

Definition of Balanced Literacy Terms

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| Shared Language /Literacy | <p>A group meeting where a brief, focused experience intended to expand students' language and/or literacy skills is presented by the teacher.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <p>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, ect., Students write the sentences, edit with a partner or individually, and then discuss the reasons for using the conventions.</p> |
| Handwriting | <p>A five-minute mini-lesson once a week on letter formation. After the mini-lesson, guided and independent practice needs to be provided.</p> |
| Word Study | <p>A whole group mini-lesson on a strategy or principle related to ongoing word study that is within small group instruction.</p> |
| Modeled / Shared Reading | <p>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.</p> |
| Modeled / Shared Writing | <p>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/he 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.</p> |
| Interactive Read Aloud | <p>The teacher reads a text aloud to the students by stopping at significant points during the text to ask for comments or facilitate a discussion of what is happening in the text.</p> |
| Choral Reading | <p>A group of students (can be a small group or whole group) re-read an already familiar text for the purpose of increased fluency.</p> |
| Mini-lesson | <p>A short lesson focused on a specific principle or procedure that most students need help learning. In a mini-lesson, you teach students something important about reading or writing and demonstrate 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.</p> |
| Independent Reading | <p>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. Independent reading is usually followed by a form of sharing and evaluation.</p> |

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| 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, temporary 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 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 separately, 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. |

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

What is Balanced Literacy?

