Teaching in Action
Grades 4–6

writers in Action

to learn to read to learn to
Active Young
Readers

A Teaching Resource

NOVA SCOTIA
Education

TEACHING IN ACTION
GRADES 4–6

Contents

Program Design and Components

Planning and Organizing for Instruction

When teachers think about the organization of their classrooms, they usually visualize the materials, resources, and use of space first. Although careful use of the physical space is important, a well-framed instructional plan is also critical. The learning environment, the social environment, and the physical environment all need to be included.

Planning for a Comprehensive Literacy Program

What Is It?

A comprehensive literacy program, or balanced literacy, refers to a deliberate and well-planned language arts program that has making meaning at its heart. It includes whole-class, small-group, and independent teaching and learning opportunities for students across the whole range of speaking and listening, reading and viewing, and writing and other ways of representing.

Key Descriptors

- Modelled reading and writing
- Shared reading and writing
- Guided reading and writing
- Independent reading and writing
- Word study/vocabulary
- Range of genre
- Oral experiences, including choral reading, Readers Theatre, rich and meaningful conversations
- Explicit teaching (which includes modelling and demonstration)
- Mini-lessons
- Strategy-based comprehension development
- Ongoing assessment as part of the instructional plan

Setting Up a Writing Workshop

A Writing Workshop is set up in September to develop an understanding that writing strategies for beginning and moving a draft forward are useful tools for writers. I do a lot of modelling and select mini-lessons for developing an "authority" list.

Other lessons might include

- topic choice
- clustering
- beginning a draft
- keeping readers informed
- writing short, focussed pieces ("snapshots")

Early in the year, activities are deliberately short and based on personal experience. In September, the focus is on ideas and content—clarity and focus. The rest of the year revisits the ideas of focus, giving readers enough information, and explaining that published copies need to look and sound like real language. My focus is a genre study track:

- narrative—personal memoir
- information texts—pamphlets, brochures
- scripts—Readers Theatre
- poetry
- speeches
- news writing
- fairy tales

~ Grade 6 teacher

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Daily Reading and Writing Workshops, including large blocks of time for students to engage in purposeful reading and writing
- Frequent small-group instruction (shared and guided)
- Students reading texts they can really read ("just right" texts)
- Students writing about topics that are important to them
- Students using their reading and writing skills in other curriculum areas
- Regular individual conferences with all students about their growth as readers and writers
- Mini-lessons on strategies, skills, or craft, followed by guided practice and independent application
- Mini-lessons based on regular assessment of students' strengths and needs

What Do We Need?

- A large classroom library including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry (see pp. 4–6)
- A variety of writing materials
- Large blocks of time scheduled for reading and writing
- A word study program linked to both reading and writing
- Wall charts to support comprehension strategies
- Wall charts to support the writing process
- Time for performance, display, celebration of student work, reflection, and sharing
- An assessment plan to assess, monitor, and record student progress
- Integrated technology (computer with Internet access, variety of applications—*Front Page*, Inspiration)

Questions for Teachers

- How do I make making meaning the explicit focus of all our work?
- Do students understand that meaning focus?
- Do my students have long daily blocks of time for authentic reading and writing?
- Do I choose the focus of my mini-lessons based on my assessment data?
- How often do I meet with my students for reading or writing conferences?
- How do I embed word study into my reading and writing program?
- Do students have ample time for discussion and learning through talk?
- How do I model skills or strategies and give ample opportunity for guided experience before I expect independent application?

While recognizing the scheduling challenges and realities of some schools, this list suggests weekly literacy experiences for students:

- 4–5 hours engaged in authentic reading experiences, including poetry, fiction, and non-fiction
- 2–3 meetings for small-group instruction
- 4–5 hours writing—personal choice and in other content areas
- 2–3 sessions of language/word study embedded within reading or writing workshops

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It is not the intent of this document to prescribe how teachers should organize their year. Different teachers will begin with different foci, for different purposes, and with different students. The important message is that *there is a careful and deliberate plan that ensures all components of a comprehensive program are considered and revisited frequently.*

Vignette

The Need for Explicit Teaching

It was day two of a grade-wide writing assessment when I noticed one student frowning over her written piece while attempting to revise it. Knowing that I couldn't give much guidance, I reinforced for her what revising involved and directed her again to the student revision checklist that had been provided. Felice looked up at me and said very sincerely, "I want to make it better, but I don't know how."

Felice's words have stayed with me. They told me that, despite my teaching and even considering that a checklist for revision had been provided, this grade 6 student needed more. The connections hadn't been made for her; and how frustrating it must be to want to do something, know you are *supposed* to do something, but not truly know how to do it.

I wondered how many other students felt that same way about revising or reading or anything we ask them to do. Felice's words have taught me to ensure that I teach more explicitly, modelling what I'm wanting students to learn, while providing numerous opportunities for them to talk, listen to talk, and work with shorter pieces until **they** can tell me smiling, "I want to make it better and I **know** how!"

I also wondered how many times we as teachers feel that same way, that we want to do better as teachers of reading and writing but we're not sure how. Hmmmm.

~ Resource teacher

Check It Out

Cunningham, Patricia, and Dorothy Hall, *Month by Month Phonics for the Upper Elementary Grades* (Carlson Dellosa Publishing 1998).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001, pp. 2–11).

Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* (Heinemann 2003, pp. 202–205, 41–62).

Routman, Regie, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* (Heinemann 2005, pp. 53–82, 173–204).

Strickland, Dorothy, Kathy Ganske, and Joanne Monroe, *Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers: Strategies for Classroom Intervention 3–6* (Stenhouse 2002, pp. 41–55, 141–199).

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* (Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 500–503).

> *Children don't get to be stronger readers by holding heavier books.*
>
> (Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Reading*, 2001, p. 35)

The Classroom Library

The classroom library can be the centre of interest in the room. As you consider the content and organization of this library, there are several questions to ask yourself:

1. What makes book displays appealing?

- Display by genre
- Non-fiction organized by topic and form
- Reference texts displayed around a writing centre, near the computer, and/or on a specific bookshelf
- Books face out for easy selection (rain gutter displays work well for this)
- Series books together
- Books organized by author
- New books displayed together
- Popular books (e.g., read-alouds/shared selections)
- Books within easy reach
- Class picks
- Read with a friend books (two copies)
- Books we have read aloud
- Favourite characters
- If you like _____, you may like these
- Newspapers/magazine articles by topic

2. What messages do I send to students by my selection of books?

- Classroom libraries need to have a wide range of books, so that there are texts accessible to all the readers in the classroom. There also needs to be a variety of books that are too difficult for the students to read on their own, but accessible for shared or read-aloud experiences that demonstrate models of fine literature. Lucy Calkins cautions that if the books are too hard for the students, the reading experience is actually destructive. "Children don't get to be stronger readers by holding heavier books." (Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Reading*, p. 35)

- Resist levelling mania. While levelled books are an important instructional tool for emergent or early readers, classroom libraries should reflect a broad range of text, organized in a variety of ways to meet the instructional needs and the interests of our students. Book baskets labelled with a variety of selection criteria (author, topic, read-aloud, magazines) are helpful. Books for read-aloud and/or shared experiences are often above students' instructional level, and this is deliberate and critical. If students are to learn about their language and hear it beautifully written and read, these books must be a fundamental piece of classroom libraries. If the majority of books in our classroom libraries are displayed by level, students think of themselves as levels, rather than as readers.

- Books are important. Students who have access to a wide variety of books both in their own classroom and in the school library realize that literacy is valued throughout their school.

3. What types of texts should I include?

The classroom library should have many favourite genres, such as

- picture books
- magazines
- graphic novels
- traditional fiction
- newspapers
- poetry
- reference books
- series books
- mysteries
- science fiction
- biography
- fairy tales
- award-winning books
- books that address significant childhood issues
- persuasive text
- instructions and procedures
- brochures
- posters
- pamphlets

Classroom libraries are a literacy necessity; they are integral to successful teaching and learning and must become a top priority if our students are to become thriving, engaged readers. (Routman, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well*, p. 65)

- Be sure to have lots of books on hand for those readers who are striving. These readers often read much less than our more successful readers. Most of these students will read more if materials appeal to them (series fiction, comic books, information text). Nova Scotia's *Authorized Learning Resources* include series such as Momentum, *Too Cool*, *Bold Print*, and *Mainsails*, which have topics and formats that are appealing to these readers.

- Select quality texts. For read-aloud and think-aloud, look for high-quality literature that
  - is likely to prompt thinking and discussion
  - has believable, compelling characters
  - addresses real childhood issues
  - has been nominated for or has won awards
  - has been on best seller lists

" *Childhood is not all happy, not all sad, not all good, and not all bad. Don't be afraid to let kids know you know this.* "

(Miller, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades*, p. 41)

Check It Out

Calkins, Lucy McCormick, *The Art of Teaching Reading* (Addison-Wesley Longman 2001, pp. 26–39).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers, (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001, pp. 89–91, 93, 406, 408).

Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* (Heinemann 2003, pp. 63–81).

Sibberson, Frankie, and Karen Szymusiak, *Beyond Leveled Books* (Pembroke 2001, pp. 47–50).

4. How many books should be in the classroom library?

- Routman suggests a minimum of five to six titles per student, aiming for a collection of more than 1000 titles.
- Taberski believes that 1500 is the right number of books to have in each classroom.
- Building a quality classroom library takes time, patience, and co-operation.
- Having an extensive library is not enough. It is the careful and deliberate use to which the library is put that matters.

5. Where should titles be located?

- A combination of books in baskets at tables, on shelves (organized by stage, series, or topic), or on easels in the meeting area, with guided reading books in a separate bookcase, is often recommended.

Teaching Tip

Many discount stores sell picture stands that look like miniature easels. These make great display pieces for individual books you want to invite your students to discover. I often use one for fiction and one for non-fiction.

The Learning Environment

A positive and productive learning environment comprises physical, social, and academic expectations that are interconnected and interrelated. Each must be considered separately when planning for the year, but each must also be considered in relationship to the others.

Social Environment

The atmosphere of the classroom has a profound effect upon students' learning. A safe, supportive environment, in which all contributions and questions are valued and all learners respected, is paramount. Students realize they are in different places on their learning journeys and respect and celebrate the efforts of all class members. The teacher's role is critical in modelling this respect for and valuing of all students. The teacher is pivotal in creating a community of learners whose shared goal is to support each and every learner in the community and to treat each learner with respect.

In a real classroom community, students take responsibility for their learning and for the learning of others. This development of responsibility does not come easily and is modelled and demonstrated, then practised for some time early in the year. It is continually reinforced and revisited throughout the year.

This does not mean a *laissez-faire* attitude to learning. All students have explicit learning goals, developed in conference with their teacher, and understand their individual strengths, needs, and expectations.

Talk is a key feature of a productive classroom. Conversation between teacher and student, and talk among students on a variety of learning subjects and social issues lead to a rich and challenging learning environment. The nature of this talk is demonstrated and reinforced from the first day in class by the teacher. Natural, literate conversations based in genuine inquiry are encouraged rather than the stilted and superficial language of interrogation.

The following list is helpful, but not exhaustive, in considering how to create a positive social environment:

- explicit modelling of appropriate social behaviour
- positive reinforcement of appropriate social behaviour
- clear rules made in collaboration with students
  - ways to talk and listen respectfully
  - respect for materials
  - reading and writing quietly to respect the learning needs of others
- clear routines and procedures including clear routines for technology use
- appropriate use of voices for whole-class and small-group experiences
- inviting parent involvement, where appropriate, though home-reading programs, information newsletters, and other communications (see Appendix A: The Role of Parents/Guardians in Supporting Grades 4–6 Literacy.)
- class reading log—tracking form and genre together
- shared materials, such as pencils, pens, erasers, crayons

In a balanced and comprehensive literacy program, students should have the opportunity to work in **whole-group** contexts, in **small groups** (e.g., pairs, triads), and **independently**. The balance of these contexts is determined by the stage of literacy development of the students and their individual strengths and needs as learners.

Groups are created for many purposes, within English language arts and beyond. Groups can be formed through shared interest or at the direction of the teacher based on a specific instructional need. Groups must be flexible. Students should never find themselves in the same group either for a long period of time during a reading block, or for a prolonged number of days in a particular learning cycle. Teachers can recognize when needs have been met and disband the group, fully or partially, based on this recognition.

As one of several instructional approaches, grouping provides

- an efficient use of teacher time to meet the identified learning needs of a group of students
- effective sharing of resources
- practice in co-operative behaviours
- shared learning and support
- a social opportunity for learning with and from others
- the pleasure of learning together and sharing uncertainties and celebrations

For developing writers, shared, interactive, and modelled experiences form the bedrock upon which they can build. Demonstration followed by guided practice means students are often working in large or smaller groups as they talk about and explore the act of writing. As teachers observe their writers, they note specific strengths and needs, and from this analysis may flow a small-group writing lesson, similar in purpose and structure to guided reading. Writing groups, as with reading groups, are flexible, based on need and/or interest, and change frequently when the purpose has been accomplished. Students also work on their own as appropriate and confer with peers or the teacher as needed.

Physical Environment

Organizing for Reading Instruction

When the classroom is organized thoughtfully and purposefully, learning is enhanced. Good organization and management allow the teacher to focus on meeting the needs of all the learners in the classroom and to keep interruptions and confusion to a minimum. Physical and social environments each play an important role in supporting quality reading experiences for students.

The physical environment may include

- space for meeting (shared or whole group), small-group or independent work
- attractive and accessible classroom library
- comfortable chairs, couches, rocking chairs where possible
- book displays—shelves/storage/easels/book pots
- rain-gutter bookshelves to display front covers rather than spines
- books organized in variety of ways—genre, topic, author, level of difficulty
- storage for guided reading material
- storage and display of books used as read-alouds

Vignette

Making Better Use of Time

It was so much easier to teach a whole-class lesson, then turn students loose to practise. However, I knew I was not meeting the needs of many of my students that way. I needed to discipline myself to include small-group, shared, and guided experiences more frequently. It is through those small-group opportunities that I really get to know my students and that they really learn about reading and writing.

Once I was able to get independent reading and writing organized, I was surprised at how much time I had to meet either individually with kids for assessment, or in small groups for focussed instruction. What a difference!

~ Grade 4 teacher

- student work prominently displayed (I recommend … favourite authors)
- anchor charts in support of strategy use
- posted schedule
- guidelines for Reading Workshop
- space for teacher-student conference

Materials

- Books in classrooms, not only in central book rooms
- A large and varied classroom library
- Storage for students' individual reading materials ("just right" books)
- Reading response journals
- Baskets and a schedule for the return of the reading journals
- Clearly labelled materials
- Computer, cassette recorder, overhead projector, listening station
- Pocket charts
- Whiteboards—full size or smaller
- Listening centres
- DVD player
- CD player
- LCD projector
- Sticky notes/highlighters
- A supply of writing materials

How to Start

At the beginning of the year, start immediately with whole-class activities and routines, such as creating rules, whole-class reading, sharing, and conversations. All routines must be demonstrated, reinforced, and practised before independence can be expected from students. These routines could become the focus for explicit mini-lessons.

Students need to know
- how to work in small groups
- how to read with a partner
- what to do when they have finished
- how to move around the classroom
- washroom and drink rules
- what is acceptable noise
- what to do when they need help

Once routines are established, students and teachers can move on to more independent work. Building stamina for independence is very important for readers at all stages of development. Expectations for read-aloud, shared, and guided reading also need to be modelled and practised explicitly before independent practice will be expected or achieved. During the Reading Workshop, teachers use independent reading time as the time to confer with their students, assess skills and strategies being learned, work with small groups, and check that the other students are focussing on productive and meaningful learning.

Organizing for Writing Instruction

As students move through the developmental stages of writing, more emphasis is put on revision (rethinking) and editing (conventions), and the student assumes more responsibility for these processes as they are able. As students develop as writers, they understand the role of audience and purpose and the importance of making their writing accessible to the reader.

Suggested Materials

- Blank overheads
- Chart paper
- Clipboards
- Computers
- Correcting tape
- Crates for storage of folders
- Date stamp
- Display space for student work
- Envelopes
- Index cards
- Journals
- Labels
- List pads
- Mail slots
- Meeting place with easel, whiteboard, overhead projector for modelled and shared writing experiences
- Mentor texts—a large variety of exemplars in various forms and genres
- Paper of varying sizes and colours
- Pens, pencils, markers
- Portable storage
- Portfolios

" *When a school system recognizes that writing is a crucial tool for learning to read and to think across every subject area, then time for writing becomes non-negotiable.* "

(Calkins, *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum*, 2003)

" *I have finally realized that the most creative environments in our society are not the kaleidoscopic environments in which everything is always changing and complex ... They are instead the predictable and consistent ones ... Each of these environments is deliberately kept predictable and simple because the work at hand and the changing interactions around that work are so unpredictable and complex.* "

(Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing*, 1994, p. 12)

Building a Safe Space for Sharing

At the beginning of the year, as soon as students have produced a first draft of writing, I invite any students who wish to do so to share their work with the class. For some students this is something that they will be very reluctant to do, while others will be enthusiastic about the opportunity. I explain to the students that during the course of the year there will be many opportunities for writers to get feedback from each other in a range of settings: from a partner, from a small group, from the teacher, and from the entire class. I also explain that reading their work aloud to the class during whole-class share time is a personal decision.

During group share, the following steps are put on chart paper:

1. Listen carefully to the author. (Perhaps make jot notes of key words/phrases.)

2. When the author has finished, comment on what worked well in the piece. (Encourage the students to be specific.)

3. Ask questions relating to the topic or ask for more information.

4. Offer suggestions. (Do this only if the author is interested in considering suggestions.)

~ Grade 6 teacher

It might be helpful to think of this process as I do, We do, You do.

- Publishing materials

- Reference materials

- Staplers

- Sticky notes

- Student accessibility to materials

- Students' bulletin boards

- Writing folders

How to Start

Start immediately with whole-class activities and routines, such as

- whole-class writing demonstrations

- shared writing

- charts created collaboratively, posted, and referred to frequently

- routines for demonstration, guided practice, and independent work clearly established and modelled

- storage/organization of student writing

- clear procedures for publication (How often do students take a piece to publication?)

- guidelines for a Writing Workshop

Gradual Release of Responsibility

The purpose of any instruction is to guide the student towards independent use of the strategy, skill, or procedure. Learners benefit from a combination of observation, demonstration, and ample opportunity to practise the skill with a supportive "expert." This gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson and Gallagher 1983) examines the teacher/student role and the degree of involvement of each.

Pearson and Gallagher use four stages that guide students towards independence:

1. teacher modelling, demonstration, and explanation

2. shared experience, where students assume some responsibility for the task, with a relatively high level of support from the teacher

3. guided experience, in which the student assumes more responsibility, with a smaller amount of support from the teacher (tasks are structured so there is every possibility of student success)

4. independence

Current research leads us to re-examine the role of guided experience. This "scaffolding" includes ample opportunity to practise a strategy before independence is expected. Large blocks of time in reading and writing workshops are devoted to students really reading or writing, practising the skills and strategies they have seen modelled and demonstrated before they are expected to apply these independently. The ability to internalize and apply without teacher prompting will vary. The teacher's sensitivity to the need for further demonstration, longer periods of practice, and consistent checking for automatic application is very important to student growth and success. Students will often be able to articulate and identify what to do, but require varying extents of practice before complete independence of application actually exists.

Shifting Support in Literacy:

Highest Level of Support in Reading

- Read-aloud/think-aloud
- Shared reading (whole group)
- Shared reading (small group)
- Guided reading
- Independent reading

Highest Level of Support in Writing

- Modelled writing/think-aloud
- Shared writing
- Interactive writing
- Guided writing
- Independent writing

Technology in Grades 4–6

Classroom access to information and communication technology (ICT) is changing the ways teachers think about and design instruction, and the ways students learn. The integration of ICT within the public school program allows teachers and students to create and employ novel, alternative ways of achieving learning outcomes. Technology can influence how students read, listen, and represent their understandings. Thoughtful use of technology can be a powerful motivator, an effective learning and teaching tool, and a support for students. High-quality and timely teacher instruction, assessment and monitoring of students' interactions with each other, and well-selected information and other learning resources make thoughtful and appropriate uses of information and communication technology possible.

Grade 4 students demonstrated their understanding of how technology plays a role in their learning when, in teams of four, they made informed decisions on representing what they had learned.

As part of a larger unit on oceans, they became curious about deep-ocean fish. Questions led to a mini-research project. Their goal was to present their information to younger students in a format they would enjoy. They selected first-person introductions of themselves as fish. Through collaboration they made team plans, researched, gathered, and organized their data using print and electronic resources.

Most adults assume these teams would naturally select the computer and projector as a venue for presenting, but they did not. Rather, they chose personal "drama type" presentations, creating audio clips, using overhead projectors, as well as student-created illustrations, to name a few, which the younger students thoroughly enjoyed.

As a team of teacher facilitators, we were amazed and pleased to see how our students used information technology to support their learning.

~ Grade 4 teacher

Among the technologies currently available in Nova Scotia classrooms are traditional media such as

- overhead projector
- chalk or whiteboard
- tape recorder/cassette recorder
- CD player
- DVD player
- listening station
- video tape player/cassette recorder
- television
- cable service

Newer technologies that extend and further enrich the learning environment include

- current and refurbished computers
- peripheral devices such as mice, microphones, scanners, web cameras
- school-networked resources such as intranet, student video and web servers, storage for electronic projects and files
- LCD projectors
- digital cameras
- electronic books
- music and reference CDs
- collaborative and interactive Internet resources such as e-mail, classroom websites, and video and audio conferencing

The array of ICT integrated learning opportunities enhances student learning in reading and writing. Among them are the following:

- PowerPoint presentations for whole-class reading, as in shared reading with explicit instruction
- teacher or student graphic organizers for reading comprehension, as in forms of representing what is understood or learned
- websites about authors
- access to research materials, newspapers, and magazines, such as with EBSCO, a commercial company that provides subscription services and journal article databases to libraries and other institutions
- electronic books with text that can be highlighted
- teacher-created websites with specific information and instructions
- digital image making and scanning of students' art to create electronic books

- mini-lessons on the use of organizational features of electronic text
- creating a class newsletter, cards, brochures, letters, or animation
- concept mapping to support research, prewriting, and revision of student work
- composing and publishing student writing
- online projects such as Flat Stanley
- ongoing access by students and parents to teacher-created websites with specific information and instructions

Learning opportunities that integrate technology are strengthened through collaboration. Research tells us that students often prefer to work in groups of two or three rather than alone.

Students work together to develop problems and ask questions that arise from prior learning, curiosity, and interest. They access research sites; create dramatic or multimedia presentations, artwork, specific forms of writing; or they read text together.

When planning for technology use, the teacher should consider
- screening of websites and awareness of appropriate content for their students
- specific curriculum outcomes
- grouping students for the range of learning tasks and the number and currency of computers available
- purpose for using technology
- the prior experience of the students and the amount of instruction required to support the use of the technology
- how to provide equity of access, rather than equal access to class and library computers and software for learning purposes

Electronic mail provides opportunities for students to develop literacy skills because it creates a motivating and authentic experience for both reading and writing.

(*Information and Communication Technology in Public Schools*, p. 4)

In a national survey, the Canadian Teachers Federation reports that if students use computers, they take more initiative outside class for research; work harder on assignments, and help one another more; and learn reasoning and problem-solving skills faster.

(*Information and Communication Technology in Public Schools*, p. 2)

The Techie Club

Students come to us with varying degrees of experience with technology. For the most part, they have skills built around playing games. In order to give them enough experience to be able to work independently with educational software, we created a "Techie Club." We met at lunch time, and they learned how our key pieces of software worked. These students came from grades 3 and 4 and were a valuable asset to both teachers and students while we were all on different levels of the learning curve.

At a classroom level, I have always used "Techies" as part of my classroom management for technology. They are the experts, and they apply for the position at the beginning of each year. By the end of the year, I have a classroom full of experts! I could not live without my "Techies."

~ Grade 4 teacher

" *The teacher's role is critical in making certain that good decisions are made around which technology to use and in supporting children in their use of technology to ensure that potential benefits are achieved.* "

(NAEYC 1996)

Reading/Writing Connection

What Is It?

Reading and writing are closely linked in many ways. Before we can expect students to write in a specific form or genre, they must have had frequent opportunity to read, and be read to, in that form. Read-aloud and shared reading experiences, across a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction genres, are an integral part of the foundation for successful writing experiences, including vocabulary building.

Connections between reading and writing are also made structurally in the familiar and parallel structures of Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop. These workshops begin with whole-group teaching/ learning through mini-lessons, book talks, or read-alouds; progress to large blocks of time in which students are engaged in purposeful and authentic reading and writing experiences tailored to their needs, interests, and abilities; and close with reflection and sharing.

Key Descriptors

- Frequent references to the structure and characteristics of text, both in reading and writing experiences
- Frequent read-aloud and shared experiences
- Explicit highlighting of a range of fiction and non-fiction forms
- A classroom library comprising a range of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Anchor charts detailing the structure of featured genres to support students as they write (charts also support stages in the writing process, editing, revision techniques, and many other facets of writing)
- School-based conversations to ensure that students are being exposed to a range of form and genre

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Lots of talk about the form and structure of books
- Explicit comparison between and among forms as students explore the characteristics of more-familiar and new forms and genres
- A chart tracking the genres of read-alouds and shared reading experiences
- Modelling of genre exposure through read-aloud
- A wide range of genres for students to choose from for their independent reading
- A scheduled time for writing workshop in which students explore a range of genres
- Effective use of mentor texts (Dorothy Strickland in *Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers* defines mentor texts as "simply an example of writing in the mode the student has chosen." p. 182)

What Do We Need?

- To be sure we are using a wide range of genres in our read-alouds and shared reading experiences
- To be sure we have immersed the children in a reading genre before we expect them to write in that genre
- To provide precise instruction on reading/writing connections so that they are explicit
- To create a large classroom library

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Wood, Karen D., and Thomas S. Dickinson, *Promoting Literacy in Grades 4–9: A Handbook for Teachers and Administrators* **(Allyn and Bacon 2000, pp. 306–316).**

Authentic Writing Opportunities

This project can be used in science, social studies, and English language arts. Students create a storybook for younger children. In the past, various teachers in our school have created these storybooks, and we have actually shared them with younger students in another school. We have created Christmas storybooks, science storybooks, and social studies storybooks related to outcomes for that particular grade level.

This topic is introduced through reading picture storybooks to the class. We then discuss what makes an interesting picture book (titles, illustrations, size of print, quotations, information in the text, information about the author and illustrator). The books read to the class could be anywhere from the *Magic School Bus* in science to Ralph Fletcher's Harvest Moon.

For example, one of the science outcomes for grade 6 is to teach students about vertebrates/ invertebrates and the characteristics of mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, and amphibians. Students create a storybook to teach students at a lower grade level about a particular species.

Students must follow a storybook format, create a plan, research their topic (social studies, science), and pull their information together to make it interesting and informative for the younger reader and writer. (At other times my students chose to use poetry, question-and-answer formats, or pop-up books in addition to narrative.)

~ Grade 6 teacher

Questions for Teachers

- Are students using correct terminology to describe different forms of text?

- Do students refer to texts that have been read aloud or used during shared reading?

- Are students writing in a variety of genres, mirroring the range used in reading instruction?

- Do I have sample mentor texts across a variety of genres?

- How often do I model reading and writing?

- How often do I make explicit connections between reading and writing?

- What are the authentic purposes for which my students read and write?

Literacy across the Curriculum

What Is It?

- Contexts for reading, writing, speaking, and listening, beyond the English language arts curriculum

- Use of reading and writing to learn in the content areas

- Writing and other ways of representing to communicate learning in the content areas

- Legitimate and authentic opportunities for language learning and use that support the content area work

- Application of the strategies learned in Reading and Writing Workshop should be linked to reading and writing activities across the curriculum

- Ways to build academic vocabulary necessary for comprehension and communication in each content area (see Appendix B: Planning for Instructional Alignment)

Key Descriptors

- Consistent use of strategies across curriculum areas
- Common language (predict, question)
- Always in context
- Explicit linking of reading and writing strategies to content areas
- Modelling, demonstration, shared, and guided experiences
- Frequent and deliberate use of non-fiction text for reading and writing experiences

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Read-alouds and shared reading experiences linking to topics in science, social studies, and health education
- Math word walls
- Property charts, using science words needed for authentic writing experiences
- Writing opportunities that pose questions or record discoveries
- Integral features of other curriculum areas (math, science, health education, social studies, visual arts) still retained with ample hands-on experiences for students
- Purposeful talk as a foundation
- Authentic writing and recording in other curriculum areas, using common language (and procedures) that link to English language arts instruction

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Effective classroom practices in building academic vocabulary:

- Read widely.
- Provide explicit instruction on words that are critical to content.
- Ensure that students authentically encounter the words several times.
- Encourage students to elaborate on word meanings in their own way (words sketches, mental images).
- Have students demonstrate their understandings in various contexts.
- Explore the ways words are constructed.

Check It Out

Fletcher, Ralph, and Joann Portalupi, *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K–8* (Stenhouse 1998).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001, pp. 389–508).

Olness, Rebecca, *Using Literature to Enhance Writing Instruction: A Guide for K–5 Teachers* (International Reading Association 2005, pp. 1–9).

Routman, Regie, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* (Heinemann 2005, pp. 119–140).

Taberski, Sharon, *On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K–3* (Heinemann 2000, pp. 28–29, 176, 181–182).

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* (Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 226–227).

Are There Cautions? Where Does It Fit?

The major caution is that other subject areas are not taught exclusively through literacy-based activities. While reading about a topic is helpful and can expand understandings in a vicarious way, the students have not had a complete learning experience unless they do the "hands-on" observations and discovery learning at the core of their subject-specific learning experiences. Reading books about snakes and writing a report do not replace the experience of having a class pet and the active engagement that such a learning opportunity presents.

Questions for Teachers

- What kinds of literacy activities do I provide in other curriculum areas?
- How often do I use non-fiction as read-aloud or shared experience?
- Does my classroom library have a wide enough range of non-fiction titles at varying levels of difficulty and on a wide range of topics?
- What types of writing opportunities do I provide beyond my English language arts time?
- Can I address outcomes from other curriculum areas through English language arts?
- Can I address English language arts outcomes through authentic work in other curriculum areas?
- Am I using consistent language when I use reading or writing as tools for learning in other subject areas?
- How am I ensuring that the integral components of the other subject areas are present?
- How am I balancing hands-on discovery learning with literacy experiences?
- How do I encourage my students to see reading and writing as tools for learning across all curriculum areas?
- How do I use non-fiction and topic-related materials within my English language arts time as well as within other subjects? (Do my students see the purposeful links?)

Examples of authentic experiences:

The Arts

- Choral readings
- Creating songs and raps
- Making posters
- Using drawings or illustrations to show information
- Making models

Health Education

- Create visual presentations
- Conduct research
- Conduct interviews
- Maintain journals/activity logs
- Investigate, discuss, and practice use of inclusive language

Math

- Graphing
- Conducting research on a topic
- Conducting surveys
- Categorizing information
- Sorting

Science

- Recording observations
- Describing how to do something (procedures)
- Drawing pictures of natural objects
- Presenting reports

Social Studies

- Read and create maps and charts
- Conduct research and interviews
- Collect and interpret data
- Develop appropriate vocabulary
- Understand and construct time lines
- Using maps and legends

Literacy Instruction in Combined Classes

Literacy instruction in combined classes is very manageable when teachers understand the following:

- the stages of reading and writing development
- the reading process and the writing process
- effective methods for assessing reading and writing progress
- scaffolding and combining specific curriculum outcomes (SCOs) from a number of angles

Whether a student is in a single grade class or a combined class, the instruction designed to meet their needs should be the same. Through assessment, the teacher identifies the stage of reading or writing development where the student fits, then tailors instruction to match that stage. Students with similar needs, regardless of age or grade, will receive instruction on specific strategies or techniques in small instructional groups.

Science and Literacy Combined

The science topic Weather gives my students an opportunity to explore informational writing. Students will be expected to develop informational diagrams on a weather-related topic. I provide a range of texts for my class to read and view as they built their understanding of weather. I am always mindful to provide not only a range of levels for the diverse needs of my students, but also a good variety of models of information diagrams. I focus on the awareness of informational writing in my writing/reading workshop time and also in science time. We focus not only on the information, but on how writers effectively convey the information.

Some of my lessons include

- KW (What I know, What I want to find out)
  - List 12 things you already know and 12 questions you have or things you are wondering about.
- Focussing topics
  - I model my own KW process and then have students review their work.
- Note-taking—teaching note-taking strategies
  - We begin together and generate conversation on how to do this effectively.
  - Their notes
    - include only main information
    - use short forms, contractions, abbreviations, and symbols
    - include author, title, page number, and publication date
    - summarize longer passages
    - reference key vocabulary
    - outline main points
    - features of informational text

~ Grade 5 teacher

Reading Supports across the Curriculum

Assessments suggested that many of our students were having difficulties with the language component of the math curriculum. In response, one hallway bulletin board has been dedicated to math. Classes take turns creating a bulletin board display aimed at familiarizing students with math vocabulary. Also, a math question of the week, centred around geometric concepts and related language, is part of the school-wide announcements. A new clue is given every day, and a draw is made from correct student responses. Students see it as a way to win a prize, while teachers report being thrilled with the increased incentive and opportunity for developing math language, which, in turn, supports student comprehension of math text.

~ Resource teacher

Key Descriptors

- Instructional decisions based on assessment
- Instruction focussed on strengths
- Explicit contextual instruction
- Frequent small-group instruction
- Groups based on need rather than age or grade
- Peer and partner sharing

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Whole-group instruction based on identified needs that are particular to the majority of the class
- Whole-group instruction that is developmentally appropriate
- Content area plan that avoids repetition of topic treatment
- Small-group instruction using books with just enough challenge to move students ahead with skill/strategy development
- Writing that focusses on student choice
- Celebration of writing attempts
- Reading and writing linked to authentic topics in content areas
- Frequent conferences to discuss strengths and needs
- Whole-group activities based on assessment, chosen texts
- Celebration of authors (commercial and within the class)

What Do We Need?

- Knowledge of the outcomes for each grade level
- A substantial classroom library, including fiction and non-fiction texts of varying levels of difficulty for read-aloud, shared, guided, and independent experiences

Questions for Teachers

- Do I think of my students by grade or stage or age?
- What strategies and techniques do I teach in whole-class contexts and why?
- Are my groupings mixed grade, where appropriate?
- How often do I confer with each student?
- How do I balance read-aloud and shared experiences for children I had in my class last year and have again this year so that each experience is fresh?

Note: Teachers with a combined grade 3/4 class may wish to refer to Appendix C: English Language Arts Outcomes, Grade 3.

Speaking and Listening

The Use of Oral Language in a Comprehensive Program

Why Is Oral Language So Important?

- Oral language is the fundamental form of communication and the foundation for reading, writing, and spelling.
- Students need to know how to communicate effectively in a variety of ways, depending on purpose and audience.
- Students need to use talk as a tool for learning and for reflecting on their learning.
- Vocabulary development/background knowledge is directly linked to success in school.

Cueing systems/spelling patterns are based on the components of language:

Pragmatics: How we communicate depending on audience and purpose

Semantics: (Does it make sense?)—Meaning: concepts, background knowledge, and vocabulary

Syntax: (Does if sound right?)—Sentence structure and grammar

Phonology: (Does it look right?)—How sounds are used in language (phonological awareness); linking sounds to print (phonics)

What Is It?
- Talk to build classroom community
- Talk as a tool for learning
- Talk as a form of reflection
- Talk as a means of communication
- Speaking as a form of presentation

Johnston, Peter, *Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Students' Learning* (Stenhouse 2004).

We often *ask* students to work in groups without teaching them how to do this effectively. Students need to understand the principles of effective conversation (speaker/listener roles) and how to negotiate turns. They also need to learn and practise different roles for group members. Finally, students need to understand and reflect on group process. For suggestions on developing these skills, see:

- *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6*, pp. 105–108
- Trehearne, M. et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers*, (Thomson Nelson Canada 2006), pp. 45–54.

Vignette

The Importance of Reflection

One of the challenges in the reading/writing workshop is making sure I include "sharing time" at the end of the workshop. I used to leave it out in order to give the students another 5 or 10 minutes for reading and writing. But I found that when I included sharing time, the students really benefited from the opportunity to talk about and listen to others talk about what they were learning about themselves as readers/writers/learners. They began to use the language of reflection more frequently and were able to assess their progress as readers/writers/learners more effectively. Now I make sure I include it most days as part of my workshop … and when I forget, the students remind me! They really value the opportunity to share what they're learning.

~ Grade 5 teacher

Key Descriptors

Teacher talk

- can make what is implicit more explicit for students
- demonstrates active listening
- models effective and respectful conversational skills
- models how to give descriptive feedback
- can challenge and extend student thinking
- models how to speak in different contexts for different purposes
- provides the language needed to talk about thinking (e.g., think-alouds to demonstrate problem solving, strategy use)
- supports vocabulary development

Opportunities for speaking/listening

- Shared reading/choral reading
- Drama
- Peer conversations
- Group conversations
- Teacher/student conferences
- Oral language across the curriculum

Reflection

- Developing common language to discuss thinking, problem solving, and strategies for reading and writing across the curriculum

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Vocabulary Development

When introducing new vocabulary, students need several exposures to the new word/concept before they internalize the meaning. Looking up a definition for a word or using it in a sentence is not enough. Students should use the word immediately by discussing/exploring the word in the context of personal experience. This helps create important links that reinforce the word's meaning.

Introduce vocabulary in a meaningful context. Make sure that students pronounce the word accurately. Write the word so they see what it looks like. Define the word in student-friendly language. Give examples of how the word is used. Have students think of examples and non-examples of the concept, as well as related vocabulary such as antonyms, synonyms, homonyms, and figurative expressions. Encourage alternative ways of expressing the meaning through role-play, dance, music, or art.

This approach can be used when introducing new vocabulary across the curriculum.

See Appendix B: Planning for Instructional Alignment.

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Teacher and/or student talk to demonstrate a strategy/process
- Teacher–student talk (e.g., group discussions, conferences)
- Student–student talk (e.g., group discussions, peer conferences, brainstorming)
- Interactive authentic conversation rather than simply interrogative language
- Talking about books
- Talking as an integral part of the writing process, especially during prewriting, when students are generating ideas, and revision, when they are rethinking and clarifying what they have written
- Talking about concepts and ideas across the curriculum
- Interviews
- Oral interpretation (oral reading, shared reading, choral speaking, Readers Theatre, storytelling)
- Oral presentations (book talks, oral reports, debates, advertisements, guest speakers)

What Do We Need?

- Opportunity—instruction—practice
- Safe environment where students feel free to take learning risks
- Modelling of language—vocabulary, sentence structure, speaking and listening skills
- Teaching body language (non-verbal communication)—what it means and how to use it effectively
- Group process explicitly taught and practised
- Self-assessment of speaking and listening
- Engaging topics and texts to talk about

What Do We Need to Teach?

- Listening skills, including how to listen for different purposes (e.g., appreciative, attentive, critical)
- Speaking skills, including non-verbal communication and how to speak differently depending on the context, the purpose, and the audience
- How to work effectively in groups
- How to give feedback to peers appropriately, using descriptive language
- How to have genuine conversations about books and ideas (what was interesting, surprising; making connections; asking questions, etc.) not answering literal questions

Media and critical literacy provide excellent opportunities to engage students in authentic talk.

Check It Out

Beck, I., M. McKeown, and L. Kucan, *"Taking Delight in Word: Using Oral Language to Build Young Children's Vocabularies," American Educator* (Spring 2003, pp. 36–47).

Beck, I., M. McKeown, and L. Kucan, *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (The Guilford Press 2004).

Johnston, Peter, *Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Students' Learning* (Stenhouse Publishers 2004).

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 1998).

Trehearne, M., et al., *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* (Thomson Nelson 2006).

Listening

Listening is a complex process that involves students in actively processing and responding to language (both verbal and non-verbal). Effective listeners know why they are listening (purpose), how to shift between speaker and listener roles (e.g., how to signal when they want to speak), how to clarify if they are not understood, and how to connect what they are hearing to what they already know.

Listening can be affected by distractions such as fatigue, external noise, anxiety, or familiarity with and interest in the topic. Students need to learn to identify distractions and develop strategies to deal with them. Listening is hard work and teachers need to be aware that students can experience "listening fatigue" over time.

Types of Listening

- Appreciative listening—for the enjoyment of an experience
- Attentive listening—for information and ideas
- Critical listening—for the evaluation of arguments and ideas
  (*Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6*, p. 104)

Questions for Teachers

- Is talk a natural component of learning in my classroom, across all subject areas?
- Am I modelling effective speaking and listening skills in the classroom?
- Am I explicitly teaching students *how* to communicate—as partners, in small groups, in whole-group discussions?
- Am I explicitly teaching students *how* to use oral language purposefully to enhance reading, writing, and spelling?
- What opportunities am I providing for purposeful talk?
- Am I aware of the various communication patterns of my students from differing cultures or backgrounds?
- Whose voices get heard in the classroom?
- Do my questions promote discussion?

Reading and Viewing

Stages of the Reading Process

Reading Development over Time			
Emergent Readers **Levels A–C**	**Early Readers** **Levels D–K**	**Transitional Readers** **Levels L–P**	**Fluent Readers** **Levels Q–Z**
• know that language can be recorded and revisited • know that text as well as illustration conveys the message • display reading-like behaviour • understand directionality of text • identify some familiar written words; in a variety of contexts; in a book, on a chart, or in the environment outside of school • can discuss what is happening in a story and predict what might happen next • make links to their own experiences • occasionally predict words or phrases based on syntactical cues • occasionally predict based on initial and final consonants or familiar parts of words	• consistently match one-to-one • have knowledge of print conventions • are more confident in using background experience • make approximations and use context and letter-sound associations to sample, predict, and confirm • begin to self-correct • know the most common sounds and letters • have a basic sight word vocabulary of functional words • begin to read familiar texts confidently and can retell the message from printed and visual texts • select text appropriate to their needs and interests • use a variety of strategies to create meaning (e.g., make inferences, identify character traits, follow written directions) • use some features of written text to determine content, locate topics, and obtain information	• set purposes for their reading • read widely and experience a variety of children's literature • select appropriate material • adjust strategies for different texts and different purposes • use pictorial, typographical, and organizational features of written text to determine content, locate topics, and obtain information • integrate cues as they use reading strategies of sampling, predicting, and confirming/self-correcting • self-correct quickly, confidently, and independently • prefer to read silently • can retell and discuss their own interpretations of texts read or viewed • recognize characters can be stereotyped • make meaningful substitutions • have an increasing bank of sight words • use a range of word identification strategies for constructing meaning	• select, with growing independence, texts appropriate to their interests and learning needs • read widely and experience a variety of children's literature, with emphasis on genres and authors • use pictures and illustrations, word structures, and text features to locate topics and obtain or verify understandings of information • use a range of strategies automatically when constructing meaning from text • describe their own processes and strategies for reading and viewing • give reasons for their opinions • use background knowledge to question information presented in print and visual text • seek information from a variety of texts
Texts: simple stories with 1–2 lines of print	**Texts:** longer books with high-frequency words and supportive illustrations	**Texts:** texts with many lines of print, organized into short chapters, more difficult picture books, wider range of genre	**Texts:** wide reading of a variety of long and short texts, in a range of genre and for a range of purposes
Predominantly found in			
P–1	1–2	2–4	4–6

Reading Instructional Components

A comprehensive literacy program in reading includes the following components:

Read Aloud

What Is It?

- A time when the teacher reads aloud to students, either in whole or small groups
- A deliberate instructional context
- An interactive learning opportunity

Key Descriptors

- Reading material beyond what they can read on their own
- Reading aloud **every day**, modelling the how and the why of reading
- Reading *to*
- Building community
- Varying and enriching students' exposure to and engagement with text

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Teacher holds the only copy of the text (occasionally students may have a copy)
- Teacher pauses at significant points to invite response/ask for comments or to lead brief discussion
- Can be an opportunity to support other curriculum areas
- Takes place at different times during the day depending on the purpose
- Students look and listen in an engaged way
- Opportunity to discuss high-quality fiction, non-fiction, and poetry

What Do We Need?

- Variety of text including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry
- Range of short stories, essays, excerpts, letters, newspaper and magazine articles, picture books, and "chapter a day" novels
- Large chart to track genre being used
- Comfortable meeting location for whole-group reading
- Specifically labelled place to store books that have been used for read-aloud

Questions for Teachers

- Have I read the selection first to prepare myself and to plan for discussion points?
- What listening routines are acceptable during read-aloud?
- Have I encouraged the students to predict appropriately?
- Are the students listening attentively?
- Are comments made by students appropriate?
- Do the students make meaningful connections to the text in writing, oral responses, or incidental conversation?
- Am I providing a good balance of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry for the read-aloud sessions?
- Do I make explicit reading/writing connections?
- How many times a day do I read aloud?
- What happens to the texts I read aloud?
- How often and for what purposes might I reread a text or a part of a text?
- Have I based mini-lessons on this text?
- What is my instructional focus for choosing part of a text in this context?
- Is the instructional focus changing over time?
- Do the students understand the instructional focus?
- What have I learned about the students?

Teaching Tip

- Do not stop too often or too long; it disrupts the flow.
- Balance performance read-aloud with interactive read-aloud.
- Use shorter text (e.g., use several short novels or non-fiction texts rather than one long one).

Vignette

In the past, read-aloud simply provided my learners with an opportunity to listen to and share a piece of literature. Now I carefully select my book with a clear purpose in mind. My purpose may be pleasure, genre, presentation, text features, imagery, or other aspects of literacy. It is not enough to select purposely unless you share this purpose with the learners and follow through with clear expectations.

~ Grade 5 teacher

Vignette

Visualizing through Read-Aloud

After working on the strategy "visualizing," I wanted to extend its application through my read-aloud. I wanted the experience to have a different feel for my students. *The Butterfly Lion* by Michael Morpurgo was perfect for what I had in mind. A storyboard with a square for each chapter was created. Students were instructed to illustrate what they were "seeing" at the end of each chapter. There were no "think-alouds" or stopping for instructional purpose, just reading aloud and giving students time to represent their understanding visually. The illustrations and accompanying conversations provided a window to their thinking, what they valued, and how they reacted, and I was assessing much more than their ability to visualize.

The most difficult part for me, as their teacher, was keeping my "teacher fingers" out of this process. I found myself constantly wanting to stop and share with them what I could visualize, what I would illustrate—but I stopped myself and let them lead the way. It was so successful I used this same "keep your teacher fingers out" approach for a read-aloud using *Rose Blanche* with a focus on the strategy "questioning."

~ Grade 4 teacher

Check It Out

Allen, Janet, *Yellow Brick Roads: Shared and Guided Paths to Independent Reading 4–12* (Pembroke 2000).

Calkins, Lucy McCormick, *The Art of Teaching Reading* (Addison Wesley-Longman 2001, pp. 49–63).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001).

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 1998, pp. 127–129).

Routman, Regie, *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating* (Heinemann 2000, pp. 30–32).

Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* (Heinemann 2003, pp. 18–21, 147–149, 37, 97).

Sibberson, Frankie, and Karen Szymusiak, *Still Learning to Read* (Stenhouse 2003, pp. 78–90).

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* (Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 62, 63, 169, 460–465).

Shared Reading

What Is It?

- A step between reading to students and independent reading
- A context that provides deliberate and purposeful opportunities for teaching and learning about the way written language works
- A context that provides support for all readers in a safe, comfortable learning community

Key Descriptors

- Texts may be beyond what students can read on their own, but are appropriate in terms of age, needs, and interests.
- Students can successfully read these texts, or part of these texts, in unison with the teachers and their classmates.
- Teacher often uses enlarged text or overhead.
- Students join in as they can.
- Reading *with* one another in small groups or as a whole class (together in a parallel or reciprocal fashion).

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Teacher displaying the text to the group
- Whole group or small group
- Students sitting close together to explore a shared text
- Explicit instructional focus, such as word analysis, punctuation
- Used with short dramatic stories or poems, can lead to performance (Readers Theatre or choral reading)
- Buddy reading

What Do We Need?

- Charts with large text—songs, poetry, non-fiction
- Text with enlarged print such as a big book
- Text on overhead transparency
- Individual copies for further reading
- LCD-projected presentation (PowerPoint or other)

Questions for Teachers

- What is my purpose for this reading? Is it to teach a reading skill or to support students getting through the text to perform an operation or take part in a conversation?
- What is my instructional focus for choosing this context?
- Has this focus been shared with the students?
- What have I learned about the students through this activity?
- Was the instruction effective and how do I know?
- How might I use this text again, with a similar or different focus?

Guided Reading

> The goal of guided reading is to help students develop more effective and efficient text-processing systems and to expand their reading into increasingly more difficult texts.

What Is It?

- Small-group instructional time during which children are reading text at their instructional level
- Teacher selecting the focus for the lesson
- Small-group instruction with texts selected to *scaffold* student's literacy development

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Through shared reading, students internalize new language and learn to enjoy the way words sound. (Fountas and Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy*, p. 36)

Vignette

Thinking about Shared Reading

There are times when text is a barrier to discussion of bigger issues. When I want all students to have equal opportunity to discuss something new and important, I often put the text on an overhead transparency, and we highlight key words, phrases, or ideas together as a group. Once we have read through the text several times together, we then move on to a discussion of the issues or problems involved. This is a great tool in supporting students with math problems.

~ Grade 3/4 teacher

With slightly more mature readers I use shared reading as a way to focus on descriptive language. I put a piece of writing on a transparency and read it aloud several times to the students. I then give them their own copies and ask them to underline words or phrases that jump off the page at them. We then read the piece as a shared reading session, with students reading only what they have individually highlighted.

~ Grade 3/4 teacher

Shared reading is one of the most supportive types of reading we can do, and it often gets left behind in grades 4–6 classrooms. It is a time when, using short pieces of text, poetry, or excerpts, students and I help each other "talk through a piece of writing." Sometimes we read it just because we like the way it sounds.

~ Grade 5 teacher

Check It Out

Calkins, Lucy McCormick, *The Art of Teaching Reading* **(Addison-Wesley Longman 2001, pp. 43–44, 175–195).**

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* **(Heinemann 2001).**

Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* **(Heinemann 2003, pp. 91–93, 130–149).**

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* **(Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 62–63, 465–472, 503).**

Key Descriptors

- Small groups, based on need as identified through observation and assessment
- Expectation that students can, with support, successfully read the text (instructional level)
- Lesson begins with a brief introduction that might connect concepts, demonstrate a strategy, or expand vocabulary
- Independent practice time, as teacher assesses or reads with individuals
- Instruction focusses on strategies or processing but is always overarched with meaning
- Progresses with the readers towards elements of style, features, literacy devices, and more complex issues
- Demonstration and practice leading to independent application

What Does It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Teacher introduces the book.
- Teacher provides support/instruction on one strategy or feature to be highlighted.
- Teacher uses white board to highlight vocabulary information.
- Students read text independently.
- Groups are flexible and change according to need in both size and composition.
- Teacher assesses or reads with individuals, as others read independently.
- Discussion takes place around the teacher-chosen focus and the students' practice of the strategy or use of the feature.

What Do We Need?

- Multiple copies (4–6 copies) of text, crossing a wide range of levels and genres
- Short text (articles, poems, magazine clippings)
- Meeting area with easel, whiteboard, chalkboard, or chart paper (Some teachers also use sticky notes, markers, or magnetic letters.)
- System for keeping a record of individual student progress, as well as the composition of the groups over time

Teaching Tip

It is more effective, particularly with readers who are having some difficulties, to meet the guided reading group for several consecutive days rather than every second or third day.

Questions for Teachers

- What is my instructional focus for choosing this context?
- Have I identified the supports and challenges in the text?
- Has the focus been made clear to the students?
- Are the students able to read the text with minimal support?
- What did I learn about the students?
- Is this group meeting my expectations?
- What did the student learn to do that he or she didn't know how to do before?
- Does the student demonstrate understanding of the focus strategy being emphasized?
- Is the student attentive and engaged during the lesson and the follow-up?
- Where will I go next? What will be my next instructional focus?
- Do I need to meet with some groups more than with others?
- How long has this particular group been together, and is it time to regroup, fully or partially?

Vignette

Using the Sticky Note

Guided reading provides me with an opportunity to fine-tune reading development and enhance classroom dynamics. My favourite guided reading tool is the sticky note. Throughout the session, I jot down areas of strength and need that we will revisit the next day. These notes generate the basis for some of the following day's explicit teaching.

~ Grade 5 teacher

Vignette

Planning for Guided Reading

One of the most important parts of my role is to decide which students need guided reading and for what purpose. Some of my students need frequent support, and others are progressing well, with occasional need for support beyond the whole-class and individual contexts. Not all students need guided reading all the time at this level, but all students do need to be expanding their understanding of text using books they can really read.

~ Grade 4 teacher

Vignette

Getting to Know Students through Independent Reading

Independent reading is a perfect time to have informal "chats" with students. After observing my students' choices over time, I noticed one girl would read every and any piece of fiction related to horses. I expanded my non-fiction library to include books about horses. One day, during I.R., as we called it, I sat beside her to "chat" and show her two new books, both non-fiction, about horses. She was hooked immediately. She was also thrilled to find poetry selections related to horses. I.R. time in my classroom is critical to my ongoing assessment of needs and my observation of independent application of strategies taught and learned. Without I.R., I could not run an effective English language arts program.

~ Grade 4 teacher

Independent Reading

What Is It?

- A focussed block of time during Reading Workshop when students practise skills and strategies on their own

- Students building stamina for increasingly longer periods of time when the books they choose are interesting, appropriate, and at the students' independent reading level

- The foundation that supports small-group instruction and provides time for assessment

Key Descriptors

- Instructional focus on reading skills and strategies

- Teacher and student roles and nature of reading experiences differ from USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading) or DEAR (Drop Everything and Read)

- Explicit teaching of how to select "just right" text

- Students read recognizing a purpose and an audience

- Student self-selection

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Students engaged with text they can really read, and teachers engaged with students

- Partner reading

- Teachers and students engaging in small-group instruction, one-to-one conversation, and conferring

- Students occasionally choosing text—based on interest and selection/recommendation by friendship group

- Students reading "just right" text to practise strategies and skills

- Absence of worksheets

One suggested structure

1. Book talk

2. Mini-lesson

3. Status of the class

4. Individual reading, conferring, and responding with teacher and peers

5. Group reflection and sharing

What Do We Need?

- A substantial and varied classroom library
- Routines for choosing, abandoning, and returning books
- Scheduled blocks of time when students are interacting with books
- A solid plan for assessment
- An understanding of the strengths and needs of each student

Questions for Teachers

- What is the instructional focus for choosing this context?
- Is this focus clear for the students?
- How much time do my students have to do independent reading every day?
- What did I learn about my students?
- Are students selecting books they can really read?
- Are students better able to select appropriate books?
- Are students building stamina?
- Am I using this opportunity to confer with individual students and meet with small groups?
- How often are paper-and-pencil activities used during independent reading?
- What is the nature of the pencil-and-paper activity in terms of bridging or connecting to real reading?

The Book Pass System Procedure

- Organize students' chairs/desks in a circle.
- Explain the purpose of book pass by demonstrating how you sample a book before deciding to read it.
- Gather books, making sure there is one per student.
- Give each student a book; which one doesn't matter as they will see all books.
- Choose the direction for passing.
- Immediately list the title and author of each book.
- Allow one or two minutes and say "Pass." Students then make a quick comment before passing. Have a share time at end. Questions could include: Who found a book he or she can't wait to read? Anyone found a book that would teach us something new?
- Students put completed forms in reading folders for choosing books for independent reading.

Flexibility in Book Choice

In the classroom, we teachers are always striving to keep students focussed and accountable for their time during independent reading. I ensure that my classroom library has a wide range of fiction and non-fiction titles, at various stages of reading difficulty and representing a myriad of topics. Students are guided in their selections to maintain "just right" book choices, and "book hopping" is discouraged.

However, I relaxed my "rules" a little when I observed one of my most committed readers having trouble staying engaged in her novel. I knew she had just returned to school from being home sick for a few days and thought, at first, that she was having trouble getting back to class routines. Thankfully, I asked her how things were going instead of making other assumptions. She offered that she wanted to read but that the smaller print of the novel was giving her a headache, likely because she was still not feeling very well. I suggested that she might take a break from her novel and try a non-fiction text with more picture support and larger print, one in which she could choose to read the sections that interested her for as many days as she needed before getting back to her novel.

At first, I was a little hesitant to allow the "book hopping," but the bigger picture needed to be seen here. After all, rules and routines must also adhere to common sense.

~ Resource teacher

Demonstration of Ways to Choose Books

- Look at front and back covers.
- Muse aloud about the reviews.
- Talk about the content.
- Talk about your knowledge of author's writing.
- Mention honours: awards the book has won.
- Read the first few lines and talk about leads that caught your attention.
- Skip through the book and talk about size of print, illustrations, text supports such as maps, headlines, and chapter titles.
- Talk about your reading mood. What do I want to read right now? Do I want to read a series? Am I looking for more information on my habitat project?

The recording sheet for the students can be as simple as the sample below.

Book Pass		
Name:		
Author	Title	Comment

Teaching for Comprehension: Using the Strategies

What Is It?

Comprehension is the reason for reading. Successful comprehension is closely linked with fluency and accuracy. While on their own, fluency, sense, accuracy, information, and pleasure are important, the real purpose for reading is to understand and thus to think. This thinking is the overarching focus for all instruction.

Comprehension strategies are the tools readers use to deepen their understanding and expand their thinking. While there are hundreds of strategy "tricks and tips," lists of those worth explicitly teaching usually include the following:

- **Making connections:** The reader is able to recognize relationships that exist between the text and other experiences. These connections support the reading by linking the reader's prior knowledge and experience to the reading situation. Connections include
  - text to self: connections between the text and the reader's own life
  - text to text: connections between the text and other texts that have been previously read or viewed
  - text to world: connections between the text and larger world issues
- **Visualizing:** During the reading, the reader is able to create images pertaining to the text in his or her head.
- **Inferring:** The reader is able to construct meaning from the text by reasoning about known facts or evidence that may be implied, but not directly stated by the author. Inferring is often referred to as the ability to "read between the lines."
- **Questioning:** The reader poses questions about the text, its content, and its construction in order to enhance understanding. The reader asks questions before reading, during the reading, and after the reading.
- **Determining importance:** The reader is able to identify central ideas and select key points.
- **Analysing:** The reader is able to examine the text, its construction, ideas, and content in order to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of what was written and how it was written.
- **Synthesizing:** The reader is able to combine information from a variety of sources (personal, world, literary knowledge) to construct new understandings about the topic or text.
- **Monitoring comprehension and using fix-up strategies when meaning breaks down:** Readers can use a number of "fix-up" strategies (reread, use context clues, read on, skip it, ask for help) when they encounter difficulty.

Teaching Tip

Appendix D: Reading Comprehension Bookmarks provides a template for a two-sided bookmark that features these strategies in an easy-to-use format.

Vignette

Visualizing

I remember clearly my grade 3 student who looked so surprised when she realized she was visualizing. It helped me to understand that teaching for comprehension really means teaching students to think about their thinking.

~ Grade 3 teacher

Vignette

Visualization as a Comprehension Tool

A grade 4 student was reading to me from a chapter book. I asked him if the pictures on a page help him with the reading. He said that they did. I probed further as I wanted to know if he also used visualization as a comprehension strategy.

"If there's no picture I do that."

"And how does that work for you?"

"Well, I get the point of what I'm reading, and then I get a picture of that in my mind until I get to the next paragraph point and so on. I just keep making a big story picture in my head!"

Although this student struggles at times with word identification, comprehension is rarely a problem. We know one reason why!

Other students can be invited to visualization as a comprehension strategy through a variety of activities. One I've tried is to give them blank comic strip blocks and ask them to do a "quick draw" of the storyline as I read aloud. Another activity is to take a piece of text, fiction or non-fiction, and examine it for key words that prompt visualization. Done as a group or whole class with an overhead, this activity alerts students to the kinds of words around which they can form mental pictures.

~ Resource teacher

" *Study after study has revealed that explicitly teaching students even one strategy for comprehending text can improve their comprehension.* "

(National Reading Panel 2000)

Check It Out

Allen, Janet, *Yellow Brick Roads: Shared and Guided Paths to Independent Reading 4–12* (Pembroke 2000).

Calkins, Lucy McCormack, *The Art of Teaching Reading* (Addison-Wesley Longman 2001, pp. 64–79).

Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* (Heinemann 2003, pp. 46–47, 55–56, 156–158, 212–215).

Strickland, Dorothy, Kathy Ganske, and Joanne K. Monroe, *Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers: Strategies for Classroom Intervention 3–6* (Stenhouse 2002, p. 58).

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* (Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 472–473, 480–483, 589).

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Explicit mini-lessons on talking about comprehension
- Modelling of a strategy, followed by a number of opportunities for shared and guided practice
- Students practising independently with books they can really read
- Anchor charts highlighting the important messages about each strategy prominently displayed and regularly used
- Individual student bookmarks to serve as prompts
- Student using the language of comprehension strategies (e.g., visualizing, synthesizing)
- Small-group instruction based on the comprehension focus
- Several weeks devoted to a specific comprehension focus

What Do We Need?

- Wall charts highlighting comprehension strategies
- Student- and teacher-generated anchor charts summarizing a particular focus
- Bookmarks
- Wide range of text to illustrate the comprehension focus (short text and picture books are particularly useful)
- A deliberate plan for explicitly teaching all comprehension strategies in an order logical to the needs of the class
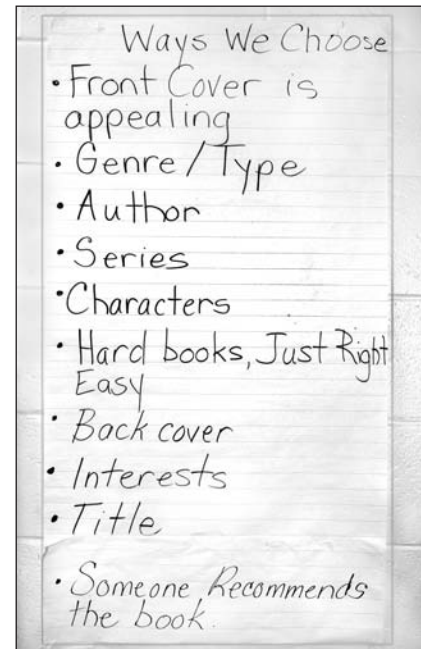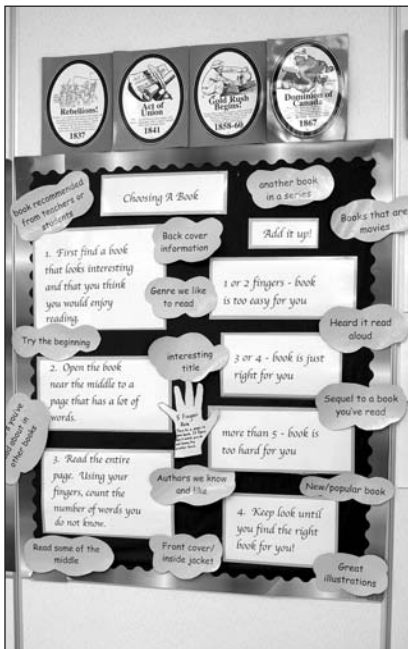
Questions for Teachers

- What is my comprehension instructional plan?

- Do I know my students well enough to identify which strategies they use and which ones need more attention?

- Am I modelling comprehension strategies every day in every content area?

- Do my students understand that making meaning is the purpose for reading?

- Do my students understand that strategy use is intended to support meaning?

- Do the texts my students are reading invite deep thinking, and are they accessible in interest and reading level for the student?

- Do I give my students enough time to talk about their understandings?

- Do I give my students enough guided practice before I expect them to apply strategies automatically and independently?

- Am I teaching my students how to find information in the text and beyond the text?

- Can my students identify which strategy (or strategies) they are using and how it helps them?

The Role of Book Choice

One of the most important aspects of the comprehensive literacy program is the choice of books. In the past, grades 4–6 reading programs were largely based in novel study. Often the class read the same novel and answered questions on each chapter. Sometimes students chose their own novels and did reports or projects based on the novel.

While teachers at grades 4–6 should not discard the novel as a valid teaching tool, a comprehensive literacy program moves beyond this one form and includes a wide variety of text as instructional means. (See The Classroom Library, pp. 4–6.)

Teachers use novels of various length and complexity in combination with shorter non-fiction books, magazines, articles, short stories, and poetry and thus offer students a broader range of reading opportunities. This variety of text also provides a wide range of instructional opportunities for examining comprehension strategies, text features, and fix-up strategies, as well as making links to writing and other curriculum areas. See Appendix E: School-based Planning for suggestions on constructing a school-wide reading plan.

Suggested Planning Frame
- First, think big picture.
- Find a working definition of the strategy you will teach.
- Define what is key for students to know.
- Break it down into its most important elements.
- Once this is done, think about how you will teach it contextually and purposefully.
- What books will be used?
- How will activities be structured to gradually release responsibility to the students?
- What variety of scaffolded authentic experiences will be created for students?

Caution
The assessment of comprehension is much deeper and more complex than simply having students answer a number of questions about the text. Assessment can include conversations, observations, or written work—which may include written responses, drawings, diagrams, poetry, music, or other art work.

Moving from Whole-Group to Small-Group Instruction

As a fifth-grade teacher, I do spend some time with the whole group using an overhead and short pieces of text to teach students about the strategies that support reading. As the year progresses, I work with small groups to help them learn how to build on their understanding of these strategies in focussed discussions that allow them to support one another.

~ Grade 5 teacher

Modelling and Letting Go

As Stephanie Harvey suggested in *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Learning*, I used *The Mary Celeste* by Jane Yolen to expand our work on questioning. It is short, intriguing, and leads to all types of questions. After discussing and recording how questions help readers understand, we were ready to begin. I had the perfect lesson planned … with modelling through my think-alouds, which would lead to guided practice in their own independent reading. The kids became so excited during my modelling session, I had to let them take over. We had everything from literal to critical questioning, determining whether the text would provide answers as we read or whether we would have to go to an outside source, to students determined to research their own decisions about the disappearance of the ship.

A spark had been ignited in my students, a spark that lasted the rest of the year. The true evidence of understanding and independence came when there was a change in how they wrote to me about what they were reading. As a teacher, I became a learner, when my students forced me to consider the quality of my own questions during our very first session.

~ Grade 4 teacher

The use of shorter, accessible texts for instruction gives teachers and students more-efficient ways to learn about reading. Short text holds the student's attention and can still provide a complete work to support discussion. Students can sustain comprehension on shorter text, and teachers can make their instructional points quickly and explicitly. Well-chosen excerpts can give rich examples for discussion and serve as springboards and mentor text for writing. Shorter text supports those readers who struggle and can still provide extensive challenge for more advanced readers. Short text, be it fiction or non-fiction, is an effective choice for guided reading, allowing demonstration and practice over shorter periods of time.

Literature Circles

What Is It?

- A time for students to select, read, and discuss their own books
- A time to reflect and learn from themselves and one another

Key Descriptors

- Specific student roles and responsibilities frame group work— "Discussion Director", "Artful Artist" may be involved (Daniels 2002)
- Teacher facilitates book choices and monitors discussion
- Students choose the text (sometimes from a controlled range)
- Focus is on discussion, not strategies
- Text is often independent level

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- There is careful and deliberate modelling of structure and routine.
- Groups of students discuss text, issues, and reactions, with or without a teacher present.
- Students may be working from a common text.
- Students may be exploring issues through related, but not identical, texts.
- Students share leadership roles.
- Students choose their own text based on interest.
- Personal reactions and connections often form the basis of the discussions.

What Do We Need?

- Multiple copies of a large range of text crossing many reading levels and interests (including poetry)
- Careful framework for expectations and procedures
- Role sheets modelled and reinforced (if necessary)

> **Caution**
>
> The role sheets are intended as supports and scaffolds in helping students understand the variety of ways in which they can examine text. The sheets should be phased out as soon as possible and should never become the major focus of literature circles.

Questions for Teachers

- What is my instructional focus for choosing this context?
- How have I scaffolded and demonstrated expectations for behaviour and conversation?
- Do I begin with the whole class or with one group at a time?
- How do I monitor progress?
- How often during a year do I use literature circles? For what purpose?

The Fiction/Non-Fiction Balance

What Is It?

- A shift from traditional practice
- Redressing the balance between story and non-fiction to more closely mirror real life
- Deliberately inviting students into the world of non-fiction through reading and writing experiences
- Exploring non-fiction beyond narrative

> *Unfortunately, little non-fiction, beyond personal narrative, is practiced in classrooms. Children are content to tell their own stories but the notion that someone can write about an idea and thereby affect the lives and thinking of others is rarely discussed.*
>
> (Don Graves, as cited in *Is That a Fact?* by Tony Stead, 2002)

Supporting Reading Comprehension in Non-fiction

"What's a documentary?" one student said as we read aloud an article about the plight in North Korea.

Instead of allowing the question to be answered, I saw this as an opportunity to send the class on a search for clues to the word's meaning. With highlighters in hand, the students scanned the paragraph for other words and phrases that supported their understanding of the reference "documentary."

"It's got to be a TV show or a type of movie or something because it says here that the author 'watched a documentary about North Korea.'"

"Yeah, and look where it says, 'The program continued ...,'" another student discovered as he read further in the paragraph.

I asked that they highlight any word or phrase that linked in some way to the word "documentary" and draw a fine line from it back to the key word. The students experienced first-hand how the context of a piece often supports their comprehension and how words work together to make meaning. Besides, don't they just love the chance to highlight!

~ Resource teacher

Check It Out

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001, pp. 309–320, 328–338).

Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudvis, *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Learning* (Pembroke 2000).

Check It Out

Hoyt, Linda, et al., *Spotlight on Comprehension: Building a Literacy of Thoughtfulness* **(Heinemann 2005).**

Keene, Ellin, and Susan Zimmerman, *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop* **(Heinemann 1997).**

Miller, Debbie, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* **(Pembroke 2002).**

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Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* **(Heinemann 2003, pp. 117–129).**

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Serafini, Frank, *Lessons in Comprehension: Explicit Instruction in the Reading Workshop* **(Heinemann 2004).**

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* **(Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 97, 205).**

Wilhelm, Jeffrey, *Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension: Role Plays, Text Structure Tableaux, Talking Statues and Other Enrichment Techniques That Engage Students with Text* **(Scholastic 2002).**

Wilhelm, Jeffrey, *Improving Comprehension with Think Aloud Strategies: Modeling What Good Readers Do* **(Scholastic 2001).**

Key Descriptors

- Students reading and writing a variety of non-fiction genres. Some of the purposes for non-fiction include
  – describing
  – explaining
  – instructing
  – persuading
  – retelling information about a person or past event
  – exploring and maintaining relationships with others
- Teacher using non-fiction as a read-aloud choice
- Use of non-fiction as a focus for guided reading and writing experiences
- Going beyond journal writing
- Going beyond bugs, trucks, and critters—appealing to both girls and boys

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Genre chart to monitor read-aloud choices, reflecting a balance between fiction and non-fiction
- Non-fiction books included in reading pots or baskets, as well as non-fiction books prominently displayed in several categories "Animals," "Recipes," "How and why," "How to care for," and so on
- Explicit use of non-fiction in read-aloud and shared experiences
- Creating non-fiction in modelled and shared writing experiences
- Experiences that are purposeful and authentic
- Student work prominently displayed
- Use of diagrams, labels, and illustrations by students and teacher
- Explicit instruction on text features and their purpose, in reading and in writing
- Explicit lessons designed to compare and contrast forms of non-fiction writing
- Anchor charts and/or explicit models of a variety of non-fiction forms posted for easy reference
- Instruction might link with Historica Fairs or science-related fairs, which give life to authentic non-fiction research

What Do We Need?

- A large variety of non-fiction texts that serve as models or mentor texts
- Resources at a variety of reading levels, so students can select text that they can really read
- Resources may include, but are not limited to, books, magazines, advertising, cards, maps, cartoons
- Internet access for research
- A variety of writing tools—recipe cards, cardboard for greeting cards, paper of various sizes
- A variety of pens, pencils, markers, highlighters
- Assessment rubrics for specific written forms
- Time for conferring
- Time for celebrating

Questions for Teachers

- What is my instructional focus for choosing this context?
- Do the students understand the instructional focus?
- Are the students writing in a variety of fiction/non-fiction genres?
- Have I modelled fiction/non-fiction in both reading and writing contexts?

Poetry

Instruction in poetry is multi-faceted, since, as with other genres, students must learn about the features and structure in order to read poetry as well as to write it.

What Is It?

- An essential component of a comprehensive literacy program
- A form of literature that can be fiction or non-fiction
- Features rich, concise language, imagery, and emotion

Check It Out

Chambers, Aidan, *Tell Me: Children, Reading, and Talk* (Pembroke 2001).

Daniels, Harvey, *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student Centered Classroom* (Stenhouse 2002).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6) Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001, pp. 252–276).

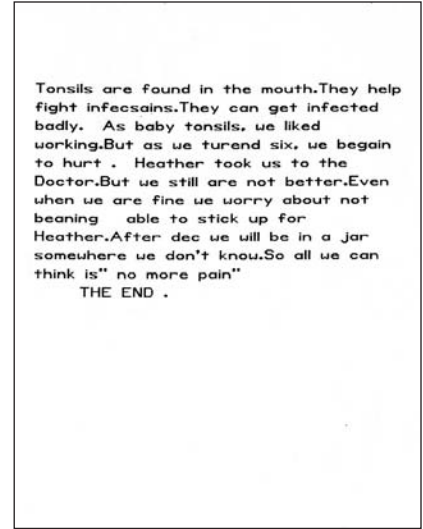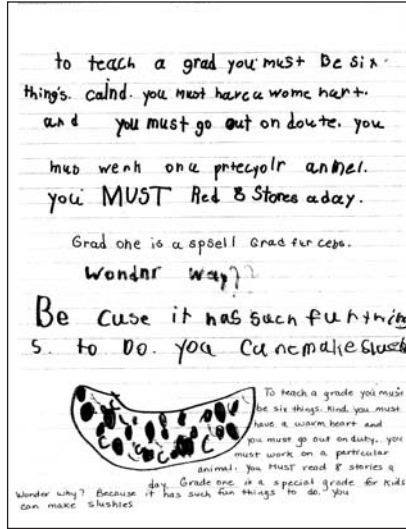Routman, Regie, *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning and Evaluating* (Heinemann 2000, pp. 171–204).

Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* (Heinemann 2003, p. 153).

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* (Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 53, 127, 483–485, 518–520).

Vignette

One-a-Day Poetry Practice

It used to be, "Oh no, not poetry! Sigh!"

"I can't write poetry. There are too many instructions."

But things have changed for my grade 5 students. Since September I've shared at least one poem a day. Students then have many opportunitites to hear poems read, to see poetic forms, and to explore writing various poetic forms.

Now the conversations about poetry are animated. The students really liked hearing and sharing a poem every day. Students sometimes write found poems after having chosen favourite lines from a favourite poem or piece of prose. Free verse is free flowing and all that rhyme is now more relaxed. Sharing happens.

Poetry, all the time, beyond April which is customarily known as "Poetry Month," infused into the day has made 'doing' poetry fun!

~ Grade 5 teacher

Free verse is the easiest and best way I know to turn all kids into successful, joyful writers. (Routman, *Writing Essentials*, p. 305)

Key Descriptors

- May rhyme, but also may not rhyme
- Communicates meaning and emotion
- Uses figurative language
- Highlights concise language, powerful description, the power of word choice
- Features sound patterns
- Forms of poetry include
  - free verse
  - lyric
  - limericks
  - cinquain
  - found poems
  - haiku
  - narrative

(*Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6*, Appendix 17, describes many distinctive forms of poetry.)

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Classroom libraries include a wide variety of poetry
- Not limited to a "unit" but rather is a valued part of the weekly routine
- Featured as a regular is part of read-alouds and shared reading experiences
- Free verse is the first introduction, since it is not restricted by form or rhyme
- Students are reading and writing poetry regularly

What Do We Need?

- A wide range of poetry at a range of levels
- A school-wide plan for when certain forms will be explicitly taught (See Appendix E, p. 120 for school-based planning suggestions.)
- A positive attitude towards poetry
- Response to poetry (oral and written supported statements)
- A successful way to teach any form of poetry, e.g.,
  - teacher modelling
  - sharing poetry of other students (from other sources)
  - opportunity for discussion about response to a poem
  - conversations before writing
  - celebration of student efforts
  - publishing an anthology or collection

Questions for Teachers

- How do I introduce poetry to my students?
- Do my students feel my enthusiasm for poetry?
- Do I have a wide variety of poetry as part of my classroom library?
- How often do I include poetry in my read-aloud or shared reading experiences for students?
- Am I responsible for the explicit teaching of certain forms of poetry at my grade level?
- How do I support students to interpret poetry? (What types of mini-lessons might I use for text features, word choice, and so on?)
- How do I support students in writing poetry?
- How do I connect poetry to students' experiences in music and visual arts?

My Memory Box

My memory box is important to me
It is filled with special things to see
It shows who I am and some things I do
What I have done and may pursue

There are memories that bring sadness
And memories of great gladness
So sneak a peek as I am full of pride
Of my pictures, notes and dreams inside

I have filled it with thought, filled it with care
And added many memories with my family shared
This box of mine gives me great pleasure
And it is something I will forever treasure

Kate Mosher
Grade 6
November 2005
Mrs. Sampson

(Refrain poem)

When I went shopping

When I went shopping one day
I bought a checkered hat
A fuzzy checkered hat
An ugly one said Pat

When I went shopping one day
I found a purple wedding dress
A silky wedding dress
Pat said a wedding mess

When I went shopping one day
I came across an orange belt
A fashion dream orange belt
Pat said I hope it will melt

When I went shopping one day
I found a cute pair of pants
A cargo pair of pants
Pat said those pants are so great
they make me want to dance

Ali MacDonald
January 12, 2006
Grade 6

Free Verse Poem
Dancing

Dancing fills you up with joy
You're out of breath your feet hurt
But still all you can think about is how
beautifully you danced
Finally the night is over
You are not sad because you know this is
not the last time you will dance
You will dance wherever you are

Sarah Glen
Grade 6
Mrs. Sampson
January 13, 2006

FREE VERSE POEM

Spring

This is spring.
Green grass glistening with dew,
Yellow sunbeams shining,
Gray crickets hidden in the ground,
Blue streams trickling,
Dark sweet smelling earth,
Pink flowers sprouting
This is spring.

By: Linnea Swinimer
January 13, 2006
Grade 6
Mrs. Sampson

Check It Out

Calkins, Lucy, and Laurie Pessah, *Nonfiction Writing: Procedures and Reports, Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum* (Heinemann 2005).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001, pp. 399–406, 359–360, 367–368).

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Routman, Regie, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* (Heinemann 2005, pp. 114–115, 126–127, 137, 196–197).

Stead, Tony, *Is That a Fact?: Teaching Nonfiction Writing K–3* (Stenhouse 2002).

Stead, Tony, *Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension with Nonfiction K–5* (Stenhouse 2006).

Books to engage students:

- *Hey World, Here I Am (*Jean Little, Kids Can Press 1990)
- *Gonna Bake Me a Rainbow Poem* (Peter Sars, Scholastic 1990)
- *Do Whales Jump at Night?* (Florence McNeil, ed., Douglas and McIntyre 1990)
- *Double Vision, A Collection of Canadian Poetry* (Scholastic 1999)
- *Go Cart Getaway, (*Monica Kulling, Nelson Canada 1993)
- *West Coast Rhymes* (Jenny Nelson, Gage 1992)
- *Beetles and Blue Jeans* (Maxine Tynes, Nelson 1993)
- *Three Kernels of Popcorn, A Collection of Canadian Poetry* (Scholastic 1999)
- *Til All the Stars Have Fallen, Canadian Poems for Children* (David Booth, Kids Can Press 1989)
- *Honey, I Love* (Eloise Greenfield, Harper Trophy 1978)
- *Voices in the Wind* (David Booth, Kids Can Press 1990)
- *The Earth Is Painted Green: A Garden of Poems about Our Planet* (Barbara Brenner, Scholastic 1994)
- *Make a Joyful Sound: Poems for Children by African American Poets* (Deborah Shine, Checkerboard Press 1991)
- *Brown Honey in Broomwheat Tea* (Joyce Carol Thomas, Harper Collins 1996)

Novel Study

What Is It?

- A traditional reading activity in grades 3–6 classrooms. It usually involves students reading the same text and reporting on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

Key Descriptors

- Teachers using novels as an interactive read-aloud experience, providing opportunity for rich conversation around character, plot, or significant issues
- Use of shorter "chapter books" or series books that give students opportunity to practise their reading strategies
- Novels can provide wonderful springboards for shared discussions on character sketches and finding main ideas and for literary techniques such as flashbacks
- Student choice rather than teacher selection
- Literature study choices
- Individual titles chosen by students as "just right" books, based on interest

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Novels form a part of a large classroom library
- Large range of challenge among the novels
- Novels not used throughout the year, but interspersed with other forms of text for instructional and demonstration purposes
- Rarely used for guided reading—shorter text for instruction is a more logical choice

What Do We Need?

- A large variety of titles
- A large range of challenge
- A plan to teach students about "just right" choices
- Strong literature for interactive read-alouds that stimulate deep conversation and reflection
- Content that respects the age level of the students

Questions for Teachers

- Do I provide a large range of options for reading, including, but not limited to, novels?
- Do I balance my read-alouds between novels and other forms of text?
- Do I choose my read-aloud novels deliberately, and do I model comprehension and reflection as part of the experience?

Check It Out

Anderson, Carl, *Assessing Writers* **(Heinemann 2005, pp. 188–191, 236).**

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* **(Province of Nova Scotia 1998, Appendix 17, pp. 161–162).**

Booth, David, and Judith Dubé, *Writing Sense 4–7* **(Harcourt Brace and Co. 1998).**

Cullinan, Bernice E., Marilyn C. Scala, and Virginia C. Schroder, *Three Voices: An Invitation to Poetry across the Curriculum* **(Stenhouse 1995).**

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* **(Heinemann 2001, pp. 391–392, 410–422).**

Heard, Georgia, *For the Good of the Earth and Sun: Teaching Poetry* **(Heinemann 1989).**

Rog, Lori Jamison, and Paul Kropp, *The Write Genre: Classroom Activities and Mini-Lessons That Promote Writing with Clarity, Style and Flashes of Brilliance* **(Pembroke 2004, pp. 141–152).**

Writing and Other Ways of Representing

Writing is a process that involves thinking and composing considering audience, purpose, and form; and using the conventions of written language. Writing is also a tool for learning—a means of gaining insight, developing ideas, and solving problems. The breadth of this definition reminds teachers that instruction in writing is far more than simply giving students choice, guiding them through the writing process, or using the six traits of writing for self-assessment. Effective writing instruction involves all of the above and more.

Writing instruction takes into account	
• Stages of writing development – Emergent – Early – Transitional – Fluent	• Modes of writing – Expressive (journals, diaries, learning logs) – Transactional (maps, procedures, reports, directions) – Poetic (poetry, plays, short stories)
• Process of writing – Prewriting/Rehearsing – Drafting – Revising – Editing – Proofreading – Publishing/presenting	• Types – Narrative – Expository – Descriptive – Persuasive
• Traits – Ideas – Organization – Word choice – Voice – Sentence fluency – Conventions	• Balanced instruction – Modelled writing – Interactive writing – Shared writing – Guided writing – Independent writing

Stages of Writing Development

"Our purpose is not to produce writing; it is to produce writers."
(Phenix, *The Writing Teacher's Handbook*, 2002)

Learning to write, like learning to read, is a process; students grow in competence gradually over time; their learning is continuous, recursive, and lifelong.

Among the factors that contribute to students' writing development are:

- previous language experiences
- exposure to various writing forms, structures, and texts
- experience with adults who are enthusiastic about writing and who serve as writing role models
- a positive, supportive learning environment
- frequent opportunities to write
- specific descriptive feedback on writing
- ability to identify and apply strategies that have been successful
- classroom instruction that is focussed and delivered in a meaningful context

Researchers describe writing growth as a series of stages through which students develop. While these stages should not be viewed rigidly, they describe characteristics common to students at various stages of writing maturity. By keeping these characteristics in mind when they observe their students' writing, teachers can determine how best to support student learning.

Stages of Writing Development

Stage	Common Patterns
The **emergent stage** begins when a child first picks up a pen, pencil, or crayon to make purposeful marks or scribbles. This writing tends to be "in the moment," so it frequently needs the author's presence to be understood. It is a crucial first step on the path to writing.	- learns that writing is something that people do - shows interest in letter-sound relationships and how to represent specific speech sounds - is aware of print, begins to understand that print holds meaning - demonstrates increasing knowledge of functions of writing, some genres - plays at scribble writing—strings of capitals letters or letter-like forms - may produce some words in conventional spelling, some left-to-right writing, mostly phonetic spelling
Sometimes called the **developing writer stage**, the **early stage** of writing development shows that the student is beginning to acquire a sense of purpose and audience beyond himself or herself. The early stage writer begins to experiment with form and convention, showing awareness one day, but losing it the next.	- enjoys writing and sharing writing with others - understands that writing is "ideas written down" - is increasingly aware of a wider range of genre - is more aware of letter-sound relationships - may use "temporary" spelling when writing a draft - uses common spelling patterns - writing is becoming increasingly conventional with many standard spellings - directionality well established
The writer at the **transitional stage** is consolidating the knowledge and skills he or she has been developing. Increasingly, he or she will gain control of the craft of writing, but it may remain inconsistent, especially when writing across a number of genres.	- shows an increasing awareness of audience - enjoys giving and receiving feedback about writing - begins to revise for clarity - uses words that elaborate text - uses a variety of sentence structures - begins to produce stories with two or more characters - supports topics by relevant detail - writes more-complex reports, letters, poems - demonstrates increasing knowledge of spelling patterns, writing terminology - produces increasingly conventional writing
The **fluent stage** writer is beginning to demonstrate consistent control of basic structure and forms. At this stage the writer has enough skill and strategies to work with some independence and will attempt new genres and forms.	- enjoys playing with words and ideas to create particular effects - writes for a wide range of purposes - can convey more-complex and abstract ideas through writing - writes in a variety of genres including expository texts - develops characters through dialogue and description - demonstrates increasing knowledge of spelling patterns, range of genres - representational forms across the curriculum - produces increasingly conventional writing with a high degree of spelling accuracy - is able to use most punctuation marks independently

Your mom looks nice. Nolan.
Sept. 16 /04

to teach a grad you must Be six
thing's. caind. you must have a worm hant.
and you must go out on doute. you
must wenh on a prtecyolr annel.
you MUST Red 8 Stores a day.

Grad one is a spsell Grad fur cebs.

Wondnr way?

Be cuse it has such fun thing
s. to Do. you Ca ncmake slushe

To teach a grade you must
be six things. Kind. you must
have a warm heart and
you must go out on duty. you
must work on a particular
animal. you MUST read 8 stories a
day. Grade one is a special grade for kids
Wonder why? Because it has such fun things to do. you
can make slushies

Tonsils are found in the mouth. They help
fight infecsains. They can get infected
badly. As baby tonsils. we liked
uorking. But as ue turend six. ue begain
to hurt . Heather took us to the
Doctor. But ue still are not better. Even
when ue are fine ue worry about not
beaning   able to stick up for
Heather. After dec ue uill be in a jar
someuhere ue don't knou. So all ue can
think is" no more pain"
        THE END .

Regardless of their stage of writing development, students must understand the role of purpose and audience in their work as writers. Writers at the early stage of writing development often write for audiences who are a part of their immediate environment (e.g., classmates, the teacher, parents, and themselves). Young writers begin to understand the concept of a "wider" audience as they prepare pieces that may be displayed in the hall rather than in the classroom. In becoming more fluent in their use of written language, developing writers use their exposure to a variety of genres and forms to reach wider reading audiences. Audience is inherent in purpose, form, and publication when students work through the writing process.

Awareness of audience allows writers to know the protocols of style, genre, and conventionality as they work with their written efforts. Audience is tied to the purpose and form chosen for publication. Respect for revision, editing, proofreading, and presentation become more critical when an authentic purpose and audience are established. Writers must then adhere to convention according to audience so that their ideas will be accurately conveyed.

Process of Writing

There are many excellent resources available that detail the writing process. It is important to note that there is no one clear, linear process and that writers approach the task of writing in different ways. They plan, write, and rethink, but each writer may have a unique way of approaching these processes. Students in grades 4–6 need to understand the processes of thinking, composing, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading in order to develop their own writing process. They also need many modelled, shared, and guided experiences before they can work independently across a range of forms and genres.

While a commitment to daily time for writing is essential, it is not enough. Skilled teaching, conferring, and assessment are also critical.

Prewriting (The work we do to get ready to draft)
- Also called rehearsal
- Warm-ups
- Talk
- Brainstorms
- Finding a focus
- Developing topics
- Free-writes
- Webs, diagrams, outlines
- Using drama and art to explore ideas
- Generating ideas—making notes, mind mappings, developing strong frames

Drafting (getting it down on paper)
- Organizing ideas in written form
- Experimenting with organizational patterns
- Conventions included at the student's level
- Usually silent
- Revision often embedded rather than done at the end

Revision (changing content, meaning, structure, or style)
- Leads
- Endings
- Details
- Word choice
- Time flashbacks
- Expanding
- Point of view
- Organization
- Clarity

Editing
- Sentence structure
- Punctuation

Proofreading (surface use of conventions)
- Capitalization
- Spelling
- Usage

(See Appendix F: Concepts, Grades 4, 5–6.)

Publication (the public face of writing)
- Not all writing is published
- Good copy
- Selecting a format
- Illustrations
- Sharing

The Traits of Writing

What Is It?

- Descriptors of effective writing that support strong assessment and self-assessment
- Characteristics or qualities that define writing

> *A writer has an effective writing process when whatever tools and strategies he uses when he's rehearsing, drafting, revising, and editing help him write well time and time again.*
>
> (Anderson, *Assessing Writers*, 2005)

Key Descriptors

- *Ideas* are the central message; the significance of the piece. They are the content of the work.
- *Organization* refers to the structure of the work; the way in which ideas and details are ordered for clarity and logic.
- *Voice* is the most distinctive feature of writing, which carries the writer's unique style and feelings.
- *Word choice* involves rich, descriptive, yet precise language that brings out detail and meaning.
- *Sentence fluency* refers to the flow of language; the sound of words and phrases—the way the writing sounds.
- *Conventions* refer to matters of correctness in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics. (See Appendix F: Concepts Grades 4–6.)

What Does It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Students actively involved in the writing process
- Students examining examples of writing, with focussed discussion on a particular trait (overhead with teacher, mentor text, student writing from other sources)
- Students engaged in frequent and varied opportunities for writing
- Whole-class mini-lessons featuring characteristics of good writing
- Teacher as writer
- Students using rubrics to respond to others' writing and as a guide to their own

Check It Out

Anderson, Carl, *Assessing Writers* (Heinemann 2005, pp. 107–140).

Fletcher, Ralph, and JoAnn Portalupi, *Non-fiction Craft Lessons: Teaching Information Writing K–8* (Stenhouse 2001).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3-6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001, pp. 52–54, 63–66, 78).

Heard, Georgia, *The Revision Toolkit: Teaching Techniques That Work* (Heinemann 2002).

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 1998, pp. 139–144).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Writers in Action 4: A Teaching Resource* (Province of Nova Scotia 2007).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Writers in Action 5: A Teaching Resource* (Province of Nova Scotia 2007).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Writers in Action 6: A Teaching Resource* (Province of Nova Scotia 2007).

Portalupi, Joann, and Ralph Fletcher, *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K–8* (Stenhouse 1998).

Portalupi, JoAnn, and Ralph Fletcher, *Teaching the Qualities of Writing* (Heinemann 2004).

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grade 3–6 Teachers* (Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 245–246).

What Do We Need?

- Significant time for writing
- An in-depth understanding of the writing process, including the teacher's own growth as a writer
- Samples and exemplars of student writing across a range of genres
- Whole-school conversation and consensus about what makes a good piece of writing
- Rubrics, written in student-friendly language, posted and referred to

Questions for Teachers

- What is my instructional focus for choosing this focus or trait?
- Do the students understand the instructional focus?
- Can students identify strengths and needs in a piece of writing?
- Do students recognize the traits in their own writing?
- Do I model, demonstrate, and give opportunity for guided practice before expecting independence in application of the traits?

Books to Introduce and Teach the Traits

Ideas

- *Nothing Ever Happens On 90ᵗʰ Street*, Roni Schotter
- *Mama Played Baseball*, David A. Adler
- *The Days of Summer*, Eve Bunting
- *Out of the Ocean*, Debra Frasier
- *Your Move*, Eve Bunting
- *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*, Mem Fox

Organization

- *Three Cheers for Catherine the Great!*, Cari Best
- *Switch on the Night*, Ray Bradbury
- *Butterfly House*, Eve Bunting
- *Grandpa Never Lies*, Ralph Fletcher
- *When Lightning Comes in a Jar*, Ernest L. Polacco

Voice

- *Voices in the Park*, Anthony Browne
- *The Frog Principal*, Stephanie Calmenson
- *Diary of a Worm*, Doreen Cronin
- *The Spider and the Fly*, Tony DiTerlizzi
- *Rachel: The Story of Rachel Carson*, Amy Ehrlich
- *The Bird House*, Cynthia Rylant
- *A Symphony of Whales*, Steve Schuch

Conventions

- *Your Move*, Eve Bunting
- *Animal Dazzlers: The Role of Brilliant Colors in Nature*, Sneed B. Collard
- *Caught' Ya Again!: More Grammar with a Giggle*, Jane Bell Kiester
- *Anguished English*, Richard Lederer

Sentence Fluency

- *Hide and Snake*, Keith Baker
- *The Important Book*, Margaret Wise Brown
- *One Tiny Turtle*, Nicola Davies
- *Twilight Comes Twice*, Ralph Fletcher
- *Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!*, Mem Fox
- *Bad Dog*, Nina Laden
- *Dogteam*, Gary Paulsen

Word Choice

- *Hello, Harvest Moon*, Ralph Fletcher
- *Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster*, Debra Frasier
- *A Story for Bear*, Dennis Haseley
- *Why the Banana Split*, Rick Walton

> Exemplars are samples of writing that represent each stage of a rubric, not just the highest level of achievement. Indeed, exemplars used for demonstration purposes should not always represent only the optimum level on a rubric. Discussion on what is valuable in a less-successful piece and what needs improvement is also helpful. Students who struggle often find it discouraging to see only a level of expectation they may never achieve.

> Simply giving students a rubric without explaining and demonstrating what the terms mean will not lead to quality writing.

Check It Out

Atwell, Nancie, *Lessons That Change Writers* **(Heinemann 2002).**

Caswell, R., and Brenda Mahler, *Strategies for Teaching Writing: An ASCD Action Tool* **(ASCD 2004).**

Culham, Ruth, *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide, Grades 3 and Up* **(Scholastic 2003).**

Fletcher, Ralph, *Non-Fiction Craft Lessons: Teaching Information Writing K-8* **(Stenhouse 2001).**

Heard, Georgia, *The Revision Toolkit: Teaching Techniques That Work* **(Heinemann 2002).**

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* **(Province of Nova Scotia 1998).**

Olness, Rebecca, *Using Literature to Enhance Writing Instruction: A Guide for K–5 Teachers* **(International Reading Association 2004).**

Portlupi, JoAnn, and Ralph Fletcher, *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K–8* **(Stenhouse 1998).**

Portalupi, Joann, and Ralph Fletcher, *Teaching the Qualities of Writing* **(Heinemann 2004).**

Teaching a Form or Trait

Teaching a form, feature, trait, or genre requires explicit modelling and demonstration, plenty of time for guided practice, independent application, and celebration of students' accomplishments. Many genres or traits are complex and may be subdivided, rather than taught globally.

Teaching for Organization

Students most frequently struggle with organization. They often find it difficult to get their ideas into a structure that conveys a coherent message to the reader. For this reason, organization is explored as a specific illustration in this document. Support for teaching other traits is provided in *The Write Traits Classroom Kits* and in the Check It Out boxes.

The *Write Traits Classroom Kits* list the following as components of a focus on organization:

- Writing a strong lead
- Putting things in order
- Identifying organizational patterns
- Matching organizational pattern and writing task
- Staying on topic
- Creating strong transitions
- Writing endings
- Putting details together

As they assess their students' writing, teachers make decisions about which of the components require specific instruction and in which instructional context (whole-class exploration, small-group work, or individual instruction). It is helpful to list these components and to refer to them explicitly over time.

Teaching Ideas

Following are some tips from teachers of grades 4–6 for dealing with the trait of organization:

- After reading a passage, poem, or short story, I put a copy of the text in a cut-apart form on the overhead, and as a group, we decide how to reassemble it. Later I will give each student a piece of writing to reassemble, highlighting that it must have a logical beginning and an ending, and the core of the writing must be in a logical order. We explicitly discuss the organizational features and why they work (leads, endings, sequencing, and so on).
- Sometimes I give students the text reconstruction activity on a piece of unseen text so they are not informed by their memory of how the selection goes.

- We use story maps to emphasize the need for a logical progression in a story. Students can create their own maps for a story they will write, or they can map a story they have read to highlight its features.

- I sometimes give students a copy of a piece of writing that is a level 2 on an organizational rubric, and we talk as a group about how this story might move to a level 3.

- Students must understand the characteristics of the form in which the piece is written before they can understand how to organize their own attempts at this form. I have anchor charts for various forms and genres posted in the room, and I also use mentor texts, particularly *Mainsails* that provide excellent demonstration on how to organize and write in a particular genre.

- When working on leads, we look at leads in a variety of popular series and see the similarities. We talk about why they are effective and how we might improve them.

- My students use graphic organizers for recount, report, or cause-and-effect writing. This helps them to have a clear picture of where they are going before they begin. We also use the organizers to analyse sample writing, to emphasize the characteristics of a form.

- I give my students a selection of endings for a story, and they must choose, and justify the one they think is the most effective. (There is no one right answer.)

Types of Writing

As writers, students need to explore different modes and forms of writing for a variety of purposes. Teachers need to provide explicit instruction that highlights the variety and range of forms at appropriate points in the writer's development. It is critical that students have ample opportunity to read and be read to across a wide range of forms and genres before they are expected to write in these forms.

The *Canadian Writers in Action Handbook* suggests four main types of prose—narrative writing, expository writing, descriptive writing, and persuasive writing.

Check It Out

Ray, Katie Wood, *The Writing Workshop: Working through the Hart Parts* (And They're All Hard Parts) (NCTE 2001).

Routman, Regie, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* (Heinemann 2005, pp. 174, 240, 244, 275).

Spandel, Vicki, *Creating Writers Through 6-Trait Writing* (Pearson 2005).

Spandel, Vicki, and Jeff Hicks, *Write Traits Classroom Kit, Grades 4, 5, and 6* (Houghton Mifflin [Thomson Nelson] 2004).

Trehearne, Miriam, et al. *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3–6 Teachers* (Thomson Nelson 2006, pp. 224–225, 230–231, 237, 303).

Type of Writing	Descriptors	Examples
Narrative writing tells a story	• has a beginning, middle, and end • one or more characters • a problem that needs to be solved • plot, characters, and setting	• novels • short stories • fairy tales • fables • diaries • biography • autobiography
Expository writing gives information or shows how	• has an introduction, body, and conclusion • a main idea • information that develops the main idea, such as facts, quotations, and statistics	• instructions • explanations • newspaper articles • reports
Descriptive writing uses words to create a clear picture of something in the reader's mind	• has strong words for specific details • words that appeal to different senses • an organized way of describing (e.g., most important)	• character profile • novels • short stories • poetry
Persuasive writing convinces the reader to agree with a point of view	• has an introduction, body, and conclusion • a main idea • strong arguments that support the main idea (facts and reasons) • appeal to reason and logic or to emotion	• reports • movie reviews • speeches • editorials • advertising • argument

The Role of Genre

Genre study is an integral part of a comprehensive literacy program. Genre is a French word meaning type or kind and refers to the ways in which texts may be classified and categorized. These characteristics are very helpful for students as they learn about audience and purpose and explore a variety of text types and structures. Learning about genre is equally important in both reading and writing.

Traditionally, literature is divided into prose and poetry, with prose being again divided into fiction and non-fiction genres. Students need explicit teaching to highlight the commonalities and contrasts between and among genres. As a part of a school-based reading and writing plan, teachers need to ensure that students are receiving explicit detailed instruction in a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction genres, while also revisiting previously taught forms. (See Appendix E: School-Based Planning and Appendix G: Sample Writing Plans)

There are many frames, organizers, and other resources that detail the characteristics of the most common genres. Resources such as *Mainsails* or *Power* magazines serve as mentor texts for students as they explore high-quality examples of the genre and learn about the characteristics particular to that genre.

> *Before we can teach our students how to write in a particular genre, we need to immerse them in the reading and writing of actual texts in that genre.*
>
> (Routman, *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating*, 2000)

Genre at a Glance

This list is not exhaustive but provides a quick reference to common genres. A more detailed chart is available at <www.heinemann.com/writingessentials>.

Fiction		
Code	**Genre**	**Definition**
TL	Traditional literature	Began with oral stories passed down through history. It includes folktales (including fairy tales), myths, legends, and epics.
F	Fantasy	Contains unrealistic or unworldly elements. It includes science fiction.
RF	Realistic fiction	Often focusses on universal human problems and issues. While coming from the writer's imagination it is true to life or realistic in content.

Fiction (continued)		
Code	Genre	Definition
HF	Historical fiction	A fictional account of events created by the author but true to life in some period of the past.
M	Mystery	Offers the reader suspense and wonder as the author reveals the plot and characters bit by bit. Central to this genre is the element of the unknown and clues provided by the author that help the reader solve the mystery.
A	Adventure	Provides the reader with the opportunity to explore circumstances where characters experience new situations, overcome adversity, and grow as individuals. Plot is often fast paced and exciting.

Non–Fiction		
Code	Genre	Definition
I	Informational	Provides information, facts, and principles related to physical, natural, or social topics or ideas.
E	Expository	Explains or provides direction.
B	Biographical	An account of an individual's life.
AB	Autobiographical	An account of the life of an individual written by that individual.
M	Memoir	Record of events based on the writer's observations. It may cover only one event or one aspect of an event.

Writing Instructional Components

A comprehensive literacy program includes the following components.

Modelled Writing

"Students need explicit instruction in the strategies that writers use when they draft and revise." (Anderson, *Assessing Writers*, 2005)

What Is It?

- A time when the teacher may compose, construct, or share text as students observe
- Provides the highest level of support to students

Key Descriptors

- Explicitly modelling forms and genres that are developmentally appropriate for students
- Frequent modelling and demonstration models the how and why of writing
- Making the writing process more visible
- Explicit modelling of the traits of writing

What Does It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Teacher thinks aloud to demonstrate process
- Teacher models various genres and forms (also through read-aloud and think-aloud)
- The exploration of mentor text, highlighting well-written pieces and discussing what makes them strong
- Mini-lessons based on assessment of student writing
- Among the focusses could be topic choice, specific genres or forms, or revision strategies
- Explicit think-aloud about process, form, craft, and correctness
- Examples of modelled writing texts include
  - response
  - reports
  - leads
  - poetry
  - endings
  - narrowing a topic

Check It Out

Atwell, Nancie, *In the Middle: New Understanding about Writing, Reading, and Learning,* 2nd ed. (Heinemann 1998, pp. 331–369).

Atwell, Nancie, *Lessons That Change Writers* (Heinemann 2002).

Fountas, Irene C., and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2001, pp. 5–6, 181, 390–408).

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 1998).

Raison, Glenda, Judith Rivalland, and Beverly Derewianka, *First Steps Writing Resource Book* (Heinemann 1994).

Rog, Lori Jamison, and Paul Kropp, *The Write Genre: Classroom Activities and Mini-Lessons That Promote Writing with Clarity, Style and Occasional Flashes of Brilliance* (Pembroke 2004).

Routman, Regie, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* (Heinemann 2005, pp. 190–197).

Students who are weak in organization, structure, or form are often strong in ideas. Their participation in shared experiences validates their strengths in front of their peers and builds confidence.

What Do We Need?

- A clear focus for the writing
- A variety of text to serve as **mentor texts** (see reading/writing connections)
- Anchor charts to support forms and genres
- Comfortable meeting space for whole-group work

Questions for Teachers

- What is my instructional focus for choosing this context?
- Do students understand the instructional focus?
- What did I learn about my students?
- Do I need to revisit this concept?
- What instructional purpose will I make of the text I have created or selected?
- Is there a good balance of fiction and non-fiction and a range of genres and forms?

Shared Writing

What Is It?

- One step between modelled writing and independent writing
- Provides deliberate and purposeful opportunities for teaching about the way written language works
- Provides support and engagement for all writers in a safe, comfortable learning community

Key Descriptors

- Creates readable text that can be used again
- Students help to compose the text
- Teacher acts as scribe and often thinks aloud to demonstrate the process to the students
- Teacher shapes students' language and engages them in planning so the text is accessible to the group as readers
- Enhances the reading/writing connection through frequent rereading of shared pieces

What Does It Look Like in a Classroom?

- The teacher is often doing most of the work
- Can also be a shared experience for a pair, triad, or small group of students
- Can take place with a partner or in a small group
- Groups may create and then pass on a piece to add on
- Purposeful conversation
- Teacher and students work together to discuss and then to compose a common text
- Supportive way to write in a new genre or use a new strategy before working alone
- Teacher displays the writing to the group (whole class or small group)
- Students sit close together to explore a shared text
- Exemplars created jointly are posted around the room

What Do We Need?

- Chart paper, whiteboard or chalkboard, or overhead transparency
- Assessment to inform the instructional focus
- Comfortable meeting space
- A plan for the lesson focus

Check It Out

Calkins, Lucy McCormick, *The Art of Teaching Writing* (Heinemann 1994, pp. 193–219).

Fletcher, Ralph, and Joann Portalupi, *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K–8* (Stenhouse 1998).

Heard, Georgia, *The Revision Toolkit: Teaching Techniques That Work* (Heinemann 2002).

Portalupi, Joann, and Ralph Fletcher, *Teaching the Qualities of Writing* (Heinemann 2004).

Routman, Regie, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* (Heinemann 2005, pp. 180–181, 332–333, 148).

Vignette

After much discussion and support, my students were asked to write the lead paragraph of a story. They then passed the work to the next person in their group who read the beginning and wrote the middle of the story. The third person in the group was responsible for the ending. The piece was then returned to the first writer who could present it to the class.

The students found this helpful in defining the beginning, middle, and end of a story and loved writing pieces in conjunction with others. This shared experience was one of the most exciting writing activities I have done with my students in quite some time.

~ Grade 6 teacher

" *Guided writing is not parallel to guided reading ... I do use small guided writing groups when I am teaching something like summary writing, questioning for literature discussion, or reciprocal teaching ... guided practice takes place during daily sustained whole class writing.* "

(Routman, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching*, 2005)

Vignette

I do not have guided writing groups, nor do I schedule guided writing as part of my timetable. I use this context when I see small groups of students who have similar needs. Our class was working on writing various forms of information text. Several students were struggling with the sequencing of chronology. Instead of reteaching the lesson to the entire class I pulled the three or four students together who needed the extra support. We spent time learning how to organize text in a timeline. This was a much more efficient use of my time and theirs.

~ Grade 6 teacher

Questions for Teachers

- What is my instructional focus for choosing this context?
- How do I know that the students understand the instructional focus?
- Is there opportunity over time for many students to be involved in the process?
- Do we reread until students are comfortable with the text we have created?
- Where do I post the text and what instructional use do I make of it?

Guided Writing (Small–Group Instruction)

What Is It?

- A step between modelled writing and independent writing
- A practice piece (See Gradual Release of Responsibility p. 12).
- A small group of students with common needs brought together with a specific instructional focus
- An opportunity for students to practise a specific skill, strategy, or technique

Key Descriptors

- Small temporary groups, based on need as identified through observation and assessment
- Often based on large-group focus
- Demonstration and practice leading to independent application of writing skills, strategies, writing in different genres
- Expectation that students can, with support, write successfully
- Flows from modelled and shared practice
- In addition to being a source of support for students who struggle, it also provides an opportunity for enrichment and support for more-proficient writers

What Does It Look Like in a Classroom?

- It is a mini-lesson or group demonstration of an identified concept, skill, strategy, or technique
- The teacher provides support/instruction on a strategy or feature to be highlighted
- The student writes independently, within the small group confines, as the teacher provides feedback
- Discussion centres around the focus and the student's practice of the strategy or use of the feature
- Groups are flexible

What Do We Need?

- A deliberate plan for assessing individual student needs
- A management system that allows the teacher freedom to meet with groups and individuals while other students are purposefully engaged (a strong independent writing component)
- System for keeping a record of individual student progress as well as the composition of the groups over time

Questions for Teachers

- What is my instructional focus for choosing this context?
- Do the students understand the instructional focus?
- Are the students able to understand the writing task with little support?
- What did I learn about the student?
- Where will I go next?
- What students require more support?
- Who has demonstrated independence?

Vignette

Publication Routines

1. At the beginning of the year, I try to involve students and their parents in the writing process. I introduce writing to the parents through orientation evening, communication letters, and the *Canadian Writers in Action Handbook.* I explicitly teach students and parents how to revise and edit together and how this should look. **2.** Students are asked to write a rough copy, doubled spaced so they are able to make revisions and edits on their own work. They also use an editing and proofreading checklist that I have created for them. **3.** Confer with teacher. **4.** Final copy after conferring must be typed with a rough copy and editing sheet attached. **5.** Pass in the "Final Copy Basket."

~ Grade 4 teacher

" *Daily writing is as important as daily reading. It is difficult to conceptualize and finish a piece that has been left unattended for many days. Writing is a daily activity, not a series of isolated assignments.* "

(Fountas and Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6),* 2001).

> "Today, I want us to work on writing a summary. Does anyone know what I mean by that?"
>
> "I know!" said one grade 4 student, "A summary is a faster copy of the book."

Shared Responsibility for Independent Writing Time

Early in the year, I noticed a hum of activity during our independent writing time, and some of the students were already complaining that the noise was distracting to them. I called the class together and started off by talking about my own needs as a writer and then asked the students for their thoughts on the problem of a noisy classroom. Their concerns were charted according to those that were individual responsibility and those that some adjustment to the management routines in the classroom would address.

The students told me that one major distraction was my calling the names of students for conferences. Students also noted that the questions and comments of others beside them talking about their writing was a problem.

Change occurred immediately. Students agreed to take more responsibility during independent writing time. I agreed to walk over to students and signal them when I needed to meet with them. (Later we developed a sign-up system.)

We revisit the problem regularly in our group share. I also posted the students' suggestions for a quiet classroom, and we refer to them often.

~ Grade 4 teacher

Independent Writing

What Is It?

- A focussed block of time during Writing Workshop or structured writing time when students practise skills and strategies on their own
- The foundation on which small-group instruction and time for assessment rely

Key Descriptors

- Scaffolded support has been provided through demonstration and shared and guided practice
- Choice plays a large role in writer's direction and commitment
- Students compose and construct at their own level
- It provides opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in other reading/writing contexts
- It provides daily blocks of time for writing instruction and practice

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Might begin with a mini-lesson
- Students engaged in writing a variety of forms and genres during the year
- Authentic writing in a purposeful setting
- Absence of commercial and superficial worksheets
- Students in all stages of the writing process
- Variety of groupings
- More conventional spelling, less temporary spelling as evidence of an effective word study program
- Evidence of awareness of the traits of writing
- Peer supported and teacher support through individual and small-group conferences
- Technology for word processing
- Teacher conferring with students in groups or individually
- A clear ritual for publication

What Do We Need?

- Regular scheduled time for writing
- A plan for assessment and a method of recording student progress
- Interactive word wall to support spelling
- Anchor charts supporting text types, features, traits, and the writing process
- Reference library of writing resources accessible to students (thesauri, dictionaries across a range of levels)
- Storage for student work (portfolios, folders, files)
- Tools: markers, paper, staplers (see Organizing for Writing Instruction, p. 11)

Questions for Teachers

- How does my management system support and enable small-group and individual instruction and assessment?
- Which mentor texts will support the work/context?
- Which mini-lessons will support the students' understanding of form and genre?
- What is my instructional focus for choosing this context?
- How do I help the students to understand the instructional focus?
- How do I help my students make use of the anchor charts and word wall supports, interactively and regularly?
- How do I help the students learn to identify their stronger pieces of writing and give evidence for their choice?
- How do I help the students build strong reading connections to the form or genre I expect them to write?
- What sort of feedback/response can I give students to move them ahead with their writing?
- How will I monitor ongoing progress?
- How long should I plan to spend on this focus?

Check It Out

Atwell, Nancie, *In the Middle: New Understanding about Writing, Reading, and Learning,* **2nd ed. (Heinemann 1998).**

Calkins, Lucy McCormick, *The Art of Teaching Writing* **(Heinemann 1994).**

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* **(Heinemann 2001, pp. 19–20, 50–51, 82–86).**

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* **(Province of Nova Scotia 1998).**

Ray, Katie Wood, with Lester Laminack, *The Writing Workshop (Working through the Hard Parts and They're All Hard Parts)* **(National Council of Teachers of English 2001).**

Routman, Regie, W*riting Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* **(Heinemann 2005).**

In relation to word study, advanced readers are known to demonstrate these traits:

- use phonological and visual information to solve complex, multi-syllabic words
- are able to solve words more rapidly, without conscious thought
- are adept at breaking down words and using phoneme-grapheme (sound/symbol) relationships
- have had time to learn more words
- attend to a wide variety of visual features

Word Study

Word study is the core of the reading/writing program. It is the comprehensive study of words by exploring word meanings, history, usage, and patterns. It needs to be an integral part of the child's reading and writing balanced literacy approach. While many students in grades 4–6 can decode or pronounce words, other still struggle. Comprehension, however, goes far beyond the accuracy of decoding. While words are the foundation of reading, thinking must go well beyond the word level.

What Is It?

- Active exploration of word meanings, history, usage, patterns
- A developmental study, which reinforces the importance of "instructional level" of a good fit between the reader and the text

The most important aspect of word solving is that we learn more while doing it. (Fountas and Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6)*, 2001)

Key Descriptors

- Can be in the context of reading or writing
- Active, hands-on
- Moves beyond the passive "spelling ritual" of assigning on Monday and testing on Friday

What Does It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Embedded within the components of a comprehensive literacy program
  - explicit teaching of word patterns, analogy, and usage in the context of real reading and writing
  - direct teaching about how words look and sound and what they mean
  - opportunities to encounter and notice words in a variety of meaningful contexts
  - opportunities to use what the students know in authentic writing experiences
- Connecting new words with known words

- Wall charts and interactive word walls
- Pocket charts
- Spelling through analogy
- Word webs

What Do We Need?

- In-depth understanding of how words work
- Space for word walls
- Time deliberately set aside for word wall practice and other word study activities across the curriculum
- Ample time for writing, so students can practise and understand the connection between word study and real writing
- Resources such as *Making Words*, and *Making Big Words* (Cunningham and Hall)

What Do Students Need to Be Good Word Solvers?

- Knowledge of an ever-increasing core of words
- Knowledge of patterns that occur in words
- Knowledge of strategies for solving words

Questions for Teachers

- What is my instructional focus for the lesson?
- Do the students understand the instructional focus?
- Is word study embedded within the larger context of real reading and purposeful writing?
- What have I learned about my students as word solvers?
- How am I teaching for the following:
  – strategies for word solving
  – word analysis—whole words, syllabication
  – word patterns
  – constructing words in writing
  – vocabulary—learning the meaning of words

Check It Out

Bear, Donald, Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, and Francine Johnston, *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction,* **4th ed. (Prentice Hall 2004).**

Cunningham, Patricia, and Dorothy Hall, *Making Words* **(Good Apple Publishing 1994).**

Cunningham, Patricia and Dorothy Hall, *Making Big Words* **(Good Apple Publishing 1997).**

Cunningham, Patricia, and Dorothy Hall, *Month by Month Phonics for the Upper Elementary Grades* **(Carlson Dellosa Publishing 1998).**

Fountas, Irene C., and Gay Su Pinnell, *Voices on Word Matters: Learning about Phonics and Spelling in the Literacy Classroom* **(Heinemann 1999).**

Fountas, Irene C. and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* **(Heinemann 2001, pp. 15, 26–38, 369–388).**

Gentry, R., *The Science of Spelling: The Explicit Specifics That Make Great Readers and Writers (and Spellers!)* **(Heinemann 2004).**

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* **(Province of Nova Scotia 1998, pp. 150–152).**

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Writers in Action 4: A Teaching Resource* **(Province of Nova Scotia 2007).**

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Writers in Action 5: A Teaching Resource* **(Province of Nova Scotia 2007).**

Sampler of Activities in an Active Word Study Program

- Making Words
- Word sorts (spelling, concept, auditory sorts)
- Word webs
- Graphic organizers
- Analysing semantic features

Media Literacy

Our students are inundated every day by a steady stream of sound, text, and images. Many elementary students spend almost as much time each day in front of a TV, video game, or computer as they spend in school. Researchers are concerned that young students may not be able to handle what they are seeing and hearing. Media literacy creates an awareness of how media messages are constructed, achieve their purpose, and influence a target audience.

What Is It?

- The ability to understand how mass media (such as TV, radio, and magazines) work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized, and how to use them wisely
- The ability to access, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of ways
- Another way to critically examine the world

Key Descriptors

- Grounded in relation to intended audience, purpose, and writer bias
- Explicitly taught
- Uses relevant examples
- Combines reading media text with writing media text
- Built around analysing and critiquing
- Varied media (print, electronic)

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Critical examination of a variety of text (posters, print, TV, computer advertisements, photos, video games, newspapers, web pages)
- Mentor texts
- Genre study (news writing, persuasive writing, advertisements)
- Teacher modelling
- Use of key questions (see sidebar)
- Whole-group, small-group, and partner conversations
- Examining media text for point of view and bias
- Creating research opportunities to prove or disprove advertising claims

What Do We Need?

- Examples of print text including books, magazines, advertisements, newspapers
- Examples of electronic text (including news articles, ads, e-zines)
- Internet access

Teaching Ideas

- Consider the link with reading and writing persuasive text. Who is being persuaded and how? How could student writers persuade their audience?
- Create an ad promoting an historical figure or inventor as a person of the year.
- Examine truth in advertising by looking at such products as beverages claiming to be juice, but containing only 10 percent real juice.
- Create, compare, or analyse opinion pieces/editorials or commentaries.
- Examine the varied ways in which a country could be portrayed (photos of a "civilized' Africa as compared to the Africa of The Lion King or Tarzan)
- Make a video and discuss how it might influence others if certain statements are included or omitted.
- Sort ads by topic, gender, race, and age. Discuss the findings.
- Discuss how families are portrayed in ads and TV shows. Are there racial differences? Other differences?
- What messages do the media send about how we should look?
- Compare a TV show or movie based on a book with the actual book. Are there differences? Why might this be?

Check It Out

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Writers in Action 6: A Teaching Resource* **(Province of Nova Scotia 2007).**

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Spelling P–9: A Teaching Resource* **(Province of Nova Scotia 2007).**

Pinnell, Gay Su, and Irene Fountas, *Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom* **(Heinemann 1998).**

Scott, Ruth McQuirter, and Sharon Siamon, *Spelling: Connecting the Pieces* **(Thomson Nelson [Gage] 2004).**

Scott, Ruth, *The Student Editor's Guide to Words* **(Gage Publishing 1991).**

Snowball, Diane, and Fay Bolton, *Spelling K–8: Planning and Teaching* **(Stenhouse 1999).**

Strickland, Dorothy, Kathy Ganske, Joanne K. Monroe, *Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers: Strategies for Classroom Intervention 3–6* **(Stenhouse 2002, pp. 89–119).**

Phenix, Jo, *The Spelling Teacher's Handbook* **(Pembroke 2001).**

Key Questions
- Who created this message?
- What techniques are used to get our attention?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What point of view is present or absent?
- How is the message being sent?
- What is the purpose of the message?
- How might other people interpret the message differently from the way I do?
- In whose best interest is it that I believe this?

Booth, David, and Judith Dubé, *Writing Sense 4–7* (Harcourt Brace and Co. 1998).

Heard, Georgia, *The Revision Toolbox: Teaching Techniques That Work* (Heinemann 2002).

McMackin, Mary, and Barbara S. Siegel, *Knowing How: Researching and Writing Nonfiction, 3–8* (Stenhouse 2002).

Booth, David, *Media Sense 4, 5, and 6* [Meadowbooks Series] (Thompson Nelson 1998).

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 1998, pp. 184–185).

Portalupi, JoAnn, and Ralph Fletcher, *Nonfiction Craft Lessons: Teaching Information Writing K–8* (Stenhouse 2001).

Steinberg, Evelyn, Canadian *Writers in Action Handbook* (Gage 2003).

Aspects of Media
- Media construct reality by reporting observation and experiences with attitudes and interpretations.
- Audiences negotiate meaning as they interact in a variety of ways based on a variety of factors (age, gender, experience, background).

- Have students count the ads they see and hear for a whole day. Chart them and decide what is advertising and what is not? Create a definition for advertising.
- Consider certain types of ads shown at certain points in the day.
- Create a social marketing promotional message for healthy eating, recycling, physical activity, or non-smoking.
- Ask students to evaluate the credibility of sources.
- Create a classroom or school newsletter, either in print hard copy or on the website.
- In math, help students discover that the same set of data can be represented differently to emphasize a particular message.
- Compare the ratio of advertising in newspapers or magazines to that of TV broadcasts or Internet.
- Conduct experiments to see if advertised claims made by various products are true.
- Create a product and devise a target audience and a marketing strategy.
- Focus on one event and have students compare how the issue is presented in a number of articles and TV broadcasts.
- Write classified ads trying to sell something. Discuss word choice and significant information.

Questions for Teachers

- How does what I am teaching deepen my students' understanding?
- Am I embedding media literacy where appropriate across a range of curriculum areas?
- Does my media literacy instruction include both analysis and production?
- Are my students more aware of the role the media play in their lives?
- What have they learned that they didn't know before, either in literacy or in the content areas? Is this learning purposeful and developmentally appropriate?
- Are the learning opportunities and examples authentic, relevant, and purposeful?
- How do I know my students are viewing the media more critically?

Assessment in Grades 4–6

Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting

Assessment and evaluation are essential components of teaching and learning.

Assessment is the process of gathering information on student learning.

Evaluation is the process of analysing, reflecting upon, and summarizing assessment information and making judgments and/or decisions based on the information collected.

Reporting involves communicating the summary and interpretation of information about student learning to various audiences who require it.

Principles of Assessment and Evaluation

- The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to inform teaching and to promote and encourage learning.
- Assessment and evaluation must be an ongoing and integral part of the teaching/learning process. It is one continuous cycle consisting of collecting data, interpreting data, providing feedback to students, and making instructional decisions.
- Assessment and evaluation must be consistent with beliefs about curriculum and classroom practices.
- Assessment and evaluation processes involve the use of multiple sources of information collected in a variety of contexts. In order to make decisions about any aspects of a student's learning, the teacher gathers evidence of that learning at different times, in different contexts, and in different ways.
- Assessment and evaluation processes recognize learners as active partners in their own learning. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own growth, considering progress, strengths and needs, and goals.

(Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Active Young Readers, Grades 4–6: Assessment Resource*, Province of Nova Scotia, 1998, p. 13)

Large-Scale and Classroom-Based Assessment

	Purpose	Method
Classroom Assessment (constant, ongoing, using a variety of tools and products, observation, and conversation)	• to help the teacher design specific daily instruction • to help the students understand their own learning strengths and needs • to provide useful feedback to individuals so the individual can learn • to provide the feedback teachers need to determine areas requiring intervention and support	• collects a large amount of information from a small number of students
Large-scale Assessment Individual student and program assessments, externally managed in accordance with rigorous ethical guidelines	• to help the system be accountable to all stakeholders • to identify system-wide trends and patterns • to provide information about the effectiveness of curriculum delivery • to provide information about the performance of individual students to students, parents, and teachers	• collects a relatively limited amount of valid and reliable information from a large number of students

Assessment *for*, *of*, and *as* Learning

	What is it?	What does it look like?	What is the information used for?
Assessment **for** learning	• goes beyond formative assessment • happens in classroom context	• helps to decide what to do next • involves specific descriptive feedback in relation to criteria • focusses on improvement • involves the student	• next teaching and learning steps
Assessment **of** learning	• resembles traditional summative assessment or evaluation	• checks what has been learned to date • provides evaluative feedback including marks, grades, scores • compares the student's learning with the expected grade level outcomes	• to communicate progress toward expected learning outcomes • to report on student learning • to gather system data • to identify trends and patterns
Assessment **as** learning	• uses assessment and evaluation to improve and extend student learning by the students themselves through student examination	• student self-assessment • students personally monitoring what they are learning and using the feedback to make adjustments and changes in what they understand • students asking reflective questions and considering a range of strategies for learning • students having self-monitoring skills to realize when they don't understand and having ways to decide what to do about it	• learning takes place through the actual assessment process itself • information helps students to recognize their learning strengths and needs and to identify ways they can further develop as learners

Vignette

Descriptive Feedback

Many educators speak to the value of descriptive feedback when responding to students. Most of us would agree that specific comments that support and guide students truly help them develop as readers and writers. Making a point to provide descriptive feedback benefits our teaching as well. It forces us to become more knowledgeable about the various skills and strategies required to be successful readers and writers. By being able to talk about a specific trait of writing or skill of reading, we are more able to tune into specific areas in need of further support without overlooking areas of strength or relative strength.

It's important to remember that a writer can be weak in his or her use of conventions but strong in ideas and that a reader can be weak in immediate word recognition but strong in comprehension. Dedicating ourselves to giving descriptive feedback allows us to see the pieces that make the whole and acknowledge a student's strengths and successes as well as targeting the needs.

~ Resource teacher

Feedback

There are two types of feedback—descriptive and evaluative.

Descriptive feedback tells students about their learning—what is going well and what needs more attention. Descriptive feedback

- comes during, as well as after, the learning
- is easily understood and relates directly to the learning
- is specific, so performance can improve
- involves choice on the part of the learner as to the type of feedback and how to receive it
- is part of an ongoing conversation about the learning
- is in comparison to models, exemplars, samples, or descriptions
- is about the performance or the work—not the person

(Davies, *Making Classroom Assessment Work*, p. 13)

Descriptive feedback often begins with a phrase such as "I like the way you …" naming a specific action or product from the student.

Evaluative feedback tells the student how he or she has performed and often uses letters, numbers, check marks, or other symbols. While it may tell students that they need to improve, it does not let the students know what they must do to improve. Evaluative feedback sometimes involves stickers, or comments such as "good" or "keep trying."

Researchers recommend that the amount of evaluative feedback be reduced and the amount of descriptive feedback be significantly increased.

Gathering Data

Interpreting Data

Using Data/ Information
a) to inform instruction
b) to report
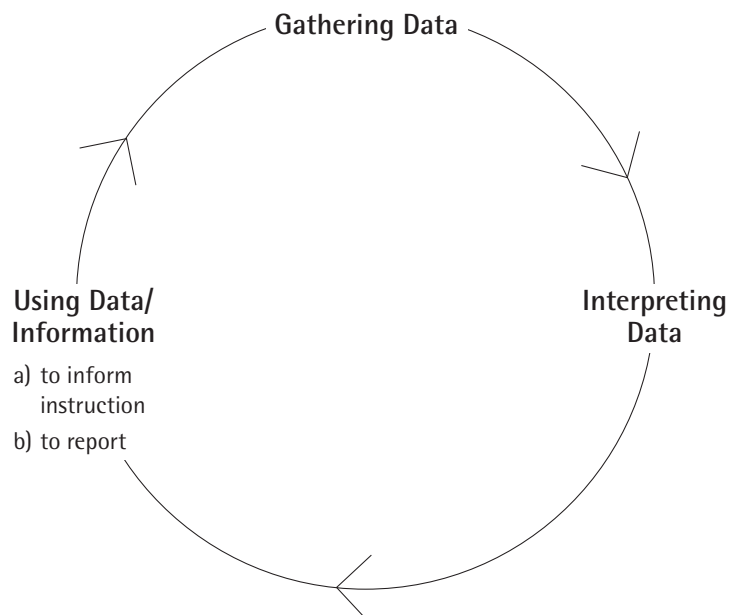
Gathering Data

What Is It?

- Collecting data from multiple sources of information in a variety of contexts

Key Descriptors

- Frequent
- Ongoing
- Focussed on what the student knows and is able to do
- Informed instruction
- Varied

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Interviews and conferences managed by the teacher while other students are working on other tasks
- Teacher conferring, formally or informally, with groups or individuals
- Clear expectations communicated to the students
- Focussed observations
- Work samples
- Conferences
- Records of oral reading
- Rubrics posted for student use
- Self-assessment
- Surveys and inventories

What Do We Need?

- A system for managing the data
- Index cards, chart on clipboard, scribbler or folder organized by student; assessment binder
- A deliberate plan to meet regularly with each student
- *Active Young Readers, Grades 4–6: Assessment Resource* and other reading assessment tools
- Writing exemplars and rubrics
- *Write Traits* kit and other writing assessment tools

Questions for Teachers

- Is there a clear focus for assessment?
- Has this focus been shared with the student(s)?
- What have I learned about the student through this process?
- Do I see indication that my instruction has been helpful?
- How often have I met with this student?
- Do I have a variety of work samples?
- Do I have a number of records of oral reading?
- Have I noted strengths as well as needs?
- How often have I conferred with this student about his or her writing?
- Have I asked the student to describe his or her own progress?

Vignette

Keeping Track

I have struggled through a variety of premade record-keeping forms, plus scribblers and other suggested formats. My systems are always evolving and getting better. I think the important thing is that I am doing it.

~ Grade 5 teacher

Vignette

Sticky Notes and Assessment

Every year I try new ways to control the collection of data on my students. Every year I go back to the sticky note method as it is the easiest to use during any component of the literacy program and easy to store in assessment scribblers. I simply write the student's name, the date, and my observations on the note. Sometimes while circulating during independent reading, I stick several notes on a clipboard and make sure I talk to specific students about their reading. At other times I leave these notes on a page in my plan book for easy access, especially if I am following up on a specific strategy. I still try new things ... and then go back to my stickies.

~ Grade 4 teacher

Conversations

Observations   Products

Interpreting Data

What Is It?

- Using what we have collected to make decisions about instruction and reporting
- Looking for patterns and trends in the class as well as in individual students
- Looking for strengths and needs
- Reflecting on information to evaluate effectiveness of instructional approaches

Key Descriptors

- Valuing process as well as product
- Analysing records of oral reading and other data beyond the numbers
- Completing and analysing summary sheets
- Tracking data over time
- Learning from errors

Maximizing Conference Time

After attending "Write Genre" workshops with Paul Kropp and Lori Jamison, I realized it is impossible to conference every single piece of writing for every student. I often choose to conference with those students who I feel are having the most difficulty, keeping in mind that the good writers require feedback as well. I ask questions that will prompt students to get a better understanding of how they could change their writing to improve it. At the end of the conference, I give advice, and students must write how they could improve this piece of writing.

I teach my students how to conference with each other, and I circulate as they are conferencing. When students are conferring with one another, I ask that the piece of writing is read aloud. Students tend to find sharing their writing out loud allows them to see where revisions should be made before the conference sheet is actually completed.

I photocopy my conference sheets so I can insert them in my assessment binder for further reference. The original copy is attached to the student's writing so the student can refer to the advice given for the next piece of writing.

One student wrote about visiting Norway one summer and visiting a waterfall.

Questions:
- When did you go to Norway?
- Who went with you?
- Where and why did you visit this particular waterfall?
- Can you tell me more about the setting of this lovely place?

This was something I really liked in her writing.

At the end of the conference, we discussed paragraph formation and how she could improve this particular piece of writing by telling me more about the setting, who went with her, etc.

~ Grade 6 teacher

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Summarizing key points with students during a conference ("I like the way you did these three things. Now I need you to work on …")
- Descriptive feedback—"I noticed you did this," "I liked the way you wrote …"
- Small-group instruction based on a need defined through interpretation of assessment data
- Whole-group instruction based on a need defined through assessment data
- Students discussing their own strengths and needs in appropriate language
- Leads to student self-assessment
- Procedures that yield accurate and informative representation of a student's performance in relation to curriculum outcomes for the reporting period

What Do We Need?

- A wide range of assessment data
- A system to manage, organize, and interpret the data
- Frequent interaction with students focussing on progress in specific terms
- Clear exemplars
- Clear goals tailored to each student's strengths and needs and communicated to the student
- Active participation by and with the student

Questions for Teachers

- Do I have a clear purpose for each assessment tool I use?
- What am I doing with the data I am collecting?
- What patterns and trends do I notice?
- How is my analysis of the data changing my instruction for my class, for small groups, and for individuals?
- Do I clearly communicate my findings to the students?
- Do I help them set reasonable goals for practising skills and strategies?
- Am I building in opportunities for students to analyse their own progress?

Reporting the Data

What Is It?

- Communicating the information gathered from assessment and evaluation to everyone involved in the process
- Includes reporting to parents, other teachers, and the students themselves
- May include student reporting to teacher and parent

Key Descriptors

- Audience—accessible form and language
- Positive and constructive tone
- Traditionally in report card format
- Traditionally a teacher-to-parent communication
- May also be a student-to-parent communication
- May also be a teacher-to-student communication

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Assessment used to design instruction is evident in practice and conversation
- Report cards including relevant and constructive data about student achievement
- Notes or phone calls home
- Based on triangulated evidence (observations, conversations, product)
- Class newsletters
- Student self-assessment, in written or illustrated forms
- Parent-teacher/open house format
- Student-led conferences
- Parent-teacher conferences

What Do We Need?

- Assessment data from multiple sources
- Frequent evaluation of the data
- Use of the data to make instructional decisions
- Clear descriptors of the student's progress and learning needs

I decided to give my grade 4 students more responsibility in reporting their learning to parents. During the first parent–teacher visitation of the year, the students were responsible for explaining our English language arts program. After modelling the process and having students involved in role-playing activities, they were ready.

I thoroughly enjoyed watching my students interacting with their parents and so "professionally" describing the components of our program. Parents had a prompting sheet of questions if students needed prompting. All of the parents commented on their evaluation sheets about how much they enjoyed the evening and the reporting of data too!

This not only helped in my assessment of my students' understanding, but also informed parents as to what English language arts "looked like" in our grade 4 classroom, opening the door to better communication.

~ Grade 4 teacher

Questions for Teachers

- In what varied ways do I report to parents?

- How often and in what ways do I involve the student?

- What role does student self-assessment play in my room?

- What can the student do now that he or she could not do at the time of the last report?

- What has the student learned in the various language processes?

- What areas need attention in the next stage of the student's development?

- What are the future language and learning goals for the student?

- What can be done at home to facilitate language development, and how can I communicate that?

Using Data and Information to Inform Instruction

"The whole purpose of assessment is to find out what children do well and what we need to teach them." (Taberski, *On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching K–3*, 2000)

What Is It?

- Making adjustments to teaching as a result of gathering and analysing student data

- The primary purpose of the evaluation process

- Using assessment for learning, rather than assessment of learning

- Placing assessment within the learning cycle, not just at the end

Key Descriptors

- Carefully planned instructional contexts:
  - whole group
  - small group (shared and guided experiences)
  - individual instruction
- Assessment embedded in the instruction process (e.g., conferring within a reading or writing workshop)
- Instruction tailored to individual and group needs, based on real evidence and documentation
- Sharing the data with students

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Whole-class focus on a specific strategy or issue (comprehension)
- Whole-class focus on a trait or topic in writing
- Scaffolded support for all students (See Gradual Release of Responsibility, p. 12)
- Ample opportunity for guided practice (shared and guided experiences) before expectation of independence
- Students reading books they can really read during guided practice and independent practice time
- Students spending the bulk of the writing workshop working on authentic writing tasks, based on careful analysis of student needs and student commitment to particular pieces
- Teacher working with small groups and individuals, while other students are reading or writing for authentic purposes
- Teacher making anecdotal notes, recording conference data in deliberate and systematic form

What Do We Need?

- An in-depth profile of each student's strengths and needs based on strong assessment and evaluation data
- A classroom environment supportive of all learners
- An understanding of balanced literacy and a comprehensive literacy program
- Students actively participating in the process
- A management system for data
- Clear rules and expectations for procedures
- A classroom library containing a wide variety of text for many interests and abilities (see pp. 4–6)
- A variety of writing tools (e.g., pencils, pens, markers, highlighters, sticky notes)
- Posted rubrics, anchor charts, and other visual supports created with students

Vignette

In order to focus on non-fiction and recording students' learning, I developed a series of mini-lessons associated with specific non-fiction texts such as the *Guinness Book of Records.* During shared reading, we would begin with a specific response depending on the layout of the text. On Non-fiction Fridays students used books from a special non-fiction basket as well as their own texts. Specific responses taught in mini-lessons went along with the special texts, and a generic response accompanied all other texts. Discussions arising from this activity helped inform my instructional decisions of the features and structure of non-fiction text.

~ Grade 4 teacher

> "Students can reach any target they know about and that holds still for them."
>
> (Stiggins, *Student-Centered Classroom Assessment,* 2nd ed., 1997)

> "The more the child is able to do on his or her own, the more learning takes place."
>
> (Routman, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching,* 2005)

Vignette

Learning through Reflection

I have to make myself do reflection time at the end of Reading or Writing Workshop. I often hate to interrupt the flow and yet, once we assemble and begin our conversations, I learn so much. I often ask kids to share what they are working on, to read a bit, or to talk about how they solved a problem.

I also need to model all these things for myself. I talk about my reading and writing and think out loud as I read and write. This helps the kids see that reading and writing are messy and not perfect. It also gives them some common language to discuss reading and writing.

~ Grade 6 teacher

Questions for Teachers

- Do I know my students well enough to make instructional decisions?
- What information am I using to make instructional decisions?
- Do I meet with all my students on a regular basis?
- Do I share what I discover with them so they can learn about their own learning?
- Have I taught a variety of instructional and organizational mini-lessons to support the classroom community?
- Am I making the optimum use of my instructional time?
- Am I linking reading and writing wherever possible?
- Am I making deliberate choices for read-aloud and shared experiences to support my overall focus?
- Do students understand the instructional focus?
- Am I using all the data I collect? If not, why am I collecting it?
- Do I need more information about my students?

Student Self-Assessment

What Is It?

The process of involving the student in the assessment process. When students understand themselves as learners and have clear goals and expectations, they are more engaged and better able to analyse their needs and strengths.

Key Descriptors

- Contextual
- Based in conversations, observations, and products
- Clear expectations modelled
- Explicit teaching
- Shared goal setting
- Guided practice of self-assessment strategies and expectations
- Common language
- Lots of purposeful talk and reflection, whole-class, small-group, and individual formats
- Giving them the language to understand themselves as learners

What Might It Look Like in a Classroom?

- Student-friendly rubrics
- Students involved in setting criteria
- Anchor charts for reading and writing, posted and referred to
- Frequent and regular reflection time
- Portfolios
- Charts brainstormed with the class on "What does a good reader do?" "What does a good writer do?"
- Interviews and attitude surveys
- Conferring
- Student record keeping in reading and writing

What Do We Need?

- Scheduled reflection and sharing time
- Regular conferences
- Frequent conversations with students about process as well as product
- Open-ended interview surveys

Questions for Teachers

- Does what I am teaching deepen my students' understanding?
- How do I create goals that reflect individual student development?
- Do I model and demonstrate the process for conferring?
- How do I share the goal setting with my students?
- Are the goals clear? Can the student articulate the goals?
- How am I helping my students to develop a common language that helps them understand themselves as readers and writers?
- How do I help my students transfer what they observe in their writing to their broader understanding of themselves as writers?
- What types of opportunities do I give my students to reflect on their progress? (Journals, portfolios, surveys, conversations)
- Are the learning opportunities authentic and purposeful?
- How am I revisiting and reinforcing their ideas?

Check It Out

Davies, Anne, *Making Classroom Assessment Work* **(Connections Publishing 2000).**

Fountas, Irene C., and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3–6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* **(Heinemann 2001, Appendices 5–7, 12–14, 46–47, 52, 53).**

Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* **(Heinemann 2003 p. 113).**

Routman, Regie, *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* **(Heinemann 2005 pp. 250–255).**

Stiggins, Richard, *Student-Centered Classroom Assessment,* **2nd ed. (Merrill Publishing 1997).**

Strickland, Dorothy, Kathy Ganske, and Joanne K. Monroe, *Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers: Strategies for Classroom Intervention 3–6* **(Stenhouse 2002 p. 199).**

Assessment in Reading

The purposes of assessment in reading are to help students expand their reading abilities and to help teachers provide effective instruction for each student.

Classroom-based assessment of student progress in reading takes place every day in a variety of ways. To effectively assess their students in reading, teachers need to

- understand their students as readers
- understand and use effective assessment tools
- use their assessments to design effective instruction
- have an awareness of strategies that help students develop as readers

Both the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* and the *Active Young Readers, Grade 4–6: Assessment Resource* provide substantial and detailed support for teachers in the assessment of reading.

Key messages in classroom-based reading assessment:

1. Teachers must understand the reading process and the stages of reading development (p. 27).

2. Teachers must help students become aware of the supports and challenges in text.

3. Teachers must use a wide range of assessment tools to gather information about their students.

4. Students must understand themselves as readers.

5. Assessment must be frequent and built into daily experiences, rather than added on close to reporting time.

6. Effective assessment includes conversations with students, observations (formal and informal), as well as product.

A wide range of assessment tools are available.

Assessment Tools	What is Being Assessed	How to Assess
Observation	• attitude • strategy use • work ethic • interest and engagement	• anecdotal records • checklists • rubrics
Conferences/Conversations	• accuracy • fluency • comprehension • strategy use • attitudes • interests	• retelling (assisted/unassisted) • response • oral reading records • questioning (multilevel) • anecdotal records • checklists
Work Samples	• range and amount of reading • strategy use • skill development • growth/improvement • comprehension • reading responses (visual, written, oral, dramatic)	• reading logs • retelling • response • learning logs/journals • graphic organizers • visual representation • portfolios • rubrics • audio/video recordings
Self–Assessment and Peer–Assessment	• group work • discussion • reading strategies • attitude • interests • reflection on growth over time	• checklists • rubrics • surbeys and inventories • open-ended questions
Oral Reading Records	• accuracy • fluency • comprehension • strategy use	• oral reading record • rubric (fluency) • checklist • anecdotal records

Note: These lists are intended as partial lists only and are not exhaustive.

There was a time when all I worried about was if the students in my class were reading at grade level. Now, I look for so much more. I have learned that while it is important to know what level of text the students can read with understanding, it is also important to look at what they can do as readers and help them to become better. Using the *Active Young Readers, Grades 4–6: Assessment Resource* has helped me to understand the characteristics of young readers and then tailor my instruction to meet their needs. Using this resource, I also learned to use a variety of observations to support my instruction.

~ Grade 3/4 teacher

Assessment in Writing

This document contains information on significant issues that inform effective assessment in writing. The chart on page 48 may be used as a checklist for teachers to monitor the balance of their writing program. Other sections of the document highlight significant components in the assessment of student writing.

- Stages of writing development with examples (p. 49)
- The writing process (p. 52)
- The traits of writing (p. 53)
- Genre study (p. 59)
- Instructional contexts (p. 61)
- Student self-assessment (p. 84)
- Organizing for assessment (p. 89)
- Exemplars and rubrics with teacher comments (p. 90)

The purposes of assessment in writing are to help students expand their writing abilities and to help teachers provide effective instruction for each student.

Classroom assessment of student progress in writing takes place every day in a variety of ways. To effectively assess their students in writing, teachers need to

- understand the writing stages along the developmental continuum
- understand their students as writers
- understand and use effective assessment tools
- use their assessments to design effective instruction
- have an awareness of strategies that help students develop as writers
- understand the key role of teacher as role model

Key messages in classroom-based writing assessment:

- Teachers must understand the writing process and the stages of writing development (pp. 49–52).
- Teachers must help students become aware of the features of various forms and genres.
- Teachers must use a wide range of assessment tools to gather information about their students.
- Students must understand themselves as writers.
- Assessment must be frequent and built into daily experiences, rather than added on close to reporting time.

- Effective assessment includes conversations with students, observations (formal and informal), as well as product. (Davies, *Making Classroom Assessment Work*)

- Students must be supported in organizing and clarifying their ideas and texts as writers.

Planning and Organizing for Assessment in Writing

Ongoing assessment is foundational in all parts of the program at the grades 4–6 level. Teachers need to ask themselves

- What am I looking for?

- How will I know when I see it?

- How do I need to modify my instruction to help students achieve the goals and outcomes?

Assessment takes place at all times and throughout all curriculum areas in the primary day. Teachers look for

- snapshots—information and data that inform them about the student's strengths and needs at a particular point in time

- patterns—which look for growth and progress and tell the teacher how the students have interpreted the instruction and whether more instruction or guided practice is required (Teachers also look for group patterns and determine whether more than one student, or indeed the entire class, requires instruction or clarification on a particular skill or concept.)

One of the challenges for teachers is the organization and management of assessment data. Some suggestions for keeping the data organized:

- Sticky notes, which can be added to teacher notebooks later (put date on them for easy records)

- Notebook for each student (could be kept in plastic bins in groups)

- Clipboard with class list

- Index cards—taped and layered
  - Put student's name on bottom, arrange on a clipboard and flip to particular child as needed

- Binders—one for reading, one for writing with pages per child

- Monthly checklist for running records and writing samples to be sure all students are being represented

- Portfolios that are created through student decision making and teacher support

In most cases these suggestions work equally well for any curriculum area.

Check It Out

Calkins, Lucy McCormick, *The Art of Teaching Reading* (Addison-Wesley 2001).

Davies, Anne, *Making Classroom Assessment Work* (Connections Publishing 2000).

Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudvis, *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding* (Stenhouse 2000).

Keene, Ellin Oliver, and Susan Zimmerman, *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop* (Heinemann 1997).

Johnston, Peter, *Knowing Literacy: Constructive Literacy Assessment* (Stenhouse 1997).

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades 4–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 1998).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Active Young Readers, Grades 4–6: Assessment Resource* (Province of Nova Scotia 2003).

Routman, Regie, *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating* (Heinemann 2000).

Routman, Regie, *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* (Heinemann 2003).

What am I looking for?

How do I find the time to assess regularly?

How do I keep track of all the information?

Joining the Club

In order to assess the writing progress of my grade 4 students I went to the English language arts guide for descriptors of the developmental stages. I collected pieces of daily classroom writing to have baseline data on each student. A supportive environment was in place to ensure writing would happen. We started using the *Writer's Handbook* as a guide. It became clear that we should expect specific things in every piece of writing, whether draft or published copy, such as punctuation, capital letters, and writing that made sense. As a class, we devised a set of criteria they as students would be responsible for, while I continued to support them in new learnings—a perfect match. I would not have to continually harp about the simplest of conventions. Struggling readers and writers had their own criteria.

We formed a club called the Five 3s Club, and becoming a member was quite simple. Any piece of writing that met our criteria received a "3." Students could pick small items from a treasure chest for every "3" they received. Certificates were awarded and became the responsibility of the student. When any student had five certificates he or she became a member of the club and could now select from a different treasure chest containing books, computer coupons, and much more. Many students would choose books we had used for read-aloud! Pictures were taken and taped into their photo journals. It was quite an event to become a member or repeat member!

This process allowed me more time to deal with content and explore their thinking as writers. The kids became more responsible for self-assessment of their work because it started so small.

~ Grade 4 teacher

When the students are involved in independent reading, writing, or other curriculum explorations, and by showing the students how to take responsibility for more classroom procedures, teachers can find more time to observe, have conversations, or organize products and work samples.

Exemplars and Rubrics

It is helpful for teachers and students to have clear guidelines concerning what is expected of students as they develop as writers. Exemplars can provide this guidance, giving examples of student writing at various degrees of proficiency. An exemplar is a response to a prompt or an assigned piece of writing. A rubric is used, based on the particular form of writing, and student examples demonstrating each stage of the rubric are chosen.

Rubrics for particular forms of writing as well as exemplars from Nova Scotia students in grades primary–8 are available at <nswritingexemplars.EDnet.ns.ca>.

The *Write Traits* classroom kits also provide rubrics designed to be used for instruction and demonstration. These rubrics are designed to indicate levels of proficiency in each of the traits of writing.

In grades 4–6, it is important that students understand the expectations and intent of rubrics. Many teachers design rubrics with their students. The instructional intent of rubrics is student self-assessment so that students are able to self-monitor their writing and understand where it fits within the expectations and what has to be done to improve the writing.

Grade 4: Scoring Rubric for a Humorous Fictional Story

Categories	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Reasoning	**The student:**			
• complexity of ideas and connection to the story line	• uses only a very few simple ideas that have little or no connection to the story line	• uses simple ideas that are connected to the story line	• uses developed ideas that are connected to the story line	• uses well developed, interesting ideas that advance the story line
• number and relevance of supporting facts and details	• uses very few supporting details	• uses some supporting details	• uses sufficient supporting details to clarify the point of the story	• uses imaginative details that develop the story line
Communication	**In the student's work:**			
• purpose: to write a humorous story	• the purpose of the writing is unclear to the reader	• the purpose of the writing is somewhat clear to the reader	• the purpose of the writing is clear to the reader	• the purpose of the writing is clear and engages the reader
• voice (feelings, opinions, attitudes)	• the writer's voice is not evident	• there is some evidence of the writer's voice	• there is clear evidence of the writer's voice	• the writer's voice is clear and sustains the reader's interest
• word use and vocabulary (e.g., descriptive words)	• the vocabulary is limited or used inappropriately, with few descriptive words	• a limited variety of vocabulary is used appropriately but with limited effect	• a wide variety of vocabulary is used appropriately to add descriptive detail to the story	• an extensive vocabulary creates images or pictures for the reader
• sentence variety	• only simple sentences are used	• some variety in sentences is evident, but the types of sentences are limited	• a variety of sentences are used	• a wide variety of sentences enhance the writing
• use of literary elements such as humour and exaggeration	• literary devices are not used	• there is limited use of literary devices	• some literary devices are used	• a number of literary devices have been used effectively
Organization	**The student's writing:**			
• overall structure (beginning, middle, and end)	• has no clear beginning, middle, or end	• shows some evidence of a beginning, a middle, and an end	• has a clear beginning, a middle, and a logical end	• flows smoothly, progressing logically from the beginning to the middle to the end
• paragraph structure	• contains ideas and details that are unconnected and has no paragraph structure	• includes ideas and details that are somewhat connected with paragraph	• has sentences that • are linked together in paragraphs	• has sentences that are clearly organized in paragraphs to develop the story line
Conventions	**The student:**			
• grammar, spelling, punctuation	• uses very few of the conventions studied correctly	• uses some of the conventions studied correctly	• uses most of the conventions studied correctly	• uses all or almost all of the conventions studied correctly
• visual presentation (e.g., indentations, spacing, margins, title)	• produces a visual presentation that is not clear	• produces a visual presentation that is basically clear	• produces a clear visual presentation	• produces a clear and effective visual presentation that enhances the story

Grade 5: Scoring Rubric for a Non-fiction Report

Categories	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Reasoning	**The student:**			
• complexity of the ideas and connection to the topic	• uses only simple ideas, some of which are off-topic	• uses simple ideas that usually support the topic	• uses developed ideas that support the topic	• uses well developed ideas that support the topic effectively
• understanding of the topic	• shows limited understanding of the topic	• shows some evidence of understanding the topic	• shows a general understanding of the topic	• shows a thorough understanding of the topic
	• has a conclusion that is unclear	• has a conclusion that is not entirely clear	• has a clear conclusion that summarizes some of the ideas presented	• has a clear conclusion that summarizes all the ideas presented
• number and relevance of supporting facts and details (research sources)	• appears to have based the report only on personal knowledge	• appears to have based the report mostly on a single source	• appears to have used information based on both personal knowledge and other sources	• appears to have used information from a variety of sources effectively
Communication	**In the student's report:**			
• purpose (to write a report)	• the topic is unclear and is described with limited detail and accuracy	• the topic is identified and described with some detail and accuracy	• the topic is clearly identified and described with good detail and accuracy	• the topic is clearly identified and thoroughly and accurately described
• voice (appeal to the reader through content, style, or vocabulary)	• there is little evidence of the writer's voice	• there is some evidence of the writer's voice and some attempt to interest the reader	• the writer's voice is clearly evident	• the writer's voice is clear and engages the reader's interest
• word use and vocabulary	• only basic and unclear vocabulary is used	• the vocabulary used is limited but clear	• the vocabulary clearly conveys the meaning of the writer	• the vocabulary is extensive, clear, creative, and descriptive
• sentence variety (structure, type, length)	• there is little variety in the sentences	• there is some variety in the sentences	• there is good variety in the sentences	• there is extensive variety of sentences used effectively
Organization	**The student's report:**			
• overall structure (beginning, middle, end, links)	• has no clear beginning, middle, or end	• has a beginning, a middle, and an end that are somewhat linked	• has a clear beginning, middle, and end with paragraphs linked to the main topic and an end that is linked with the beginning	• flows logically and sequentially with paragraphs that build to a conclusion
• paragraph structure	• contains ideas and details that are unconnected, with no paragraph structure	• includes ideas and details that are somewhat connected within the paragraph	• has paragraphs that each contain similar or linked ideas and supporting details	• has paragraphs that each contain ideas and supporting details that are logically linked
Conventions	**In the student's report:**			
• grammar, spelling, punctuation	• there are several major errors or omissions	• there are several minor errors or omissions	• there are only a few minor errors or omissions	• there are practically no errors or omissions
• visual presentation (e.g., indentations, spacing, margins, title)	• few aspects of the expected visual presentation are evident	• some aspects of the expected visual presentation are evident	• most aspects of the visual presentation are evident	• all aspects of the visual presentation are evident

TEACHING IN ACTION · GRADES 4–6 A TEACHING RESOURCE

Grade 6: Scoring Rubric for a Summary Report

Categories	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Reasoning	The student:			
• understanding of the main ideas	• shows limited understanding of the main ideas	• shows some understanding of the main ideas	• shows general understanding of the main ideas	• shows thorough understanding of the main ideas
• number and relevance of supporting facts and details	• retells few of the main ideas	• retells some of the main ideas, including supporting details	• summarizes most of the main ideas and includes supporting details	• summarizes and interprets all the main ideas and includes supporting details
Communication	In the student's summary:			
• purpose: to summarize a report	• shows limited evidence of the purpose in the introduction	• communicates the purpose somewhat clearly in the introduction	• communicates the purpose clearly in the introduction	• communicates the purpose clearly in an effective and interesting introduction
• voice (use of the author's own words)	• contains words taken directly from the text	• contains some words from the text as well as the student's own words	• contains appropriate words from the text as well as the student's own words	• contains ideas expressed concisely in the student's own words, which expand on the concepts
• word use and vocabulary	• contains a limited vocabulary	• contains some variety of vocabulary	• contains a good variety of vocabulary	• contains an extensive vocabulary used correctly and effectively
• sentence variety (structure, type, length)	• has little sentence variety	• has some sentence variety	• has a good variety of sentences	• has an extensive variety of sentences used effectively
Organization	The student's summary:			
• overall structure (introduction, body, conclusion)	• is presented in a disorganized way	• shows some organization, including an introduction, body, and conclusion	• contains an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, with the conclusion linked to the introduction	• contains an introduction, a body, and a conclusion that are effectively linked to each other
• paragraph structure	• lacks a paragraph structure	• contains paragraphs that have some structure, but more than one topic may be combined within a paragraph	• contains paragraphs that have topic sentences and related details	• contains paragraphs that are well developed, with clear topic sentences and relevant supporting details
Conventions	In the student's summary:			
• grammar, spelling, punctuation	• there are several major errors or omissions	• there are several minor errors or omissions	• there are only a few minor errors or omissions	• there are practically no errors or omissions
• visual presentation (e.g., indentations, spacing, margins, title)	• few aspects of the expected visual presentation are evident	• some aspects of the expected visual presentation are evident	• most aspects of the expected visual presentation are evident	• all aspects of the expected visual presentation are evident

Using Rubrics for Assessment

- Rubrics serve a dual purpose—they give clear expectations and requirements for assessment and provide indicators for instruction.
- Rubrics provide specific feedback (see Descriptive Feedback, p. 76) on what the student has done.
- Rubrics are often created with students, giving clear criteria for a particular writing task.
- Involve students in the process by having them, in pairs or small groups, apply a rubric to pieces of writing (from other sources).
- Students need to have a copy of the rubric as they examine the teacher's assessment of their work. Simply putting rubric numbers on a piece of work without this context is not helpful.
- Rubrics are not intended as scores and should not be averaged or calculated in any way.
- When using rubrics for assessment, teachers should also highlight one or two areas to be assessed.
- Occasionally a more global assessment is done.
- Students should receive specific suggestions for improvement as part of the assessment/evaluation process. Comments need to take the students farther.
- Rubric descriptors also help in reporting student progress in detail.

Making Your Own Rubrics

- Designing your own rubric gives the flexibility to examine a piece of writing through multiple lenses.
- Rubric categories might include specific traits, text features, or genre characteristics.
- Many teachers choose to incorporate elements from the write traits rubrics (highlighting traits of writing) with features about a specific form or particular expectations.
- Rubrics can be as complex or simple as required and tailored to the needs of individuals or groups of students.
- Rubrics are written in positive language, highlighting the "can do" observations.

Story Writing: Fractured Fairy Tale

Teacher Name: _____   Student Name: _____

Category	4	3	2	1
Title Page	Title page has a graphic or fancy lettering, has the title, author's name, illustrator's name, and the year.	Title page has the title, author's name, illustrator's name, and the year.	Title page has the 3 of the 4 required elements.	Title page has fewer than 3 of the required elements.
Spelling and Punctuation	There are no spelling or punctuation errors in the final draft. Character and place names that the author invented are spelled consistently throughout.	There is one spelling or punctuation error in the final draft.	There are 2–3 spelling or punctuation errors in the final draft.	The final draft has more than 3 spelling and punctuation errors.
Illustrations	Original illustrations are detailed, attractive, creative, and relate to the text on the page.	Original illustrations are somewhat detailed, attractive, creative, and relate to the text on the page.	Original illustrations relate to the text on the page.	Illustrations are not present OR they are not original.
Writing Process	Student devotes a lot of time and effort to the writing process (prewriting, drafting, reviewing, and editing). Works hard to make the story wonderful.	Student devotes sufficient time and effort to the writing process (prewriting, drafting, reviewing, and editing). Works and gets the job done.	Student devotes some time and effort to the writing but is not very thorough. Does enough to get by.	Student devotes little time and effort to the writing process. Doesn't seem to care.
Problem/Conflict	It is very easy for the reader to understand the problem the main characters face and why it is a problem.	It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem the main characters face and why it is a problem.	It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem the main characters face but it is not clear why it is a problem.	It is not clear what problem the main characters face.
Solution/Resolution	The solution to the character's problem is easy to understand and is logical. There are no loose ends.	The solution to the character's problem is easy to understand and is somewhat logical.	The solution to the character's problem is a little hard to understand.	No solution is attempted or it is impossible to understand.
Setting	Many vivid, descriptive words are used to tell when and where the story took place.	Some vivid, descriptive words are used to tell the audience when and where the story took place.	The reader can figure out when and where the story took place, but the author didn't supply much detail.	The reader has trouble figuring out when and where the story took place.

Finding Time to Assess

1. Students are writing independently after they have been given clear instructions on the task. I usually take three or four students and conference with them about their writing. Students are reminded to work quietly. If a student has a question during the writing time, he or she must wait until I have completed a conference and before moving on to the next student. Note: Interruption during the conferencing loses its purpose.

I have always found it difficult to work under noisy conditions, so my expectations are clear at the beginning of the year.

2. Students are reading independently at their desks. This gives me an opportunity to assess students' reading. I may at this time complete a running record, make individual notes, and ask questions about their book. If there is a question, students must wait until the conferencing is completed.

Reminders:

1. These applications can be made across the curriculum.

2. Have your assessment binder in place with all materials beforehand. Plan ahead.

3. Make notes immediately about the student/conferencing session.

4. Start with the students you are most concerned about, not forgetting the ones you know are quite capable.

5. Plan for at least 2–3 sessions per cycle for reading and writing so the teacher can meet with individual students.

This has always been a difficult task to organize and fit into the cycle for me. I always felt I had to be circulating in the class. I will always remember the day one of my students commented, "Teacher may we just sit back, relax, and read today with no interruptions and no questions to ask or think about." This works for me!

~ Grade 6/7 teacher

Samples of Student Writing with Teacher Comments

Each writing selection has been evaluated at least twice with two different types of sample comments. It is significant to consider which type of feedback and comment is most supportive, constructive, and will encourage the student to make changes in his or her writing.

Example One

Grade 5 writing response to *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*

> *After we finished the book and I thought back over all the funny things that happened, I really remember thinking that some of those things could actually happen in real life. That was the best book I have ever listened to because I was always laughing at something. The only thing that I didn't really understand is that Imogene started to cry when they sang silent night. I wasn't sure why that happened. Maybe she doesn't like that song or maybe she is just tired of all the fighting that she and her brothers and sisters do all the time. I didn't know why the author put a sad part in when the other parts of the book are very funny. But, it is still my favourite book.*

Response One	Response Two
I think this is a good response, I am glad that you like the book. Imogene cried at the end because she was overcome with the whole Christmas story. I agree with you, it is a funny book.	You make several points that I want to talk to you about. When you find something funny, you need to be very explicit. By that I mean that you have to tell the exact part you like and then explain what you liked about it. So, you could have said, I like the part when Imogene found out how much everyone weighed and then pretended to share that information unless she got things she wanted. That reminds me of a time when I would give my sister money so she wouldn't tell my parents that I smashed a good vase.
	You need to back up your opinions with an example and explain why you feel a certain way.
	Also, I want you to take the book and read the last part when Imogene cries. Then I want you to talk to me about why you think that happened.

These are two ways of responding to students' writing. The second is more helpful because it gives a demonstration and lets the child see how to make connections and then write about them.

A teacher wouldn't be expected to write like this on everyone's work but may choose to do an example on the overhead.

Also, as a teacher, you might not want to give all the answers. In the second piece, encouraging a second read is a good idea. Obviously the student missed the author's message and needs to discuss this again. Simply giving them the reason, as in the first teacher's example, won't help the student.

Example Two

The Basketball Championship

Stefan Boudreau
November 30, 2005
Grade 6
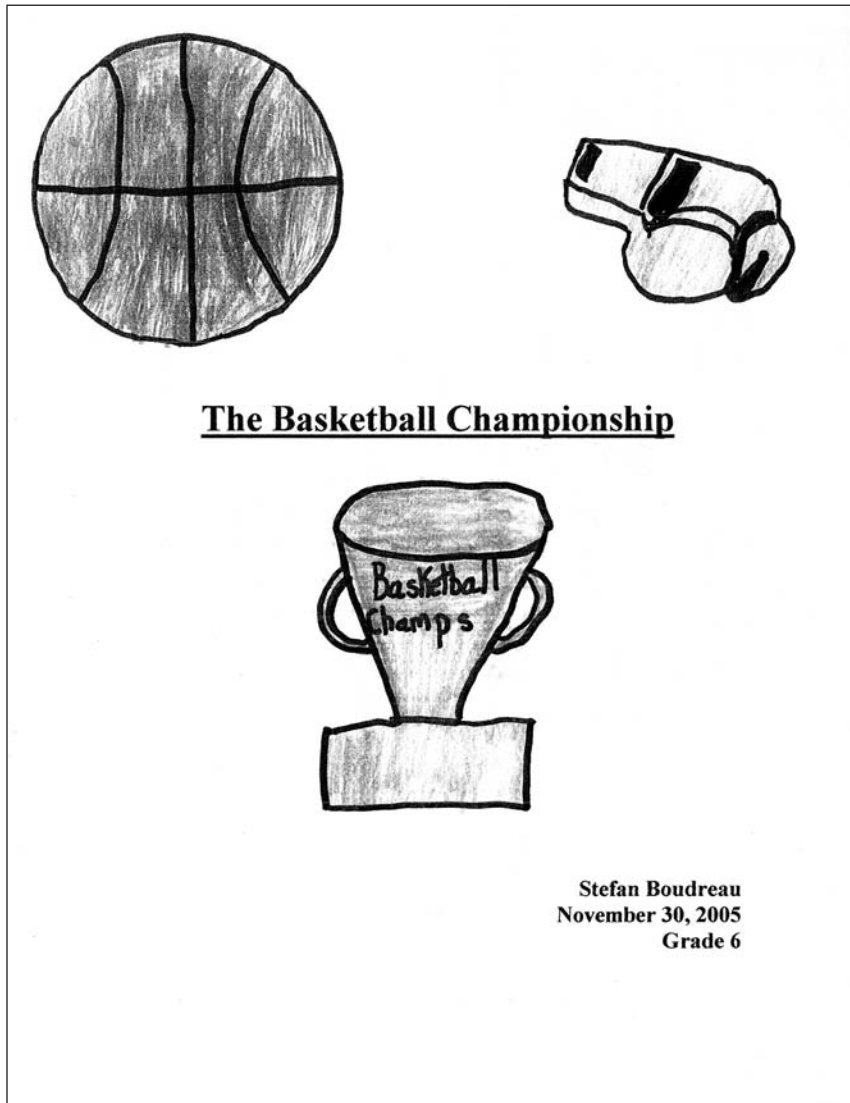
Check It Out

Culham, Ruth, *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide, Grades 3 and Up* (Scholastic 2003).

Rog, Lori Jamison, and Paul Kropp, *The Write Genre: Classroom Activities and Mini-lessons That Promote Writing with Clarity, Style and Flashes of Brilliance* (Pembroke 2004, pp. 36–46).

Spandel, Vicki, and Jeff Hicks, *Write Traits Classroom Kit, Grades 4, 5, and 6* (Thomson Nelson 2004).

Do you like basketball? If you do then you'll love this story. My name is Jimmy. I have four friends Joe, Josie, Tim and Tina. We have always played basketball together. I've always thought about us playing basketball in a championship, but we don't have a coach. So instead of playing in a stadium or a really basketball court we play at Tim's house.

One day we were playing basketball at Tim's and a moving truck drove into Tim's neighbor's house. We stopped and went over to see what was happening. Tim's neighbors were moving to Quebec and a basketball coach was moving in. That gave me a great idea.

After we all went home from Tim's house I went over to see the coach. I asked him if he was already coaching a team and if he wasn't would he be interested in coaching us. He said he would think about it.

The next day I told Joe, Josie, Tina and Tim that we might become a basketball team. They all asked how and I told them that I went to see the coach that was moving next to Tim and asked him if he would like to coach us. He said he would think about it. I hope he says yes because there is a mixed basketball championship next weekend.

That night the coach came over to my house and said that he would coach us if any games or tournament come up. I told

Example Two continued

him that there is a mixed championship next weekend that we'd like to enter.

It was the last day of the week and we were very excited because tomorrow was the basketball championship.

It was the day of the championship. We already won all of our games and made it to the finals. It was us against the Cougars and we won 54 to 53. Everybody was so excited that we celebrated at the coach's house and showed off our golden trophy.

Example Two continued

$\dfrac{21}{30} = 70\%$

Scoring Rubric for Writing

Based on "Six Traits" Analytic Assessment Scoring Guide and Regina Public Schools' Rubric for Writing Assessment

	5 Exemplary	4 Strong	3 Satisfactory	2 Developing	1 Below Expectations
Ideas/Content	fresh, original treatment of ideas; well-developed theme with relevant and engaging detail	clear and focused; appropriate details enhance the main idea. *4*	evident main idea with some support; may be somewhat mundane	some attempt at support or expansion, but main theme may be too general or confused by irrelevant detail.	Writing may lack a central idea; development is minimal or non-existent.
Organization	effectively organized in logical and creative manner; engaging introduction and conclusion	order or structure moves the reader smoothly through the text; inviting introduction and satisfying closure *4*	Organization is appropriate but conventional; obvious attempt at lead and conclusion	some evidence of organizational plan; may be a list of events; introduction and/or conclusion are not well developed.	Writing lacks clear sense of direction; may be ideas strung together loosely; ineffective or non-existent lead and closure
Voice	individual and engaging; strong sense of audience and purpose	sincere and engaging; recognizes audience	pleasant tone; some personality and style evident; voice generally appropriate *3*	Voice may be erratic or non-existent; lacks sense of audience	flat, lifeless
Word choice	powerful and engaging words, carefully selected to convey the intended impression in a precise, interesting and natural way	broad range of vocabulary; uses colorful language, but it may be overdone	Words are adequate and correct, ~~but lack flair and originality~~. *3*	no evidence of precision or description; may be immature; may be "stream of consciousness" thinking	limited vocabulary range
Sentence fluency	Well-crafted sentences with varied length and structure create a rhythmical flow to the text.	Writing flows easily, with good variety in sentence length and construction.	many similar structures; occasional effort at variety and fluency *3*	generally in control, but lacks variety in sentence length and construction	choppy sentences; most are short and simple in structure or rambling.
Conventions	Writer demonstrates a mastery of standard writing conventions beyond grade-level expectations; some errors may result from experimentation.	Writer demonstrates strong control of conventions; writing is generally correct, but may be risk-free. *4*	reasonable control over conventions; may have occasional errors	There are frequent errors in conventions, but they do not interfere with readability of the piece.	Numerous errors in conventions may interfere with reading.

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Using Rubrics for Writing Instruction and Assessment – The Six Traits 45

Example Two continued

Dear Stefan:

You don't have to tell me your name. You are the voice in this piece of writing. This is first person and I like your lead. I would like to see more detail in your writing. You could talk about preparing before the championship with your new coach!

Great story!

Mrs. S.

Example Three

Dear manager of the movie theatre,

I am very conserned about the price of the treats at the theatre. A movie isn't as good if you don't have anything to eat while you are watching it. If people cannot afford to buy the movie theatre's treats, and they are not allowed to bring things from home, then they won't have anything it eat.

If the movie theatre is going to charge a lot of money for treats, people are probly going to try to sneak treats in. An idea that I have is that we could be allowed to bring things from home. Another idea, is that you could lower the prices of the treats to the same price that the stores are selling them for. If you lower the price, people will buy them there, instead of making an extra trip to the store.

This would be a good way for the movie theatre to still make money, but make their costomers happy also. I am very affected by this issue, and I hope you will look at it from the customer's pointof view. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

<div align="center">A conserned customer</div>

~~~~~~

Teacher response #1
This is your best piece yet! I am very proud of you. This shows good effort and is well written.

Teacher response #2

from an **assessment rubric**
Ideas (4)
- Main idea is clearly communicated
- Writer expands main idea through explanation and supportive details

Organization (4)
- Piece is focused on 1 main point or idea
- Engaging lead opens the piece
- There is an obvious conclusion, reflecting the main point/idea

Conventions (4)
- Few or no errors present
- Sentence structure is intact
- Words from given text are spelled correctly
- Evidence shows that proofreading was applied, if necessary
- Choice of punctuation matches intent of piece

Example Four

Someday, I'm going to so something about homework. When I start disliking it enough, here's what I'll do. I'll tell everyone that I'm going on strike to get rid of homework at 11:00 am sharp in front of the office, and if they asked to join, I'd gladley let them. I'll write on GIGANTIC posters, which (in this school) are as large as the bulletin board itself saying,"No more homework!!! Join David in his expodition to get rid of nasty old homework.It's fun!" And the following might make everyone snicker but it might change the world.I'll say aloud and in front of the class, and I quote, "I hate homework, and some day, I will do something about it!" right in the middle of the class, in front of the teacher. And if THAT doesn't do it…I may as well give up!

~~~~~~

Teacher response #1
I liked what you wrote but you haven't really followed the directions. There are a few spelling mistakes, too, and your work is crowded in parts. Not your best effort.

Teacher response #2
3Ps/1S (3 positives and 1 suggestion)

3Ps
+ good word choice. Words like *gigantic, snicker,* and *expedition* show that you gave much thought to using
    specific words that suit the meaning you want.

+ sentences are longer and have more phrases (A little too long in some parts, though.)

+ there's a clear order to your piece, with one idea building on the idea before it.

1S
> You've certainly described the many ways you would express your opinion of homework but I'm not clear how this would convince others to agree with you, which were the directions of the piece. Let's re-examine your ideas with that in mind. What would persuade other to join you in your hatred of homework?

Appendices

Appendix A: The Role of Parents/Guardians in Supporting Grades 4–6 Literacy

Parents are an integral part of students' lives. In earlier grades there are many opportunities for parents to be involved in the literacy acquisition and development of their children. There are volunteer opportunities, take-home reading programs, and the constant emphasis on reading at home with children. Parents often assume that once children have learned to read there is no further need for their support. This is simply not true. As students get older the importance of the home-school link should not diminish. There are still many ways in which parents can support literacy development.

Oral Language

- Provide a good listening model by showing interest in, and responding to, your child's contributions.
- Ask and answer questions.
- Encourage your child to express and justify opinions, develop logical arguments, and give reasons for decision made.
- Involve your child in adult conversations, where appropriate. These experiences will provide a range of language styles, ideas, and vocabulary.
- Assist your child to express ideas in an orderly, fluent manner. For example, ask for an explanation of a game, a description of an item, or a recount of an experience.

Reading

Our most important task as parents is to help students have access to all the books they want and to let them see adults in their lives enjoying reading.

- Continue to read to your child if he or she enjoys it.
- Make sure you read some of the books your child enjoys so the conversations can be rich.
- Encourage your child to find an interesting article or photo from a newspaper and tell you about it.
- If a child makes a mistake when reading aloud, don't interrupt right away, allow time for self-correction. If the mistake doesn't alter the meaning, let it go.

Check It Out

Botrie, Maureen, and Pat Wenger, *Teachers and Parents Together* (Pembroke 1992).

Lucas, Bill, and Alistair Smith, *Help Your Child to Succeed: The Essential Guide for Parents* (Pembroke 2004).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Let's Talk about … Books in Grades 3–6 Classrooms* (Province of Nova Scotia 2005).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Let's Talk about … Classroom Assessment in Reading: grades 3–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 2005).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Let's Talk about … Classroom Assessment in Writing: Grades 3–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 2005).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Let's Talk about … Effective Writing Grades 3–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 2005).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Let's Talk about … Forms of Writing Grades 3–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 2005).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Let's Talk about … Problem-Solving Strategies in Reading Grades 3–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 2005).

Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Let's Talk about … Readers' Workshop Grades 3–6* (Province of Nova Scotia 2005).

Oglan, Gerald R., and Averil Elcombe, *Parent to Parent: Our Children, Their Literacy.* (National Council of Teachers of English 2001).

Pinnell, Gay Su, and Irene C. Fountas, *Help Canada Read: A Handbook for Volunteers* (Irwin 1997).

- Help your child remember and apply useful strategies. (Use strategy bookmarks to help them remember.)

- Encourage your child to ask "Does it make sense?"

- Talk to your child about connections between the text and his or her own experience.

- Show that you value your child's efforts.

- Give your child lots of opportunity to choose from a wide range of books or magazines (library cards, subscriptions, book clubs, second-hand bookstores, flea markets).

- Talk to your child about what you are reading.

- Show your child many forms of reading materials around your home (newspapers, flyers, catalogues, magazines, Internet, TV guides).

Writing

Writing is hard work. Children need a lot of encouragement. It is important to focus on the good things children do in their writing, rather than on their mistakes. The key is to be sure they enjoy writing. The rest will follow as they mature.

- Comment on what you like about your child's writing.

- Encourage your child to talk about his or her ideas.

- Write reminder notes to your child.

- Discuss current events.

- Talk about mass media and their influence on society.

- Understand that different types of writing require different language, different context setting, special vocabulary (a business letter is not the same as a letter to a friend).

- Resist the temptation to "take over."

- Encourage your child to write at home.

- Talk with your child about his or her ideas and writing.

- Provide an array of writing materials such as different types of pencils, pens, or markers and a dictionary.

- If your child has access to a computer, look for programs that involve reading and writing for real purposes rather than those that simply give drills out of context.

- Read aloud to your child and discuss what the author did to make the writing interesting.
- Develop consumer awareness by encouraging your child to write to a manufacturer whose product is unsatisfactory.

There are also many opportunities for parents to support students in the school context. Among them might be

- teacher-led presentation or workshops on the reading or writing program in their classroom
- presentation on how to help intermediate students at home
- newsletters
- suggested reading lists
- bookmarks to keep at home
- author's night, which celebrates student writing
- having parents visit the classroom to discuss their jobs and the role reading and writing play in their work
- having parents do Book Talks about favourite types of reading, books they read when they were young

It is important that teachers communicate that the parents are not expected to carry the most significant part of the teaching load, for that is the role of the program. Teachers also need to be aware of the particular cultural traditions and socio-economic circumstances of their communities. Many parents who might wish to help may not be able to do so for a variety of reasons, and teachers need to carefully consider requests they make of parents in this context.

Check It Out (continued)

Wollman-Bonilla, Julie, F_amily Message Journals: Teaching Writing through Family Involvement_ **(National Council of Teachers of English 2000).**

Zimmerman, Susan, and Chryse Hutchins, _7 Keys to Comprehension: How to Help Your Kids Read It and Get It_ **(Three Rivers Press 2003).**

Appendix B: Planning for Instructional Alignment

About Literacy and Language

After taking a graduate course in technology, it became very apparent to me that the language we use is sometimes the barrier to learning. Learning about technology was an example to me of how important the vocabulary is. There were so many times throughout the course that the teachers were using terms they assumed the class knew and understood. There were many of us left behind sometimes because we didn't understand the terminology. This became a reminder to me as a teacher of literacy. I am now very careful to teach vocabulary and to explain everything. We sometimes throw around words like rubric, anchor chart, mentor writing, etc., and assume that everyone knows what we are talking about. Language can be a barrier in learning to be literate!

~ Grade 5 teacher

While all students come to school with background knowledge, not all students come to school with the type of background knowledge that gives them an advantage in a school setting. To level this playing field, researchers suggest making sure that teachers explicitly teach those concepts and vocabulary words. In his book *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement*, Robert Marzano (2004) talks about two things we can do to increase students' background knowledge: 1) we can provide students with the opportunity to read (and be read to) widely about a variety of topics, and 2) we need to teach key academic vocabulary to students in a variety of ways.

School-based planning is essential to ensure that students are receiving balanced and comprehensive instruction as they move through the grades. Teachers need to plan and understand where and when to teach particular forms, genres, vocabulary, and concepts. This planning does not need to be rigid and inflexible and can accommodate the individual strengths of teachers as well as the individual needs of students. However, it is important that each teacher realize their role and that students do receive explicit instruction in the structure of important text types and features in a careful way with no gaps. (Teachers need to plan for the teaching of all text types and forms of writing. No one teacher can be expected to address all forms, so schools need to ensure that by the time the students leave, they have had explicit instruction in all major forms and genres.)

It is also important to distinguish between concepts that teachers would expect students to have learned and concepts that will be explicitly taught. While grade 3 teachers might expect students to understand the role of writing thank-you letters, they will review this concept but will not spend significant amounts of time teaching it explicitly, since they would know that initial work had been done earlier. Each teacher will have a plan for what he or she can expect his or her students to have been exposed to (and thus will need review, not in-depth work) and what to teach in-depth and explicitly, using the entire Gradual Release of Responsibility model. (p. 12)

A teacher may wish to consider the following options when using or making reference to the list on pp. 112–113:

- Not all words will be chosen. Determine which vocabulary/ concepts are the most essential and, therefore, will be introduced and explicitly taught.

- At each grade level attempt to choose about 25–30 essential terms for instruction.

- Once terms have been introduced, it is also important that teachers in subsequent grade levels revisit and provide opportunities for students to reflect on and extend their understanding of these terms/concepts.

- It is also important that teachers recognize the importance of providing vocabulary instruction around other terms that they consider to be important but not essential, as well as taking their lead from students and providing instruction that is responsive to their needs and interests.

- The teaching is contextual. Marzano is not advocating a "word of the week" approach.

Another consideration in vocabulary instruction is to decide as a school what effective vocabulary instruction looks like at the grade primary–3 or 4–6 level. Effective vocabulary instruction does not involve assigning words and having students record definitions and then using the word in a sentence. It is also not the spelling model of pre-test on Monday, work on the words through the week, and do a post-test on Friday. When building background knowledge, it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide a range of experiences that will help the student understand the concept over an extended period of time. This means providing explicit instruction over time during one school year and then revisiting the concepts in future years.

Check It Out

Bear, Donald, Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, and Francine Johnston, *Words Their Way,* 4th edition (Prentice Hall 2004).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom* (Heinemann 1998).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Voices on Word Matters: Learning about Phonics and Spelling in the Literacy Classroom* (Heinemann 1999).

Fountas, Irene, and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3–6, Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Heinemann 2000).

Marzano, Robert, *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement* (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 2004).

Strickland, Dorothy, Kathy Ganske, and Joanne K. Monroe, *Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers: Strategies for Classroom Intervention* (Stenhouse 2002).

Suggested List of Concepts/Vocabulary: Grades 4–6

abbreviation
action verb
actor
adjective
adverb
advertisement
affix
animation
antonym
apology
apostrophe
appendix
asking permission
atlas
author's purpose
autobiography
audience
audiotape
bibliography
biography
body of the text
bold
brainstorm
business letter
card catalogue
cause and effect
CD-ROM
central idea
character trait
chart
checklist
children's literature
chronological order
climax
closing sentence
colon
chapter title
comma
command
commercial
common noun
compare and contrast

complete sentence
concluding statement
conclusion
connection
construct meaning
content area vocabulary
context clue
contraction
contrast
cue
current affairs
cursive
custom
decode
definition
description
descriptive language
detail
diagram
diary
direct quote
directions
director
discussion leader
double negative
draft
drama
e-mail
edit
encyclopedia
ending
essay
example
exclamation mark
explanation
expression
eye contact
fable
facial expression
fantasy
first person
form

friendly letter
genre
glossary
grammar
graphic organizer
graphics
greeting
guide words
heading
headline
homonym
how question
humour
illustration
imagery
indentation
index
inference
Internet
interrogative sentence
introduction
investigate
invitation
irregular plural noun
italics
journal
key word
learning log
legend
letter of request
linking verb
listening comprehension
literature
logs
meaning clue
media
memory aid
minor character
miscue
mood
motive
multimedia presentation

musical

multiple drafts

multiple sources

mystery

myth

narrative

negative

news

news broadcast

news bulletin

newspaper section

notes

noun

novel

numerical adjective

object

opinion

oral presentation

oral report

organization

outline

pamphlet

paragraph

passage

past tense / present tense

peer review

pen pal

personal letter

personal pronoun

persuasive writing

phone directory

phonetic analysis

phrase

plot

plot development

point of view

posing a question

possessive noun

possessive pronoun

posture

predicate

preface

prefix

preposition

prepositional phrase

preview

prior knowledge

pronoun

pronunciation

proofread

prop

proper noun

publication date

punctuation

question mark

quotation

quotation marks

radio program

rating

reading strategy

reading vocabulary

regular plural noun

regular verb

report

request

revise

rhyming dictionary

role-play

root word

rules of conversation

scan

science fiction

second person

self-correction

sensory image

sentence structure

sequential order

setting

short story

signature

singular noun

skim

skip

slang

sound effect

source

special effect

spoken text

stay on topic

story element

story map

story structure

subject

subject-verb agreement

suffix

summarize

summary

summary sentence

supporting detail

suspense

syllable

symbolism

synonym

table

tall tale

tense

text

theme

theme music

thesaurus

third person

time line

tone

topic sentence

typeface

usage

verb

voice

volume

website

when question

where question

why question

word choice

word search

written directions

written exchange

Appendix C: English Language Arts Outcomes, Grade 3

General Curriculum Outcomes	Specific Curriculum Outcomes
GCO 1: Students will speak and listen to explore, clarify, extend, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.	*Students will be expected to* 1.1 describe, share, and discuss thoughts, feelings, and experiences and consider others' ideas 1.2 ask and respond to questions to clarify information and to explore possibilities or solutions to problems 1.3 express and explain opinions and respond to the questions and reactions of others 1.4 listen critically to others' ideas and opinions
GCO 2: Students will be able to communicate information and ideas effectively and clearly, and to respond personally and critically.	2.1 participate in conversation, small-group and whole- group discussion, understanding when to speak and when to listen 2.2 adapt volume, projection, facial expression, gestures, and tone of voice to the speaking occasion 2.3 give and follow instructions and respond to questions and directions 2.4 engage in and respond to a variety of oral presentations and other texts
GCO 3: Students will interact with sensitivity and respect, considering the situation, audience, and purpose.	3.1 use basic courtesies and conventions of conversation in group work and co-operative play 3.2 identify some forms of oral language that are unfair to particular individuals and cultures and use vocabulary that shows respect for all people 3.3 demonstrate a growing awareness that different kinds of language are appropriate to different situations

GCO 4: Students will be expected to select, read, and view with understanding a range of literature, information, media, and visual texts.	4.1 select, independently and with teacher assistance, texts appropriate to their interests and learning needs
	
	4.2 read widely and experience a variety of children's literature
	
	4.3 use pictorial, typographical, and organizational features of written text to determine content, locate topics, and obtain information
	
	4.4 use and integrate, with support, the various cueing systems (pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic) and a range of strategies to construct meaning
	   – predict on the basis of what would make sense, what would sound right, and what the print suggests (semantics, syntax, graphophonics)
	   – monitor reading by cross-checking the various cues (Did that make sense? Did it sound right? If that were "fire" would it have a "t" at the end?)

	4.5 use a variety of self-correcting strategies (e.g., rereading, reading on and trying to think about what would make sense, trying to find a little word in the big word)
	4.6 read silently, vocalizing only when a major problem with word recognition or meaning occurs
	4.7 visually survey the text when reading and abandon finger pointing unless a problem occurs
	4.8 word solve by using analogy with known words; knowledge of affixes, roots, or compounds; and syllabication
	4.9 use blending as one strategy for decoding words
	4.10 recognize a wide variety of sight words
	4.11 use a dictionary
	4.12 identify main idea and supporting details of a text
	4.13 identify principles of order in text (time, cause and effect, space)
	4.14 interpret figurative language
	4.15 use clues from the text and personal experiences to gain an understanding of character
	4.16 recognize different emotions and empathize with literary characters
	4.17 recognize the elements of a story or plot
	4.18 use prereading/previewing strategies, such as – predicting what the text will be about based on its title and pictures, as well as their personal experiences with the topic – making connections between what they read and their own experiences and knowledge – setting their own purposes for reading/viewing – asking themselves questions about what they want to find out
	4.19 use during reading/viewing strategies, such as – verifying and adjusting predictions/making further predictions – making connections between what they read and their own experiences and knowledge – visualizing characters, settings, and situations (making pictures in their minds)
	4.20 use after-reading/viewing strategies such as – reflecting about the text – responding to the text (through talking, writing, or some other means of representation) – asking questions about the text
	4.21 describe their own reading and viewing processes and strategies

GCO 5: Students will be expected to interpret, select, and combine information using a variety of strategies, resources, and technologies.	5.1 answer, with assistance, their own questions and those of others by seeking information from a variety of texts – identify their own personal and learning needs for information – generate their own questions as a guide for research – use a range of print and non-print materials to meet their needs – use basic reference materials and a database of electronic search – reflect on their own research process
GCO 6: Students will be expected to respond personally to a range of texts.	6.1 make personal connections to texts and describe, share, and discuss their reactions and emotions 6.2 express and explain opinions about texts and types of texts, and the work of authors and illustrators, demonstrating an increasing awareness of the reasons for their opinions
GCO 7: Students will be expected to respond critically to a range of texts, applying their knowledge of language, form, and genre.	7.1 question information presented in print and visual texts – use a personal knowledge base as a frame of reference 7.2 identify some different types of print and media texts – recognize some of their language conventions and text characteristics – recognize that these conventions and characteristics help them understand what they read and view 7.3 respond critically to texts – formulate questions as well as understandings – identify the point of view in a text and demonstrate an awareness of whose voices/positions are and are not being expressed – discuss the text from the perspective of their own realities and experiences – identify instances of prejudice, bias, and stereotyping
GCO 8: Students will be expected to use writing and other forms of representation to explore, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and learnings; and to use their imaginations.	8.1 use writing and other forms of representation to – formulate questions – generate and organize language and ideas – discover and express personal attitudes and opinions – express feelings and imaginative ideas – record experiences – explore how and what they learn 8.2 explore, with assistance, ways for making their own notes 8.3 experiment with language choices in imaginative writing and other ways of representing

GCO 9: Students will be expected to create texts collaboratively and independently, using a variety of forms for a range of audiences and purposes.	9.1 create written and media texts using a variety of forms – experiment with a combination of writing with other media to increase the impact of their presentations 9.2 demonstrate some awareness of purpose and audience – make choices about form for a specific purpose/audience – realize that work to be shared with an audience needs editing 9.3 consider their readers'/listeners'/viewers' questions, comments, and other responses in assessing their work and extending their learning

GCO 10: Students will be expected to use a range of strategies to develop effective writing and media products to enhance their clarity, precision, and effectiveness.	10.1 experiment with a range of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, and presentation strategies
	– use a variety of prewriting strategies for generating and organizing ideas for writing (e.g., brain-storming, webbing, story mapping, reading, researching, interviewing, reflecting)
	– use appropriate drafting techniques (focussing on getting ideas on paper, taking risks with temporary spelling when necessary, experimenting with new forms/techniques, keeping audience in mind, using a word processor to compose)
	– use revision techniques to ensure writing makes sense and is clear for the audience (e.g., reading/rereading, adding ideas, crossing out repetition or unnecessary information, sequencing ideas/information, rearranging, using feedback from conferences to help revise)
	– use editing strategies (e.g., checking punctuation and language usage; checking spelling by circling words that don't look right, trying them another way, and checking with a resource such as dictionary; using an editing checklist)
	– use appropriate techniques for publishing/presenting (e.g., a word processor to publish; illustrations, charts, and diagrams to enhance writing where appropriate; sharing writing/representing orally; publishing online; submitting work to school/district newsletter)
	10.2 use some conventions of written language
	– punctuation and capitalization
	  – use capitals for proper names, titles, places, days, months, holidays, beginning of sentences
	  – use periods at the ends of sentences and for abbreviations
	  – use commas in a series and in dates
	  – use apostrophes for possessives and contractions
	  – use question marks, exclamation marks, and quotation marks

	– language structure
	– make subjects and verbs agree
	– begin to use simple paragraphing
	– use a variety of simple and more complex sentence structures
	– use pronouns appropriately
	– spelling
	– use meaning and syntax patterns as well as sound cues
	– use a range of spelling strategies
	– spell many words conventionally
	– use a variety of strategies to edit for spelling (identifying misspelled words, trying them another way, and using another resource to check them out)
	10.3 demonstrate engagement with the creation of pieces of writing and other representation
	– engage in writing/representing activities for sustained periods of time
	– work willingly on revising and editing for an audience
	– demonstrate pride and sense of ownership in writing/representing efforts
	10.4 experiment with technology in writing and other forms of representing
	– use a tape recorder to tape dramatic presentations, readings of published work, and retellings
	– use a simple word processing program to draft, revise, edit, and publish
	– use a drawing program (computer software)
	– with assistance, use a database, CD-ROM, and the Internet as resources for finding information (prewriting strategy)
	– with assistance use the Internet to communicate
	10.5 select, organize, and combine relevant information, with assistance, from at least two sources, without copying verbatim, to construct and communicate meaning

Appendix D: Reading Comprehension Bookmarks

Remember to

make connections

Think, "What does the text remind you of?"
T–S (text to self)
T–T (text to text)
T–W (text to world)

visualize

Create pictures and images in your mind.

infer

Look for hints the author has left about the text.

question

Ask questions about the text.

determine importance

Think of your purpose for reading, "What are you trying to find out?" Read for key information.

analyse

Look closely at the text, "How is it written? What is it about?"

synthesize

Build new ideas. Think of what you already knew and how this knowledge fits with what you have just read.

Remember to

predict

Ask, "What will the text be about?"

confirm

Ask, "Does this match my predictions?"

monitor

Think, "How is my reading? Is the text too difficult?"

self-correct

Use a fix-up strategy when you get stuck (reread, read on, ask for help, use context clues).

word solve
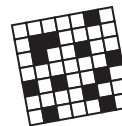
Use a variety of strategies to figure out unfamiliar words (look for smaller words in the word, common rimes; consider word meanings).

sample/gather
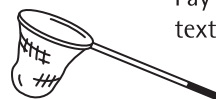
Pay attention to parts of the text that are helpful.

maintain fluency

Read smoothly with expression. Remember to follow the punctuation cues.

Appendix E: School–Based Planning

As part of the School Improvement Planning process, teachers and administrators discuss academic and other priorities for their schools. These conversations are far-ranging and productive, as school staffs address issues and concerns around shared goals.

The following management and organizational issues may become part of actions or strategies, particularly in relation to a literacy goal.

1. Resource storage, management, and distribution	• The Department of Education has provided a number of resources for individual classrooms, for grade-level groupings, and for the whole school. These resources are listed on the Active Young Readers / Writers in Action (AYR/WIA) website at <http://ayr.EDnet.ns.ca>.
	• Schools need to decide where the shared resources will be stored and how they may be accessed and tracked. They might also like to identify gaps in the resources so their credit allocation or other funding can be used to address these gaps.
	• Classroom resources need to be carefully monitored. As teachers leave the site or change grade levels, the AYR/WIA classroom resources should stay in the classroom. Professional resources, on the other hand, are the property of the individual teacher.
	• It is helpful to have a contact person or someone who knows where shared or targetted resources are stored.
	• Schools also make decisions about the use of levelled texts. Some schools opt to store multiple copies of text in a shared space. Others find it more beneficial to have some levelled sets in their rooms, with others in a central location.
2. Curriculum alignment—reading and writing plans	• Schools need to decide what forms/genres will be taught at each grade level. There is a difference between introducing and reading texts to students and explicitly teaching and practising the forms, and the expectation of independence.
	(See suggestions below.)
3. Assessment procedures, expectations, and record keeping	• Schools need to be sure the procedures for tracking and monitoring student progress are clear. It is helpful to discuss what type of information will be passed on to the next teacher and how that will be done.
	• It is also helpful to have grade-level and school-wide conversations about writing. (These can include examining student writing, discussing strengths, needs, what makes good writing, which traits are being taught and emphasized, expectations, and consistency.)
	• Tracking students who are or have been in combined classes is also important to ensure they are benefiting from a wide range of reading and writing genres without unnecessary duplication.

Suggestions for creating a school-wide writing plan:

- Teachers at each grade level should list the forms they teach explicitly (Appendices 1 and 14 in the English language arts guide may be helpful as a framework. Appendix D: Writing Plans, A Sample Format in this document also provides a suggested form).

- On a master chart or overhead, collate the data and discuss where there are overlaps and gaps. Realign the plan, based on teacher strengths and interests as well as on student needs. Distinguish between explicit teaching and the importance of revisiting.

- Post the plan and revisit it regularly to be sure it is meeting student needs and is realistic.

- Use the plan to support purchases of mentor texts that support the various genres and forms of text at various levels.

Suggestions for creating a school-wide reading plan:

- Discuss the features of an effective reading program.

- At grade level examine some of the features (classroom library, role of the teacher, whole group, small group, independent instruction, gradual transfer of responsibility, reading/writing connection, teaching for comprehension).

- Look for common areas of practice and determine gaps and needs for professional development as well as for resource support.

As students move through the elementary grades they should experience

- consistency of expectations

- a widening range of reading and writing genres

- a common language (as developmentally appropriate)

School-wide planning supports the organization and management of a comprehensive literacy program.

Appendix F: Concepts, Grades 4–6

Concepts	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Abbreviations			
• invitations, addresses, dates, days of week, months of the year	✓	✓	
• for organizations, acronyms		✓	
Capitalization			
• beginnings of sentences, names of people	✓	✓	
• names of organization, first word in direct quotation		✓	
Compound Words	✓	✓	✓
Hyphenated Words		✓	
Contractions			
• role of apostrophe, as shortcuts	✓	✓	✓
Paragraphs			
• topic sentence, grouping ideas, concluding sentence			✓
• dialogue			✓
Parts of Speech			
• nouns, verbs, adjectives	✓	✓	✓
• pronouns, adverbs		✓	✓
• proper, common, compound, and collective nouns	✓	✓	✓
• prepositions, conjunctions, interjections		✓	✓
Plurals			
• *s*, *es*, *y* to *ies*, irregular plurals	✓	✓	✓
• vowel-plus-y rule		✓	✓
Possessives			
• role of apostrophe, singular possessives	✓		✓
• distinguishing between possessives and plurals		✓	✓
• irregular plurals, names ending in *s*			✓
Prefixes		WIA Handbook p. 87	
Printing/Handwriting			
• upper-case and lower-case cursive letters	✓	✓	✓
• speed and neatness	✓	✓	✓
• word processing	✓	✓	✓

Concepts	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Punctuation			
• period, exclamation mark, question mark	✓		✓
• apostrophe in contractions, in the possessive	✓		✓
• comma		✓	✓
• quotation marks in dialogue, titles			✓
• comma in direct quotation			✓
• colon (in a list, a formal letter, in a statement), semicolon			✓
• punctuation in abbreviations, in initials	✓		✓
• dash, ellipsis, hyphen		✓	✓
Reference Material			
• alphabetical order	✓		✓
• electronic/computer spell checker		✓	✓
• dictionary		✓	✓
• thesaurus			✓
• table of contents, using an index		✓	✓
• computer software to gather information (e.g., data base, CD-ROM)	✓	✓	✓
• electronic information retrieval (e.g., Internet)	✓	✓	✓
Sentences			
• concept of sentence, kind of sentences	✓		✓
• run-on sentences	✓	✓	✓
• combing sentences (joining sentences with connectives)	✓	✓	✓
• phrases, clauses			✓
• subject/verb agreement		✓	✓
Suffixes			WIA Handbook p. 88
Word Awareness			
• synonyms, antonyms, homophones	✓		
• colloquialisms and slang	✓		
• inclusive language		✓	
• commonly confused words (WIA Handbook, pp. 91–93)			✓

Appendix G: Sample Writing Plans

EXPRESSIVE	P	1	2	3	4	5	6
Journal							
Learning log							
Response letter							
Friendly letter							
Invitation							
Thank-you note							
Diary							
TRANSACTIONAL							
Research project							
News report							
Book report							
Survey/questionnaire							
Summary							
Instructions							
Interview							
Business letter							
Letter to the editor							
Advertisement							
Persuasive essay							
Autobiography							
Biography							
Memoir							
Debate							
Speech							
POETIC							
Free verse poetry							
Structured poetry							
Personal narrative							
Descriptions							
Mystery stories							
Adventure stories							
Science fiction stories							
Modern fantasy stories							
Fairy tales							
Fables							
Legends							
Myths							
Historical fiction							
Skits							
Cartoons							

TEACHING IN ACTION· GRADES 4–6 A TEACHING RESOURCE

Appendix H: Sample of Yearlong Instruction/Assessment Planning

Speaking and Listening	September	October	November	December
1.1 explore and discuss their thoughts, ideas, and experiences and consider those of their peers				
1.2 ask and respond to questions to clarify information and explore solutions to problems (e.g., use interview format)				
1.3 explain personal opinions and respond to the questions and opinions of others				
1.4 listen critically to others' ideas or opinions expressed				
2.1 contribute to conversations, small-group and whole-group discussion, showing an awareness of when to speak and when to listen				
2.2 use word choice, tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures appropriate to the speaking occasion				
2.3 give and follow instructions and respond to questions and directions				
2.4 engage in and respond to oral presentations (e.g., retell a story, sing a song)				
3.1 show basic courtesies of conversation in group interactions				
3.2 identify examples of prejudice and stereotyping in oral language, and use language that shows respect for all people				
3.3 show an awareness of the kinds of language appropriate to different situations and audiences				

Appendix I: Active Young Readers / Literacy Success / Writers in Action

Print Resource Inventory (March 2007)
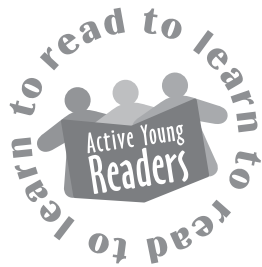
Grades Primary–3

Professional

On Solid Ground, Sharon Taberski

Word Matters, Fountas and Pinnell

Snapshots, Linda Hoyt

Is That a Fact?, Tony Stead

Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum, Lucy Calkins

Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Writing

Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations While Simplifying Teaching

Primary–3 Professional Development Cluster

Big Lessons from Small Writers (DVD)

One to One: The Art of Conferring with Young Writers (book)

Conferring with Primary Writers (CD-ROM)

Literacy Talk package

Note: small inventory board distribution only

Classroom

One learning resource (approximately 130 books) for P–3 classrooms

One supplementary learning resource (30 twinned fact and fiction books for all classrooms with grade 3 students in them)

Peek-a-Little Boo picture book (grade primary)

ABC Letters in the Library picture book (grade primary)

The Nature Treasury: A First Look at the Natural World (grade 2)

Write Traits 1

Write Traits 2

Write Traits 3

School

Wonder World (4 titles × 6 copies)

Windows on Literacy (176 levelled non-fiction science and social studies titles designed to meet the needs of emergent through transitional readers)

Show Me (a set of three teacher resources focussing on information and visual literacy)

Kids Poems (a set of four teacher resources focussing on poetry)

Alphakids (a collection of six-packs ranging over 24 levels, both fiction and non-fiction, designed specifically for guiding reading) (36–48 six packs)

Side by Side: Mathematics (a P–2 program including big books, small books, and a teacher's guide focussing on making literacy and math links)

A big book collection (approx. 12), both fiction and non-fiction, ranging P–3

Side by Side: The Arts (a P–2 program including big books, small books and a teacher's guide focussing on making literacy and arts links)

Shutterbugs books making links between science and literacy

Library pack to support comprehension (a collection of 12 books highlighting comprehension strategies)

Literacy Place Sampler (grade 2)

Literacy Place Sampler (grade 3)

Regional

A collection of hardcover books mostly by local and Canadian authors and illustrators (approximately 30 books)

A cross section collection of *Sunshine Guided Reading* (approximately 60 books)

Grades 3/4–6

Professional

Beyond Leveled Books, K. Szymusiak and F. Sibberson

Non-fiction Matters, Stephanie Harvey

Strategies That Work, Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (4–6)

Miscue Analysis Made Easy, Sandra Wilde (4–6)

Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers: Strategies for Classroom Intervention 3–6, Dorothy Strickland, Kathy Ganske, Joanne K. Monroe

The Writing Workshop: Working through the Hard Parts (And They're All Hard Parts), Katie Wood Ray

The Revision Toolbox: Teaching Techniques That Work, Georgia Heard

Guided Writing Instruction: Strategies to Help Students Become Better Writers, Shelley Peterson

Knowing How: Researching and Writing Nonfiction 3–8, Mary C. McMackin and Barbara S. Siegel

Writing Every Day: Reading, Writing, and Conferencing Using Student-Led Experiences, Kelly Buis

Teaching the Qualities of Writing, Ralph Fletcher and Joanne Portloupi

Strategies for Teaching Writing: An ASCD Teaching Tool (grade 5)

Reality Checks, Tony Stead (grades 3–5)

Lessons in Comprehension, Frank Serafini (grades 4–6)

A Comprehensive Literacy Resource: Grades 3–6, Miriam Trehearne

Classroom

One learning resource (approx. 130 books) for all 4–6 classrooms

One student book collection for **resource** rooms

Mainsails Grades 4–6 sets

Power Magazines Grades 4–6 sets

Write Traits 4 (grade 4 classrooms)

Write Traits 5 (grade 5 classrooms)

Write Traits 6 (grade 6 classrooms)

Active Young Readers, Grades 4–6: Assessment Resource

Active Young Readers Grades 4–6 Supplementary Passages

The Canadian Writers in Action Handbook

Gage Canadian School Dictionary (seven per classroom)

Gage Canadian School Thesaurus (seven per classroom)

Grammar books, Oxford

Grammar: The Essential Guide to Correct Grammar (grade 4 only)

Punctuation: The Essential Guide to Punctuation Marks and How to Use Them (grade 4 only)

Spelling: The Essential Guide to Correct Spelling (grade 4 only)

Comprehension: Read and Understand Different Types of Writing (Grade 4 only)

Ruth Heller (set of eight books on punctuation)

"Grandma, What Do Our Mi'Kmaq People Do All Year Round?" (grade 4 only)

One set of reading comprehension posters (grade 5 only)

Dream: A Tale of Wonder, Wisdom and Wishes (grade 6 only)

School

The News (20 books)

Reading Expeditions (two sets of 30 books)
(*The Human Body and
Science Issues Today*) (60 books)

Solo Series 3 Library Pack (8 books)

Momentum Green (24 books)

Inquizative Green (20 books)

News II (10 books)

Storyteller Collection (9 books)

My Name Is Yun Jin (single title)

Units of Study For Teaching Writing: Grades 3–5, Lucy Calkins

*National Geographic Reading Expedition Reading and Writing Workshop
Springboard Level*

Grade 7

Professional

A Middle Mosaic (a collection of articles edited by E. Close and
K. Ramsey) (ELA teachers)

Strategic Reading, Jeffrey Wilhelm (ELA teachers in grades 7, 8, and 9)

Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning, Doug Buehl (ALL teachers)

Promoting Literacy in Grades 4–9 (a collection of articles edited by
K. Wood and T. Dickenson)

I Read It But I Don't Get It, Cris Tovani

The Write Genre

Seven Steps to Successful Writing

Writing Anchors

Classroom

One learning resource for all registered grade 7 English program classrooms

One student book collection for resource classrooms (grade 7)

Write Traits 7

Grade 7 Writing Centre

Language Arts Charts

School

Reading Reminders: Tools, Tips and Techniques, Jim Burke

Health Issues 7 (one set of 35)

Atlantic Canada Collection II

Literacy Team 7 administrator binder

Active Young Readers, Grades 4–6: Assessment Resource

Active Readers 7 Infusion:

National Geographic Reading/Writing Workshops (Levels A, B, and C)

Lessons That Change Writers, Nancy Atwell

Regional

A collection of 40–50 books that passed 1st level but were not chosen from the AR7 call to each lead team to be distributed throughout the region (9 collections)

Grade 8

Professional

When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do, Kylene Beers

Teaching Reading in the Middle School, Laura Robb

Real Reading, Real Writing: Content Area Strategies, Topping/McManus

Naming the World: A Year of Poems and Lessons

Writers in Action 8 Professional resources:

Exploring Writing in the Content Areas

Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop

Inside Writing: How to Teach the Details of Craft

Creating Writers through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction

Writing Reminders

Classroom

One learning resource for all registered grade 8 English program classrooms

Write Traits 8

Writing Centre materials

School

Active Readers 8 Infusion:
X Zone (1 set of 20 magazines)
Math behind the Science
Mathematical Thinkers
Cells at Work
Leaf by Leaf
New Series Canada
Orca Soundings Series

Grade 9

Professional

The Reading/Writing Connection: Strategies for Teaching and Learning in the Secondary Classroom, Carole Booth-Olson
Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?, Cris Tovani
Tools for Teaching Content Literacy, Janet Allen

Classroom

One learning resource collection for every grade 9 English program classroom
Supplementary classroom collections
Write Traits Advanced Notebook Level 1

School

A supplement to *Active Readers 9* collection

Grades 7–9

Professional

Subjects Matter, Harvey Daniels and Steven Zemelman
Reading and Writing across the Content Areas, Roberta Sejnost and Sharon Thiese
Making the Match, Teri S. Lesesne
Deeper Reading, Kelly Gallagher
Reading Reasons, Kelly Gallagher

Help for Struggling Readers: Strategies for Grades 3–8,
Michael McKenna

Speaking With a Purpose

Classroom

One learning resource collection to be shared across grades 7, 8, and 9

School

A supplement to *Active Readers 7–9*

Grade 10

Professional

Going with the Flow: How to Engage Boys (and Girls) in Their Literacy Learning

Socratic Circles: Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking in Middle and High School

The English Teacher's Companion: A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession

Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning

Classroom

Checkmate: A Canadian Writer's Reference

Gage Canadian Thesaurus

The Canadian High School Dictionary

Write Traits Advanced Notebook Level 1

Literacy Success 10 student resource collection

School

A set of 4 of the following:

Teaching Reading in the Content Areas

Teaching Reading in Science

Teaching Reading in Mathematics

Teaching Reading in Social Studies

Grades Primary–6

School

Knowing Literacy, Peter Johnston

Administrator's binder P–6

Atlantic Canada Collection I

Atlantic Canada Collection III

Parent Communication Professional Resources

Ross and the Big Happening

15 boxes of leftover books distributed to areas of identified need

Additional Resources provided to lead teams:

A tub was created for each region consisting of a collection of professional development print resources to support regional leadership work. It included

- *When Learners Evaluate*, Jane Hansen
- *Guiding the Reading Process*, David Booth
- *Guiding Literacy Learners*, Susan Hill
- *Literacy Centres for the Primary Classroom*, Blakemore and Ramirez
- *The Supportive Classroom*, Nova Scotia Department of Education
- *Scholastic Kindergarten Teacher's Guide*, Scholastic
- *Joint Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice*, NAEYC and IRA
- three videos based on *On Solid Ground*, SharonTaberski
- one video on Guided Reading, Nova Scotia Department of Education

Grades Primary–12

Professional

The Principal Difference: Key Issues in School Leadership and How to Deal with Them Successfully, Susan Church

Informal Assessment Strategies: Asking Questions, Observing Students, and Planning Lessons that Promote Successful Interaction with Text, Beth Charlton

Resources were also (or will be) distributed to each lead team member. They include the following:

Grades Primary–3

Reading Assessment: Principles and Practices for Elementary Teachers (a collection of articles from The Reading Teacher)

Conversations, Regie Routman

Voices on Word Matters, Fountas and Pinnell

Reading With Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades, Debbie Miller (2004)

Grades 4–6

Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3–6, Fountas and Pinnell

Methods That Matter, Harvey Daniels

Still Learning to Read, Frankie Sibberson and Karen Symuziak

Grade 7

Promoting Literacy in Grades 4–9, edited by K. Wood, T. Dickenson

Health Issues 7

Secondary Science: A Teaching Resource

Grade 9

Self-Assessment and Goal Setting, Anne Davies

Conferencing and Reporting, Anne Davies

Setting and Using Criteria, Anne Davies

Grades Primary–8

Spelling K–8 Planning and Teaching

Grades 7–9

Atlantic Canada Collection II

Atlantic Canada Collection IV

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