

Deer Park Independent School District

**Belief Statements
About
the
Teaching
Of
Literacy**

**Composed by the DPIISD Literacy Collaborative
2016-2017**

Effective Literacy Instruction

We believe effective literacy instruction results in students who are proficient and confident readers and writers.

We believe students should have many opportunities to read and write every day in settings which include small group, whole group, and individually.

We believe a strong classroom literacy program will support students in all content areas.

We believe that students develop a self-extending system and use strategies efficiently when reading and writing independently.

We believe that reading and writing are reciprocal processes and provide effective literacy instruction every day.

We believe that as educators our on-going professional learning and development is critical to achieving student success.

We believe that effective teaching includes modeling, thinking aloud, working with individuals, and working with small groups of students.

We believe that children who see themselves as readers and writers will become life-long readers and writers.

Reciprocal Process of Reading and Writing

Reading and Writing are reciprocal processes that build upon each other and foster literacy development.

- Reading affects writing, and writing affects reading.
- The study of a writer's craft in quality examples of reading and writing provides models for students to imitate in their own writing.
- We write in response to reading; we read in response to writing.
- Using the same text for mini-lessons, teachers are able to foster the integration of reading and writing.
- When students read extensively, they become better writers.
- Reading a variety of genres, students can learn text structures and language that they can then transfer to their own writing.
- We read to learn; then, we are able to share that knowledge through writing.

Creating Independent Readers and Writers

In order to create independent readers and writers, we believe that teachers should first see themselves as readers and writers, serving as models for their students. Opportunities should be provided for students to read and write for authentic audiences and purposes. Creating a safe learning environment, teachers allow students to take risks in the areas of reading and writing. This environment promotes guidance and choice as to what students want to read and write while being exposed to quality models of various texts and genres. Daily opportunities to read and write build stamina and literacy independence, creating life-long readers and writers.

Reading Instruction

Shared Reading

Shared Reading is an instructional context in which the teacher involves the students in the reading in order to introduce aspects of literacy such as: print conventions, reading strategies, and vocabulary. Shared Reading is an effective way to build students' systems of strategic action in reading and fosters the growth of student agency. Shared Reading may include reading enlarged text, choral reading, and readers' theater of an on-grade-level text. Shared Reading offers high teacher support in the Gradual Release Model of Literacy Instruction.

Interactive Read Aloud

Interactive Read Aloud is an instructional context in which the teacher carefully selects a text to read to the students, generally in a whole group setting. This type of reading is "interactive" because it is intended to engage students in a discussion of the text. As students listen, they activate systems of strategic action. The teacher identifies a few places in the text where students turn and talk as a way to engage in making connections and articulating their thinking. Teachers purposefully select texts to expand student thinking and proficiencies in literature discussion.

Guided Reading

Guided Reading is small group instruction designed to be responsive to the needs of individual students. Students who are similar in their reading development are grouped together. Data from various assessments guide the teacher when grouping students. Grouping is flexible and adjusted based on teacher assessment and analysis of student needs. Instruction is planned with the intention of meeting the different needs of students. Small group Guided Reading may include literature circles/book clubs based on a teacher's assessments of students' needs. The goal of Guided Reading is to assure students are supported during small group instruction as they apply a wide range of strategic actions while processing increasingly complex text. Students in an elementary classroom, K-5, should receive small group instruction in a guided reading group or a literature circle/book.

Word Work in Guided Reading

We believe that word work in Guided Reading is a focused lesson teaching students to take words apart quickly and efficiently. Word work promotes fluency and flexibility when reading text. Based on patterns of students' needs, word work can focus on letters, letter-sound relationships, word patterns, word structure, or high-frequency words. Word work during Guided Reading is an opportunity for the students to build proficiency in noticing similarities and differences in letters, words, and segments of words.

Independent Reading

We believe that Independent Reading offers the opportunity for a student to develop tastes as a reader and to read a large number of self-selected books on his/her own. A key factor in independent reading is choice. Teachers support independent reading by offering students a well-organized collection of books from which to choose. The collection includes an assortment of texts of varying genres, topics, and levels of difficulty, so that each student will be able to find something they can read and want to read. The teacher may offer support through individual conferences with the student. Independent Reading will occur at a specific time of the day and as part of the Reading Workshop. Through mini-lessons, the teacher helps students apply understandings to their own reading and learn how to choose books they can enjoy. Reading conferences with individual students and small groups support thinking. Throughout Independent Reading, students also extend their thinking through group share, journal responses, partner talk, graphic organizers, writing about reading, and book talks.

Reading Workshop

Reading Workshop is a framework for reading that provides students with differentiated instruction within a supportive environment. The emphasis is on student engagement and the interaction between readers and text. It is a daily, structured context in which the teacher models and instructs students in strategies that enable them to become independent readers and writers. Students practice and strengthen their skills through time spent in independent reading. Through reading, writing, listening, and talking, a community of learners develops.

The structure of a Reading Workshop includes:

- **Mini-lesson** (10 – 15 minutes)
 - Small group or whole group as appropriate
- **Interactive Reading Aloud or Shared Reading** (5 – 10 minutes)
- **Independent Reading** (takes place during individual and small group work)
 - Response to literature
 - Applying skills learned in the mini-lesson
- **Individual and Small Group work** (45 – 60 minutes)
 - Guided Reading
 - Guided Reading with advanced readers may take the format of Book Clubs or Literature Circles, but still must include opportunities for the teacher to hear students read and guide students towards skill improvement on a weekly basis.
 - Assessments
- **Conferencing** (2 – 6 minute individual/small group conferences)
- **Share time/closing conversations** (5 – 10 minutes)

Reading Mini-lesson

The 10 – 15 minute Reading Mini-lesson is a key component of helping students think like readers. The goal is applying what they are learning to the reading of text. Mini-lessons may focus on strategies and skills to increase students' effective reading systems. Teaching links the mini-lesson to students' continually developing systems of strategic actions: thinking within the text, thinking about the text, thinking beyond the text.

The structure of the Mini-lesson: connect (teaching point), teach (model), actively engage (text talk), link (apply the teaching point and link to own thinking). Students share their thinking and/or application of the Mini-lesson during the workshop (mid-workshop) or at the end of the workshop.

Writing Instruction

Writing and reading are reciprocal processes; learning in one helps the learning in the other.

The writing process is composed of planning and pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing of student work. Students experience flexibility as they write, weaving in and out of the writing process. An important overarching component of the writing process is viewing self as a writer.

Students learn to write by writing – by engaging in all of the component processes many times. The writing process is recursive; the same processes are used over and over and some simultaneously as they become more sophisticated.

Writing is a basic tool for learning as well as for communicating with others. We want our students to become individuals who can use many types of writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences throughout their lives.

Students should have opportunities to write across all subjects. Writing to learn should be a natural process built into the study of the core subjects. It deepens learning in all content areas while enhancing academic vocabulary.

Writers learn to write from studying the craft of other writers. Published authors can serve as their mentors, as students notice what they do to make their writing effective.

When writers write, they may have a purpose in mind and select the genre accordingly. It is important to recognize that effective writers do not write in a genre just to practice it. They choose the genre that will best convey the meaning they intend.

Writer's Workshop

We believe that Writing Workshop is a framework for writing instruction and practice in the classroom with the goal of fostering life-long writers. Students write for a variety of audiences and purposes. The teacher acts as a coach, modeling writing techniques through mini-lessons as students move through the writing process. Mini-lessons provide explicit instruction in specific areas of writing. Students spend time writing independently while the teacher conferences with individual students. Students may even confer with each other about their writing.

Guided writing takes place in a small-group context where students receive immediate, targeted support. Think-alouds, or the scaffolding of a strategic activity, enable students to integrate strategies into their own writing. Guided writing can take place within the time allotted for independent writing. It is not necessary for every student to participate in a guided writing lesson every day. Teachers make intentional, thoughtful decisions about which students would benefit from the targeted instruction. Guided writing lessons are flexible in nature and are based on being responsive to the writing needs of the students. The small group format is a part of the writing workshop model and does not take the place of interactive writing.

Group share is an important part of the writing workshop as students are given opportunities to share their writing. This allows writers to learn from each other and hear good examples of writing. It also builds confidence to share in a safe and risk-free environment.

Writer's Workshop follows a consistent framework:

- The Mini-lesson (5-10 minutes)
- The Model (5-10 minutes)
- Independent Practice (20-45 minutes)
 - Conferencing (during independent writing)
 - Guided Writing (10-20 minutes within independent writing time)
- Group Share (5-10 minutes)

These times can be flexible within the consistent framework.

Interactive Writing

Interactive writing is similar to shared writing in that teacher and students compose a text together. In interactive writing, the teacher invites the students to share the pen. Occasionally, the teacher will point out various features of words and letters, inviting the student to come to the easel to contribute a letter, word, or part of a word. After students have developed a large writing vocabulary, interactive writing progresses to shared writing.

Shared Writing

During shared writing the teacher and students compose a text together with the teacher as the scribe. It is based on a high level of student participation and talk. The text becomes a model for future writing and discussion as well as activating prior knowledge.

Independent Writing

Students should be given time to write independently. Working on self-selected pieces of writing, they work at their own pace. Opportunities for authentic writing should happen while being exposed to various genres of quality models of literature. Independent writing provides time for teachers to conference with student writers, providing strategies of improvement, modeling good examples of writing and possible editing suggestions.

Viewing Self as a Writer

To create life-long writers, students must write for real audiences and purposes. They must be immersed in a rich reading and writing environment that displays and celebrates student efforts. Daily opportunities must be provided to apply and reapply what they learn and know about quality writing to develop their individual craft. Teachers value each **student** and **themselves** as a writer, providing feedback through conferencing and encouragement offered to students to take risks in a safe, reassuring environment.

Common Language

authentic audience: an audience beyond the teacher, class or even the school. It is a heterogeneous audience as one would write for if one wrote in a newspaper or magazine article. It is an audience that chooses to read what is being written instead of a group that is chosen by the writer or a teacher.

balanced literacy: an approach to reading instruction that uses both whole language and phonics. The goal of balanced literacy is to include the strongest elements of each. The components of a balanced literacy approach include: the read aloud; guided reading; shared reading; interactive writing; shared writing; Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop and Word Study.

book clubs: bring students together for in-depth discussion of a self-selected book they have read (or listened to), extending thinking about and enjoying age-appropriate material. Students have the opportunity to think more deeply about a text and its illustrations as they talk with one another and co-construct new, richer understandings than any one reader could gain from reading it for himself.

book introductions: a planned process that is key to the readers' access to the book. A brief and lively discussion in which the teacher interests the children in the story and produces an appropriate set for reading it (Holdaway, 1979).

choice: a key feature to engaging students in the act of reading, teachers may allow students full free choice of the full range of books and texts in a classroom, or may allow limited choice based on students' readiness for texts or purpose for reading.

conferencing: a one-on-one strategy that takes place between the student writer and the teacher, writing conferences can occur at any stage of the writing process.

differentiated instruction: a framework for effective teaching that involves providing different students with different avenues to learning (often in the same classroom) in terms of: acquiring content; processing, constructing, or making sense of ideas; and developing teaching materials and assessment measures so that all students within a classroom can learn effectively, regardless of differences in ability.

essential question: an open-ended question that does not have a single, final, or correct answer. It should be thought-provoking and intellectually engaging, call for higher-order thinking, point towards important transferable ideas, raise additional questions, require support and justification and recur over time (McTighe and Wiggins, 2017)

flexible grouping: a method of formally or informally grouping and regrouping students in a variety of ways throughout the school day.

fluency: in reading, this term names the ability to read continuous text with good momentum, phrasing, appropriate pausing, intonation, and stress. In word solving, this term names the ability to solve words with speed, accuracy, and flexibility.

- Rate: the speed with which a text is read
- Accuracy: reading with no errors
- Prosody: reading aloud with expression

form: a kind of text that is characterized by particular elements. Short story, for example, is a form of fiction writing.

genre: a kind of category of text or artistic work or a class of artistic endeavor (including music, drama, and studio arts) that has a characteristic form or technique.

gradual release model: a particular style of teaching which is a structured method of pedagogy framed around a process devolving responsibility within the learning process from the teacher to the eventual independence of the learner. This instructional model requires that the teacher, by design, transitions from assuming “all the responsibility for performing a task to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility.

group share: at the closing of the writing lesson, when students come back together as a whole group, a few students may be invited to share out what they have written or accomplished during the writing time.

high-frequency words: commonly used words that young children are encouraged to memorize as a whole by sight, so they can automatically recognize these words in print without having to use decoding strategies.

instructional reading level: the highest level at which a reader has adequate background knowledge for the topic, and can access the text very quickly with very few errors.

interactive read-aloud: an activity in which the teacher reads-aloud an age-appropriate, grade-appropriate text, which promotes the joy of reading, expands vocabulary and the ability to think, talk, and write about texts that fully engage their interest, many of which are beyond students’ current ability to decode.

letter-sound relationship: the ability to connect the letters that make up the spelling of a word to the phonemes that make up its pronunciation to a point where reading words becomes automatic.

literature circle: small-group reading instruction in which students form temporary groups built around a common book choice. Students meet regularly to discuss their reading. The ultimate goal for a literature circle is for students to be able to independently choose discussion topics and conduct deep, meaningful conversations about their reading.

mini-lesson: a lesson of short duration – generally no longer than 15 minutes, in which the teacher provides explicit, specific instruction to a small group or to the whole class.

print conventions: include book familiarity (location of print, where to start reading, and what direction to read and write), text features (punctuation, capitalization, and special types like boldface), and text concepts (word boundaries, number of words/letters, and first/last part of word/sentence).

publishing: the process of making the final draft of a written composition public.

readers theater: a dramatic presentation of a written work in script form. Readers read from a “script” and reading parts are divided among the readers. No memorization, costumes, clocking or special lighting is done. Presentations can easily be done in a classroom.

reading strategies: learned skills that help students successfully decode and understand text. These may include: activating prior knowledge; clarifying; context clues; drawing conclusions; evaluating; inferring; predicting; rereading; restating; stating a purpose; skimming and scanning, and; visualizing.

response to literature: the way in which one reacts to something that has been read or listened to. This process begins before reading as one thinks about what is to be read and continues during and after reading.

scaffolding: is a process through which a teacher adds support for students in order to enhance learning and aid in the mastery of tasks. The teacher does this by systematically building on students’ experiences and knowledge as they are learning new skills.

self-extending system: readers read silently most of the time and are fluent and phrased in oral reading. They use all sources of information (word structure, syntax, and meaning) in a smoothly orchestrated way. They can sustain reading over long texts requiring several days or weeks.

stamina: the ability to read and comprehend text for long periods of time. Students must build reading stamina over time with increased exposure to longer, sustained reading opportunities.

strategic action: any one of many simultaneous coordinated thinking activities that go on in a reader’s head.

student agency: the capacity and propensity to take purposeful initiative—the opposite of helplessness. Young people with high levels of agency do not respond passively to their circumstances; they tend to seek meaning and act with purpose to achieve the conditions they desire in their own and others’ lives.

think-alouds: teachers verbalize aloud while reading a selection orally. They verbalizations include describing things they are doing as they read to monitor their comprehension. The purpose of the think-aloud strategy is to model for students how skilled readers construct meaning from a text.

thinking about the text: questioning strategy that includes asking students to identify items such as the title of the book, what students noted about a book, who the author was and the student's response to the content.

thinking beyond the text: questioning strategy that includes asking students to predict what will happen next, making connections between the characters and plot and the students' own lives and experiences, and comparing the text to other texts.

thinking within the text: questioning strategy that includes identifying major plot points, key details, characters and setting within a text.

turn and talk: a strategy that permits all students to participate in a discussion, rather than only a few students participating in a whole classroom discussion. Prompted by the teacher to "turn and talk" to a partner or small group, students are provided questions or topics to discuss before being asked to respond to the whole group.

word patterns: lists of words that follow a common pattern in spelling or pronunciation.

word structure: the allowable arrangement of sounds in words, also known as morphology.

word work: an instructional strategy that focuses on playing the words, word patterns, word families, prefixes, suffixes, and so on, in order to assist students in honing their knowledge of words and increasing their writing skills.

writing process: a recursive approach to writing that focuses on the stages or steps through which a piece of writing evolves, rather than solely on an end product. Stages in the process include prewriting; drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Writers do not move through all stages at one time, and the stages are recursive in that writers may return to any stage at any point in time before moving onward with a piece of writing.