



# Providing Balanced Literacy Curriculum: **Best Practices for Total Child Development**

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## Overview

### *Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum*

- Instructional Strategies
  - Underlying principles
  - Organizing for instruction
  - Specific ideas
- Professional Development
- Home/School Connections
- Effective Leadership

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## Instructional Strategies - Some underlying principles

### Effective Instruction is --

- Based on Principles of Developmental Appropriate Practice (*grounded in child development*)
- Engaging -cognitively & behaviorally (*of interest and importance to children*)
- Scaffolded (1) *teacher models*; (2) *teacher collaborates with children*; (3) *children work independently*)
- Differentiated (*different groupings; different needs*)
- Explicit with opportunities for Planful Indirect Follow-up (*both are focused and engaging*)

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## Instructional Strategies - Some underlying principles

### What are Skills?

- Knowing the sound of the digraph ph is a skill.
- Skills are performed the same way all the time.
- Skill instruction relies on drill and practice.

### What are Strategies?

- Strategies involve problem solving during the construction of meaning.
- Strategy instruction relies on the learners' control and self-monitoring to make decisions regarding which strategy to use under what circumstances and to make appropriate adjustments as needed.

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## Differentiating Instruction

**Teacher-Pupil Ratio** - Whole Group; Small Group; One-to-one

**Group Constituency** - Heterogeneous; Homogeneous

**Specific Needs** - English Language Learners; Struggling Readers & Writers; Advanced Learners

**Materials/Modalities** - Varied opportunities/ways to achieve goals

**Intensity and Duration** - specific or general focus; long-term or short term

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## Organizing the Day Pre K, Kindergarten *a general guide*

### A Typical Plan – Full Day – Language Arts Block

- **Whole Group (on the rug)**  
Read Aloud; Shared Reading; Interactive Writing; Word Study  
TRANSITION/PLAN FOR CENTERS
- **Center Time - Direct & Indirect Instruction;**  
- Small group & Independent Activities  
SHARING

### LUNCH/REST

- Additional Read Aloud/Circle Time (math/content areas)
- Large Motor Activities
- More small group and independent activities

*Note: Content areas are integrated throughout*

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## Language Arts Block Grades 1-6 90 Mins. +

*Note: Ind. Reading & Writing Workshop Scheduled Separately; Strategies reinforced through content areas.*

### Whole Group (Approx. 20 – 35 minutes)

Explicit Instruction –Strategies

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Comprehension
- Fluency
- Vocabulary

### Small Group/One-to-One (Approx. 60 minutes)

- Follow-up to Whole Group
- Special Needs
- Guided Reading
- Literature Circles
- Teacher-Pupil Conferences

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Independent Reading - Primary Grades

Prepare 3 ring binder with page for each child with column heads –

Date/Book Title & Page #/Comments

Conference Format

1. Brief informational conversation
2. Student reads aloud
3. Teacher records comments

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Independent Reading -  
Pre K, Kindergarten

Before

- Actively involve children in read aloud and other language arts activities (whole group; on the rug)

During

- Set out crate of books previously read and discussed
- Have children select books & “read” in pairs or alone
- Circulate, observe, confer
- Note “reading” and book handling skills

After

- Conduct brief share session

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*Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum* Instructional Strategies

- Shared/Interactive Reading
- Shared/Interactive Writing

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*Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum*  
Instructional Strategies

- **Planning Read Alouds**
- **Effective Questioning**

Prediction      Recall  
Inference      Reflection

*Limit the use of Recall Questions*  
*Ask more Open-Ended Questions*

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Learning through Themes

**Content Goals** – Knowledge Outcomes  
*What do we want children to know at the end of this unit of study?*

**Process Goals** – Literacy, Problem Solving, Mathematics  
*How do we want children to improve their listening, speaking, reading, writing?*

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Learning through Themes:  
Virtual Field Trips

**Builds Vocabulary and Background Knowledge**

- Select topic - may be tied to district/state standards
- Select books for interactive read-alouds
- Select core vocabulary
- Create poster with related to topic with pictures/photos
- Involve children in "First Write"
- Conduct Interactive read-alouds/related activities
- "Final Write"

Source: *Vocabulary Visits: Virtual Field Trips for content Vocabulary Development* by Camille L. Z. Blachowicz and Connie Obrecht

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## Effective Assessment

Effective Assessment yields information about -

- **The child in relation to him/herself** –  
*How well is a child doing today compared to a previous time?*
- **The child in relation to the group** (standards/benchmarks)  
*How well is the child doing in relation to others in the group?*
- **The group as a whole** –  
*How well is the curriculum working?*

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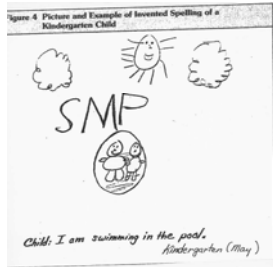
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## Writing Sample - Kindergarten



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## Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum Professional Development

Effective professional development --

- **Stresses both the theoretical and the practical**
- **Is collaborative**
- **Is long term**
- **Involves all related school personnel**
- **Promotes learning by doing**
- **Promotes shared leadership**

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*Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum*  
Fostering Home/School Connections

**Before the session** –select a particular goal or outcome on which to focus. For example:

- Reading aloud to your child
- Monitoring television viewing
- Engaging your child in extended conversations

**Some ground rules:**

- Involve families and teachers in the planning;
- Build on the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participants;
- Make use of multicultural, multilingual materials
- Give plenty of notice for meetings; then send a reminder
- Provide baby sitting service and refreshments
- Prepare resource materials in advance

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*Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum*  
Fostering Home/School Connections

**I. Introducing the Session**

Use an "initiating prompt" to get attention and to illustrate the goal of the session. Some examples:

- Question or request  
Ex. "Share one thing you like best about your child and one thing that you and your child are working to improve."
- Video tape
- Demonstration (someone modeling a particular activity)  
Ex. a parent-child read aloud; use of wordless books; a parent-child cooking experience.
- Book talks on appropriate books for particular age groups; acquaint parents with the vast array of types of books (informational books; ABC; storybooks, etc.)

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*Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum*  
Fostering Home/School Connections

**II. Participant Interaction**

- Guided discussion & hands-on activities.
- Participants actively engage in the session through:
  - Discussion;
  - Role playing an activity;
  - Anything else that keeps their attention and allows them to participate fully.

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*Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum*  
Fostering Home/School Connections

**III. Wrap-up** -- Summarization and Commitment

Participants contribute by

- Reflecting on the session and the desired outcomes;
- Sharing what they found valuable and how they plan to act on it;

Workshop leader(s) facilitates by

- Suggesting ways that parents might act on what was discussed;
- Distributing and discussing resource materials;
- Engaging participants in planning for follow-up session.

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*Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum*  
Effective Leadership

**An Effective Literacy Leader:**

1. Considers the development of literacy as a priority and learns as much as he or she can about it
2. Inspires faculty/staff and children to do their best
3. Provides moral support
4. Provides support through acquisition of books and materials
5. Provides support through opportunities for professional development

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*Toward a Balanced Literacy Curriculum*  
Effective Leadership

**An Effective Literacy Leader:**

6. Offers leadership through special events celebrating literacy
7. Becomes involved in literacy activities with children
8. Becomes involved in professional organizations
9. Is available to children, parents, and teachers
10. Is a good listener to all

*From: Strickland & Riley Ayers, Literacy Leadership in Early Childhood, NAEYC & Teachers College Press*

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Questions to Consider  
About Adopting a Curriculum Model

- What is the theoretical orientation of the curriculum model? How does the theoretical model define the roles of the teacher and the child in initiating learning?
- What domains of learning are addressed and are they treated as distinctly separate content and skills or integrated? How much emphasis is placed on oral language development, higher order thinking, and problem solving? Will the curriculum lead to achievement of state standards?

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More Questions to Consider  
About Adopting a Curriculum Model

- Does the curriculum model provide guidance, adaptations, and specific strategies to differentiate teaching depending on characteristics of the children, e.g. children with special needs, English Language Learners, children with challenging behaviors?
- How is learning assessed? Is a system provided that is consistent with the teaching philosophy and content of the model?
- What is the research base for this curriculum model?

*Adapted from Frede & Ackerman, 2006*

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## Planning Read-Alouds

*Read the book in advance of reading it to the children. Use the guide below to help plan an enjoyable and purposeful read-aloud.*

### **1. What content will I emphasize ?**

(ex. concepts, background knowledge)

*This may be pertinent to any book, however, this is particularly important for informational books.*

### **2. What process skills and strategies will I emphasize?**

(ex. vocabulary, expressive language, comprehension)

*Concept books such as alphabet books and rhyming books will promote those specific process skills.*

### **3. What questions/prompts will I use?**

(ex. recall questions; inference questions; questions that make connections to self, to other books, to the world around them)

Ex. recall question - How many sisters did Cinderella have?

### LIMIT THE USE OF RECALL QUESTIONS

Ex. *inference question* - What do you think will happen next? What makes you think so?

Ex. *connections to self* - Does this remind you of anything you've done?

Ex. *connections to other books* - How is this book like “\_\_\_” ? What other books does this remind you of?

Ex. *connections to the world around them* - Do you think this could happen in our neighborhood? Why or why not?

### **4. What follow-up (if any) will I plan beyond the read aloud?**

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*When parents and teachers share books with children, good things happen: they model the reading process;; they explain, define, and extend vocabulary and concepts; they help children relate the text to their personal lives and to the world around them; they encourage children to respond to texts; they share a “social” event. (Strickland & Taylor (1989).*

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Figure 4.4 A Framework for Observing Shared (Interactive) Book and Chart Experiences

Teacher	Child	Objectives
<p><i>Before the Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Asks children what they think story might be about, based on title and cover. Or, thinks aloud about what he/she thinks this story might be about.</li> <li>•Shows pleasure and interest in anticipation of the reading.</li> </ul> <p><i>During the Reading (teacher reads aloud):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Gives lively reading. Displays interest and delight in language and story line.</li> <li>•Hesitates at predictable parts in the text. Allows children to fill in possible words or phrases.</li> <li>•At appropriate points in a story, queries children about what might happen next.</li> </ul> <p><i>After the Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Guides discussion about key ideas in the text. Helps children relate key concepts.</li> <li>•Asks children to recall important or favorite parts. Finds corresponding text (with help of children) and rereads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses clues from title and cover, together with background knowledge, to formulate predictions about the story. Or, observes teacher model the same.</li> <li>• Observes as teacher models personal interest and eagerness toward the reading.</li> <li>• Observes teacher evoke meaningful language from print</li> <li>• Fills in likely words for a given slot.</li> <li>• Makes predictions about what might happen next in the story.</li> <li>• Participates in discussion of important ideas in the text.</li> <li>• Recalls and describes specific events or parts of text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using clues from text and background knowledge to make inferences and formulate predictions.</li> <li>• Building positive attitudes toward books and reading.</li> <li>• Understanding that print carries meaning.</li> <li>• Using semantic and syntactic clues to determine what makes sense.</li> <li>• Using story line to predict possible events and outcomes.</li> <li>• Reflecting on the reading; applying and personalizing key ideas in a text.</li> <li>• Using print to support and confirm discussion.</li> </ul>

Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2007

**A Framework for Observing Shared (Interactive) Writing**  
*from Strickland & Riley Ayers (2007)*

Teacher	Child	Objectives
<p><b><i>Before the Writing:</i></b>            Involves children in an activity or discussion that generates a shared experience worth writing about. May relate to science, social studies or a response to a read aloud.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discusses with the children the form of writing (list, letter, poem, recipe, etc.).</li> <li>• Shows pleasure and interest in anticipation of the writing.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>During the Writing:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts as a scribe at the chalkboard or on a chart.</li> <li>• Engages children in discussion about content and language to be written down.</li> <li>• Pauses for children to suggest words or letters that might come next.</li> <li>• Calls attention to written conventions such as capital letters at the beginning of names, spaces between words, and left to right progression.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>After the Writing:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reads completed text for children.</li> <li>• Rereads text encouraging children to join in</li> <li>• Guides analysis of text by discussing ideas and noticing print patterns, such as repeated words, phrases, and letters they know.</li> <li>• Encourages children to try out writing on their own and provides materials and guidance at their request.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages in discussion focused on an activity of interest and importance.</li> <li>• Anticipates opportunity to move ideas from talk to print.</li> <li>• Observes as the teacher writes down the ideas discussed.</li> <li>• Offers suggestions for what might be written down.</li> <li>• Notices the print conventions used and described aloud by the teacher.</li> <li>• Observes as the teacher reads the completed text.</li> <li>• Shares in rereading of the text to the extent possible.</li> <li>• Participates in analysis of text by noticing (matching) words and phrases and identifying known letters.</li> <li>• Attempts, independently, to communicate ideas through written expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities to participate in activities designed to generate thoughtful discussion.</li> <li>• Promote vocabulary and concept development.</li> <li>• Promote understanding that what we say can be written down and that print carries meaning.</li> <li>• Promote understanding that written language has certain forms and conventions.</li> <li>• Support understanding that what we write can be read by us and others; that we can return to it again and again to reread and discuss.</li> <li>• Encourage to children to make attempts at writing (and drawing) about things of interest and importance to them</li> </ul>

**PLANNING SHEET - THEME-BASED INSTRUCTION**  
**Note: teachers are encouraged to work together on the plan.**

**Theme** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade Level** \_\_\_\_\_

**Goals & Objectives:**

**A. Content Objectives** (*social studies/science*)

Knowledge you hope students will acquire and/or increase t. Includes key concepts/vocabulary.

Ex. Students will know what plants need in order to live.

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- etc.

**B. Process Objectives** - *Language Arts/Literacy Standards focus (May include math)*

Skills/strategies you hope students will acquire and/or improve. Includes application of knowledge; inquiry skills.

Ex Early literacy skills & strategies (below) typically addressed and monitored.

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- etc

**C. Content Area Activities:**

**Ex. Conduct Experiment: What do plants need to grow?**

**D. Language/Literacy Strategies:**

**Ex. Read aloud and shared reading of books related to topic. Discussion  
 Chart predictions relative to experiment; chart progress of experiment.**

**E. Resources**

**Literature/Technology - list related books; websites; other sources**

**Other related objects; materials - Ex. containers; soil; watering can; seeds; fertilizer**

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**Key areas of focus: listening; speaking; reading; writing; vocabulary;  
 comprehension; content knowledge**

Some Content Area Strategies	Some Language Literacy Strategies
Read aloud and discussion Field trips and discussion (pre/post) Planned inquiry activities; experiments	Read aloud Shared/interactive reading Shared/interactive writing Word Study Independent reading Independent writing

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