Carmel Central School District

K - 4

Balanced Literacy Administrator/Teacher Handbook

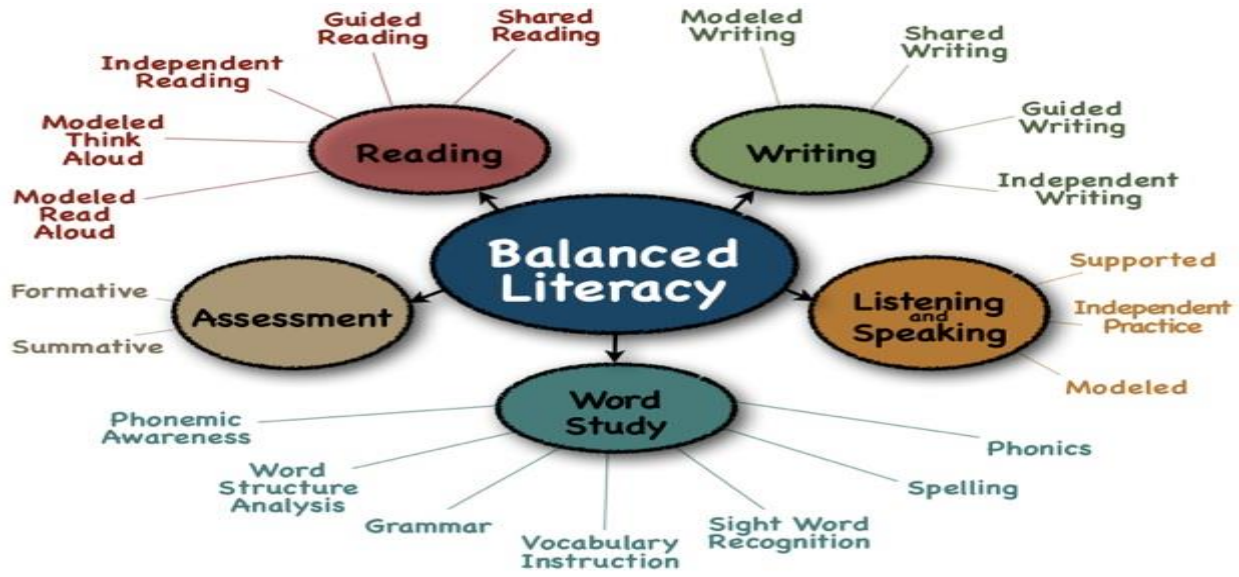
Effective Literacy Instruction:
A Balanced Literacy Approach

OUR MISSION

The Carmel Central School District educates the whole student through partnerships to become lifelong learners in an ever-changing world.

There is no greater gift to give a child than to teach that child to love reading and writing. Literacy unlocks a world of opportunity for students. We are faced with a tremendous opportunity to teach our students to become literate global thinkers. The goal of our work is to ensure the preparation of our students for any reading or writing task they will face or set themselves. We want them to be life-long, confident readers and writers that can show agency and independence in their future. This is our mission, this is our challenge and this is our work.

In Carmel Central School District, we believe in providing a Balanced Literacy Approach. Balanced Literacy is a methodology that integrates various modalities of literacy instruction aimed to guide students towards proficiency and lifelong learning. The five components include Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, Word Study and Assessment.



We also know that the research on volume of reading with high comprehension will move students to a higher text complexity. The amount of time reading is the best predictor for reading achievement. In Carmel, we understand the importance of teaching the reading basics early to flourish in school. We have classrooms with stimulating fiction and non-fiction texts, rich student conversations, visual displays of skills and on-going assessments. This handbook highlights the key components and best practices for balanced literacy instruction.

Acknowledgement: Thank you to Arlington and Peekskill School Districts for sharing their literacy handbook document.

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GETTING STARTED WITH BALANCED LITERACY

The Readers Workshop/Literacy Block and Writers Workshop/Writing Block sections of the handbook are not intended to provide teachers with everything they need to know to support a highly developed Readers and Writer's Workshop. It is a place to get acquainted with some of the components. Extensive professional reading and professional learning are required to become a master teacher of the Readers and Writers Workshop Model.

1) Readers Workshop/ Literacy Block

Every student K-4 must have at minimum a 90-minute literacy block daily. In addition, the 30-minute intervention period for all on level and below level students provides additional time for explicit instruction, literature circles, and writing experiences. It is important to understand that literacy continues throughout the day in all content and special area subjects in these grades as well. Students should be taught in a developmentally appropriate manner. Kindergarten students will learn to read and write at their developmental level by the end of the year.

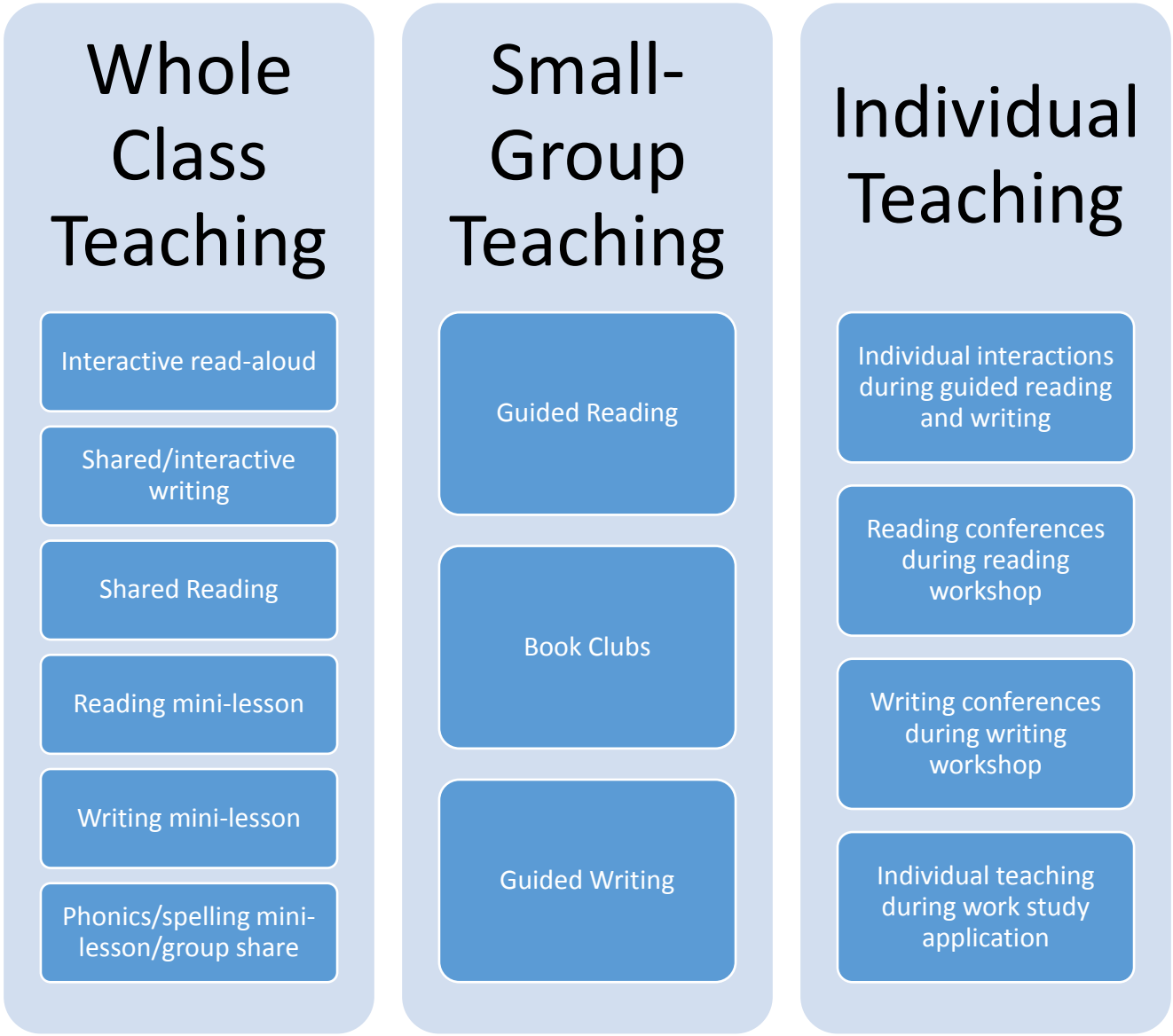
Some of the components of balanced literacy will fit perfectly into 90 minutes some days. Other days, you may find that word study fits best in the intervention period or that immediately after lunch is a good time for shared reading. You will have to make some sound instructional decisions based on your class schedule and your class needs. Work with your literacy leaders and your colleagues to create how the components of the block fit and flow.

2) The Workshop Model

Each component of a Balanced Literacy approach works to support the others. When taught with a high level of skill, it can be difficult to identify when one ends and another begins. Integration will be the highest form of development in this work. Readers Workshop (aka Literacy Block) and Writers Workshop (aka Writing Block or Period) will overlap as reading and writing are integral to instruction.

Classroom Literacy Instruction

READING AND WRITING



WORD STUDY

(Incorporated in reading and writing lessons, as well as all content lessons)

- Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Sight Words
- Editing (Grammar, Spelling, Convention)
- Vocabulary Development
- Handwriting

3) Organizing My Classroom to Support Balanced Literacy

In well-designed classrooms, the physical space is critical to the success of the workshop model. Some important considerations include:

- There are well-defined areas for whole group, small group, and independent work.
- Your classroom library is inviting and well organized (leveled) and culturally diverse. Books are easy to find and to return.
- There are clearly defined places for students to store and to retrieve their tools (writing folders, texts for various groupings, book boxes, pens/pencils/paper, etc.)
- There is wall space set aside for the following key supports:
    - Word Wall
    - Daily Schedule
    - "I can" statements or learning targets
    - Student work is displayed
    - Anchor charts (to be developed as you work)

Whole group work is best established away from the path to the classroom door. You will want your students to be focused on you and the shared text, while you have a line of sight to the guest at the door. It is important for the entire school to minimize disruptions during the instructional day. E.g. announcements

- **Example:** You would want an easel, chart paper, markers, highlighter tape, pointers, large pocket chart/sentence strips, a way to record anecdotal notes, texts for the day. These items will be different at different grade levels. It is imperative that you are prepared to teach and will not need to be searching for your tools while students are waiting to learn.

Small group work needs to occur in a place that provides you with complete visibility of all areas of the classroom AND within arm's reach of all the materials you will need to teach the small group lesson. Think carefully about where you position this teaching and what you will need easily accessible in this location.

- **Example Guided:** You would want to have arm's length access to the texts for each group that day, anecdotal

note-taking materials, various markers, small dry erase boards, sentence strips, letter tiles/magnet letters/tray, small pocket chart, sticky notes, highlighters, etc. These items will be different at different grade levels. It is imperative that you are prepared to teach and will not need to be searching for your tools while students are waiting to learn.

4) How can I get to know my students as readers/writers?

Many teachers use student surveys, read previous grade level reading logs and conduct short reading conferences to get to know their students interests and self-perceptions. The use of the District reading benchmarks and assessments including DRA2 and AimsWeb Plus will assist in providing a diagnostic lens into what skills and strategies the reader has internalized, which in turn, provides a basis for instructional planning.

ALL ABOUT ASSESSMENT

1) What is the purpose of DRA2 and Writing Prompts?

Using a common lens – the leveled benchmark books of the DRA2 – teachers observe, record and analyze a student's reading behaviors. Based upon the data collection (AimsWeb Plus), teachers plan for whole group, small group and individualized reading instruction throughout the day.

District Writing Pre and Post Assessment will provide an opportunity for teachers to gather information about what students already know about being an effective writer. These pieces of student writing will be scored using a common rubric.

2) What is the link between assessment and instruction?

The link between assessment and instruction is critical to the success of teaching and learning in every classroom, K-12. As students develop in their reading and writing throughout the year, teachers must make instructional decisions that continue to reflect the changing needs of their students. At times, this requires moving forward and skipping some areas already well understood and at other times, it requires teachers to slow down and re-teach a skill or strategy through a different modality to allow students to internalize the concept.

Because there is an underlying assumption that students will almost always be in different places with their understanding of any skill, strategy or concept, the teacher's ability to adjust instruction accordingly – including the differentiated grouping of students for learning – is critical to ensuring that each student meets with success at their grade and moves forward ready to learn in the subsequent grades and beyond.

3) What role does assessment play during the school year?

Assessment occurs in well-established classrooms all of the time. Teachers assess student learning formally and informally and for different purposes – diagnostic, formative, and summative. Assessment takes many forms from the observations of students by master teachers who record their thoughts through anecdotal notes to the pen and paper or performance assessments that close a unit of study and finally, to the annual NYS ELA testing in grades 3-5.

The continued assessment of student reading and writing occurs during whole group, small group and individual conferences and play a vital role in helping teachers plan subsequent instruction and shift students fluidly for small group work.

READERS WORKSHOP

1) What is a mini-lesson?

Mini-lessons are targeted, powerful opportunities for teachers to deliver information in whole or small group work. By using our assessment information to drive the planning of mini-lessons, we can make this 10-15 lesson an exceptional vehicle for literacy learning based upon student needs. In general, mini-lessons fall into 3 specific categories – **some examples include**:

Management Mini-Lessons

- Selecting and returning books
- Caring for your reading journal
- Choosing just-right books
- Sharing a book in small group work
- Writing a letter in your response journal
- Independent reading routines/expectations

Strategy and Skills Mini-Lessons

- Using context to figure out new words
- Recognizing compound words
- Recognizing and using punctuation
- Reading with phrasing, espression
- Adjusting reading speed
- Summarizing a text
- Locating evidence to support thinking
- Using an index or a glossary
- Making connections to your personal experiences
- Comparing this text and others with similar topics, plots, or characters
- Writing a quality response to a book
- Responding to an assigned topic for writing about reading
- Monitoring Comprehension

Literary Analysis Mini-Lessons

- Getting to know different genres
- Noticing features of a text format and how format is related to meaning
- Connecting prologues and epilogues
- Identifying major and minor characters
- Identifying how authors make characters believable
- Identifying setting and its significance to story
- Noticing how an author uses time
- Identifying the message or theme of the book
- Learning about books in a series

Skills and strategies are not the same. "**Skills** are the more mechanical aspects of reading: recognizing words, monitoring accuracy, using punctuation, etc. **Strategies** are 'in the head' processes that readers employ as they construct meaning from print." Fountas and Pinnell, 2001

2) What is 'accountable talk'?

There are natural stopping points along the way in any engaging read aloud. During these moments, teachers utilize what has become known as 'accountable talk' – a time when teachers engage students in focused chats through routines such as "turn and talk", "knee to knee, eye to eye", "think, pair, share", etc.

As teachers, we expect that student 'talk' focuses on some aspect of the text whether directed by a specific prompt or just a 'what do you wonder about right now?' experience. The talk is 'accountable' because it focuses on a text related topic. There are techniques to help students focus on the text and stay on task with a partner.

One of the most productive tools, once we have 'fish-bowled' (explicitly modeled) accountable talk for our students is to ask the student what their partner shared in the brief discussion ('active listening'). This forces each student to be both a listener and a contributor in the 'accountable' chat.

3) Read Alouds

This component of the balanced literacy framework is teacher directed. We often and this is good practice, select texts that are above the readability of our class – students' listening levels are higher than their reading levels. Read alouds fulfill many important purposes in the development of critical readers at any age. These include:

- Fostering a love of reading
- Modeling how proficient readers process text
- Increasing/improving student vocabulary and listening skills
- Providing a 'shared text' for conversation
- Modeling fluent reading

Read aloud time is focused on talk – this lays the foundation for ALL conversations about texts that you may hope to have your students engage in at other times – book clubs, partnerships, conferences with you, etc. The texts utilized in our ELA curriculum can be used for read aloud or for shared reading depending on the instructional reading level of your students.

4) Shared Reading

The premise of shared reading is the 'shared' part – all eyes are on the same print. Most often that print is a big book, poem on chart paper, text on an overhead, doc camera or interactive white board. Shared reading in our ELA curriculum is often a text that each student possesses, e.g. Rain School (Grade 3). Shared Reading is controlled by the teacher – you are using this print to model/teach something – teacher and student may read the piece together.

Shared reading can be utilized to teach many of the concepts about print, phonics and phonemic awareness lessons that are critical in building the skills of our emergent readers. However, Shared Reading is just as appropriate at the upper elementary levels where it could be used through a text excerpt on an overhead/interactive whiteboard. The teacher is using Shared Reading to model a strategy that students are acquiring.

5) Guided Reading (focus on miscue or strategy instruction)

How do I conduct an effective Guided Reading group?

- Group size should be limited to no more than 6 students. This allows the teacher to closely attend to the reading of individual students in the group setting.
- First determine the goal or focus of your lesson, and then select a text that will support that goal.
- Set the goal of the small group lesson with your students.
- Start together as a group, moving the students toward the opportunity to try it on their own.
- End the session by reminding students what they need to continue to work on in their independent reading.

Joanna Hindley, 2005

How are guided reading groups formed?

Assessment of individual students guides the formation of dynamic, fluid guided reading groups, which are intended to shift membership frequently and are based upon student needs and instructional level text. Common features of powerful guided reading opportunities for students include the following:

- Students are grouped based on similar reading needs and similar instructional levels of text
- Teachers introduce the text, provide scaffolded support during the reading and probe for text comprehension after reading
- Each student reads the whole text
- Groups change frequently based on the results of formal and informal assessment data gathered through everyday teaching and established benchmarking
- Emphasis is on reading many books along a gradient of increasing complexity and challenge

How do I incorporate flexible grouping?

We assemble guided reading groups because a group of students require extra practice with a particular skill or strategy. Guided reading groups are often formed with both high ability and low achieving readers who still need to acquire a very specific skill or strategy. Groups may also be formed by text level. Examples of flexible grouping for guided reading could include:

- Fluency work
- Word work
- Decoding multisyllabic words
- Using context clues to figure out new words
- Story sequencing
- Retelling
- Forming opinions about the reading
- Developing stronger journal responses

Remember to use your anecdotal notes from whole group, small group and conferencing along with formal assessment data to continuously reflect on the make-up of your guided reading groups.

Guided reading is intended to be a short, focused session – not longer than 20 minutes per group, groups no larger than 6 students. Scheduling these across the week should have you working with your neediest readers every day (these students are ideally also seeing a Tier 2 specialist with whom you are planning a collaborative teaching focus).

6) Literature Circles/Book Clubs

Literature circles or book clubs are small groups of students formed around the selection of a text they wish to read. The purpose of a circle/club is to encourage, support and scaffold discussion, response and reflection around a text.

Through shared conversations with their peers, students deepen and expand their understanding and appreciation for a common text. Discussion centers on students' personal responses to the text and through the entry point of events, characters, and

craft. Students often question and challenge one another's responses to the shared story.

How do I organize for book clubs/partner reading?

Choosing texts

- Texts should be chosen at a variety of reading levels appropriate to the students in your classroom
- Texts should be complex enough to provide opportunity for rich discussion
- Over time, texts should represent diverse genres, authors, formats, world
- perspectives, student interests

Forming Groups

- Plan on having the same number of circles/clubs as you have guided reading groups with a similar number of students (max of 6) in each group
- Ideally, students should be permitted to self-select the text of their choice following your brief 'book talk' for each text provided for the circle/club you are launching

What is the teacher's role in book clubs?

Your ultimate role in book clubs is that of an observer, listening in on the conversations of your students and gathering assessment data that will inform your whole group, small group and individual conversations. At the beginning of this process, you may find the need to do some modeling about process or behaviors. You may also find that there are times when you may need to re-direct a group that drifts off focus in the conversation. On occasion, a teacher may wish to participate in a circle as a full member. Should you choose to do so, you should be prepared to keep up with the reading and prepare your role and/or notes just as you would expect your students to do for the circle.

How do I assess book clubs?

The class develops a schedule for when a text is to be completed and shared out. Within this 'deadline' students may be asked to accomplish a number of things, all of which can provide assessment opportunities for teachers. First, there is 'accountable' talk within the group. You may wish to apply a rubric for this. Some teachers ask their students to keep their role preparations in a reader's notebook – these would be available for assessment.

7) Independent Reading

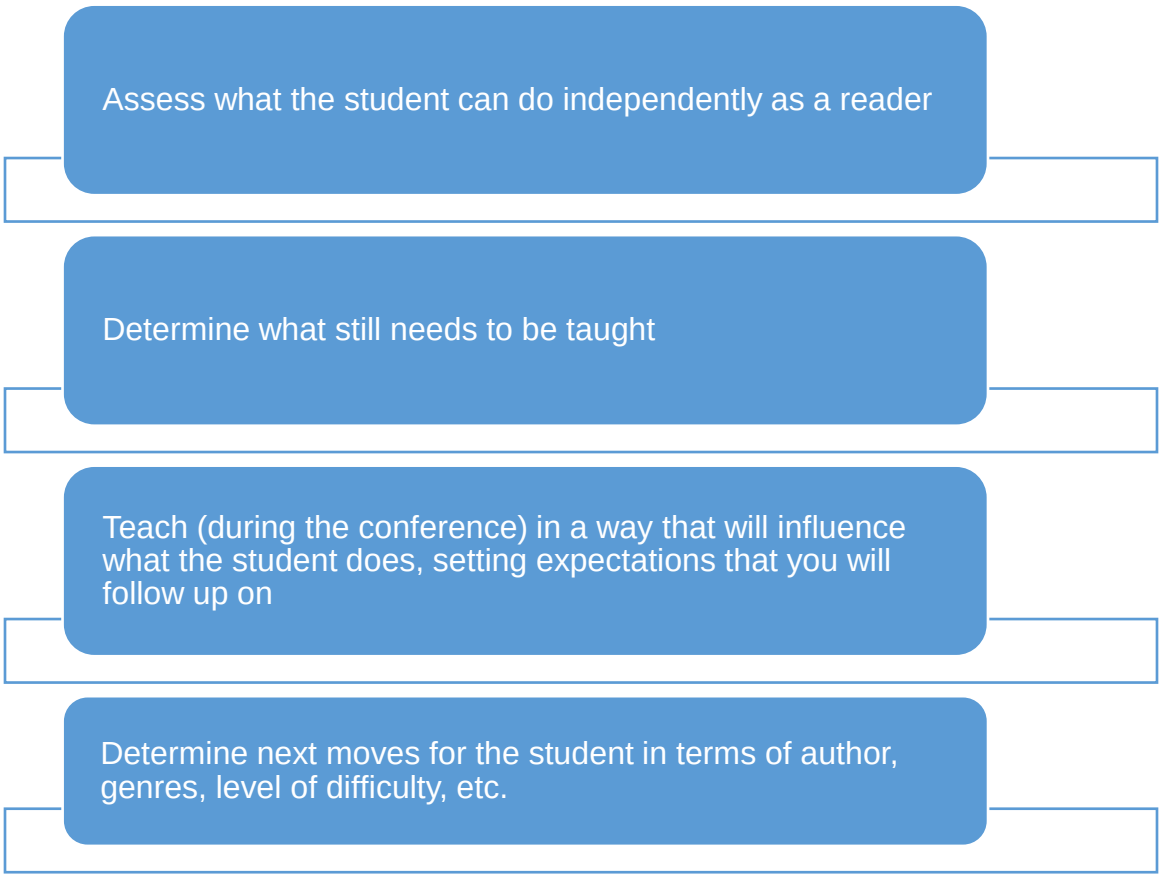
Why incorporate Independent Reading?

Encouraging students to read for many purposes, enjoyment, instruction, information, etc. Learning to choose a book involves a great deal of meta-cognition on the part of our students. They must determine what type of book they like to read, or a favorite author. They must determine if the text they want to read is

accessible to them. It is fairly common practice to have students maintain a reading response journal that involves a letter exchange between student and teacher relative to the current independent text. Through the journal, students are expected to provide the teacher with a deep understanding of their current reading. The teacher need not know the book under discussion but certainly knows the appropriate questions to pose to help push the student to deeper understandings of and across texts, characters, theme, etc.

What does a conference look like?

A reading conference is a 1:1 conversation between the student and the teacher most usually around an independently selected text. During a typical conference, the teacher seeks to accomplish several things:



Teachers keep notes on the conversations and findings that occur during a reading conference. Again, these anecdotal notes serve to inform instruction across all groupings in the classroom. In a typical literacy block, teachers should plan to confer with 2-3 students during a session with each conference lasting a few minutes. Beginning year conferences will typically take longer to conduct because teachers are seeking to establish a baseline across many areas of concern with each student.

What are some key questions in the conference?

In the student reading conference, teachers are seeking to determine if students have chosen a text they can read, are applying the strategies taught in whole group lessons, etc. The responsibility is on the student to lead the conversation about the process and the text. In conferences, the student should be doing most of the talking.

Sample guiding questions might include:

- Why did you choose this book?
- What is the story about?
- What do you want me to notice today?
- What are you learning about yourself as a reader in this book?
- What are you going to work on next?

Bear in mind that this is likely the text the student is writing to you about in their reader response journal. It is interesting to note if the student is more capable of in depth analysis orally, in written form or both.

8) Response Journals

Students and teachers engage in a private dialogue about story through the use of Reader Response Journals. Through the art of letter writing, student-to-teacher-to-student, teachers are able to assess deeply a student's comprehension of all aspects of a given text. The teacher uses well developed, open-ended questioning to probe the student's thinking within, beyond and about the story. In this way, it is not necessary for the teacher to have read the text in question. It is the job of the student reader to reveal the text to the teacher by responding to the questions posed and by presenting their thoughts and analysis in the shared dialogue.

Writing in response to reading is an important opportunity to deepen comprehension. As a regularly used element of the workshop there are many reasons for using reader response journals:

- writing about our reading forces us to think more deeply and yet again about the text in an effort to explain it to someone who has not read it
- helps to hold students accountable for their reading
- can provide another assessment opportunity

- slows down the reader who rushes through a book and forces them to think and reflect

What might it look like?

Management of the reader response journals is a teacher decision, but there are some suggested guidelines to consider:

In an average class size of 25 students, you might contemplate having 5 students respond to you each day. Five letters is a more than manageable task for any teacher. Most teachers have students respond in a marble or spiral notebook. After many years of using Reader Response Journals effectively, it might be suggested that a small (1/2 inch) binder is more suitable as a Reader Response Journal. The ease of adding to or taking from, as well as utilizing dividers for different sections makes the use of a binder much more advantageous.

If you choose to use the binder with your students, you are now simply removing the 5 loose-leaf sheets with your letters for each day and returning to school the next morning with 10 sheets of paper – instead of carrying notebooks back and forth. The ultimate choice is up to you and you may certainly find yet another alternative. Whatever method you choose for the letters, it is highly recommended that you employ response journals and develop mini-lessons for powerful letters.

How do I prepare students to write powerfully in response to text?

"Talk is the rehearsal for writing."

You can take several steps to assure that your reader response experience is everything it can and should be. Consider the following:

- Begin with assessment that helps you guide students to 'just right' books
- Read aloud often and follow/intermingle with deep discussion about text
- Scaffold 'accountable' talk focused on text
- Provide opportunities for students to talk amongst themselves about Read Aloud text often
- Occasionally model and expect student 'jotting' in response to the Read Aloud

"If I can think it, I can say it – if I can say it, I can write it – if I can write it, I can read it"

WRITERS WORKSHOP

1. Types of Writing

➢ Shared Writing

Simply stated, shared writing refers to teacher and students composing a text together. The students will tell you what to write and you scribe their words on paper or typing (displayed on an interactive board, etc.). Through the shared writing experience, teacher and students work through the conventions of print, spelling and grammar in an authentic way that causes students to understand the "rules" and apply them to a meaningful writing experience, simultaneously.

With older students, a teacher might be modeling or sharing a composition of their own and together the group works through the piece to apply the rules of composition, revision and/or editing in context Again, the focus is on application of the 'rules' – which moves us beyond simply hearing or memorizing them.

When repeated use of shared writing reveals the application of 'rules' in context, teachers should expect that students apply the same rules to their personal writings.

➢ Interactive Writing

Interactive writing helps students attend to print while using their knowledge of oral language. As young students 'share the pen' with the teacher, they have an opportunity to practice writing the letter and words they know and to do some problem solving on words they are still coming to know.

Interactive Writing is an excellent way to model the Concepts of Print – directionality, one-to-one correspondence - and the conventions of writing – capitalization, punctuation, etc.

It is important to remember that like Shared Writing, Interactive Writing is yet another authentic experience for students to find themselves engaged in the learning and application of important writing and reading strategies and skills.

➢ *Guided Writing*

Think about 'guided reading' – a small group of students gathered around a common need. Same idea only it's writing, not reading. The groups are formed based upon your assessment of student writing – formally through the benchmarks and informally through your conferencing with students.

The instructional planning also mirrors a guided reading lesson in the sense of developing a targeted skill/strategy and then having a before, during and after process for student work. As with guided reading, these groups should be fluid with students moving in and out and often belonging to more than one group based upon needs.

➢ *Independent Writing*

Students learn to write by writing. We cannot become adept at writing by listening to teachers talk about good writing or by completing worksheets where we identify parts of speech or the correct usage of a punctuation mark. Simply put, we learn to write by writing every day and often on topics of our own choosing.

It is only through the daily opportunity to write independently that students can employ the work of our mini-lessons to their own thoughts. Independent writing time must be scheduled and valued by teachers. It should also be appropriate in terms of length of time to the age and development of the student. Typically, younger students might start with independent writing in short periods of 15 minutes, gradually increasing to 30 minutes or more over the course of a school year.

Ideally intermediate grade levels should aim to begin the year with 30 minutes devoted to independent writing, gradually increasing writing stamina throughout the year.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE WRITER'S WORKSHOP

➢ *The Writing Process*

A cycle is followed in the process that students become familiar and comfortable with but one that does not necessarily end in publication. Students within a Writers Workshop can often place themselves in one stage of the process or another….

- **Prewriting** – students are still immersed in jotting, listing, etc.
- **Drafting** – an idea has been selected and a first draft is being crafted
- **Revising** – the place where most teaching resides is in the REVISION stage. Here a writer applies a critical lens to the work

- **Editing** – the work of editing is only attempted once the writer has made the final revisions to the content of the piece. Only then is it worthwhile for students to check spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- **Publishing** – Not every piece that is drafted, revised and edited is intended for publication. This is usually the choice of the writer and sometimes the writer and the teacher. Published work is often intended to be shared through a formal process, but not necessarily

➢ *Structure of Writer's Workshop:*

- Mini-lesson
- Independent writing time
- Mid-Workshop Teaching Point
- Conferencing
- Share

What is a mini-lesson?

It has one teaching point, which is usually named explicitly and then demonstrated.

What is a writing conference and how does it inform my instruction?

A writing conference is an opportunity for teacher and student to engage in a deep conversation about where the student is in their writing. Conferencing offers an assessment opportunity and clearly guides teacher decision-making about small and whole group work. Conferences focus the student on a particular strategy or skill that will move their writing forward. Think about the structure as:

- **Ask** – find out how the student's writing is going
- **Look and Decide** – decide what strategy would make sense to teach the student next
- **Teach** – 1:1- on the spot focused writing strategy instruction in this session
- **Record** – teaching point, noting new goals, expectations and accomplishments
- **Plan –** use notes to plan future whole and small strategy group work.

How should I schedule and manage student conferences?

Writing conferences are intended to be brief – not lasting more than 5 minutes with each student. You will be amazed at how long 5 minutes really is – use a timer in the beginning to keep yourself on track and to see just how long you truly have with each student. The intensity of the 1:1 conversation allows for much to be accomplished in these 5 minutes.

In an average class size of 25 and within the 90 + 40 minute literacy allotment of time, you can reasonably expect to conference with all of your students within a two week span of time.That may not sound like a lot of time with each student but it will be as you develop your conferencing skills and as you learn to gather assessment information about students through every available opportunity in the day-to-day routines of your classroom instruction. It is imperative that you keep written records of your conferences. The way in which you choose to do this is entirely personal choice and must work for you or you will not keep it up. These notes are your assessment for groupings, future instruction, student grading, student accountability, etc. Find a method that resonates with you and stick with it.

3. Writing Tools

The tools that our students use for writing change as they move from the formative work in the primary grades to the fluent work of the intermediate grades.

K-2: Students in the early grades most often collect their writing tools and ongoing pieces in a folder. The typical primary folder provides students with an alphabet chart, a personal word list, work that is ongoing and work that has been completed. Additionally, students' daily writing may be collected through the use of a large sketchpad. The spiral binding serves to hold all written work in one place (copies can be made if the writing needs to be removed for any purpose).

3-5: Students in the intermediate grades work primarily in a 'notebook' – marble composition, spiral, etc. At this point as writers, the notebook begins to serve a distinct purpose as a place where writers plan. The notebook no longer just holds 'stories' as it did during the primary years – now it holds 'ideas' as well. These may take many forms from lists, to word associations to sketches. The opening weeks of school can provide many opportunities for the intermediate student to jot down ideas for future stories. The notebook may contain planning pages and drafts.
Appendix: CCSD ELA One Drive writing prompts and rubrics

WORD STUDY

Word Study focuses on helping students learn about how words work – looking for patterns that support continued decoding and encoding of increasingly challenging words. Word Study also focuses on vocabulary development.

The process of becoming competent word solvers develops only when students are actively engaged in the work while reading and writing. To be a word solver, one considers categories of words, not merely spelling rules. Word solvers learn how words relate to one another and use their knowledge of the parts of words to help in solving both pronunciation and meaning in context.

Word Walls are utilized across grades to support automaticity, genre/thematic studies, provide opportunities to see patterns, etc. Words are not added to the Word

Wall arbitrarily but rather after they have been studied and considered appropriately by the students. Students actively engage the Word Wall as they read and write during the school day.

Fountas and Pinnell (2001, p 370) share the following for our consideration with word solving:

Strategies for Solving Words	
By Sound (phonemic strategies)	You can read or write some words by thinking about the sounds (man, hot, bed, hit, cup)
By Look (visual strategies)	You can read or write some words by thinking about the way they look (the, pie)
By Meaning (morphemic strategies)	You can read or write some words by thinking about what they mean (suitcase, two/to/too)
By Connections (linking strategies)	You can use what you know about a word to figure out a new word (tree, my – try; connect, connection)
By Inquiry (research strategies)	You can use reference materials to learn more about words (lists, dictionary, charts, computer programs)

CCSD uses Fundations K-2, as well as readers and writers workshop to incorporate word study skills. Grades 3-4 utilizes the readers/writer's workshop time to teach these skills. Word study incorporates:

Phonemic Awareness: the awareness of words, rhyming words, onsets and rimes(ending part of a word), syllables, and individual sounds (phonemes).

Word Structure Analysis: to break apart words into parts of individual sounds in order to parse them.

Grammar: complex rules by which people can generate an unlimited number of phrases, sentences, and longer texts in that language. Conventional grammar refers to the accepted conventions in a society.

Vocabulary

Sight Word Recognition

Spelling

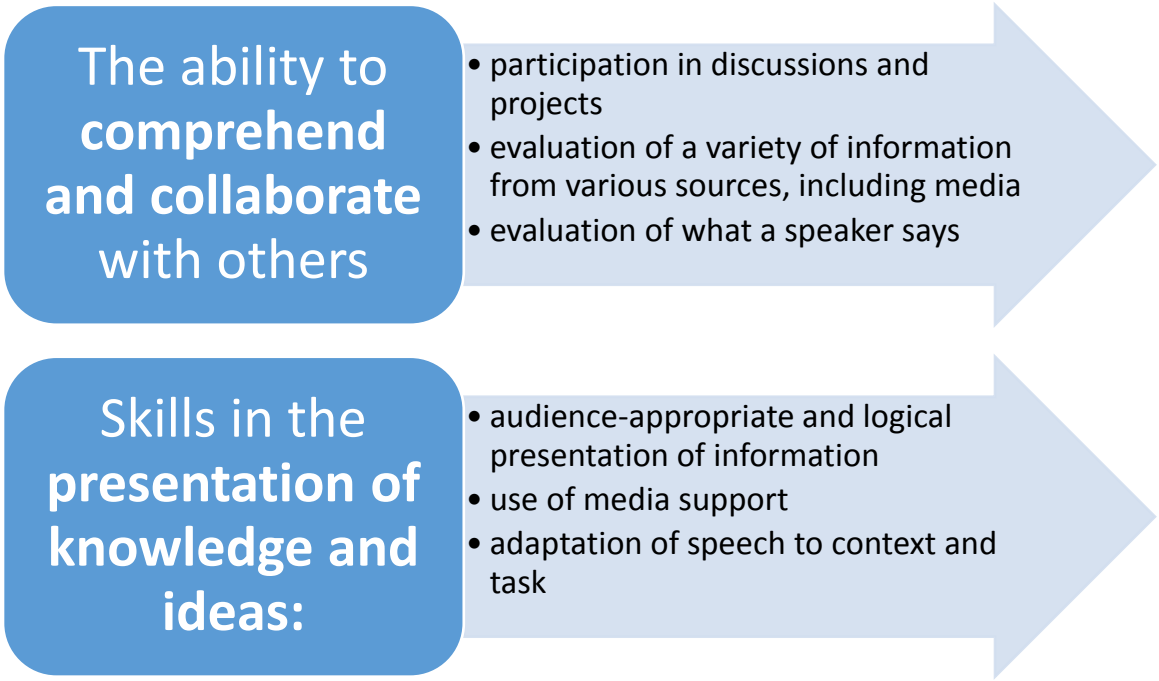
Phonics: the knowledge of letter-sound relationships and how they are used in reading and writing. Teaching phonics refers to helping children acquire this body of knowledge about the oral and written language systems; additionally, teaching phonics helps children use phonics knowledge part of a reading and writing process.

Phonics instruction uses a small portion of body of knowledge that makes up phonetics**.**

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Both speaking and listening are forms of thinking, they allow an emerging thought to be refined through conversation. The better a student's verbal communication skills are the more quickly his or her thoughts about a complex topic can gain clarity and coherence. In other words, we learn to think when we listen and when we speak. The CCLS expect that students gain, evaluate, and present increasingly complex information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking as well as through media.

According to the CCLS, speaking and listening includes two main elements:



The Common Core State Standards emphasize the importance of engaging students in academic discussions in a variety of forms and settings—whole-class, small-group, and one-on-one. Some of these discussions should be formal presentations, but many are the more informal discussions that reflect real life, when students collaborate to answer questions, build understanding, and solve problems.

Strategies for Speaking and Listening in English Language Arts

Collaboration is imperative to gain speaking and listening skills, in large part because it reflects how things happen in the real world. Seldom does a professional work in complete isolation. The very best ideas and inventions come from the

collaboration of various minds to work on a problem. Therefore group work, either in pairs, small groups, or large groups, should be part of every classroom. There are many ways to promote listening and speaking skills in your classroom, such as think-pair-share, debating, and presentations.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Vocabulary has long been correlated with reading comprehension. If students don't understand the words, they will not understand the key points of an article, follow the plot of a story. The vocabulary that is usually emphasized is often discipline-specific, which is important, but will likely appear far less frequently in future texts.
Three general criteria for determining which words to choose for intensive teaching:

1) words needed to fully comprehend the text;
2) words likely to appear in future texts from any discipline
3) words that are part of a word family or semantic network where you can use one word to introduce several

[1]*Hiebert, E. (Ed.), (2009). Reading More, Reading Better: Are American Students Reading Enough of the Right Stuff? New York: Guilford Publications, 2009.*

There are three tiers of words;

- **Tier One words** are the words of everyday speech usually learned in the early grades. They are not considered a challenge to the average native speaker, though English language learners of any age will require support from teachers.

- **Tier Two words** (what the Standards refer to as *general academic words)* are far more likely to appear in written texts than in speech. They appear in all sorts of texts. Tier Two words often represent subtle or precise ways to say relatively simple things. Because Tier Two words are found across many types of texts, they are highly generalizable.

- **Tier Three words** (what the Standards refer to as *domain-specific words)* are specific to a domain or field of study and key to understanding a new concept within a text. Because of their specificity and close ties to content knowledge, Tier Three words are far more common in informational texts than in literature.Recognized as new and "hard" words for most readers, they are

often explicitly defined by the author of a text, repeatedly used, and otherwise heavily scaffolded.

Adapted from Common Core State Standards Appendix A

GLOSSARY OF BALANCED LITERACY TERMS

Close Reading: an interaction that involves observation and interpretation between the reader and the text. It means rereading and reflecting to come to new conclusions and understandings about the ideas that a text sets out.

Gist: the general meaning or purpose of a tex. Summarizing what is happening in the story.

Independent reading level- The level at which the child reads the text with 95% or higher accuracy and excellent or satisfactory comprehension (Levels A-K) or 98% or higher accuracy with excellent or satisfactory comprehension (Levels L-Z).

Instructional reading level- At levels A-K, the level at which the child reads the text with 90-94% accuracy and excellent or satisfactory comprehension; or 95% or higher accuracy and limited comprehension. At levels L-Z, the level at which the child reads the text with 95-97% accuracy and excellent or satisfactory comprehension; or 98% or higher accuracy and limited comprehension.

Interactive read- aloud- The teacher reading aloud to a group of children and inviting them to think and talk about the text before, during and after reading.

Small group reading instruction- The teacher working with children brought together because they are similar enough in reading development to teach in a small group; guided reading.

APPENDIX HELPFUL INFORMATION

LINKS

CCSD ELA Committee 16/17 One Drive
CCSD Grade Level One Drive

Seven Strategies to Teach Students Text Comprehension

The following seven strategies appear to have a firm scientific basis for improving text comprehension:

1. Monitoring comprehension

Students who are good at monitoring their comprehension know when they understand what they read and when they do not. They have strategies to "fix" problems in their understanding as the problems arise Research shows that instruction, even in the early grades, can help students become better at monitoring their comprehension.

Comprehension monitoring instruction teaches students to:

- Be aware of what they do understand
- Identify what they do not understand
- Use appropriate strategies to resolve problems in comprehension

2. Metacognition

Metacognition can be defined as "thinking about thinking." Good readers use metacognitive strategies to think about and have control over their reading. Before reading, they might clarify their purpose for reading and preview the text. During reading, they might monitor their understanding, adjusting their reading speed to fit the difficulty of the text and "fixing" any comprehension problems they have. After reading, they check their understanding of what they read.

Students may use several comprehension monitoring strategies:

- **Identify where the difficulty occurs**
  "I don't understand the second paragraph on page 76."
- **Identify what the difficulty is**
  "I don't get what the author means when she says, 'Arriving in America was a milestone in my grandmother's life.'"
- **Restate the difficult sentence or passage in their own words**
  "Oh, so the author means that coming to America was a very important event in her grandmother's life."
- **Look back through the text**
  "The author talked about Mr. McBride in Chapter 2, but I don't remember much about him. Maybe if I reread that chapter, I can figure out why he's acting this way now."
- **Look forward in the text for information that might help them to resolve the difficulty**
  "The text says, 'Hmm, I don't understand how people can do that…Oh, the next section is called 'Wells.' I'll read this section to see if it tells how they do it."

3. Graphic and semantic organizers (Thinking Maps)

Graphic organizers illustrate concepts and relationships between concepts in a text or using diagrams. Graphic organizers are known by different names, such as maps, webs, graphs, charts, frames, or clusters.

Regardless of the label, graphic organizers can help readers focus on concepts and how they are related to other concepts. Graphic organizers help students read and understand textbooks and picture books.

Graphic organizers can:

- Help students focus on text structure “differences between fiction and nonfiction” as they read
- Provide students with tools they can use to examine and show relationships in a text
- Help students write well-organized summaries of a text

Here are some examples of graphic organizers:

- **Venn-Diagrams**
  Used to compare or contrast information from two sources. For example, comparing two
  Dr. Seuss books.
- **Storyboard/Chain of Events**
  Used to order or sequence events within a text. For example, listing the steps for brushing
  your teeth.
- **Story Map**
  Used to chart the story structure. These can be organized into fiction and nonfiction text
  structures. For example, defining characters, setting, events, problem, resolution in a
  fiction story; however in a nonfiction story, main idea and details would be identified.
- **Cause/Effect**
  Used to illustrate the cause and effects told within a text. For example, staying in the sun
  too long may lead to a painful sunburn.

4. Answering questions

Questions can be effective because they:

- Give students a purpose for reading
- Focus students’ attention on what they are to learn
- Help students to think actively as they read
- Encourage students to monitor their comprehension

- Help students to review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know

The Question-Answer Relationship strategy (QAR) encourages students to learn how to answer questions better. Students are asked to indicate whether the information they used to answer questions about the text was textually explicit information (information that was directly stated in the text), textually implicit information (information that was implied in the text), or information entirely from the student's own background knowledge.

There are four different types of questions:

- **"Right There"**
  Questions found right in the text that ask students to find the one right answer located in one place as a word or a sentence in the passage. (Example: Who is Frog's Friend?
  Answer: Toad)
- **"Think and Search"**
  Questions based on the recall of facts that can be found directly in the text. Answers are typically found in more than one place, thus requiring students to "think" and "search" through the passage to find the answer. (Example: Why was Frog sad? Answer: His friend was leaving.)
- **"Author and You"**
  Questions require students to use what they already know, with what they have learned from reading the text. Students must understand the text and relate it to their prior knowledge before answering the question. (Example: How do you think Frog felt when he found Toad? Answer: I think that Frog felt happy because he had not seen Toad in a long time. I feel happy when I get to see my friend who lives far away.)
- **"On Your Own"**
  Questions are answered based on a students' prior knowledge and experiences. Reading the text may not be helpful to them when answering this type of question. (Example: How would you feel if your best friend moved away? Answer: I would feel very sad if my best friend moved away because I would miss her.)

5. Generating questions

By generating questions, students become aware of whether they can answer the questions and if they understand what they are reading. Students learn to ask themselves questions that require them to combine information from different segments of text. For example, students can be taught to ask main idea questions that relate to important information in a text.

6. Recognizing story structure

In story structure instruction, students learn to identify the categories of content (characters, setting, events, problem, resolution). Often, students learn to recognize

story structure through the use of story maps. Instruction in story structure improves students' comprehension.

7. Summarizing

Summarizing requires students to determine what is important in what they are reading and to put it into their own words. Instruction in summarizing helps students:

- Identify or generate main ideas
- Connect the main or central ideas
- Eliminate unnecessary information
- Remember what they read

Effective comprehension strategy instruction is explicit

Research shows that explicit teaching techniques are particularly effective for comprehension strategy instruction. In explicit instruction, teachers tell readers why and when they should use strategies, what strategies to use, and how to apply them. The steps of explicit instruction typically include direct explanation, teacher modeling ("thinking aloud"), guided practice, and application.

- **Direct explanation**
  The teacher explains to students why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply the strategy.
- **Modeling**
  The teacher models, or demonstrates, how to apply the strategy, usually by "thinking aloud" while reading the text that the students are using.
- **Guided practice**
  The teacher guides and assists students as they learn how and when to apply the strategy.
- **Application**
  The teacher helps students practice the strategy until they can apply it independently.

Effective comprehension strategy instruction can be accomplished through cooperative learning, which involves students working together as partners or in small groups on clearly defined tasks. Cooperative learning instruction has been used successfully to teach comprehension strategies. Students work together to understand texts, helping each other learn and apply comprehension strategies. Teachers help students learn to work in groups. Teachers also provide modeling of the comprehension strategies.

Adapted from Adler, C.R. (Ed). 2001. Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, pp. 49-54. National Institute for Literacy. Retrieved Nov. 1, 2007, from http://nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1text.html.

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