



Balanced Literacy: The Reader's Workshop

EDUO 9200

Instructor Doug Fannin; dfannin@dominicancaonline.com

Introduction

Balanced Literacy is an approach with a goal of developing lifelong readers and thinkers. It exposes students to the habits of good readers by interacting with many genres and styles of literature. Components of balanced literacy, including the reader's and writer's workshop models, will be explored. Creating effective mini-lessons, grouping students appropriately, and planning effective guided reading lessons will be an integral part of the course.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 1, participants will be able to:

Identify the components of *balanced literacy*: the reader's workshop.

- A. Read-aloud
- B. Independent reading
- C. Guided reading
- D. Response to literature
- E. Reading conferences

By the end of Session 2, participants will be able to:

Explore the structure and format of the mini-lesson in the reader's workshop model.

- A. Investigate the format of the mini-lesson
- B. Identify mentor or anchor texts that can be used to support lessons
- C. Assess a mini-lesson for effectiveness

By the end of Session 3, participants will be able to:

Plan for and conduct guided reading groups.

- A. Explore guided reading as one component of balanced literacy
- B. Understand the varying levels of literacy development and how to plan instruction aimed at meeting these individual needs
- C. Identify characteristics and behaviors of students at different reading levels
- D. Establish guided reading groups through effective assessment

Materials

1. Videos:

A Morning in a Kindergarten Classroom

A Literacy Program in a K-1 Classroom

Balanced Literacy: 2 Hours 10 Minutes in a Second Grade Classroom

2. Professional Development Materials

- A. Annotated Content with Essential Questions and Supplementary Resources
- B. Menu of Key Concepts, Inquiry Questions, and Related Resources

Session 1: Identifying the Components of Balanced Literacy

Overview

Balanced literacy is an approach to teaching reading and writing that attempts to balance the teaching of phonics while exposing students to a rich body of literature through the use of whole language. The skills that all students must learn in order to become effective readers and writers include phonemic awareness (matching sounds and letters), decoding or sounding out words (phonics), advancing vocabulary, practicing reading, and building comprehension skills. The ultimate goal is for teachers to create fluent readers who use reading as a tool to learn. There are many components to an effective balanced literacy program. Teachers make time during their literacy block to include many of the following components in their instruction. In her article, **Understanding the Language of Balanced Literacy**, Arlyne LeSchack defines several of these components:

- reading aloud - In the balanced literacy model, the teacher reads aloud to the whole class or small groups. The texts are carefully selected from children's literature and a variety of genres are represented. Favorite texts may be reread several times. The model we are using includes "read-alouds" that provide opportunities for students to "turn and talk" to each other about various story-related subjects.
- shared reading - The teacher uses an enlarged text that all the children can see, and involves the students in reading together, perhaps using a pointer. Big books, poems, songs, or the class' own interactive writing may be used for this activity.
- guided reading - Working with small groups who have similar reading levels, the teacher selects and introduces new books and supports the children who are reading the text to themselves. The teacher makes teaching points before, during, and after the reading of the text. When the teacher uses guided reading during a conference, he/she allows the children nearby to benefit from the teaching point provided to one student.
- reader's workshop - The children read on their own, or with a partner, from a wide range of materials. Most important is that some of the reading should be exactly at their reading level. If a student is going to learn to read by reading, then the books have to be "just right." This is also called independent reading.

Resources for Session One

Session 2: The Structure of the Mini-Lesson in the Reader's Workshop Model

Overview

Through the use of the mini-lesson, the workshop approach allows the teacher to guide students toward meeting standards and building various skills needed to develop their reading and writing proficiency. Teachers conduct workshops by creating learning experiences that

model correct reading and writing strategies. Content area texts and various genres of literature are used to anchor the lessons.

According to Arlyne LeSchack, both the reading and writing workshops start with a 10- to 15-minute mini-lesson. The mini-lesson has a definite structure. The first part is the connection; the teacher starts by connecting the current lesson to something previously done. Next comes the teaching point, when the teacher states explicitly and repeatedly exactly what she is teaching in this lesson. Next the teacher models or demonstrates exactly what she wants the students to do. Then the active engagement occurs, when all the students try out or discuss what it is they are supposed to do. The last part of the mini-lesson is the link when the teacher tells the students what they will do during the independent work time of the workshop. During this period, the students work independently while the teacher walks around and confers with individual students. After about 30 minutes, the teacher briefly shares, using a student's good work as an example.

Mini-lessons are brief, focused on specific skills, appropriate for the whole class, and allow time to apply the new skill. They are followed by a period of practice via independent or small group work, and then sharing.

Resources for Session Two

Session 3: Guided Reading

Overview

Guided reading is the heart of a balanced literacy program. It is a small-group approach to teaching reading where the teacher works with a small group of students with similar reading ability. The book must be at the students' instructional level. The teacher spends the first part of the lesson discussing concepts in the book and scaffolding information. This lays the groundwork for reading success. To establish an effective guided reading group, teachers must assess and place groups of no more than five or six students with similar needs. Teachers must also account for meaningful activities for the rest of the class while they are working with their guided reading group. Assessment is ongoing, and instruction is differentiated as readers transition from one group to the next when they have achieved a higher level of proficiency.

Resources for Session Three

Assessment