INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL RENEWAL

Comprehensive Literacy Framework

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The Comprehensive Literacy Framework

THE COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY FRAMEWORK:
An Introduction

The Institute for Education Renewal (IER) has developed the Comprehensive Literacy Framework in order to bring to teachers a clear, concise picture of research-supported strategies that will help every child become a competent reader and writer. The Comprehensive Literacy Framework is the foundation for IER's literacy work within the school community.

The Comprehensive Literacy Framework combines **systematic, explicit instruction** on skills and strategies with **authentic, meaningful activities** that will engage students in their learning. It recognizes the growing consensus that children learn most effectively from balanced literacy instruction based on their developmental needs (Joint Position Statement of the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998). It reflects all of the components of literacy instruction that are necessary for children to reach the high standards that have been mandated at state and local levels. In addition, this Framework is compatible with the use of multilevel, culturally responsive teaching strategies that lead to effective learning (Hale, 2001; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Strickland, 1994).

Oral Communication: The Foundation of Literacy

The overarching belief of the Framework is that oral communication is the foundation on which all literacy skills are built. Strong listening and speaking skills are essential tools for children to become successful readers and writers (Nelson, 1989). It is critical that teachers remain aware of the importance of oral communication in every aspect of literacy instruction and throughout the school day, particularly for those children who have come to school with limited oral language skills. Research confirms that children's literacy develops most effectively using active, creative strategies that engage them fully in interactions with the teacher and with each other, rather than "silent, passive, and socially isolating work" (ODE, 1991, 22; Zemelman, 2000; IRA Statement).

Oral communication is part of every subject area. The way in which teachers and children exchange information determines how effectively the children will

learn. Children also need ample opportunities for interaction with their peers. When oral language is used to create meaning and purpose in the classroom, children become more fully engaged in their learning and they are able to organize their learning more effectively.

Reading, Writing, Language and Word Study: The Building Blocks of Literacy

Like a child working with building blocks, the teacher manipulates these three major "blocks" of the Comprehensive Literacy Framework in order to create a solid structure for children's learning. The Framework is designed to give teachers a visual way of understanding the pieces that are necessary for a complete literacy curriculum. Each block (and the sub-blocks within it) can be put into place separately, but all are necessary to achieve the goal of successful learning for all children. The blocks overlap and interconnect in ways that make teaching and learning challenging, satisfying, and successful.

The **Reading Block** includes Read Aloud, Modeled/Shared Reading, Guided Reading, and Independent Reading, providing students with comprehensive instruction in decoding, fluency, and comprehension strategies. The block is completed with Literature Study and Reading in the Content Areas that encourage students to become critical readers and thinkers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1998; Taberski, 2000; Gambrell, Morrow, Newman, & Pressley, 1999; Calkins, 2000; Trelease, 2000; Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999; Put Reading First, 2001).

The core of the **Writing Block** includes Modeled/Shared Writing, Guided Writing, and Independent Writing. Writing in the Content Areas reaches beyond this core and gives students the opportunity to integrate and expand their writing skills into other areas of the curriculum. Like the Reading Block, this comprehensive writing curriculum provides appropriate, targeted, intensive instruction for students, while fostering independence and creative, critical thinking (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2000; Gambrell, Morrow, Neuman, & Pressley, 1999; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998; Graves, 1991).

Every component of the **Language and Word Study Block** is critical to the development of literacy. Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Letter/Word Concepts, Vocabulary, and Grammar are closely intertwined as teachers plan systematic, explicit literacy instruction. Linking these sub-blocks within

meaningful contexts enhances students' ability to become fluent readers and to comprehend text (Put Reading First, 2001; Cunningham & Hall, 1997; Moats, 1998; Ganske, 2000; Bear, Inernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2000).

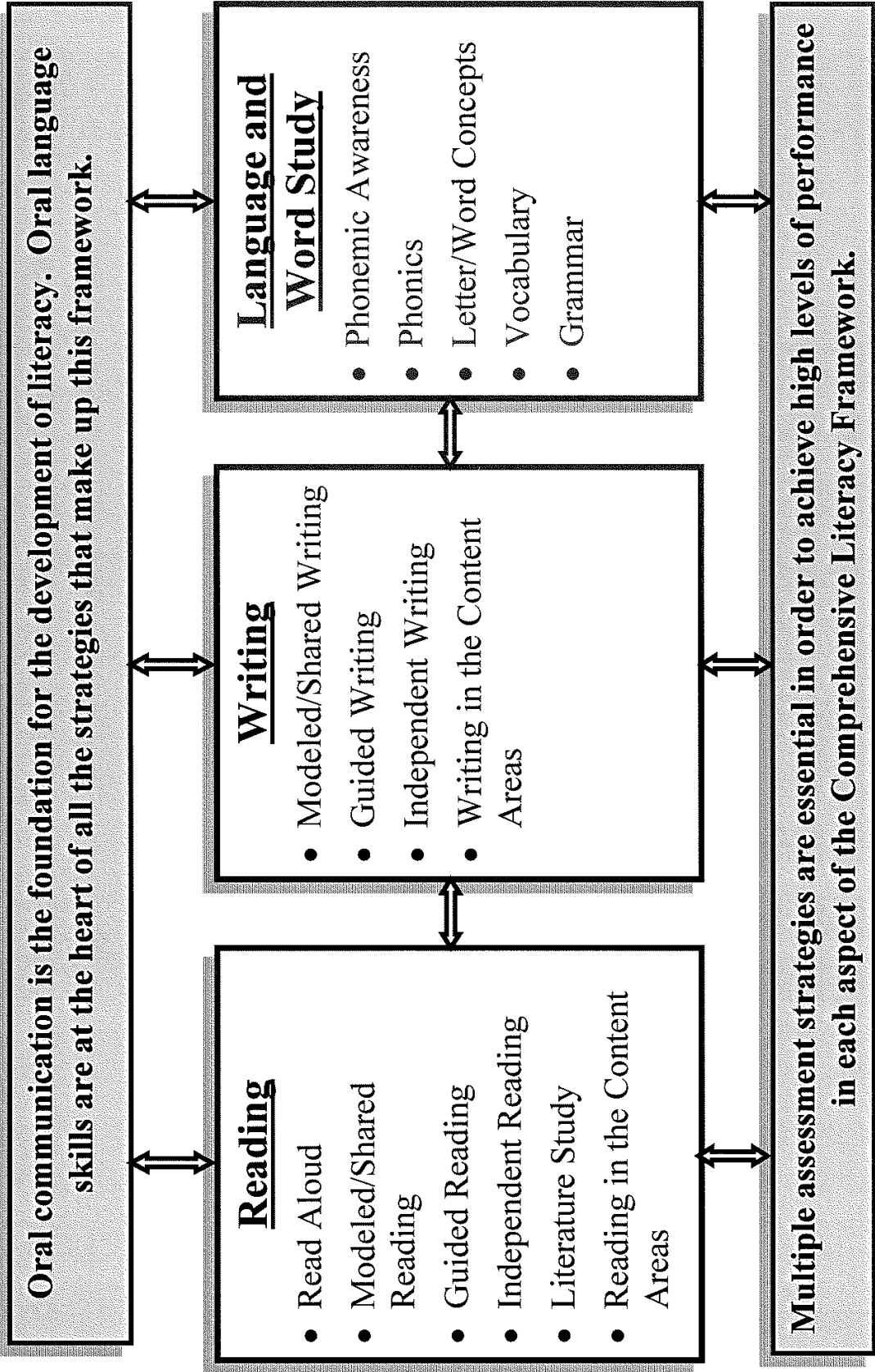**Assessment: The Mortar that Strengthens Literacy**

Assessment is the mortar that holds together all the components of literacy instruction, providing the strength needed to build each child's growth as a reader and writer. Effective student assessment includes not only assessment **of** learning, but assessment **for** learning. Many teachers associate assessment solely with the summative forms so prevalent in education today – state mandated tests such as the achievement test, short cycle evaluations, or end of unit tests. Authentic assessment is both formative and summative; it is continual and is integral to the curriculum.

Assessment **for** learning begins when teachers identify students' needs as the basis for planning instruction. As teachers implement the Framework, they will use a variety of formative assessment strategies, including effective observation, leveling of students' reading ability, conferences focused on essential skills and analysis of student work. These measures will help teachers gain dependable information about student learning and how it can be used to inform instruction, as well as to evaluate performance (Stiggins, 1999; Wiggins, 1998). In addition, throughout every component of the Comprehensive Literacy Framework, teachers seek ways to make classroom assessment student-centered, involving students directly in the assessment process and inviting them to take ownership of their own learning (Stiggins, 1999).

Resources

IER consultants have studied the current literature on how literacy develops and have worked with classroom teachers to develop the concepts and approaches in this Comprehensive Literacy Framework. We have gathered the best, current ideas that are available, in order to create a Framework that is accessible to teachers and that will help schools reach the levels of student achievement that parents, teachers, and the community desire. This Framework has been developed through the study and synthesis of the resources that follow. Teachers can use this resource list to study literacy development further and to explore individual topics of interest.

COMPONENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Oral communication is the foundation for the development of literacy. Oral language skills are at the heart of all the strategies that make up this framework.

Language and Word Study

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Letter/Word Concepts
- Vocabulary
- Grammar

Writing

- Modeled/Shared Writing
- Guided Writing
- Independent Writing
- Writing in the Content Areas

Reading

- Read Aloud
- Modeled/Shared Reading
- Guided Reading
- Independent Reading
- Literature Study
- Reading in the Content Areas

Multiple assessment strategies are essential in order to achieve high levels of performance in each aspect of the Comprehensive Literacy Framework.

READING COMPONENTS

Read Aloud

- The teacher reads aloud to the whole group using carefully selected literature.

- Reading aloud provides opportunities for students to enjoy fine literature and to expand their vocabularies, learn new information, develop reading strategies, and learn how text is organized. It develops fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

- Selection of text includes both fiction and non-fiction. Often, these are selections that children cannot read independently. The teacher demonstrates and discusses skills that will be carried over into the students' independent reading.

Modeled/Shared Reading

- In modeled reading, the students follow along as the teacher reads an enlarged text. In shared reading, the children read together with the teacher from an enlarged text.

- Modeled/Shared reading demonstrates the reading process and provides opportunities to model reading strategies. It develops fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

- The texts are ones that children may not be able to read independently, but can read successfully in unison with the teacher and their classmates. Selections may include big books, poems, songs, choral readings, and retellings. After these reading sessions, teachers and students may revisit the text to highlight particular word study or comprehension strategies.

Guided Reading

- Guided reading is an instructional strategy that links systematic reading instruction with independent reading.

- Across the grades, guided reading is the means for children to develop decoding and comprehension strategies that are needed to master the complexity of the reading process.

- The teacher identifies a small group of children who have a similar instructional need or interest and brings them together for lessons targeted to that need. These groups are flexible, and the composition of the group varies according to the changing needs of the children. The lessons target a particular strategy that will help that group of students solve problems in their reading and move on to continually more challenging texts. The reading level should be at 90 percent text accuracy. While the emphasis in guided reading is on a particular skill or component of the reading process, the overall focus is on finding meaning in the text.

  Once a guided reading group has been formed, "The teacher selects and introduces texts to readers, sometimes supports them while reading the text, engages the readers in a discussion, and makes teaching points after the reading" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 193).   After the lesson, the students engage in independent reading or written activities that connect to the strategy that was addressed in the lesson. The teacher engages in an ongoing process of observation and assessment that guides the progress of students toward reading proficiency.

Independent Reading

- Independent reading is "a systematic way of supporting and guiding students as they read on their own" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 116). Unlike other reading time (e.g., SSR and DEAR), independent reading is an integral part of reading instruction within the literacy block.

- Independent reading provides students the opportunity to practice their reading skills, to develop new reading strategies, and to reflect on what they have read. It supports decoding and develops fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

- Teachers use book talks, mini-lessons, and conferences to help students select books of interest.   During independent reading, students are directed to practice particular skills that they have learned in guided reading or other reading instruction. Students may keep weekly reading logs, participate in literature circles, respond to a book through writing, read with tapes or

partners, read big books, use graphic organizers, or work on an extension activity.

The teacher continually assesses the needs of individual students through mini-conferences, shared reading, and guided reading activities, and guides students to select materials that are matched to their appropriate reading level (95 percent text accuracy) to gain the most benefit. During conferences the teacher can assess each child's progress through oral retellings, discussions, and running records, and the teacher can also provide instruction in particular reading skills.

Literature Study

- Literature study crosses many elements of the Comprehensive Literacy Framework. It is a separate area of instruction that gradually builds students' ability to read, comprehend, and appreciate fine fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, etc.

- Through literature study, students learn to use interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes "in order to create shared meanings that are more refined and complex than they would discover on their own" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 40).

- Selections for literature study reflect the interests of students and connections to other parts of the curriculum. An important element of literature study is discussion, using a variety of techniques that enhance thinking and communication skills. Literature study also includes written responses that develop writing skills and enhance content learning.

  Literature study in the Comprehensive Literacy Framework often includes these effective teaching strategies:

  ✓ Literature Circles
  ✓ Great Books discussions
  ✓ Author studies
  ✓ Genre studies
  ✓ Character studies
  ✓ Theme studies
  ✓ Study of literary terms and techniques

Reading in the Content Area

- The Comprehensive Literacy Framework is based on the premise that every teacher in the school is a reading teacher and that reading instruction takes place all day. Every teacher is responsible for developing each student's skills to enable him/her to read using a variety of strategies, to comprehend using content-based texts, and to experience many subject area genres.

- Many reading skills are best addressed within the context of content area learning.

- As teachers plan units of study in math, science, social studies, art, and other content areas, they should include instruction in reading strategies (e.g., making connections, developing specialized vocabulary, identifying essential information, etc.) that build students' abilities to use fiction and non-fiction to construct lasting learning.

WRITING COMPONENTS

Modeled/Shared Writing

- In modeled writing, the teacher demonstrates writing a text. In shared writing, the teacher and students work together to compose a text that the students can read later.

- Modeled/shared writing provides opportunities to plan and construct text in order to demonstrate how writing works, to focus on specific word study or writing skills, and to serve as a written resource for independent classroom reading. Shared writing also enables students' ideas to be recorded as they construct text with the teacher.

- The teacher uses chart paper or an overhead to present a text that will demonstrate particular skills or writing strategies based on the writing needs of the group. The teacher may demonstrate alone (modeled writing) or work with the students (shared writing) to develop a topic. The teacher may actually "share the pen" with the children (interactive writing) in order to draw attention to letters, sounds, words, and writing techniques. These strategies are often part of guided writing or independent writing mini-lessons.

Guided Writing

- Guided writing introduces students to multiple genres of writing and to the writing skills that are needed to become proficient writers.

- Through guided writing, students develop the essential link between thinking and writing, using a variety of strategies (graphic organizers, "formula" writing, writing prompts, etc.) to support that connection. It provides the opportunity for the teacher to assess and instruct the students in small or large group settings.

- Teachers plan specific writing activities to develop standards-based writing skills. In guided writing, particular topics and techniques are assigned. They are often demonstrated in mini-lessons that use modeled/shared writing. Often guided writing takes place in flexible groups that vary according to the changing needs of the children. Guided writing activities frequently take place in connection with learning in the content areas.

Independent Writing

- Independent writing gives students the opportunity to generate their own topics and to develop these topics in a self-directed writing process through drafting, revising, editing, and publishing pieces of writing.

- Independent writing allows for choice by children, encourages independence and creativity, increases writing ability, and develops student voice.

- The Writing Workshop is an effective way of structuring independent writing activities. Teachers plan an authoring cycle of approximately eight weeks, with workshop sessions two or three times a week. Each session begins with a mini-lesson that highlights particular grade level expectations in writing. The mini-lesson is followed by an extended, independent writing period during which the student writes on a topic of his/her choice while the teacher conducts short, individual writing conferences. Each session ends with students sharing their writing. By the end of each authoring cycle, each student publishes at least one revised and edited piece of writing, and the class has an author celebration.

Writing in the Content Areas

- The Comprehensive Literacy Framework is based on the premise that every teacher in the school is a writing teacher. Every teacher is responsible for developing each student's ability to use the writing process when generating written products, to write in a variety of genres and for many purposes, and to use the standard conventions of English in his/her writing.

- Many writing skills are best addressed within the context of content area learning. Informational writing is particularly important, not only to develop writing skills, but also to enhance lasting learning of content material.

- As teachers plan units of study in the content areas, they should include instruction that covers a variety of writing strategies, not only during the literacy period but also throughout the school day.

LANGUAGE AND WORD STUDY COMPONENTS

Phonemic Awareness

- Phonemic awareness is an auditory process involving the student's ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.

- The understanding that spoken words are made up of sounds improves the student's ability to read, comprehend, and spell. It provides the foundation needed in order to learn phonics.

- Phonemic awareness can be taught and learned, and it should be a regular part of literacy instruction for children in primary grades. Teachers focus on activities that manipulate spoken words by segmenting and blending phonemes. Unlike phonics, instruction in phonemic awareness involves the oral manipulation of sounds.

  Literacy skills vary in children of all ages; therefore, we need to assess the phonemic awareness of students from kindergarten through middle school to determine their ability to hear and manipulate sounds. Through flexible grouping, older students who need further assistance in developing these skills should be provided with instruction to meet their needs.

Phonics

- Phonics is the relationship between written letters (graphemes) and spoken sounds (phonemes).

- Phonics gives children the understanding of the predictable relationship between letters and sounds. For many children, it provides the foundation for reading and writing words.

- Phonics instruction should be systematic and explicit, introducing a set of letter-sound relationships in a clearly defined sequence. Phonics instruction also gives children substantial practice in applying knowledge of these relationships as they read and write. Throughout phonics instruction, students must carry over phonics skills into meaningful contexts. This may

include teaching decoding strategies during guided and shared reading instruction as well as shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing.

Letter/Word Concepts

- This component of the Comprehensive Literacy Framework covers many of the technical aspects of reading and writing, such as spelling, handwriting, and the knowledge of print features. Teachers use instruction in letter/word concepts to teach children to identify and analyze the structure of words and print.

- Instruction in letter/word concepts allows the child to learn the many aspects of written language that are required in order to make sense of reading and writing.

- Students should have experiences with alphabet centers, word walls, quality literature, and word study activities that help them develop reading and writing strategies. Systematic word study (Ganske, 2000) is an effective way to teach the complexities of spelling. Students need guided practice in forming letters and words to communicate clearly in writing. Beginning with learning that we read from left to right all the way to learning to use complex features of middle school textbooks, students need to gain awareness of the features of print that support their reading.

Vocabulary

- Vocabulary instruction provides students with the meaning of words they must know to read and communicate effectively.

- In order to gain meaning from their reading, students must have a vocabulary that supports their understanding of the written word. Students must know most of the words they read in order to understand the text.

- In order to be effective, vocabulary knowledge should be taught in meaningful contexts. Teachers may provide specific instruction of vocabulary that students will use in a particular text or area of study. Children learn the meaning of most words indirectly through daily oral language experiences. Teachers can best expose children to a wide variety of

words through read alouds, modeled/shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading.

Grammar

- Grammar is the study of conventions of language and punctuation.

- A strong understanding of grammar allows students to communicate effectively in writing and speech and to clearly process text.

- Grammar conventions ideally should be taught through mini-lessons that are part of meaningful reading and writing activities rather than as separate, direct instruction. When planning standards-based instruction, teachers should be mindful of the importance of language conventions, identify which conventions should be introduced at various grade levels, seek ways to embed them in literacy instruction, and devise ways to monitor students' progress in the use of conventions.

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