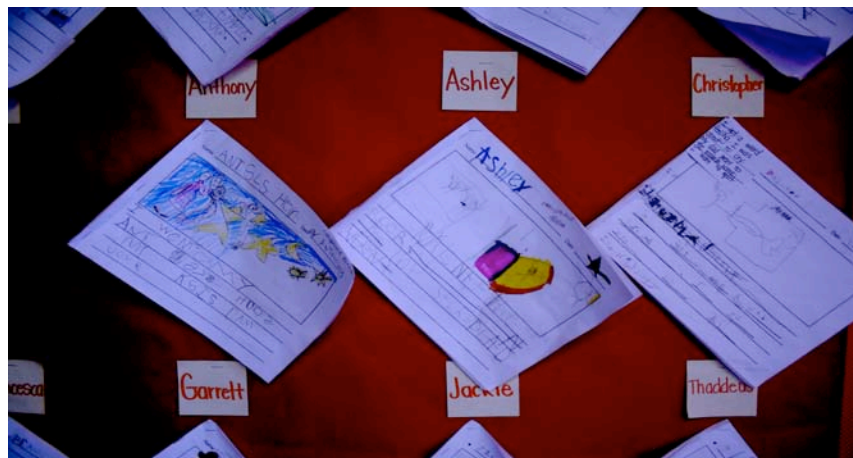
Most primary classrooms also feature a listening center with books in digital format, headphones, and comfortable seating. Children have the opportunity to listen to high quality literature.



*Children view and listen to books in digital format*

Balanced Literacy classrooms are alive with books. Children have access to many kinds of books. Children in balanced literacy classrooms spend a good portion of their literacy block reading independently. A key component is the “just right“ book collection. These are books that are arranged by text difficulty. Children practice their emerging skills with books that provide a “just right” challenge. There are many other kinds of books from which to choose. Books are sorted by genre or category (i.e. animal books or books about transportation).

A balanced literacy classroom has spaces where student work is displayed. Bulletin boards showcase student products.

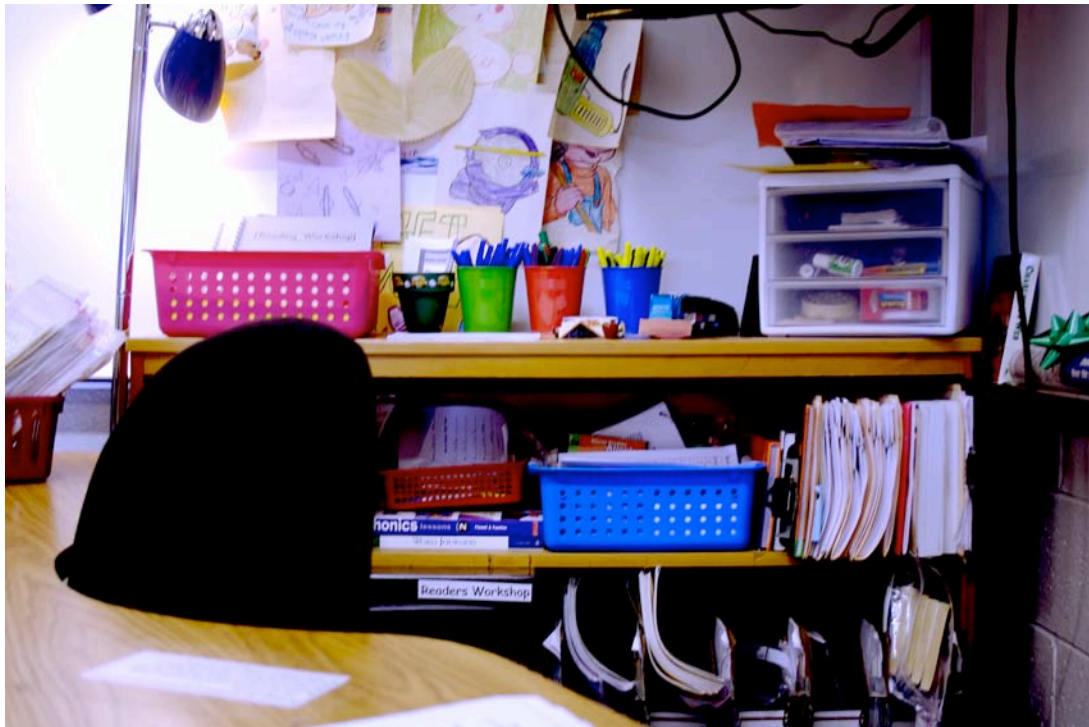


## Classroom Set-up in the Intermediate Grades

Even the most casual observer will be able to notice the distinctive features of the balanced literacy classroom in the elementary grades.

The physical arrangement of the classroom is designed to facilitate differentiation of instruction. A space is designated for whole-class instruction, which is structured as a community meeting with students and teacher seated in a circle. Some teachers have a carpet or a rug that students come to. Others have arranged desks or tables so that children can quickly arrange their chairs into a circle. In either case, gathering in this fashion supports the ethos of a community of readers and writers led by a teacher who is first among equals in this process. This stands in contrast to the teacher centered model, where students are rewarded by the expert teacher with grades or other evaluative measures in exchange for reading and writing “products”. Research indicates the latter is much less effective than the first model.

In addition to a circle space for whole-group instruction, there will also be space designated for the small group instruction known as guided reading and guided writing. This aspect of reading instruction best occurs around a small, kidney-shaped table in order to enable quiet conversation that is not distracting to the larger group. In order to prevent distraction from the movement of the larger group, this space should be removed from areas of activity such as book bins, material and supply centers, and drinking fountains.



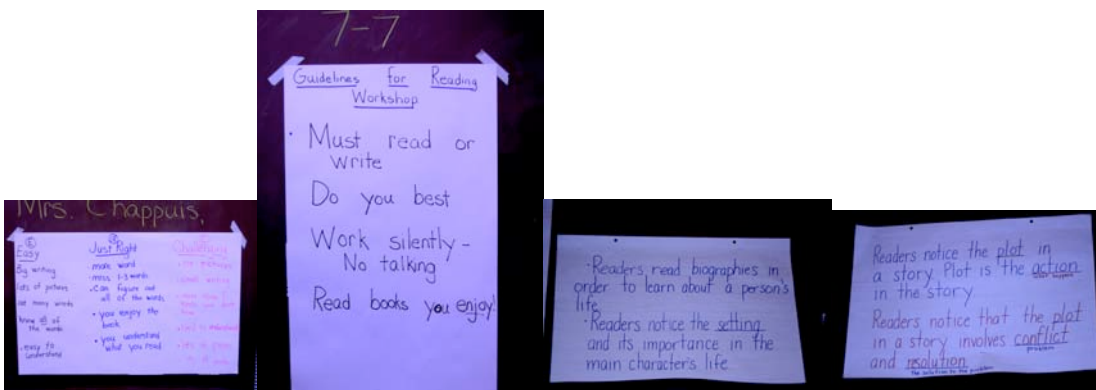
The teacher supplies such as guided reading materials, white boards, and writing tools, should be on hand and at the ready in order to maximize efficiency in time and instructional practice.



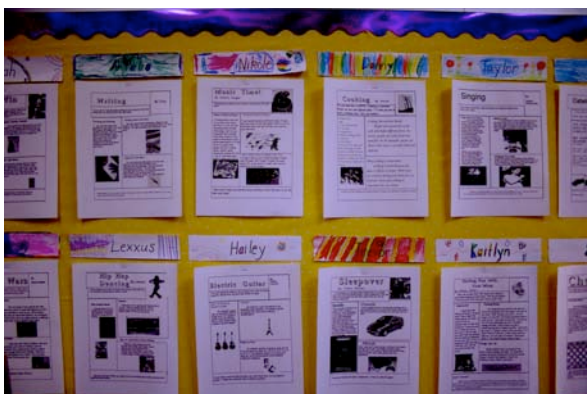
The intermediate classroom has a large independent reading library that is accessible for all students in terms of interest, range of genre, series books, favorite authors, and subject.

### Use of Teacher and Student Created Artifacts

The effective balanced literacy classroom seldom has commercially produced posters or charts as tools for guiding learning. Artifacts and guides for learning are interactively written by the teacher and students in whole group, and small group lessons. These are meaningful for students because they are rooted in authentic classroom context and conversation. They are living documents that are revised and rewritten as students develop understanding and skillfulness.



Examples of learning are also in evidence. As students gain proficiency in writing and reading, samples of their work are posted and celebrated. Authentic student work provides models for other readers and writers in the classroom.



It should be apparent from observation of classroom artifacts what is being taught and learned in the classroom. A careful observer will be able to discern the content of reading and writing instruction by observing classroom charts and examples of student learning.

## Literacy Supplies in the 3-5 Classroom

- An independent reading library organized in bins by genre, author, subject and series which is accessible in text difficulty, interest, and culturally responsive to every member of the class
- Reading response journals for each student full of student entries
- Writer's notebooks for each student
- A writing folder for each student with teacher feedback
- Writing supplies in a center or at each table which include pencils, drafting paper, sticky notes, thesauri, and dictionaries
- A table for guided reading and writing which include easy teacher access to teacher supplies, white boards or an easel
- Artifacts of learning which are interactively written with teacher and students
- Examples of published work
- Shared text such as read-alouds which are accessible for student re-reading
- An easel, white board, or digital projector in order to share text and images during whole group instruction
- Space for the class to gather in a circle
- Magnetic letters for word study

## Chapter Three

### Understanding the Reading Process

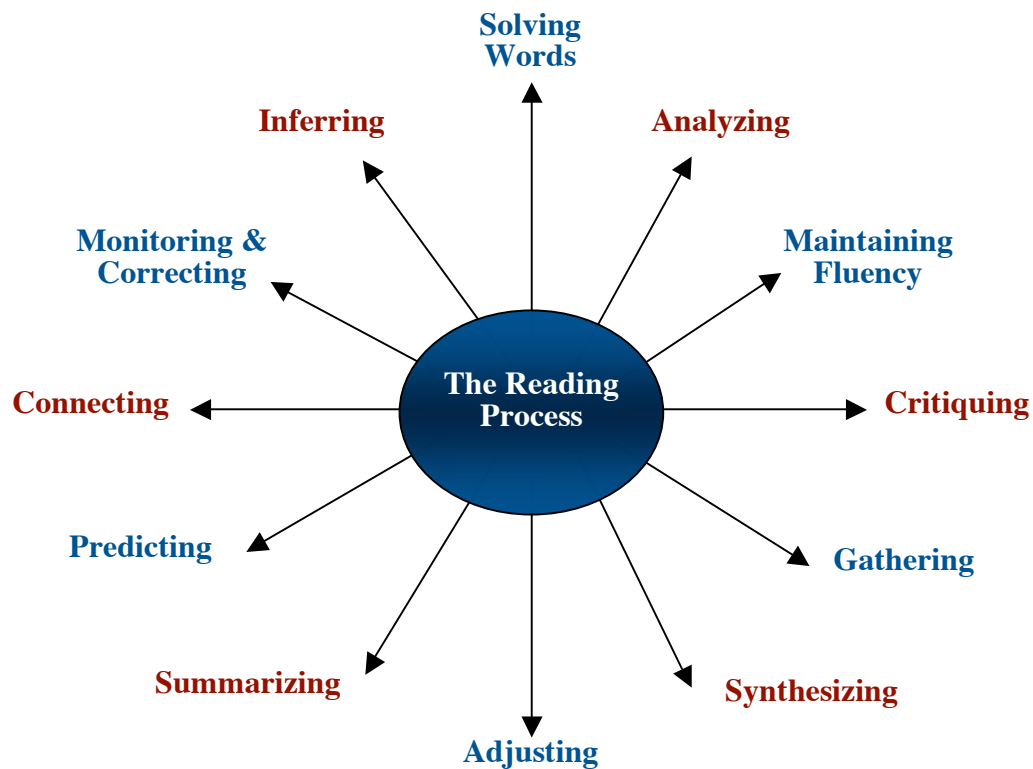
*“Reading is a complex, meaning making process.”*

The New Zealand Ministry of Education

Reading is neither a single skill nor a collection of isolated or “linear” skills and strategies. Rather, it is a process in which a large number of skills and strategies are employed in a flexible fashion to construct and reconstruct meaning.

A simple, yet helpful analogy to the process of reading is the act of juggling. The juggler is able to throw an object a short distance into the air from one hand. The juggler then catches the object in the opposing hand. Next, the juggler throws the object into the hand he began with. Finally, the juggler catches the object and begins again.

None of these requirements are particularly difficult for the average person. Yet juggling is a challenging task. Why is this? Because, in fact, the person who juggles is performing each of these simple operations simultaneously and smoothly as he adds additional objects to his collection.



Reading, though far more complex, is similar to the act of juggling both for the learner and for teacher. A child is using phonetic, semantic, and meaning based knowledge, predicting from experience and text knowledge, and continuously monitoring for understanding as she or he constructs meaning.



All of this happens simultaneously and interactively at a barely conscious level. It is the smooth orchestration of these and other skills that constitute the effective reading process. For this reason, it is important to strengthen skills and add to the knowledge base and sophistication of the process while the child is engaged in the process. Simply put, the most effective teaching occurs while the child is making sense of text and engaged in the act itself. It is necessary for the learner to engage in the act of reading, over and over again, and to be taught new strategies and understandings of the process *while being engaged in the process*. Teaching reading effectively and learning to read with proficiency really is rocket science.

### Growth of the Reading Process Over Time

It is important to understand the evolving nature of the reading process and the manner in which it changes over time. In the Emergent and Early stages, a child develops phonemic awareness, gains understanding of the alphabetic principle, develops automatic recognition of basic sight words, creates literal understanding and creates limited inferential understanding of text while gaining fluency.

A Transitional and Self-extending reader begins to spend less cognitive energy with decoding and fluency. He begins to build stamina with longer text and deeper inferential understandings of increasingly sophisticated levels of text in multiple genres. An Advanced Reader regularly makes connections beyond the actual text and uses text to pursue about areas of interest or informational study.

<b>Emergent Readers A-B</b>	<b>Early Readers B-H</b>	<b>Transitional Readers H-M</b>	<b>Self-Extending Readers M-R</b>	<b>Advanced Readers R-Y</b>
Develop print Knowledge  Develop letter knowledge  Know a few high frequency words	Use letter sound information and meaning to solve words Recognize most high-frequency words  Read orally and begin to read silently	Read silently most of the time  Have a large core of words that are recognized automatically  Know how to read differently in some different genres	Sustained reading with text over several days  Fluent and flexible  Become absorbed in books  Connect texts with previous texts read	Notice and comment on author's craft  Read to explore self and philosophical issues  Go beyond the text to form interpretations  Use reading as a tool for learning in the content areas

## Understanding the Emergent and Early Reading Process in the Primary Classroom

The Emergent Reader typically at the preschool and kindergarten grades begins to form understandings of the reading process as he explores the world of books. He learns that print carries meaning, and that it is composed of letters that go together to make words. As he becomes more familiar with print he begins to see the same words many times. He learns to recognize his name and the names of his family members. He learns letter names, and the sounds that the letters represent. He sees letter clusters and word parts that occur many times and begins to use analogies to help him solve words. He learns that books work in certain ways – from front to back, and that print always goes from left to right. The student begins to use punctuation to make meaning as she reads, and to understand the author’s intent. She delights in the sound of the language as books are read to her and adds new words to her listening vocabulary. She begins to differentiate book language from oral language. She uses her receptive vocabulary to help her solve unknown words.

The Early Reader must orchestrate many systems of thought simultaneously. She must scan the word visually, seeing the letters or letter clusters in order, make meaning of the word. She can attend to the syntactic structure of the word, all the while keeping the meaning of the text in her immediate memory. She must coordinate all three cueing systems: visual, syntactic, and meaning. She must be able to recognize when she has lost the meaning, or can’t make sense of the word visually or structurally. She must have appropriate strategies to fix the dissonance this creates. She must know to reread and apply a new strategy to correct the confusion or misunderstanding. Proficient readers are able to do all of this at a barely conscious level.

Beginning readers need text with clear patterns, words that are either seen many times and therefore are easy to remember, or words that are important and interesting. Language of beginning texts must be close to the young reader’s oral language so that words and sentences generally “sound right” (syntax). Story lines must be simple and easy to follow and familiar to young readers so that making meaning is a fairly simple task.



## Understanding the Transitional, Self-Extending, and Advanced Reading Process in Grades 3-5

Students in the upper grades are taught to read in wider ranges of genre. They learn to adjust their stance as readers according to genre and they work to build capacity with longer and longer text. Thinking becomes more sophisticated as children read to gain knowledge in the content areas, and to explore personal and philosophical issues.

The process of word recognition is largely automatic and fluent. More and more, the cognitive task of the reading process involves comprehension of information within the text (sustain meaning) and beyond the text (expand meaning). A student who is still “decoding” words will be hindered in their ability to gain knowledge from text. Learning other, more effective strategies at this point is an essential reading/teaching objective.

### Strategies for Sustaining Reading

<b><i>Solving Words</i></b>	Use a phonetic, meaning based, and semantic strategies for decoding words while reading continuous text.
<b><i>Monitoring and Correcting</i></b>	Check if reading sounds right, looks right, and makes sense.
<b><i>Gathering</i></b>	Identify and select information from print.
<b><i>Predicting</i></b>	To anticipate what will happen next in text.
<b><i>Maintain Fluency</i></b>	Integrate sources of information in a smooth, expressive fashion.
<b><i>Adjusting</i></b>	Read in different ways for different types and genres of text.

### Strategies for Expanding Meaning

<b><i>Connecting</i></b>	To connect text to prior knowledge or experience.
<b><i>Inferring</i></b>	To go beyond the literal to the implied.
<b><i>Summarizing</i></b>	To understand the “gist” of the text
<b><i>Synthesizing</i></b>	To use information from the text, prior experience and knowledge, and/or other text to form new knowledge.
<b><i>Analyzing</i></b>	To closely examine elements of text to understand how it is constructed.
<b><i>Critiquing</i></b>	To judge or evaluate the text.



## Chapter Four

### Structures that Build an Effective Reading Process in the Primary Classroom

Central to the concept of Balanced Literacy are four domains of reading. Each area has its own specific contribution to the reading process, and each differs in the level of control for the learner. Remember our earlier reference to “release of responsibility”.

**Read aloud:** Listening to good literature is an essential part of every balanced literacy classroom. The learner expands his listening vocabulary and hears how language sounds so that he is able to identify when something doesn’t “sound right”. As he reads he demonstrates listening comprehension, is taught to make inferences about characters and plot, and learns to love literature. Through read-alouds the learner is exposed to many literary genres. The learner also listens to a fluent reading of the text from his teacher or other mature readers. He develops a model of what fluent reading sounds like.



**Shared reading:** Shared reading occurs when the teacher and the students negotiate a text together. The text is enlarged so that all have access to the print. Teachers may use “big books” or projected text or text written on white boards for example. Shared reading can be enlarged texts of fiction or nonfiction, and can include charts, poems, lists, and memories of shared experiences such as field trips.

The purpose of shared reading is to make available aspects of the texts that children could not navigate on their own. For example, kindergarten children learn about concepts of print as the teacher tracks the text from left to right and top to bottom with her finger. Children learn about punctuation and its purposes. They learn to recognize high frequency sight words as the teacher models. They learn strategies readers use to solve unknown words.



They develop literacy appreciation through exposure to various genres of text. As with read-alouds, they hear fluent reading of text and develop the ear to recognize when their reading “sounds right”. Comprehension strategies are modeled as children learn to make inferences, predictions, and share their reactions to the text. Features of words such as word endings, compound words, and vowel patterns are analyzed.



**Guided Reading:** Guided reading refers to the work that children do while working in small groups with peers who have similar needs in the reading process. It is based on the Vygotskian model of apprenticeship with a more capable person. The teacher, or reading “expert”, carefully selects a text that is in the children’s *zone of proximal development* – this means the text is too difficult for them to negotiate on their own, but with carefully designed supports or scaffolds, they are able to read it.

Guided reading groups follow a predictable structure. There is a text introduction, followed by each child being engaged in the text while the teacher takes turns listening to individuals read. The teacher prompts for use of strategies to solve unknown words. The strategies have been explicitly taught and modeled, either in the guided reading setting, or in a shared reading experience. After the reading of the text, there is time for word work (vocabulary and spelling strategies) and/or writing that supports the use of new strategies. There is always a discussion of the text. The instruction is intentional and explicit.

**Independent Reading:** The level of support is gradually released to the child through shared reading and then guided reading. Finally with independent reading, the child assumes full control. It is critical therefore, that the child have opportunities to read text that is at his/her independent level – that is, text that can be read with a high degree of accuracy without teacher support. The child applies strategies he has been taught. In a balanced literacy program, children must have multiple opportunities throughout the day to engage in text at their independent reading level. Classroom libraries have collections of text at many levels so that each child has choices for books that are at his “just right” or independent reading level. This may include informational text in the content areas.

### **The Role of Explicit Instruction: Understanding the Mini-lesson**

Whole group mini-lessons are taught in a shared reading lesson. Children are taught a principle using clear, concise language, and then have opportunities to practice the skill first in a group setting, later in guided reading as they negotiate the text with teacher support. Finally through their independent reading they apply what they have learned. Children are taught strategies readers use when solving unknown words. An example of a first strategy that kindergarten children learn is: *Readers check the picture, then look at the word and get their mouths ready to say the first letter.* In the shared reading lesson, the teacher demonstrates the strategy, and gives children opportunities to practice. Later, in guided reading, the principle is reviewed, and children attempt to practice while the teacher is close by for instructional support. Finally, in their independent reading, children apply this principle as they solve words on their own.

## The Role of Assessment in the Primary Reading Workshop

Continuous assessment is central to the emergent reader's literacy instruction. In order for the apprenticeship model to be effective, the teacher must know precisely what reading behaviors the child controls, and the next instructional steps for growth. In order to choose text that is within the child's zone of proximal development, the teacher must know what strategies the child can apply independently, which strategies he is still developing, and which are too difficult. The teacher must be a careful observer of her students. She listens intently as the child reads. She makes notes about which areas are difficult, and what reading behaviors are emerging. She talks to the child about his reading. She shares with him what she has discovered, telling the child what things he can do easily, and what strategies she has noticed he is using. This assessment is called a "running record". Again, instruction must be intentional and explicit.



A critical assessment tool for the balanced literacy teacher is the running record. The teacher takes an exact record of the child's reading of a small portion of text, typically one hundred words. Miscues are coded and analyzed to see which cueing systems the child uses to solve unknown words. The teacher uses this information to guide her teaching of specific strategies to the student.

For example, if through analysis of the running record the teacher sees that the child is using visual cues to solve words without checking to see if the new word guess makes sense (meaning), the teacher would teach the student how to make a visual guess and to double check that the guess makes sense in the content of the story. The child would have opportunities to practice this skill in guided reading and in shared reading. If several students would benefit from a similar lesson, the teacher will pull together a small group for explicit instruction.

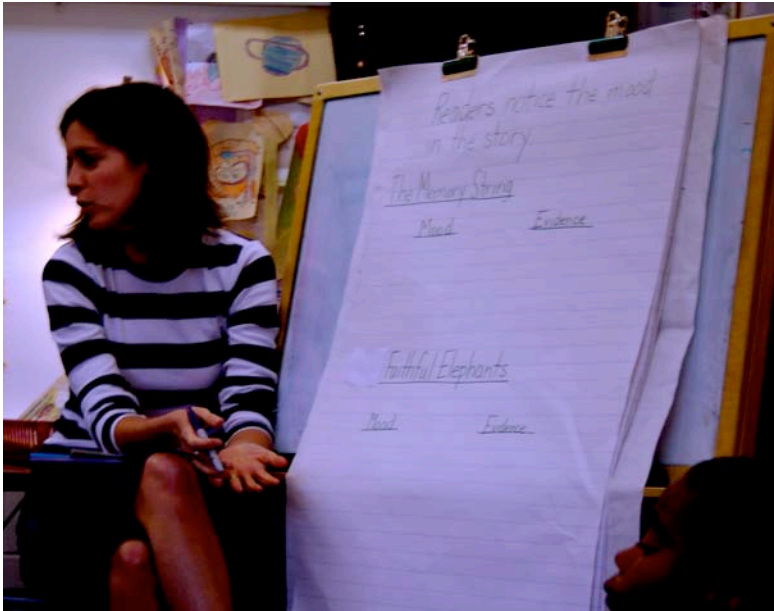
The Ann Arbor Public Schools uses the Rigby Benchmark Assessment collection of leveled texts to monitor the reading achievement of students in kindergarten through second grade. Children are asked to read a leveled text and respond to questions to assess comprehension. Fluency comprehension is observed and assessed during the "running record". This information is reported and summarized at the district level in November, March, and June. While all children progress in their reading competencies in varied rates, certain criteria are used to measure children with their same age peers. District grade level "targets" have been identified.

## Chapter Five

### Structures that Build an Effective Reading Process in the 3-5 Classroom

#### Shared Reading

Shared Reading is an instructional strategy wherein the teacher reads a text that the entire class has access to. Each student may have his or her own copy of a book or the text may be displayed on an overhead or digital projector. Math, Social Studies, and Science texts are often written at a level of difficulty beyond the proficiency of the reader. Text of this nature is best presented during Shared Reading. It is essential that students for whom reading is still a developing skill have exposure to stimulating grade level content material. Shared reading allows students the opportunity to think and talk about complex topics beyond their actual independent reading level.



The teacher models effective reading with the selected text demonstrating fluency, pointing out features of the text, and thinking aloud (meta cognition) about the text in order to demonstrate comprehension strategies. Opportunities for shared reading exist within the content areas (social studies and science) on a daily basis.

#### Choral Reading

In Choral Reading, the class shares a text and reads it aloud together. Choral Reading is one of the most effective ways to build fluency for the reader. Choral Reading can be done for literary appreciation; students enjoy reading text such as the silly poems of Jack Prelutsky. This kind of reading is full of tongue twisters, which develop children's word solving skills. Choral Reading can also be done within the content area. Having students use Choral Reading in order to name core democratic values, historical facts, or scientific processes is an effective way to strengthen the reading process and to help students memorize important information.

#### Literature Study or Book Clubs

Literature Study or Book Clubs are another vehicle for small group reading instruction. These groups tend to be heterogeneous. (If a reader is not capable of managing the text

independently, they will need to have the book read to them or hear a recorded version in order to be prepared for group discussion. No child should be excluded from discussions due to their independent reading level.)

Books are chosen by students from a number of texts that have been pre-selected by the teacher. It is important that the texts are well written and meaningful. Series books are typically not recommended for literature circles, for example, since they are not usually connected to themes and issues, which will sustain meaningful conversation.



Students are assigned a text or a portion of the text. They are instructed to make notes or use stickies in order to remember points of interest, wonderings, or confusion. They then join the group for discussion. The teacher's role is to intervene *as little as possible*. In the most successful Literature Study or Book Club groups, the teacher merely listens and only occasionally guides the conversation. Students may need to be taught or monitored in this process.

Often, and especially in the beginning of the process, students will need more active support from the teacher but the goal and movement is always toward a fully independent and student led conversation. Remember, the graph on page 5 that reflects a gradual release of responsibility.

Literature Study or Book Club groups can discuss picture books, short stories, short or long novels, or provocative magazine articles. The text selected, especially at fourth or fifth grade, can be highly effective in support of content area instruction. For example, historical fiction novels having to do with The Revolutionary War would be an excellent text for students to discuss as they engage in study of this time period in the Social Studies curriculum.

### **Guided Reading**

Much like in the primary level process, Guided Reading is a short, fast-paced instructional strategy which is extremely effective in growing and developing the reading process. Guided Reading is conducted in small groups of not more than five students.

Students are grouped homogeneously, according to assessed need and reading level. Guided reading groups should be flexible. Students should grow into new text level groupings as skills develop. To do otherwise would be tracking a child and holding back his/her potential. This mobility should happen relatively often and with fluidity. On going assessment will help determine a child’s readiness to work at a different text level. The components of the Guided Reading lesson are described in the chart below.

### **The Structure of the Guided Reading Lesson**

<b>Text Introduction: 5-10 Minutes</b>	The teacher introduces the text, or portion of the text, which is to be read. In the text introduction the teacher introduces vocabulary that may be challenging, excites interest, activates prior knowledge, and scaffolds any understanding of the text, which may be challenging for the group of readers. The text introduction is the most critical part of the lesson. Since the text is at the student’s instructional level, they will only be successful reading if the teacher has adequately prepared them to embrace the topic or content.
<b>Reading the Text: 15-20 Minutes</b>	Students read the text independently. The reading is <b>never</b> round-robin style reading. It is critical that each child is exercising their own reading process. At the transitional stage and beyond, students will almost always read silently. The teacher may listen to an individual reader, ask question(s) or the teacher may leave the reader to complete the passage alone.
<b>Discussion: 5-10 Minutes</b>	After the reading, the teacher leads the students in discussion. This is not an interrogative “prove you read it” kind of talk, but rather authentic inquiry-based discussion of the text. The teacher will also use this time to for teaching a skill or strategy with a short mini lesson.
<b>Word Work (optional): 5-10 Minutes</b>	The teacher may choose to do some brief, word work instruction at this time. This teaching is not specific to the text but rather a short reminder of a word study principle. At the upper stages of the reading process this lesson is usually around morphology or other word solving actions ( <i>e.g. the Latin root manu means of the hand, this helps us to understand words like manufacture, manacle and emancipate</i> ).
<b>Extension (optional)</b>	The teacher may choose to add an extension to the lesson such as a graphic organizer or brief writing assignment.

### **Independent Reading**

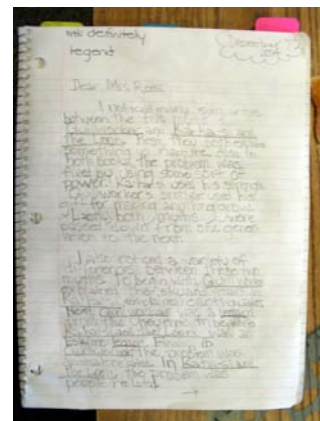
As students’ reading process matures, they are able to engage in extended periods of independent reading. We say that their reading process has become *self-extending* when the act of being engaged in reading increases their skills and capacity as readers. This is particularly true when independent reading sessions are preceded by short and focused explicit instruction.

For example, a teacher may begin the reading workshop with a mini-lesson on character analysis. She will state that *“Readers pay attention to characters. They notice the way that characters are described and the things that characters do. This helps the reader know and understand the character.”* She will then ask students to think about characters in their independent reading and she will ask them to respond with brief written descriptions of their thinking about characters. She will also confer with individual students about their thinking in response to the mini-lesson. In this way the teacher helps the student develop the ability to comprehend while the student is engaged in independent reading.



As a part of independent reading the student will keep a reading response journal or notebook. In this journal, the student records titles read including genre of the books and the date in which the reading is completed. The student also maintains a list of reading interests including favorite authors, subjects and genres. The teacher is able to identify trends in the student's reading behavior and guide them as readers through conferring conversations.

Another important part of the response journal is a weekly reader's response letter. The student takes notes through the week in response to explicit instruction that the teacher has provided through daily mini-lessons. The student gathers his or her thinking from throughout the week and compiles the thinking in a friendly letter format. The teacher responds in kind. In this way, the teacher is able to assess and guide the student's thinking and also to establish a social context for independent reading.

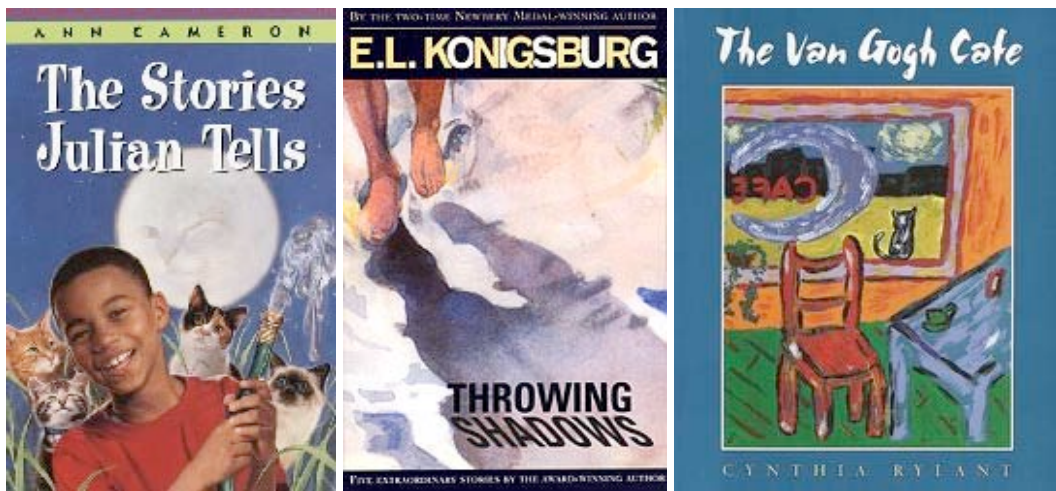


## The Role of Assessment in the Intermediate Classroom

In addition to assessment information that is garnered from the reading response journals, conferring conversations, and guided reading discussions, the intermediate teacher performs running records assessments known as **The Ann Arbor Benchmark Assessments**.

These assessments are trade book selections, at text levels N through T, in fiction and nonfiction genres. The teacher begins by assigning the portion of text to be read and asks a guiding question which the student responds to in writing. After the student has read the text silently, and responded in writing to the guiding question, the teacher asks 10 predetermined and carefully crafted comprehension questions. Half of the questions are literal and half are inferential. The teacher also records accuracy information on 200 running words from the text.

These assessment protocols enable the teacher to match text to reader for instructional purposes including guided and independent reading. They also inform the teacher's instruction for individual, small-group, and whole-group context.



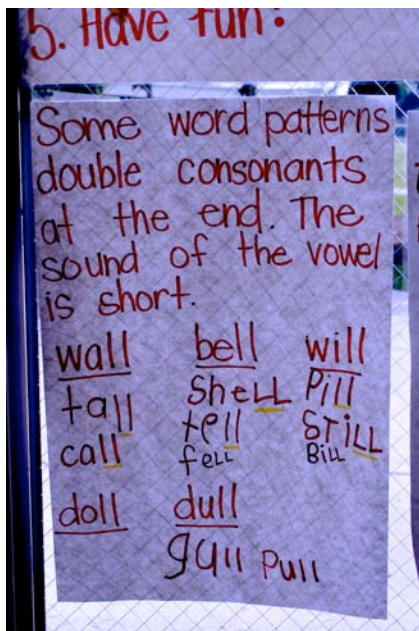
*Some titles from The Ann Arbor Benchmark Assessments*

## Chapter Six

### Understanding the Writing Process:

#### In the Primary Classroom

The beginning writer comes to school with many notions about print. He sees his parents writing grocery lists, taking telephone messages, emailing, writing checks, and writing thank you letters to family and friends. He becomes aware that print carries the meaning of text in books. He learns to write his name, much to the delight of his immediate family. As he makes the journey to becoming a writer, he learns that written expression has power. He learns that he can share his ideas, feelings, thoughts, memories, and needs through writing. He studies the writing of published authors to learn “what writers do”. Along the way he learns the conventions of writing: he learns to leave spaces between words so that others can read what he writes, he learns about punctuation and the power it can have to add meaning to what is written. He learns how to say words slowly to hear the sounds. He learns to spell some words quickly and automatically.



We know that reading and writing are closely related. As the young child learns to read, he is also learning skills that help him to write. He learns letter names and the sounds the letters represent. He uses that knowledge to spell words phonetically as he begins to record his thoughts on paper. He learns to write some high frequency words by memory, thus strengthening his recall of those words in print. He reads what he has written, and relies upon his knowledge of syntactic rules to create sentences that are grammatically correct. This reinforces the cueing system he uses to monitor his reading by thinking if what he has read “sounds right”. As he listens to stories, he hears interesting words that add meaning, depth, and excitement to the story. He hears what good writing sounds like.

He begins to learn that writers write for others, and thus begins to consider his audience when composing. He shares his writing with peers, and uses feedback to revise and edit his pieces. He occasionally “publishes” a piece of writing, and delights in the sharing of his work with a wider group. He reads and listens to the writing of his peers, giving advice and reactions. He uses the written word to develop his position or opinions about a topic. By second grade the young writer studies genres of writing, and has opportunities to create varied pieces of writing.



Writing takes place in the primary classroom in the writer's workshop. This is a forty-five minute period where all children are engaged in writing tasks. The writer's workshop follows a predictable structure. It begins with a mini-lesson taught by the teacher to the whole group. Mini-lessons are short, (no more than five to ten minutes), focused lessons on some aspect of the writing process.

Children are taught a principle, given examples, and encouraged to try the new learning in their writing that day. After the mini-lesson, children work individually. They may continue a piece that was started earlier, begin a new piece, or choose a completed piece for revision or publication. During the writing phase the teacher circulates and confers with individuals and/or small groups. The last ten minutes of the writer's workshop are devoted to sharing. Children share their work with their peers. The teacher asks children who have tried that day's mini-lesson to share their efforts. The class is taught how to give constructive feedback, and how to share compliments by stating specifically what they enjoyed in a piece of writing. The Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) actually requires "peer feedback" as a portion of this mandated test. Students who have experienced the writer's workshop are prepared for this expectation.

### **In the Intermediate Classroom**

The structure for teaching, The Writing Workshop, remains the same in the upper elementary classroom as it expands to a 60 minutes session. Teachers begin with a short segment of explicit instruction known as a mini-lesson. The lesson can be about procedure in the workshop, the craft of writing, the nature of a writing genre or task, or about grammar, punctuation, or any other writing convention. Students are asked to demonstrate the new skill when they work independently on writing projects.

As students write, the teacher differentiates instruction, conferring with individual writers or working with small (no more than 5 students) guided writing groups. These differentiated teaching structures are where the nuts and bolts of teaching and learning can occur and the power of instruction is most evident.

*A teacher confers with a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade writer.*



At the end of the workshop, the teacher gathers the whole class for a session of sharing. The sharing conversation should be linked to the mini-lesson, giving students the opportunity to see student peers demonstrate the concept which was taught by the teacher earlier in the lesson. This is a critical moment for the teacher, as well. The teacher will know whether he/she successfully taught the lesson based on the students' work. Sometimes, mini-lessons must be repeated or extended, or taught differently. The students' work will reflect whether or not the lesson was effectively taught. The work becomes an authentic assessment.

While the format of the workshop is consistent with the primary workshop, the nature of teaching and learning shifts due to the development of students as writers. In the early stages of the writing process, much of the focus is in learning how to master the alphabetic code and in accumulating an inventory of words that are known with automaticity. As a child's writing process matures, they become able to spell most words quickly and without conscious attention to the process. The writer is capable of developing and extending a topic over many pages and a growing sense of writer's voice emerges.

Writers begin to use information that they gather from their reading to develop their work and they recognize and use many aspects of the writer's craft to improve their writing.

A growing sense of audience develops and an ability to write for a variety of functions such as narrative, expression and information emerges. Indeed much of the teaching in the upper grades can focus on genres that are varied and specific to the content area subjects. The State of Michigan suggests several different genres and The Ann Arbor Public Schools have built genre studies into the elementary writing curriculum.

## Current Writing Genre Studies in the Ann Arbor Public Schools

2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> semester: Lucy Calkins/2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester: Personal Narrative
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Personal Narrative, Feature Article, Poetry, Storytelling/Fiction
4 <sup>th</sup>	Personal Narrative, Feature Article, Poetry, Realistic Fiction
5 <sup>th</sup>	Personal Narrative, Feature Article, Poetry, Historical Fiction, Persuasive Essay

Writing in the content area is an excellent strategy for taking information from short term to long-term memory. Writing about informational content helps the teacher verify that concepts are well understood, inaccuracies are corrected, and students are connecting content learning to prior knowledge. In the intermediate grades, writing projects can be combined with science and social studies units in order to integrate writing and content instruction. Students must also become proficient in writing to express their mathematical reasoning. A complete sentence reflects a complete thought. Writing – for the purpose of developing content knowledge proficiency – is absolutely critical in the intermediate classrooms.

## Chapter Seven

### Structures that Build An Effective Writing Process in the Primary Classroom:

#### Part One: Understanding Units of Study in the Primary Writing Workshop

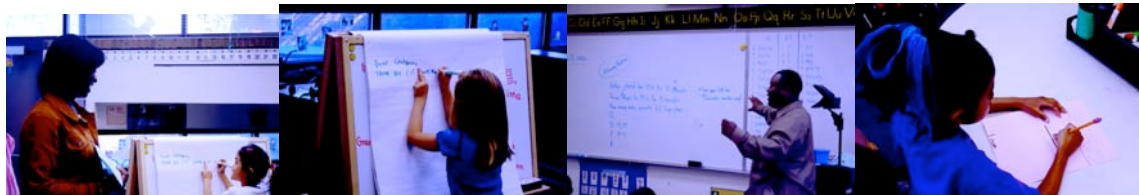
All K-2 classrooms in the Ann Arbor Public Schools teach writing through the writing workshop model. We use *Units of Study for Primary Writing*, developed by Lucy Calkins, the Teachers College Reading/Writing Project at Columbia University. It is built upon the following assumptions:

- In order to teach writing, we need to establish structures that last across every day of our teaching.
- When we teach writing, the learner needs to do the bulk of the work. In order for children to learn how to write, they need to be engaged in the task of writing for authentic purposes.
- Children need to learn from the beginning, that the purpose of writing is to communicate to an audience, and so all writing needs to convey meaning.

There are seven units of study that are organized sequentially. Each book contains approximately sixteen days of teaching across a unit of study. There are separate books on revising and conferring as well as an introductory book on how to teach writing to young children.

#### Part Two: Gradual Release of Responsibility: Modeled, Interactive, and Shared Writing

Central to the philosophy of balanced literacy is the notion of gradual release of responsibility. We see this concept in reading as children progress from read-alouds (teacher has total responsibility) to shared reading (teacher and child share control of the text) to guided reading (child assumes greater control, while teacher prompts for use of specific strategies) to independent reading where the child is in total control of the reading process.



The same holds true for writing. Through modeled writing, the teacher has total control of the writing process. She models the “in the head” thinking that occurs when a writer composes a text. She demonstrates how writers go back and reread what they have written in order to make sure that their writing makes sense. She shows how writers revise while they are writing. She shows the class how to say words slowly in order to hear the sounds in each word. Modeled writing occurs in a whole class format. The teacher can demonstrate various genres of writing such as writing lists, letters, and memoirs. During shared writing, the teacher and the children share the responsibility of composing the text. The teacher continues to write the words as the children help decide the content. The goal of shared writing is to guide children in the selection process that occurs when writers write. “How can we say that?” is a question that occurs frequently. The children offer exciting and interesting words. During interactive writing, the teacher and the children control both the content of the text and the writing. Children are given opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in letter/sound correspondence, spelling high frequency words, writing consonant clusters and digraphs, and other phonetic principles. Finally in the writer’s workshop the child has the opportunity to apply the specific skills he has been taught during interactive and shared writing.

### **Part Three: Assessment in the Primary Writing Workshop**

Assessment is an integral, continuous part of the teaching of writing. The teacher of young writers begins the writing workshop with a small focused mini-lesson of a principle or concept that she feels most of her writers need. She decides upon this teaching point after examining her students’ writing. Teachers should not omit this step. Mini-lessons build skillfulness and maturity within the writing process. This cycle of teaching, evaluating, and using this information to plan for the next teaching is similar to what happens in the reading workshop. Authentic assessment occurs within the teaching cycle. It drives the instruction, rather than vice versa.

As the teacher confers with individuals and small groups, she is continually focused on meaning. She demonstrates through her intense need to make sense of the writer’s message, that all writing must make meaning for the reader. She offers one teaching point to the young writer, demonstrates how to achieve this goal, and gives clear examples of how to begin.



She makes notes of what she has taught, and plans to discuss the writer’s efforts toward this goal at the next conference. This process is very different from “correcting” a piece of writing for the student. Not only does the classroom teacher assess the student’s product, but the student himself begins to look critically at his own work in the hopes of making it better for his audience. The young author begins to see that his work is ongoing, that he listens and solicits the feedback of others in order to enhance the

meaning of his message. Thus, assessment occurs not only from the teacher, but from the individual writer and his peers. There are some highly effective computer software programs now on the market that provide explicit feedback to the student in much the same way a peer or teacher might.

## Chapter Eight

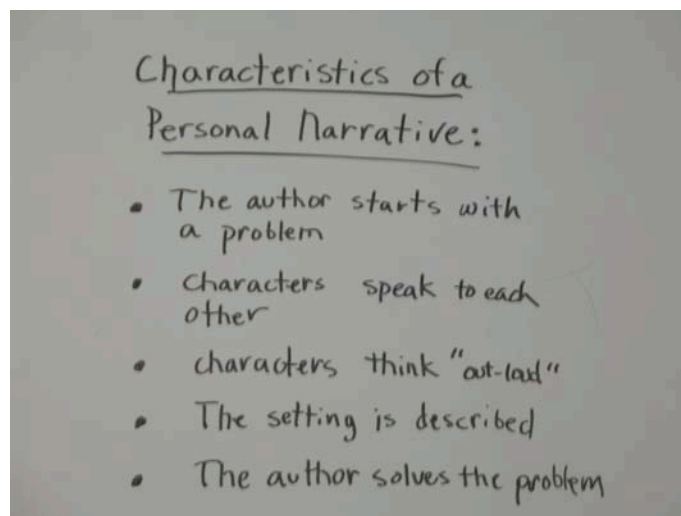
### Structures that Build An Effective Writing Process in the Intermediate Classroom:

#### Part One: Understanding Genre Study in the Intermediate Writing Workshop

Genre studies are units of learning that help the writer understand specific modes of written communication for an intended audience. The typical genre study includes four phases:

##### *Phase One: Immersion*

In the immersion phase, students are shown several examples of the writing genre that is being studied. The teacher guides a conversation in which students describe and list the characteristics they are noticing about the genre.



For example, in personal narrative the students are immersed with examples where a problem is established in the lead, some inner and external dialogue occurs, a description of characters and setting is apparent and an ending resolves the problem. Typically, characters reflect on lessons learned. In the immersion phase students come to understand aspects of the genre they are studying and see good models that they can emulate.

## Phase Two: Prewriting



The pre-writing phase is critical. Students need to be positioned with a topic, idea, or information in order to proceed. In other words, students need to have a cognitive map or plan for what they will say in order to begin. In the personal narrative genre study, the pre-writing phase includes teacher-led and peer storytelling. During this process, the teacher guides the student to recognize the anecdote that will appeal to readers, the story worthy of being told. Once orally identified, the student then proceeds to organize his or her thinking in graphic form.

## Phase Three: Drafting

Once the topic is identified and mapped, the student proceeds with a first draft. A series of mini-lessons have been identified, and accompanying power points are provided, which reinforce an understanding of the genre the student “discovered” during the immersion phase. In the immersion phase, the student has studied the characteristics of the genre. Now the student will learn how to reproduce those genre attributes in his/her own work. The personal narrative mini-lessons include the following:

- Writing a lead which introduces a problem and establishes tension
- Reflecting the thinking of the main character (inner dialogue)
- Developing dialogue
- Describing character and setting
- Writing from the first person
- Writing an ending which solves the problem, resolves tension, and reflects on lessons learned

## Part Two: Gradual Release of Responsibility: Modeled, Interactive, and Shared Writing

The notion of gradual release of responsibility is important to the intermediate balanced literacy classroom. As in the reading workshop, the student is guided from modeled writing, in which the teacher shares their thought processes as they construct text. During this interactive writing, the teacher and students co-construct text. The student continues with guided writing during which she constructs text with strong support from the teacher. This means the teacher is constantly providing constructive feedback – not merely correcting or grading the product. Finally, the student constructs text independently, while coached and supported by the teacher in conferring conversations.

In this way, the student gradually assumes responsibility for complex writing tasks. The process is ongoing and recursive.

### **Part Three: Assessment in the Intermediate Writing Workshop**

Writing Assessment is ongoing and multi-dimensional in the writing workshop. The teacher is always gathering observational evidence to inform the two most important questions: “What does this child know about being a writer?” and “What does this child need to learn/do *next* as a writer?” The effective writing teacher can always answer these questions, from notes and record keeping the teacher keeps on each young writer. Daily writing lessons are developed from these notes.

An understanding of *The Six Traits of Effective Writing* is a useful way to frame the inquiry and decision-making around assessment of student learning. It is, however, important to understand the Six Traits as a way to think about and guide student proficiency. It is not, however, a writing curriculum. There is often confusion about such distinction.

Assigned genre studies, connected to the State of Michigan’s Grade Level Content Expectations, is the district’s writing curriculum. Within these genre studies are rubrics, which reflect an understanding of Six Traits and which trait might be most important in a particular genre. These rubrics are an important component of the assessment process in the intermediate writing workshop.

Another exciting tool for writing assessment is the web-based intellimetric tool known as MyAccess. This web based writing evaluator, responds to prompted student writing with scores in five domains. The domains, though named differently, are similar to The Six Traits. In addition to scoring each piece of writing, suggestions are made to guide student revisions, which will improve the score (and the writing).

Most students are highly motivated by this tool. The response to their writing is instantaneous, ongoing and reflective of the five domains. This software is an effective tool during the writing instruction process.

Teachers mediate this program. They are able to gather data from MyAccess, which identifies areas of proficiency and deficits for whole group, small group, and individualized instruction. In addition to the evaluative information, teachers are offered lesson plans as mini-lessons in order to respond to student need.

This tool is offered for all Ann Arbor Public School students, grades 4-9, whose teacher is willing to use the software and ready to integrate this technology tool into the writing workshop process.

## Chapter Nine

### Content Integration in the Balanced Literacy Classroom

There is an old adage that says: “We learn to read in the primary grades, and we read to learn for the rest of our schooling.” Teachers have always known better, but there is some truth behind this saying.

While the reading process is *always* about *constructing meaning* from text, the focus in early reading instruction is gaining an automatic sight word vocabulary, understanding the alphabetic principle and word-solving skills, and gaining fluency with text at increasingly difficult levels. The student must be accurate in “word calling” in order to construct meaning. In the earliest stages of the reading process, the early and emergent phases, the major cognitive task for the reader has to do with these sorts of “word calling” behaviors.

Likewise, in the earliest stages of the writing process, the early and emergent phases, the writer is concerned with learning to use letter and word formation tools in order to *convey meaning*. The major cognitive tasks involve grapho-motor integration, letter sound association, and the acquisition of a large body of known words that can be written with automaticity.



Yet even at these early and emergent phases, we look for reading material that students will be motivated to read and to which they can make personal connections. This will include informational texts about such topics as animals, families, schools and childhood routines. We never lose sight of the fact that the reason for focusing on the cognitive tasks described above is *to construct and convey meaning* -- always.

The bridge that provides the critical link for young children is oral language, specifically the speaking and listening that is such a critical part of primary classrooms. Full of wonder and curious about their world, young students listen as teachers read aloud and share content area texts with them.





They respond and engage in discourse that both deepens their understanding and further piques their curiosity. Through read-alouds, shared reading and interactive writing, students learn about content and text structures long before they are able to engage in them independently as readers and writers.

As the reading process evolves to the transitional and self-extending stages, the reader is able to connect with and expand upon content information in increasingly sophisticated and complex ways. Indeed, an important way that we build reading comprehension and grow the student's reading process is to teach comprehension skills that involve dealing with content specific text as well as acquiring content knowledge from other text sources such as novels, magazines, and other formats and genres. By content we mean areas typically referred to as social studies, science, and mathematics.

There is a similar parallel in the writing process. As learners become proficient and automatic at putting language onto the page, the genres and modes of expression specific to content learning become the next teaching and learning tasks.

As the district selects programs and classroom materials, two criteria are consistently before us: (1) the need to meet Michigan Standards and Benchmarks (the required curriculum across the state) and Grade Level Content Expectations and (2) the presence of opportunities for cross-curricular connections, developed authentically within the lessons. These authentic opportunities enrich learning for students and make it easier for teachers to address all the Michigan Benchmarks and Grade Level Content Expectations.



**State of Michigan  
Grade Level Content  
Expectations**

In elementary classrooms, it is possible and often preferable to teach content reading and writing within the reading and writing workshops. The study of social studies, science and mathematics involves the use of language. It includes word study and vocabulary development, learning text structures and different reading and writing genres. All of this can be woven into the literacy block if done with forethought and planning. On the other hand, there are tools, practices and models associated with our balanced literacy program

that can be incorporated into social studies, science and mathematics blocks. Examples of those include:

- Mini-lessons
- Differentiated instruction
- “Just-right” instruction
- Writer's (scientists', social studies, math) notebooks
- Reading response letters
- Genre studies (e.g., reading a math problem, learning the structure of the social studies text)
- Use of graphic organizers

We need to apply what we have learned about language learning to our instruction across the curriculum. This not only “saves time” but also increases instructional effectiveness. Sometimes it also means giving up instructional practices and class activities that are not measurably effective and directly related to increased student achievement of the Michigan Standards and Benchmarks. With the increased expectations for ALL students today, there is no longer the time in the school day to spend on activities and instructional practices that are not thus focused. These are the professional/discretionary decisions teachers across the state make everyday.

Recognizing where cross-curricular opportunities are present has strong implications for our use of precious learning time. For instance, the strong emphasis on collecting and using data and on measuring temperature in the first grade Weather unit means that the lessons on graphing and measuring temperature in *Everyday Math* may not need to be taught. Whereas the curriculum committees can identify these connections, all teachers need to understand the Michigan Standards and Benchmarks and Grade Level Content Expectations and the needs of the students in their classrooms when making decisions to skip or condense lessons. If a teacher chooses “not to teach” a lesson, that teacher should be otherwise confident that the concept or skill is mastered in another way.

Reading and writing is well integrated into each unit of the new *Science Companion* science units, including such specific lessons as “reading informational material” and “writing a set of procedures.” Examples of language arts concepts integrated into the units are as follows:

- Creating a content word/definition wall
- Reading a variety of fiction and non-fiction related to the content area (read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading)
- Reading and writing poems about weather
- Learning how to use a field guide to identify and learn about a rock specimen.
- Creating a class field guide
- Reading about scientists who have contributed to the field of \_\_\_\_\_
- Writing information learned about \_\_\_\_\_
- Writing detailed descriptions
- Writing procedures
- Documenting observations, discoveries and questions that emerge
- Reading and following multi-step directions
- Forming and writing conclusions based on evidence

Our elementary social studies program also provides authentic opportunities for developing literacy skills in conjunction with developing social studies skills and concepts. The following are a few examples:

- Creating a content word/definition wall
- Learning and practicing skills related to speaking, listening, and presenting information
- Reading a variety of fiction and non-fiction connecting students, their lives and their world to the various social studies strands and themes and modeling different text structures (read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading)
- Reading a variety of genres to develop understanding of historical times and events
- Learning and using features of a social studies text book
- Writing personal memoirs about their family
- Organizing information to compare and contrast
- Writing descriptions, summaries, narratives, comparisons, explanations, position papers related to various social studies themes (interactive writing, guided writing, independent writing)

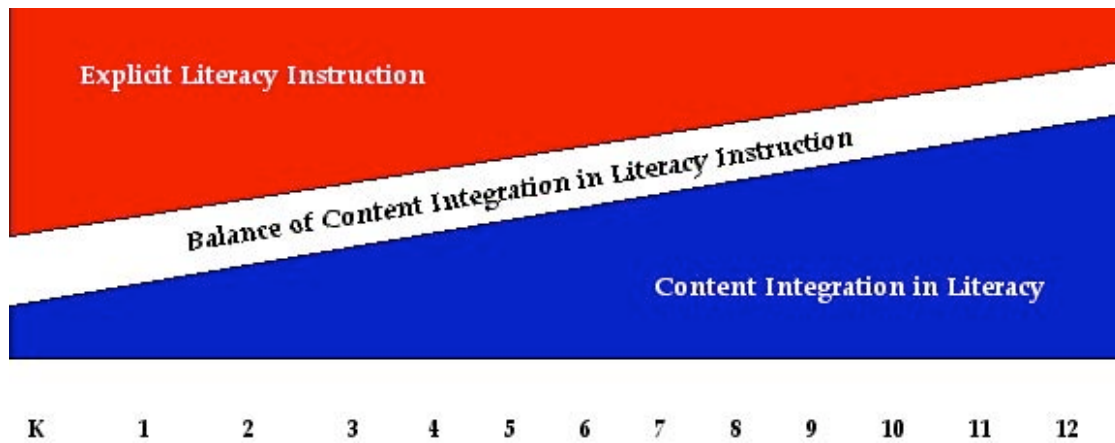
Any math program that meets the standards students are expected to reach in today's world will be both mathematically rigorous and language rich. This rigor is set in contexts (i.e., stories and “word problems”) which minimize meaningless drills with abstract numbers. Mathematics is about patterns and relationships. For students to be prepared to pursue higher levels of mathematics, their experiences need to be grounded in meaning and understanding, in making connections within mathematics and between mathematics and the “real world.” This all involves the use of language. Explicit language arts connections in our math program include:

- Creating content word/definition wall
- Discussing word origins and derivations
- Sharing strategies for problem solving (orally and/or in writing)
- Using math-related songs, chants, poetry, literature (titles suggested in every unit, K-5)
- Using Math Logs and/or Exit Slips to write about mathematical thinking, answer open-ended questions, write self-reflections
- Writing number stories
- Using *Student Reference Book* (informational reading and reference skills)
- Using library and internet resources to access information related to the *World/Michigan Tour* (4<sup>th</sup> grade) and *American Tour* (5<sup>th</sup> grade) tasks

In elementary classrooms, much cross-curricular work can be incorporated into time allotted for the literacy block. Content vocabulary work can be incorporated into Phonics Lessons and Word Work time; content reading and writing can be incorporated into Readers' and Writers' Workshops. This work involves learning about language as well as learning about content. The work we have done to establish a balanced literacy framework in every elementary classroom, the work we have done creating genre studies and implementing the Lucy Calkins writing modules, the work we have done implementing Phonics Lessons and other word work routines have brought us to a place where we can now integrate the content areas into these powerful structures.

We can never say that a student is “finished” learning how to learn to read and how to learn to write. Sound instruction at all levels, K-12 and beyond, includes instruction that is specifically intended to increase writing and reading proficiency.

The balanced literacy framework, which includes reading, writing, and word study instruction, becomes increasingly geared toward integration of content as a function of increasing reading and writing proficiency. A part of becoming skilled as a reader and writer is learning to construct and convey content information as well as becoming proficient in the genres and modes which are more traditionally associated with the subject we call Language Arts.



By the time a student reaches the advanced secondary levels, from tenth grade and onward, a significant amount of instruction is text driven and proficiency with text is often assumed. Research and results with students have long indicated, however, the need for explicit instruction in reading and writing throughout the learner's K-12 academic career. We can never extinguish our own, or our student's potential to become more proficient and effective readers and writers.

## *Chapter Ten*

### **The Scope and Sequence of Word Study**

#### **Understanding the Phonics Lessons Curriculum:**

A key component of the balanced literacy model is word study. We know that efficient readers and writers are able to take words apart in a systematic fashion. We know they can read and write many words automatically. The Ann Arbor Public Schools uses the *Phonics Lessons* curriculum in grades K-2. This program, written by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, lays the foundation for children to become flexible and efficient word solvers. The Phonics Lessons curriculum is based on nine categories of learning. Each of the nine categories is taught through brief focused whole group mini-lessons with an opportunity to apply the learning in a small group setting facilitated by the classroom teacher. These nine categories provide a scope and sequence of word study in the K-2 classroom.

**Early Literacy Concepts:** The beginning kindergartner learns to distinguish between print and pictures, and learns about directionality in print.

**Phonological Awareness and Phonemic Awareness:** These lessons focus on hearing sounds in words and distinguishing sounds in words.

**Letter Knowledge:** Children learn to name and notice features of letters. In first grade children learn to write letters efficiently. These lessons compliment the handwriting program.

**Letter/Sound Relationships:** Children learn to link letters and sounds in kindergarten. As they progress in their literacy journey, they learn more complex associations including letter clusters, and that more than one letter can represent a sound.

**Spelling Patterns:** Children learn to identify common spelling patterns, and initial strategies for decoding words.

**High Frequency Words:** Various activities help children learn to read and write many words fast and efficiently. These activities such as “buddy study” promote rapid, meaningful spelling skills.

**Word Meaning:** Children learn vocabulary related to concepts such as number words and colors in kindergarten, Older students learn that words have multiple meanings. They study homophones, synonyms and antonyms.

**Word Structure:** Children learn underlying rules for understanding compound words, contractions, plurals, prefixes, possessives and abbreviations.

**Word Solving Actions:** Children learn some of the complex “in the head” strategies that efficient readers use to solve words quickly as they read.

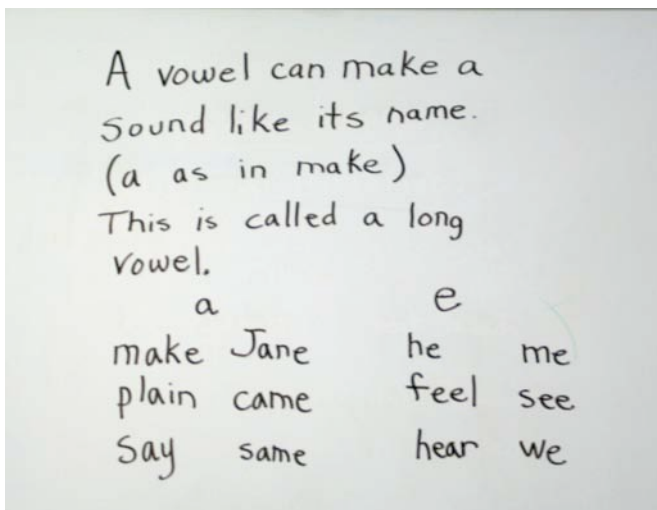


Balanced literacy classrooms begin their Reading Workshop with a phonics mini-lesson. As the teacher works with small groups of readers with similar needs in guided reading, the rest of the class is engaged in other meaningful literacy work in classroom centers. One center provides an opportunity for the children to apply what they have learned in the mini-lesson.

### **Building Vocabulary and Word Solving Skills:**

As the beginning reader begins to control the reading process, he must become efficient at decoding unknown words. We know that efficient readers process many systems of information seemingly without effort or conscious thought. Readers use context and their understanding of English and how sentences are structured to anticipate and decode most words “on the run”. When meaning breaks down, the efficient reader stops to look at the word more closely. He notices features of the word such as prefixes, suffixes, and word parts that may be familiar. He might reread the sentence to gain more information about context to help him narrow the focus of his guess.

How then, do we help children learn “in the head strategies” that efficient readers use? The answer lies in word study.



Through our Phonics Lessons curriculum, children are taught specific systematic ways to approach words. Through practice in solving words, and learning how words work, children are able to apply these skills when encountering unknown words in text. The skilled teacher uses specific, precise language to scaffold young readers as they begin to apply these word-solving strategies. This explicit instruction must be a part of daily literacy teaching and learning.

Through the understanding of the child's zone of proximal development, the teacher decides how much prompting a reader needs to solve the word. The teacher's language reflects enough of a prompt to guide the child to use what he knows, but not so much help that the student doesn't have an opportunity to "work" and wrestle with practicing these new skills.

The young reader learns vocabulary through his discussions both in the text introduction in a guided reading lesson, and in the discussion after reading the text. The skilled teacher uses the new word multiple times throughout the day in as many contexts as possible. These "echoes" of teaching make it easier for the child to remember the meaning of the new word. The young reader also learns vocabulary through whole group experiences in shared reading and read-alouds. He has an opportunity to share his understanding of the word during class discussions. During writer's workshop, mini-lessons focus on using powerful and exciting words to make the message clearer and more interesting to the reader. Young writers learn to select words carefully to enhance their writing.

### **Spelling Instruction that is Individualized and Integrated** *The Five-Day Buddy Study System*

Spelling instruction must be connected to the needs of the learner. Lists that are compiled for whole class memorization, will not meet the needs of individual learners. Children within a classroom vary in their accumulation of knowledge of individual words and of generative spelling patterns.

Students are also at varying places in their "need to know". An effective spelling program differentiates for all learners and especially for students with special needs or students learning the English language. Modifying the "length" of a spelling list is not necessarily sufficient. We learn to spell words as we become interested in using them. Our need to spell various words often emerges in the context of our own writing process. A teacher may not need to spell the word metacognition until they are completing academic work or reporting on student progress. As the teacher needs to use the word in her written communication, she establishes the motivation and purpose for memorization.

The development of spelling proficiency is engendered by seeing and experiencing encoded language many, many times and by attaching the knowledge of patterns and idiosyncratic spellings to purposeful use of the language. The **Five-Day Buddy Study** program is a system that provides for both learning experiences. The structure begins with pairing students at similar skill or proficiency levels. They then engage as partners in a series of activities described below:

#### **Day One: Choose, Write Build**

On day one of the instructional cycle, the teacher presents a mini-lesson which teaches a spelling concept or pattern. Using 3 x 5 note cards, students pick four or five of these words to work with for the week. They also use four or five words that the teacher has helped them to identify from their "words to learn" list kept in a writing folder. These are

words that they have misspelled in their daily work. Since the students are attempting to use them in their writing, they are ready to learn to spell them correctly.

As students choose their words, they submit their list for teacher approval. The teacher makes sure that their words are spelled correctly and that the words are appropriate or “just right” for the learner. Students then build the words with magnetic letters.

### **Day Two: Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check**

In this activity, students use specialized work sheets and folders to go through a series of repetitions of each word wherein they look at the word, say the word, cover the word and attempt to spell it correctly, and then check to see if they were successful. This allows the child to “process” the word in a visual, auditory and kinesthetic manner. Multiple strategies for learning ensures different learning styles are engaged.

### **Day Three: Buddy Check**

Students who have been instructionally paired give each other a practice test. They identify words that they have misspelled and talk with each other about strategies for remembering the correct spelling. They then build any misspelled words with magnetic letters.

### **Day Four: Making Connections**

This is perhaps the most important day of the cycle. Using the words from their personal lists, and working with their assigned partners. Students generate words that are “connected” to their weekly lists. It may be as simple as “words that begin or end like” or a connection such as “words using the same consonant digraph”. This work is not intended to be corrected. Rather, it is an inquiry-based activity which helps the child see the broad application of spelling principals across written language.

### **Day Five: Final Test**

Student partners give each other a final test. The test is turned into the teacher for correction. Any words which the child has not spelled correctly are added to the next week’s subsequent list.

This system, when applied properly, enables the teacher to differentiate spelling instruction to the needs of the learner. This process recognizes the importance of differentiating spelling for special needs and/or students for whom English is not a first language. It also allows the teacher to construct an atmosphere of accountability. Since words that are misspelled in daily work are placed on the “words to learn” list and become part of the learning system, students soon understand that the purpose of spelling proficiency (and spelling instruction) is to facilitate their written communication.

## **Beginning Morphology Instruction**

We can think of the English language as a system of four languages. Elements from Anglo-Saxon and Germanic origins, Latin, Greek, and French are all embedded in our language. Teaching students in the upper elementary grades about root words and origins is important and necessary.

### **Words of Anglo-Saxon or Germanic Origin**

Words that come from Anglo-Saxon or Germanic origins, tend to be short. They are often names of common things. They often have silent letters, vowel teams and use the letter w.

*Examples of Words with Anglo-Saxon or Germanic Origins:*

run                      sun                      knee                      night                      boat                      watch

### **Words of Latin Origin**

Words that come from Latin and romance languages tend to be long words with prefixes and suffixes. Their roots are usually verbs and they often include connectives. The *sh* sound is spelled with *ci*, *ti*, or *si*. There are seldom vowel teams in these words. Long vowel sounds tend to be generated by the vowel-consonant-*e* pattern.

*Examples of Words of Latin Origin:*

insomnia                      inspiration                      monument                      irregular  
reelect                      experiment                      regulate                      education

Students in late elementary and early middle school can be taught meaning-bound roots of Latin origin as well as the way that affixes affect these roots. This instruction will equip them as readers to deal with increasing levels of difficulty and length of content area text.

### **Words of Greek Origin**

Words with Greek elements tend to be scientific, medical, or technical words. The *f* sound in these words is spelled with a *ph* and the *k* sound is spelled with a *ch*. *Th* (never found in Latin words) and *x* are commonly found in the initial letter position. Silent letters occur in such combinations as *ps* and *pn*. Words often end in *ic* and *ac*. Words are often formed by combining two roots (usually nouns) with a connective *o* between them.

*Examples of Words of Greek Origin:*

cardiac                      photograph                      psychology                      geography  
neurology                      sophomore                      technology                      architect

These words and principles can be taught to students in the latter middle school grades as content area text frequently includes them.

### **Words of French Origin**

Words with French elements tend to be words for socially sophisticated topics such as wines, fashion, religion, warfare, sports, and cuisine. The *sh* is spelled with a *ch* and the *oo* sound is spelled *ou*. Silent letters and generally difficult spellings make these a nightmare for dyslexic students.

#### *Examples of Words of French Origin:*

beige	rouge	chardonnay	chablis	chateau
lieutenant	chef	brochure	regime	avalanche

We can see a scope and sequence of sorts. The early words that students learn as they develop an effective reading and writing process tend to be of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic origin. In the late elementary and early middle school years it is important to build an understanding of Latin and then Greek elements in order to facilitate comprehension of content text. A reader of classic literature will need some awareness of words of French origin; this instruction can occur during the high school years.

The Phonics Lessons and Word Study curriculum that is used in the Ann Arbor Public Schools provides mini-lesson models for Anglo-Saxon and Latin and Greek words in the word study portion of the balanced literacy framework. These lessons should be taught as part of a comprehensive, effective literacy framework.

## Chapter Eleven

### *The Reading Intervention Program: A Second-Tiered Intervention for Primary Level Learners*

For eighty percent of children in our classrooms, the model of Balanced Literacy with all of its components will result in children who are successful, self-extending readers. Successful readers can problem solve while reading, and are actively making meaning while doing so. Some children, however, need additional support in order to achieve this goal. It is for this reason that Ann Arbor Public Schools has developed a three-tiered approach to reading instruction.

Tier one, the district's core curriculum, is the classroom setting in which the child learns to read. There are multiple opportunities each day to engage in text, in whole group settings, small group settings, and individual settings. Approximately eighty percent of our children are successful with a Tier 1 opportunity.

For those twenty percent of children in grades K-2 who find reading more difficult, there is a second tier of support. This Tier Two program is called Reading Intervention. Reading Intervention takes place five days per week. It consists of thirty minutes per day of direct instruction in groups of three to five. Children spend time rereading previous texts, writing about texts, reading texts at both their instructional level and independent level, and ten minutes per day of specific word work and phonics lesson instruction. With Reading Intervention, an additional ten to fifteen percent of our children become successful, self-extending readers. Reading Intervention supplements – not supplants – the core classroom teaching.

For the remaining five to ten percent of learners who continue to experience significant difficulty in learning to read, an additional level of support, or a third tier is offered. The method of instruction selected and used is carefully chosen after additional assessments of the child's learning style. The student may be struggling due to traumatic or neurological causes. A team assessment and/or evaluation is typically helpful.

### *Working with ELL Students: Good Teaching for Second Language Learners*

Good literacy teaching is effective for all learners. We would be well served to refer to our literacy framework as a literacy *and language* framework because, while good literacy instruction addresses the needs of all learners, it particularly addresses the needs of English Language Learners.

When considering the needs of ELL students, the effective literacy teacher is careful to set up his or her classroom in an inclusive fashion. The teacher fosters a climate of acceptance in which all learners, but particularly those who are building proficiency with the English language, feel invited to take risks.

The teacher models and promotes a culture in which all students are expected to read, write, speak, and listen, and in which all approximations toward these outcomes are

valued and rewarded. In the balanced literacy classroom there are not “right” or “wrong” answers.

As with all other students, it is important for the effective literacy teachers to understand the strengths and needs of each learner. Assessment is ubiquitous and the basis for all instructional decisions. It occurs on the informal level throughout the day and formally in a frequent and systematic fashion. It is ongoing and embedded in all instruction.

The teacher seeks to identify the spoken language patterns that the child has under control and to extend those patterns through social interactions as well as conversational structures during shared/guided reading and writing.

Another important opportunity for assessing and extending the learning of spoken language patterns is during conferring conversations related to independent reading and writing. The running record provides a wealth of information about the students’ language, patterns, vocabulary, and life experiences.

The scaffolded nature of balanced literacy instruction is useful for the English Language Learner. Through read-alouds, the teacher is able to make cross-cultural connections, model fluency and expression, and check for developing comprehension. Through shared reading, the teacher is able to model and teach for comprehension strategies. Through choral reading the teacher is able to “level the playing field” for ELL students. The rhythm and rhyme of the English language help a student’s syntactical and semantic understanding of text.

In guided reading, the teacher makes use of the text-introduction included in each lesson in order to build vocabulary and prior knowledge that are necessary to understanding of the text. The effective literacy teacher also includes rich conversation in each guided reading lesson in order to extend the knowledge and reading skill of each student and/or reference aspects of a child’s cultural or experiential background.

As we consider the needs of English Language Learners, it is important to realize that the balanced literacy classroom is a highly effective model for developing social and academic language proficiency. Literacy and English language development go hand in hand for all students, particularly for those students from non-majority language groups.

### **The Supplementary Nature of Intervention**

When providing intervention it is essential to remember that all successful intervention works in conjunction with good classroom teaching. Intervention is always a value-added component of instruction.

Let’s revisit the notion of a three-tiered system in order to think systemically about instruction and intervention. In a three-tiered system, all instruction is considered an “intervention”. In a three-tiered literacy system of instruction, the interventions are intended to prevent the outcome of illiteracy.

The **first tier** of intervention would be considered the core curriculum of the school district and should engender success for a minimum of eighty percent of the general population. In the Ann Arbor Public Schools, the core curriculum is balanced literacy. This tier one “intervention” is currently successful at a rate exceeding ninety percent of the general population as measured by state reading test scores.

The **second tier** of intervention is our Reading Intervention program. This intervention always *supplements* daily balanced literacy instruction. In other words, students who have not been successful with the core curriculum are given daily phonics and guided reading lessons *in addition* to that which they receive daily in the classroom. An effective second tier of intervention should gain success for another 10 to 15% of the target population. Tier two interventions are short term in nature.

Title I, ESL and other tutorial supports may be effective Tier 2 programs if these supplemental services reinforce Tier 1 reading/writing strategies.

Finally, for students who are still not succeeding, a **third tier** if intervention is in place. This may be a multi-sensory, orthographic, or sequential phonetic “over-learning” curriculum. It may be a combination of two or even three of the above.

Successful intervention occurs when instruction is added to good classroom practice. In order to be successful, all intervention must be supplemental in nature.

## Chapter Twelve

### Using Literacy Teams to Support Effective Literacy Instruction for all Learners

Successful curriculum alignment is about more than curriculum. A successful implementation of a balanced literacy curriculum is also comprehensive school reform.

By its very nature, balanced literacy is a new way of thinking about students and instruction for many schools. The focus of decision-making shifts from an exclusive use of a prescribed scope and sequence, to an understanding of instructional aims that is informed by the needs of the learner and relies on continuous and embedded assessment. The objectives are no less clear or accountable than in programs with scripted lessons and regimented timelines.

The workshop model is constructivist in nature. It is very different from the way that many teachers have previously taught. Explicit instruction is limited and highly focused. Students have a far greater degree of independence and need to be trained in routine and procedure. Whole group instruction exists but in a much more limited fashion and teaching is continually differentiated to the small groups and individuals.

In order to move effectively to a balanced literacy implementation, it is important to form building based literacy teams. The literacy team is comprised of grade level teachers, special education and other ancillary staff, and the principal. Its members must be committed to implementing best instructional practice and comfortable with the change process. The literacy team works to attain the following goals:

- To function as a change agent in whole school reform.
- To develop and reinforce shared understanding of effective instructional practice.
- To work to facilitate implementation of effective instructional practices.
- To identify and manage resources for effective literacy instruction.
- To work with principal and staff to identify and respond to achievement trends.
- To facilitate communication with parents and families.

Literacy teams should have regularly scheduled meetings that begin and end on time. They should have a chairperson or facilitator for each meeting. Ideally, this task rotates among members of the team. An agenda should be printed for each meeting and a recorder should take notes. Most importantly, as the literacy team makes decisions about the things that they will do to achieve their goals, they should assign specific people to accomplish specific tasks and they should record the outcome of each plan.

Some tasks that the literacy team could assume are:

- Developing and implementing a family literacy night
- Organizing and maintaining a book room
- Scheduling and providing brief book talks around professional text at staff meetings

As the team matures in its function and purpose it can provide more in-depth guidance and leadership to staff by doing things like:

- Organizing cross-classroom visitations.
- Setting up coaching schedules.
- Working with the principal to understand and respond to achievement trends.
- Analyzing building data and student work samples.

It is important to remember that effective balanced literacy reforms the culture of the schoolhouse. Implementing balanced literacy can focus the priorities of a local school or school system toward an equitable and guaranteed curriculum while facilitating high literacy achievement for all students. Literacy teams are an important and effective tool in transforming instruction and the school culture.

