**Literacy: What Counts?**

Literacy is the “gateway skill”. There’s an argument to be made that it’s the only thing you need. What do we mean by that? We’re a literate society. Schmoker talks about the key components of any effective classroom as: READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS. I would also add APPLY. What would happen in your schools if this is what you saw in every classroom you entered? What would happen if you cut out all the noise of programs and test prep and activities that all sound great but maybe don’t add up to students being truly literate. What if all you focused on was students embracing the written word – and created truly strong thinkers who can express what they think in conversation and writing?

* Students need more time actually reading and responding to what they read – in writing and discussion – than they do talking and writing about reading assignments. Expert teachers introduce any kind of text in half the time, demonstrate strategies in half the time and engage students in follow-up activities about half the time as those offered in the typical classrooms.
* Primary and middle schools spend scant time on application and thinking and instead focus on skill acquisition. The result is students reach the intermediate grades unprepared for the content that they are expected to encounter. A more integrated approach early on would counter this legacy – and middle and high schools need to address it if they inherit it.
* Students need to acquire transferable and flexible strategies for comprehension. This means that they are able to apply strategies to whatever type of reading they encounter – not simply explain or define a strategy or recall the facts of a specific selection. Answering questions after reading doesn’t foster development of transferable strategies.
* Too often assigning and asking are confused with teaching. Modeling and demonstrating are essential for students to understand, “How do I do this?”

Successful literacy approaches incorporate five major components:

* 1. Large amounts of time for actual text reading
  2. Small amounts of time with teacher-directed instruction in comprehension strategies
  3. Opportunities for peer discussion
  4. Occasions for students to talk to a teacher and to one another about their responses to reading
  5. Opportunities for students to write in response to what they’ve read

Students need easy, consistent access to books that they choose to read and adult assistance in making good choices on a periodic basis. This needs to be significantly more than once a week from the school or class library.

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| The Essential Elements of Guided Reading | | |
|  | **Teacher Role** | **Student Role** |
| **Before the Reading** | * Select texts that will provide opportunities for students to expand their processing strategies. * Prepare an introduction to the text that will help readers access and use all sources of information in a fluent processing system. * Introduce the whole text or unified sections of the text, keeping in mind the demands of the text and the knowledge, experience, and skills of the readers. * Leave some opportunities for students to independently solve problems while reading (moderate amount of challenge). | * Engage in a conversation about the text. * Understand the purpose for reading the text. * Access background knowledge (personal, literary, world) as they prepare to read a new text. * Raise questions about the text. * Build expectations for the text. * Notice information in the text. * Make connections between the new text and others they have read. |
| **During the Reading** | * May listen to individuals read a segment orally. * Interact with individuals to assist with a problem solving at difficulty. * Interact with individuals to reinforce ongoing construction of meaning. * Observe reading behaviors and make notes about the strategy use of individual readers. | * Read the whole text or a unified part to themselves (silently). * Use background knowledge and strategies effectively to construct meaning. * Think about what they understand and questions that they have about the text. |
| **After the Reading** | * Talk about the text with the students and encourage them to talk with/to each other. * Invite personal response. * Return to the text for one or two teaching opportunities such as finding evidence or discussing problem-solving. * Assess students’ understanding of what they read. * Invite students to ask questions to expand their understanding. * Sometimes engage the students in writing – personal responses, comments, questions, or other forms to extend understanding. * Sometimes engage students in two minutes of isolated work with words to increase flexibility and speed in word solving. | * Talk with each other and the teacher about the text. * Think about what they understand and questions the text raises. * Check predictions and react personally to the text. * Raise questions or make comments to clarify confusion and expand understanding. * Express personal, text-related, and world-related connections. * Revisit the text at points of problem solving as guided by the teacher. * Revisit the text to provide evidence for thinking. * Sometimes engage in revisiting or responding to the text through talk, writing, or visual arts. * Sometimes engage in taking words apart and discovering how words work. |

**Reading Minutes for Needed Yearly Gains**

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| **First** | **Homeroom Teacher** | **Grp** | **Read Level Aug** | **Read Level Oct** | **Needed Reading Min/Wk** | **Reading Block Min/Week** | **Intervention** | **Reading Min/Wk** | **Intervention** | **Reading Min/Wk** | **Total Min/Wk** | **Min Still Needed** |
| Gabriela | Garcia | E | 2.7 | 3.7 | 400 | 760 |  |  |  |  | 760 | -360 |
| Jesus | Garcia | I | 0.9 | 2.0 | 880 | 760 | Petrossino | 80 | Mentor | 60 | 900 | -20 |
| Uriel | Garcia | I | 1.7 | 2.1 | 840 | 760 | Petrossino | 80 |  |  | 840 | 0 |
| Alejandro | Garcia | I | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1000 | 760 | Anguiano | 90 | Tutor | 90 | 940 | 60 |
| Clarissa | Garcia | I | 1.2 | 1.7 | 1000 | 760 | Anguiano | 90 | Tutor | 90 | 940 | 60 |
| Sergio | Garcia | I | 1.6 | 1.8 | 960 | 760 | Anguiano | 90 | Tutor | 90 | 940 | 20 |
| Daniel | Garcia | I | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1000 | 760 | Anguiano | 90 | Tutor | 90 | 940 | 60 |
| Miguel | Garcia | I | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1000 | 760 | Anguiano | 90 | Tutor | 90 | 940 | 60 |
| Kayla | Garcia | T | 1.5 | 2.2 | 800 | 760 |  |  | Mentor | 60 | 820 | -20 |
| Elijah | Garcia | T | 1.6 | 2.1 | 840 | 760 | Petrossino | 80 |  |  | 840 | 0 |
| Mariah | Garcia | T | 1.3 | 2.3 | 760 | 760 |  |  |  |  | 760 | 0 |
| Valerian | Garcia | T | 1.6 | 2.2 | 800 | 760 | Petrossino | 80 |  |  | 840 | -40 |
| Jennifer | Garcia | T | 2.7 | 2.8 | 560 | 760 |  | 80 |  |  | 840 | -280 |
| Lexus | Garcia | T | 2.8 | 2.9 | 520 | 760 |  | 80 |  |  | 840 | -320 |
| Ismael | Garcia | T | 1.7 | 2.3 | 760 | 760 |  |  |  |  | 760 | 0 |
| Juan | Garcia | T | 2 | 2 | 800 | 760 |  |  | Mentor | 60 | 820 | -20 |
| Marc | Garcia | T | 2.3 | 2.3 | 760 | 760 |  |  |  |  | 760 | 0 |

*Note: 80 minutes per day (400 minutes per week) are needed to make one year’s growth in one year’s time*