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10/9/10

Literacy Project

“Literacy is the ability to accomplish a wide range of reading, writing, speaking, and other language tasks associated with everyday life.” (Combs 4) In today’s society literacy includes technology and the ability to use it accordingly; such as a computer, numerical, scientific, visual, and media literacy. Reading comprehension is vital part of literacy. Reading comprehension is reading print language and extracting the meaning from the print. Without reading comprehension there is no purpose of reading the print.

**Balanced Literacy Development**

Reading Aloud & Literature Study

Shared Reading

Shared & Interactive Writing

Balanced and Integrated Literacy Framework

Guided Writing

Guided Reading

Independent Writing

Independent Reading

Word Study

Balanced literacy development is teachers providing students with various strategies in order for students to develop literacy skills. The five instruction focuses are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Students will be focusing on the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds within words. Sounds of spoken language work together to form words; thus, knowledge of sounds in spoken language is an aid to reading and spelling words. Phonics is the awareness that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes. Knowledge of letter-sound relationship is crucial to both reading and spelling. Vocabulary is stored information about the pronunciation and meaning of words heard and spoken in the written language. Fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly with expression. Automatic recognition of words is essential. Being fluid in reading helps with comprehension of the text. Comprehension is when the reader is able to understand what the text is saying. Comprehension is the cognitive process which requires thoughtful interaction between the text and the reader.

There are four stages of literacy development, emerging, developing, transitional, and independent readers. Emergent readers are just beginning to receive formal reading instruction, in a school setting (Combs 26). Children are beginning to be expected to understand print. Throughout this stage children are developing their knowledge of print. Children are learning about sounds and how those sounds can be represented through the alphabet. Children’s first interactions are primarily with the illustrations versus the actual text. Print is being read to children in the emergent reading stage. Children are beginning to understand that print is used to communicate and meaning. Emergent readers are developing their interests and curiosity in reading. They are developing their book-handling skills and direction of print. They are recognizing that print moves from left to right and top to bottom. Children are developing their basic knowledge of phonological awareness, such as words are strings of sounds put together to make other words. Children are making meaning of simple books. They rely heavily on memory of familiar words, illustrations, story context, and selected letter cues (Combs 27). Children are beginning to recognize that the same shape letter reoccur from word to word and can appear in different places within words (Combs 27). They understand or are beginning to understand that there is a correlation between the sounds we hear and the letters we use to represent those. Children are recognizing that the words we use in writing have spacing in between words and letters are grouped together to form words.

Children during the developing stage are learning to “break the code” (Combs 76). They are generalizing their concepts about print such as sound patterns. Unfamiliarity with words with more than one syllable present challenges within this stage, however, by the end of this stage readers can accurately reading words with two or three syllables. Children will be developing their sight vocabulary during this stage. Throughout the developing stage children must have extensive exposure to print and how words are formed. Children will need to strengthen their knowledge of phonics awareness in order to make predictions of the pronunciation of print words that they do not know. Transitional readers are typically fluent readers. They have made the transition between picture books to chapter books. They can really get immersed into reader for thirty minutes or more. Children at this stage have a strong concept of words in print and a foundation in letter-sound patterns. (Combs 76-77) Daily practice of words provides children with the much needed practice of continued development of concepts about words and print that leads to spellings that are more and more conventional. Independent readers are reading fluently on their own. They understand the text and are able to articulate what the author is saying. The children have a true understanding of print. They are able to be immersed in reading.

Teachers must create a rich literacy environment. (Copple 286-289) Children need to have access to a lot of literacy that intrigues them and inspires them to read and be creative. Teachers must create a literate environment full of focused instruction, trade books, and games. Teachers should link writing and reading activities together and create activities that the children work as individuals, partners and as a group. Teacher can create literacy centers which the children rotate every twenty minutes. One group can browse books in the literacy/classroom library, the teacher works with a small group on vocabulary, another group practice newly learned vocabulary and sentences and another group works together on a journal entry. Small group activities allow the teacher to tailor lessons to the individual needs of the students. Depending on the instruction the teacher may group children upon the student’s ability. Mixed skill groups facilitate learning because they can learn from their peers. Whole group activities work best when you are teaching a new skill or concept. Reading with children is vital. Children need to be read to at least once a day. Choose books that challenge the students to think.

Observing children’s reading and writing behaviors, is essential first step in the assessment of their development. (Combs 94) For children who are in the early part of the developing stage teachers should evaluate the following questions for their students. Teachers should take note of what strategies the child uses in developing sight vocabulary? How much instructional and independent reading seems to be necessary for the child to learn new words? How constantly does the child use the “context +” strategy with the beginning consonants? With final consonants? Is the child becoming more accurate in representing short-vowel phonemes in one-syllable words? Is the child beginning to notice that some words have parts (base + inflected suffix)? For children who are in the later part of the developing stage teachers should collect data for the following questions: Does the child sight vocabulary show a marked increase over the early part of this stage? Do the child’s reading and writing reflect a growing knowledge of single and double vowel patterns? What behaviors suggest that the child understands that some letters in English will be silent and may serve as markers for a vowel in the same syllable? How consistently does the child use the “context + “strategy with consonants? With vowels? With morphemes? How consistently is the child able to find base words within multi-syllable words in which the base does not change?

For children who are in the early part of transitional stage teachers should evaluate the following: Does the child have a large enough sight vocabulary to read fluently in appropriate text? Is the child able to use morphemic knowledge with words in which the base has been changed by the joining of syllables? Is the child beginning to integrate phonics and morphemic patterns to decode unfamiliar multi-syllable words? How consistently is the child able to us the “Context +” strategy to decode multi-syllable words? What behaviors suggest that the child is ready to break into flexible, more mature reading?

Assessment of high frequency sight words should be done at the beginning of each school year. This will give you the teacher a baseline of where the child is in their development. Comb states “the most efficient assessments are lists of about twenty to twenty-five words grouped together and presented in an easy-to-read format, such as:

Is you with his

That it they me

Keep records of children’s progress and words that have been correctly identified. Focus should be on words that the child has automatically identified three seconds or less. Charts can be used to determine where children are at. Such as keeping track of word knowledge Figure 3.9 in Readers and Writers depicts Sight Vocabulary, Phonics Patterns, Morphemic Patters and Self-Monitoring Strategy. The teacher can mark if the child usually, sometimes or rarely meets expectations. Read alouds provide the teacher with useful information about each child’s attitudes toward reading and their ability to make meaning with text they hear. Anecdotal records will document growth over time. Having children retell the story to you will help you gauge their reading comprehension. Activities can include parts or the whole text.

In order to assess children’s shared reading ability have two copies of what they are reading mark each syllable that the child reads. A child may read Twink le instead of twinkle. This should be done periodically to assess where children are in their understanding in words in print and reading them out loud. Rehearse the song or chant prior to doing this as a class when it is the individual child’s turn to read to the teacher she/he reminds him/her that this is the same song that they just learned as a class. The child reads the text and points to each word. After ask the child to find a word that he/she repeated, find high frequency sight words, find a common word with same beginning sound as another word in the passage, and find a longer word that is distinctive. A teacher should be watching to see how the child locates each word. Do they go directly to each word or do they hesitate? Take notes of observations. Assessments should be done early in the school year and periodically to show how the child is formulating his/her concepts of words in print.

Scripted and unscripted reading records can be used to assess children’s growth in reading. Scripted reading records used early in year gauge how children use self-monitoring strategies. You take the total words minus the errors equal the words correct and that is the accuracy rate. When the child is reading you should also have a copy to mark down on how many times the child self corrects, skips a word, inserts a word, you have to tell a word, misuses a word, etc…

“Shared and interactive writing provides opportunities for teachers to observe children’s development of: knowledge of ways to organize writing, ways to include appropriate ideas and content in writing, use of conventions in writing, showing voice in writing, ability to reread for meaning and ability to attend to details and patterns in words.” (Combs 275) Writing development occurs over time documentation should be done periodically to assess student’s progress.

Teachers should collect students work over time in order to assess their progress. Teachers can understand through children’s work what they understand about writing as a code, a medium, a product and a process. How a child uses writing as a form of thinking to re-collect, re-create, or re-construct ideas. How a child uses various forms of functional writing to communicate; and how a child uses the phrase of the writing process to explore and develop understandings of a topic and or to communicate that topic to others. Teachers should also take anecdotal records of how child respond to lessons, how they settle into their writing each day, how they give and receive help during response and editing activities, how their attitudes reflect their own writing, how they sustain themselves during independent writing and how they choose writing strategies. When you do not have information on a child it should be a signal to you as the teacher to do more focused observation on that child.

Diagnostics tools that help to identify if a child is need of intervention are all of the assessments listed above. You can pin point where the child is in need of help and give them support in that area. At Wells Memorial they use DIBBLES to assess reading frequency. This helps the teacher’s gauge where they students are at on the reading frequency level. Wells Memorial just finished taking the NEWEA test and that provide the teacher with immediate feedback on where the child is at. The teacher can then develop lessons based on where the students may be lacking.

Strategies to involve families of literacy development are open communication with the families about what the unit of study will be. Provide families with activities that they can do at home to extend and enhance children’s learning; for instance daily read aloud time. On a periodic basis the teacher should be in contact with families on how their child is developing. Constant open communication is key with families. To support a student it is crucial that you truly are partners with the families.

**Bibliography**

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