

# Components of Balanced Literacy

## National Reading Panel Topics    Reading Foundations

### Interactive Read Aloud

**Comprehension (Text Comprehension, Vocabulary)**

**Comprehension, Vocabulary**

Interactive Read Aloud is a time when the teacher reads a piece of quality writing aloud to the whole class and stops at planned points to ask questions that elicit student response. Students learn to think deeply about text, to listen to others and to grow their own ideas.

### Shared Reading

**Comprehension (Text Comprehension, Vocabulary)**

**Comprehension, Vocabulary**

Shared Reading is a type of focus lesson in which either enlarged print is utilized, or all students have the text to “share” the reading process with a group of students. The teacher uses this time to explicitly model reading strategies and skills that the students need to learn. The responsibility for reading is “shared” between the teachers and the students, although the teacher reads most of the text. Shared writing may be a component.

### Guided Reading/ Strategy Groups

**Comprehension (Text Comprehension, Vocabulary)**

**Comprehension, Vocabulary**

The overall purpose of guided reading is to enable students to read for meaning. The teacher meets with a small group that needs to work on a specific strategy or that has a similar reading level. Each student has a copy of the text and reads it quietly. The teacher uses this time to explicitly teach and to have students practice the strategy they need to learn. Written comprehension work may be a component or follow-up activity. Fountas and Pinnell describe essential components:

- A teacher works with a small group.
- Students in the group are similar in their development of a reading process and are able to read about the same level of text.
- Teachers introduce the stories and assist students’ reading in ways that help to develop independent reading strategies.
- Each student reads the whole text.
- The goal is for students to read independently and silently.
- The emphasis is on reading increasingly challenging books over time.
- Students are grouped and regrouped in a dynamic process that involves ongoing observation and assessment.

### Inquiry Circles; Literature Circles/Book Clubs

The purpose of inquiry circles or literature circles/ book clubs is to engage students in thinking, discussing, researching, and asking and answering questions. These take a variety of forms, such as: discussion of various types of texts, including novels, poetry, and non-fiction; mini-inquiries around a research topic; curricular inquiry; and open inquiries. Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels describe the various types in more detail.

## **Independent Reading/Reader's Workshop**

**Fluency, Comprehension**

**Fluency, Comprehension**

Independent Reading is a time when students read text (either self-selected or teacher recommended) at their independent reading level to practice reading strategies and to develop fluency and automaticity. The teacher confers with students one-on-one, prompts the use of the strategies, discusses various aspects of the text, and learns about each student as a reader. Students may respond to the text in meaningful ways through writing, discussing, or sketching.

## **Independent Reading Conference**

**Comprehension (Text Comprehension, Vocabulary), Alphabetic (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics), Fluency**

**Comprehension, Fluency, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary**

An Independent Reading Conference is a time when the teacher works one-on-one with a student to teach the student what s/he needs to learn about reading. The teacher uses the conference to assess (research) what the student needs to learn, to decide what to teach the student and then to teach the student.

## **Writer's Workshop**

Writer's Workshop is a time when specific writing skills are taught explicitly and practiced. Mini-lessons may focus on a type of writing (narrative, opinion, informational) or on conventions. The teacher chooses the focus of the lesson based on analysis of the students' writing samples. The lesson includes direct modeling and explanation and time for students to practice what they have learned. While students are practicing, the teacher conferences with students about their writing and provides feedback which is primarily related to the focus of the lesson.

## **Word Study/ Word Work**

**Alphabetic (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics) Phonemic Awareness, Phonics**

Word Study is the study of our alphabetic symbol system. This involves the areas of phonics (letter/sound relationships), morphemic analysis (using word parts to denote meaning), and automaticity for sight words. Word study involves both the decoding (reading) and encoding (phonics and spelling) of our symbol system so students can make meaning from and author's message and convey meaning by creating their own message. Writing words and/or sentences may be a component of word work.

### **Levels of Support for Reading:**

1. Read Aloud
2. Shared Reading
3. Guided Reading or Inquiry Circles/Literature Circles
4. Independent Practice

### **Levels of Support for Writing:**

1. Modeled Writing
2. Shared/Interactive Writing
3. Guided Practice in Writing
4. Independent Practice

## **Sources:**

- Methuen Massachusetts School District
- *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children* by Irene C. Fountas & Gay Su Pinnell
- *Balanced Literacy Framework* by Paul Bloomberg
- *Collaboration and Comprehension* by Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels