



**ELEMENTARY  
TEACHER  
HANDBOOK**

# *Elementary Handbook*

*“When we plant a rose seed in the earth, we notice that it is small, but we do not criticize it as ‘rootless and stemless.’ We treat it as a seed giving it water and nourishment required of a seed. When it first shoots up out of the earth, we don’t condemn it as immature and underdeveloped; nor do we criticize the buds for not being open when they appear. We stand in wonder at the process taking place and give the plant the care it needs at each stage of development. The rose is a rose from the time it is a seed to the time it dies. Within it, at all times, it contains its whole potential. It seems to be constantly in the process of change; yet at each state, at each moment, it is perfectly all right as it is.”*

*Timothy Gallway*

*Barry Beauchamp, Superintendent*

*Dr. Linda Dzialo, Deputy Superintendent*

*Billy C. Davis, Executive Director of Elementary Education*

*Linda Myers, Executive Director of Early Childhood*

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## *About Teachers, We Believe.....*

*Teachers show respect for children's ideas, feelings, and actions.*

*Teachers recognize and consider children's home environments and cultural uniquenesses in planning curriculum.*

*Teachers use evaluation to gain information and apply it in seeking better ways of encouraging and providing for children's learning.*

*Teachers' expectations affect students' achievements and attitudes.*

*Teachers are knowledgeable of the process by which children learn best.*

*Teachers provide activities based upon children's interests and developmental levels.*

*Teachers provide an accepting, non-threatening climate for the development of literacy.*

*Teachers provide an exciting, literate environment which fosters independent learners.*

*Teachers share children's strengths and needs with parents, and actively encourage parent participation in their children's learning.*

*Teachers are active learners and see the classroom as an opportunity for their personal growth and change and their classrooms reflect this.*

# *About Children, We Believe.....*

*Children have a literacy base which begins in infancy and is enriched and refined in the school setting.*

*Children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process.*

*Children have a natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.*

*Children are unique individuals with strengths and needs which must be recognized and addressed.*

*Children need personal and concrete experiences to extend their language and understandings of the world.*

*Children learn through interactions with their peers.*

*Children learn from adult models.*

*Children will freely seek self-expression in an accepting climate.*

*Children's learning is stimulated in a rich, literate environment.*

*Children can become self-directed learners and take responsibility for their own learning.*

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

- \* Abundance of trade books
- \* Availability of materials
- \* Abundance of print
- \* Verbal interaction and opportunities for language use  
(Teacher-Student Student-Student)
- \* Students view themselves as authors and readers
- \* Creativity
- \* Flexibility and choice of activities
- \* Language activities related to real life
- \* Student's work valued and shared
- \* Active classroom library
- \* Time for brainstorming, writing, sharing, feedback, rewriting, and book sharing
- \* Time to linger, reread, retell, and rethink
- \* Cooperative / collaborative groups
- \* Positive reinforcement
- \* Business noise and movement
- \* Student centered
- \* Networking
- \* Manipulatives and experiments
- \* Evidence of students' work in the environment
- \* Students are independent, not dependent
- \* Teacher working with and among students

## *Checking - In and Withdrawing Students*

## **CHECKLIST FOR WITHDRAWING STUDENTS**

1. The teacher should fill out the Student Withdrawal Sheet. Students withdrawing during the first nine-week period will receive evaluation and attendance on the student withdrawal sheet. Students withdrawing after the first nine-weeks will receive a report card and a student withdrawal sheet with the information for the current reporting period on it.
  
2. The student should check in all state textbooks and library books.
  
3. The teacher should check the cumulative folder for the following items:
  - Reading Sufficiency Plan
  
  - Reading Tests (End of book tests)-If applicable
  
  - Writing Portfolios
  
  - Report cards (if applicable)

**A student transferring into the Lawton Public School district who has attended fifteen (15) days will receive a completed report card at the end of that reporting period. A student in attendance less than fifteen (15) days will receive the comment “Insufficient Attendance” in the column designated for grades; unless, the teacher feels there is sufficient data to make an evaluation. The report to the parent is based on the days attended in the district.**

**Schools receiving students from within the district will initiate the report card at the end of the nine-week period utilizing the information from the present school. Attendance on the report card will reflect the total number of days in the district.**

**Students withdrawing from the district within ten (10) days prior to the last day of the school year may receive a (COMPLETED) report card. For students withdrawing before this ten (10) day period, the normal procedure for withdrawing students will be followed. Students who are absent, who have not withdrawn from school, will not be given report cards until the last day of school. Report cards may be picked up at the school or, upon request, will be mailed to the parent.**

## *Maintaining the Student Record*

## **EXPLANATION OF PERMANENT RECORD CARD (Record of Attendance, Health, and Academic Progress)**

Each student entering the Lawton Public School District will have completed upon enrollment a Permanent Record Card (or the Record of Attendance, Health and Academic Progress). It includes such important data as verification of age by birth certificate, proof of immunization, and any unusual health problems. The top of the card should be typed. However, the recording of grades and other information may be handwritten with black ink.

The Data Center will prepare and issue Permanent Record Cards for Kindergarten students upon request. The school secretary will type the information from the Enrollment Card to the Permanent Record Card for all other students. A Permanent Record Card will be initiated for students in grades K-5 and a second card will be initiated for sixth year students.

Semester grades will be given for the number of days in attendance in Lawton Public Schools. Students entering the district and in attendance for fifteen (15) days will receive semester grades.

Results from standardized tests should be placed on the back of the permanent record card where additional space is available for test results and other information. Information must be signed and dated.

At the end of the school term, sixth year permanent records and the cumulative folders for the students who are entering middle school are to be alphabetized and an alphabetical list (in triplicate) prepared. One copy of the list will accompany the permanent records and the cumulative folders to the receiving middle school; one copy will be sent to the Student Services Department; and one copy retained at the sending school for reference. Sixth grade cumulative folders that are forwarded to the middle schools should contain:

1. immunization records;
2. verification of address if available;
3. standardized test scores;
4. copy of birth certificate and social security card if available; and
5. legal documents such as custodial/guardianship papers, restraining orders; and/or legal name change papers.

At the end of the school term teachers' grade books and PASS documentation will be maintained on file at the school site for five years. Principals should maintain these records in a centralized file.

At the end of each semester, the student's current progress will be recorded relative to the standards for their particular grade level and the grading scale appropriate for that grade level's standards at that point in time.

Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Transitional-First will be evaluated with ( + ) Masters standards consistently, ( √ ) Demonstrates skill but needs more practice, ( \ ) Needs more time to grow and develop, (N/A) Not assessed at this time.

Primary students (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade) will evaluate students with (4) Exceeds grade level standards, (3) Meets grade level standards, (2) Improving but not meeting grade level standards, (1) Not meeting grade level standards, (N/A) Not assessed at this time.

Intermediate students (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade) will be evaluated with (A) 90-100%, (B) 80-89%, (C) 70-79%, (D) 60-69%, (U) below 60%.

## **EXPLANATION OF CUMULATIVE FOLDER**

Each student entering the Lawton Public School District will have a cumulative folder. It will be initiated and prepared by the classroom teacher for each new student enrolled. Entry information such as name, address, grade, parent's name, etc., may be typed or handwritten.

Cumulative folders will contain information to include :

- \* Standardized Test and Criterion Reference Test Results

- \* Writing Samples

One sample per quarter should be retained in the student portfolio.

All writing samples should be sent home with fifth graders at the end of the fifth grade year.

- \* Reading Sufficiency Educational Plans

- \* ELL Test Results

- \* MAT Test Results

- \* 504 Plan

## **TRANSFERRING THE STUDENT RECORD**

### **STUDENT TRANSFERS WITHIN THE LAWTON SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Permanent record cards received from another school within the Lawton School District should be maintained by the receiving school.

Each school should keep a separate active file and a separate drop file for the permanent record cards and cumulative folders.

Upon request from the receiving school, the permanent record card and the cumulative folder of the student transferring from the sending school within the Lawton School district should be updated, (including grades, credit accrued, attendance, etc.), checked thoroughly, and forwarded to the receiving school. Before forwarding the permanent record card and the cumulative folder, the sending school should **keep a copy** of the permanent record card for future reference.

All records, with the exception of the Student Withdrawal Sheet, will be sent to the receiving school by the school distribution service in the envelope designed for that purpose.

The receiving school should check the incoming student records for accuracy and completeness of information.

### **STUDENT TRANSFERS IN THE LAWTON SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Permanent record cards received from schools outside the Lawton School District should be evaluated by the school principal, secretary, and the classroom teacher.

A new permanent record card will be prepared by the receiving school. The record received from the sending school should be placed in the cumulative folder.

### **STUDENT TRANSFERS FROM THE LAWTON SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Permanent record cards of students transferring from the Lawton School District should be updated and checked thoroughly. The permanent record card should be filed in the Drop File and upon request, **a copy of the permanent record card should be forward to the receiving school.**

The cumulative folder should be checked and cleared of unnecessary, sensitive, and non-pertinent information. The cumulative folder will be sent along with the **copy** of the permanent record card to the requesting school. Parents may request to sign a release form allowing them to hand-carry the cumulative record folder with a **copy of the permanent record card** to the new school. The student must receive a check-out sheet. Parents are to check the student out of school and clear records and debts before receiving the Student Withdrawal Sheet.

### **DROPS AND NO SHOWS**

After the beginning of the new school term, some time after the first nine weeks of school, the Student Services Department will request the permanent records of those students that left the Lawton School District during the previous school year and the permanent records of students that did not return for the new school term.

An alphabetical list (in duplicate) will be prepared. One copy of the list will be sent with the permanent records to the Student Services Department and one copy will be retained at the sending school for reference.

### **REQUESTING RECORDS OF FORMER STUDENTS**

If a former student re-enrolls in the Lawton Public Schools, the receiving school may initiate a Request for Permanent Record. This request should be sent to the last school of attendance in the Lawton School System or to the Student Services department in the Shoemaker Education Center.

## *Grading and Reporting*

## **EXPLANATION OF PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRESS REPORT**

The **Pre-Kindergarten Progress Card** is used to report progress of those students who are enrolled in the Lawton Public School District's Four-Year Old Program. The Pre-Kindergarten Progress Card evaluates student behaviors that are intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically developmentally appropriate for the four-year old student.

The coding system to be used to evaluate behaviors listed on the Progress Card is:

- ( + ) Masters standards consistently
- ( √ ) Demonstrates skill but needs more practice
- ( / ) Needs more time to grow and develop
- (N/A) Not assessed at this time

The **Pre-Kindergarten Progress Card** is to be completed at the end of each semester.

## EXPLANATION OF KINDERGARTEN PROGRESS REPORT

The **Kindergarten Progress Card** is used to report progress of those students who are enrolled in the Lawton Public School District's Kindergarten program. The Kindergarten Progress Card evaluates student behaviors that are intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically developmentally appropriate for the kindergarten student.

The coding system to be used to evaluate behaviors listed on the Progress Card is:

- ( + ) Masters standards consistently
- ( √ ) Demonstrates skill but needs more practice
- ( / ) Needs more time to grow and develop
- (N/A) Not assessed at this time

The **Kindergarten Progress Card** is to be completed at the end of each nine week grading period.

## **EXPLANATION OF TRANSITIONAL-FIRST YEAR PROGRESS REPORT**

The **Report of Student's Progress in Transitional-First Year** is an evaluation based on recorded observations of standards in actual verbal and nonverbal behaviors, and/or significant shifts in general social, emotional and intellectual development of the transitional-first year student. The format of the transitional-first progress report is a reporting of standards through ongoing assessment during the course of each quarter. It is intended to present an objective overview of a student's interests, strengths, instructional needs, and concrete evidence of progress in the areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, Personal Skills, Science, Social Studies, Behaviors That Promote Learning, Music, Physical Education, and Additional Studies.

It is the responsibility of the transitional-first year teacher to complete the progress report. It is the responsibility of the Physical Education teacher and the Music teacher to mark the Physical Education and Music codes.

The **Report of Student's Progress in Transitional-First Year** is to be completed at the end of each quarter.

## **EXPLANATION OF PRIMARY PROGRESS REPORT**

The evaluation of student progress in the Lawton Public Schools is a highly individualized approach. Instead of measuring a student's learning by comparing one student to another, emphasis is put on determining the amount of growth the student has achieved related to the state standards from one nine week grading period to another. Thus, the Report of Primary Student's Individual Progress reflects the student's present learning to his/her own past achievement.

### **Explanation of Progress Marks**

- 4 - Exceeds grade level standards
- 3 - Meets grade level standards
- 2 - Improving but not meeting grade level standards
- 1 - Not meeting grade level standards
- N/A - Not assessed at this time

### **Behaviors That Promote Learning**

- ( + ) Meeting Expectations
- ( √ ) Inconsistent
- ( \ ) Not Meeting Expectations

Comment boxes have been printed on the back of the report card to accommodate further communication or explanation to the parent.

# EXPLANATION OF INTERMEDIATE PROGRESS REPORT

The evaluation of student progress in the Lawton Public Schools is a highly individualized approach. Instead of measuring a student's learning by comparing one student to another, emphasis is put on determining the amount of growth the student has achieved related to the state standards from one nine week grading period to another. Thus, the Report of Intermediate Student Progress reflects the student's present learning to his/her own past achievement.

## **Explanation of Progress Marks**

**A, B, C, D, and U** will be used in reporting to parents the following areas: **Reading Standards, Language Arts Standards, Math Standards, Science Standards, and Social Studies Standards.** The grading scale for performance is as follows:

A = 90 - 100%

B = 80 - 89%

C = 70 - 79%

D = 60 - 69%

U = Below 60%

The progress report will be based on an average of grades recorded from daily work, tests, projects, etc. Daily papers from which grades are recorded will be marked in 4-point grading scale, letter grade, or numerical grade. Other daily work can be graded with symbols or remarks as deemed appropriate by the individual teacher. The teacher's grade book shall serve as the source in determining grades for students. Such records shall be consistent with district guidelines.

The **Report of Intermediate Student's Individual Progress** is a report of the quality of work done during the nine weeks according to the standards for the particular grade level. No pluses or minuses should be used (A+, C-, etc).

## **Coding of Music, Physical Education, and Additional Studies**

The evaluating of these academic areas will be through the Evaluation Key:

4 - Exceeds grade level standards

3 - Meets grade level standards

2 - Improving but not meeting grade level standards

1 - Not meeting grade level standards

N/A - Not assessed at this time

## **Behaviors That Promote Learning**

These areas of Attentive Listening, Personal Best, and Mutual Respect will be evaluated by the following marking system:

( + ) - Meeting Expectations

( / ) - Inconsistent

( \ ) - Not Meeting Expectations

## **Marking Daily Papers**

Teachers may "grade" daily papers with the marks which they feel are appropriate for the specific paper. One paper may need to be scored with a percentage grade, while another paper may need to have teacher remarks or a symbol to indicate that the paper was done as a group activity. When possible the remarks need to be positive and that which would enhance the student's feeling of self-worth.

Teachers need to keep sufficient data to have meaningful conferences with parents. Some teachers will feel comfortable in the conference with a grade book in which they have recorded significant samples of daily work. Teachers may also show the progress of the student using portfolio assessment. Portfolios contain a collection of authentic student work samples from all academic areas. Portfolios may contain anecdotal records, writing samples, reading responses, reading records, audio tapes, finished projects, checklists, learning logs, student conference records, samples of daily work, etc.

## **POLICY ON APPEAL: STUDENT RETENTION OR GRADE APPEAL**

It is the policy of the Lawton Board of Education that the principal and the teacher have the authority to decide whether a student will be promoted, retained, or receives a passing grade in any given course. This policy, however, does not eliminate principal, teacher, and parent conferences concerning such actions.

Decisions made according to the procedure outlined above shall be subject to appeal to the district office administration and the board of education. The appeal process will be as follows:

1. A parent or guardian, if dissatisfied with the teacher's or principal's decision to retain a student at the present grade level or to not pass a student from a course, may appeal by submitting a written response to the Executive Director of Elementary or Secondary Education.
2. A review of the written request will be conducted by the Executive Director of Elementary or Secondary Education within two weeks of such request. A written response of the review will be forwarded to the parent. A conference may be called by the Executive Director to discuss findings.
3. Upon findings of this review, a parent or guardian may proceed by submitting a written appeal to the board of education.
4. Members of the board of education will review findings of the Executive Director of Elementary or Secondary Education and the written appeal submitted by the parents. Upon this review, the board of education will take appropriate action. The decision of the board will be final. (Oklahoma Statutes, Title 70, Section 24-114.1)

## **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES**

A minimum of one (1) parent-teacher conference is required each school year. This conference should be scheduled by the teacher. Additional conferences will be scheduled, however, at the request of the parent, teacher, principal, or other appropriate education staff members. The scheduled parent-teacher conference day is usually scheduled in late October or early November each fall. Please consult the annual school calendar for the specific conference date. Students do not attend classes on that day.

Teachers need to keep sufficient data to have meaningful conferences with parents. Some teachers will feel comfortable in the conference with a grade book in which they have recorded significant samples of daily work. Other teachers will be able to show the progress of the student using portfolio assessment. Portfolios contain a collection of authentic student work samples from all academic areas. Portfolios may contain anecdotal records, writing samples, reading responses, reading records, audio tapes, finished projects, checklists, learning logs, student conference records, samples of daily work, etc.

A parent-teacher conference should be held not later than February 15, informing the parent of the progress of the student for possible reassignment.

Another parent-teacher conference is then needed before the end of school to make a final determination of placement of the student for the following year.

On the "Record of Attendance, Health and Academic Progress" there is space available to make a notation of conferences held with parents. According to HB 1017, Section 66, no student shall be advanced to a higher grade level after a recommendation of a teacher that the child should be retained in the child's present grade level unless a written request for such advancement is signed by a parent or guardian. A copy of the request shall be included in the permanent record of the student.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school on a regular and punctual basis. The purpose is to help students learn daily and be educationally prepared for the next school year. The District believes that teaching children the importance of regular and punctual attendance also helps them mature into responsible adults who will one day be prepared for the world of work. Children are expected to be in school a minimum of ninety per cent (90%) of the time. The following steps assist in accomplishing this goal.

1. Before 9:30 a.m., on the day of any absence, it is the responsibility of the students' parent/guardian/legal custodian (hereby referred to as the parent) to notify the school secretary or building administrator regarding the reason for the absence. In the event the school is not contacted, a school official will attempt to contact the parent.
2. If a student has three unexcused absences, a school official will contact the child's home, and the child's parent will be required to meet with the school official to discuss the unexcused absences, as well as the student's academic standing and potential for success in school.
3. Following the fourth unexcused absence, the parent will be required to meet with an administrator from the District Office of Student Services, and sign a statement of understanding regarding Oklahoma's school attendance laws.
4. In accordance with Oklahoma School Law (Section 232) when a child is truant four (4) or more days or parts of days within a four-week period or is absent without valid excuse for ten (10) or more days or parts of days within a semester, the District Office of Student Services shall report such absences to the Comanche County District Attorney. *The District Attorney has responsibility for initiating legal proceedings pursuant to Title 10 of the Oklahoma Statutes. (70-10-106).*

#### **Attendance and Ability to Receive Credit**

**No student shall receive semester credit in a course in which the student is absent more than ten (10) days per semester excluding approved activity absences, court appearances, religious observances, or illnesses documented by a licensed medical practitioner.** The building principal shall have discretionary authority to approve any make up or waiver for days missed beyond the 10-day limit.

#### **Attendance and Removal from Attendance Roll**

In compliance with Oklahoma School Law (Section 387/Part 2), a student who has been absent without a valid excuse for ten (10) consecutive days shall be removed for the District's attendance roll beginning with the eleventh day.

## **PROFICIENCY BASED PROMOTION**

To assure that maximum opportunities for students' individual learning needs are met, Lawton Public Schools offers a Proficiency Based Promotion option for grades one through twelve.

Upon request of a student or parent, students in grades one through twelve may demonstrate proficiency in the Priority Academic Student Skill (P.A.S.S.). Lawton Public Schools recommends that parents confer with the child and the child's counselor before proceeding.

In order to receive credit through Proficiency Based Promotion, students must pass two test components at 90% or higher:

1. a criterion referenced test; and
2. a performance component.

After successfully completing both components, and other appropriate consultation with parents, students will be promoted and will receive credit on the permanent record.

The Proficiency Based Promotion test will be administered twice each year in the months of April and July.

# *Curriculum*

# CURRICULUM

Lawton Public Schools stresses an instructional approach that is learner-centered, building on each child's individual strengths and meeting their needs with acceptance and understanding. Our goal is to provide instruction in a meaningful, integrated manner to assist children in seeing connections among all curriculum areas as well as connections between school and real life experiences.

The Priority Academic Student Skills (P.A.S.S.), mandated by House Bill 1017 and initiated by the State Board of Education, defines the basic skills and knowledge all Oklahoma students should learn in the elementary and secondary grades. Thus, the Priority Academic Students Skills provides the framework for curriculum and instruction in the Lawton Public Schools. Using P.A.S.S. as the curriculum guide, teachers may select from a wide variety of materials, resources, and instructional strategies to teach the P.A.S.S. curriculum. Materials and resources include: quality children's literature, text books, reference materials, audio-visual materials, computers, hands-on materials, and community resources. Instructional strategies include: literature-based reading, reading and writing processes, cooperative learning groups, hands-on experiments, manipulative math, theme units or cycles, integrated curriculum, whole language, and learning styles.

In planning instruction to teach the P.A.S.S. curriculum, it is important that teachers be well grounded in learning theory. Research tells us that children are natural learners and they come to school with five years of experience as budding curriculum developers. Learning begins at birth and by the time children enter kindergarten, they have extensive experiences on which to build. Children's acquisition of knowledge is a constructive act building from what they already know to what they want or need to know. Research has given rise to the following learning principles:

1. Learners construct meaning for themselves, most readily in context where they can actively transact, or interact, with other people, with books, and with objects and materials in the external world. The most significant and enduring learning, particularly of concepts and complex processes, is likely to be that which is constructed by the learner, not imposed from without.
2. When learning is perceived as functional to and purposeful for the learner, it is more likely to endure. That is the most significant learning derives from that which arouses the interest, meets the needs, and furthers the purposes of the learner in the here and now.
3. In order to engage themselves wholeheartedly in learning, however, learners must be confident that they will be safe from negative repercussions. That is, the environment for learning must be risk-free.
4. Though there are developmental trends among learners, learning is fundamentally idiosyncratic, even chaotic; the nature and course of each individual's learning are unique.
5. Individual learning is promoted by social collaboration: by opportunities to work with others, to brainstorm, to try out ideas, and get feedback, to obtain assistance. In short, learning is facilitated by a community of learners.

Several implications for curriculum and instruction derive from what we know about how children learn:

1. Since learning proceeds best when learners engage in authentic learning experiences; the curriculum should consist not of worksheets and dittos but of opportunities to engage in the myriad kinds of reading, discussions, experimentation, and research that children and adults voluntarily engage in outside of school. "Opportunities" also imply a strong element of choice for learners.
2. Since choice is an important factor in facilitating learning, the curriculum is in many respects negotiated among the teacher and their students. Ultimately the teacher determines in what respects and in what instances learners may make choices, but often curricular decisions are made by the teacher and students together, during long-range planning and also in the daily give-and-take of the classroom. Often, curriculum develops around topics and themes, with language and literacy developing through and across the curriculum.
3. Since learning opportunities need to be perceived as functional and purposeful by the learner, it follows that language itself must be kept natural and whole. This means that emergent readers will be assisted in reading rhymes, songs, and repetitive and predictable stories rather than stilted, unnatural, fragmented language; they will read whole texts rather than the contextless bits and pieces of language that characterize worksheets and workbooks. Similarly, students will write authentic stories, poems, letters, and other pieces, not assignments like composing a story on "The day I woke up as a pencil," copying a poem from the blackboard, or filling in the blanks or lines of a workbook page.
4. Direct and indirect instruction of the "parts" of language occurs in the context of the whole and in the context of the students' need. For example, the teacher will show one or more students how to punctuate dialogue when the students have actually used dialogue in writing a story, not through an isolated skill lesson on quotation marks. Phonics skills are developed through writing and in the context of enjoying a rhyme or song, not through worksheet practice. And reading strategies are developed in the context of real reading.

In summary, learning in school should be as social and functional as it is outside of school. Based on this belief, teachers should strive to create an environment where children are (1) trusted to be meaning makers, (2) given choices within reasonable parameters to focus their interests and energies, (3) supported in a community of learners, and (4) free to make mistakes and try again. The learners in the classroom should always be the "starting point" from which other instructional decisions and direction emerge. A critical aspect of curriculum and instruction is that rather than being an external realm of information imposed on children, curriculum should take on meaning as it emerges from and is mediated by the learner's real experience. Also, curriculum should focus as much on process as it does product.

## **WHAT IS MEANT BY CONTINUOUS PROGRESS?**

Continuous progress refers to a student's progress from time of school entry until graduation. With continuous progress, students are challenged appropriately according to their ability to master intellectual, physical, emotional, and social tasks at progressively more difficult levels. Continuous progress means that students should neither spend time on what they have already adequately achieved, nor proceed to more difficult tasks if they have not yet learned materials or acquired skills essential to that new level of knowledge.

## **WHAT DOES A CONTINUOUS PROGRESS CURRICULUM LOOK LIKE?**

The premise of the continuous progress curriculum is that every child is unique and has an individual pattern and timing for growth. In other words, no two children learn and grow intellectually, emotionally, physically, or socially at the same rate or at the same pace. Continuous progress provides opportunities for children to build progressively on their developing knowledge base. There is respect for different learning styles and paces. It is understood that the time it takes for children to reach certain developmental levels is a variable, prompting the elimination of grade-level barriers or time-based finish lines. Teachers structure a supportive learning environment where children feel successful and competent, develop positive self-concepts, and are helpful and sensitive to others.

Specifically, the continuous progress curriculum has the following characteristics:

- \* It is integrated. Separate subjects are replaced by an integrated curriculum which engages children in meaningful activities that explore concepts and topics relevant and meaningful to children's lives.
- \* A developmental approach to teaching reading and writing is the basis of the language arts program.

Continuous progress accepts each child at his or her place on developmental learning continuums. These continuums contain benchmarks which clearly define major stages of growth. They allow teachers to assess, evaluate, and plan curriculum according to the individual developmental abilities of each child. . .not according to grade level expectations.

# GUIDELINES FOR HOMEWORK

To assist educators with maximizing effectiveness from their use of homework, the following rationale and guidelines are offered.

The careful provision of homework can make a positive contribution toward helping students to become independent learners. Students who develop responsibility and good study skills will learn much more when on their own than those who do not develop such skills.

Because there are so many types of homework assignments, these guidelines must be applied to the situations where they are appropriate. Consider the age of your students, community, and family needs, the goals of your school and the relevance of the homework assignment when adapting these guidelines to your particular situation.

1. **Inform parents.** Communicate with parents about the importance of homework in your class, your expectations, and recommended procedures. Good communication is a key to gaining parent support.
2. **Require pupils to demonstrate instructional competence before they engage in independent work.** Stated another way, children who cannot do the work in class cannot be expected to complete it by themselves.
3. **Assign homework at pupils' independent reading level.** For skills practice, exercises that pupils can read are essential. Materials should be simple enough that the pupils can focus their attention on the skills practice rather than decoding the text.
4. **Be sure students have available the materials necessary to complete their assignments.** From one perspective, we must ascertain whether pupils have the encyclopedias, trade books, transportation to a the library, and materials to construct new projects. From a different point of view, we need to review assignments at the end of the day to be certain that pupils take home the appropriate books and other resources.
5. **Provide structure (scaffolding) that facilitates the completions of a content-area reading assignment.** In social studies, for example, (a) provide background reading, (b) present vocabulary crucial for understanding key concepts, and (c) provide purposes for reading. These three strategies enable pupils to approach the homework assignment with a greater likelihood of success.
6. **For reports and projects, teach the strategies required for the successful completion of the assignment.** Don't assume that previous teachers have taught these strategies. Sometimes students submit poor reports and projects because they lack skill in the component strategies required for success of the task.
7. **Make the homework assignment relevant.** Instead of just correcting a friendly letter in a language book, pupils might write a letter to relatives or friends. Instead of just reading about a war, students might interview veterans. Relevancy is a crucial component for motivation and meaning.
8. **Explain why homework is important.** While careful explanation provides no assurance that students will understand or agree, a failure to point out the value almost inevitably will convince many students that homework is just a meaningless busywork assignment. At the beginning of the year, and periodically thereafter, explain why homework is important.

9. **Check homework.** Pupils learn very quickly not to spend time and energy on work that is not checked. If the homework is truly important, it should be checked. Incidentally, research supports the practice of recording specific comments on student work. It provides feedback and shows students you value their efforts.
  
10. **Be sensitive to the amount of time that students must spend on homework.** Suggested time allotments are: 30 minutes an evening for primary students and one hour per evening for intermediate students.

## **FOUR-YEAR OLD PROGRAM**

Lawton Public Schools offers an early childhood program for four-year olds. Any child who is four (4) years of age but not more than five (5) years of age on or before September 1, is entitled to attend the four-year old program.

The four-year old program shall be directed toward developmentally appropriate objectives which meet the child's developmental level, rather than academic objectives. The teachers of the four-year old program will be certified in early childhood education and shall be well grounded in the principles of developmentally appropriate practices as they relate to the physical, social, emotional, as well as intellectual development of four-year olds.

In planning the curriculum and instruction for the four-year old program, teachers should consider (1) the careful design of the learning environment and selection of materials, (2) the diverse roles that teachers play in the management of that environment, and (3) the interactions children experience with their environment, and the materials and people within it.

Young children learn through interacting and playing with the materials, objects, and people surrounding them. They are shaped by the many encounters they experience each day. Teachers play a critical role as architects and designers of the learning environment. For optimal learning, teachers must create a space that encourages and supports the kinds of play that are young children's primary avenue to growth and development. Young children learn through self-selected activities while participating in a variety of centers which are interesting and meaningful to them. Learning centers include: socio-dramatic, block, science, math, manipulatives, listening, reading, writing, art, music, and construction.

## **KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM**

The Lawton Public Schools provides full-day kindergarten for all children five years of age on or before September 1. All teachers of kindergarten must be certified in early childhood education. Kindergarten programs are to be developmentally appropriate. Instruction is based on the knowledge of how young children develop and learn. It is directed toward the education of the whole child, physically, socially, cognitively and creatively. Developmentally appropriate programs are:

- \* Age appropriate which considers the developmental stages of the children when preparing the classroom environment and planning appropriate experiences.
- \* Individual appropriate which considers and respects each child's individual pattern of growth, learning style and cultural background.
- \* Programs that provide an integrated curriculum which integrates all content areas around a theme. The school day is not divided into blocks of time by content area. The Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) for kindergarten are a prime foundation of the program.
- \* Programs that provide an environment which is arranged in learning areas that allow children choices to work at different levels on different activities and does not require all of the children to do the same thing at the same time.
- \* Programs that provide a balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, active and quiet activities, independent and guided activities, large and small groups, and individual activities.
- \* Programs that provide a learning process that is active, not passive. Children interact with each other and materials while they engage in cooperative "hands-on" learning with real experiences.
- \* Programs that provide curriculum which builds upon what children already know and are able to do to enable them to connect new concepts and skills.

## **TRANSITIONAL FIRST YEAR**

The Lawton Public Schools maintains a child-centered philosophy of education which considers each child as an individual and meets each child's needs with acceptance and understanding.

The transitional first year program is designed to meet the needs of children who have completed kindergarten but are not developmentally ready for the academic instruction of a typical first year class. Children who qualify for the transitional first year class are intellectually bright but display social, emotional, and / or physical development "youngness." The transitional first year class will offer opportunities for children to explore, manipulate and learn through the use of a wide variety of materials, through learning centers and interaction with peers and teachers.

These experiences, in a stress-free environment, will set the stage for high self-esteem and a positive learning experience so that each child can reach their full potential.

# **FAMILY LIFE PROGRAM**

## **Philosophical Statement**

It is the philosophy of the Lawton Public Schools that the parents or the child's guardians are the primary educators of their children and they are the first source to recognize a child's need for education in human sexuality. Nothing can replace each family's appropriate response to this need. As a support system for the family and its values, the public schools with the direction and support of the community and the approval of the Board of Education will have a family life program.

Elementary schools are in many ways a social center of peer activity. Since peer group sharing is often a vehicle for discussing sex-related subjects, we wish to create an atmosphere which not only dispels anxiety-producing myths but underlines the basic idea that sexuality is a serious subject.

The Family Life curriculum of Lawton Public Schools will be taught during the second semester of the sixth year. AIDS Prevention Education will be included in this curriculum.

## **Guidelines**

In order to implement this philosophical statement, the following guidelines will be observed in the curriculum:

1. Establish an environment which is conducive to responsibility with serious attitudes towards sexual development.
2. Disseminate factual and accurate information.
3. Develop an understanding that physical and emotional maturation occur at different developmental stages for each individual child.
4. Acknowledge that the family is the basic unit in our society.
5. Recognize personal values and their relationship to the family, community, and society.
6. To be aware of and accept the consequences and responsibilities of their decisions.
7. Encourage responsibility for personal hygiene.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL OVERVIEW**

The Family Life program will be an extension of existing programs in health and drug education, science, social studies, and character education. As illustrated by the curriculum outline, it will deal specifically with the realities of physical and emotional maturation. One or more teachers in each elementary school will be designated to provide this instruction. Although each teacher will be expected to gear instruction to the needs of each student group, there will be a degree of uniformity in the procedures used in each school. These procedures will include:

1. The program will be offered to sixth-year students during the second semester.
2. Boys and girls will be in the same class unless the teacher deems it appropriate to separate boys and girls for discussion of specific topics or to accommodate student needs.
3. The unit will cover approximately fifteen to twenty hours of instruction.
4. Planned instruction about masturbation and abortion will not take place; however, any questions raised by students regarding these and other topics will be answered in a factual, non-judgmental manner. Questions which involve value judgments or deal with issues of morality will be identified as such, and students will be encouraged to discuss them with their parents or religious/ethical teachers.
5. Parental approval is essential for a student to participate in this program. Each year the parents of the sixth-year students will be invited to preview the instructional program. Written parental permission for their child to be in this program will be obtained prior to the initiation of the program. Teachers may exclude any student unable to maintain a responsible attitude.
6. A sound academic program as an alternative to participating in the Family Life program will be provided by a teacher for those students whose parents choose to have their children not participate in this program. Alternative programs will be limited to health and drug education, science, social studies, and character education.
7. Prior to beginning this curriculum the two films "Girl to Woman" and "Boy to Man" should be viewed by students.
8. Included in the Family Life program will be a minimum of 90 minutes of instruction on AIDS/HIV Prevention Education taught in a sequential, consistent manner.
9. AIDS/HIV Prevention Education will emphasize that abstinence from sexual activity is the only completely reliable means of preventing HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

## **ELEMENTARY GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAM**

The goal of the Lawton Public Schools elementary guidance and counseling program is to help develop the strengths --- educational, vocational, and social-personal---of all individual elementary children. The elementary counselors see their role as “developmental” in nature. That is, guidance and counseling is a continuing process and has as its clientele ALL children. This approach to counseling emphasizes a proactive, facilitative role in which focus of interest is always the individual growth and development of the child.

A special emphasis of the elementary guidance and counseling program is the facilitation of conflict resolution. The Lawton Public Schools believes that a focus on prevention at all grade levels is the most effective approach to implementation of conflict resolution. The prevention approach is two--pronged: 1) Teachers creating classroom environments that are caring, supportive places where there is a sense of belonging and everyone is valued and respected; and 2) Teaching students strategies for effectively dealing with conflict in appropriate ways.

At the elementary level, conflict resolution is facilitated through the guidance and counseling program with reinforcement from the teachers and principals. A core curriculum published by the Peaceworks Foundation is being utilized by the counselors to teach strategies for dealing with conflict.

## **ELEMENTARY LIBRARY MEDIA SERVICES**

The mission of the Lawton Public School Library Media Program is to provide an atmosphere for enhancing the appreciation and enjoyment of reading, to support the curriculum, and to assist students in the development of lifelong learning.

Each elementary school is assigned at least a part-time certified library media specialist. In addition, each elementary school has one full-time library assistant on staff.

# **FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Foreign language instruction in Lawton Public Schools will be based upon the premise that schools must prepare children to become culturally sensitive and communicatively competent citizens, to interact positively and more effectively with the native speakers they meet and work with in this country, and to develop capabilities of productive citizenship in our community, nation, and the world.

## **K-3 Foreign Language Awareness**

### **Overview**

Children should become aware of different forms of communication. This can be achieved by exposure to other languages and cultures. The K-3 program should encompass broad recognition of varied cultures and geographic locations. These objectives can be accomplished by various activities such as: cooking, resource people, map work, games, music, and folk dancing, video, and computer programs.

The multi-cultural awareness should be integrated into the regular classroom content areas.

## **4-6 Foreign Language**

### **Overview**

A sequential program of a specific foreign language instruction will begin in grades 4-6. The foreign language program will follow a specific plan of scope and sequence that will develop from grade to grade. The Lawton Public Schools has determined that the specific foreign language taught in grades 4-6 will be Spanish.

## **PROGRAMING OPTIONS FOR GIFTED STUDENTS**

The professional staff of each school will provide programming which meets the special needs of students identified as gifted and talented in their building. The goal of comprehensive programming is to provide appropriate educational opportunities for all students. The school site program may include any option but is not limited to any of the options. Appropriate programming for gifted students may include many options designed to meet the needs of the student. Some options are available only at particular grade levels. These programming options may also be appropriate for able learners who have not been identified as gifted. A parent conference must be held prior to a student's exit from a particular programming option.

**Enrichment in the Regular Classroom** - Experiences provided in regular classrooms that are supplemental to the established curriculum and which are purposefully planned with the needs, interests and capabilities of particular students in mind. This curriculum is made up of learning experiences with greater depth and / or breadth for the student who understands abstract ideas, enjoys complexity, and has either a deep or a wide range of interests.

**Summer Enrichment Program** - Enrichment classes or courses offered in the summer at various sites.

**Creative and Academic Competitions** - Organized opportunities for students to enter local, regional, state or national contests in a variety of areas.

**Differentiated Curriculum** - Curriculum designed to meet the needs of high ability students and differentiated according to content, process, and product.

**Learning Centers** - A designated area or portable center designed to enrich and/or accelerate students' interests in a given content area.

**Differentiated or Enriched Classes** - Differentiated curriculum and accelerated content designed for able students.

**Independent Study** - Individually contracted in-depth study of a topic within the classroom.

**Interest-Based Independent Study** - Students are encouraged to pursue their own interests with support and guidance from the teacher.

**Acceleration** - Students progress through the curriculum and / or grade levels at a rate faster than the average.

**Proficiency Based Promotion** - Students advance through levels by demonstrating proficiency at the 90% level or higher.

**Cluster Grouping** - Any classroom with a group of identified able learners purposefully organized to provide planned differentiated instruction most of the time.

**Cross-Grade Grouping** - Opportunity for a student to work in an advanced grade-level setting.

**Curriculum Compacting** - A system designed to adapt the regular curriculum to meet the needs of above average students by either eliminating previously mastered work or streamlining work that may be mastered at a faster pace. The

time gained may be used to provide students with appropriate enrichment and/or acceleration experiences.

**Academic and Creative Thinking Skills** - Specialized one day a week optional pull-out program for fourth, fifth and sixth grade students identified as gifted in the area of intellectual ability.

**Guidance and Counseling** - To assist students in planning their academic careers, and to address the specific social-emotional needs of the gifted to include underachievement.

**Guided Research** - This option allows students to engage in guided research.

**Correspondence Courses** - This option allows high school students to satisfy accredited goals through an approved university.

**Concurrent Enrollment** - Qualified students may enroll in college courses concurrently while in high school according to district and university guidelines.

**Elective Courses** - Students' programming needs in the areas of visual arts, performing arts and leadership are met through a variety of curricular offerings: Band, Orchestra, Vocal Music, Art, leadership classes, etc.

**Seminars** - This option is available from colleges to senior high students on a limited basis.

**Honors Classes** - These classes are available to secondary students who are highly motivated and have the ability to perform successfully in an accelerated course.

**Advanced Placement** - These college-level courses are available to senior high students meeting specific criteria of the individual department. Students may receive college credit by examination.

**REQUEST FORM  
FOR  
FIELD TRIP**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

(Teacher)

FIELD TRIP TO: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF FIELD TRIP: \_\_\_\_\_ HOW MANY STUDENTS?: \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSPORTATION: \_\_\_\_\_ BUS \_\_\_\_\_ CAR

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES:

POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES:

**Lawton Public Schools**  
**Resource Speaker Request**  
*(To be completed by classroom teacher making request)*

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Request: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Resource Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_ Speaker's Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructional Objectives:

Brief Synopsis of Speaker's Content:

**Principal's Approval**

\_\_\_\_\_ Approved

\_\_\_\_\_ Disapproved

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# **LANGUAGE ARTS**

## **PHILOSOPHY**

The teaching of language, both written and spoken, is a life-long process. We believe each child should be given the opportunity to begin reading and writing when he/she is developmentally ready. From the earliest inventive writing in journals to the final senior composition, the ultimate purpose of our language arts program is to develop students who love to read and write, are able to read and write independently for information and pleasure, and who have an appreciation of literature.

The teacher of language arts organizes the class in such a way that each child can experience success. As an observer and facilitator, the teacher builds from individual strengths, tailoring the program to meet individual student needs and learning styles. A positive learning environment that is immersed in literature and interwoven with the writing process will develop readers, writer, thinkers, and communicators.

# READING

Reading is a thinking process, not an automatic response to print. It is an individualistic developmental process which must be nurtured and can be learned best through practice in using the process. It must be evaluated in terms of individual progress in the ability of a pupil to read, independently, a variety of print materials of increasing difficulty.

## THE READING PROCESS

Reading requires interaction between the reader's thought and language and the thought of the writer as represented by print. Through the use of context the reader is able to bring meaning to print. Even when the print is very brief, a reader still can bring meaning to it if the print is presented in a context-rich situation, for example, the EXIT sign by a door. Much of what we read, however, is removed from a physical situation which could provide context; therefore the material must supply its own context. It must be written in natural whole language in which words are presented in such a way that the reader is able to predict and confirm meaning.

As readers construct meaning they bring their language, culture, feelings, ideas, and prejudices. They bring all of their life experiences and background information to the reading act. This includes all the information they are picking up during the reading.

The writer has also brought his life-experience to the writing. If there is too big a gap between the prior knowledge of the writer and the reader, the reading process will collapse. The teacher's job becomes one of finding out if readers have adequate prior knowledge for a particular reading task; if not, they must be provided with appropriate prereading experiences.

The reader is a thinker involved in a systematic series of actions (strategies) towards the end of bringing meaning to print. The strategies a reader uses are:

- predicting**
- confirming or disconfirming and correcting**
- comprehending**

The reader is enabled to use these strategies by his knowledge of three language cueing systems:

- the grapho-phonetic - sound / symbol relationships**
- the syntactic - the grammatical relations and functions of sentence components**
- the semantic - meaning**

Although we elaborate in turn on each of the strategies and cueing systems, it must be emphasized that they are part of an integrated whole, and that without integration the process breaks down.

# THE STRATEGIES A READER USES

## PREDICTING

Readers predict by using grapho-phonetic, syntactic, and semantic cues. Prediction is the energy force that carries the reader along. Prediction helps the reader eliminate unlikely alternatives; possibilities would be limitless and unmanageable without prediction. Deviations from the text are the result of incorrect predictions. They reveal to the teacher how the reader is using the reading process; for example, if a reader substituted “warned” for “worried” in the sentence “Jonathan worried a little about leaving Christine outside,” it can be seen that he is using syntactic and graphophonic cues, but not meaning. “Warned” and “worried” are the same part of speech, the words look somewhat alike, but meaning is lost if one is substituted for the other.

Predictions are triggered by the schemata brought to mind before and during reading.

How well a reader is able to predict depends on:

- understanding that prediction is a part of reading,
- confidence in ability to predict and willingness to risk,
- familiarity with, and interest in the material,
- having, selecting and using the appropriate schemata,
- the predictability of the text.

## USING PREDICTION

Prediction is used at all levels: book, chapter, section, paragraph, word, and letter. As a reader proceeds through a text, prediction strategies change; for example, a reader needs to use fewer cues to predict once he has an idea what the author is trying to do and the structure of the writing.

A reader is unable to predict when the material is incomplete or poorly written, or the reader does not have the prior knowledge required to read it, or he does not understand what he should be trying to do.

## CONFIRMING

Readers, when they are using the process efficiently, confirm their predictions using syntax, semantics, and grapho-phonics by asking themselves:

- Does what I have predicted sound like language?
- Does it make sense?
- Does the print confirm it?

If predictions are confirmed, reading is continued. If predictions are disconfirmed, efficient readers go back, or read ahead for more information upon which to base new predictions. Readers then seek to confirm their new predictions.

Whether or not readers confirm or disconfirm depends on their:

- prior knowledge
- understanding that confirming is a part of reading
- knowing that they have resources within themselves that enable them to confirm
- believing that reading is a process of constructing meaning

The effectiveness of confirming strategies depends on the reader’s prior knowledge and the quality of the text. Readers’ correction strategies reveal whether or not readers are confirming prediction. They also reveal the cues readers are using to do so.

## **COMPREHENDING**

The terms “integrating” and “comprehending” are both used as the desired result of reading. Integration is subsumed by comprehension. It is through integrating the use of language cues to predict and confirm that a reader comprehends. Using one cueing system without integrating it with the other systems results in a breakdown of the reading process.

The knowledge a reader has of language cues, and the way in which he uses that knowledge, are dependent on prior experience which is different for each individual. Therefore, when we say that comprehension is the result of the integrated use of language cues, it necessarily follows that comprehension is different for each reader.

Comprehension is finding answers to one’s own predictions or questions, not to someone else’s questions. Believing this means we do not try to teach comprehension by asking children questions. Rather, we use techniques that try to broaden children’s life experiences so that they have a greater resource of prior knowledge to bring to reading.

# THE LANGUAGE CUES A READER USES

## GRAPHO-PHONICS

Using grapho-phonics (sound / symbol relationships) is a part of reading, but grapho-phonics must be used in balance with syntactic and semantic cues. Teachers should teach phonics in a variety of ways and assess continuously, rather than test as an isolated skill. What teachers assess is whether and how well children use phonics in conjunction with other important cueing systems AS THEY READ, not how well students complete worksheets. It is one thing to KNOW phonics (worksheets) and another thing to be able to USE phonics in the act of reading.

We know that reading does not proceed by grapho / phonemics alone. Rather, proficient reading involves the use of context to predict what is coming next; the selective sampling of grapho / phonemic cues to interpret tentatively the word in question; and the use of following context to confirm or correct this tentative interpretation. Thus reading involves the constant interplay of all the language cue systems; grapho / phonemic, syntactic, and semantic.

Important information about the teaching of phonics includes:

1. First, phonics must be taught not as a method of reading, but as one cue system that is important to meaning.
2. Context should be the first cue to word identification (or more properly, to meaning).
3. Where a choice must be made from among several words that would reasonably fit the given context, phonics knowledge becomes an invaluable aid.
4. However, “sounding out” a word is cumbersome, time-consuming, and unnecessary. By using context, we can identify words with only minimal attention to grapho-phonemic cues.
5. Children should be taught the basic symbol / sound relations for consonants: the single consonants; consonant digraphs (ch, th, etc.); and consonant clusters (st, bl, etc.)
6. It is much less important to teach symbol / sound relations for vowels, since they are much less useful in word identification.

When teaching the grapho-phonemic cueing system, the following strategies may be modeled and discussed with children:

- Use the first letter to predict what the word might be.
- Use the first letter(s), last letter, length of word, configuration of word to confirm what the word is.
- While reading to the class, leave off the last word or words in a line, or say the first sound of a word in a text and ask the children to predict what it could be.
- Show the first letter or letters of a word in a text, and ask the children to predict what it could be.
- Ask students, “Does it look right”?

## Suggested Ways to Teach Phonics

1. **Start With Whole Texts.** In order to engage the children in learning phonics as part of the reading process, it is important that they are first immersed in complete and engaging texts. Such engagement is encouraged in the contexts listed here.

\* Reading aloud and shared reading of:

nursery rhymes	raps	predictable stories
lists	songs	finger plays
chants	riddles and jokes	poems
stories with word play	stories with rhyme and repetition	

\* Writing aloud and shared writing of:

morning messages	letters	dictated stories
lists	content-area work	signs
procedures	rules	language experience
innovations on stories, songs, and chants		

\* Reading “just right” books

\* Journal entries and other free-choice writing.

2. **Focus on Sentences.** Starting with a meaningful text, sentences can be taken out of context, analyzed, cut apart, and then put back and read again in the context of the whole. These types of texts are useful starting points:

predictable stories	morning messages	language experience
dictated stories	content-area work	letters
personal journal entries	stories with rhyme and repetition	
innovations on stories, songs, and chants		

3. **Focus on Words.** It is appropriate to focus on words and word parts in isolation, but only as part of a larger literacy context such as writing in a content area, spelling words in a personal letter, or reading a book. Once again, we go from whole to part to whole. The best source of words is those that are familiar to the children, either through repeated readings or through stories they have authored. Activities that help focus on words include:

alliteration	matching	word searches
word games	personal dictionaries	word wall
sequencing	word sorts	cutting up sentences
Milk carton dictionaries	masking (oral cloze) and framing	
making and testing hypotheses	generating new sentences and text	
writing generalizations		

4. **Focus on Letters.** Young children do not necessarily understand the difference between a word and a letter, and this is an important concept for them to develop. Texts and activities that focus on letters include:

alphabet books	masking (cloze)	framing
magnetic letters	clusters and chunks	students' names
cutting up words into onsets and rimes plus endings		
generating new words and sentences		

5. **Play With Syllables and Phonemes.** Young children need to understand the alphabetic principle: letters represent sounds and these sounds or phonemes are represented by letter. Children need to be able to hear the sound sequences of words before they can read independently. Some other procedures include clapping, cutting, singing, and working with onsets and rimes.

The onset is the part of the syllable that comes before the vowel and is always a consonant or a consonant blend. The rime is the rest of the unit. Onsets and rimes are powerful for helping children to read and write because they are easier to learn than individual vowel sounds. The phonic patterns remain stable and word families are easily constructed for reading and spelling.

For example, a child who can write and spell neat, eat, seat, beat, and heat. In contrast, being able to read meat does not mean that the child can make the transfer to the word meal. It is harder for the child to isolate and apply the vowel sound than the rime.

### **THE SYNTACTIC CUEING SYSTEM**

Syntax refers to the grammatical relations and functions of sentence components. To use the syntactic system, the reader must be dealing with meaningful language units. Children have demonstrated their ability to use syntax to predict, even in the earliest grades. Before they start school children have learned a great many of the grammatical structures of their language and use them orally. This is a strength they bring to reading. Even when children deviate from the text they have a strong tendency to replace nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs and so forth. Maintaining grammatical function is a natural tendency for all readers, but they are unable to use this strength when the language of the text is unnatural and stilted, or incomplete.

Suggested questions to ask students when modeling the reading process to support the use of the syntactic cueing system include:

- Does it sound right?
- What other words could the author use that would sound right?
- Can you finish the line with a word or phrase that would sound right?

## **THE SEMANTIC CUEING SYSTEM**

Semantics has to do with meaning. Meanings are very personal and are dependent upon a reader's prior experience. Readers bring meaning to what they are reading on the basis of such things as the depth of their understanding of a topic, their culture, prejudices, feelings, instructional experiences, and interest.

In order to use the semantic cueing system two things are essential:

1. The material being read must be a well-written, complete literary unit because:
  - the meaning of a word cannot be determined out of context,
  - position in a sentence affects the meaning of a word,
  - understanding a sentence is not combining the meanings of individual words, but is dependent upon the ideas being developed by an author and the interrelationship between ideas.
2. The reader must have, and use, appropriate schemata. Authors never can tell everything, but must assume the reader can fill in what has been left out. For example, an author might assume that readers are aware of certain social relationships and can anticipate and interpret the reactions of characters in a story.

Suggested questions to ask students when modeling the reading process to help students focus on the meaning of text include:

- What do you think the story is about?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What do the pictures tell us?
- Who would like to retell the story?
- What would make sense?
- What do you notice about the characters?
- What are some of the important things that happened in the story?
- Does this book remind you of any other books?
- What other words could the author have used that would make sense?
- Can you finish the line with a word or phrase that would make sense?
- Does it make sense?

## **FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF EFFICIENT READERS**

Children learn best how to use language, e.g., to speak, write, listen, and read while pursuing other purposes. When children have a purpose for reading, an intention to read, and expectations of what they will find as they read, they will know what reading really is. They will develop as readers and will stand a better chance of becoming lifelong lovers of reading.

The teacher's job therefore becomes one of:

- helping students have a purpose for reading,
- helping students develop in their ability to set up predictions as they read,
- helping students realize the importance of confirming, or disconfirming their predictions and correcting as they read,
- providing students with meaningful reading experiences throughout the day as the students pursue activities related to subjects such as mathematics, science, nutrition and social studies, and as they enjoy good literature.
- establishing a physical and psychological environment which encourages reading.

# SOME STRATEGIES TO ASSIST DEVELOPING READERS

## Help Students Understand the Process

Tear away the mystique of reading by helping children understand what they should be doing as they read. Sometimes this means simply legitimizing for children what they are already doing. For a variety of reasons many students assume that the only strategy expected of them when they read is to sound it out. When pressed further about what they actually do when they don't know a word, they will make statements such as:

“Well, sometimes I just skip a word and go on.”

“I guess what the word is.”

“I look back to see what it could be.”

These are good strategies and are used by all proficient readers. Let children know that what they are doing is a valid part of reading. It might be a good idea to say to a child:

“Why do you look ahead or look back to find out what a word could be?”

“If you guess what a word is, how can you find out if your guess is a good one?”

When children are asked such questions they often assume they must have done something wrong. Somehow we must help them to understand that we respect their thinking and know that there are good reasons for their responses. When children really understand the reading process they will realize they have within themselves the power to monitor their own reading by asking themselves:

“Does this make sense?”

“Does it sound like language?”

## Help Students Use the Reading Process Efficiently

When students make unsuccessful attempts to read unknown words by relying on sounding out:

- Use Cloze. Blank out the word and have the reader predict a number of possibilities relying only on context. Then reveal the word and let the reader select the word from those predicted. It may be that none of the predicted words matches what is in the text, in so, let him make new predictions, now using all three language cueing systems.

When children ignore print:

- Use Cloze. At first, something the student has written could be used. Later, use interesting selections in which you have put only the initial consonant for some key concept-laden words. Don't give this as an exercise to be done by the child and later corrected by you. At first do some selections with students, helping them predict words and when they have finished discuss their predictions with them or let them do this in independent groups.

How children respond to print is the result of their experiences with reading. If the use of one language cue is stressed over another, children will likely overuse that cue and neglect using the other cues available to them.

When students ask you to tell them what a word is:

- Do not rush in to supply the word or to correct miscues. Give students an opportunity to confirm and predict for themselves.

When students read word by word:

- Read along with the child, chiming in and out of reading to assist the child when needed, so that students are carried along and read in meaningful phrases.
- Take some well-written material and rewrite it in *chunks of meaning* , or have students rewrite it in meaningful chunks; for example,  
Their yard  
was a big one  
with a wire fence  
around it,  
but in winter  
the gates were fastened back  
and were almost buried  
in snowdrifts.
- Put familiar songs on charts. As children sing, swing your hand under phrases, pausing only after phrases, not after each individual word.

When students have problems comprehending:

- Provide time for groups to discuss what they have been reading,
- Have students retell a story in their own words.
- Let students draw pictures of what happened in the beginning, the end, and the middle of the story.
- Have children paraphrase what they have read. As they read a selection, have the pause after each paragraph and write one sentence about what they have read.
- Develop an understanding of higher order structures. An understanding of story grammar improves comprehension of stories; understanding a structure being used by an author, such as contract, or cause and effect, improves understanding of expository material.
- Develop concepts. Vocabulary drills may increase fluency of reading but do nothing to improve comprehension. The significant aspect of learning vocabulary is concept development. Steps which might be followed are:  
Brainstorm for initial associations. Put on the blackboard all the words students think of in connection with the concept.  
Have students tell why those words came to mind.  
Brainstorm for more ideas. It is quite likely that step two will trigger other associations.  
Categorize.

While going through these steps observe the types of responses given by the students. Students likely have insufficient knowledge if responses are triggered by associations with root words, prefixes, suffixes, words that sound alike, and first hand, but not relevant experiences. If students provide examples, attributes and defining characteristics, they have some, and perhaps sufficient, prior knowledge of the concept.

### **Reading With Children--Shared Reading**

Our ultimate goal is to help children become independent readers who know their way around books and who look for every opportunity to escape inside them. Shared reading is a way to help young readers grow from listening to stories to reading stories themselves. Shared reading supports children as it involves them more actively in reading.

In shared reading, children read the same book at the same time in unison with the adult. This can be likened to two or more people singing a song together. The less experienced reader--the child--is supported by the adult so that he/she can take an active role in the reading and behave like an accomplished reader.

## **The Values of Shared Reading**

The values of shared reading are many. They include:

Children:

- Learn what smooth, fluent reading sounds like and feels like.
- Follow print first with their fingers and eyes. Later, they learn to use their eyes alone.
- Learn how print works--that it moves left to right and that they must match one spoken word to one printed word.
- Revisit what they know about print. Again and again, they can spot words, letters, and punctuation marks they know.
- Learn how sentences are laid out on the page.
- Figure out new words by examining the sounds related to the first letter of the word as well as the middle and final letters.
- Say and see the words that will build their beginning reading vocabulary. These are words that they recognize quickly and easily as they read other materials.

## **Finding Books to Read**

Shared reading requires special attention to the reading materials because the child must be able to see the lines of print.

For example:

- The print must be clear and easy to read.
- The material must be simple, with only a few lines of print on each page and some repeating patterns--- something your partner can soon read themselves.
- The material may be a rhyme or poem that your partner will enjoy reading over and over.
- The material may be books or stories that your partner has read before or a text that is brand new.
- The material should have a predictable story line and rich language.

In some classrooms, teachers may use oversized books with very large print known as “Big Books.” These work well for shared reading with a small group of children. You do not need big books when you are working with one or two children.

## **Sharing Reading Together**

Sharing the reading task supports children who are just learning to read, but it also helps older children learn to read more fluently. When you read books with early readers, you point frequently to the words while reading or slide a pointer underneath the words. With more experienced readers who no longer need to point to each word, the adult and child simply follow the print with their eyes and read together.

Shared reading means reading together. Be sure that all the readers can see the print clearly. This may mean putting the book on an easel on the wall. Point to the words from the very beginning even with the early reader. You should crisply point to each word rather than sweeping under the line of print. The idea is to notice the individual words. Use the pointer yourself, demonstrating how to point under each word and read. Gradually, with experience, the child can take a turn using the pointer or pointing with his/her finger.

If the story or poem is new to the child, read it to them as many times as needed before they begin to join in on the reading with you. Enjoy it together, moving gradually toward sharing the reading. If the child has read the story many times, you can read all the pages together.

Often books have difficult parts and easy parts. You read the harder parts and let the child join in or read alone the easier parts.

An advantage of shared reading is that you and your reading partner progress right through the book, turning pages and moving along the lines of print with enthusiasm and expression. In this way, the child gets the feel of being a reader. You won't have many opportunities to stop for conversation because talk would interrupt your reading, but you and your partner can talk about the reading afterward.

## SHARED READING

### Step 1: Introduce the Story.

- The first reading is for pleasure and meaning. It is primarily a listening experience.
- Discuss story cover and illustrations. Invite students to predict what story is about.
- Read the story dramatically. If appropriate, pause to ask students to predict.
- After first reading, allow for spontaneous reaction, comments, questions, discussion.
- Students may be asked to retell story in their own words, using the pictures to assist them or to confirm their predictions.
- Teachers may focus on a repetitive element such as a phrase, a chant, or a chorus.

### Step 2: Re-read a Familiar Story.

During subsequent re-readings, the teacher is aiming at achieving:

- Increased participation where children “read along”.
- Teaching about the characteristics of books and the conventions of print through demonstrations.
- Teaching reading strategies.
- Developing a sight vocabulary of “function words” such as a, the, and, is, etc.
- Learning phonics.

### Step 3: Independent Reading.

### Step 4: Follow-Up or Expressive Activities

Expressive story-extending activities can help children gain a deeper understanding of a story, apply key concepts for a story to their own personal lives, integrate new knowledge into their understanding of how the world works, and generate richer language based on language experience activities related to the story.

Extended activities include:

- write or dictate stories based on the structure of a story just read. (Innovating on the original text).
- create shoe box dioramas of scenes from a story.
- engage in dramatic activities such as skits, role-playing, and puppetry.
- design book jackets.
- draw, paint, make a collage, or work with clay to illustrate some aspect of a story.
- arrange a bulletin board display related to a story or group of stories.
- write a letter to a main character or to the author.
- write a different ending for a book.
- give a book talk.

# Guided Reading

Guided Reading is another process used in teaching children to read. Guided Reading is a group approach, involving the teachers with a small group of children of similar reading ability. The teacher selects an appropriate book for the group, a book that is at the children's instructional reading level and that will introduce or reinforce appropriate reading challenges for that particular group of children.

The teacher spends the first part of a Guided Reading session discussing the concepts of the book and scaffolding information, thereby laying a foundation for reading success. At the emergent levels, the teacher guides the children in exploring the language structure and vocabulary of the story prior to the first reading. In this way, the children already understand the sentence structure of the book and recognize most of the key words, so the groundwork for a successful reading experience is in place before the children begin to read. The teacher also discusses reading strategies with the children during Guided Reading, helping the children to identify and utilize many ways to solve print problems.

Children may read the entire story two or more times during a Guided Reading session. At the earliest levels of Guided Reading, the children read aloud together, with each child reading at his or her own pace. At more advanced levels, the children read silently and then together discuss the story and their use of reading strategies.

During Guided Reading, the teacher has an opportunity to evaluate each child's reading in action. Just as the Guided Reading experience is structured to promote successful reading by children, it is also structured to encourage successful evaluation of children's use of print concepts and reading strategies. Through the use of appropriate strategy prompts, the teacher can focus a child on a specific concept of print, on a particular cue system, or on a particular reading strategy. Because the children are in a group situation, they can all be helped with a particular challenge, or one child can be helped with a specific problem in a nonthreatening way.

## Guided Reading Format

### 1. Story Introduction

- The teacher is the only one who has a copy of the book.
- Your goal is to interest the children in the story, relate it to their experiences, discuss the title and author, and provide an overall sense of what the book is about.
- New or important vocabulary, even proper names, can be emphasized in the introduction.
- You do not 'preteach' words although you may call attention to a word in context, asking children to locate it and notice specific features such as the beginning letter.

### 2. Picture Walk

- You guide the readers to look at the pictures and understand the structure of the story and critical aspects of meaning.
- You do not read the book to the children.

### 3. First Reading

- Each child has a copy of the book.
- Children are asked to read orally.
- Each child reads at his or her pace.
- This is not 'round robin' reading.
- You listen in. You look for evidence of problem solving and intervene as needed.
- Your observations help you plan what to teach after the children finish reading the story.

#### **4. Second Reading**

- Independent reading or partner reading

#### **5. Discussion**

- Give the children the opportunity to relate the story to their lives or retell the story.
- You can ask them how they liked the story and what it made them think about.
- You may want to discuss the meaning of the story more extensively.

#### **6. Mini Language Lesson**

- A mini language lesson can focus on:
  - concepts of print
  - sight words
  - problem-solving strategies
  - beginning sounds
  - word endings

#### **7. Independent Practice or Follow-up Activity**

- Children read the book for independent reading.
- Occasionally children may be invited to extend the text through activities such as writing, art, or drama.

## **Readers' Workshop**

Readers' Workshop is a child-centered approach to teaching reading that brings the "real" world of reading into the classroom. Like all "real" readers, the students select their own reading material, read at their own pace, and talk to others about what they've read. Through self-selection, self-pacing, sharing, listening, and spending significant amounts of time reading, the children not only learn how to read, they also learn what reading is about.

A readers' workshop takes into account the important elements of time, choice, response, community, and structure.

### **TIME**

In readers' workshop students spend a significant amount of time reading in a natural, unhurried way. They also have daily opportunities to browse and select books, and reflect on their reading. Children need lots of time to be with books, interact with the author, and think about their reading.

### **CHOICE**

It is important to let students select their own reading material. This provides the motivation for reading. That is why it is so important that teachers have well-stocked classroom libraries, filled with all kinds of print materials to include fiction, non-fiction, biography, picture books, wordless picture books, poetry, Big Books, trade books, magazines, and newspapers. Teachers need to give students opportunities to select from a wide variety of quality literature, but they also need to teach students how to make appropriate choices.

### **RESPONSE**

"Response" in a readers' workshop generally refers to students responding orally to their own reading and that of others: conferring with the teacher, talking with each other in peer conferences, or sharing in small or large groups. It may also take the form of writing, art or drama.

### **COMMUNITY**

In a readers' workshop where students actively support each other as readers, community is established. Students work cooperatively with each other, assume leadership roles when appropriate, help each other learn, encourage each other to do well, share their learning with others, and learn to be active listeners.

### **STRUCTURE**

Structure refers to the organization of the workshop and the management system students can count on. Readers' workshop isn't just having students sit around and read. Students learn to read because the teacher has taught and modeled strategies that good readers use, and has provided them with significant amounts of time to practice those strategies with self-selected materials. They also learn to read by responding to each others' reading, sharing their own reading and writing about their reading.

# Overview of Reading Workshop

The structure of Readers' Workshop includes five parts:

- I. Introductory Activity Time (Whole Class)  
(This is sometimes also referred to as mini-lesson time)
- II. Independent Reading Time (Whole class and includes the teacher)
- III. Response Time (Responding to reading)
- IV. Conferencing (Individual and group conferences)
- V. Share Time (Whole Class)

## I. Introductory Activity Time

Readers' Workshop begins with an introductory activity or mini-lesson with the whole class gathered together on the floor around the teacher. Older children may easily remain in their seats. Introductory activity usually lasts for approximately 10-15 minutes. During this time, one of the teachers' main roles is to open the world of children's literature to the students. It allows the teacher to introduce and expose children to a variety of books, authors, illustrators, and to introduce children to various forms of literature.

A major objective of the introductory activity is to help children know what to look for, and what to ask, when they are involved in their own reading. Typical questions to ask during introductory activity might include:

- \* What does the author have to say?
- \* Is the author saying it clearly?
- \* Does the author provide enough information?
- \* How do the illustrations support the message?
- \* Why do you think the author chose to write in this form?
- \* What other stories have we read that remind you of this story?

Planning an introductory activity can be guided by having a focus for a day, a week, or any other length of time. There are basically three different kinds of introductory activities or mini-lessons that teachers may conduct:

- \* Procedural  
A procedural mini-lesson might model for students how to do a small group share, or how to give a book talk.
- \* Literary  
A literary mini-lesson might teach how authors develop characters in their stories, or what the setting of the story is and why it's important.
- \* Strategies / Skills  
A strategy is broader and more process-based---for example, what to do when you come to an unknown word, or how to make predictions to guide your reading. A skill is more focused---for example, how to use blends to figure out unknown words.

The following is a list of mini-lesson topics that could be used as a focus for introductory activity time:

Procedural mini-lessons:

- \* where to sit during reading time
- \* giving a book talk
- \* how to be a good listener in a share session
- \* what is an appropriate noise level during reading time
- \* what to do when you finish a book
- \* what kinds of questions to ask during a share session
- \* running a small group share session
- \* self-evaluation
- \* getting ready for a conference
- \* how to have a peer conference
- \* where to sit during introductory activity
- \* taking care of books
- \* keeping track of books read
- \* rules for readers' workshop

**Literary mini-lessons:**

- \* differences between fiction and non-fiction books
- \* learning from dedications
- \* books that show emotion
- \* books written in the first, second or third person
- \* author studies
- \* how authors use quotations
- \* how the story setting fits the story
- \* characteristics of different genres
- \* development of characters, plot, theme, mood
- \* how leads hook us
- \* how authors use the problem / event / solution pattern
- \* differences between a picture book and a novel
- \* titles and their meanings
- \* characters' point of view
- \* examples of similes and metaphors
- \* examples of foreshadowing
- \* how authors use dialogue
- \* predictable and surprise endings
- \* use of descriptive words and phrases
- \* how illustrations enhance the story
- \* secrets in books

**Strategy / skills mini-lessons:**

- \* how to choose a book
- \* selecting literature log topics
- \* connecting reading material to your own life
- \* tips for reading aloud
- \* figuring out unknown words
  - using context
  - substituting
  - using picture clues
  - using the sounds of blends, vowels, contractions, etc.
- \* using Post-its to mark interesting parts
- \* monitoring comprehension (Does this make sense and sound right?)
- \* asking questions while reading
- \* making predictions
- \* emergent strategies
  - concept of story
  - concept that print carries meaning
- \* making sense
- \* mapping a story
- \* how to retell a story orally
- \* looking for important ideas
- \* making inferences
- \* looking for relationships
- \* drawing conclusions
- \* distinguishing fact from opinion
- \* relating text to the reader's own experiences

All mini-lessons are taught through demonstrations using quality children's books. Never is a mini-lesson taught through the use of dittos or worksheets. It is important that children learn to use these strategies and skills to help them accomplish the act of reading. Remember, knowledge of a skill is one thing, using a skill is another.

## **II. Independent Reading**

Independent reading may be oral or silent. Beginning readers will often read orally even when they don't need to. It is essential that children be allowed to choose much of their own reading material. Children can only learn to choose wisely when they are given the opportunity to choose. Returning a poorly chosen book and replacing it with a more appropriate one is a sign of development, not failure. During independent reading time, everyone including the teacher should be reading. Teacher modeling is often much more powerful than we realize.

The steps for insuring a quality independent reading time include:

1. Insure that each child has selected a book to read.
2. Have the children seated in comfortable positions around the room (chairs, rugs, book nooks, etc.), where they have an unobstructed view of the teacher and the teacher can see them.
3. Rehearse the rules for independent reading time:
  - \* no interruptions,
  - \* no changing of books,
  - \* every child must read silently,
  - \* teacher must read silently,
  - \* take care of restroom needs before independent reading time begins.
4. A timer (e.g. a cooking timer, digital watch) is started, everyone, including the teacher, begins reading. The timer is set for an amount of time the children are capable of sustaining. This may only be 5-6 minutes at first.
5. Independent reading is continued until the timer rings. At the ringing of the timer, the teacher warmly and enthusiastically congratulates the children by saying: "Good, well done, you've been reading for "x" minutes. Carry on."
6. Silent reading continues until there are signs of interruption. When this happens, conclude the session quickly. Record the time, but don't tell the children. Build the initial time up slowly each day until the children can read for 20-30 minutes without interruption.

Beginning readers may want to read in small groups or individually during independent reading time.

## **III. Response Time (Responding to reading)**

Response time gives students the opportunity to make sense of their reading, reflect on their reading, and monitor their own comprehension. Response to reading also provides teachers with information for assessment to plan further instruction.

The response activity may be self-chosen, initiated by a group of children, or teacher-required. Mini-lessons should be conducted to teach the students how to do the response activities.

The response activities are numerous and varied. Responses to literature include:

- \* writing stories
- \* making books
- \* reading logs / journals
- \* double entry journals
- \* drama
- \* storytelling
- \* retellings
- \* art (murals, illustrations, pictures dioramas, etc.)
- \* music
- \* puppetry
- \* reading more books by the same author, illustrator
- \* literature discussion groups and / or Grand Conversations
- \* Story frames
- \* character webs
- \* other activities suggested in this PASS manual

#### **IV. Conferencing**

Conferences may be held with individual children or with a small group of children, especially when the group has read the same book or books by the same author. Conferencing is the heart of readers' workshop. During the reading conference children will have opportunities to develop their comprehension. It is during the conference that the teacher can find out about the children's interests, and reading needs. Also the teacher discovers what to emphasize or demonstrate during introductory activity. In addition, conferencing gives teachers the chance to hear students read aloud, so that they can examine the pattern of students' miscues, information that helps teachers decide what strategies the student is using or not using. During the conference, children will attend to aspects of characterization, setting, plot, theme, style, mood and form.

When conferencing is new to children, the teacher will need to help the children prepare. This may be the focus of a mini-lesson in introductory activity. Children may be required to:

- complete a written comment in a reading log to bring to the conference,
- bring their books with bookmarks inserted, indicating a part they want to share,
- bring response activities or other projects related to their reading to discuss.

The focus of conferences may be related to recent mini-lessons. For example, after conducting a mini-lesson on relating the content of the story to the student's own experiences, a question for a conference might be, "Have you come across anything in your book that reminds you of something in your life?" Or, after conducting a mini-lesson on how to figure out something in reading that gives you trouble, teachers could tell students to be prepared during a conference to share something in their reading that gave them trouble, and the strategy they used to fix the problem. It is important for teachers to ask open-ended questions that illicit discussion. The purpose of questions is simply to get the discussion going. Teachers will not ask each child the same kind or number of questions. Each child has different needs, so when teachers ask a question, they should listen to the answer and take it as their lead for where to go next in the conversation. The goal should be for teachers to talk less than the student.

Towards the end of the conference, further readings may be discussed and children will be helped with record keeping and self-evaluation.

#### **V. Share time**

Children's responses to reading may be shared with others during the whole class share time at the end of the daily readers' workshop. During share time, the teacher will need to help by asking questions of the child who is sharing. This will provide a model for the other children so that they learn about the different kinds of comments and questions that will make share time valuable.

Initially, teachers need to organize and quiet the children during share time. However, as soon as possible, the children must take responsibility for the session.

Share time is a necessary conclusion to every reading session.

# WRITING

## **Assumptions About Writing**

1. Students learn to write by writing, not through practicing grammar or sentence completion activities.
2. Students are empowered by writing when they write for genuine and across-the-curriculum purposes.
3. The writing process is as important as the written products students create.
4. Students should experiment with different writing forms and writing for varied audiences.
5. Students learn to refine their writing by listening to and reading the writings of other students as well as that of published authors.
6. As students prepare to make their writing “public,” they revise and edit their writing by working in writing groups.
7. Teachers’ suggestions about how to improve a piece of writing are more useful while the student is writing rather than after the piece has been completed.

## **Components of an Effective Writing Program**

1. Students write for a variety of purposes every day.
2. Students know the stages of the writing process and use them to develop their compositions.
3. Students write in a variety of genres.
4. Students write to respond to literature and compose literature.
5. Students write to learn about social studies, math, science, etc.
6. Students use writing to report information learned in thematic units.
7. Students have a repertoire of writing strategies and skills.
8. The quality of students’ writing (e.g., ideas, organization, style, word choice) is steadily improving.
9. Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and other mechanics in students’ writing is increasingly correct.
10. Students reflect on and self-assess their writing.

# The Writing Process

Instead of focusing on the end product, emphasis in writing should be placed on the process writers use as they create and refine the product. The writing process consists of five distinct though closely interrelated states: (1) prewriting, (2) drafting, (3) revising, (4) editing, and (5) sharing. The writing process is cyclical rather than linear; it involves recursive cycles of exploration and clarification through these stages.

## 1. **Prewriting - Getting Ready to Write**

Prewriting is one of the more neglected stages in the writing process. It is the stage when the ideas are generated and organized, and decisions are made about the purpose for the writing and the audience to whom the writing will be directed. Approximately 75% of writing time should be devoted to this stage. Prewriting activities include talking, reading, freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, cubing, observing, and taking notes.

## 2. **Drafting - Getting the Ideas Down on Paper**

Students write and refine their compositions through a series of drafts. In their first rough drafts students pour out their ideas, with little concern about spelling, punctuation and other mechanical errors. These drafts are usually messy and may be cut and taped together. The teacher's role is to provide support, to encourage, and to be a sounding board for ideas.

## 3. **Revising - Refining Ideas**

The emphasis in this stage is on refining the content through adding, deleting and rearranging material. Attention to mechanical errors should be postponed until the editing stage. Students should share their compositions in writing groups in which they read their writing to their classmates and the teacher who then react to the writing. After the conference, students sift through the feedback they have received and decide what changes to make in their compositions. After making these changes, students may move on to editing or they may want to share their writing in another conference in order to receive more feedback on how well they are communicating.

## 4. **Editing - Putting It in Final Form**

In the editing stage, teachers and students work together to polish the writing by correcting spelling, usage, punctuation and other mechanical errors. The first step in editing is proofreading. Students and their peer editors proofread the compositions several times, identifying various categories of error. Teachers function as editors for students, helping them locate and correct their errors as well as providing skill instruction as needed. Editing is important to students when they are planning to share their writing with genuine audiences.

## 5. **Sharing - Bringing the Composition to Life**

Students can share their compositions in a variety of ways. They can publish their writings in individual books, magazines, school newspapers, letters, etc. Alternative formats include poetry, readings, videotapes, filmstrips, films, slides, drama, etc.

## IDEAS FOR INFORMAL WRITING TO LEARN

1. **MAPPING or WEBBING** is a way to visualize an idea or problem. Ask learners to map the structure of what they've heard or learned. Let them discover their own forms, their own ways to depict and chunk knowledge.
2. **LISTS** push for creative thinking by pulling out buried ideas. Give learners a few minutes to list facts, reasons, questions. Ask "How many did you discover?" Then ask, "Who has 6? Who can get \*? We can also ask for lists that categorize.
3. **BRAINSTORMING** generates many ideas quickly and helps students to take risks and stop censoring themselves. Give learners a few minutes to write down every \_\_\_\_\_ they can think of, no matter how off-the-wall a response might seem. The goal is to get a significant array of data down on the page and then reflect on it.
4. **ROLE-PLAYING** breaks with tradition and ritual in content area writing, helps children see situations from new perspectives, and invites active participation. Assign learners a voice and an audience, then ask them to play the roles in their logs.
5. **WHAT I LEARNED IN CLASS TODAY** summarizes a lesson or activity for both learner and teacher. Students use their own language to tell what they understand. Then the teacher asks volunteers to read, leads a quick read-around, or collects the logs to determine what was understood / misunderstood and what students will need to know and do next. Variations include: **ONE INSIGHT FROM MY READING, ONE THING THAT STRUCK ME ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY, ONE SURPRISE.**
6. **SETTING QUESTIONS BEFOREHAND** awakens learners' curiosity and helps them look for problems. Before a film, lesson, reading, observation, experiment, or experience ask, "What questions do you have about X?" Afterwards, ask children to check off answered questions, delete irrelevant questions, and add new ones--but NOT to write answers. The goal is to teach a habit of thought--questioning---not to copy down information.
7. **PLANNING** helps students in workshop-style classrooms to focus their attention at the start of the workshop. The prompt is "What will you do today?" Students' plans might also be long-term: personal goals for the week, semester, or year in a subject area.
8. **PREDICTION** activates a learner's prior knowledge and experiences. Before a film, lesson, reading, observation, experiment, or experience, ask students to guess about a concept (e.g., "What could have started the Civil War?" "Why do leaves change color?" "What could the author of this book be setting us up for?" "What habitats do you think you'll see on our walk tomorrow?")
9. **SHIFTING TO A NEW MODE** allows students to approach a subject from a fresh perspective. Ask learners to compose a poem, song, short story, fable, brief memoir or diary or log entry about the content area topic--to use poetic language to shape their knowledge.
10. **DOUBLE-ENTRY JOURNALS** capture both important facts and individual responses. Students draw a line down the center of a page. In the left column they write down direct observations, paraphrases, excerpts, or quotes. Opposite they jot down their own reflections: questions, speculations, insights, arguments, connections.
11. **DIRECT OBSERVATIONS** help students learn both how to look and how to generate their own impressions and questions. In addition, a series of observations of a single phenomenon over time helps learners build theories.
12. **DIALOGUE JOURNALS** foster exploration in collaboration. Student and teacher or student and student correspond about a subject matter and teach each other. Topics may be general ("books, authors, reading and writing") or specific ("What you understand about parallel electrical circuits").
13. **PROTOCOLS** are students' running records of how they do something: written accounts that give them and their teachers a window on their thinking processes (e.g., their steps in dealing with an unfamiliar word in reading or in solving a long division problem in math).
14. **DIAGRAMS AND DRAWINGS** help students visualize their learning, make it concrete, and capture details that aren't easily described in words.
15. **GRAPHS, CHARTS, AND SURVEYS** allow students to record a lot of data quickly and to visualize it in formats that are convenient for analysis and comparison.

# SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF WRITING SKILLS

## Stage 1: Writing Readiness (Preschool - K)

- A. The child will be able to dictate
  - 1. words for objects
  - 2. words for pictures
  - 3. captions for pictures
  - 4. sentence(s) for pictures
  - 5. individual and group experience stories
- B. The child will make initial attempts at expression in scribble writing.

## Stage 2: Beginning Writing (Grade 1)

- A. The child will be able to
  - 1. compose and copy group and individual experience stories, thank you notes, invitations
  - 2. communicate in writing a meaningful unit
  - 3. write captions for pictures
  - 4. recognize varied sentence patterns such as question, statement, exclamation
  - 5. write sentences using varied sentence patterns
  - 6. write simple poems using rhyme
  - 7. write riddles
- B. The child will be able to edit written work for
  - 1. initial capitalization
  - 2. end punctuation (periods, question marks, exclamation points)

## Stage 3: Primary Writing (Grades 2-3)

- A. The child will be able to write:
  - 1. at least two meaningful units in which thought moves forward from one unit to the next.
  - 2. unifying ideas of at least two meaningful units using patterns other than noun-verb or noun-verb-noun, such as
    - a. sentences using adjectives and adverbs to expand meaning
    - b. sentences using connectives
    - c. sentences using prepositional adverbial, and adjective phrases
  - 3. using subject matter of at least two of these characteristics
    - a. expression of feelings
    - b. an interpretation
    - c. precision in supporting detail or in word choice
    - d. humor
    - e. unexpected idea, event or situation
    - f. recognition of thoughts, views or feelings other than those of writer
  - 4. using a literary device such as
    - a. alliteration
    - b. metaphor, simile
    - c. onomatopoeia
- B. The child will be able to write
  - 1. initial capitalization and ending punctuation
  - 2. correct spelling of basic words
  - 3. punctuation of written dialogue
  - 4. commas in a series

**Stage 4: Intermediate Writing (Grades 4-6)**

- A. The child will be able to:
  - 1. unify ideas of at least three or four meaningful units using narration
  - 2. unify ideas of at least three or four meaningful units using a topic sentence with supporting details
    - a. a descriptive paragraph
    - b. an explanatory paragraph
    - c. a persuasive paragraph
  - 3. use subject matter containing several characteristics from Stage 2, #3.
- B. The child will be able to edit written work for:
  - 1. structure of a paragraph
  - 2. content of a paragraph
  - 3. run-on sentences
  - 4. complete sentences

## SPELLING

Spelling is a developmental process. Learning to spell unfolds over time, like learning to speak. Most adults typically view spelling as a rote memorization. We remember our own spelling books with lists of words to be memorized. We think of spelling as something to be assigned, tested, and graded.

But children don't learn to spell by memorizing word lists. The process is more complex. Research has proven that children learn to spell in the same manner in which they learn to talk. . .by experiencing ongoing interactions with talk (and written language) over a period of time. When children are learning to talk, they do not display full-blown adult competencies with talking from the very beginning. At first they babble and approximate with talk. They "take risks" with oral language even though it isn't correct. Example: the child who says "DAT" for "THAT" and "WA" for "WATER." In other words, they "invent" talk. Research has proven that children move through developmental stages of invented spelling just as they move through developmental stages of speech. The first of these developmental spelling stages begins at about age 3-4. This first stage is recognized by scribbling, picture drawing, and / or stringing letters together. By age 5-6, they will understand that the letters of the alphabet make sounds and they will use the letters to spell sounds, often the sounds heard are the letter names. Example: "YOU" will be spelled "U" and "IN" will be spelled "N". This insight is extended so letters are used to spell messages, and a spelling system has been invented. Children will continue to move through the developmental spelling stages until they reach the last stage, referred to as the "correct" spelling stage at about age 8-9. An example of a child's progression through the spelling stages for the word "BIRD" would be:

Stage 1:	(Age 3-5)	LyilaWO
Stage 2:	(Age 5-6)	BD
Stage 3:	(Age 6)	BRD
Stage 4:	(Age 7-8)	BRID
Stage 5:	(Age 8-9)	BIRD

Research is very clear: Invented spelling does not lead to the formation of bad spelling habits. When children encounter new information about standard spelling, they readily modify their guess and have no difficulty adopting standard spelling. This is what happens to children as they acquire oral language and the same is true for children in their efforts to learn written language. Ultimately the expert speller is able to use information from visual memory, as well as knowledge of phonetic, contextual, and meaning relationships to determine the correct spelling of a word. But the process takes time! Important foundations of learning to spell are set with the use of invented spelling.

To become better spellers, children must do lots of writing. After all, the only reason children learn to spell is so they can write. Writing allows them to add new words to their spelling repertoire and engages their thinking about spelling. It exercises their spelling skills and keeps them from getting rusty as spellers. Children who don't write suffer from spelling disuse.

During the primary grades (grades K-3) invented spellings should be honored, just as parents honor their preschoolers' speech approximations. Students will begin formal spelling instruction when they reach the correct spelling stage (generally around third grade).

The more experiences that children have to engage in writing activities, the more proficient their spelling will be. Children learn best to write and spell while pursuing other purposes. This means that children should be engaged in authentic, genuine writing experiences. Examples include:

- letters
- accounts of family events
- shopping lists
- class signs and posters
- journals
- bulletin boards
- messages to class members
- books
- labels
- play scripts

# CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INVENTED SPELLING STAGES

## **Stage 1: Precommunicative Spelling (Ages 3-5)**

- \* Child uses scribbles, letter-like forms, letters, and sometimes numbers to represent a message.
- \* Child may write from left-to-right, right-to-left, top-to-bottom, or randomly on the page.
- \* Child shows no understanding of phoneme-grapheme correspondences.
- \* Child may repeat a few letters again and again or use most of the letters of the alphabet.
- \* Child frequently mixes upper and lower case letters but shows a preference for upper case letters.

## **Stage 2: Semiphonetic Spelling (Age 5 - 6)**

- \* Child becomes aware of the alphabetic principle, that letters are used to represent sounds.
- \* Child uses abbreviated one, two, or three letter spelling to represent an entire word.
- \* Child uses letter-name strategy to spell words.

## **Stage 3: Phonetic Spelling (Ages 6-7)**

- \* Child represents all essential sound features of a word in spelling.
- \* Child develops particular spellings for long and short vowels, plural and past tense markers, and other aspects of spelling.
- \* Child chooses letters on the basis of sound without regard for English letter sequences or other conventions.

## **Stage 4: Transitional Spelling (Ages 7-8)**

- \* Child adheres to basic conventions of English orthography.
- \* Child begins to use morphological and visual information in addition to phonetic information.
- \* Child may include all appropriate letters in a word but reverse some of them.
- \* Child uses alternate spellings for the same sound in different words, but only partially understands the conditions governing their use.
- \* Child uses a high percentage of correctly spelled words.

## **Stage 5: Conventional Spelling (Ages 8-9)**

- \* Child applies the basic rules of the English orthographic system.
- \* Child extends knowledge of word structure including the spelling of affixes, contractions, compound words, and homonyms.
- \* Child demonstrates growing accuracy in using silent consonants and doubling consonants before adding suffixes.
- \* Child recognizes when a word doesn't "look right" and can consider alternate spellings for the same sound.
- \* Child learns irregular spelling patterns.
- \* Child learns consonant and vowel alternations and other morphological structures.
- \* Child knows how to spell a large number of words.

## WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT TEACHING SPELLING

1. A test-study-test approach should be used for spelling instruction.
2. The pretest is a critical component in study procedures, and the best means of improving students' spelling is to have them correct their own pretests.
3. Students should learn to spell the most frequently used spelling words.
4. Words in spelling lists should not be grouped according to phonetic generalizations.
5. Students need a systematic and efficient strategy for learning to spell words. It should focus on the whole word rather than on sounds or syllables. Also, the strategy should be multi-sensory.

### Steps in Learning to Spell a Word

1. LOOK at the word and say it.
  2. READ each letter in the word.
  3. CLOSE your eyes and spell the word to yourself.
  4. LOOK at the word. Did you spell it correctly?
  5. COPY the word from your list.
  6. COVER the word and write it again.
  7. LOOK at the word. Did you write it correctly.
  8. If you made any mistakes, repeat the steps.
6. Students do not need to complete a variety of textbook activities to learn to spell words. Neither should they use their spelling words in contrived sentences or essays.
  7. Spelling instruction does not need to be time consuming. Research indicates that only five to ten minutes is needed each day.
  8. Spelling instruction should be tied to writing.

## **SPELLING INSTRUCTION IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES**

After students have reached the correct stage of spelling development and spell 90 to 95 percent of words correctly, they are ready for formal spelling instruction. Providing opportunities for students to read and write each day is prerequisite to any spelling program. Spelling is a writer's tool best learned through writing.

Research on children's invented spelling suggests that spelling is best learned through writing and that spelling instruction should be individualized so that children can learn to spell the words they need for their writing. Thus, a contract spelling approach allows students the opportunity to develop individual contracts with the teacher to learn specific words during the week. Contract spelling places more responsibility on students for their own learning, and when students have responsibility, they tend to perform better.

### **Developing the Word List**

Contract spelling begins with the development of a weekly word list from which teachers and students select. Words for the master list are drawn from all the words students needed in their writing activities during the previous week and words related to content area units or seasonal words. To accumulate words for the list, students can keep a sheet of paper taped to their desks, and teachers can record the words students need help with on the slips of paper. Or, teachers can write the needed words on slips of paper, which students return to a box on the teacher's desk after they are used. The list may include 30,40, or even 50 words at the middle and upper grades.

### **Pretest**

The master list of words serves as the pretest at the beginning of the week, and students try to spell as many of the master words as they can. From the words that each student misspells, he or she chooses words to study during the week and these words become each student's spelling contract. After students have corrected their own pretests, they complete a spelling contract similar to the one on the next page.

Students circle the words they spelled correctly on the pretest and transfer this information to the word list by circling the number of each correctly spelled word. Then they draw a box around the number of each word they plan to learn that week. If the word list and spelling contract are on the same form, students have less trouble keeping track of their work.

The master word list used for the pretest includes words at several levels of difficulty because of the students' different spelling needs. Because of the range of words on the master word list, students will be able to select words at their own level for their spelling contracts. Good spellers will be able to learn both more difficult words and a greater number of words each week than poor spellers will. Five words a week will be an achievement for some students, whereas others may be able to learn twenty.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Week: \_\_\_\_\_

## Spelling Contract

Number of words spelled correctly on the pretest: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of words to be learned: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of words contracted: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \* \_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

14. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

16. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

17. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

18. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

19. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

20. \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions:

1. Circle the number of each word you spelled correctly on the pretest.
2. Draw a box around the number of each word you plan to learn. Use a pencil so that you can make changes if necessary.

\* The teacher writes the master list on these lines before duplicating the form.

## **Negotiating the Spelling Contract**

Students negotiate with the teacher for the number of words they believe they can learn in one week. This number includes the words they spelled correctly plus additional words they misspelled on the pretest that they think they can learn. The negotiations help students learn to be realistic about their spelling ability.

## **Word Study**

Students spend approximately five to ten minutes studying the words each day during the week. Instead of busywork activities such as using their spelling words in sentences or gluing yarn in the shape of the words, research shows it is more effective for students to learn and use a systematic strategy for practicing spelling words. The strategy should focus on the whole word rather than breaking it apart into sounds or syllables, and it should include visual, auditory, and kinesthetic components.

### **Steps in Learning to Spell a Word**

1. LOOK at the word and say it.
2. READ each letter in the word.
3. CLOSE your eyes and spell the word to yourself.
4. LOOK at the word. Did you spell it correctly?
5. COPY the word from your list.
6. COVER the word and write it again.
7. LOOK at the word. Did you write it correctly.
8. If you made any mistakes, repeat the steps.

## **Weekly Final Test**

A final test is administered at the end of the week on the words the students have contracted to learn. The teacher reads the master list, and students write only those words they have contracted to learn. To make it easier to administer the test, the students first list the numbers of the words they have contracted to spell on their test papers; they can locate the numbers of their contracted spelling words on their spelling contracts.

## **Follow-up**

Any words that students misspell should be included on their lists for the following week. Students should also list these problem words in a special spelling log and try to determine why the words are difficult for them.

## EXAMPLE OF SPELLING LOG

<b>Correct Spelling</b>	<b>My Misspelling</b>	<b>Why the Word Confuses Me</b>	<b>Helps to Remember the Correct Spelling</b>
demonstrate	demonstrate	I use e instead of o.	A demo is used to demonstrate.
coarse	course	I get it mixed up with course as a class.	a = coarse is hard.
meant	ment	I spell it like I think it sounds.	It's the past of mean.

## **100 WORDS MOST OFTEN MISSPELLED BY CHILDREN IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES**

- |               |               |                |                 |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. their      | 26. want      | 51. mother     | 76. February    |
| 2. too        | 27. where     | 52. another    | 77. once        |
| 3. there      | 28. stopped   | 53. threw      | 78. like        |
| 4. they       | 29. very      | 54. some       | 79. they're     |
| 5. then       | 30. morning   | 55. its        | 80. cousin      |
| 6. until      | 31. something | 56. brought    | 81. all right   |
| 7. our        | 32. named     | 57. getting    | 82. happened    |
| 8. asked      | 33. came      | 58. going      | 83. didn't      |
| 9. off        | 34. name      | 59. course     | 84. always      |
| 10. through   | 35. tried     | 60. woman      | 85. surprise    |
| 11. you're    | 36. here      | 61. animals    | 86. before      |
| 12. clothes   | 37. many      | 62. started    | 87. caught      |
| 13. looked    | 38. knew      | 63. that's     | 88. every       |
| 14. people    | 39. with      | 64. would      | 89. different   |
| 15. pretty    | 40. together  | 65. again      | 90. interesting |
| 16. running   | 41. swimming  | 66. heard      | 91. sometimes   |
| 17. believe   | 42. first     | 67. received   | 92. friends     |
| 18. little    | 43. were      | 68. coming     | 93. children    |
| 19. things    | 44. than      | 69. to         | 94. an          |
| 20. him       | 45. two       | 70. said       | 95. school      |
| 21. because   | 46. know      | 71. wanted     | 96. jumped      |
| 22. through   | 47. decided   | 72. hear       | 97. around      |
| 23. and       | 48. friend    | 73. from       | 98. dropped     |
| 24. beautiful | 49. when      | 74. frightened | 99. babies      |
| 25. it's      | 50. let's     | 75. for        | 100. money      |

## THE 100 MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS

This list of words represents 50-60% of words that people ever use.

I	there	to	around
and	with	do	see
the	one	about	think
a	be	some	down
to	so	her	over
was	all	could	did
in	said	as	mother
it	were	get	our
of	then	got	don't
my	like	came	school
he	went	time	little
is	them	back	into
you	she	will	who
that	out	him	by
we	at	can	after
when	are	people	no
they	just	from	am
on	because	saw	well
would	what	now	two
me	if	or	put
for	day	know	man
but	his	your	didn't
have	this	home	us
up	not	house	things
had	very	an	too

# MATHEMATICS

Learning mathematics has often relied on rote memorization of rules. Success in mathematics has traditionally been associated with mastery of facts. To equip students for productive, fulfilling lives in the information age, the definition of success in mathematics must be transformed.

Curricular reform in mathematics must address both the content and emphasis of the curriculum as well as approaches to instruction. A long-standing preoccupation with computation and other traditional skills has dominated both what mathematics is taught and the way mathematics is taught. As a result, mathematics at the elementary level is narrow in scope; fails to foster mathematical insight, reasoning, and problem solving; and emphasizes rote activities. Even more significant is that children begin to lose their belief that learning mathematics is a sense-making experience. They become passive receivers of rules and procedures rather than active participants in creating knowledge.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has determined that mathematics curricular goals for elementary students should include: learning to value mathematics, becoming confident in one's own ability, becoming a mathematical problem solver, learning to communicate mathematically, and learning to reason mathematically. These goals address what mathematics is, what it means to know and do mathematics, what teachers should do when they teach mathematics, and what children should do when they learn mathematics.

## **BUILDING POSITIVE STUDENT ATTITUDES ABOUT MATH**

Research suggests that teachers and other adults can foster positive attitudes, even when there is little support from the home. As a starting point, teachers need to project that they themselves think math is challenging, fun, and useful. Teacher enthusiasm can set the tone for the whole classroom.

In addition, teachers must back up positive words and feelings with stimulating and enjoyable math activities. Most children enter school with a range of problem-solving skills learned from everyday situations and continue to acquire new procedures on their own outside of school. Rather than squelching these methods, schools can start in the earliest grades with math experiences that build on children's intuitive sense and natural curiosity. Concrete objects---calculators and computers, for example---can inject excitement into the classroom. At the same time, they promote student learning.

## **MAKING MATHEMATICS MORE RELEVANT**

Students are more apt to view mathematics positively when they see its relevance to their everyday lives and futures. The soundest way to convince students of the relevance of math is by offering a curriculum that is relevant to today's job and life demands, one that builds students' problem-solving skills, challenges their powers of reasoning, and incorporates technology. Students must see how the skills they are learning can be applied to other situations, and how the knowledge they already have leads to new knowledge. A few ideas to make mathematics more relevant include:

- \* Use problems and examples from everyday life, such as those with a consumer or sports bent, rather than taking contrived problems from textbooks or worksheets. Personalize problem statements; for example, students can measure their height in different units, including nonstandard ones such as pencil lengths. Use problems with practical significance that are written in natural language and reflect students' culture. Or ask students to create their own problem situations.
- \* Develop class projects that connect math to the real world, such as running a class store.
- \* Bring in parents and community people to discuss how they use mathematics in their jobs. Show that even rock stars and professional athletes use math.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING AND WRITING AND MATH**

When students' reading and writing skills are weak or not fully developed, teachers must make special efforts to teach the language of math. Direct instruction of math symbols, graphics, and vocabulary can help students over the hump. In addition, teachers should communicate problems in a variety of ways---for example, using diagrams or symbols instead of words, or reading aloud---so that reading comprehension does not always factor in the solution.

There is a positive side to the relationship between reading and math. Mathematics can help children read better by providing opportunities to practice reading and to make inferences.

Research also supports the use of writing activities to improve math skills and help lighten math anxiety. Writing problems or keeping journals helps students communicate about math and order their thoughts. Writing is an especially effective way to develop conceptual and higher order skills.

## **INTEGRATING MATH INTO THE OTHER CURRICULUM**

Real jobs and everyday situations are not easily compartmentalized, and neither should school be. A natural starting point in a more integrated approach to learning math is to link math and science. Integrated math and science programs emphasize the role of mathematics as the primary language or other sciences and the chief analytical tool for technology.

Integrated programs are not limited to science. Social studies, reading, writing, and even art, music, and physical education can be partnered with math. Curricular integration need not always begin with the math class. Mathematics lessons can be embedded in classes whose primary focus is another subject.

## **CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING IN MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION**

Recent studies show cooperative learning approaches and small group work are effective alternatives to whole class instruction for students of all ages and achievement levels.

Cooperative learning is well suited to a variety of instructional purposes: working with concrete objects, solving problems, proving theorems, practicing skills, reviewing and sharing data, and using computers.

In a typical cooperative learning situation, groups of three to five children work on a problem. They exchange views, discuss the merits of different approaches and solutions, and persuade each other of the soundness of their arguments. In this way, students' thinking processes are brought into the open and they are exposed to different approaches. By explaining their views to others, children clarify their own logic and order their thoughts.

Heterogeneous groups that mix students of different achievement levels, gender, and race are usually advisable, according to research. Homogeneous grouping is not usually recommended; if used at all, it should be based on students' math achievement, not their overall academic ability, or on their conceptual needs rather than their skill levels.

The key lesson from research is to keep groups flexible and rearrange periodically. The size and makeup of groups should vary as subject content changes. A teacher might consider regrouping at the beginning of each topic or task. When groups are static, subtle hierarchies emerge.

## **ACTIVE INSTRUCTION IN MATHEMATICS**

Active instruction is based on research that recognizes learning as a dynamic process in which a child brings to bear the knowledge he or she already has. Rather than trying to transfer information to the child in a ready-made package, active instruction builds on each child's level of understanding and conceptual development. The teacher becomes less of a transmitter and more of a facilitator and organizer. The classroom becomes a lively place where students freely exchange ideas and learn concepts by talking, exploring, and discovering.

Active instruction encompasses a range of instructional approaches---small groups and cooperative learning, class discussion, teacher interviewing, and the use of hands-on experiences and concrete objects. It is well-suited to teaching higher order thinking skills.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS OF DISABLED STUDENTS IN MATHEMATICS**

Structuring an appropriate math education for the physically handicapped child may simply be a matter of providing the right instructional aids. Research shows that educational technology, including computers and calculators, can be adapted for use by disabled students and can result in higher math achievement and improved self image.

Math information processing is especially difficult for learning disabled (LD) students. The vocabulary, text format, structure, and use of symbols in mathematics texts can seem like insurmountable obstacles to LD children, who tend to have difficulty with decoding, visual-spatial relations, directionality, and sequencing. Direct instruction in the language of math can help students recognize and get over these hurdles.

Teachers should be sensitive to the fact that the settings of word problems are often far removed from the disabled child's everyday life. Personalized problems and student-written problems can help overcome these barriers.

Cooperative learning approaches have also been shown to be successful in mainstreaming disabled children in the math classroom. And as with any component of a disabled child's educational program, an individualized approach tailored to the child's needs is advisable.

## **THE ROLE OF MANIPULATIVES AND PLAY IN MATHEMATICS**

Mathematical learning in young children is strongly linked to sense perception and concrete experiences. Children seem to move toward an understanding of symbols, and eventually abstract concepts, only after they have first experienced ideas on a concrete level. According to research, manipulatives are a good way---and a highly recommended way in the elementary grades---of providing this tangible experience.

Manipulatives are objects with appeal to several senses. Students can touch, handle, and move them. They range from commercial products (unifix cubes, Cuisenaire rods, base-ten blocks) to everyday objects, such as nickels and dimes. Numerous studies have documented their positive effects on student achievement. Students who learn with manipulatives are better able to cross the bridge to the abstract world of mathematical concepts and apply their knowledge to real-life situations. With their visual, auditory and tactile qualities, manipulatives promote active learning, build motivation, and counteract boredom. They are particularly helpful in introducing students to new concepts. Beansticks, for instance, can help students learn place value while reinforcing counting skills; an apple cut four ways can help children grasp fractions.

## **THE ROLE OF WORKSHEETS AND WORKBOOKS IN MATHEMATICS**

Worksheets and workbooks tend to be used for practice and review. They don't usually teach students higher order skills, although teachers can design their own worksheets to focus on whatever objectives they wish. Many experts view workbooks as an inferior substitute for hands-on learning, such as experience with manipulatives.

Workbooks are especially prevalent in remedial programs for low-achieving children and have been criticized for making some math compensatory education programs monotonous and ineffective.

## **THE ROLE OF COMPUTERS IN MATHEMATICS**

The role of computers in daily life, and their indisputable importance to scientific and technical fields, make them essential components of mathematics education.

According to research, computers are used more often in mathematics than in any other subject, mostly in the area of drill and practice. The computer can be a good motivator, as children generally prefer it over other drill techniques.

Other key research findings about computers:

- \* Computer-assisted instruction in mathematics tends to work better when there is a high degree of guidance from the teacher.
- \* Students work longer on computer activities than they do on traditional activities, and talk more about the tasks, which may contribute to learning.
- \* Computers are good for group learning and increase interaction among students.
- \* Learning computer programming helps children develop problem solving skills, creativity, and self-direction. However, teaching programming is time consuming, and should not be the primary emphasis of a mathematics instructional program.
- \* Computer applications in testing can help teachers make immediate and fairly accurate diagnoses of student weaknesses.

# SCIENCE

The conventional textbook approach to science in education is not working for most students. Scientists, researchers, educators, and business people agree on this point, and the evidence supports their perceptions. Statistics show that only a slim percentage of young people graduate with the knowledge, skills, and motivation that constitute scientific literacy, let alone with the background to successfully tackle college science or pursue science-related careers.

According to many researchers, scientists, and educators, these troubling statistics are symptomatic of the weaknesses in the conventional approach to science education---an approach that emphasizes breadth over depth, static over activity, memorization over critical thinking, and recitation over well-reasoned argument.

Some important shared beliefs among scientific and education groups underlying reforms in science education are:

- \* All students---not just a talented few---need an in-depth understanding of science; all students have the ability to achieve this understanding if they are taught in ways that encourage and build upon their natural curiosity and other abilities.
- \* Children learn more readily and remember things longer when they can connect new experiences and information with what they already know about the world---in other words, when they can actively construct their own knowledge.
- \* Young people build critical thinking skills and scientific habits of mind when they are allowed to become scientists--rather than simply studying science--- by modeling processes of inquiry and exploration that real-life scientists use to discover new knowledge.
- \* Students gain a more coherent understanding of major science concepts---the “big ideas”---when they revisit these concepts with increasing sophistication at various grade levels.

What does a classroom organized around these beliefs look like? Here, too, experts agree that certain instructional techniques are especially effective. Some promising characteristics include:

**Active learning.** Students do science, with ample opportunities to design and conduct experiments, to identify and solve problems, to participate in hands-on activities, to ask questions, and to discuss and reflect on their findings.

**Depth of content.** Teachers and students cover less material in greater depth, with an emphasis on related ideas and themes, rather than on terminology and facts.

**Varied groupings.** Classes include a mixture of instructional groupings, with provision for both group studies and independent work.

**Real-world connections.** Students connect science concepts with the natural world and explore how science and technology affect their lives and their society.

**Prior learning.** Instruction links new information clearly and logically with what students already have learned inside and outside school.

**Integrated approach.** Instruction stresses links among different scientific disciplines and, where appropriate, integrates science content with other subjects.

## ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS THAT PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNING

Active, open-ended exploration in the early years plays a crucial role in a child's intellectual development. Building on this conclusion from cognitive research, evaluators of classroom practice have uncovered positive associations between active science instruction and student achievement, attitudes, and interest.

Although there is no guarantee that active learning alone will raise achievement, the collective benefits of this approach are sufficient to prompt many researchers and practitioners to endorse it as the backbone of elementary science instruction and an important component at all grades.

Active learning is based on the belief that students learn best when they construct their own understandings by interacting with the natural world, each other, and their teachers. Usually active learning is part of a broader strategy to build students' self-direction using the processes of inquiry, exploration, and experimentation that scientists employ in the real world. On a practical level, active learning encompasses an enormous variety of activities: students manipulate "hands-on" objects, collect and catalog specimens, organize data, observe and record animal behavior, interview people, plant and cultivate flora, focus a microscope, measure rainfall, graph changes in their own height--the list goes on. Active learning need not be restricted to the classroom or the laboratory. It lends itself well to field trips and other community learning experiences.

## INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS THAT SUPPORT SCIENTIFIC THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem solving resists simple definition. Experts suggest that problem solving be viewed as a continuum. At one end are exercises with solutions---such as how to balance items on a scale. At the other are problems to which no one has the answer, such as how to create conditions in which cold fusion will transpire.

The type of problem solving recommended in research closely parallels the processes and habits of mind that scientists use, including logical reasoning, questioning, analysis, and hypothesizing. This form of problem solving helps students gain a deeper understanding than simply memorizing science facts. It can be a terrific motivator, especially if the problems address interesting, non-trivial, real world issues. Problem solving is appropriate for all ages.

One model from research asks teachers to guide students through four distinct stages of problem solving:

**Invitation.** A question from a student or the teacher invites students to learn more about concepts that intrigue them.

**Exploration, discovery, and creativity.** Students develop experiments and use other methods of inquiry, such as observation and revision, to begin to answer the initial question.

**Proposing explanations and solutions.** With support from the teacher, students develop, discuss, and debate explanations consistent with the results of their experiments.

**Taking action.** Students follow up on what they have learned through such means as writing a letter or initiating action in their homes or communities.

Another model for building problem-solving skills engages children in designing technological solutions to real-world challenges. Children engage in four phases of inquiry:

**Investigation.** A child poses a question, becomes aware of a need or problem, or accepts a challenge.

**Invention.** Students plan and design alternative ways to address the challenge.

**Implementation.** Students test and modify their original design.

**Evaluation.** Students evaluate both the product they developed and the process they used.

For example, on one classroom second graders used half-gallon milk cartons to design a habitat for an animal they selected. The habitat had to include an offset wheel that would allow the animal to jump up and down. Students saw how important it was to measure accurately and to stabilize the wheel. They also researched the animal's movements. From this project, children synthesized design concepts, anesthetics, basic scientific principles, and language concepts.

Research contains other tips for teachers to make problem solving more effective. Among them are:

- \* Use intentionally open-ended questions.
- \* Help students see ways to keep track of their thinking steps as they solve problems.
- \* Encourage students to be active and use pencil and paper or other materials.
- \* Help students use the tactic of working backward from what they want to find out as they devise a plan.
- \* Use familiar procedures and equipment to introduce new problems.
- \* Encourage mobility and student interaction.

## **THE ROLE OF QUESTIONING, DISCUSSION, AND REFLECTION IN LEARNING SCIENCE**

As Socrates well understood, learning is more likely to change through dialogue and reflection than through lecture and imposition. Science educators are restoring these time-honored practices to a central place in teaching and learning.

In a science classroom that encourages students to construct understanding through scientific inquiry, questioning plays different roles during distinct phases of the learning process. An initial question posed by the teacher or raised by a student---Why are there waves in the ocean? How is sound captured on a CD? ---can set learning in motion and induce the class to conduct an experiment. Often the best questions are open-ended, allowing for more than one correct answer. In the investigation stage, additional questions from the teacher and classmates---What exactly are you doing? What would happen if you changed this?---help students see different routes to a solution and spur subsequent exploration and new hypotheses. When students are ready to propose explanations, questions help clarify, justify, and in some cases alter their thinking: Did anything you discover surprise you? What do you have to say about Linda's answer? A concluding round of questions---Where could you get more information on this topic?---can stimulate students to act on what they have learned.

Discussion is essential in a student-centered learning environment. Learning often occurs when students are pressed to explain their ideas in ways that their peers will understand and to defend their viewpoints. Feedback is an important component of discussion. To be effective, feedback must include suggestions. Listening is critical, too. Teachers can gauge students' thinking processes by listening to their explanations; students can build new understandings by listening to other people's strategies and listening to feedback about their own. Questioning and discussion have the added bonus of strengthening students' oral communication skills.

Effective science programs also reserve time for reflection. One study found that learning increased when teachers provided about two minutes for reflection out of every ten minutes of discussion. Time for reflection enables students to consider feedback, make adjustments, and reformulate solutions.

## **THE ROLE OF WRITING IN SCIENCE**

Scientists who write well are a treasure in the world of science. Their ideas travel farther and wider, and the clear expression of their mental connections enralls colleagues and layman alike.

Writing serves a similar function in the science classroom. When students are asked to write about their observations, results, reasoning processes, or attitudes, they are forced to pay closer attention to details, organize data more logically, and structure their arguments in a more coherent way. In the process, they clarify their own understanding of science and hone their communication skills. Moreover, science presents an almost inexhaustible choice of subject matter for the different forms for writing students need to master: description, exposition, persuasion, expression, narration, and poetry.

Research and practice suggest a range of effective writing activities for the science teacher. Among them are:

- \* Have children keep a science journal in which they record observations, reasoning processes, and feelings.
- \* Require students to maintain a laboratory log in which they keep track of observations, approaches, results, and hypotheses and reflect on their experiences and findings. The log might also describe how the knowledge gained from experiments was applied to homework or used to solve everyday problems.
- \* Have children describe in detail an animal observed on a class trip to the zoo.
- \* Assign an essay convincing other children to recycle trash.
- \* Encourage students to write letters to the editor of the local paper supporting or opposing the city's decision to cut the budget for the science museum.
- \* Ask children to write a poem or a story based on their feelings about Hurricane Andrew.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

The Social Studies curriculum should enable students to develop:

- 1) Civic responsibility and active civic participation.
- 2) Perspectives on their own life experiences so they see themselves as part of the larger human adventure in time and place.
- 3) A critical understanding of the history, geography, economic, political and social institutions, traditions, and values of the United States as expressed in both their unity and diversity.
- 4) An understanding of other peoples and the unity and diversity of world history, geography, institutions, traditions and values.
- 5) Critical attitudes and analytical perspectives appropriate to analysis of the human condition.

An important goal in elementary school is to excite student interest in social studies and to capitalize on the eagerness of young children to learn. An effective K-6 social studies curriculum can help students gain a better understanding of themselves, as well as a view of the world within and beyond the walls of the classroom.

In the early years it is imperative that the social studies curriculum avoid superficiality and be well defined and relevant to the needs and interests of young learners. Many social studies concepts are abstract; nevertheless, even very young students can begin to grasp these concepts if they are presented in active and engaging ways appropriate to their interests and cognitive development.

When planning the social studies curriculum it is important that teachers keep in mind some well-established general findings from developmental and cognitive research.

First, students at all ages know more about the world than is readily apparent. Much of that knowledge represents out-of-school learning. Instruction should capitalize on the conceptual building blocks that children possess.

Second, different students know somewhat different things, reflecting their life experiences and cultural differences. To some degree, education should help provide a common experience and frame of reference. But education also must take advantage of such differences, since they are great resources: the knowledge held and obtained by students taken together is far beyond that which belongs to any single learner or set of learners. Thus the social studies curriculum should be flexible, adaptable to many situations and subject to modification.

Thirdly, in social studies especially, students learn to some extent vicariously and cooperatively. That is, some of the essential things to learn--that different people have different experiences and perspectives, that individuals act in new ways as members of groups, that others influence us at a distance through social structures and social arrangements,---are directly experienced by students in the learning situation as they watch others learning and as all parties participate in defining (or refining) the questions and arriving at the answer. This does not mean that individual students do not actively receive, ponder and process information, but it does mean that discovery, in the social studies, is not entirely a private or personal matter. Moreover, in social studies, social learning is not only the object of study but the medium of study and learning.

Taken together, all of this suggests that, especially in the elementary grades, social studies instruction needs to take place very much "in public". That is, elicitation of what students do know, and what erroneous ideas they hold, is needed. This means that the teacher must listen as well as talk, must guide discussion and provide means for students to share and compare their knowledge and thinking. As many have argued, rote learning, lockstep recitation, passive absorption of information are pointless in social studies.

*Discipline  
and  
Classroom Management*

## **BEHAVIOR REPORTS**

Corporal punishment will be administered only in intermediate grades and only if a corporal punishment permission card has been signed by the parent and is on file in the principal's office.

Corporal punishment will be administered only by using the paddle, as prescribed by action of the Board of Education. Behavior forms are to be completed after corporal punishment has been administered by the teacher in the presence of the principal, assistant principal, or acting principal. When such punishment is administered by the principal, assistant principal, or acting principal, it must be administered in the presence of at least one certified employee.

Behavior reports, after completed, are to be sent to the office of the Executive Director for Elementary Education.

# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

## Principles of Effective Discipline

- \* We create most of our discipline problems by how we teach and treat people.
- \* Treat students with dignity and respect.
- \* Effective teaching reduces discipline problems.
- \* Students need a limited say in what happens in the classroom.
- \* It takes time to develop an effective discipline plan and style.
- \* Bored students become discipline problems.
- \* Lack of self-esteem is the major reason why students act up. (Great Expectations contends that discipline problems result from unmet needs.)
- \* No one wants or likes to fail. A student would rather be bad than be stupid.
- \* Anything you can do to make students feel good about themselves will help to minimize discipline problems.
- \* People who feel powerless will find ways of expressing their lack of power (for example, not knowing what the assignment is).
- \* We deny most the students who need to learn responsibility, by denying them the experience to have responsibility.

## Classroom Management

Teachers who develop skills in effective classroom management have classes in which students are on task and deeply involved with their academic work and misbehavior is rare. The characteristics of a well-managed classroom include:

- \* Students are deeply involved with their work, especially with academic, teacher-led instruction.
- \* Students know what is expected of them and are generally successful.
- \* There is relatively little wasted time, confusion, or disruption.
- \* The climate of the classroom is work-oriented, but relaxed and pleasant.

## Establish Clear Rules Where Rules Are Needed

Certain aspects of classroom management occur on a regular basis because they are part of the daily routine. These include such matters as storage of clothing and personal belongings, use of the toilets and drinking fountains, access to paper and other everyday supplies, and use of special equipment.

In these or any other situations where a rule is required, the rule should be made very explicit to the students, and the rationale for it should be explained in detail.

Rules should be kept to a minimum and be clearly needed. Usually, they are a means to an end. Therefore, they should be presented as such to the class, and not over generalized or presented as ends in themselves.

There should be a range of activities offered to a student who finished independent assignments. Such activities could include reading a book, beginning an art project, examining a science display, working on homework, talking quietly with another student who has also finished, etc. These activities could be done without disturbing the teacher or other students.

## Let the Students Assume Independent Responsibility

There is no reason for teachers to do things that students could be doing for themselves. Needless rituals and delays can be avoided by letting students assume all of the classroom management functions that they can handle on their own.

## **Minimize Disruptions and Delays**

Management problems start and spread much easier when students are idle or distracted by a disruption than when everyone is involved in productive activity.

Thorough daily planning is important. Problems often begin when a teacher breaks the flow of a lesson or activity because equipment needs to be prepared that could have been accomplished earlier or to look up information in a manual.

The room should be arranged to promote free and easy traffic flow. Heavily used traffic lanes such as areas around the door, the drinking fountain, the coat rack, and special areas for group lessons should not be obstructed.

When students are asked to wait without anything to do, they may become bored or fatigued, lose interest, or the ability to concentrate, daydream or actively misbehave.

## **Plan Independent Activities As Well As Organized Lessons**

Usually students spend a good part of their school day working on independent assignments. Disruptions often originate with students who are not working on their assigned work or who have finished and have nothing else to do. A choice of extended activities should be provided for students in addition to assigned independent tasks. Independent assignments and extended activities should be designed to compliment and enrich the basic curriculum and should not be merely time fillers.

Students need to be profitably occupied with independent activities, when the teacher is busy with small group instruction. In addition, the teacher should establish clear-cut rules regarding getting help with independent assignments.

## **Cue and Reinforce Appropriate Behavior**

Positive, desirable classroom behavior should be stressed. Students, like everyone else, find learning easier and more pleasant when someone is showing them what to do rather than what not to do.

### **Positive Language**

Close the door quietly.

Try to work these out on your own without help.

Quiet down---you're getting too loud.

Sharpen your pencil like this.  
(Demonstrate)

Carry your chair like this.  
(Demonstrate)

Sit up straight.

Raise your hand if you think you know the answer.

When you finish, put the scissors back in the box and put the bits of paper from the floor in the trash.

These crayons are for you to share. Use one color at a time and put it back when you're finished so others can use it.

### **Negative Language**

Don't slam the door.

Don't cheat by copying your neighbor.

Don't make so much noise.

That's not how you use a pencil sharpener.

Don't make so much noise with your chair.

Don't slouch in your chair.

Don't yell out the answer.

Don't leave a mess.

Stop fighting over the crayons.

## **Praise Desired Behavior**

In addition to stating desired behavior by phrasing rules in a positive way, teachers should follow up by praising or otherwise rewarding such behavior when it is observed.

In addition to praising frequently, teachers need to praise appropriately. Some guidelines for praising appropriately follows:

- \* Praise should be simple and direct. IT should be delivered in a natural voice, without gushing or over dramatizing. Even very young children will see theatrics as insincere and phony.
- \* Praise is usually more effective if it is given in straightforward declarative sentences. “That’s very good, I never thought of that before.” Instead of gushy exclamations, “Wow” or rhetorical questions, “Isn’t that wonderful?”
- \* The particular behavior or accomplishment being praised should be clearly specified.
- \* Teachers should use a wide variety of words when praising students.
- \* Verbal praise should be backed with communication or approval.

### **Get and Hold Attention**

The most successful way to handle situational inattention and distraction is to prevent it from happening, or if it does occur, to check it before it spreads and becomes more serious.

### **Focus Attention When Beginning Lessons**

Teachers should establish that they expect each student’s full attention to lessons at all times. There are several techniques teachers can use to do this.

First, the teacher should be sure to get the students’ attention before beginning the lesson.

The teacher should have a standard signal that tells the class the lesson will formally begin. The particulars of this signal will vary according to teacher preferences. After giving this initial signal, the teacher should pause very briefly to allow the signal to take effect.

Teachers should review their expectations regarding responses to these signals early in the school year.

### **Keep Lessons Moving At A Good Pace**

Teachers often begin with good attention but lose it by spending too much time on minor points. Causing everyone to wait while students respond individually and passing out materials are examples of ways the teacher may lose their attention.

### **Monitor Attention During Lessons**

Throughout the lesson, the teacher should regularly scan the class or group.

### **Maximize Proximity to Minimize Problems**

Teachers should maximize proximity to students and frequently used materials and equipment. Time is lost when teachers and students waste steps to reach each other, gather materials, or use classroom equipment.

The closer teachers are to their students, the more they will minimize classroom behavior problems. Teachers should continually roam the classroom, interacting with students. When the teacher is far removed from students or sits continually behind their desk, the students are more likely to become disruptive.

### **Show Variety and Unpredictability in Asking Questions**

The teacher should hold all students accountable for paying attention to the entire lesson and for learning all of the material, not just the part they have been asked to recite or demonstrate.

### **Stimulate Attention Periodically**

The teacher’s own variability is one important factor. There is no need for theatrics, but lectures delivered in a dull monotone with a minimum of facial expressions and gestures soon produce yawns.

In addition to these more subtle techniques, attention can and should be directly stimulated at times. For example, the teacher can set up careful attention to a question by challenging the class, “Now here’s a really hard question---let’s see who can figure it out.”

## **Terminate Lessons That have Gone On Too Long**

This is especially important for younger students, whose attention span for even the best lesson is limited.

## THE PIECE WE'D RATHER BE

*Each of us is made of pieces that we get from one another. Everyone we meet has an impact upon us, no matter how small, and that experience becomes a piece of what we are. Our experiences with other human beings are the means whereby we gain our own humanity.*

*A tiny smile or a brief glimpse of a gurgling baby changes us however slightly. The empathy we feel at the sight of a hurt and crying child will also impact upon our humanity. Shared experiences of laughter and dreams leave a bit of their sparkle that becomes a part of us. Shared experiences that are petty or mean also leave something that becomes a piece of us.*

*Some people are large pieces in our lives. Our experiences with them become a large part of what we will become. Our parents build that part of us that knows security and love. Then others may see in us confidence and a willingness to risk being wrong. They model for us responsibility and comforting that may become a piece of us. Teachers, too, play a large part in what we become. Many large pieces in what we are, originated in our experiences with teachers.*

*Teachers can add many wonderful pieces to our lives or they can introduce negative pieces into our lives that we have not before experienced. A teacher who never smiles, who is judicious but unforgiving, who marks our successes and our every failure can introduce a tiny piece of hatred into us. And those who resorted to sarcasm or ridicule we remember to this day and with that memory a piece of hatred reappears in us once more.*

*What young child goes to school on his first magical day and feels himself a failure? But how many children all too soon learn that, in a part of their lives, they are failures? Where does that piece of them that says "I can't" come from? Who needs that piece?*

*But there are pieces that we'd rather keep. The pieces that we would most like to be made of. A father's sense of responsibility, a mother's belief in her child: these pieces we'd rather keep. The wisdom of a grandparent, the secret sharings with a friend, these too we'd rather keep.*

*The intermediate teacher who left each student in the class with a piece of self respect and confidence in their ability to succeed became an important part of them. The intensity with which he went about all that he did, marked us all, some more, some less, forever. If we could choose we'd rather keep a piece of him within us. He was a significant other in the lives of many students and they wanted to rearrange the pieces that made up their lives into patterns that would make him smile.*

*When we are young the pieces of our lives flow easily into patterns. Children are easily hurt and taught failure, but equally easily lead to success and to seeing the joy of learning in school. The teacher is a gigantic piece of a child's life. Like the elephant and the mouse, we may harm greatly while scarcely noticing the impact of our actions on the small child. And for some children, we teachers are the only persons who, with love and care, strive to build positive patterns in their lives. How wonderful it is if others can look for our smiles as they try to order the pieces of their lives. If in their joy and successes we can see but a small piece of ourselves in them, then how wonderful it is to be a teacher!*

*But if we talk of gloom and doom and the futility of striving, if we blame others for our failure to order the parts of our lives into pleasing patterns; then what piece of ourselves do we give to other humans whose lives touch ours? Then when we meet a man of smiles and kind words who dreams and dares to make a better world, do we exchange equal pieces of our lives? Which piece would we rather have as a part of us, the optimistic one he gave or the pessimistic one which he received from us?*

*There are those magic people who are for us the vital pieces. We would like them to be a large piece of what we are. We would like to be a part of what they become. If we could choose they are the pieces we'd rather be made of.*

*As we get older we may see beyond the piece of a person that hurts us with an unkind word or deed. We may see the pieces from which he is made and then we may understand the reasons for his anger or disappointments. But, though we understand, we would still prefer to be with and a piece of the person who smiles rather than the one who frowns, the one who delights in life rather than the one who despairs. We seek out the optimist to gain a piece of him and we shun the pessimist.*

*But then, if instead of avoiding the pessimist we had but smiled and said a kind word to his pessimism; perhaps we would have become a piece of him and he might smile and say, "I'd rather be a piece like...."*