

A Balanced Literacy Program

The chart here helps organize potential curriculum experiences, strategies and materials to help you keep the "big picture" of a balanced program. Frequently limited to the first two strands—learning language and learning about language—literacy programs often fail to include the second two strands below, which language researcher Jerome Harste advises is an error. Learning drives the reading process; questioning things that we take for granted offers choice. He challenges us that it is these twin processes that make literacy empowering.

Literacy Workshop across the Day				
LEARNING LANGUAGE				
ENGAGEMENT	PURPOSE	POSSIBLE STRATEGIES	ORGANIZING DEVICES	MATERIALS
Read-aloud	To create classroom community To build a shared repertoire of stories, poems, chants, and songs To build a sense of story, as well as of other genres	predicting / think-aloud	list of books read / anthology of favorite poems	Best-loved and classic stories, poems, songs; award-winning texts, recognized authors
Shared reading interactive writing	To demonstrate literacy processes; to engage all students' participation at current level of ability	partner-reading / readers theater		Big books, chart writing or poems, texts on overhead; personal copies of text
Independent reading and writing	To read texts independently To select, browse, and read texts of interest To capture ideas; to contribute to thinking		reading log / writers' notebooks	Texts of interest Books at "just right" level
LEARNING ABOUT LANGUAGE				
Strategy Instruction Demonstrations Focused lessons Mini-lessons	To focus on the processes, elements, and strategies of reading, writing, spelling, punctuation, and workshop organization: "what to do when I'm stuck" strategies using reference texts / phonemic awareness / locating materials / genre characteristics / browsing / literary elements / workshop routines / spelling patterns	interactive writing / newsboard / author's chair / conferences / have-a-go spelling	"strategies I can use" sheets	Students' own writing: family stories, inquiry reports, poetry, articles; writing of peers, others' writing; predictable books, literature, poetry, everyday texts (media, newspaper, magazines, etc.)
LEARNING THROUGH LANGUAGE				
Literature study	To read and write stories as a way of helping making sense of life; texts that help readers understand more about themselves and interrogate their world To discuss texts with small groups of interested others To study the author's craft To inform, comment, critique, document	sketch-to-stretch, say something, drama, music, movement, art responses	reading journals "how our group is doing"	Multiple copies of books; stories of significance, often that contribute to broader class theme; text sets; sets of books by one author
Inquiry	To document what one knows; to discover additional information on topics of interest. Paired with literature study, contributing knowledge to a themed inquiry To gather information for projects To publish or present what was learned	browsing / note-taking	graffiti boards / webs / timelines / inquiry journals	Text sets: a collection of related texts (books [varied genres], CDs, maps, tapes, artifacts), which contribute multiple perspectives to learners' research

LEARNING TO CRITIQUE THROUGH LANGUAGE

Social Action Projects	To use language to question what seems normal and natural To redesign and create alternate social worlds, through interrogation of the Internet, media, advertisements, and other everyday texts.	questioning / interrogating / critical talk about books	Audit trail	Books which support critical conversation Everyday texts
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M.A.K. Halliday (1980) found that in any meaningful language event, children have the opportunity to learn language, learn about language, and learn through language. They learn language through the "doing" of language—talking, listening, reading, and writing. They learn about language as they explore how language functions and the conventions that support communication. They learn through language as they focus on what it is they are learning. To this we've added learning to critique through language (Egawa & Harste, 2001). All four aspects are essential in every classroom. We don't start with one and progress to the next. Rather, it is the four operating together within a meaningful context that provides the most balanced and supportive learning environment for literacy learners.