

**KET Professional Development
2000/01 Seminars**

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

Programs 3-4

Teacher's Packet

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Department of Education.

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Designing and Managing a Balanced Approach to Literacy Programs 3-4

The third and fourth programs in this eight-part series, produced in partnership with the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, demonstrate how routines help primary students become more independent readers and writers. Once again, the featured classrooms —representing a range of communities and geographic regions— are Grapevine Elementary, Grant’s Lick Elementary, Arlington Elementary, and W.R. Castle Elementary.

As in the first two programs, Programs 3 and 4 are supported by abundant videotaped footage, in this case illustrating how the teachers participating in the series help their young students master classroom routines.

About This Packet

This packet includes an updated biography of one of the teachers who appears in the program as well as narratives that follow along with Programs 3 and 4—“Teaching Routines.” Also included are questions for discussion and reflection. The remaining four programs, two on “Implementing Strategies” and two on “Evaluating Classroom Structure,” do not have accompanying print packets.

Please refer to the packet for the first two programs for a list of resources related to a balanced approach to literacy at the primary level. The narratives included in the first packet also provide brief overviews of each school included in the series plus more detailed descriptions of the classrooms themselves.

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Meet the Teachers and University Consultants

Classroom Teachers

The primary teachers participating in the series include **Cyndi Boggs** of Grapevine Elementary in Hopkins County; **Ruth Collins** of Arlington Elementary in Fayette County; **Cherie Deskins**, who teaches at W.R. Castle Memorial Elementary in Johnson County; **Wanda Lee Meaux**, Ruth's teaching partner at Arlington Elementary, and **Amy Razor** of Grant's Lick Elementary in Campbell County. These teachers' biographies are included in the packet for Programs 1 and 2.

The sixth teacher featured in the program is **Joan Radford**, who teaches with Cyndi at Grapevine Elementary. Joan has a B.S. in elementary education from Western Kentucky University and an M.A. in education with a reading endorsement. She is presently working on her Rank I and administrative K-12 certification at Western. Joan has taught at Grapevine for the past seven years. During that time, she has served as Extended School Services Coordinator, School Assessment Coordinator, chair of the Textbook Committee, and district reading trainer and writing cluster leader. Joan is a charter member of the Kentucky Reading Project and an *Everyday Math* consultant.

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 3 and 4. Throughout the two programs, these verbal descriptions are extended through extensive teacher interviews and classroom video footage.

Teaching Routines (Programs 3 & 4)

Developing and teaching routines that foster student independence and responsibility is critical to managing a balanced literacy program. Once students function efficiently and successfully during the classroom activities, the teacher is able to move into the role of facilitator and coach, spending more time on small group and individual instruction. Programs 3 and 4 revisit the six teachers’ classrooms at the beginning of the school year to see how they help move their students toward independence and responsibility in the classroom.

You will recall from the first two programs that the teachers all share some common goals in their literacy instruction and that those goals direct their approach to designing their classroom environments. All the teachers provide their students with a range of literacy experiences in a variety of settings across each school day. All their students work in a variety of groups each day. We heard all the teachers state that literacy instruction never stops—it plays a major role in instruction in every subject area. Finally, each teacher begins the year teaching her students the routines and procedures that help them function responsibly within their classrooms.

Program 3

This program takes us back to **Grant’s Lick and Arlington Elementary** schools within the first month of school where viewers will see the early stages of teaching classroom routines.

A Return Visit to Grant’s Lick Elementary School

The initial classroom videotaped footage shows **Amy Razor** preparing her young students for the second day of reading workshop. Up to this point, the students have seen each of the five parts of the workshop modeled and have practiced each part separately. Now, in the third week of school, they are ready to be working through all parts of the workshop simultaneously.

As you watch Amy guide the children through the reading workshop, consider how she makes students aware of their responsibilities and choices, how she holds them accountable for the work they do, and how she helps them evaluate their progress in completing activities for the first time. As you may recall, Amy’s classroom is small and narrow, so she uses the hallway for silent reading to compensate for her limited classroom space. Throughout the classroom video, we have interspersed segments showing Lynne Smith and Amy discussing what she has done for

the past three weeks to build up to a full-fledged reading workshop, and how she will continue to work on instilling more independence and responsibility in her students.

As you watch Amy work with the group, notice her use of questions to help students solve problems. As she circulates around the room, she notes particular problems that arise, as well as if and how the students solve them. She discusses some of the problems and solutions with the entire class. Then, if the problem arises in another group, students already know some possible solutions.

The focused instruction, modeling, and practice Amy provides her students enable them to begin mastering the routines of reading workshop. By spending time on routines at the beginning of the year, transition time is greatly reduced and more time is available for students to engage in literacy activities.

A Return Visit to Arlington Elementary School

At Arlington Elementary, **Wanda Meaux** and **Ruth Collins** share the routines their students are learning. They too emphasize independence, responsibility, and the productive use of time in their classrooms. As you recall, since Ruth and Wanda have a number of students with special needs, gifted students, and students in ESL, someone is usually moving in or out of the classroom. In addition, their rooms are next to each other but not connected so students must learn how to move efficiently between the two classrooms. You will notice that the teachers' emphasis is on teaching students to work cooperatively and respectfully. This reinforces their focus on creating a community within their classrooms.

Just as Amy prepares her students for reading workshop step-by-step, Ruth and Wanda develop specific procedures for handling materials and doing group work incrementally. In the video, they explain how they delegate responsibility for materials and transfer that responsibility from group member to group member.

The focus, as in Amy's classroom, is on engagement and effective use of time. Wanda and Ruth consciously teach students what options they have if they complete an activity before their peers. In addition, they teach their students to judge which reading materials are most appropriate for them.

Conclusion

Although the Arlington classrooms and the Grant's Lick classroom have very different settings, the students' literacy experiences have much in common. Effective use of time is valued, as is student responsibility, cooperation, and independence. Students are actively learning rather than completing seatwork. Early in the year, the teachers have focused on modeling the strategies and procedures they want students to internalize. Student independence is supported by teacher modeling, problem-solving discussions, and increasing levels of responsibility.

In Program 4, we visit the classrooms of Cherie Deskins at Castle Elementary and Joan Radford and Cyndi Boggs at Grapevine Elementary. We will continue to explore how teachers guide students through the routines of their literacy programs at the beginning of the school year. We will also look at how the routines in these classrooms mirror the teachers' beliefs and allow them to provide a balanced literacy approach for all students.

Program 4

Introduction

In Program 4, we continue to look at how primary teachers successfully design and implement a balanced literacy approach, emphasizing the routines students need in order to work in their classrooms. Featured are Cyndi Boggs' and Joan Radford's classrooms at **Grapevine Elementary** and Cherie Deskins' classroom at **W. R. Castle Elementary**.

Through video clips of instruction, we learn how these teachers begin to foster independence within their classrooms and how this enables them to provide a balanced approach to literacy. Because the teachers value all aspects of reading and writing, students read and write in a variety of settings with a range of materials, and student progress is monitored so that teachers can match instruction to the needs of their students.

A Return Visit to Grapevine Elementary School

Our first video visit is to **Joan Radford's** classroom at Grapevine Elementary. The students in Joan's class are divided into five groups for center time and assigned roles with varying responsibilities that are rotated within each team. Joan has assigned a leader, a materials person, a quiet captain, and a reporter/recorder in each group. During center time, Joan meets with one small group of students while the other students work on literacy activities such as journal writing and character analysis.

After the first block of center time, the groups rotate to different activities and Joan works with another small group. As in other classrooms, we see that the students need time to learn what to do and what their choices and responsibilities are.

After observing the students during center time, we move next door to **Cyndi Boggs'** classroom where she explains her reasons for committing extra time at the start of the school year to teaching routines. Then she demonstrates how she leads the students from a whole group activity into center time. You will notice that Cyndi also explains to her students why certain routines and procedures are necessary.

Material folders, time cards that tell students which center to go to, and clocks that give students a time allotment for each activity all contribute to the smooth flow of learning during center time. As in Program 3, we see a teacher who understands that emphasizing procedures now will make the students more independent later in the school year. Cyndi recognizes that when

students understand why they are asked to follow certain routines, they will internalize the steps of the routines more fully and will see more sense in what they are being asked to do.

A Return Visit to W. R. Castle Elementary School

The final segment of Program 4 features **Cherie Deskins'** classroom at W. R. Castle Elementary. Cherie has implemented the Four Block Program, created by Patricia Cunningham, which consists of a "working with words" block, a guided reading block, a self-selected reading block, and a writing block. You will see how she embeds routines while modeling the skills and strategies that help her second graders read and write independently.

Writing Block

The first part of writing block time is a time to model writing for students and to present mini-lessons. As she writes a message to her students, Cherie "thinks aloud" to model her thought processes. Students have already realized that they are expected to try to figure out the meaning and context of her writing.

As the year progresses, Cherie will include mini-lessons on the mechanics of writing based on the needs she sees in her students' work. We see that her students are already learning to edit and understand why changes need to be made. During the videotaped segment, Cherie moves to the portion of the writing block in which students write while she conferences with individuals. To make this possible, students must understand their options and responsibilities.

Initially, Cherie modeled writing in her log during this portion of the writing block. She provided small periods of time for the students to work while she circulated and provided encouragement. As her students have become more familiar with their choices and responsibilities, Cherie has extended the time for independent writing. In addition, she has recently added conferences with individual students and time for students to publish their pieces on the classroom computer. Cherie demonstrates that she has a sense of what her students are ready to handle, the order in which parts of the block need to be introduced, and how to continue reinforcing routines.

Cherie uses music to cue the students about the duration of their writing activities. As she observes student progress, she gradually increases the time for writing. If she needs more time to conclude a conference, students are encouraged to illustrate their journal entries.

Another important part of the writing block is sharing. Each day a different group of students has the opportunity to share their writing with the class. Cherie has two goals for this portion of the block. First, she wants all students to feel comfortable sharing with the class and to learn how to read their writing to an audience. Second, she wants all the students to become audience members who listen considerately and ask appropriate questions about the writing they hear. In the videotape, we see how Cherie supports both these goals during a student share.

By using a microphone and allowing the writer to call on students who have questions, Cherie makes sharing a comfortable and fun experience for the students. Because Cherie models asking

a question that provides feedback to the writer, the students are now able to formulate their own questions about the writing their peers share.

Conclusion

In these three classrooms, we have seen teachers who understand where their students are and what they need to know to function effectively. This understanding is guided by the teachers' visions of what they want their students to be able to do by the end of the year and their sense of the next steps students need to take. All the teachers we visited in Programs 3 and 4 involve their students in authentic literacy activities that require them to take increasing responsibility for their own learning. Through structures and teaching routines, students are able to work successfully on their own, freeing the teachers to work with small groups and individual students.

Too often, teachers struggle to provide high quality independent activities while working with groups of students or individuals. In Programs 5 and 6 ("Implementing Strategies"), we will examine how the featured teachers move students into increasingly sophisticated literacy tasks, how they help students evaluate the quality of their work, and how they use informal assessment to determine when it is time to introduce new strategies.

Programs 3 & 4: Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What routines have you established in your classroom? How are these routines related to increasing student independence in reading and writing?
2. How do you go about teaching routines to your students?
3. When do you use modeling to show your students how to perform the tasks for which they are responsible? Can you think of other tasks and roles that might be taught through modeling?
4. How well do your students understand the reasons for their routines? Would they benefit from your providing them with specific rationales?
5. How well have your students mastered the routines at this point in the school year? What do you think accounts for their level of mastery?
6. How do you handle student transitions (from one activity to another, from whole group to small group and center time, from one space to another)? How might you alter your routines to make these transitions smoother?
7. What provisions have you made for insuring that all your students will be engaged in productive activities while you work with small groups and individuals?
8. Which of your routines are working well? Which need improvement?
9. What have you seen on Programs 3 and 4 that you could use or adapt for your classroom?