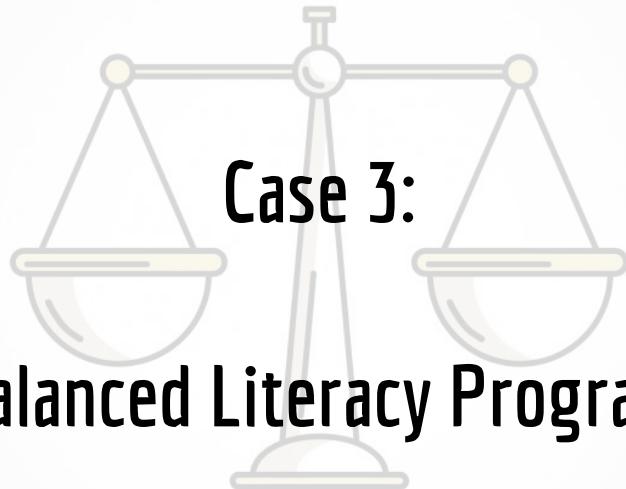


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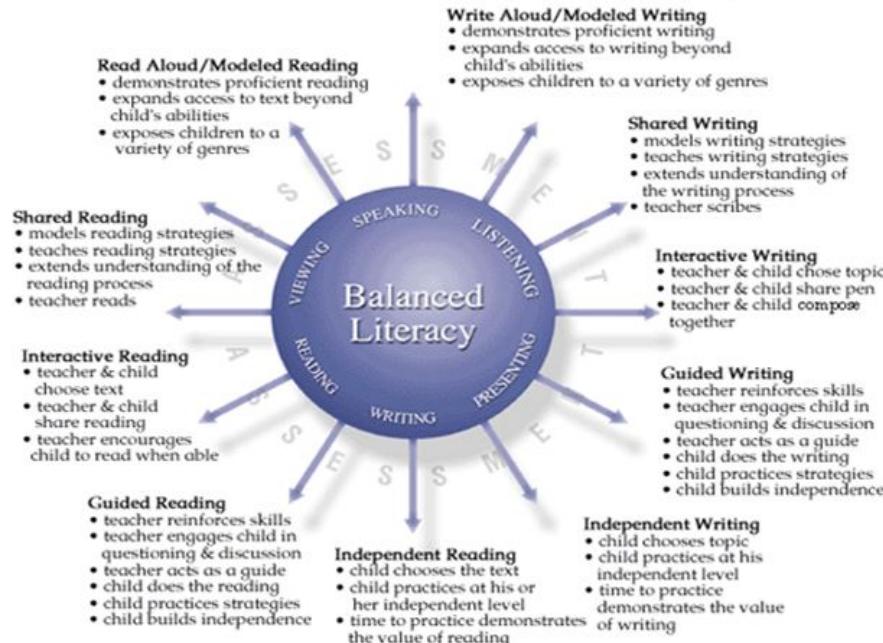


Case 3: Balanced Literacy Program

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What is Balanced Literacy?



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Introduction



A Balanced Literacy Program (BLP) is an approach to **literacy** that incorporates a variety of teaching and learning methods in order to accommodate for the diversity of students in the classroom (Gross, 2010). Balanced literacy focuses on a wide range of aspects relating to literacy, summed up by Cooper (2005) as the "Six Essential Tasks of a Balanced Approach" that can be observed in reading and writing as listed below.

1. Oral Language
2. Narrative Form
3. Conventions of Print
4. Code
5. Word Study
6. Reading for Meaning

Image Retrieved from FreePik



In our package, we try to answer the question of "**How can teachers implement a balanced literacy program that builds on students' funds of knowledge?**". We discuss what these six tasks mean, the importance of BLP, and give suggestions as to how teachers can implement a BLP in their classroom.

Importance of BLP



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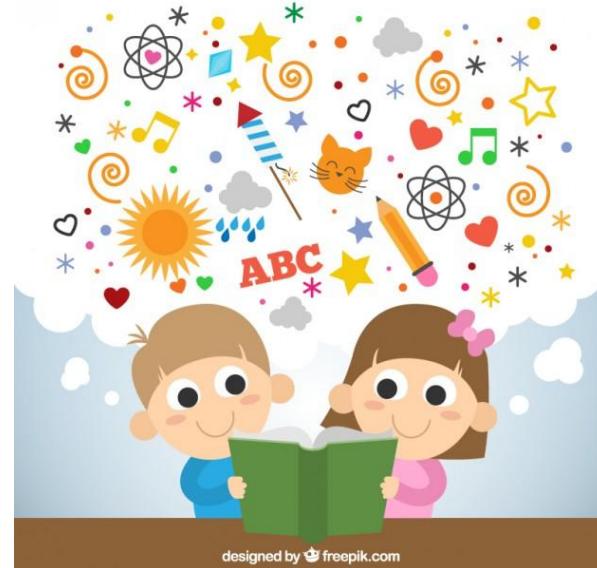
Having a Balanced Literacy Program will help students develop different literacy skills necessary for their reading and writing development. These skills include word recognition, comprehension, and achieving fluency in the English language.

Word recognition refers to the student's ability to decode texts, as well as their phonemic awareness.

Comprehension refers to the student's ability to make sense of the texts they read.

Fluency refers to the efficiency and ease in which the students are able to recognize words and comprehend texts.

(Gross, 2010)



BLP and the New BC Curriculum

New Curriculum: Core Competencies



Personal and Social - Personal and social competency is the set of abilities that relate to students' identity in the world, both as individuals and as members of their community and society. Personal and social competency encompasses the abilities students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world.



Thinking - The thinking competency encompasses the knowledge, skills and processes we associate with intellectual development. It is through their competency as thinkers that students take subject-specific concepts and content and transform them into a new understanding. Thinking competence includes specific thinking skills as well as habits of mind, and metacognitive awareness.



Communication - The communication competency encompasses the set of abilities that students use to impart and exchange information, experiences and ideas, to explore the world around them, and to understand and effectively engage in the use of digital media.

How does a Balanced Literacy Program incorporate the BC Ministry Curricular Competencies?

When we compare the main focuses and objectives of a **Balanced Literacy Program** with BC's **Core Curricular Competencies** of Grade 3/4, we can see that many overlap.

Focuses of Balanced Reading Program	BC Ministry Grade 3 Curricular Competencies	BC Ministry Grade 4 Curricular Competencies
Oral Language – <i>Speaking and listening, vocabulary</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">“Use oral storytelling processes”“Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">“Use oral storytelling processes”“Orally share a memory from the story with others”
Narrative Form – <i>Telling stories, use text to express feelings, etc.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">“Recognize the structure and elements of story”“Create stories and other texts to deepen awareness of self, family, and community”“Create a variety of communication forms for different purposes and audiences”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">“Respond to text in personal and creative ways”“Apply a variety of thinking skills to gain meaning from texts”“Transform ideas and information to create original texts”

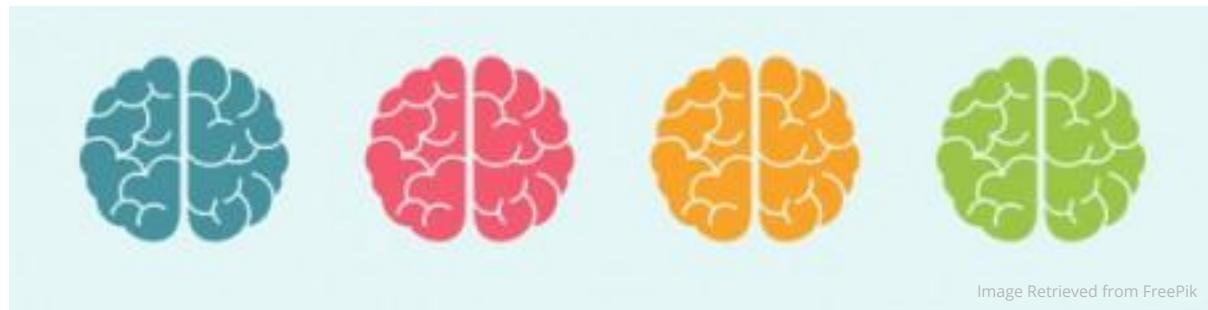
How does a Balanced Literacy Program incorporate the BC Ministry Curricular Competencies?- Continued

Focuses of Balanced Reading Program	BC Ministry Grade 3 Curricular Competencies	BC Ministry Grade 4 Curricular Competencies
Conventions of Print – <i>Text features, written grammar</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Communicate using sentences and conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Communicate using sentences and conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation”- “Use language in creative and playful ways to develop style”
Code – <i>Recognizing individual sounds, decoding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Use knowledge of language patterns and phonics to decode words”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Use contextual cues, phonics, and word structure”
Word Study – <i>Word patterns, spelling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Develop and apply expanding word knowledge, such as morphology and spelling”- “Understand the structure of compound sentences”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Develop and apply expanding word knowledge, such as morphology and spelling”- “Understand paragraph structure, parts of speech”
Reading for Meaning – <i>Fluency, comprehension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Use sources of information and prior knowledge to make meaning”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Use a variety of comprehension skills to deepen understanding of text”

Funds of Knowledge - An Anthropological Approach

“...bodies of knowledge and skills that are essential for the well-being of an entire household.” (Esteban-Guitard & Moll, 2013, p. 31)

The terms “**funds of knowledge**” was coined by Arizona researchers Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez in 1992 to talk about the ways in which home may be connected to the classroom. Rather than simply being the prior knowledge a student has about a certain topic, funds of knowledge refers to the culture and cultural practices that have been derived from the students’ experiences. These funds of knowledge influence students’ work, behaviour, values, and attitudes.



(Moll et al., 2001)

Funds of Knowledge

Some influences of students' funds of knowledge include:

- Culture and family histories
- Occupations of caregivers
- Hobbies
- Geographical location
- Community and home life



Note: "Funds of knowledge" is different from "prior/background knowledge. *Background knowledge* focuses on what the student knows about a specific topic, whereas *funds of knowledge* reflect the influence of experiences in a broader sense.

Once educators draw on students' fund of knowledge, they may be able to plan themed units so that students can actively learn through **participation, engagement, and inquiry**. Funds of knowledge allow for students to have a thorough educational experience, outside of just the classroom.

Preparation

Here are some essentials for effective balanced literacy instruction that a teacher can prepare before the lesson.

- **Know yourself:** understand your own literacy experience, curriculum expectations and literacy outcomes you envision for your students
- **Know your students:** understand your student's existing funds of knowledge and their literary experience
- **Create a classroom community:** foster respect for individual differences and make it possible for students to take risks
- **Organize classrooms:** create an effective establishment of literacy centres, workshops and charts
- **Communication:** foster constructive and accountable talk for learning
- **Understanding:** reading and writing involves multiple responses, and levels of support
- **Storytelling:** use traditional and digital storytelling

Reading Components of BLP



Image Retrieved from FreePik

The writing components of BLP mostly focuses on three of the six essential tasks to help students develop reading skills: Conventions of Print, Word Study, and Reading for Meaning

Conventions of Print: The student develops knowledge about print functions such as directionality, where the student follows the teacher's pen as they move it left to right, spaces between words, punctuation, cluster of marks we call letters, and how these letters are grouped together to make particular words.

Word Study: Development and knowledge of sight words **phonetics**, spelling and decoding of **high frequency words** and key vocabulary. There are many entry points to teach word study through storytelling: direct and indirect. The direct method occurs when the teacher decides to address particular skills, whereas the indirect method occurs when the teacher takes the opportunity to play with words apart from the story.

Reading for Meaning: Comprehension and searching for meaning in text. Through this method, teachers help students make their text match their intentions, and the pictures in their heads match their words.

Reading Strategies of BLP

Read Aloud

- Teacher reads the text aloud to the students

Shared Reading

- Teacher and students read the text together

Guided Reading

- Teacher chooses the text for students to read

Independent Reading

- Students choose and read the text

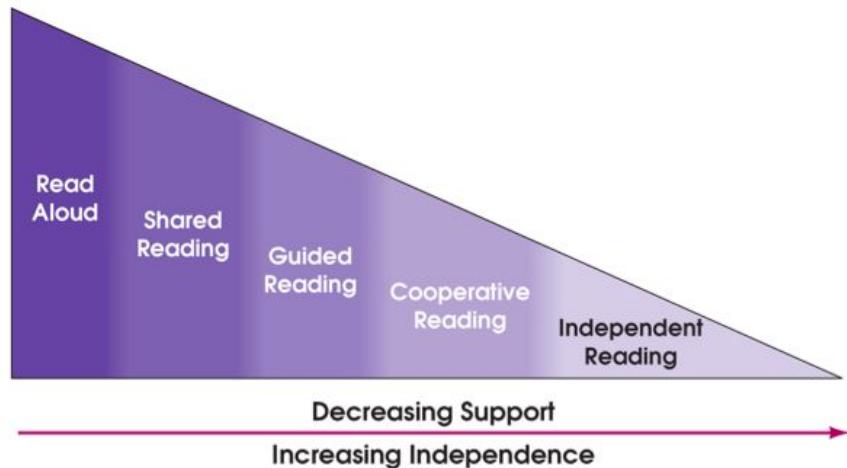


Image from Mifflin, 2012.
Slide 5

(Gross, 2010)

Reading Strategies of BLP- Continued



Image Retrieved from FreePik

	Reading Strategies	Development	Other
Read Aloud	Introduces and models new strategies	Ear for vocabulary, structures of language in print, sense of story and prediction	Active listening
Shared Reading	Allows teacher to model new strategies, and strategies for decoding	Awareness of text, sense of story, fluency, phrasing, and reading comprehension	Allows students to see themselves as readers
Guided Reading	Promotes strategies and allows students to practice strategies on their own	Comprehension, encourages independent reading and allows teacher to monitor individual's progress	Expand student's belief in their own ability as a reader
Independent Reading	Allows students to practice and encourages strategic reading	Comprehension, practice behaviour of proficient readers, and fluency	Allows students to choose texts based on their own interests and promotes reading for enjoyment

Types of Grouping for Reading Instructions

Whole Group: Whole group reading can be done through read alouds, shared reading, mini lessons, and discussions. The main purpose of whole group reading is provide *lessons on specific strategies*.

Small Group: Small group reading focuses on a particular area of literacy. It is a *needs based* instruction strategy.

Ability: A teacher may group students based on reading levels and specific skills they would like to enhance, such as vocabulary. This can be done through *guided reading* and teacher-led instruction.

Interest: Grouping for interest allows the flexibility for students to choose novels and learn through *literature circles*. Here, students can organize their own discussions. This could be student-led, teacher facilitated instructions.

Individual Conferencing: Individual conferencing allows the teacher to help the student with their *specific needs*. It can be a one-on-one method of instruction.

Reading Centres: Reading centres provides many forms of reading materials and strategies such as silent reading, poetry, listening centres, interactive boards, computers, newspapers, and word study. Teachers can use reading centres to *reinforce literacy skills*.

Writing Components of BLP



The writing components of BLP mostly focuses on three of the six essential tasks to help students develop writing skills: Oral Language, Narrative Form, and Code.

Oral Language focuses on the expression of one's self, which can be done orally, or with written means. Students that are able to orally express themselves, will find writing these expressions down easier.

Achieving the **Narrative Form** task would mean having an understanding of ***narrative*** texts, such as stories. Students will be able to recognize the different stages and processes that make up a story, and be able to write one themselves.

Code refers to the ***encoding*** and ***decoding*** of texts. Encoding is putting thoughts and ideas into text, and Decoding is analyzing that which is written. Having these abilities can help students get started on writing, and being aware of what is being written.

Writing Strategies of BLP

There are several strategies that teachers can use to help students achieve these tasks (Gross, 2010).

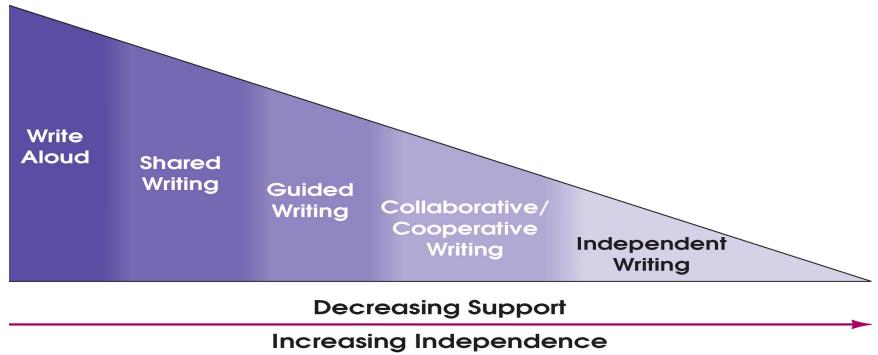


Image from Mifflin, 2012.
Slide 6.

□ Teacher Write-Aloud/Modeled Writing

Students can learn through the teacher demonstrating different types of writing, to see how it is done, and to see the process that goes into the writing. For example, the teacher can demonstrate how narratives are written, and the different stages of how the story moves from introduction to climax, and finally to the conclusion.

This is also an opportunity for teachers to help students discover different text genres. Studies have been done that show because students are often exposed to narratives, that they become more comfortable and familiar with narrative forms, and will read more narrative genres of text rather than going outside of their comfort zone (Gallo & Ness, 2013).

Teachers can show how different text genres can better suit different expression purposes, for example, students can move on from using a narrative to talk about what happened on the weekend to using a recount method.

(Gross, 2010)

Writing Strategies of BLP - Continued



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Shared Writing / Interactive Writing

Students can work together as a class, or in big groups on a writing so that they can use oral language to share their individual writing styles, be exposed to different styles, as well as draw on each other's funds of knowledge. They can see how others encode their ideas in writing if someone is scribing, such as a teacher or fellow student, and learn new strategies as to how they themselves can encode their oral expressions into writing.

Alternatively, a student could work together with the teacher, where they can both construct a piece of writing together. This allows the teacher to directly support the student, to get an idea of how the student approaches writing and their thinking process, and to ask questions in order to get an idea of their cultural background that may be reflected in their texts.

Writing Strategies of BLP - Continued

Guided Writing

Students can work in smaller groups, and focus on writing in specific styles or to improve certain writing skills. For example, allowing students to decode what their group members have written, and to ask questions. This allows for deeper and more focused discussions and for students to slowly become accustomed to working with less people so that they may move on to independent writing.

□Independent Writing

As the students progress in their development of writing skills, the support from the teacher can slowly decrease so that the students slowly increase their independence (Mifflin, 2012). Through scaffolding guidance, the teachers can help the student, but otherwise, students can work by themselves on their writing.

Assessment

As with any other school subject, assessment is important for literacy development. In a Balanced Literacy Program, there are **formative** (ongoing) and **summative** (final) assessments. These not only monitor students' comprehension skills, but also allow insight for educators to adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Assessments also allow students to monitor their own strengths and weaknesses, and focus on what they need to optimize their learning and literacy development.

For writing, assessment can be done through **observation**. This may include observation of pencil grip, letter formation, and posture. Observation is also beneficial when assessing reading fluency. It is important to record observations, such as using checklists, post-its, and rubrics. To assess written work, teachers may choose to keep **portfolios** of students' work to continually monitor development of meaningful writing, attention to grammar and sentence structure, and meaning making. Portfolios can be recorded through photos, videos, audio files, or samples of written work.

In formative assessment, the goal is to see how the child is responding to the literacy program. This type of assessment is done frequently so that teachers can ensure the student is meeting objectives and at the appropriate progress levels. Then, the teacher can modify the instruction accordingly. There are also diagnostic tests that may be used to assess a student's progress, such as phonemic awareness testing and sight vocabulary.

In summative or outcome assessment, teachers use specific criteria to determine if the student meets expectations of certain skills. This can be assessed through standardized tests, given in either groups or individually.

Examples of Assessment Rubrics

Here is an example of some of the criteria a teacher may use for an assessment.

Aspect	Score	Criteria
Ideas		At least one original idea
Vocabulary		Use of new vocabulary word bright
Lay-out		Letters formed correctly Correct spacing of letters and words.
Spelling		Correct spelling of <i>is, look, was</i>
Punctuation		Capital letters and full stops used

Observation (NEPS, 2015, p. 85)

Here is an example of a student's literacy portfolio.



Portfolio (NEPS, 2015, p. 87)

Easy Text (96-100%)	Appropriate Instructional Text (93-95%)	Challenging Instructional Text (90-92%)	Hard Text (Below 90%)
Move child to higher text level.	A comfortable instructional text level.	Child may require more direct support.	Move child to lower level.

Here is an example of a rubric to help determine a student's reading level.

Running Record Percentage (Alphakids, 2002, p. 2)

Summary of Assessment



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Type Of Assessment	What does it do?	Examples
<p>Formative (ongoing) This is an assessment <u>FOR</u> learning (response to instruction)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measures student understanding• Provides regular student feedback• Helps modify teaching and learning throughout program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly spelling test• Observation and anecdotal records• Guided reading/writing observations
<p>Summative (Final) This is an assessment <u>OF</u> learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measures student understanding and literacy skills at end of term• Measures student's capability of reading and writing independently, decoding, making meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unit assessments• Standardized tests• Student portfolios

Strategies & Applications

Class Storybook: A large piece of poster paper or a booklet of blank paper is made available to students, and the teacher can start the story off with a prompt. Students are then free to add to the story by writing as much or as little as they want, to read the story, and to share the story with others. This encourages students who are not comfortable writing longer pieces to contribute to a “class project”, and allows the students to share each other’s writing styles.

Literacy notebooks and portfolios: Students document their literacy journey which can include learning goals, plans, and reflections. It is not constricted to writing, but can also include illustrations and mind maps. Observation and feedback from teachers, parents and peers are encouraged. This form of application can help keep track of learning and be used as an assessment tool. (Parr & Campbell, 2012)

Literacy Circles: Students get together in groups of 6 and are assigned different tasks to analyse for each chapter. Tasks can include: summarizing, illustrating a scene, making a connection from the story with their personal life, identifying new vocabulary, creating a new ending for the chapter, and describing their favourite passage.

Pen Pals: If possible, teachers can collaborate with another school and have their classes be pen pals. This will give students the opportunity to write about themselves, and to learn about others.

Weekly Reading Log: Students can keep a weekly reading log that they fill out at home. This helps to motivate students and self-monitor their progress with literacy development. The logs can be monitored by parents and teachers as well.

Board Games: Literacy board games (such as Scrabble) help students use play to develop their literacy. Teachers and families can also collaborate and join in playing.

Links to the Case- Conclusion



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The teacher in case 2 has already “been planning a balanced literacy program that reflects all the language arts and the classroom environment”, and so our research package provides them with a deeper understanding of how the implementation of BLP will look like in the classroom, what “funds of knowledge” means, as well as ways in which they can implement and incorporate it into their classroom, so that it connects to the students’ funds of knowledge.

In addition, as almost all the students “speak English as a first language” rather than focusing on introducing them to the English language, the teacher can focus on exploring the deeper and different varieties of literacy that can help those students increase their fluency of English, and to make connections with literacy to their own identities and cultural backgrounds.

Glossary

Comprehension: the ability to make sense of the texts they read

Decoding: the process of analyzing written words

Encoding: the process of turning thoughts and ideas into words

Fluency: the efficiency and ease in which one is able to recognize words, and comprehend texts

Funds of Knowledge: accumulated bodies of knowledge and skills essential to individual functioning and well-being

Formative Assessment: ongoing assessment to measure student's response to instruction

High Frequency Words: common words that students automatically recognize in print

Literacy: the ability to receive other's thoughts and ideas, as well as express one's own thoughts and ideas through reading, writing, verbal communication, and other means of expression

Narrative: texts that tell a story

Observation: form of assessment that includes to evaluate students' progress and reading fluency

Phonetics: the classification of speech sounds

Portfolio: a collection of students' work that include written samples, photo, audio or video records

Summative Assessment: assessment at a specific point in time to evaluate student's learning at the end of an instructional unit

Word Recognition: the student's ability to decode texts, as well as their phonemic awareness



Image Retrieved from FreePik

Annotated Bibliography

Anderson, S. M. (2015). K-5 Elementary Balanced Literacy Reading Program Implementation Evaluation.

This article analyzes the Balanced Literacy Program from a cognitive and social theoretical perspective. The study looks at the perceptions of K-5 teachers in regard to program resources, staff development, and impact on teachers and students.

British Columbia Ministry of Education, (2016). Core Competencies. BUILDING STUDENT SUCCESS BC's new curriculum. Retrieved 20 October 2016, from <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies>

This webpage is maintained by the BC Ministry of Education, and explains the details of the new curriculum. Core competencies are the set of intellectual, personal, and social and emotional proficiencies that students are expected to meet per grade level.

Cooper, P. M. (2005). Literacy learning and pedagogical purpose in Vivian Paley's 'storytelling curriculum'. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 5(3), 229-251. Cooper's article looks at the usage of storytelling in classroom and explains how storytelling is a balanced literacy approach, in which it includes the "six essential tasks of a balanced approach" (p. 238). This article can help by defining what a balanced literacy program is and providing a guideline to see a literacy program is truly balanced.

Duke, N. K., & Pearson, P.D. (2008). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. *The Journal of Education*, 189(1/2). 107-122.

This chapter describes strategies for an effective balanced comprehension and literacy program. It provides informative tools to help educators maximize students' comprehension skills. It also provides formative assessment guidelines.

Esteban-Guitart, M., & Moll, L.C. (2014). Funds of identity: A new concept based on the funds of knowledge approach. *Culture & Psychology*, 20(1), 31-48.
doi:10.1177/1354067X13515934

This article takes upon a sociocultural approach to Moll's previous theory of 'funds of knowledge'. The study focuses on a concept called 'funds of identity' through a relative comparison of accumulated knowledge and how it influences identity.

Gallo, G., & Ness, M. K. (2013). Understanding the Text Genre Preferences of Third-Grade Readers. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 9(2), 110-130. This study argues for the importance of having the nonfiction genre being encouraged by teachers for their students, as it was found that students read and preferred fictional books more than nonfiction, because they were more familiar with the structure. This study can be useful for understanding the importance of having a variety of texts, to challenge students to inquire and research on topic and issues that they are interested in.

Annotated Bibliography - Continued

Gross. (2010). Balanced Literacy Program [Powerpoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/ttkm/literacy-program>

This powerpoint was created by a grade 5 teacher that defines and explores what encompasses a balanced literacy program. She provides examples for the classroom and assessments.

K12 Reader. (2010). Balanced Literacy Instruction: A Truce For The Reading War? *K12Reader: Reading Instruction Resources*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.k12reader.com/balanced-literacy-instruction/>

This article is taken from the K12 Reader resource guide that discusses the reading wars and how balanced literacy can be a resolution to it. The resource overviews five components of balanced literacy and provides links that further explores each concept.

Mifflin, Houghton. (2012). A Comprehensive Balanced Literacy Program [Powerpoint Slides]. Retrieved from:

http://college.cengage.com/education/cooper/literacy/7e/assets/ppt/cooper_ppt_ch02.ppt

This powerpoint slide presentation provides many useful visuals for teachers to understand the concept of a balanced literacy program.

Moll, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms.

Theory

into Practice, 31(2). 132-141.

This article explains the notion of 'funds of knowledge' from a broad, multidimensional perspective and how they can be used for teaching. The study focuses on Mexican and Native-American students in the United States, and illustrates implication of experiences on the accumulation of knowledge.

Parr, M., & Campbell, T. (2012). Balanced literacy essentials: Weaving theory into practice for successful instruction in reading, writing, and talk. *Pembroke Publishers Limited*.

This resource is a book that provides various strategies on how to incorporate a Balanced Literacy Program in the classroom. . This book provides detailed information for the teacher that is applicable to the classroom of various age-range and guides the teacher from its environment, content, and execution.