

Creating a Balanced Literacy Classroom



Read Aloud:

Reading aloud provides a model of fluency and builds listening comprehension. You read to the students, acting as both author and reader (Mooney, 1990). Students are released from the responsibility of concentrating on the mechanics of reading. Reading aloud may occur with the entire class, a small group, or an individual child.

Shared Reading:

Shared reading mirrors the bedtime story, when reader and child interact with the text (Holdaway, 1979). You read with the students as they interact with text they cannot read for themselves (Mooney, 1990). This allows active participation as you explicitly teach and model reading strategies. Students have visual access to the text in the form of big books, charts, overhead transparencies, etc. Shared reading usually occurs with the entire class.

Guided Reading:

Guided reading provides a small group of students the opportunity to talk, think, and question their way through text (Mooney, 1990). Each student holds a copy of the text. Reading is done by the individual students while the teacher coaches. The teacher determines supports and challenges to match the reader with the text.

Independent Reading:

Independent reading occurs at all stages of reading development. Students assume full responsibility and know where to go for help when their comprehension breaks down. The reading is done completely by the students, which offers them an opportunity for fluency building

Modeled Writing:

Modeled writing is a time for students to watch and listen as you think, talk, and write about any topic. As you write, think aloud about strategies, conventions, ideas, and language. This places you in the role of an author. You hold the pen as you write about your ideas! Modeled writing usually occurs in front of the whole class.

Shared Writing:

Shared writing encourages you and the students to collaborate on a piece of writing together. Students share ideas and you record them. Together you negotiate ideas, language, and conventions about writing. You hold the pen and record contributions. Shared writing may occur with the entire class or a small group.

Guided Writing:

Guided writing follows modeled or shared writing. This is the time for students to try out the skills and strategies you have modeled. As students write, you provide support and guidance through individual or small group conferences.

Independent Writing:

Independent writing allows students to experiment, gain fluency, and write freely. Sources of support such as word lists, word walls, and/or dictionaries should be present for student use. Students should be explicitly taught when and how to use the resources in the room to assist them during this time.

What Is a Literacy Center?

A Literacy Center is a place or activity that:

- Invites students to practice and apply strategies that have been taught and modeled in shared and guided literacy lessons
- Promotes reading, writing, speaking, and viewing
- Allows students to manipulate language in both oral and written form
- Engages the learner through interaction
- Exposes students to a variety of text
- Provides open-ended activities for students
- Enables the teacher to assess and evaluate the students' use of literacy strategies

Possible Literacy Centers and Their Purpose:

Classroom Library - Provides students with a variety of print and genres to practice reading skills and strategies.

Listening Center - Increases speaking, reading, and writing vocabulary. Allows students to self-monitor fluency and progress in reading.

Literature Response Center - Gives students the opportunity to respond authentically to a text they have read or heard.

Poetry Center - Encourages students to read and perform various poems with fluency and expression. Exposes the struggling reader to rhyme, rhythm, and repetition.

Research Center - Integrates the study of science and social studies into the literacy hour. Provides students with time to interact with nonfiction text.

Spelling/Word Work Center - Allows students to manipulate letters and words that can be integrated into their reading and writing experiences.

Writing Center - Provides the opportunity for students to practice the writer's craft and target skills through self-selected topics and methods of presentation.