



Balanced Literacy and Biliteracy

Balanced Literacy:

Balanced literacy is a term used to describe literacy instruction that focuses on the three cueing systems used by proficient readers and writers, the semantic system (meaning), the syntactic (structure), and the grapho-phonetic (visual) (Cloud et al, 2009). Fountas and Pinnell (2001) describe balanced literacy as a framework made up of three blocks: reading, writing and word study/language, and they emphasize that teachers and students should consistently make connections across the three blocks during the day. They also state that what students read and write should come from the content areas (science and social studies, and can also include health, math, etc.) and that students benefit from connecting their reading and their writing as much as possible. Oracy development (the academic oral language required for reading and writing) is infused in all parts of this framework.

The description below by Fountas and Pinnell highlights the flexibility of this 3 block framework and how it should be used for planning and the delivery of instruction.

This three-block structured framework will help you conceptualize the language arts curriculum, think about students' literacy learning, plan and organize instruction, and provide a high level of productivity and engagement. The framework is flexible. There are many possibilities for variation - in the content studied, the texts, the configurations of students (individuals, small groups, the whole class), and the daily time frames. p.13

Many districts in the United States have adopted the components of balanced literacy as a way to plan, organize and deliver optimal reading and writing instruction. Also known as routines, these components are carefully chosen based on unit design and unit performance tasks, and they thus vary throughout the unit. A description of these components, or routines, can be found at the end of this document. This list of components represents the types of configurations that contribute to successful balanced literacy instruction; they are not meant to all be used at all times with all students, instead their selection is to be done carefully based on the performance goals of the unit and where in the unit students require different types of instructional support.

Balanced Literacy and Biliteracy:

According to Beeman and Urow, a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction integrates content, literacy and language instruction and connects reading [comprehension] with oral language and writing. Effective biliteracy instruction enables bilingual learners to use reading, writing, listening and speaking for a wide range of

purposes in two languages (Beeman and Urow, 2013). The challenge in implementing balanced literacy within a biliteracy construct is two-fold: 1) the constraint of time (planning for two literacy periods instead of one), 2) the need to protect the pedagogical spirit of a balanced literacy philosophy which is inherently student-driven, flexible and fluid.

Therefore, to implement a balanced literacy approach to biliteracy, it is helpful to ensure that students will read, write, listen and speak in both Spanish and English everyday. However, the kind of listening, speaking, reading and writing done will vary based on where the unit is and what the performance tasks of the unit require. Because, as suggested by Fountas and Pinnell, the components (or routines) of balanced literacy are flexible and fluid, the same ones are not used every day in the same way, not in a monolingual setting, and therefore not in a biliteracy setting either.

The following are a few principles to consider in planning for biliteracy:

1. Students should experience daily literacy time in both languages.
2. Unit designs should integrate language, literacy and content and they should reflect the program's language and content allocation plan. Literacy components are identified as part of the unit design and they change from the beginning of unit, the middle and the end, and reflect a gradual release of responsibility approach.
3. Selection of components/routines should be guided by student performance data, the standards upon which the unit is based, and the summative assessment/performance outcomes of the unit. These literacy components can be used in any language.

Unit Design Example

The unit example found below is organized around standards, big ideas (or essential understandings), and language and content targets. These three areas of focus of the unit are captured in the unit's performance task, or summative assessment. A performance task is any form of evidence where students will demonstrate what they have learned by showing it through an activity or assessment (McTighe, 2015). In the Biliteracy Unit Framework BUF (Beeman and Urow, 2013), the performance task is used by teachers to backwards plan the specific mini lessons that will lead to all students successfully completing the summative assessment, or unit performance task.

Below is an example of a performance task based on Susan Pryor's First Grade Biliteracy Unit Framework (BUF) titled [Self/Story of My Life](#). The entire unit can be found at www.teachingforbiliteracy.com/samples.

Performance Task/Unit Summative Assessment:

Students will write a personal narrative about how student has grown from baby to big girl/boy, including details that describe key features of each stage (what they could do or objects they used and what they did during each stage).

Tool: Teacher created rubric

Student Configuration: Independent Work

Plan for Literacy Configurations (routines) throughout the 1st grade unit:

Beginning of the Unit Components/Routines: Build Oracy and Background Knowledge	Middle of the Unit Routines	End of the Unit Routines
Whole Group Experiences: TPR, Concept Attainment, Dramatic Play Shared Language/Literacy Shared Reading (Adapted Reader's Theater) Story dictation: a strategy that provides a link between the oracy- heavy beginning and the more literacy heavy middle of the unit. Students talk and teachers write what they say. A kind of modeled writing, but very heavily reliant on oral language. Although this routine is usually totally open ("What's your story today"), it could be used as part of a unit if the question is tailored to the content of the unit ("Tell me a story about when you were little"--maybe using a photo as a reference)	Whole Group Experiences: Read Aloud with turn to your partner (lots of opportunities to practice the oracy developed during beg of the unit experiences) Language Experience Approach (modeled writing that elicits oral language and models how to encode it) Shared Writing--sharing the pen with students: scaffolded encoding by students Language/Word study begins and is heavy here using the language of the unit (the oral language developed at the beginning if working on phonological awareness can start right away, or using the encoded language from the LEAs, shared writing to work on elements that rely on written language)--dictado starts here Small Group Experiences: Small Group Reading Instruction (targeted and differentiated)	Independent Reading (personal narratives) Independent Writing (personal narratives) Opportunities to share projects (presentation or share with older grade buddy 1:1, using all the oral language students have practiced-working on speaking and listening standards related to the presentation)--the oracy comes full circle when approached this way.

References

Beeman, K and Urow, C (2013) Teaching for Biliteracy: Strengthening Bridges between Languages; Caslon Publishing: Philadelphia, PA.

Cloud, N, Genesee, F and Hamayan, E. (2009). Literacy Instruction for English Language Learners; Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH.

Fountas, I, and G Pinnell (2001), Guiding Readers and Writers, Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy, Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH.

McTighe, Jay. (2015, April), What is a Performance Task (Part 1) [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <https://blog.performancetask.com>

Balanced Literacy Configurations (or Routines)

Source: Fountas, I, and G Pinnell (2001), Guiding Readers and Writers, Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy, Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH.

Shared Language /Literacy	A group meeting where a brief, focused experience intended to expand students' language and/or literacy skills is presented by the teacher. Examples include: · Having students talk about a topic for 2-3 minutes in small groups then share key ideas that surfaced with the whole class. · Build vocabulary by reading a paragraph that features one or more new words and then talk about what they mean.
Interactive Edit	A brief activity (no more than 5 minutes long) focusing on conventions. One way of doing this might be to dictate one or two sentences that present challenges in spelling, grammar, punctuation, word choice, etc. Students write the sentences, edit with a partner or individually, and then discuss the reasons for using the conventions.
Handwriting	A five-minute mini-lesson once a week on letter formation. After the mini-lesson, guided and independent practice needs to be provided.
Word Study	A whole group mini-lesson on a strategy or principle related to ongoing word study that is within small group instruction.
Modeled/ Shared Reading	The teacher reads a text to students and models specific thinking about a text along the way. The teacher and the students all have a copy of the same text (or the text is visually displayed for all students to see). Students follow along while the teacher reads and models active thinking skills while reading. Every so often, students are provided the opportunity to practice the kind of thinking that was modeled by the teacher.

Modeled/ Shared Writing	The teacher and the students work together to compose a common text. As the teacher writes the text on a chart for all students to see, the teacher models specific thinking associated with the written text she is modeling. Every so often, students are provided the opportunity to practice the kind of thinking that was modeled by the teacher. When appropriate, the student suggestions can be added to the chart by the teacher.
Interactive Read Aloud	The teacher reads a text aloud to the students and stops at significant points during the text to ask for comments or facilitate a discussion about what is happening in the text.
Choral Reading	A group of students (can be a small group or whole group) re-read an already familiar text for the purpose of increased fluency.

Mini-lesson	A short lesson focused on a specific principle or procedure that most students need help learning. In a mini-lesson, the teacher focuses on something important about reading or writing and demonstrates an aspect of the reading or writing process. Mini-lessons are not all telling – they should interactively engage students and can focus on management, strategy or skill, or craft. A mini lesson is specific and succinct, lasting between 5-15 minutes.
Independent Reading	Students independently read a variety of texts and prepare periodic written responses. While students read independently, they practice applying what they learned during the mini-lesson provided by the teacher. During independent reading time, the teacher also confers with individuals to support and assess reading as well as to teach to individual needs. The reading is usually followed by a form of sharing and evaluation.
Guided Reading	The teacher pulls together small, temporary groups to explicitly teach effective reading strategies for processing a variety of literary and informational texts. Its central focus is to teach for the comprehension of texts. The group is homogeneous in that all students in the group have similar reading behaviors and needs. The teacher introduces the text and readers read it independently. The teacher selects teaching points based on readers' needs and sometimes assigns oral and/or written response tasks. Word work may follow.

Literature Study	The teacher and students set up assigned reading/writing tasks and agree on meeting times. The group is heterogeneous in nature as students may all exhibit different reading behaviors, but all students are reading or listening to the same text. When they meet, the group engages in in-depth discussions about a text. The teacher is generally with the group for discussion, though the students take turns facilitating. The teacher, in consultation with the group, devises written responses.
Group Share and Evaluation	A five- to ten-minute opportunity to close the writing or reading time where students share how they applied the teaching point discussed in the mini-lesson.
Independent Writing	Students engage in the writing process applying the teaching point learned during the mini-lesson. During this time, the teacher confers with individuals to support and address writing needs.
Guided Writing	The teacher pulls together small, <u>temporary</u> groups of writers to provide explicit teaching based on the writers' needs at a particular point in time. Sometimes, the teacher has noticed students' needs and forms the groups; at other times, the students request group help with some aspect of writing. The teacher explicitly and efficiently works with students to teach the writer's craft, strategies, and skills.
On-going Word Study	During this time, the teacher provides an opportunity for individuals or small groups to pay close attention to the structure of words to help students become aware of letter patterns and word parts. While this study of words is done in isolation, students are familiar with the words and their meaning. The purpose is to teach students efficient strategies to solve words and discover the inner workings of words.