

**KET Professional Development
Seminars**

**Designing and
Managing a Balanced
Approach to Literacy**

Programs 1-2

Teacher's Packet

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Department of Education. A

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Designing and Managing a Balanced Approach to Literacy Programs 1 – 2

Moving students toward independence in reading and writing is a major instructional goal during the primary years. This eight-part series, produced in partnership with the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, provides practical advice on how primary teachers can design, organize, and manage a classroom environment that supports a balanced literacy approach.

Rich classroom footage illustrates four major topics: preparing the classroom, teaching routines, implementing strategies, and evaluating classroom structure.

The series was taped in classrooms at Grapevine Elementary, Hopkins County; Grant’s Lick Elementary, Campbell County; Arlington Elementary, Fayette County; and W.R. Castle Elementary, Johnson County.

About This Packet

This packet includes biographies of the teachers and university advisors involved in the series and questions for reflection and discussion for participants to use following the programs. You’ll also find narratives that follow along with Programs 1 and 2—two 30-minute programs on “Preparing the Classroom.” A print packet is also available for Programs 3 and 4, on “Teaching Routines.” The remaining four programs—two on “Implementing Strategies” and two on “Evaluating Classroom Structure”—do not have accompanying print packets.

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Meet the Teachers and University Consultants

Classroom Teachers

This is primary teacher **Cyndi Boggs**' third year of teaching at Grapevine Elementary in Hopkins County. Before coming to Grapevine, Cyndi spent two years teaching primary at Pride Avenue Elementary in Madisonville. She is a charter member of the Kentucky Reading Project and a member of the International Reading Association. Cyndi's honors include the 2000 Hopkins County Elementary Teacher of the Year, the 2000 Milken Family Foundation National Education Award, and the Outstanding Graduate Student award at Western Kentucky University. Cyndi graduated from WKU with a B.S. in elementary education. She also has completed her MAE/Reading Endorsement in elementary education and her Rank I/Administrative K-12 Certification.

For the past 16 years, **Ruth Collins** has been a primary teacher at Arlington Elementary School in Fayette County. Ruth has participated in Literacy First Training and in the 2000 Kentucky Reading Project/Collaborative Center Literacy Development project. At Arlington, she serves as the PEW Leadership Team Chair and the Curriculum Committee Chair and is also a member of the school's planning committee. Over the years, she has presented at a number of in-services and conferences on a variety of topics related to teaching in the elementary classroom. Ruth earned a B.A. and an M.A. in elementary education at the University of Kentucky and also completed a planned sixth year program at UK.

For 13 of her 15 years in the classroom, **Cherie Deskins** has taught at W. R. Castle Memorial Elementary School in Johnson County. In addition to teaching primary, she also has been a Title I teacher. Cherie has served on a number of committees at Castle including the Textbook Committee, the Primary Plan Committee, and the Literacy Committee (successful in obtaining an Early Literacy Grant for the school). She is currently teaching a class for Morehead University on the foundations of reading. Cherie is a member of the International Reading Association and the Kentucky Reading Association and also was a charter member in the 1999 Kentucky Reading Project and a consultant in the 2000 Reading Project. Cherie has a B.A. in elementary education with kindergarten endorsement from Eastern Kentucky University, an M.S. in elementary education from Morehead, and is currently completing her Rank I in the state portfolio program.

Wanda Lee Meaux, has taught at Arlington Elementary in Lexington since 1992. Ruth serves as the building level representative for the Fayette County Education Association and as a member of the Arlington Curriculum Committee and the Fayette County Multicultural Curriculum Committee. She also has served as co-chair of her school's professional development committee and participated in the 2000 Kentucky Reading Project. Wanda has a B.A. in elementary education K-4 from Lindsey Wilson College and an M.A. in early elementary education from the University of Kentucky. She is also a National Board Certified Teacher.

Cyndi's partner, **Joan Radford**, also teaches primary at Grapevine Elementary School in Hopkins County. Her biography was not available in time to include in this packet.

Amy Razor has taught at Grant's Lick Elementary School a total of five years. She also has taught at two other Campbell County elementary schools—Alexandria and Reiley. Amy's service at her school includes membership in the Bravo and REACH for Excellence in School Health Committees. She was awarded the 2000 Northern Kentucky Ashland Teacher Award. Amy has a B.A. and a M.Ed. from Northern Kentucky University is a National Board Certified Teacher.

University Consultants

University consultants appearing in the series include **Dr. Mary Shake**, associate professor in the department of curriculum and instruction and chair of the elementary program faculty at the University of Kentucky; **Dr. Lynne Ann Smith**, elementary and special education professor at Northern Kentucky University who directs the NKU Kentucky Reading Project; **Tiffany Wheeler**, distinguished practitioner in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at Murray State University; and **Dr. Melinda Jo Richardson Willis**, associate professor in elementary reading and language arts at Morehead State University.

Editor’s Note: The narration below follows along with the spoken narration in Programs 1 and 2. Throughout the two programs, these verbal descriptions are extended through teacher interviews and classroom video footage.

Preparing the Classroom (Programs 1 & 2)

These programs take you to the teachers’ classrooms as they prepare for the start of the school year. You’ll hear the teachers describe their instructional goals (what they want students to know and be able to do by the end of the year) and how the schedule, organization, and management routines support their goals.

Program 1

Series Overview

Providing balanced literacy instruction is an overarching, but challenging goal for many primary teachers. In this eight-part series, we’ll visit six teachers working to meet this challenge in settings that range from an urban inner-city school, to a rural school, to two small community schools in eastern and western Kentucky.

Programs 1 and 2 focus on how the teachers have set up their classrooms and how that design reflects their beliefs about literacy instruction. Programs 3 and 4 will center around how the teachers guide their students through the classroom routines during the first month of school.

In Programs 5 and 6, we’ll explore the variety of instructional strategies employed in the classrooms. And in the final two programs, the teachers will reflect on what the students have learned, what went well, and the adaptations they have made during the year.

Throughout the series, you’ll see extensive classroom footage and discussions of beliefs, practices, and procedures. And despite the many differences apparent in the schools and classrooms, you’ll see and hear many similarities in the ways the teachers approach literacy instruction.

Common Components in Literacy Instruction

A balanced approach to literacy covers a broad range of beliefs and practices. Some of the common components of the programs you will see are:

- All aspects of reading and writing are valued and incorporated into the literacy program so that all students read and write a variety of materials for authentic purposes.
- The children have opportunities to share their literacy experiences with the whole class, the teacher, and a variety of small groups. While achievement level groupings are used, they are

only one of many groupings students experience. Flexible groupings based on interests and specific needs are routinely used.

- The teachers foster responsibility and independence in their students. In order for students to work in pairs or in small groups, they must understand the available materials, make responsible and effective choices, work effectively with their peers, and be responsible for the materials they need. The routines and group skills that students need for successful group work are taught and modeled by the teachers.
- The teachers also “begin with the end in mind.” They develop literacy goals for their students, monitor students’ strengths and needs, provide effective experiences and instruction, and evaluate student progress toward goals.
- Rather than focusing solely on skill development, the teachers provide a framework for the students to develop reading strategies. They model their own strategy use; talk to students about when, where, and how strategies may be used; and teach students to evaluate the success of their own strategy use.
- Throughout the classrooms, you’ll see teachers choosing the materials, experiences, and strategy instruction that move students toward independent strategic reading and writing.

A Visit to Cherie Deskins’ Classroom at W. R. Castle Elementary School

W. R. Castle Elementary is located in Johnson County, just outside Paintsville. The school serves a small, established community. Eighty percent of the students at Castle qualify for free or reduced lunch. Recently the faculty received an Early Reading Incentive Grant to supplement reading instruction for struggling students. A team of teachers from the school attended the Kentucky Reading Project at Morehead University and designed an action plan to improve literacy instruction in their classes. The school is now a demonstration site for the Kentucky Reading Project.

Cherie Deskins currently teaches a second grade primary classroom following five years of teaching Title 1 reading. In the program, Cherie explains why her school has moved to a more balanced approach to literacy and how she has begun to implement this in her own classroom.

Although Cherie’s program follows the popular Four-Block model, instruction is based on her knowledge of students’ strengths and weaknesses. She uses available test data to determine overall class strengths and needs, as well as those of individual students. This enables her to start determining which strategies should be the focus of whole class or small group instruction and which might be individual needs.

In planning individual class schedules one factor is beyond teachers’ control—the master schedule for the school. Working around the various special classes can make it difficult to provide blocks of uninterrupted time for literacy instruction.

Integrated science and social studies into the literacy program provides extra flexibility in scheduling and helps Cherie’s students see that literacy encompasses all subject areas.

Currently, Cherie has 20 students in her class, but because her room is small, Cherie has had to use all the available space efficiently. Yet she still has managed to provide areas for small and large group work, quiet reading, and a classroom library. The room is also set up to support the Four Blocks of her literacy instruction.

Four Blocks of Literacy Instruction

- Guided Reading
- Working with words
- Self-selected reading
- Writing

When classroom materials are accessible and well organized, and teachers provide routines that structure activities, students can be responsible for their own materials and free the teacher for other activities. Program 3 of the series will return to Cherie's classroom to see how students are learning their way around and how their activities flow smoothly in this small but well-designed space.

A Visit to a Combined Classroom at Arlington Elementary School

Arlington Elementary is located in Lexington. An older, inner-city school on an alternative calendar, Arlington serves approximately 300 students, most of whom receive free or reduced lunch. Within this setting is a combined primary classroom of seven through nine-year-olds, taught by **Wanda Meaux** and **Ruth Collins**. Wanda and Ruth have been team teaching for about seven years. They share adjoining but not connected classroom space and have combined their students and their resources.

Wanda's room contains enough tables and chairs to seat all 47 students. There is a carpeted area, and the classroom library is housed in her room. The teachers co-teach in Wanda's room during part of the day; at other times, half of the students and their teacher work in Ruth's room next door and half remain in this room with their teacher.

Ruth's room is the center area. The centers are based on the multiple intelligences, are multidisciplinary, and often integrate science, math, and social studies. While this seems like a very complex classroom structure, it is ideal for the diverse group of 47 students.

Organizing the Classrooms

As Ruth and Wanda began planning their year, they had to overcome two potential barriers to instruction. First, they had to deal with the fact that all the students leave the room for some kind of instruction or assistance. When their classes are scheduled flexibly, students do not have large gaps in their learning. In addition, the teachers' sense of the curriculum and the needs of their students allows them to cycle activities so that students have many opportunities to learn over time.

A second barrier is the need to have students move within and between their classrooms. While the classrooms adjoin, they are not connected, so students need to transport materials from place to place efficiently. The solution is using baskets to organize and manage student materials. This practice fosters independence and responsibility in students and leaves more teacher time for

instruction. Organization is extended further through the use of thematic and writing folders. Students know immediately what they need when instruction or an activity is about to begin.

Ruth and Wanda have organized their classrooms to minimize the amount of time they spend handling materials and to help make their students responsible class members. In Wanda's room, which is used for whole group instruction, self-selected reading, writing instruction, and guided reading, the focus is on fostering student independence and efficient use of time.

The Classroom Library

Materials are accessible to students and are grouped by level. Many varied materials, including magazines and reference materials, are in the classroom. These are easily found and moved to student work places. The sign-up board for conferences confirms Ruth and Wanda's desire to have students take responsibility for their learning, in this case expecting students to know when they need a conference.

The Center Room

Here materials and routines are organized to foster successful small group work, thereby continuing and expanding the experiences gained in Wanda's room, where the whole group meets. All the centers promote active participation and engage students in many activities that promote problem solving and higher order thinking.

Centers Found in Ruth's Room

- Block center
- Art center
- Computer centers
- Inquiry and discovery centers

The center area extends the practices used in Wanda's room. Students are taught to manage their own materials and be responsible group members. Ruth and Wanda have consciously planned their centers so that the tasks become more sophisticated as the students' abilities increase. The centers address many areas of the curriculum, many revolving around the current theme of study. These centers are an integral part of the overall literacy program. Ruth and Wanda's stated expectations and beliefs match what we see in the organization of their combined classrooms.

Conclusion

At both Arlington Elementary and W. R. Castle Elementary, the three primary teachers who share their classrooms with viewers are ready to take students where they are and base instruction on student needs. The teachers believe that students can learn while appreciating that not all students learn at the same rate or level. Although they have high expectations of students, they support students' success. They consciously scaffold activities for their students, building on student strengths to address needs.

Common themes emerged in these teachers' classrooms. Each has some kind of space or time limitation that has been addressed. Each focuses on getting to know the students and building a program around their needs. Each integrates other subject areas into the reading program.

How does the design of each classroom support a balanced approach to literacy? In both cases, students experience a variety of literacy activities and work with a variety of materials in varied settings each day. In both cases, students are expected to learn the routines of their classroom and become increasingly responsible for their own learning.

Program 2

Introduction

Providing a wide range of opportunities for reading and writing in an environment that fosters success, responsibility, and independence forms the core of the literacy programs in the classrooms featured in the series. In Program 2, we continue to visit primary classrooms to explore how the teachers set up their literacy programs and design their classrooms to support all students' learning. Featured in the program are three more primary teachers: **Amy Razor of Grant's Lick Elementary** in Campbell County and **Joan Radford and Cyndi Bogg of Grapevine Elementary** in Hopkins County.

Once again, although these teachers work in diverse settings, there are similarities in their approaches. They clearly want their students to successfully read a variety of materials in a variety of settings. They use routines to foster independence. They see their roles as varying from that of teacher to facilitator to coach. And they determine the strengths and needs of their students, use this knowledge as a basis for instruction, and monitor student progress throughout the year.

A Visit to Amy Razor's Classroom at Grant's Lick Elementary School

Grant's Lick is a small school that is the centerpiece of a rural community in Campbell County. **Amy Razor** teaches a 1-2 primary class, keeping her students for two years. She teams with another teacher, particularly in planning, but her children are only grouped with her partner's for math.

One way Amy monitors the progress of her students is by working with small groups each day. Through assessment and instructional activities with the small groups, she keeps close tabs on and provides for her students' needs.

Organizing and Managing the Classroom

For Amy, teaching in a small narrow room in the older section of Grant's Lick Elementary could present barriers to the implementation of her literacy program. However, Amy has taken the unique features of her room and made the space work to her advantage.

Reading workshop is an important part of Amy's literacy instruction. During this time, students work in multi-age, multi-ability groups. The reading workshop is structured so those students who may not read well yet have a full role in it. Students are expected to make several choices about how to use their time and be accountable for their time.

Having her young students and their materials switch classrooms for mathematics instruction posed a problem for Amy that resulted in an excellent materials organization system. Amy and her partner created notebooks to help the students transport materials between the two rooms and to insure that students have the materials they need for many of the literacy activities at hand.

Using assessments to track student progress and play instruction requires a high degree of organization. Amy has developed a management system that lets her maintain a large amount of data on her students in an efficient way.

In Amy's balanced, integrated literacy program, students work in both multi-level and achievement level groups. They all make choices in reading materials and how to respond to them at some point during the school day. Strategies and routines are modeled for them as they work to become independent learners. By closely monitoring their progress, Amy knows students' needs and shares achievements with both the students and their parents.

A Visit to a Combined Classroom at Grapevine Elementary School

A demonstration site for the Kentucky Reading Project, Grapevine Elementary is a small school that has been part of the Madisonville community for 100 years. Although it is located in a suburban area, Grapevine also serves a large number of students from the surrounding rural area. **Cyndi Boggs** and **Joan Radford** are a primary team teaching in this setting.

Planning and Organizing the Classrooms

A hallmark of Joan and Cyndi's approach to teaching is their willingness to change what they are doing to better meet the needs of their students. They practice what they want their students to do—they reflect on what they are doing, how it is going, and how it can be more successful. They make changes as needed, focusing on student need.

In their daily schedule, Joan and Cyndi integrate many subject areas into their literacy program. Students are flexibly grouped for part of the day for strategy instruction, but they work in several other groupings as well. Every student experiences a variety of literacy activities during the day. The final reflection period of the day provides feedback to the teachers and helps students internalize what they have learned and how it might be used in varied settings.

Like the classroom at Castle Elementary, Cyndi's classroom is organized to support a Four Block model. It meets the needs of students on a variety of levels, both those who need more support and those who are more independent.

Joan's room also reflects support for a variety of learners. Here, students experience a wide variety of types of reading and writing throughout the day. Joan reinforces her support of reflection, encouraging children to bring their interests into the classroom and begin to understand writing as communication more fully by sharing their journals with an outside audience.

Conclusion

The classrooms featured in Programs 1 and 2 provide models of environments purposefully designed to support a balanced approach to literacy. The teachers have considered the needs of their students, the range of those needs, and the literacy learning and experiences they value. They have thought about how to organize classroom and student materials to make students independent and to save time. They have mindfully integrated other subject areas into the literacy program. And they have found ways to have students work in several flexible groupings throughout the day. The next two programs focus on the first several weeks of school—a crucial time for students as they learn classroom routines and responsibilities and set off on the path to becoming independent readers and writers.

Programs 1 & 2: Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What literacy goals do you have for your students?
2. What limitations/barriers keep you from implementing a balanced approach to literacy?
3. What are the limitations of your classroom space?
4. How do you organize your classroom?
5. In what ways does the design of your classroom support a balanced approach to literacy?
6. What are the limitations of your materials?
7. How are your materials organized to save time and promote student independence?
8. What routines do you have to teach students in order for your literacy program to succeed?
9. How do you get to know the strengths and needs of your students?
10. What are the unique strengths and needs of the class you have this year?
11. How do you make sure you are meeting the literacy needs of all your students?
12. What are the limitations in scheduling your literacy program?
13. How do you organize your time to insure that all students have the opportunity to read and write in a variety of settings for a variety of reasons?
14. What have you seen on Programs 1 and 2 that you could use or adapt for your classroom?

Resources Supporting a Balanced Approach to Literacy

Balanced Instruction: Strategies and Skills in Whole Language

Ellen McIntyre, Michel Pressley, and Michael Pressley, Editors

April 1996

Christopher-Gordon Publishers

ISBN: 0926842560

Best Practices in Literacy

Linda Gambrell and Lesley Mandel Morrow, Editors

March 1999

Guildford Press

ISBN: 157230443X

***Classrooms That Work: They Can All Read and Write* (2nd edition)**

Patricia Marr Cunningham and Richard L. Allington

April 1998

Addison-Wesley Publishing Company

ISBN: 0321013395

Flexible Grouping in Reading: Practical Ways to Help All Students Become Better Readers

Michael Opitz

June 1998

Cartwheel Books

ISBN: 0590963902

Getting the Most Out of Morning Message and Other Shared Writing Lessons: Great Techniques for Teaching Beginning Writers by Writing with Them

Carleen Dacruz Payne and Mary Browning Schulman

January 1999

Scholastic Professional Book Division

ISBN: 0590365169

Good-Bye Round Robin: Twenty-Five Effective Oral Reading Strategies

Michael Opitz, Timothy Rasinski, Lois Bridges Bird

November 1998

Heinemann

ISBN: 0325000980

Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children

Irene C. Rountas and Gay Su Pinnell

Forward by Mary Ellen Giacobbe

October 1996

Heinemann

ISBN: 0435088637

Hey! Listen to This: Stories to Read Aloud

Jim Trelease, Editor

April 1992

Penguin USA (Paperback)

ISBN: 0140146539

Interactive Writing: How Language and Literacy Come Together, K-2

Andrea McCarrier, Gay Su Pinnell, and Irene C. Fountas

October, 1999

Heinemann

ISBN: 0325002096

Listen to This: Developing an Ear for Expository

Marcia S. Freeman

June 1997

Maupin House Publishers

ISBN: 0929895193

Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom

Harvey Daniels

November 1994

Stenhouse Publishers

ISBN: 1571100008

Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop

Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman

April 1997

Heinemann

ISBN: 0435072374

Nonfiction Matters: Reading, Writing, and Research in Grades 3-8

Stephanie Harvey

June 1998

Stenhouse Publishers

ISBN: 1571100725

***Phonics They Use: Words for Reading and Writing* (3rd edition)**

Patricia Marr Cunningham

September 1999

Addison-Wesley Publishing Company

ISBN: 0321020553

The Read-Aloud Handbook (4th edition)

Jim Trelease
August 1995
Penguin USA (Paper)
ISBN: 0140469710

Reading Instruction That Works: The Case for Balanced Teaching

Michael Pressley
April 1998
Guilford Press
ISBN: 1572303190

Revisit, Reflect, Retell: Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension

Linda Hoyt
November 1998
Heinemann
ISBN: 0325000719

Schools That Work: Where All Students Read and Write

Richard Allington and Patricia M. Cunningham
December 1995
Addison-Wesley Publishing Company
ISBN: 0673998819

Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis
February 2000
Stenhouse Publishers
ISBN: 1571103104

Web Sites

Kentucky's Collaborative Center for Literacy Development

<http://www.kentuckyliteracy.org/>

International Reading Association

<http://www.reading.org/>

National Council of Teachers of English

<http://www.ncte.org/>

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