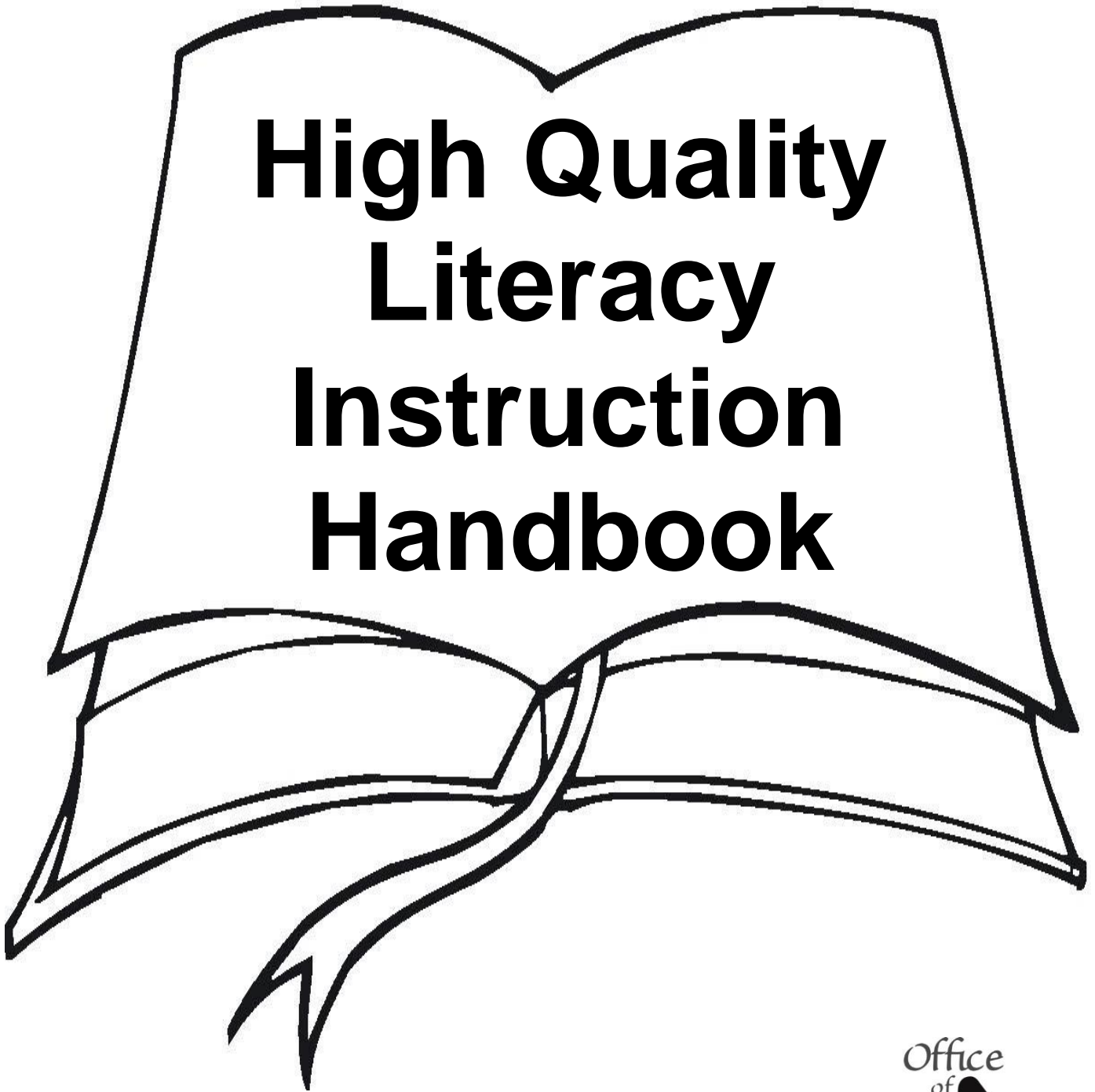




*Chicago Public Schools*

# High Quality Literacy Instruction Handbook



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## Introduction

The *Literacy Observation Guides* and this accompanying handbook were developed as part of the CPS professional development effort to deepen teacher and administrator knowledge of the four components of the Reading Instruction Framework of the Chicago Reading Initiative and to bring more consistency to literacy instruction within the 600 schools in the district. We hope you find these documents helpful in achieving our shared goal of improving literacy instruction and achievement for all students in the Chicago Public Schools so that they may participate more fully in the workplace and live more fulfilling lives.

The purpose of the *Handbook to the Literacy Observation Guides* is to assist observers who use the *Literacy Observation Guides* to understand the descriptions of recommended literacy instructional practices found in the guides. The handbook presents descriptions of teacher and student behaviors that should be observed when a teacher is implementing the recommended instructional practices with high fidelity. These recommended practices and their descriptions were gleaned from the latest research on high quality reading instruction, including research on students who are learning English as a second language and other students with special needs. The articles and books used as resources are referenced at the end of each section. Educators seeking additional information about the practices or procedures should refer to these referenced materials.

The *Literacy Observation Guides* are most appropriately used during an observation of the entire literacy instructional period. Even in a two hour instructional period, the observer cannot expect to see all of the instructional practices implemented to the same level. In fact, on a given day, a teacher may be working on teaching the writing process and thus will spend little or no time on some of the other instructional practices. On another day, the teacher may be conducting a guided silent reading lesson with related read aloud and meaningful vocabulary instruction and may not spend any time on other aspects of word study or the writing process. If one of the recommended practices does not fit logically into the instructional sequence on a given day, the observer should simply note that the practice was not observed because it would not fit appropriately into the lesson.

**CPS  
Grades K-3  
Literacy  
Observation  
Guidelines**

## Classroom Environment

Classroom environment has been shown to affect student literacy achievement. As students interact with their environment, they make adaptations to meet new situations. According to Allington (1996), students in literate classrooms where they are expected to be successful readers and writers who talk, read, and write daily, tend to outperform students in classrooms where these environmental features are less prevalent (as cited in Roskos & Neuman, 2002). The functional use of environmental print such as current student work, word walls, and labels throughout the room has proven benefits. It is also important to organize the room in ways that invite social interaction and create well defined spaces. A classroom library is another essential part of a literacy program; however, it is not enough to simply make books more accessible. Students who benefit the most from classroom libraries have teachers who understand how to stimulate problem solving and creative thinking and who can organize activities that energize and strengthen the students' literacy learning in the classroom (Roskos & Neuman, 2002).

Classroom environment refers not only to the extrinsic elements of physical organization and the environmental print of the classroom, but also to the intrinsic elements of social interactions and student motivation. A critical intrinsic element to the classroom environment is the role of motivation in literacy. Students who are motivated to read will read more and are better readers (Allington, 2001). There are several classroom characteristics that have been proven to foster motivation: access to reading materials, opportunities to select reading materials, time spent engaged in independent reading, social interactions regarding books (conversations, group and partner work), and cultural identification with text and characters in the text (Lapp et al., 2004).

### The role of the teacher is:

- To model and promote reading.
- To design and organize the classroom to support literacy.
- To post/use environmental print such as labels, word walls, charts, calendars, and student work.
- To give students the opportunity to self-select reading material from the classroom library.
- To provide independent reading time.
- To organize the classroom library to include a wide variety of genres at different reading levels.
- To promote cultural connections through reading and provide access to relevant text.
- To provide opportunities for discussion and response to reading selections.

### The role of the student is:

- To contribute to and use the classroom environmental print to support his/her reading and writing.
- To select meaningful reading material to be read and to read during independent reading time.
- To participate in discussions about his/her reading and to respond in a variety of formats (group and partner work).

### The observer will see:

- Environmental print in the classroom including current student work, print featuring aspects of the curriculum currently under study, word walls, and labeled areas and items throughout the room.
- An organized library including a variety of genres and reading levels representing a variety of cultures.
- The students selecting books for independent reading and reading the books independently in a wide variety of genres for multiple purposes.
- The students responding in a variety of ways to their reading.
- The students and teachers engaging and participating in discussions about their reading.

## Resources:

Allington, R. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers designing research-based programs*. Boston: Addison Wesley Longman.

Lapp, D., Block, C., Cooper, E., Flood, J., Roser, N., & Tinajero, J. (2004). Teaching all the children strategies for developing literacy in an urban setting.

New York: The Guilford Press.

Roskos, K., & Neuman, S. (2002). Environment and its early influences for early literacy teaching and learning. In K. Dickinson, & S. Neuman (Eds.), Handbook of early literacy research (pp. 26-33). New York: The Guilford Press.

## **Read Aloud**

The teacher reads aloud selections from narrative and expository text that are at the students' listening level but above their reading level. The purpose of reading aloud is to build vocabulary and to improve students' listening skills, reading comprehension abilities, and attitudes toward reading. During read aloud, students are exposed to vocabulary and written language syntax that they are unlikely to encounter in their daily oral language. Exposure to the more sophisticated vocabulary and syntax found in written text is a critical component in building comprehension skills (Rasinski, 2003). Shared reading is another version of reading aloud that is used at the kindergarten and first grade levels (see next literacy instructional practice sheet, "Shared Reading").

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To establish a literacy-rich environment that fosters a favorable attitude toward reading.
- To include books and other materials that students can read on their own.
- To engage prior knowledge.
- To share books with students and to model appropriate reading behavior.
- To assist students in constructing meaning from text through thinking aloud and making connections.
- To reread favorite books.
- To read a variety of books and other materials (including magazines and newspapers).
- To provide opportunities for students to respond to the reading selection in a variety of ways (i.e., drawing, writing, drama, etc.).

### **The role of the student is:**

- To make connections to his/her own experience or other reading selections.
- To enjoy listening to and discussing literature that is read aloud.
- To use descriptive language to explain and explore ideas in the literature he/she hears.
- To understand that print carries a message in literature.
- To connect new concepts and vocabulary to prior experience.
- To retell simple narrative stories.
- To provide a simple summary of an expository selection.
- To respond orally to text selection.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher setting a purpose for the read aloud.
- The teacher discussing and making connections to key vocabulary and concepts in the read aloud.
- The teacher commenting on and reinforcing what students are able to do well.
- The students making connections to ideas, events, and concepts in the reading selection.
- The students understanding that print carries a message.
- The students enjoying the reading selection.
- The students demonstrating comprehension by making predictions, summarizing, retelling, and/or describing the read aloud selection.

## **Resources:**

Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). Reading comprehension strategies for independent learners. New York: The Guilford Press.

Cunningham, P. M., & Allington, R. L. (1999). Classrooms that work: They ran all read and write. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: Addison Wesley Longman.

*CPS Grades K-3 Literacy Observation Guidelines*

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse. Rasinski, T. (2003). *The fluent reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

Shared reading. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: [http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_share\\_read.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_share_read.html)

## **Read Aloud: Shared Reading (K-1)**

Shared reading involves teachers reading aloud with groups of children in a manner similar to story book reading at home. In the classroom, the use of a big book or another form of enlarged text such as a poem, nursery rhyme, or familiar song allows the students to view both the pictures and words. A shared reading text is generally at a level higher than the students' independent reading level. During a shared reading experience, the teacher reads the selected text aloud a number of different times. The first reading of the text is for pleasure. In additional readings, the teacher invites the students to join in the reading of text.

During repeated readings, the teacher can build comprehension, discuss interesting language or vocabulary, develop phonemic awareness, introduce print concepts (i.e., directionality), identify sight words, or model decoding and self-monitoring skills in the context of the text.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To read aloud texts with rich, authentic language in an enjoyable format.
- To build awareness of the print concepts and language patterns in the text.
- To model reading skills such as decoding, rereading, and self-monitoring in the context of text.
- To provide opportunities to make predictions and draw inferences while reading.
- To encourage students to "join in" on the repeat readings of the text.
- To improve the comprehension skills of sequencing and summarizing by responding to the text through retelling activities such as storyboards, story maps, or character studies.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To enjoy and participate in reading text selections.
- To make predictions and inferences based upon the text.
- To understand print concepts such as directionality, spacing, and punctuation.
- To make connections to prior knowledge and develop vocabulary.
- To develop an understanding of text language and/or text structures.
- To understand that the spoken word can be written.
- To identify some sound and/or sight words in context.
- To respond to the text by retelling it in some format.

### **The observer will see:**

- The students and teacher reading aloud and discussing enjoyable text.
- The teacher asking students to make predictions or draw inferences throughout reading.
- The teacher modeling reading strategies and behaviors such as decoding, rereading, and self-monitoring.
- The teacher using the text to build phonemic awareness and decoding skills.
- The teacher discussing vocabulary, story language, and language patterns in a text.
- The teacher providing students with the opportunity to respond to the text through retelling in a variety of ways.
- The teacher prompting students to join in the reading of the text.
- The students reading with the teacher during repeated readings of the text.
- The students identifying story elements in the text.
- The students engaging in discussions about vocabulary and the use of language in the text.
- The students using the text to learn print concepts and decoding skills.



## Resources:

Armbruster, B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read. Retrieved June 6, 2004 from U.S. Department of Education, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Web site: [http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading\\_first1.html](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1.html)

Cunningham, P. M. (1995). Phonics they use: Words for reading and writing. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Harper Collins.

Holdaway, D. (1984). Stability and change in literacy learning. Ontario, Canada: Althouse Press.

## Scaffolding Comprehension Strategies

Scaffolding instruction is “the systematic sequencing of prompted content, materials, tasks, and teacher and peer support to optimize learning” (Dickson, Chard, & Simmons, 1993, p. 12). Scaffolding reading experiences for primary students allows the teacher to initially model the task the student is expected to perform independently. Modeling is the process of showing or demonstrating for someone how to use or do something he or she does not know how to do (Bandura, 1986). As the student moves from performing the task with continuous support and begins to master that task, the support lessens until the student is able to complete the task independently.

Primary students need scaffolding in their reading instruction as they move from emergent to independent readers. Teachers can provide this assistance initially by tapping into students’ background knowledge by using texts that have familiar concepts and easy-to-see print separate from the pictures that clearly illustrate the text message. As students move from emergent to early readers, teachers can continue to scaffold their abilities by supporting student talk about the reading selection and by modeling how to think aloud in response to the text. By allowing children to discuss what they have read and by demonstrating how print conveys meaning through letters, endings, word parts, and vocabulary, teachers set students on the pathway to independence, reducing the support as they assume increased responsibility for their learning (Fried, 2003, pp. 108-118).

### The role of the teacher is:

- To select texts with specific comprehension strategies that are easy to model.
- To read the text and plan how to use the text (e.g., where to stop and think aloud).
- To connect to students’ background knowledge by encouraging them to talk to each other about the narrative or informational text to be read.
- To model the learning task by thinking aloud during reading and by providing feedback as needed to foster student independence in completing the learning task.
- To give students multiple exposures (repeated readings) to the text for increased opportunities for skill/strategy/concept support and practice.
- To gradually release control of the task to students (according to Rodriguez: from teacher modeling, students observing; teacher modeling, students assisting; students performing, teacher assisting; to students performing independently) (as quoted by Rafael, 2004).

### The role of the student is:

- To actively listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task/strategy.
- To practice and apply the skill/strategy/concept in multiple learning situations.
- To monitor his/her own comprehension as expected from a primary student.
- To lessen dependency on teacher-guided instruction as his/her skill level increases to mastery.
- To perform the learning task—at first, with assistance from the teacher; then gradually assuming responsibility for performing the task independently.

### The observer will see:

- The teacher thinking aloud while demonstrating a strategy and how and when to use it.
- The teacher inviting and encouraging participation from the students as they assist the teacher in working through the strategy.
- The students developing their understanding of the strategy, practicing the strategy, and the teacher assisting at the students’ point of need.

- The students' independent application of the strategy with a variety of texts.

### **Resources:**

Bandura, A. (1986). Psychological modeling: Conflicting theories. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.

Dickson, S. V., Chard, D. J., & Simmons, D. C. (1993). An integrated reading/writing curriculum: A focus on scaffolding. LDForum, 18[4], 12-16. Fried, M. (2003). Scaffolding the first reading of a book for children who are learning to read. In G. S. Pinnell & P. L. Scharer, Teaching for comprehension in reading: Grades K-2 (pp. 108-118). New York: Scholastic.

Rafael, T. (2004, January). Presentation to CPS teachers. Presented at Symphony Center, Chicago, IL.

### **Making Connections**

A primary reason to incorporate strategic instruction into reading lessons is to provide students with opportunities to make connections to the selections they read. Making connections to the text enhances student comprehension. These can be *text-self*, *text-text*, and *text-world* connections. If students are able to personally connect to text, they can begin to use their new knowledge to make connections to the larger world and have a clearer understanding of the relevancy of the selected reading material. Research has shown that connecting students' prior knowledge to a reading selection deepens their comprehension (Harvey, 1998).

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To determine the text type (genre) of the reading selection.
- To set the purpose for reading.
- To model his/her own thinking about connections to self, other texts, and the world during reading.
- To model making connections to text.
- To monitor student use of labeling text as student knowledge of making connections increases.
- To model making meaningful connections to text by encouraging students to stop and ask themselves how the connection enhances their comprehension.
- To help students understand how making connections increases their comprehension of the reading selection.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To demonstrate understanding of labeling of text (*text-self*, *text-text*, *text-world*) that encourages thinking while reading.
- To provide oral or written connections to reading selections through individual or cooperative group activities.
- To monitor his/her own abilities to make meaningful connections to text that actually increases comprehension of the reading selection.
- To demonstrate the ability to make connections in informational or narrative text in discussion and in writing.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher modeling the labeling of text (*text-self*, *text-text*, *text-world*) that will foster students' abilities to make connections to the reading selection.
- The students labeling the reading selections (*text-self*, *text-text*, *text-world*) while making connections to text.
- The students self-monitoring/self-regulating their abilities to make meaningful connections to text during reading by making sure the connections they are making are related to the reading selection only.
- The students making connections using a variety of reading selections.

**Resources:**

- Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Harvey, S. (1998). Nonfiction matters: Reading, writing and research in grades 3-8. Ontario, Canada: Pembroke.
- Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

**Word Study: Word Analysis and Decoding**

Word analysis is what readers do when they do not instantly recognize a word. This analysis can include left-to-right blending of sounds, the use of known parts of words, phonics, structural analysis, and/or context clues. When students read, they use decoding and structural analysis to identify unfamiliar words. Decoding is the ability to translate letters into sounds and to use word patterns (rhymes and onsets) to determine word meanings. Structural analysis involves identifying and using word elements such as root words, contractions, prefixes, and suffixes when reading.

The purpose of word study is to introduce and teach phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationships, phonics, and spelling patterns (see literacy instructional practice sheet, “Phonemic Awareness”). Word study assists students in achieving the automatic word recognition necessary for fluency and proficient comprehension (see literacy instructional practice sheet, “Fluency”) (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001).

**The role of the teacher is:**

- To provide instruction so that students develop phonemic awareness.
- To systematically teach letters, sounds, spelling patterns, structural analysis, decoding, and word analysis.
- To model using a combination of context clues and phonics to discover new words.
- To orally model using sound-symbol relationships to discover new words.
- To consistently monitor students’ progress.
- To provide opportunities for students to read easy and familiar books and decodable texts to facilitate the fluency required for comprehension.
- To teach sight words in the context of text.
- To provide opportunities for students to use developmental spelling in their writing.
- To use activities such as word walls, word sorts, and word making to promote students’ word recognition and spelling.

**The role of the student is:**

- To use word analysis skills when reading and writing.
- To orally demonstrate comprehension of sound-symbol relationships.
- To use the spelling patterns of known words to decode, read, and spell new words.
- To use knowledge of letters and sounds to write phonetically during developmental spelling.
- To recognize sight words in context.
- To use the word wall in a variety of ways.

**The observer will see:**

- The students in whole group or small group explicit instruction working with letters and words.
- The students using word wall activities to strengthen word recognition and word analysis abilities.
- The students participating in multi-sensory activities to learn phonemic awareness and letter-sound relationships.
- The students using word analysis skills when reading and writing.

- The students reading easy, familiar, and decodable texts.
- The students writing at their developmental level and using developmental spelling in their writing.
- The students participating in word study activities such as word sorts and word making.

### Resources:

Adams, M. J. (1990). Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Armbruster, B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read. Retrieved June 6, 2004 from U.S. Department of Education, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Web site: [http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading\\_first1.html](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1.html)

Bear, D. R., & Templeton, S. (1998). Explorations in developmental spelling: Foundations for learning and teaching phonics, spelling and vocabulary. The Reading Teacher, 52, 222 - 242.

Cunningham, P. M. (1995). Phonics they use: Words for reading and writing. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Harper Collins.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1999). Matching books to readers: Using leveled books in guided reading, K-3. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Shared reading. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: [http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_share\\_read.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_share_read.html)

### Word Study: Phonemic Awareness (K-1)

Phonemic awareness is the understanding that speech is composed of a series of individual sounds (Yopp, 1992). Phonemes, the smallest units of sound, determine the difference between *cat* and *mat*, for example. Students' awareness of identifying, segmenting, and manipulating these small units of sound is a notable predictor of reading achievement, especially in primary students. Phonemic awareness can be a more accurate predictor of reading achievement than vocabulary, listening comprehension, and nonverbal ability. Phonemic awareness is also highly correlated to reading acquisition, more than other reading readiness or intelligence tests, according to Stanovich (1986).

Making primary students aware of phonemes in speech can be difficult because they are not marked by physically defined boundaries in words and they are highly influenced by surrounding sounds in the same word (Yopp, 1992). Phonemic awareness activities are oral to foster students' hearing of phonemes in spoken language. Some developmentally appropriate activities for primary children include using nursery rhymes or Dr. Seuss rhymes, singing songs, reading books with alliterative patterns, and engaging in word play. Working with phonemes to further tune students' hearing of and manipulating phonemes includes sound matching, sound blending, sound isolation, sound addition, and sound substitution. Phonemic instruction should be intentional, playful, and engaging. Griffith and Olson (1992) argue that phonemic awareness activities will not be helpful unless they can be placed in the context of real reading and writing. For primary children, real reading and writing occurs as they begin to make connections between the sounds they have heard and the symbols they write to represent those sounds. One of the major ways to develop phonemic awareness is through developmental spelling (see literacy instructional practice sheet, "Developmental Spelling").

### The role of the teacher is:

- To share with students texts that lend themselves to developing student knowledge of rhyming words by segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds.
- To engage students in oral or word play activities and language games.
- To monitor students' progress consistently and provide early intervention for students whose demonstrated weaknesses are limiting their progress.
- To model the learning tasks by using the think aloud strategy for identifying, segmenting, blending, and manipulating phonemes.
- To model for students how to decode words through segmenting and blending the sounds/phonemes.

### The role of the student is:

- To actively listen and observe as the teacher models identifying, segmenting, blending, and manipulating phonemes.
- To engage in activities such as matching sounds, splitting syllables, isolating and approximating phonemes, segmenting sounds, and deleting and substituting beginning, middle, and ending sounds in words.

### The observer will see:

- The teacher engaging students in whole or small group explicit instruction using playful and engaging oral activities, language games, and word play.
- The teacher providing corrective feedback as students engage in phonemic awareness activities.
- The teacher asking students questions that encourage self-monitoring of identifying, segmenting, blending, manipulating, and substituting phonemes.
- The students showing familiarity with rhymes, alliteration, and syllables, consistent with the phonemic awareness continuum.

### **Resources:**

Griffith, P., & Olson, M. (1992). Phonemic awareness helps beginning readers break the code. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, 516-523. [Shared reading](#). (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site:

[http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_share\\_read.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_share_read.html)

Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 360-407.

Yopp, H. (1992). Developing phonemic awareness in young children. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, 696-702.

Yopp, H., & Yopp, R. (2000). Supporting phonemic awareness development in the classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 54, 130-142.

### **Word Study: Developmental Spelling (K-1)**

When students spell developmentally, they transfer the sounds they hear in oral language to written symbols. Providing opportunities for students to use phonetic developmental spelling strengthens the bond between reading and writing. As students write their own letter-sound associations, they reinforce their growing phonemic awareness and how it applies to reading and writing (Yopp & Yopp, 2000).

Without phonemic awareness, students are unable to make the connection between speech and written language. Daily writing through journals, learning logs, or written response to text provides a supportive context for the development of phonemic awareness and spelling. Demanding that all words be spelled correctly for the beginning writer eliminates the use of rich language and the opportunity for the student to explore and reinforce his/her understanding of the sound-symbol system.

Researchers have found that there is a developmental spelling continuum (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2004). Students generally begin to understand spelling by first representing words alphabetically through matching sounds to letters, by applying patterns to spelling, and lastly by understanding that certain groups of letters have meaning (i.e., prefixes and suffixes). Ongoing assessment of a student's phonetic spelling provides teachers with the information necessary for devising the differentiated experiences for the best progress in reading and writing. The brain works to make connections, find patterns, and organize categories; therefore, practice in developmental spelling supports students' efforts to learn letter-sound correspondences. Exploring a spelling pattern taken from a familiar text (i.e., big book, song, or rhyme) or using word sorts to identify patterns are ways to help students make meaningful connections between their reading and writing experiences.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To write with students daily, modeling the relationship between spoken words and written words.
- To provide opportunities for students to write daily.
- To provide phonemic awareness and phonics instruction through the use of songs, chants, word games, shared reading, and shared writing.
- To identify word patterns found in shared reading and writing.
- To provide spelling practice through word study activities.
- To periodically assess students' spelling and provide differentiated instruction where appropriate.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To participate in daily reading and writing activities.
- To write daily using phonetic developmental spelling.
- To recognize the connection between oral language and print.
- To use phonemic awareness and phonics to develop an understanding of written language.
- To identify word patterns when reading and writing.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher writing with students daily, modeling the relationship between sounds, symbols, and letters.
- The teacher providing students with opportunities for independent writing.
- The teacher providing experiences with word study activities such as word sorts and word games.
- The teacher periodically assessing students and differentiating spelling instruction where appropriate.
- The students using developmental spelling in daily writing.
- The students participating in shared and interactive writing experiences.
- The students generating spelling rules based on word study.

**Resources:**

Bear, D., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2004). Words their way: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Chapman, M. L. (2003). Phonemic awareness: Clarifying what we know. Literacy Teaching and Learning, 7, 91-114.

Invernizzi, M., & Hayes, L. (2004). Development-spelling research: A systematic imperative. Reading Research Quarterly, 39, 216-228. Yopp,

H.K., & Yopp, R.H. (2000). Supporting phonemic awareness development in the classroom. The Reading Teacher, 54, 130-143.

**Vocabulary**

There is a strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. When problems with word identification have been eliminated, difficulty in comprehension can be linked to trouble with understanding the concepts presented in the text. Vocabulary instruction involves not only defining word meanings, but also developing concepts and organizing information into categories.

Vocabulary is developed both directly and indirectly. Vocabulary is directly developed by providing students with specific word instruction and word learning strategies. Vocabulary is indirectly developed through conversation, being read to, and independent reading (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). Instruction in definitions alone does not adequately prepare students for proficient reading comprehension. The most powerful way to directly instruct students in vocabulary and concept development is through encountering words in context and making connections with current learning and prior knowledge (Barr, Blachowicz, Katz, & Kaufman, 2002). Multiple exposures and active involvement facilitate vocabulary learning.

**The role of the teacher is:**

- To select key words that are vital for the comprehension of the text.
- To help students connect vocabulary and concepts to prior knowledge.
- To introduce vocabulary and use it in a variety of contexts.
- To provide multiple exposures to new words.
- To develop vocabulary in content areas such as math and science.
- To read and discuss concept-rich text.
- To encourage classroom talk and discussion using key vocabulary.
- To develop word awareness through word games and word play.

**The role of the student is:**

- To discuss new vocabulary and concepts.
- To connect new vocabulary to prior knowledge.
- To notice unfamiliar words in the text.
- To use context clues and structural analysis to figure out new words.
- To build word awareness through word games and word play.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher pointing out new words while reading aloud concept-rich reading selections.
- The teacher introducing key words prior to assigning texts in all content areas.
- The teacher and students discussing vocabulary and concepts.

- The teacher and students using graphic organizers such as mapping and webbing to develop concept vocabulary.
- The students engaging in word play and word games.
- Evidence of class and/or personal dictionaries.

## Resources:

Armbruster, B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read. Retrieved June 6, 2004 from U.S. Department of Education, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Web site: [http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading\\_first1.html](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1.html)

Barr, R., Blachowicz, C., Katz, C., & Kaufman, B. (2002). Reading diagnosis for teachers, an instructional approach. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson Education Company.

Blachowicz, C., & Fisher, P. (2001). Teaching vocabulary in all classrooms. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). Reading comprehension strategies for independent learners. New York: The Guilford Press. Cunningham,

P. M. (1995). Phonics they use: Words for reading and writing. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Harper Collins.

## Fluency

Reading fluency is defined as the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with expression. When students read fluently, they are able to pay more attention to comprehending the reading selections because they focus less attention on word recognition and decoding (Osborn, Lehr, & Hiebert, n.d.).

During fluency instruction, students are provided with a model of fluent reading that emphasizes expressiveness, accuracy, and appropriate reading rate. Following an initial introduction to the reading selection, students repeatedly practice oral and/or silent reading of the text. Research has shown that the explicit modeling of oral reading by teachers and repeated oral reading by students improves the students' oral reading fluency. Fluency instruction is most effective in improving comprehension when students have multiple opportunities to practice reading a familiar text (Rasinski, 2003). While oral reading is a component of a classroom reading program, the use of round-robin oral reading as a classroom strategy is not effective.

### The role of the teacher is:

- To activate prior knowledge and set purpose for reading.
- To discuss characteristics of a fluent reader.
- To model fluent oral reading by explicitly demonstrating reading using punctuation, phrasing, and intonation.
- To clarify meaning of a reading selection through modeling expressiveness and talking aloud about reading.
- To have students participate in fluent reading of a selection as a class or individually.
- To provide students with opportunities to independently practice fluent reading with a familiar text.

### The role of the student is:

- To think about the text and connect it to prior experience.
- To read in a fluent and expressive manner at an appropriate rate and pace while recognizing and using punctuation.
- To activate and use prior knowledge to anticipate words, phrases, and meaning while reading.
- To monitor his/her expressiveness while making adjustments to phrasing and pacing during reading.
- To practice reading fluently.

### The observer will see:

- The teacher modeling fluent, expressive reading during read aloud, shared reading, choral reading, or during individual reading conferences with students about both narrative and expository reading selections.
- The teacher talking about the reading selection and discussing the use of intonation, punctuation, and the role of expressiveness in the meaning of the passage.
- The students monitoring and adjusting their reading for expressiveness, phrasing, and pacing.
- The students engaging in choral or paired reading of familiar text.
- The students reading orally in a fluent and expressive manner.

### **Resources:**

Barr, R., Blachowicz, C., Katz, C., & Kaufman, B. (2002). Reading diagnosis for teachers: An instructional approach. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson Education Company.

Osborn, J., Lehr, F., & Hiebert, E. (n.d.). A focus on fluency. Retrieved July 2, 2004, from Pacific Resources for Education and Learning the Regional Educational Laboratory at PERL Web site: [http://www.prel.org/products/re\\_/fluency-1.htm](http://www.prel.org/products/re_/fluency-1.htm)

Pinnell, G.S., & Scharer, P. (2003). Teaching for comprehension in reading grades K-2: Strategies for helping children read with ease, confidence, and understanding. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

Rasinski, T. (2003). The fluent reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

### **Guiding Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text**

Guiding reading is a strategy designed to meet the instructional needs of all the students by providing scaffolding through small group instruction. The groups are fluid and allow students reading at approximately the same level to receive instruction appropriate to their needs. The students have individual copies of text at their instructional level (90-94% accuracy) and independently read (softly or silently, but not round-robin) as the teacher observes, coaches, prompts, and evaluates their performance.

The overall purpose of guiding reading is to enable children to read for meaning at all times. The instruction may involve brief detours to focus on students' attention to detail, but the construction of meaning overrides. Guiding reading involves ongoing observation and assessments that inform the teacher's interactions with individuals in the group and help the teacher select appropriate texts. Guiding reading enables children to practice strategies with the teacher's support and leads to independent silent reading, according to the New Zealand Department of Education (1985).

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To select appropriate texts that will be supportive but that will also have a few problems to solve.
- To guide students in previewing the text, arousing prior knowledge, and setting purpose.
- To ask questions to clarify and extend thinking while reading.
- To talk about the text with the students and invite personal response.
- To observe the reader's behaviors for evidence of strategy use.
- To confirm students' problem-solving attempts and successes.
- To interact with individuals to build problem-solving strategies at points of difficulty.
- To make notes about the strategy use of individual readers.
- To return to the text for one or two teaching opportunities (i.e., finding evidence or discussing problemsolving).
- To assess students' understanding of what they read.
- To sometimes engage the students in extending the text through activities (i.e., drama, art, or writing).

### **The role of the student is:**

- To engage in a conversation about the text.



- To read the whole text or a unified part to himself/herself (softly or silently).
- To request help in problem-solving when needed.
- To notice information in the text to answer questions and to check predictions.
- To talk about the text.
- To discuss predictions and react personally to the text.
- To revisit the text at points of problem-solving as guided by the teacher.
- To possibly reread the text independently or to a partner.
- To engage in activities that involve extending and responding to the text (i.e., drama, art, or writing).

#### **The observer will see:**

- A variety of instructional delivery formats used to meet individual students' needs.
- Flexible groupings, which include homogeneous and heterogeneous groups for different reasons at different times.
- The teacher assessing literacy performance in a variety of ways over time, including checklist observations of students' performance.
- A sufficient quantity of different levels of books that match students' independent and instructional reading levels.

#### **Resources:**

Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. (1999). Matching books to readers: Using leveled books in guided reading, K – 3. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. National Reading Panel. (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction. Washington D.C.: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. New Zealand Department of Education. (1985). Reading in junior classes. Wellington, NZ: Department of Education. Shared reading. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: [http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_share\\_read.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_share_read.html)

#### **Writing to Learn**

Writing to learn is the use of writing to facilitate learning with text by helping students to explore, clarify, and think deeply about ideas and concepts encountered in reading, according to Vacca and Vacca (1993) (as cited in Harris & Hodges, 1995). Writing to learn may occur before, during, and after reading.

Instructional activities such as anticipation guides, writing predictions, and brainstorming associations to key vocabulary words can be meaningful and engaging ways to activate prior knowledge of reading content before reading. Writing to learn during reading consists of activities such as taking notes, forming questions, and keeping responses in which connections to text are made. For example, students may write in response to text, write answers to higher-level thinking questions, and write retellings.

Writing to learn is informal and reflects students' responses to key concepts in the text. These assignments are usually short and take less than five minutes of class time. There are a variety of formats such as reader response journals, learning logs, letters, and graphic organizers that can be used as students write to learn. These activities allow students to engage actively in learning through writing about text.

#### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To use a variety of writing activities to activate prior knowledge and set purposes before reading.
- To create writing activities that help students develop thinking, ask questions and make predictions before reading, make connections during reading, and reflect on ideas in the text after reading.
- To ask open-ended questions and extend students' thinking through writing about text.
- To provide oral or written feedback on the content of the students' writing.
- To think about actions and choices in writing about text.

#### **The role of the student is:**

- To use writing strategies that have been modeled by the teacher.
- To use writing to brainstorm, ask questions, make predictions, and develop thinking in response to concepts taught in text.

- To independently use writing to explore, respond, and reflect on text.
- To use writing to support asking questions and making predictions.
- To use writing to facilitate the discovery of knowledge.
- To write about concepts or ideas presented in the lesson.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher modeling think aloud while demonstrating when and how to use a writing strategy.
- The students writing in journals and writing logs, using graphic organizers, and writing letters.
- The students writing reflections on what they have learned.
- The students using writing to scaffold thinking and explore questions.
- The students using strategies for writing to broaden their knowledge of concepts taught.

**Resources:**

A fuller definition of writing to learn. (2004). Retrieved August 2, 2004, from <http://www.colostate.edu/intro/pop2d.cfm> Calkins, L. (1994). The art of teaching writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cunningham, P.M., & Allington, R.L. (1999). Classrooms that work: They can all read and write. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: Addison Wesley Longman.

Harris, T., & Hodges, R. (Eds.). (1995). The literacy dictionary: The vocabulary of reading and writing. New ark, DE: International Reading Association.

Independent writing. (n.d.). Retrieved August 2, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: <http://www.illinoisreads.net>

**Learning to Write: Shared/Interactive Writing**

“Shared writing is a collaborative process between teacher and children, and children and children” (McKenzie, 1985, p. 21). The teacher becomes the scribe guiding students to organize their ideas while emphasizing the message or story that is being created. Shared writing enables the teacher to model the composing process and scaffold students’ participation in that process.

Interactive writing is a similar approach where the students and the teacher compose together. The teacher also engages children in exploring specific aspects of words, such as hearing consonants and consonant clusters, or listening for word parts in longer words. The teacher and the students often “share the pen” throughout the writing experience with the teacher recording the more difficult parts of the text and allowing the students to write the parts that are familiar to them (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998).

Shared and interactive writing are similar in that the writing takes place with the teacher in a group context. These models share the same general purposes of modeling and scaffolding the process of composition. Both approaches are effective in helping students develop their writing abilities and in promoting phonemic awareness (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 1999).

**The role of the teacher is:**

- To introduce the lesson by modeling how to begin writing.
- To help students plan text and generate ideas for writing.
- To record students’ ideas, orally reinforcing print conventions such as capitalization, punctuation, and print directionality.
- To reinforce students’ phonemic awareness through writing.

- To ask students to participate in the writing at strategic points by asking them to write known letters, words, or phrases.

**The role of the student is:**

- To contribute ideas to the group composition.
- To engage actively in writing the composition, contributing known letters and words.
- To read and reread composition with the teacher.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher working with whole groups and at times small groups of students.
- The teacher modeling what he/she is doing as he/she records what the group wants to say.
- The teacher encouraging students to write parts of the composition.
- The teacher helping students to make connections between known and unknown words.
- The students contributing ideas to writing.
- The students reading/rereading the composition with the teacher.

**Resources:**

Au, K., Carroll, J., & Scheu, J. (2001). Balanced literacy instruction: A teacher's resource book. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Press.

McCarrier, A., Pinnell, G., & Fountas, I. (1999). Interactive writing: How language and literacy come together, K-2. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

McKenzie, M. G. (1985). Shared writing: Apprenticeship in writing in language matters. London: Centre for Language in Primary Education.

Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (1998). Word matters: Teaching phonics and spelling in the reading/writing classroom. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Shared reading. (n.d.). Retrieved August 9, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: [http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_share\\_read.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_share_read.html)

**Learning to Write**

For primary children, the critical skill of learning to write can initially be taught through engaging students in the writing process. The stages of the writing process are (1) *prewriting*, (2) *drafting*, (3) *revising*, (4) *editing*, and (5) *publishing*.

In the prewriting stage, students brainstorm to identify ideas or topics of interest, determine the audience for whom they are writing to, and organize their ideas in preparation for writing the rough draft. For primary students, the use of graphic organizers can be helpful during the prewriting stage as students can visually organize their ideas. In the drafting stage, students write a rough draft where the focus is more on getting their original thoughts on paper and less on spelling and print conventions. During the revising stage, students make content changes, reflecting on the feedback received from their teacher and classmates. In the editing stage, students proofread their compositions to identify and correct grammatical and mechanical errors. The final stage of the writing process, publishing, allows students to share their final drafts with an audience (Carnahan & Farris, 1998).

Children who are emergent writers also need guidance in writing for an authentic purpose. In the primary grades, students are initially exposed to three types of writing: narrative, expository/informational, and persuasive. Teachers can develop students' understanding of the elements contained in these three distinctive writing types by reading examples of each style and by identifying and displaying similarities and differences among the three to remind students of what should be included when beginning their own essays.

Several writing models provide opportunities for teachers and students to write together to foster students' ability in learning to write (see literacy instructional practice sheet entitled "Shared/Interactive Writing"). In kindergarten and first grade, these models (shared/interactive writing, modeled writing, interactive and guided writing) are powerful instructional tools which provide students with the necessary support for learning about print conventions (i.e., capitalization, punctuation, and print directionality) and spelling, while guiding students through the composition process. During the writing process, the students provided with ongoing teacher feedback about both content and grammatical features are more likely to integrate this feedback to improve their future writings.

**The role of the teacher is:**

- To model the stages of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
- To demonstrate the process of composing a coherent message for a specific audience and/or purpose.
- To assist students in generating ideas for writing.
- To observe and assess students' writing abilities.
- To use language and actions such as "think alouds" to provide explicit instruction and critical-writing process concepts.
- To take dictation of students' ideas and think aloud about using capitalization, spelling, and punctuation.
- To prompt, guide, coach, and respond to student questions about the writing process.
- To circulate and assist student peer groups in reviewing student writings.
- To demonstrate the strategy of rereading as a reminder to students to stay focused on their writing topic.
- To foster students' independence by lessening the number of cues and prompts provided as they begin to internalize writing strategies.
- To conduct mini-lessons on various aspects of the writing process.

**The role of the student is:**

- To listen and watch as the teacher models how to brainstorm and draft.
- To provide ideas for his/her own writing.
- To attempt to use teacher-modeled strategies.
- To learn and use the stages of the writing process to produce a coherent, written document.
- To engage in writing the composition.
  
- To read and reread own writing to the teacher as the teacher notes adherence to original ideas.
- To make decisions about what to include and/or delete as the original composition is targeted to a specific audience or written in a particular genre.
- To continue to use strategies modeled by the teacher as he/she moves toward independence in completing a written composition.
- To reread compositions with the teacher to ensure original ideas are included.
- To confirm correct responses about his/her own writing during conferences with teacher and/or peers.
- To use ideas and comments from peers to write for a specific audience and purpose.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher thinking aloud as he/she models the writing process and uses language and actions to introduce critical concepts of writing.
- The teacher using whole and small group instruction to prompt, guide, coach, and respond to students' questions about the writing process and print conventions, and to ensure adherence to their original ideas.
- The teacher encouraging students to actively write the parts of the composition that they can (i.e., letters, words, sentences).
- The students observing as the teacher models the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).

- The students contributing their ideas to the writing process through brainstorming with the teacher and/or peers as they begin to write original compositions.
- The students engaging in writing, revising, and editing their own compositions.
- The students using the strategy of rereading during writing to monitor their use of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- The students using the strategy of rereading to stay focused on their writing topic.

### **Resources:**

Calkins, L. M. (1986). The art of teaching writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Carnahan, N. J., & Farris, P. J. (1998). Bridging the gap to IGAP: From theory to practice. Illinois Reading Council Journal, 26(1), 15.

Graves, D. (1983). Writing: Teachers and children at work. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

International Reading Association. (1998). Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children: A joint position statement with the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Newark, DE: Author.

Writing. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: <http://www.illinoisreads.net>

**CPS**  
**Grades 4-8**  
**Literacy**  
**Observation**  
**Guidelines**

## Read Aloud

Read aloud is an important component of effective literacy instruction that improves listening, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary skills, attitudes about reading, and student ability to visualize text. Read aloud facilitates comprehension and supports visualization of the thinking process for all students, especially beginning and intermediate English Language Learners and special education students. The Commission on Reading's report (1985) "Becoming a Nation of Readers" (as cited in Trelease, 2004) states that reading aloud to students is the "single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (para. 7).

In the read aloud strategy, a teacher sets aside time to read orally to students on a consistent basis. The selections should be above students' independent reading level and at their listening level. Read aloud allows the teacher to model fluent and expressive reading, to think aloud, and to provide interactions with a variety of texts. Teachers should increase the length and complexity of narrative and expository text over time.

### The role of the teacher is:

- To pre-read a selection thoroughly to become familiar with the content and structure prior to the lesson.
- To locate and plan meaningful places in the selection during reading for discussion, prediction, and making connections to other texts or to related personal experiences.
- To read a variety of selections (including narrative and informational texts) in all content areas.
- To use carefully selected picture books as a tool for building language experience.
- To model fluent and expressive reading (possibly through gestures and dramatic voices).
- To model engaged reading by thinking aloud, making connections, and using comprehension strategies.
- To create a literacy-rich environment that encourages an appreciation for reading.
- To provide opportunities for collaborative conversation and written response to the selection.

### The role of the student is:

- To listen actively with purpose as the teacher reads aloud and models fluency.
- To engage in collaborative conversations with peers.
- To retell content from narrative and expository text and demonstrate recall of main ideas and details.
- To respond by making connections, summarizing, inferring, synthesizing, and critiquing through discussion or writing.

### The observer will see:

- The teacher and/or students setting a purpose for reading.
- The teacher thinking aloud while reading a selection and encouraging students to make predictions and inferences.
- The teacher highlighting the features of the selection including the author, title, illustrator, text structure, illustrations, graphs, tables, and captions.
- The teacher incorporating a variety of texts including novels, picture books, magazine and newspaper articles, primary sources, and informational texts.
- The students and teacher engaging in collaborative conversations about text using comprehension strategies.

## Resources:

Calkins, L. (2001). The art of teaching reading. Boston: Addison Wesley Longman.

## **Scaffolding Comprehension Strategies**

Scaffolding is instructional assistance that enables a student to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal that could not be accomplished without support (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding instruction begins with selecting a learning task for the purpose of teaching a skill that is emerging in the student's repertoire but is not yet fully developed (Palincsar, 1986). The teacher strategically releases instructional support until the student is able to perform the task independently.

According to Dorn and Soffos (2001), a scaffolded model of instruction might proceed as follows: modeling—teacher does, students watch; coaching—teacher does, students help; scaffolding—students do, teacher helps; and fading or “releasing control”—students do, teacher watches.

With time, practice, coaching, and feedback, students gain the confidence and motivation to use the strategy independently. When scaffolding comprehension, teachers must provide students with necessary support to integrate and apply a variety of strategies to construct meaning before, during, and after reading. These strategies include: activating prior knowledge, visualizing, making connections, making predictions, inferring, questioning the text, summarizing, synthesizing, clarifying, self-monitoring, and applying fix-up strategies as they read.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To select texts that provide opportunities to model specific comprehension strategies.
- To read and plan how to model appropriate strategies using specific texts (e.g., where to stop and think aloud).
- To use consistent terminology about the learning tasks and strategies to develop a common classroom language.
- To model the learning task and provide feedback as needed to support student learning/understanding in whole group and small group settings.
- To give students multiple opportunities for skill/strategy/concept support and practice.
- To gradually release control of the task to students (from teacher modeling, students observing; teacher modeling, students assisting; students performing, teacher assisting; to students performing independently).

### **The role of the student is:**

- To actively listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To practice and apply the skill/strategy/concept in multiple learning situations.
- To monitor comprehension, selecting and using the appropriate strategy for the learning task.
- To perform the learning task—at first, with assistance from the teacher; then gradually assuming responsibility for performing the task independently.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher thinking aloud while demonstrating appropriate strategies for the learning task.
- The teacher inviting and encouraging participation from the students as they apply the strategy.
- The students developing their understanding of the strategy, practicing the strategy, and the teacher assisting at the students' level of need.
- The students' independent application of the strategy.
- The teacher and students using consistent terminology and language about the learning tasks and strategies to develop a common classroom language.

### **Resources:**

Dorn, L., & Soffos, C. (2001). *Shaping literate minds*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers: Grades 3-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lipson, M., & Wixson, K. (2003). *Assessment and instruction of reading and writing difficulty: An interactive approach*. New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Palincsar, A.S. (1986). The role of dialogue in providing scaffolded instruction. *Educational Psychologist*, 21, 73-98.



## **Making Connections**

Reading is a strategic thinking process facilitated by prior knowledge about a topic and the ability to make meaningful connections to improve comprehension. Proficient readers use background knowledge and information from previous texts to enhance their understanding and make connections. Activating background knowledge involves validating students' prior knowledge of a topic to aid in the understanding of the text. "Relating the selection to students' lives is a powerful way to engage students in a text and to facilitate their comprehension" (Tierney & Readence, 2000, p. 33). Successful readers monitor their own thinking (metacognition) and make connections between text and their own experiences, other texts, and the world through writing and talking about text before, during, and after reading.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To provide opportunities for students to share experiences and make connections to self, other texts, and the world through discussion and/or writing.
- To give students the opportunity to take what they know about themselves, other texts, and the world and to apply that information to construct the current text.
- To select engaging texts to model specific comprehension strategies.
- To provide opportunities for students to read and discuss a range of texts and genres.
- To model making connections using think aloud.
- To assess or build prior knowledge about the topic.
- To provide the context and set a purpose for reading.
- To use questions and feedback to monitor students' ability to make connections to self, text, and the world.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To actively listen as the teacher thinks aloud.
- To activate prior knowledge or pose questions connecting text to prior knowledge, personal experiences, other texts, and the world.
- To participate in whole group and small group collaborative conversations connecting text to personal experiences, other texts, and the world.
- To make connections to text through written response.
- To apply the strategy in independent reading.
- To self-monitor use of making meaningful connections to the selections.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher modeling by stopping at strategic points to think aloud about making connections to self, text, and the world.
- The teacher asking questions and engaging students in discussions that encourage them to share personal experiences and think about other texts and their knowledge of the world in relation to the topic of the selection.
- The students in various groupings making connections using a variety of reading selections and engaging in collaborative discussion.
- The students making connections to written response.
- The students self-monitoring their use of making connections.

## Resources:

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Reading workshop: Making connections. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from Springfield Public School District #186 Teacher's Toolbox, Language Arts K-5 information Web site: <http://www.springfield.k12.il.us>

Tierney, R., & Readence, J. (2000). Reading strategies and practices: A compendium. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

## Word Study

Skilled word learners use context and their knowledge of word parts to deal effectively with new words. Independent word learning is enhanced when these techniques are taught as strategies by modeling and coaching to demonstrate how the knowledge of context and word parts (structural analysis) can be used to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words encountered while reading. Word study includes interactive experience with comparing and contrasting words and semantic and syntactic categorization of words.

### The role of the teacher is:

- To provide students with explicit instruction in active exploration of words to discover the regularities, patterns, and rules of the English language.
- To provide opportunities for students to use the learned words orally and in writing.
- To provide opportunities for students to see, hear, write, and use new words.
- To provide opportunities for students to read text at their independent level, scaffolding their word study instruction toward their instructional level.
- To provide explicit instruction using mapping, webbing, and other graphic organizers to show word relationships.
- To provide an environment that promotes understanding of differences and connections between spelling and vocabulary.
- To address the needs of second language learners by incorporating words with similar structures in another language that may or may not have a similar meaning in English (cognates and false cognates).
- To monitor students' progress consistently and to provide support for students whose demonstrated weaknesses are limiting their progress.
- To provide varied and on-going assessments appropriate to the students' instructional goals/needs.
- To provide explicit instruction by modeling the strategies that will enable students to identify and learn new words; then to gradually release responsibility until they are able to use the strategies independently.

### The role of the student is:

- To actively listen and participate as the teacher models the learning task.
- To practice and apply the strategies in multiple learning situations and across the content areas.
- To use maps, webs, and other graphic organizers to show word relationships.
- To integrate knowledge of vocabulary in fluent reading and in oral and in written communication.
- To perform the learning task—at first, with assistance from the teacher; then gradually assuming the responsibility for performing the task independently.

### The observer will see:

- A print-rich environment which includes labels, learned concepts, procedural guides, word walls, and authentic, current student work on display.
- An ample classroom library, a collection of content specific books, and a variety of other print materials at the appropriate independent and instructional levels of the students.
- Explicit instruction on key content area words using mapping, webbing, and other graphic organizers to show word relationships and meaning.
- Varied and on-going assessments appropriate to the instructional goals and needs of the students.
- The teacher providing explicit instruction with unknown words in context; then gradually releasing responsibility to the students to identify and learn new words independently.
- The students integrating their knowledge of words in fluent reading in oral and written communication.

## Resources:

Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners. New York: The Guilford Press.

Buehl, D. (2001). Classroom strategies for interactive learners. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Lipson, M., & Wixson, M. (2003). Assessment and instruction of reading and writing difficulty: An interactive approach. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Systematic word study. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site:

[http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_system\\_wordstudy.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_system_wordstudy.html)

## Vocabulary

Increasing the amount of students' reading of a variety of texts is the single most important thing a teacher can do to promote large-scale vocabulary growth. Explicit vocabulary instruction is necessary when context does not provide essential information. Effective vocabulary instruction integrates key vocabulary across content areas into daily use, providing opportunities for repetition and meaningful use.

### The role of the teacher is:

- To differentiate between unknown vocabulary in context that impacts meaning (key concept vocabulary) and unknown vocabulary that does not impact meaning.
- To provide explicit instruction for key vocabulary using mapping, webbing, and other graphic organizers to show word relationships and explore word meanings.
- To provide an environment that promotes understanding of differences and connections among spelling and vocabulary.
- To pre-teach content area vocabulary words necessary to facilitate comprehension.
- To provide students with multiple exposures to new and known vocabulary orally and in writing.
- To provide students with opportunities to see, hear, write, and use new words.
- To provide students with frequent and meaningful contact with the same word (repetition).
- To provide varied and on-going assessments appropriate to the instructional goals and needs of the students.
- To provide extensive daily opportunities for students to read text at their independent level.
- To provide explicit instruction by modeling the strategies that will enable students to identify and learn new words; then to gradually release responsibility until students are able to use the strategies independently.

### The role of the student is:

- To actively listen and participate as the teacher models the learning task.
- To practice and apply the strategies in multiple learning situations and across content areas.
- To be able to identify unknown words by using appropriate strategies to access meaning.
- To use maps, webs, and other graphic organizers to show understanding of vocabulary relationships.
- To integrate knowledge of vocabulary in fluent reading and in oral and in written communication.
- To perform the learning task—at first, with assistance from the teacher; then gradually assuming the responsibility for performing the task independently.

### The observer will see:

- A print-rich environment which includes labels, learned concepts, procedural guides, word walls, and authentic, current student work on display.
- An ample classroom library, a collection of content-specific books, and a variety of other print materials at appropriate independent and instructional levels of the students.
- Explicit instruction on key content area vocabulary using mapping, webbing, and other graphic organizers to show word relationships and meaning.
- Varied and on-going assessments appropriate to the instructional goals and needs of the students.
- The teacher providing explicit instruction with unknown words in context; then gradually releasing responsibility to the students to identify and learn new vocabulary independently.

- The students integrating their knowledge of vocabulary in fluent reading and in oral and written communication.

### **Resources:**

Allen, J. (1999). *Words, words, words: Teaching vocabulary in grades 4-12*. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). *Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Buehl, D. (2001). *Classroom strategies for interactive learners*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Lipson, M., & Wixson, M. (2003). *Assessment and instruction of reading and writing difficulty: An interactive approach*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Pinnell, G., & Fountas, I. (1998). *Word matters: Teaching phonics and spelling in the reading and writing classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

*Systematic word study*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site:  
[http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_system\\_wordstudy.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_system_wordstudy.html)

### **Fluency**

Reading fluency is defined as the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with expression. When students read fluently, they are able to pay more attention to comprehending the reading selections because they focus less attention on word recognition and decoding (Osborn, Lehr, & Hiebert, n.d.).

During fluency instruction, students are provided with a model of fluent reading that emphasizes expressiveness, accuracy, and appropriate reading rate. Following an initial introduction to the reading selection, students repeatedly practice oral and/or silent reading of the text. Research has shown that the explicit modeling of oral reading by teachers and repeated oral reading by students improves the students' oral reading fluency. Fluency instruction is most effective in improving comprehension when students have multiple opportunities to practice reading a familiar text (Rasinski, 2003). While oral reading is a component of a classroom reading program, the use of round-robin oral reading as a classroom strategy is not effective.

#### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To activate prior knowledge and set purpose for reading.
- To discuss characteristics of a fluent reader.
- To model fluent oral reading by explicitly demonstrating reading using punctuation, phrasing, and intonation.
- To clarify meaning of a reading selection through modeling expressiveness and talking aloud about reading.
- To have students participate in fluent reading of a selection as a class or individually.
- To provide students with opportunities to independently practice fluent reading with a familiar text.

#### **The role of the student is:**

- To think about the text and connect it to prior experience.
- To read in a fluent and expressive manner at an appropriate rate and pace while recognizing and using punctuation.
- To activate and use prior knowledge to anticipate words, phrases, and meaning while reading.
- To monitor his/her expressiveness while making adjustments to phrasing and pacing during reading.
- To practice reading fluently.

#### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher modeling fluent, expressive reading during read aloud, shared reading, choral reading, or during individual reading conferences with students about both narrative and expository reading selections.
- The teacher talking about the reading selection and discussing the use of intonation, punctuation, and the role of expressiveness in the meaning of the passage.
- The students monitoring and adjusting their reading for expressiveness, phrasing, and pacing.
- The students engaging in choral or paired reading of familiar text.
- The students reading orally in a fluent and expressive manner.

**Resources:**

- Barr, R., Blachowicz, C., Katz, C., & Kaufman, B. (2002). Reading diagnosis for teachers: An instructional approach. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson Education Company.
- Osborn, J., Lehr, F., & Hiebert, E. (n.d.). A focus on fluency. Retrieved July 2, 2004, from Pacific Resources for Education and Learning the Regional Educational Laboratory at PERL. Web site: [http://www.prel.org/products/re\\_/fluency-1.htm](http://www.prel.org/products/re_/fluency-1.htm)
- Pinnell, G.S., & Scharer, P. (2003). Teaching for comprehension in reading grades K-2: Strategies for helping children read with ease, confidence, and understanding. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.
- Rasinski, T. (2003). The fluent reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

**Guiding Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text**

Students need ongoing instruction, support, and scaffolding throughout the intermediate grades to address the complexity of the reading process. Guiding reading is a strategy designed to meet the instructional needs of all the students by providing scaffolding through small group instruction. The groups are fluid and allow students reading at approximately the same level to receive instruction appropriate to their needs.

The procedure begins with an introduction to the selected text to support students as they are reading. In small groups, students read the same selection silently as the teacher works on specific strategies with individual students within the group. Following silent reading, the teacher and students explore the meaning of the text and revisit the text to make connections, search for information, and/or find evidence to support their thinking. Finally, the teacher uses information from the guided reading experience as the basis for teaching metacognitive strategies that can be applied to other texts (Lipson & Wixson, 2003). Oral reading should be used selectively to emphasize a particular passage, to exemplify statements in discussion, and to teach strategies as the need or opportunity arises.

**The role of the teacher is:**

- To select texts at the students' instructional level that will be supportive but have a few problems to solve.
- To introduce the text, keeping in mind the meaning, language, and visual information in the text, and the knowledge, experience, and skills of the reader.
- To interact with students individually to observe strategy use, difficulties and successes with problemsolving attempts, and to notate the strategy use of individual readers.
- To return to the text for one or two teaching opportunities to demonstrate how a reader constructs meaning from text, makes personal connections with text, and goes beyond text.
- To assess students' understanding of what they read.

**The role of the student is:**

- To engage in a pre-reading conversation about text.
- To notice the language and the visual features of the text.
- To read a text or part of a text silently or quietly.
- To request problem-solving help when needed.
- To check predictions and react personally to the text.
- To revisit the text at points of problem-solving as guided by the teacher.
- To engage in collaborative discussion about the text.
- To engage in activities that involve extending understanding and responding to the text.

**The observer will see:**

- A variety of instructional practices used to meet individual students' needs.

- Flexible student groupings, which include homogeneous and heterogeneous groups for different reasons at different times.
- The teacher assessing literacy performance in a variety of ways over time, including checklist observations of student literacy behaviors.
- A sufficient quantity of leveled narrative and expository texts matched to the students' independent and instructional reading levels.

### **Resources:**

Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers: Grades 3-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lipson, M., & Wixson, K. (2003). *Assessment and instruction of reading and writing difficulty: An interactive approach*. New York: Allyn & Bacon. [Shared reading](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_share_read.html). (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: [http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_share\\_read.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_share_read.html)

### **Guiding Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text Asking Questions to Extend Understanding**

When students ask questions and search for answers, they are monitoring their own comprehension and interacting with text to construct meaning. Whether the questions are teacher or student generated, questioning promotes interactive and engaging opportunities to collaboratively construct meaning of text and to share thinking. Questioning is the key to understanding. Through questioning, comprehension increases as readers interact with text, focus on main ideas, clarify their thinking, make connections, and extend meaning.

#### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To provide opportunities for students to generate questions.
- To generate and model questions to clarify and extend meaning before, during, and after reading.
- To give sufficient wait time for students to answer the questions.
- To encourage, prompt, and coach students to higher levels of response.
- To help students understand the relationship between questions and answers.
- To model and facilitate the thinking processes required for the demands of varied texts, questions, and answers.

#### **The role of the student is:**

- To construct and answer questions related to the text.
- To generate questions to clarify understanding of text and extend meaning before, during, and after reading.
- To integrate teacher-modeled thinking and questioning strategies into personal practice.
- To develop questions for further inquiry and research.

#### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher modeling questioning strategies to enable students to generate questions.
- The teacher engaging students in discussion through prompting and probing questions.
- The students generating and answering questions using varied texts, print resources, and personal experiences.
- The students using text to generate questions of increasing complexity.

## Resources:

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Questioning strategies. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the University of Delaware, Center for Teaching Effectiveness Web site: <http://www.cte.udel.edu>

Reading: Questioning. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from Literacy Matters Web site: <http://www.literacymatters.org/content/readandwrite/question.htm>

Tierney, R., & Readence, J. (2000). Reading strategies and practices: A compendium. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

## Guiding Silent Reading

Guiding silent reading is an instructional practice in which the teacher supports students as they silently read text. The teacher models, supports, and encourages the development of strategies before, during, and after independent reading and also in the content areas. The teacher increases the amount of time that students can read silently and attend to text, as well as the length and complexity of the assigned reading.

The teacher selects and previews the material to be read. The teacher has pre-determined strategic stopping points in the text based on content, genre, and text structure. At these stopping points, the teacher provides students with opportunities to respond to text through writing, discussing, and sharing personal and group insights. The teacher uses the student responses to check comprehension and to model self-monitoring fix-up strategies and problem-solving to be used when comprehension breaks down. Oral reading should be used selectively to emphasize a particular passage, to exemplify statements in discussion, and to teach strategies as the need or opportunity arises.

### The role of the teacher is:

- To select and preview material to be read.
- To determine meaningful stopping points to clarify students' understanding of text.
- To give students opportunities to read at their instructional level.
- To engage students in meaningful reading and writing activities.
- To observe and monitor students' reading behaviors and to check comprehension before, during, and after reading.
- To demonstrate and model comprehension-monitoring fix-up strategies to use when comprehension breaks down.
- To encourage students to use self-monitoring strategies.
- To read and discuss a range of selections including both narrative and informational.

### The role of the student is:

- To perform the learning task—at first, with assistance from the teacher; then gradually assuming responsibility for setting the purpose independently.
- To actively read and respond to text.

- To use fix-up strategies (e.g., rereading, predicting, active note taking, questioning, making connections) when comprehension breaks down.
- To participate in sharing and discussions using connections and insights.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher setting high expectations for all students.
- The teacher providing regular opportunities for students to share and collaborate.
- The teacher demonstrating a purpose and modeling comprehension strategies.
- The teacher asking questions that require students to think critically about text.
- The teacher extending the length and complexity of text over time.
- The students responding to text orally and in writing.
- The students using a variety of ways to monitor comprehension and to understand text.

**Resources:**

Balanced literacy: An overview. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: [http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_overview.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_overview.html)

Balanced literacy: Best practices in reading. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from [http://www.newton.k12.ks.us/Dist/curr/bp/lit/b\\_pract\\_read.htm](http://www.newton.k12.ks.us/Dist/curr/bp/lit/b_pract_read.htm)

Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners. New York: The Guilford Press.

**Engaging Students in Sustained Collaborative Discussion**

Classroom discussion is an important strategy for enhancing understanding, clarifying and refining meaning, making connections, inferring, and synthesizing information. It serves an important social function in the classroom by creating an opportunity for all students to participate in collaborative conversations to enhance learning. Discussion is centered on student thinking flowing from their questions and topics of inquiry. The role of the teacher is to facilitate the students' collaborative conversations around topics of inquiry. The purpose of collaborative conversation is to create an environment for the discussion of reading selections that integrates sharing, peer interaction, and expert guidance. Sustained collaborative discussion enhances exploration transmission and construction of meaning (Tierney & Readence, 2000, p. 306).

Middle level grades are social settings. Providing students with varied opportunities to collaborate and share often increases student motivation and provides teachers with a way of channeling "kid-talk" productively into the curriculum.

**The role of the teacher is:**

- To create an environment that promotes engagement in collaborative conversations about text.
- To guide students to elaborate on, provide evidence for, and extend their thinking about topics of inquiry.
- To be an effective listener who is respectful of the opinions of others.
- To facilitate the students' collaborative conversation around topics of inquiry.
- To balance peer interaction and teacher guidance, providing multiple and varied opportunities for students to discuss before, during, and after reading.
- To explicitly instruct, model, and coach students to develop effective collaborative discussion techniques through think aloud and role play.
- To clarify ideas, reflect feelings, resolve different points of view, and pose questions to students.
- To encourage students to return to text to clarify, verify, and extend meaning.

**The role of the student is:**



- To read assigned text and participate in collaborative discussion in pairs, small groups, or in a whole group setting.
- To be an effective listener respecting the opinions of others.
- To clarify ideas, reflect feelings, resolve different points of view, and pose questions to peers.
- To connect text to personal experiences, other text, and the world.
- To return to text to clarify, verify, and extend meaning.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher facilitating student-centered collaborative discussions.
- The teacher modeling and coaching appropriate collaborative discussion interactions.
- The teacher and students making connections, inferring, summarizing, synthesizing, analyzing text, elaborating, and responding before, during, and after reading.
- The students engaging in collaborative discussion related to text before, during, and after reading (in pairs or small groups).

**Resources:**

Irvin, J., Buehl, D., & Klemp, R. (2003). Reading and the high school student: Strategies to enhance literacy. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Langer, J. (1995). Envisioning literature. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University Press.  
 Tierney, R., & Readence, J. (2000). Reading strategies and practices: A compendium. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Wilhelm, J.D. (2002). Action strategies for deepening comprehension. New York: Scholastic Books.

**Writing to Learn**

Writing facilitates learning by helping students explore, clarify, and think deeply about the ideas and concepts they encounter while reading. Writing about ideas and concepts encountered in texts will improve students' acquisition of content more than simply reading without writing (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). Students benefit from writing to learn activities specific to each content area.

**The role of the teacher is:**

- To identify writing strategies that allow students to communicate and deepen their understanding of text.
- To model the writing activity and guide students as they engage in writing.
- To provide multiple and varied opportunities for students to write to clarify their thinking in response to text in all content areas.
- To provide feedback that will help students construct meaning of text.
- To focus on students' content rather than technical writing conventions.

**The role of the student is:**

- To observe the teacher model writing activities.
- To use writing to learn activities to explore and clarify responses to text.
- To write in ways that communicate understanding and thinking about the concepts in text.
- To use writing strategies in all content areas.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher modeling writing to learn activities that allow students to extend and organize their thinking.
- The teacher providing opportunities to use writing to respond in all content areas.

- The teacher encouraging participation and collaborative discussion based on the writing students have completed.
- The students using writing to develop their understanding of content area concepts.

## Resources:

Atwell, N. (1998). In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers. National writing project. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from <http://www.writingproject.org/>

Vacca, R., & Vacca, J.L. (2002). Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Writing initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from NCTE's Web site: <http://www.ncte.org/prog/writing>

## Learning to Write

Writing is a recursive process during which students negotiate the complex system of transforming thought into written communication as they develop ideas, express them through drafting, and bring their writing to a finished product. As defined by Gardner and Johnson (1997):

Writing is a fluid process created by writers as they work. Accomplished writers move back and forth between the stages of the process, both consciously and unconsciously. Young writers, however, benefit from the structure and security of following the writing process in their writing. (Stages of the writing process, para. 1)

The general stages of the writing process may be described as:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <i>Prewrite</i> | Students generate ideas for writing, identify what they already know, select a topic, and establish a purpose for writing.             |
| <i>Draft</i>    | Students generate and record their ideas on paper and begin to shape the piece.  |
| <i>Revise</i>   | Students and peers reflect on what they have written. Students rewrite to clarify ideas and organize the structure of the piece.       |
| <i>Edit</i>     | Students and peers proofread for correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Students adjust the writing to bring it to a final stage. |
| <i>Publish</i>  | Students present a final copy that may be shared with an audience.   |

## The role of the teacher is:

- To model and think aloud the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
- To provide adequate time/opportunities for students to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish their writing.
- To provide models of writing and guide students as they work toward a final draft.
- To provide feedback through conferencing to students throughout the writing process.
- To teach writing as an integral part of content area instruction.
- To assess writing in multiple ways and for multiple purposes, including teaching specific text structures.
- To teach students to assess their own writing and the writing of their peers through the use of rubrics, checklists, and other teacher-generated instruments.
- To create a shared language of the writing process.
- To create a safe environment for collaborative sharing and discussion.

**The role of the student is:**

- To use the stages of the writing process to plan, draft, revise, and edit to produce a final draft.
- To participate in writing conferences with the teacher and peers to discuss the piece.
- To use the models provided by the teacher to improve writing.
- To use feedback from the teacher and peers to improve writing.
- To assess his/her own writing and the writing of his/her peers through the use of rubrics, checklists, and other teacher-generated instruments.
- To maintain a portfolio or folder of writing.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher modeling the writing process.
- The students planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing their writing.
- The students conferencing with the teacher and peers to offer and gain feedback on their writing.
- The students collecting multiple drafts in portfolios or folders.
- Writing as an integral part of all content areas.

**Resources:**

Gardner, A., & Johnson, D. (1997). Teaching personal experience narrative in the elementary and beyond. Retrieved June 6, 2004, from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/instrctn/in5lk11-1.htm>

Herrell, A. (2000). Fifty strategies for teaching English Language Learners. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. National writing project. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from <http://www.writingproject.org/>

Writing initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from NCTE's Web site: <http://www.ncte.org/prog/writing>

**CPS  
High School  
Literacy  
Observation  
Guidelines**

## **Arousing/Building Prior Knowledge**

Prior knowledge is the sum of all experiences and information held in the mind of the reader. By building, activating, and organizing prior knowledge before reading, a teacher can enable students to bring the most to, and thus get the most from, their reading experience. Teachers assess, and when appropriate, build students' background knowledge related to topics of study by providing activities that engage students and promote critical thinking, writing, and discussion about the topic.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To provide activities that stimulate thinking, writing, and discussion about a topic prior to reading.
- To provide opportunities for students to take what they know about themselves, the world, and other texts they have read, and apply that information to get meaning from the text they are currently reading.
- To create a classroom environment that encourages predicting, questioning, and dialogue to make meaning of text.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To use knowledge about himself/herself, the world, and other texts he/she has read and apply that information to get meaning from the text he/she is currently reading.
- To self-monitor comprehension.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher engaging students in activities that build knowledge related to a topic or concept.
- The teacher providing activities to assess students' knowledge prior to reading.
- The teacher using information about students' knowledge of a topic or concept to set purpose for reading and guide instruction of that topic or concept.
- The students engaging in activities that activate and build on existing prior knowledge.

## **Resources:**

Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners. New York: The Guilford Press.

Block, C. C., & Pressley, M. (2002). Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practice. New York: The Guilford Press.

Buehl, D. (2001). Classroom strategies for interactive learners. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Comprehension strategies. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: [http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit\\_prin\\_comprehension.html](http://www.illinoisreads.net/htmls/kit_prin_comprehension.html)

Irvin, J., Buehl, D., & Klemm, R. (2003). Reading and the high school student: Strategies to enhance literacy. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

*CPS High School Literacy Observation Guidelines*

## Setting Purpose for Reading

Having a purpose is basic motivation in accomplishing any task. Good readers modify their reading strategies according to their reading goal(s). Thus, setting meaningful purposes to read content material is crucial to a student's comprehension. Different types of thinking should be encouraged depending on whether students are learning new material, processing information while reading, or consolidating new information into their memories. A critical role in setting purpose for reading is its impact on comprehension. Research findings indicate that setting purpose before reading influences recall of material in text.

### The role of the teacher is:

- To select and preview material to be read.
- To encourage different types of thinking depending on whether students are learning new material, processing information while reading, or consolidating new information into their existing memories.
- To demonstrate and model strategies students will need to be able to successfully negotiate a variety of reading tasks: reading for personal, aesthetic response; reading for information; reading to solve problems; and reading to perform tasks.
- To give students multiple opportunities to practice setting purpose for their reading tasks: reading for school purposes (generally expository reading) and reading for stimulation or entertainment (generally narrative reading).
- To gradually release control of the purpose-setting task to students.

### The role of the student is:

- To listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To practice and apply setting purpose for reading in multiple learning situations.
- To engage purposefully in the text by understanding the connection between why he/she is reading and how he/she should do the reading.
- To ask himself/herself questions about the text, to make a prediction about the content of the text, to organize ideas from the text into a map or graphic, and to connect information in the text with what he/she already knows.
- To monitor his/her own understanding of the text.
- To perform the learning task—at first, with assistance from the teacher; then gradually assuming responsibility for performing the task independently.

### The observer will see:

- The teacher thinking aloud while demonstrating how and why students set purpose for reading text.
- The teacher inviting and encouraging participation from students as they assist the teacher in working through and applying setting purpose for reading.
- The students demonstrating their understanding of setting purpose for reading depending on the structure of the text being read, the familiarity with the content of the selection, the strategies they are skilled in applying, and the speed of their reading.
- The students applying the strategy independently.

## Resources:

Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). *Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Block, C. C., & Pressley, M. (2002). *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Buehl, D. (2001). *Classroom strategies for interactive learners*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

*Comprehension strategies*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the Illinois State Board of Education Principal's Flip Chart for Reading Web site: [CPS High School Literacy Observation Guidelines](#)

## Teaching Word Meaning

Increasing the amount of students' reading is the single most important thing a teacher can do to promote large-scale vocabulary growth. However, explicit vocabulary instruction is also necessary in cases when context does not provide essential information and when knowledge of specific words is crucial to comprehension. Skilled word learners use context and their knowledge of word parts to deal effectively with new words. Independent word learning is enhanced when these techniques are taught as strategies by modeling how the knowledge of context and word parts (structural analysis) can be used to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words encountered while reading. To be effective, vocabulary instruction must foster independence and focus on conceptually difficult words that are central to understanding the reading selection.

### The role of the teacher is:

- To model strategies that will enable students to identify and learn new words.
- To gradually release control to students until they are able to use the strategies on their own.
- To provide students with multiple exposures to the same word (repetition).
- To provide opportunities for students to use the learned vocabulary orally and/or in writing.
- To monitor students' progress consistently and to provide support for students whose demonstrated weaknesses are limiting their progress.
- To provide opportunities for students to read text at their independent level and to scaffold instruction toward the students' instructional level.

### The role of the student is:

- To listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To independently apply the strategies as he/she reads.
- To practice and apply the strategies in multiple learning situations.
- To use the learned vocabulary orally and/or in writing.
- To monitor his/her comprehension.
- To perform the learning task—at first, with assistance from the teacher; then gradually assuming the responsibility for performing the task independently.

### The observer will see:

- The teacher providing explicit instruction; then gradually releasing students to use the strategies to identify and learn new words.
- The students using the new vocabulary in oral and written communication (repetition).
- The students independently applying the strategy.
- A print-rich environment with an ample classroom library or collection of content-specific books at appropriate levels for students to read independently and with instruction.

## Resources:

Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners. New York: The Guilford Press.

## **Guiding Silent Reading**

Guiding silent reading is an instructional practice in which the teacher guides students through the silent reading of text at their instructional level by modeling, supporting, and encouraging the development of strategies for independent reading. The teacher increases the length and complexity of the sections to be read and the amount of time that students can read and attend to text.

The teacher selects and previews the material to be read. The teacher chooses pre-determined strategic stopping points in the text based on the content and the text structure. At these stopping points, the teacher provides students with opportunities to respond orally or in writing. The teacher uses these responses to check comprehension by providing modeling of self-monitoring fix-up strategies when comprehension breaks down.

Time is spent in reading and responding to text through writing, discussing, sharing personal and group insights, and the teacher modeling comprehension strategies. Limited oral reading is used to emphasize a particular passage or setting, to back up statements in discussion, and to teach strategies as the need arises.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To select and preview material to be read.
- To determine meaningful stopping points to clarify students' understanding of text.
- To give students opportunities to read at their instructional level.
- To engage students in meaningful reading, writing, and discussion activities.
- To observe and monitor students' reading behaviors and to check comprehension.
- To demonstrate and model comprehension-monitoring strategies to use when comprehension breaks down.
- To encourage students' use of self-monitoring strategies.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To read and respond to text orally and in writing.
- To use strategies (i.e., rereading, predicting, active note taking, questioning) when comprehension breaks down.
- To share personal connections and insights.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher setting purpose for the silent reading selection.
- The teacher demonstrating and modeling comprehension strategies.
- The teacher asking questions that require students to think critically about text.
- The teacher extending the length and complexity of text over time.
- The teacher providing regular opportunities for students to share and collaborate.
- The students responding to text orally and/or in writing.
- The students using a variety of ways to monitor and comprehend text.

## **Resources:**



## **Scaffolding Comprehension Strategies**

“A scaffold is a temporary structure to support a person for a particular task; this task could not initially be performed without the structure” (Irvin, Buehl, & Klemp, 2003, p. 11).

Scaffolding is a metaphorical term applied to instruction that refers to the teacher’s gradual release of control and support as students develop mastery of a given task. The purpose of scaffolding instruction is to provide the student with support for a particular task or skill that the student could not perform independently. The teacher strategically releases that support until the student is able to perform the task independently. A typical scaffolding model might progress as follows: teacher models, student observes; teacher models, student assists; student performs, teacher assists; student performs, teacher observes; according to Rodriguez (as quoted by Rafael, 2004).

In scaffolding comprehension, teachers must provide students with necessary support to integrate and apply a variety of strategies before, during, and after they read to construct meaning. These strategies include: activating prior knowledge, visualizing, making connections, making predictions, inferring, questioning the text, summarizing and synthesizing, clarifying, self-monitoring, and applying fix-up strategies as they read.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To select texts that lend themselves to modeling specific comprehension strategies.
- To read and plan how to use the text (where to stop and think aloud).
- To model the learning task by thinking aloud and providing feedback as needed to support student competence.
- To give students multiple opportunities for skill/strategy/concept support and practice.
- To gradually release control of the task to students (from teacher modeling, students observing; teacher modeling, students assisting; students performing, teacher assisting; to students performing independently, teacher observing).

### **The role of the student is:**

- To listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To practice and apply the skill/strategy/concept in multiple learning situations.
- To monitor his/her own comprehension.
- To perform the learning task—at first, with assistance from the teacher; then gradually assuming responsibility for performing the task independently.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher thinking aloud while demonstrating a strategy and explaining how and when to use the strategy.
- The teacher inviting and encouraging participation from the students as they assist the teacher in working through the strategy.
- The students demonstrating their understanding of the strategy and the teacher assisting at the students’ point of need.
- The students independently applying the strategy.

## **Resources:**

Irvin, J., Buehl, D., & Klemp, R. (2003). *Reading and the high school student: Strategies to enhance literacy*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Lipson, M., & Wixson, M. (2003). *Assessment and instruction of reading and writing difficulty: An interactive approach*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Rafael, T. (2004, January). *Presentation to CPS teachers*. Presented at Symphony Center, Chicago, IL. *Scaffold instruction*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from James Madison University, MathVIDS Web site: [http://cep.jmu.edu/mathvidsr/inst\\_strat/descrip/si.htm](http://cep.jmu.edu/mathvidsr/inst_strat/descrip/si.htm)

*Scaffolding*. (2002). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from NYC Teaching Fellows Web site: <http://condor.admin.cuny.cuny.edu/~group4/>

## **Making Connections**

Reading is a strategic thinking process which involves making connections. Proficient readers use background knowledge about a topic to enhance their understanding, improve their comprehension, and connect to text in several ways. Proficient readers monitor their own thinking (metacognition) and make connections between text and their own experiences, other text, and the world through writing and talking about text.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To select engaging texts that lend themselves to modeling specific comprehension strategies.
- To read text aloud and think aloud as a model for making connections.
- To provide opportunities for students to read and discuss a range of texts and genres.
- To assess and/or build prior knowledge about the topic of the selection.
- To provide the context and set purpose for reading.
- To provide opportunities for students to share experiences and make connections.
- To use questions and feedback to monitor students' grasp of the strategy.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To listen to the teacher read and think aloud.
- To activate prior knowledge and/or pose questions about the topic of the selection.
- To read and respond to text orally and/or in writing.
- To participate in whole group and small group discussions connecting text to his/her own experiences, other text, and the world.
- To write a response based on the strategy.
- To apply the strategy in his/her independent reading.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher reading aloud and stopping at planned points to think aloud about connections.
- The teacher asking questions and engaging students in discussions that encourage students to share personal experiences and insights.
- The students in small groups reading and discussing what was read.
- The students sharing a variety of connections to the text.
- The students responding orally and/or in writing to what was read.

## **Resources:**

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.  
*Reading workshop: Making Connections*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from Springfield Public School District #186 Teacher's Toolbox, Language Arts  
K-5 Information Web site: <http://www.springfield.k12.il.us>

## **Asking Questions to Extend Understanding**

Questioning plays an important role in instruction. Whether the questions are student or teacher generated, questioning offers interactive and engaging opportunities to make meaning of text and to share thinking. Questioning is the key to understanding. Through questioning, comprehension increases as readers make connections, focus on main ideas, interact with text, and clarify their thinking.

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To identify instructional goals and prepare questions that reinforce them.
- To provide opportunities for students to formulate and answer their own questions.
- To model asking clear and specific questions at various levels of thinking.
- To ask questions that help clarify and extend students' thinking.
- To give sufficient wait time for students to answer the questions.
- To encourage, prompt, and coach students to higher levels of response.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To read and answer questions related to the text.
- To pose questions which clarify his/her understanding of the text.
- To develop questions at various levels of complexity.
- To observe the teacher as he/she models asking and answering questions.
- To develop questions for further inquiry and research.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher asking questions that allow students to extend their thinking and develop as critical thinkers.
- The teacher encouraging participation and discussion through probing questions.
- The students answering questions using the text and/or personal experiences.
- The students using text to generate higher level questions.
- The students inquiring into a particular subject of interest.

**Resources:**

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Questioning strategies. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from the University of Delaware, Center for Teaching Effectiveness Web site:

<http://www.cte.udel.edu>

Reading: Questioning. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from Literacy Matters Web site: <http://www.literacymatters.org/content/readandwrite/question.htm>

**Engaging Students in Sustained Collaborative Discussion**

“Discussion is an integral part of the comprehension process” (Alverman, Dillon, & O’Brien, 1987, p. 13). Discussion helps students communicate their ideas, refine their thinking, and enrich their understanding of assigned text. Researchers have noted the positive benefits of classroom discussion for years. Sternberg (1987) states that “Our ability to think originates outside ourselves; we must view class discussion as more than just a peripheral part of a thinking-skills program. Discussion is essential” (p. 459).

Research has also supported the movement away from teacher-dominated and teacher-led discussion to student-dominated and student-led discussion. In the student-dominated and student-led discussion, the teacher acts as a facilitator to help guide and support student discussion. High schools are social settings and providing students with varied opportunities to collaborate and share often increases student motivation and provides teachers with a way of channeling “kid-talk” productively into the curriculum.

**The role of the teacher is:**

- To provide a setting and environment in which students can freely express their opinions.
- To be an effective listener who instills in students respect for the opinions of others.
- To provide multiple and varied opportunities for students to engage in discussion around text.
- To clarify, reflect feelings, resolve different points of view, interpose summaries, and pose questions to students.

**The role of the student is:**

- To listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To read assigned text and participate in collaborative discussion.
- To be an effective listener who respects the opinions of others.
- To share questions and insights about the text.

**The observer will see:**

- The teacher setting high expectations for all students.
- The teacher observing, coaching, and monitoring student participation in collaborative discussion.
- The students in pairs or small groups engaging in talk about text.
- The students monitoring their understanding of text and text concepts.

**Resources:**

Alverman, D.E., Dillon, D.R., & O'Brien, D.G. (1987). Using discussion to promote reading comprehension. New ark, DE: International Reading Association.

Irvin, J., Buehl, D., & Klemp, R. (2003). Reading and the high school student: Strategies to enhance literacy. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Sternberg, R.J. (1987). Most Vocabulary is learned from context. In M.G. McKeown, & M.E. Curtis (Eds.), The nature of vocabulary acquisition. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Association.

Wilhelm, J.D. (2002). Action strategies for deepening comprehension. New York: Scholastic Books.

## **Writing to Learn**

Writing to learn is used by students to make sense of the text they are reading and as a response to show they understand the concepts and ideas they have read. Writing “facilitates learning by helping students explore, clarify, and think deeply about the ideas and concepts they encounter in reading. Writing about ideas and concepts encountered in texts will improve students’ acquisition of content more than simply reading without writing” (Vacca & Vacca, 2002, p. 247).

Students benefit from writing to learn activities in all content areas. According to Atwell (as cited in Vacca & Vacca), “...teachers of every discipline share in the responsibility of showing students how to think and write as scientists, historians, mathematicians, and literary critics do” (2002, p. 284).

### **The role of the teacher is:**

- To identify writing strategies that allow students to deepen and to communicate their understanding of concepts in text.
- To model the writing activity and guide students as they engage in writing.
- To provide multiple and varied opportunities for students to write to clarify their thinking in response to text.
- To provide feedback that will help students make meaning of text.

### **The role of the student is:**

- To observe the teacher as he/she models writing activities.
- To use the writing activities to explore and clarify his/her responses to text.
- To write in ways that communicate his/her understanding of the concepts in text.
- To use writing activities in all content areas.

### **The observer will see:**

- The teacher modeling writing activities that allow students to extend their thinking.
- The teacher providing opportunities for students to use writing in response to text.
- The teacher encouraging participation and discussion based on the writing students have completed.
- The students engaging in writing in response to text.
- The students using writing to develop their understanding of the concepts of the content area.

## Resources:

National writing project. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from <http://www.writingproject.org/>

Vacca, R., & Vacca, J.L. (2002). Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Writing initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from NCTE's Web site: <http://www.ncte.org/prog/writing>

## Learning to Write

Writing is a recursive process during which students negotiate the complex system of transforming thought into written communication as they develop ideas, express them through drafting, and bring their writing to a finished product. As defined by Gardner and Johnson (1997):

Writing is a fluid process created by writers as they work. Accomplished writers move back and forth between the stages of the process, both consciously and unconsciously. Young writers, however, benefit from the structure and security of following the writing process in their writing. (Stages of the writing process, para. 1)

The general stages of the writing process may be described as:

- Prewrite* Students generate ideas for writing, identify what they already know, select a topic, and establish a purpose for writing.
- Draft* Students get their ideas on paper and begin to shape the form of the writing.
- Revise* Students reflect on what they have written and rewrite to clarify and improve the writing.
- Edit* Students proofread for correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling and they adjust the writing to bring it to a final stage.
- Publish* Students present a final copy.

### The role of the teacher is:

- To model the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (bringing the writing to a final draft) as appropriate.
- To provide adequate time and multiple opportunities for students to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish their writing.
- To provide models of writing and guide students as they bring their writing to a final draft.
- To provide feedback to students throughout the process.
- To teach writing as an integral part of the content area.
- To assess writing in multiple ways.

### The role of the student is:

- To listen and observe as the teacher models the learning task.
- To employ the stages of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing to bring his/her writing to a final draft.
- To participate in writing conferences with the teacher and peers to discuss his/her writing and the writing of peers.
- To use the models provided by the teacher to improve his/her writing.
- To use feedback from the teacher and peers to improve his/her writing.

### The observer will see:

- The teacher modeling writing and the writing process.
- The students planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing their writing.
- The students engaging in conferences with the teacher and peers to offer and gain feedback on their writing.
- The students collecting multiple drafts in portfolios or folders.
- The students writing as an integral part of all subjects and classes.

**Resources:**

Gardner, A., & Johnson, D. (1997). Teaching personal experience narrative in the elementary and beyond. Retrieved June 6, 2004, from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/instrctn/in5lk11-1.htm>

National writing project. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from <http://www.writingproject.org/>

Writing initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2004, from NCTE's Web site: <http://www.ncte.org/prog/writing>

**CPS  
Literacy  
Observation  
Guides**



## Grades K-3 Observation Guide for Literacy Instruction

### Background Information

Teacher:	Date of Observation:	Observer:	Length of Observation: (minutes)	Grade Level:
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### Classroom Demographics

Total Number of Students in Class:	Number of Special Education Students:	Number of English Language Learners (ELLs):
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### Classroom Environment

A. Classroom library exhibits a wide variety of reading materials and reading levels for independent reading. A variety of genres are available for students to checkout/use.	Yes	Somewhat	No
B. Active participation and social interaction are integral parts of reading instruction in this classroom.	Yes	Somewhat	No
C. Students' original work is posted and is connected to current instruction.	Yes	Somewhat	No

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
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The teacher helped students make extensive connections to other texts, the world, and/or self through discussion and/or writing about text.	The teacher helped students make some connections to other texts, the world, and/or self through discussion and/or writing about text.	The teacher pointed out connections to other texts, the world, and/or self as students listened.	The teacher did not help students make connections to other texts, the world, and/or self.	
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**Read Aloud (Before Reading)**

**WORD KNOWLEDGE–FLUENCY–COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher read aloud to students from appropriate text that included quality children’s literature or other text related to curriculum unit or theme. The read aloud showed preparation and purpose and engaged students’ interests.	The teacher read aloud to students from appropriate text that included quality children’s literature or other text related to curriculum. The read aloud showed evidence of preparation and purpose, but did not engage students’ interests.	The teacher read aloud to students from appropriate text related to curriculum unit or theme. The read aloud showed little evidence of preparation and purpose and did not engage students’ interests.	The teacher did not read aloud to the students from appropriate text that included quality children’s literature or other text related to curriculum unit or theme.	

**Scaffolded Comprehension Strategies (Before, During, and After Reading)**

**COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided scaffolded instruction, first by modeling a strategy, then by providing guided and independent practice.	The teacher provided some scaffolded instruction with an explanation of a strategy, followed by guided and independent practice.	The teacher mentioned using strategies and provided independent practice.	The teacher provided only independent practice.	

**Made Connections (Before, During, and After Reading)**

**COMPREHENSION**

**Word Study (Before, During, and After Reading)**

**WORD KNOWLEDGE–COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided explicit instruction in decoding and word analysis skills. Students’ understanding was monitored and corrective feedback was given.	The teacher provided explicit instruction in decoding and word analysis skills. Students’ understanding was monitored, but corrective feedback was not given.	The teacher provided limited instruction in decoding and word analysis skills. Students’ understanding was not monitored and corrective feedback was not given.	The teacher did not provide instruction in decoding and word analysis skills.	

**Vocabulary (Before and After Reading)**

**WORD KNOWLEDGE**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed

The teacher focused instruction on key words in the text and provided multiple exposures and a variety of experiences to actively engage all students in learning word meanings.	The teacher focused instruction on key words in the text and provided multiple exposures, but failed to engage students actively in learning word meanings.	The teacher focused instruction on unimportant words or vocabulary words not connected to the text.	The teacher did not provide vocabulary instruction.	
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**Fluency (Before, During, and After Reading)**

**FLUENCY**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher modeled fluent oral reading, explicitly taught strategies for improving fluency, and involved students in fluency practice.	The teacher modeled fluent oral reading and involved students in fluency practice.	The teacher involved students in fluency practice.	The teacher did not provide fluency instruction.	

**Guided Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text (Before Reading)**

**COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher guided the students in previewing the text by having them determine the genre, text structure, and key features of the text to predict the possible contents and to discuss evidence for their predictions.	The teacher guided the students in previewing the text by having them determine the genre, text structure, and key features of the text to predict the possible contents.	The teacher previewed the text by pointing out the title of the selection and some features of the text, but did not involve the students in making predictions.	The teacher made no attempt to preview the text.	
4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher effectively used one or more methods to engage all students in arousing their prior knowledge (e.g., questioning, reviewing, graphic organizers, KWLs, predictions, audio-visual aids, etc.).	The teacher used one or more methods somewhat effectively to engage a majority of students in arousing/building their prior knowledge.	The teacher made a limited effort to arouse/build students' prior knowledge.	The teacher made no attempt to arouse/build students' prior knowledge.	
4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher ensured that a clear purpose was set for reading by involving the students in setting their own purpose for reading (e.g., self-generated questions or predictions).	The teacher set a purpose for reading by giving the students specific questions to answer or by eliciting predictions for them to check as they read.	The teacher set a vague, general purpose for reading.	The teacher did not give the students a purpose for reading or help them set their own purpose.	

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**Guided Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text (*During Reading*)**

**WORD KNOWLEDGE–FLUENCY–COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher taught the students to self-monitor their comprehension by stopping to summarize and check understanding in light of self-generated questions or predictions.	The teacher guided students through the reading of the text, stopping to engage students in discussions to check comprehension.	The teacher used limited strategies to engage students during the reading.	The teacher did not use any strategies to actively engage students during reading.	

**Guided Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text (*After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION–WRITING**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided extensive opportunities for sustained student-to-student interaction to help them construct meaning of the text.	The teacher provided some opportunities for sustained student-to-student interaction to help them construct meaning of the text.	The teacher led classroom dialogue by posing questions and evaluating students' responses about the meaning of the text.	The teacher provided limited opportunities for discussion of the text.	
4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify and extend their thinking (analyze, synthesize, compare/contrast, evaluate, etc.) and provided extensive opportunities for them to generate higher order questions and refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify and extend their thinking (analyze, synthesize, compare/contrast, evaluate, etc.) and provided some opportunities for them to generate higher order questions and refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify and extend understanding, but students were not required to refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that primarily assessed literal understanding of the text.	

**Writing to Learn (*Before, During, and After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION–WRITING**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed

The teacher used writing before, during, or after reading to support, extend, and/or assess comprehension of text. The teacher made the writing focus explicit, provided modeling or scaffolding, monitored students' writings, and provided corrective feedback.	The teacher used writing before, during, or after reading to support, extend, and/or assess comprehension of text. The teacher made the writing focus explicit and provided modeling or scaffolding, but did not monitor students' writings to provide corrective feedback.	The teacher used writing before, during, or after reading to support, extend, and/or assess comprehension of text.	The teacher did not use writing before, during, or after reading to support, extend, and/or assess comprehension of text.	
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**Learning to Write (Before, During, and After Writing)**

**WRITING**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided explicit instruction in the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing). The students wrote for an authentic purpose. The teacher monitored students' writing and provided corrective feedback.	The teacher provided explicit instruction in the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing). The students wrote for an authentic purpose. The teacher did not monitor students' writing or provide corrective feedback.	The teacher provided instruction in the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing). The students did not write for an authentic purpose. The teacher did not monitor students' writing or provide corrective feedback.	The teacher did not provide instruction in the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing).	

**Student Engagement**

_____ less than ¼ of class engaged	_____ ½ to ¾ of class engaged
_____ ¼ to ½ of class engaged	_____ more than ¾ of class engaged

**Classroom Embedded Assessment**

A. Did the teacher clearly state learning objectives for the students?	Yes	Somewhat	No
B. Was there evidence that the students achieved the learning objectives?	Yes	Somewhat	No

## Grades 4-8 Observation Guide for Literacy Instruction

### Background Information

Teacher:	Date of Observation:	Observer:	Length of Observation: (minutes)	Grade Level:
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### Classroom Demographics

Total Number of Students in Class:	Number of Special Education Students:	Number of English Language Learners (ELLs):
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### Classroom Environment

A. Classroom library exhibits a wide variety of reading materials and reading levels for independent reading. A variety of genres are available for students to checkout/use.	Yes	Somewhat	No
B. Active participation and social interaction are integral parts of reading instruction in this classroom.	Yes	Somewhat	No
C. Students' original work is posted and is connected to current instruction.	Yes	Somewhat	No

### Read Aloud (*Before Reading*)

### WORD KNOWLEDGE–FLUENCY–COMPREHENSION

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher read aloud to students from appropriate text that included quality children's literature or other text related to curriculum unit or theme. The read aloud showed preparation and purpose and engaged students' interests.	The teacher read aloud to students from appropriate text that included quality children's literature or other text related to curriculum. The read aloud showed evidence of preparation and purpose, but did not engage students' interests.	The teacher read aloud to students from appropriate text related to curriculum unit or theme. The read aloud showed little evidence of preparation and purpose and did not engage students' interests.	The teacher did not read aloud to the students from appropriate text that included quality children's literature or other text related to curriculum unit or theme.	

### Scaffolded Comprehension Strategies (*Before, During, and After Reading*)

### COMPREHENSION

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided scaffolded instruction, first by modeling a strategy, then by providing guided and independent practice.	The teacher provided some scaffolded instruction with an explanation of a strategy, followed by guided and independent practice.	The teacher mentioned using strategies and provided independent practice.	The teacher provided only independent practice.	

**Made Connections (Before, During, and After Reading)****COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher helped students make extensive connections to other texts, the world, and/or self through discussion and/or writing about text.	The teacher helped students make some connections to other texts, the world, and/or self through discussion and/or writing about text.	The teacher pointed out connections to other texts, the world, and/or self as students listened.	The teacher did not help students make connections to other texts, the world, and/or self.	

**Word Study (Before, During, and After Reading)****WORD KNOWLEDGE–COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided explicit instruction in decoding and word analysis skills. Students' understanding was monitored and corrective feedback was given.	The teacher provided explicit instruction in decoding and word analysis skills. Students' understanding was monitored, but corrective feedback was not given.	The teacher provided limited instruction in decoding and word analysis skills. Students' understanding was not monitored and corrective feedback was not given.	The teacher did not provide instruction in decoding and word analysis skills.	

**Vocabulary (Before and After Reading)****WORD KNOWLEDGE**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher focused instruction on key words in the text and provided multiple exposures and a variety of experiences to actively engage all students in learning word meanings.	The teacher focused instruction on key words in the text and provided multiple exposures, but failed to engage students actively in learning word meanings.	The teacher focused instruction on unimportant words or vocabulary words not connected to the text.	The teacher did not provide vocabulary instruction.	

**Fluency (Before, During, and After Reading)****FLUENCY**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher modeled fluent oral reading, explicitly taught strategies for improving fluency, and involved students in fluency practice.	The teacher modeled fluent oral reading and involved students in fluency practice.	The teacher involved students in fluency practice.	The teacher did not provide fluency instruction.	

**Guided Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text (Before Reading)****COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed

The teacher guided the students in previewing the text by having them determine the genre, text structure, and key features of the text to predict the possible contents and to discuss evidence for their predictions.	The teacher guided the students in previewing the text by having them determine the genre, text structure, and key features of the text to predict the possible contents.	The teacher previewed the text by pointing out the title of the selection and some features of the text, but did not involve the students in making predictions.	The teacher made no attempt to preview the text.	
4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher effectively used one or more methods to engage all students in arousing their prior knowledge (e.g., questioning, reviewing, graphic organizers, KWLs, predictions, audio-visual aids, etc.).	The teacher used one or more methods somewhat effectively to engage a majority of students in arousing/building their prior knowledge.	The teacher made a limited effort to arouse/build students' prior knowledge.	The teacher made no attempt to arouse/build students' prior knowledge.	
4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher ensured that a clear purpose was set for reading by involving the students in setting their own purpose for reading (e.g., self-generated questions or predictions).	The teacher set a purpose for reading by giving the students specific questions to answer or by eliciting predictions for them to check as they read.	The teacher set a vague, general purpose for reading.	The teacher did not give the students a purpose for reading or help them set their own purpose.	

**Guided Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text (*During Reading*)**

**WORD KNOWLEDGE–FLUENCY–COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher taught the students to self-monitor their comprehension by stopping to summarize and check understanding in light of self-generated questions or predictions.	The teacher guided students through the reading of the text, stopping to engage students in discussions to check comprehension.	The teacher used limited strategies to engage students during the reading.	The teacher did not use any strategies to actively engage students during reading.	

**Guided Reading: Small Group Instruction with Instructional Level Text (*After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION–WRITING**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided extensive opportunities for sustained student-to-student interaction to help them construct meaning of the text.	The teacher provided some opportunities for sustained student-to-student interaction to help them construct meaning of the text.	The teacher led classroom dialogue by posing questions and evaluating students' responses about the meaning of the text.	The teacher provided limited opportunities for discussion of the text.	



4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify and extend their thinking (analyze, synthesize, compare/contrast, evaluate, etc.) and provided extensive opportunities for them to generate higher order questions and refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify and extend their thinking (analyze, synthesize, compare/contrast, evaluate, etc.) and provided some opportunities for them to generate higher order questions and refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify and extend understanding, but students were not required to refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that primarily assessed literal understanding of the text.	

**Guided Silent Reading (*During Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION-FLUENCY**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher guided students through the silent reading of content area text, stopping at the end of meaningful intervals to engage students in discussion and to support and check comprehension during reading (text structure and content dictate appropriate stopping points).	The teacher guided students through silent reading of content area text by stopping at random intervals to engage students in discussion and to support and check comprehension during reading.	The teacher assigned silent reading, but did not guide students during the reading to support and check comprehension.	The teacher did not engage students in silent reading of content area text.	

**Engaged Students in Sustained Collaborative Discussion (*Before, During, and After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided opportunities for students to participate in discussion with peers focused on student and teacher-generated inquiry. During discussion the students clarified meaning of text, made connections, inferred, and synthesized content, with limited prompting from the teacher.	The teacher provided some opportunities for students to participate in discussion with peers focused on student and teacher-generated inquiry. During discussion the students were prompted to clarify meaning of text, make connections, infer, and synthesize content.	The teacher led classroom discussion by posing questions and evaluating student responses, but did not enable or prompt the students to clarify meaning of text, make connections, infer, or synthesize content.	The teacher provided few or no opportunities for students to engage in discussion.	

**Writing to Learn (*Before, During, and After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION-WRITING**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed

The teacher used writing before, during, or after reading to support, extend, and/or assess comprehension of text. The teacher made the writing focus explicit, provided modeling or scaffolding, monitored students' writings, and provided corrective feedback.	The teacher used writing before, during, or after reading to support, extend, and/or assess comprehension of text. The teacher made the writing focus explicit and provided modeling or scaffolding, but did not monitor students' writings to provide corrective feedback.	The teacher used writing before, during, or after reading to support, extend, and/or assess comprehension of text.	The teacher did not use writing before, during, or after reading to support, extend, and/or assess comprehension of text.	
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**Learning to Write (*Before, During, and After Writing*)**

**WRITING**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided explicit instruction in the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing). Students wrote for an authentic purpose. The teacher monitored students' writing and provided corrective feedback.	The teacher provided explicit instruction in the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing). Students wrote for an authentic purpose. The teacher did not monitor students' writing or provide corrective feedback.	The teacher provided instruction in the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing). Students did not write for an authentic purpose. The teacher did not monitor students' writing or provide corrective feedback.	The teacher did not provide instruction in the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing).	

**Student Engagement**

_____ less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of class engaged	_____ $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of class engaged
_____ $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of class engaged	_____ more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of class engaged

**Classroom Embedded Assessment**

A. Did the teacher clearly state learning objectives for the students?	Yes	Somewhat	No
B. Was there evidence that the students achieved the learning objectives?	Yes	Somewhat	No

Not Applicable/Not Observed

## High School Observation Guide for Content Area Literacy

### Background Information

Teacher:	Date of Observation:	
Class (Subject/Grade Level):	Observer:	Length of Observation: (minutes)

### Classroom Demographics

Total Number of Students in Class:	Number of Special Education Students:	Number of English Language Learners (ELLs):
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### Aroused/Built Prior Knowledge (*Before Reading*)

#### COMPREHENSION

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher effectively used one or more methods to engage all students in arousing/building their prior knowledge (e.g., questioning, reviewing, graphic organizers, KWLs, predictions, audio-visual aids, etc.).	The teacher somewhat effectively used one or more methods to engage a majority of students in arousing/building their prior knowledge (e.g., questioning, reviewing, graphic organizers, KWLs, predictions, audio-visual aids, etc.).	The teacher made a limited effort to arouse/build students' prior knowledge.	The teacher made no attempt to arouse/build students' prior knowledge.	

### Set Purpose for Reading (*Before Reading*)

#### COMPREHENSION

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher ensured that a clear purpose was set for reading by involving the students in setting their own purposes for reading (e.g., self-generated questions or predictions).	The teacher set a purpose for reading by giving the students specific questions to answer or by eliciting predictions for them to check as they read.	The teacher set a vague, general purpose for reading.	The teacher did not set or help students to set a purpose for reading.	

### Taught Word Meaning (*Before, During, and After Reading*)

#### WORD KNOWLEDGE

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed

\*Not Applicable/Not Observed

The teacher focused instruction on key content words and provided multiple exposures and a variety of experiences to actively engage all students in learning word meanings.	The teacher focused instruction on key content words but did not provide multiple exposures and/or did not engage students actively in learning word meanings.	The teacher provided limited vocabulary instruction but did not focus on key content words and/or did not provide multiple exposures to the words.	The teacher did not provide opportunities for students to learn key content words.	
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**Guided Silent Reading (*During Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION-FLUENCY**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher guided students through the silent reading of content area text, stopping at the end of meaningful intervals to engage students in discussion and to support and check comprehension during reading (text structure and content dictate appropriate stopping points).	The teacher guided students through silent reading of content area text by stopping at random intervals to engage students in discussion and to support and check comprehension during reading.	The teacher assigned silent reading, but did not guide students during the reading to support and check comprehension.	The teacher did not engage students in silent reading of content area text.	

**Scaffolded Comprehension Strategies (*Before, During, and After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided scaffolded instruction by first modeling a comprehension strategy, and then by providing guided and independent practice.	The teacher provided some scaffolded instruction with an explanation of a comprehension strategy, and then by guided and independent practice.	The teacher mentioned using comprehension strategies and provided independent practice.	The teacher provided only independent practice.	

**Made Connections (*Before, During, and After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher helped students make extensive connections to other texts, the world, and/or self through writing and talking about text.	The teacher helped students make some connections to other texts, the world, and/or self through writing and talking about text.	The teacher pointed out connections to other texts, the world, and/or self as students listened.	The teacher made no connections and did not help students make connections to other texts, the world, and/or self.	

**Asked Questions to Extend Understanding (*Before, During, and After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed

The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify and extend their thinking (analyze, synthesize, compare/contrast, evaluate, etc.) and provided extensive opportunities for them to generate higher order questions and refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify and extend their thinking (analyze, synthesize, compare/contrast, evaluate, etc.) and provided some opportunities for them to generate higher order questions and refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that helped students to clarify understanding, but students were not required to refer to the text to support their responses.	The teacher asked questions that primarily assessed literal understanding of the text.	
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**Engaged Students in Sustained Collaborative Discussion (*Before, During, and After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher provided extensive opportunities for sustained student-to-student interaction to help them construct meaning of key content area concepts in text.	The teacher provided some opportunities for sustained student-to-student interaction to help them construct meaning of key content area concepts in text.	The teacher led classroom dialogue by posing questions and evaluating students' responses about key content area concepts in text.	The teacher provided a lecture on key content area concepts in the text.	

**Writing to Learn (*Before, During, and After Reading*)**

**COMPREHENSION-WRITING**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed
The teacher effectively modeled writing strategies and guided students in using them to help students process and extend content information and communicate their understanding of key concepts in text.	The teacher engaged students in a writing activity to help them process content information and communicate their understanding of key concepts in text.	The teacher provided an assignment where students responded with word phrases or sentence level answers.	The teacher did not engage students in writing to help them with content area text.	

**Learning to Write (*Before, During, and After Writing*)**

**WRITING**

4	3	2	1	*Not Observed

The teacher effectively modeled the appropriate components of the writing process, guided students in planning, drafting, revising, editing, and bringing their writing to a final draft, and provided feedback throughout the process.	The teacher engaged students in using some components of the writing process to bring their writing to a final draft and provided some feedback to students.	The teacher provided an assignment, instructed students to use one or more steps of the writing process, and offered limited feedback to students as they wrote.	The teacher provided an assignment where students responded with a paragraph or an essay and gave a final grade without feedback.	
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**Student Engagement**

_____ less than ¼ of class engaged	_____ ½ to ¾ of class engaged
_____ ¼ to ½ of class engaged	_____ more than ¾ of class engaged

**Classroom Embedded Assessment**

A. Did the teacher clearly state learning objectives for the students?	Yes	Somewhat	No
B. Was there evidence that the students achieved the learning objectives?	Yes	Somewhat	No