

## **Balanced Literacy Approach Reading/Writing Instruction**

Balance literacy is a comprehensive, differentiated approach to reading and writing instruction. Students' instructional needs are assessed using instruments such as the Texas Primary Inventory and the Developmental Reading Assessment. The data provides teachers with specific information about the students' strengths and weaknesses in terms of comprehension, reading level, decoding, spelling, phonics, and phonological awareness. As a result, teachers can plan instruction based on the needs of each individual student. Students participate in small group lessons based on phonic needs and reading levels. Remediation and acceleration become a natural part of the reading/writing instruction.

Balanced literacy employs the fundamentals of letter-sound correspondence, word study and decoding as well as holistic experiences in reading, writing, speaking and listening to create one integrated model that addresses all the facets of literacy.

### **Key Components**

- **Alphabet Knowledge**  
Understanding of letter names
  
- **Phonological Awareness**  
Understanding of how language works  
Skills include: rhyming, segmenting syllables, blending syllables, deleting syllables, segmenting sounds, blending sounds, deleting sounds, and understanding words in sentences  
Uses auditory skills
  
- **Concepts About Print**  
Book knowledge  
Understanding about the parts of a book: author, illustrator, features of a sentence, features of a paragraph, direction in which we read, spacing between words, what is a word, what is a letter, upper and lower case letters
  
- **Phonics/Decoding/Word Work**  
Letter-sound correspondence  
Learning the patterns of the English language in a systematic way  
Practicing those patterns  
Application of knowledge to reading books

- **Spelling**  
 Taught as a way to understand patterns  
 Spelling and phonics lessons should be connected  
 Spelling should be derived from phonetic patterns
  
- **Guided Reading**  
 Small group instruction - same instructional reading level (all reading a book of the same difficulty)  
 Children read simultaneously and the teacher observes each child's application of reading strategies  
 Comprehension activities before and after reading
  
- **Shared Reading**  
 Whole group instruction  
 Teacher and students read together  
 Normally the language in the book has a recognizable rhythm and pattern such as, "Brown Bear Brown Bear what do you see"  
 Review concepts about print, word patterns, phonics, and alphabet knowledge  
 Should be at the listening comprehension level of the children (above their instructional reading level).
  
- **Independent Reading**  
 Children reading independently  
 Develops fluency  
 Extends experiences with a variety of written texts
  
- **Read Aloud**  
 Teacher reads quality literature to the children  
 Provides adult model of fluent reading  
 Develops active listening  
 Develops vocabulary
  
- **Guided Writing**  
 Teacher is working with a small group or one child  
 Guiding them through the writing process  
 Produces text that students can read independently
  
- **Model/Interactive Writing**  
 Teacher models correct writing, often on a large chart tablet  
 Sometimes called daily news or morning message  
 Children explore the nature of writing  
 Review skills such as decoding, concepts about print, and alphabet knowledge

- **Independent Writing**  
 Children go through the writing process independently with occasional assistance from the teacher  
 Supports reading development  
 Strengthens text sequences
  
- **Literacy Centers**  
 Students rotate between centers  
 Usually when the teacher pulls small groups for guided reading and guided writing  
 Reinforce what has already been learned  
 Cover key domains such as independent reading and independent writing  
 Review of phonics skills, word knowledge, and alphabet skills  
 Typical centers: Poetry Center, Listening Center, Library, Big Books, Word Work, Alphabet Center, Word Wall, Spelling, etc.
  
- **Literature Circles**  
 Alternative for teachers who want to pull small groups  
 Children form book clubs  
 Children have different roles leading the discussion  
 Must be practiced and taught in a whole group setting before children can work independently (usually second grade and above)
  
- **Reader's Theater**  
 Dramatization of stories  
 Read literature as a play  
 Creates joy in reading and builds fluency and comprehension

References:

*Classrooms that Work* by Patricia Cunningham and Richard Allington  
 Bureau of Education Research Training Materials: Using Guided Reading  
*Best Practices in Education* by Steven Zemelman, Arthur Hyde, and Harvey Daniels