St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School
Literacy program k-5

Updated March 2013

LITERACY K-5

The Literacy Collaborative is a model for teaching children in a child-centered classroom, providing many opportunities for real life reading and writing experiences. It is based on the research of Marie Clay, Irene Fountas, and Gay Su Pennell. Children read and write each day independently and in group settings (both large and small).

I. Literacy Collaborative classrooms focus on four different types of reading experiences:

Reading aloud to children
Shared reading - whole class
Guided reading - small group
Independent reading

II. Students also participate in shared and individual writing activities each day. The four types of writing experiences are:

Shared writing - whole class
Interactive writing - whole class
Writer's workshop - small groups or individual
Independent writing

Additionally, during many daily reading and writing experiences, children are taught about letters, sounds, words and how they work. Listening and speaking are also emphasized in this integrated language approach. All experiences meet Massachusetts State Standards for Language Arts Instruction.

Teachers implementing the Literacy Collaborative use an integrated approach to teaching language arts. The Literacy Collaborative framework for literacy lessons consists of a number of elements that provide massive amounts of reading and writing on a daily basis. These authentic opportunities for reading and writing are arranged on a continuum based on more or less teacher support. Some reading and writing tasks are modeled by the teachers and others are accomplished with the support of the teacher, leading to a few that are done independently by the child. The goal of The Literacy Collaborative is to help children become readers and writers who enjoy and value literacy. Children quickly learn that what they say they can write and what they write they can read. The home-school connection is also an important part of The Literacy Collaborative.

Read Aloud

In "Read Aloud" someone reads a story, book of fiction, news article, picture book, essay, poem, or trade book to another person. Usually this is a practice of parents who want to develop the enjoyment of reading in their young children who want to develop the vocabulary knowledge, focused listening skills, or critical thinking skills of children. Since children usually ask questions about the Read Aloud selection, and these questions lead to explanations, making connections and questions by the reader, informal discussion skills are indirectly developed through Read Aloud activities.

In Interactive Read Aloud, teachers verbally interact with students before, during and after reading to help them understand and make a variety of connections with the read-aloud selection. The selection can be a non-fiction or fiction narrative, a poem or picture book.

During an interactive read-aloud the teacher engages in a series of activities, including: pre-viewing the book; asking students to make predictions and connections to prior knowledge; stopping at purposeful moments to emphasize story elements, ask guiding questions or focus questions; and using oral or written responses to bring closure to the selection.

Shared Reading

Shared Reading is a link in helping students become independent readers. It allows the teacher to model and support students using prediction and confirming skills. It allows less confident students the chance to share stories/articles/poetry in a non-threatening situation. It focuses on the meaning, fun, enjoyment, characters and sequence of a story and allows them to relate it back to their own experiences. It promotes discussion, problem-solving and critical thinking by students.

Shared Reading is an interactive reading experience. An integral component of Shared Reading is an enlarged text that all children can see. Children join in the reading of a big book or other enlarged text such as songs, poems, charts, and lists created by the teacher or developed with the class through Shared and Interactive Writing. During the reading the teacher involves the children in reading together by pointing to or sliding below each word in the text. The teacher deliberately draws attention to the print and models early reading behaviors such as moving from left to right and word-by-word matching. Shared reading models the reading process and strategies used by readers.

In the shared reading model there are multiple readings of the books over several days. Throughout, children are actively involved in the reading (Yaden, 1988). During the initial reading, the teacher:

- Introduces the book (shares theme, examines title, cover, illustrations, and makes predictions)
- Relates prior experience to text
- Concentrates on enjoying the text as a whole
- Encourages students to use background knowledge to make predictions
- Encourages spontaneous participation in the reading of the story
- Discusses personal responses to the book

Texts are usually read multiple times over a period of days or weeks. The first reading emphasizes reading for enjoyment. Subsequent readings aim to increase participation, teach about book characteristics and print conventions, teach reading strategies, help develop a sight vocabulary of high frequency words, and teach phonics. During subsequent readings, the teacher:

- Directs children's attention to various aspects of the text, and reading strategies, and skills.
- Identifies vocabulary, ideas and facts,
- Discusses author's style
- Experiments with intonation and expression
- Discusses colorful phrases or words

Students participate by:

- choral reading
- dramatization
- masking activities
- word work such as "Be the Words" or sorting the words

Through repeated readings and the predictable text, children become familiar with word forms and begin to recognize words and phrases (Bridge, Winograd, & Haley, 1983; Pikulski & Kellner, 1992).

During Shared Reading...

- Rich, authentic, interesting literature can be used, even in the earliest phases of a reading program, with children whose word-identification skills would not otherwise allow them access to this quality literature.
- Each reading of a selection provides opportunities for the teacher to model reading for the children.
- Opportunities for concept and language expansion exist that would not be possible if instruction relied only on selections that students could read independently.

- Awareness of the functions of print, familiarity with language patterns, and word-recognition skills grow as children interact several times with the same selection.
- Individual needs of students can be more adequately met. Accelerated readers are challenged by the interesting, natural language of selections. Because of the support offered by the teacher, students who are more slowly acquiring reading skills experience success.

Guided Reading

Guided Reading is an instructional reading strategy during which a teacher works with small groups of children who have similar reading processes and needs. The teacher selects and introduces new books carefully chosen to match the instructional levels of students and supports whole text reading. Readers are carefully prepared when being introduced to a new text and various teaching points are made during and after reading. Guided Reading fosters comprehension skills and strategies, develops background knowledge and oral language skills, and provides as much instructional-level reading as possible. During Guided Reading, students are given exposure to a wide variety of texts and are challenged to select from a growing repertoire of strategies that allow them to tackle new texts more independently. Ongoing observation and assessment help to inform instruction and grouping of students.

Independent Reading

Independent Reading is a time when students self-select and independently read appropriate books.

Independent Reading provides an opportunity to apply strategies that are introduced and taught during teacher read aloud, shared reading, and guided reading. When materials are appropriate and students can read independently, they become confident, motivated and enthusiastic about their ability to read.

Children make great contributions to their own learning when they are given some control and ownership of the reading process. The self-selection process of Independent Reading places the responsibility for choosing books in the hands of the student. This teaches them that they have the ability to choose their own reading materials.

While students are free to choose what they like, they must be encouraged to select a variety of literature and to select materials at their independent reading level. Independent means 95% to 100% accuracy as defined by running records. These materials should be able to be read without teacher support. It is at the independent level that comprehension, vocabulary extension, and fluency are improved.

Shared Writing

Shared Writing or Modeled Writing is an approach to writing where the teacher and children work together to compose messages and stories. Children provide the ideas and the teacher supports the process as a scribe. The message is usually related to some individual or group experience. The teacher provides full support, modeling and demonstrating the process of putting children's ideas into written language. The text becomes much richer than children can write themselves and becomes good material for children to read and should be displayed in the room. The children can illustrate the finished text when possible. Children will love to see their work displayed and will feel successful because they can read it.

Interactive Writing

During Interactive Writing the teacher and class, or small group, work together to create written text. The group agrees on what to write through discussion and negotiation. In order to produce the written words, the students articulate the sounds with the teacher and then write the letters and chunks of words that they hear. The teacher may fill in parts of words or whole words, depending upon the group's stage of writing development.

Interactive Writing is used for creating stories, writing poems, the retelling of favorite literature, recipes, directions and lists. The pieces created by the students become a part of the classroom environment and are used for reading and rereading. The class may use the pieces for Shared Reading or may enjoy reading some independently.

Writer's Workshop

The basic philosophy behind writing workshop is to allow students to daily spend time writing for real purposes about things that interest them. Students can experiment with a variety of genres. English, spelling, handwriting and other mechanics can be taught within writing workshop.

Students learn the craft of writing through practice, conferring, and studying the craft of other authors. The ultimate goal of a writing workshop is always to develop life-long writers.

Within the context of Writer's Workshop, a variety of organizational patterns for instruction are used: a whole class session, a small group mini-lesson, a student-teacher conference, and a sharing of written work. The Writer's Workshop is devoted to supporting student learning in writing. What students need to learn during a Writer's Workshop is based upon their present writing competencies and the English Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks for each grade level. For the majority of the time in Writer's Workshop, students will be engaged in actual writing.

Writer's Workshop gives children daily opportunities to develop their unique writing processes and communicate meaning through words and pictures.

Independent Writing

During Independent Writing in kindergarten, children are encouraged to get ideas on paper by using pictures, letters, and words. Children can write in journals, make their own books, or write notes. Teachers should accept approximations so that children will have opportunities to become risk takers and explore sound to letter relationships.

III. Working with Words

The field of "word study" provides students an opportunity to manipulate words (and parts of words) in meaningful and enjoyable activities and games. Reading ability can develop dramatically as word study lessons develop experience with:

- Letters and their corresponding sounds
- Components of words, such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes
- Patterns of how words are spelled, such as word families
- How parts of words often will give hints to the meaning of a word, as well as its spelling or pronunciation

Word study activities call for active problem solving. Students are encouraged to look for spelling patterns, form hypotheses, predict outcomes, and test them. These activities require students to continually ask themselves, "What do I know about this new word, and how is it similar to words that I already know?"

IV. Components of a Balanced Literacy Program

All of the following contribute to producing literate citizens of the 21st Century.

Reading Aloud: Teacher reads selection aloud to students

- Provides adult model of fluent reading
- Develops sense of story/text
- Develops vocabulary
- Encourages prediction
- Builds a community of readers
- Develops active listening*

Shared Reading: Teacher and students read text together

- Demonstrates awareness of text
- Develops sense of story or content
- Promotes reading strategies
- Develops fluency and phrasing
- Increases comprehension
- Encourages politeness and respect *

Guided Reading: Teacher introduces a selection at student's instructional level

- Promotes reading strategies
- Increases comprehension
- Encourages independent reading
- Expands belief in own ability *

Independent Reading: Students read independently

- Encourages strategic reading
- Increases comprehension
- Supports writing development
- Extends experiences with a variety of written texts
- Promotes reading for enjoyment and information
- Develops fluency
- Fosters self-confidence by reading familiar and new text
- Provides opportunities to use mistakes as learning opportunities *

Modeled/Shared Writing: Teacher and students collaborate to write text; teacher acts as scribe

- Develops concepts of print
- Develops writing strategies
- Supports reading development
- Provides model for a variety of writing styles
- Models the connection among and between sounds, letters, and words
- Produces text that students can read independently
- Necessitates communicating in a clear and specific manner*

Interactive Writing: Teacher and students compose together using a "shared pen" technique in which students do some of the writing

- Provides opportunities to plan and construct texts
- Increases spelling knowledge
- Produces written language resources in the classroom
- Creates opportunities to apply what has been learned*

Independent Writing: Students write independently

- Strengthens text sequence
- Develops understanding of multiple uses of writing
- Supports reading development
- Develops writing strategies
- Develops active independence*

*Personal Qualities: Collaborative Worker, Problem Solver, Quality Producer, Self-Directed Learner, Responsible Citizen

Recognizable Characteristics of Readers K-12

EMERGENT

- Inconsistently use early strategies:
    - One-on-one matching
    - Monitoring (repeating; self-correcting)
    - Cross-checking
- Read easy patterned text with picture support with fluency
- Practice skills acquired on easy materials
- Link known initial and final sound symbols to new words
- Get "mouth ready" for an unknown word
- Have limited sight vocabularies
- Retell text with simple/interchangeable storyline
- Respond to text at a literal level

EARLY/DEVELOPING

- Search for and use cues with increasing independence
- Self-monitor and self-correct when prompted
- Read familiar text fluently
- Lack stamina needed for chapter books/novels
- Read longer text with smaller print
- Read with good phrasing and expression
- Hear/Use some medial sounds to identify new words
- Identify "chunks" and analyze longer words on their own or with support
- Increase sight vocabulary
- Retell text with story structure to capture story elements
- Respond to reading content with inconsistent comprehension

FLUENT

- Use cues flexibly and effectively
- Integrate use of cues/strategies
- Self-monitor
- Problem-solve independently
- Read smoothly using appropriate speeds
- Able to scan ahead/predict
- Transfer known information to unknown words independently
- Able to visually analyze words in text "on the run"
- Have control of multi-syllable words
- Read longer books with more complex written style
- Have an extensive sight vocabulary
- Retell complex storyline to include plot and some detail
- Respond to a variety of reading genre with comprehension

V. ASSESSMENT

Documentation of Progress: Teacher monitors student's progress in reading and writing through systematic observation.

- Provides basis for instruction
- Provides information for forming Guided Reading groups
- Provides information for appropriate text selection

Formal Assessment Provides a Snapshot View

- Stanford Nine and other norm referenced tests
- Informal Reading Comprehension Placement Test
- Informal Reading Inventory, (Reading A to Z)

Ongoing Assessment Records Evolving Progress

- Talking and listening to students (formal/informal conferences)
- Talking with parents or other teachers (formal/informal conferences, explanation of formal and informal assessment procedures, sharing student word samples)
- Observational Notes (anecdotal records, checklists)
- Samples of student work (portfolios, writing samples, journals, cloze tests)
- Listen to student read (informal/formal running records, miscue analysis

Assessing Students for Grouping and Instruction

The most useful source of information about students' instructional levels is observations teachers make on a daily basis. The following types of informal assessments are appropriate for documenting students' literacy performance and academic growth:

- Observation checklists
- Anecdotal notes
- Running records
- Student portfolios
- Teacher/student conference notes

- Student learning logs

Assessment provides documentation about what students know and can do. The primary purpose of assessment is to gather data to inform literacy instruction. If assessment does not result in improved teaching, its educational student learning value diminishes. Assessment allows teachers to see the results of their instruction and to make judgments about students' literacy development.

Observation by teachers provides the following:

- Valid information about what students know and can do
- Reliable systematic observations about students' progress and development
- Evaluation of student progress as a basis for flexible grouping
- Validation of progress for parents and students
- Authentic feedback that drives the instructional program and connects with the CORE Curriculum

When teachers review their observations and other informally collected data about students' literacy development, it is important to have an organized system in order to document academic growth. A rubric is one method of organizing informal assessment data.

- Design rubrics that have guidelines for observation, assessment, and evaluation
- Create rubrics that are both process and product based
- Assess and/or evaluate students' literacy performance and progress based on the picture of each student's progress and achievement that emerges

Guide for Observing Reading Behavior Student(s):

- Directional movement/return sweep
- One to one matching
- Uses meaning cues
- Uses structure cues
- Uses initial letters/sounds
- Uses final letters/sounds
- Uses chunks of words
- Integrates cues
- Rereads
- Recognizes basic vocabulary
- Self-monitors
- Self-corrects
- Cross checks
- Views self as a reader
- Indicates comprehension
- Participates in discussion
- Looks for main ideas
- Looks for details
- Connects to personal experience
- Thinks about what will happen and self-questions
- Summarizes during reading and after reading
- Asks self whether he/she agrees with ideas or characters
- Compares and contrasts selection with others he/she has read

VI. An Overview of Guided Reading

- Based on careful observation of students, the teacher selects books that are supportive, predictable, and closely matched to the students' needs, abilities, and interests. The chosen texts should support the objective, but be readable enough for students to proceed with minimal assistance. (Approximately 90-94% accuracy)
- The Guided Reading lesson provides the opportunity for the teacher to interact with small groups of students as they read books that present a successful challenge for them.
- The assessment provides information for the homogeneous groupings which are necessary for guided reading. This allows the teacher to tailor instruction to suit students' changing instructional needs.
- The teacher acts as a facilitator who sets the scene, arouses interest, and engages students in discussion that will enable them to unfold the story line and feel confident and capable of reading the text themselves.
- Guided Reading is reading by students. The students are responsible for the first reading of the text.
- Approximations and predictions are encouraged and praised. The teacher closely observes, monitors, and evaluates ways in which individual students process print utilizing reading strategies such as checking meaning and self-correcting.

Instructional Model for Guided Reading

Assessment drives instruction and precedes planning

1. Teacher Plans the Lesson

- Identifies CORE Curriculum components
- Plans for Guided Reading lessons of 20 - 30 minutes daily
- Defines purpose of the lesson
- Selects appropriate reading strategies
- Gathers materials needed for this lesson
- Previews text prior to instruction

2. Teacher Sets the Scene

- States the expectations for the students
- Identifies the reading strategy on which the lesson is focused
- Introduces the book, author, illustrator, theme, genre
- Asks students for predictions
- Discusses students' prior knowledge
- Uses visual aids to elicit student response

3. Students Read Independently

It is important that the students understand the purpose for reading. During independent reading, students:

- Use meaning, structure, and knowledge of letter-sound relationships
- Make a meaningful guess and check to see if it makes sense (sounds right and looks right)
- Read on to the end of the sentence or reread
- Ask for help if an unknown word is essential to meaning
- Note any problem words for later discussion

4. Teacher Provides Individual Feedback

As the students read independently, the teacher moves from student to student and closely observes and monitors the ways in which individual students process print. The teacher also checks reading strategies that are being used, praises appropriate strategies and suggests new ones.

5. Students Confer for Deeper Meaning

To improve comprehension, students need opportunities to return to the text is in the context of a group conference. This is a time set aside to discuss a book that has been read independently by a small group of students and their teacher. This part of the Guided Reading lesson:

- Extends understanding of text
- May focus on students' responses to text
- May focus on literacy merits of selection
- Follows a conversational pattern
- Encourages student to interact concerning text

6. Students Are Involved In Creative Response Activities

Responding to the text activities builds on the understanding developed when students participate in group conferences. Students' responses include, but are not limited to the following options:

- Written responses
- Oral responses, including drama
- Arts and crafts
- Reading related literature

7. Students Share Response Activities

Students enjoy opportunities to share their responses during a Guided Reading lesson. The ultimate reward for working hard on a response is sharing with peers. Sharing provides opportunities for students to develop oral language skills, practice presentation techniques, and be active participants in classroom activities.