Balanced Literacy
A Framework of Components for Planning Instruction

A balanced literacy program blends explicit skill instruction with language-rich literature to foster the development of independent, fluent readers, writers, and communicators. A balanced literacy approach requires thoughtful decision-making. Teachers identify instructional needs through ongoing assessment and plan appropriate differentiated instruction. Learner-centered (student needs) and teacher-directed (grade-level TEKS and curriculum) approaches merge together to provide students with regular opportunities to engage in authentic reading, writing, and oral language activities. A comprehensive balanced literacy framework involves reading and writing to children, with children, and by children. Teachers gradually release the responsibility for learning to students.
Defining the Instructional Components

**SHARED READING**
Shared Reading is an interactive reading experience that occurs when students join in or share the reading of a book or other enlarged text while guided and supported by the teacher. Students observe the teacher reading the text with fluency and expression. The text must be large enough for all the students to see clearly, so they can share in the reading of the text. Through explicit explanation and modeling, teachers demonstrate and assist students as they learn how proficient readers make sense of text before, during, and after reading.

**GUIDED READING**
Guided Reading enables the teacher to observe, teach, and support a small homogeneous group of students as they develop an understanding of the reading process and practice skills modeled by the teacher during shared reading. Students read a book that has been carefully selected based on their strengths and needs. The teacher facilitates learning and guides and directs the readers at their instructional level.

**READ ALOUD**
Read Aloud is a strategy in which the teacher sets aside time to read orally to students on a consistent basis from texts above their independent reading level but at their listening level. Reading aloud to students allows the teacher to model fluent and expressive reading, strengthen vocabulary, language, grammar, and writing, and provides interaction with a variety of texts.

**INDEPENDENT READING**
Independent Reading is taking place when students are able to read the text with 95% or higher accuracy and can understand what they are reading. Successful independent reading is the end result of a well-executed balanced literacy program. It allows students the chance to “practice” the strategies they’ve learned through guided reading, shared reading, and teacher read alouds — the other components of balanced literacy.

Writing process instruction teaches the kinds of thinking processes skilled writers use in producing different forms of text. Writing is a process rather than a one-time, “quick and dirty” project. Students should be taught to understand and use the phases or stages of authorship. Writers do not necessarily move from one phase to the next. They may often move back and forth between phases or even quit in the middle of one phase and start another writing project. These stages have been identified as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. These stages are taught through a variety of instructions that encompasses modeling, mini-lessons, and practice sessions.

The goal of working with words is to guide students in building word knowledge that will enable them to read and write fluently. Teachers use phonemic awareness and phonics to help the youngest students learn sound and letter relationships. Building on this basic knowledge, students analyze word features/patterns, learn high frequency words/phrases, and extend their vocabulary in order to apply this knowledge in the context of reading (decoding) and writing (encoding).

**Decoding** - Decoding means translating written words into the sounds and meanings of spoken words (often silently).

**Encoding** - Encoding, or spelling, is translating sounds and meanings of spoken words into written words. The skills used in encoding are usually developed alongside decoding skills and reflect similar learning.

In order to become good decoders and encoders (spellers), students need to first develop some basic understandings about print and how it relates to spoken English. In particular, learners must have developed phonological awareness and phonemic awareness.
# Balanced Literacy

## A Summary of Balanced Literacy

### Word Study
The teacher introduces new, high frequency words to whole class to:
- Help students learn to automatically recognize and spell high frequency words
- Help students learn to look for patterns in words to help decode and spell the less frequent words that they have not been taught

### Best Practices in Reading

#### Read Aloud/ Modeled Reading
The teacher introduces the students to rich, interesting text by reading aloud to the whole class to:
- Demonstrate proficient reading
- Give students access to text beyond their ability
- Expose students to a variety of genre
- Develop a love of literature

#### Shared Reading
The teacher introduces how language works through direct instruction using the same text over many lessons for students to:
- Become familiar with and use reading comprehension strategies
- Recognize text forms (genre) and their distinct features
- Become familiar with grammar and punctuation

#### Guided Reading
The teacher works with a small group or individual students with similar reading needs and abilities to increase fluency and comprehension and to:
- Practice strategies
- Build independence using instructional level text
- Record individual students strengths and weakness (anecdotal notes, running records, etc.)

#### Independent Reading
The student selects his/her own book from a variety of texts and practices skills and strategies independently on easy text (95-100%) to:
- Build fluency through rereading
- Practice skills and strategies independently
- Reinforce the joy of reading

### Best Practices in Writing

#### Modeled Writing
The teacher introduces the students to writing text by using think aloud with the whole class to:
- Expose students to writing beyond their skill levels
- Expose students to a variety of genres
- Demonstrate proficient writing of genres

#### Shared Writing
The teacher acts as a scribe to:
- Model writing strategies
- Teach writing strategies
- Extend understanding of the writing process

#### Interactive Writing
The teacher and student:
- Choose the topic
- Share the pen
- Compose together

#### Guided Writing
The teacher works with a small group or individual students with similar writing needs and abilities to:
- Reinforce skills
- Engage students in questioning and discussion
- Provide practice with specific writing skills and phonemic awareness
- Provide feedback on areas of strength and areas of growth
- Build independence

#### Independent Writing
The student writes by themselves for a variety of purposes to:
- Practice at his/her independent level
- Reinforce the value of writing
- Practice skills learned

### Assessment
Assessment includes: diagnostic, formative (running records, conferencing, reader response, retell and student log book)
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<th>Type of Reading</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose(s)</th>
<th>Types of Text</th>
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| READING ALOUD        | The teacher reads aloud to the whole group. In the primary grades, this usually takes place on a rug or in a comfortable group area. Quality children’s literature is used representing many different genres. | • Provides a model of phrased, fluent reading  
• Promotes oral language development  
• Develops concepts of print  
• Allows children to enjoy books that are too difficult to read themselves  
• Involves children in an enjoyable reading experience | • Quality literature  
• Books with bright and colorful illustrations  
• Multicultural themes  
• Humorous books  
• Books with dialogue  
• Books with action that hold children’s interest  
• Books that fit into the class theme or topics being studied |
| SHARED READING       | The class engages in reading a book together, usually an enlarged big book for the primary grades. | • Allows the class to engage in an enjoyable shared literacy experience  
• Allows teacher to model specific reading strategies  
• Increases children’s knowledge of print | • Predictable and rhyming text  
• Books that follow a pattern so children can fill in the words  
• Humorous books  
• Books with illustrations that the class can enjoy and share  
• Poetry  
• Word walls |
| GUIDED READING        | The teacher works with a small group of students who are on approximately the same level of reading and have similar needs. The group works with books that have been selected by the teacher to match the group’s reading level. The group reads the book out loud and the teacher works with each member to support basic reading strategies. Specific skills and strategies are taught in a supportive session. | • Provides the opportunity for students to receive help on specific needs and to read books on their specific level  
• Provides the opportunity for students to receive ‘scaffolding’ or support on reading strategies  
• Allows teacher to individualize instruction for each group and to work with each student based on data collected during continuous assessment | • Books that are on the student’s level of reading  
• At first, books that are easy and short; later, some longer texts and chapter books  
• Books that reflect a wide range of content, topics, and genres  
• Information-rich texts, that is, those in which meaning is signaled in multiple ways—the illustrations, the syntax, the context, the print |
| INDEPENDENT READING  | Children read books independently that have been chosen by the teacher, or that they have chosen from a range of material on their own level. The teacher carefully selects a range of books that the students can read based on current reading level. | • Allows students to practice reading independently  
• Provides an opportunity for children to practice reading strategies on their own  
• Promotes reading at home when children see independent reading being modeled by everyone in the classroom  
• Allows children to choose their own books and read them in a comfortable and enjoyable setting | • A variety of picture books, trade books, chapter books  
• Many genres including nonfiction should be provided  
• Books that have been “levored” or graded according to certain criteria so that they match the students’ reading ability  
• Manuals, reference materials such as dictionaries, menus or recipes, charts, diagrams, and maps |
<table>
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<th>Type of Writing</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose(s)</th>
<th>Types of Written Text</th>
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| SHARED WRITING     | The teacher provides full support for the children by writing down what the children dictate. The children can assist the teacher by helping with the spelling and wording of the sentences. The teacher then reads it back to the children and the text is reread over and over again. | ✤ Provides a model of phrased, fluent writing  
      ✤ Promotes language development  
      ✤ Develops concepts of print  
      ✤ Allows children to share in the process of writing text and becoming authors at a very young age  
      ✤ Involves children in an enjoyable literacy experience | ✤ Large print piece on a large chart and written with markers  
      ✤ Poems  
      ✤ Stories after field trips  
      ✤ Postreading discussion charts  
      ✤ Holiday descriptions  
      ✤ K-W-L charts  
      ✤ Biographies  
      ✤ Descriptions of events  
      ✤ Brainstorming maps |
| INTERACTIVE WRITING | The teacher provides a high level of support by writing most of the text but will share the pen with individual children who will write letters, words, and phrases. Often, the teacher will hold the pen with the child and help form the letters together. The message or story is composed by the whole class and then reread. | ✤ Allows the class to partake in an enjoyable shared literacy experience  
      ✤ Allows teacher to model specific writing strategies  
      ✤ Increases children’s knowledge of print  
      ✤ All children partake in composing and constructing the written piece | ✤ Large-print piece written with markers  
      ✤ Poetry  
      ✤ Lists of things  
      ✤ Retelling a story from a book  
      ✤ Postreading discussion charts  
      ✤ Familiar stories  
      ✤ Summary of events from the day |
| GUIDED WRITING      | The teacher provides some support, but children are starting to work independently to master writing strategies. The teacher gives a mini-lesson to the whole class or small group on a specific aspect of writing and then guides students as they write on their own. The teacher may work with small groups of students to provide support. The teacher will give individual conferences to students as they work. Specific skills and strategies are taught in a supportive session. | ✤ Provides the opportunity for students to receive help on specific needs and to write independently while still receiving support  
      ✤ Provides the opportunity for students to receive “scaffolding” or support on writing strategies  
      ✤ Allows teacher to individualize instruction  
      ✤ Children select their own topics or have a range of choices to write about | ✤ Children can choose from an array of topics on which to write  
      ✤ Prompts such as photographs and interesting picture can be provided  
      ✤ Word walls, dictionaries should be provided  
      ✤ A print-rich environment should be available for children to write |
| INDEPENDENT WRITING | Children write independently on topics with little support from the teacher except when needed. | ✤ Allows students to practice writing independently  
      ✤ Children know how to use the resources available to compose and spell | ✤ A variety of prompts should be available to help children choose a topic  
      ✤ Many different types of writing are provided as a model |