Kindergarten through Grade 3 Literacy Block Recommendations

As schools design master schedules and classroom educators plan instructional time to align with the Science of Reading and Science of Reading Instruction, USBE provides the following recommendations to assist school leaders and educators in implementing research-based instructional practice.

Overview: What does an effective literacy block look like?

Effective literacy instruction includes oral language development, concepts of print, phonological awareness, alphabetic principal, phonics, morphological analysis, spelling, fluency, vocabulary development, background knowledge, comprehension, text discussions, and writing. An ideal literacy block design includes dedicated, protected learning time on these instructional components. The recommended minutes allotted serve as a general guideline for the amount of time that could be devoted to each component. Please note that some components, such as concepts of prints are not taught during core instruction at every grade level as mastery is expected to be achieved in kindergarten.

Components of Instruction

Concepts of Print, Phonological Awareness (PA), Alphabetics, Phonics/Advanced Phonics

Kindergarten: 30-45 minutes, including 5-10 minutes of PA instruction
1st Grade: 40-45 minutes, including 5-10 minutes of PA instruction
2nd/3rd Grade: 20-30 minutes, including 5-10 minutes of PA instruction

- Focus English Language Arts Standards: Reading and Writing Strands
- Teach sound-symbol correspondence, syllable patterns, and morpheme structures
- Focus on blending and segmentation skills in phonemic awareness instruction[1]
- Incorporate the essential components of a Phonics lesson (reference LETRS phonics template)
- Use multi-sensory strategies and explicit instruction

Fluency

Kindergarten: 5-10 minutes
1st-3rd grade: 15-20 minutes

- Kindergarten—adults model reading fluently daily and decodable texts with corrective feedback
- 1st grade—daily repeated oral readings with familiar texts and decodable texts with corrective feedback
- 2nd-3rd grade—daily repeated oral readings with corrective feedback
- Include opportunities for students to practice automaticity with word recognition, accurate word reading, prosody while monitoring text comprehension

Components of Instruction

Vocabulary Instruction
Kindergarten: 10 minutes
1st Grade: 10-15 minutes
2nd and 3rd Grade: 10-20 minutes

- Focus on English Language Arts Standards: Reading Strand
- Use an explicit instruction routine for introducing new words
- Teach students independent word learning strategies
- Aim to explicitly teach 3-5 words per reading selection

Text-Based Instruction (e.g., reading/listening comprehension, text discussions)
Kindergarten: 10-20 minutes
1st-3rd grade: 20-30 minutes

- Focus on English Language Arts Standards: Reading. Speaking/Listening, and Writing Strands
- Include read alouds and/or close reading strategies
- Use a variety of oral reading strategies (e.g., partner reading, cloze reading, choral reading)
- Build or activate background knowledge prior to reading
- Discuss and respond to text dependent questions at different levels of depth of knowledge, including in writing and orally

Components of Instruction

Writing, including phonics-based encoding, handwriting, and grammar
K-3: 30 minutes

- Focus on English Language Arts Standards: Writing Strand
- Use text-dependent writing prompts
- Explicitly teach, model and scaffold skills in the writing standards
- Use writing rubrics to help communicate expectations to students

Teacher-led Small Group Instruction (30-45 minutes)

- Create flexible groups based on data
- Align instruction based on students' diagnostic needs
- Provide practice opportunities for students not engaged in a small group that align to previous instruction to build automaticity with previously learned skills

Phonological Awareness, Concepts of Print, Alphabetics

Instructional Strategies

Systematic, Explicit Instruction

Provides sufficient opportunities for students to practice and teacher modeling of the task.

- Effective phonological awareness instruction teaches children to notice, think about, and work with (manipulate) sounds in spoken language.
- Following a progression of phonological skill progression, teachers use many activities to build phonological awareness, including: *word awareness, rhyme & alliteration, syllable manipulation, onset & rime manipulation, phoneme identification, phoneme categorization, phoneme isolation, phoneme blending, phoneme segmenting, phoneme deletion, phoneme addition, phoneme substitution, and phoneme reversal.*
    - Teacher mouth awareness when producing all English phonemes.
    - Provide immediate corrective feedback.

Resources

- LETRS Unit 2
- USBE MTSS Recommendations https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OUPKypbKd5jXnlwMqnhKbpEZ02JX28WM/edit
- CORE: Teaching Reading Sourcebook
    - Print Awareness
    - Letter Knowledge
    - Phonological Awareness Section
- Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum and Resources: www.heggerty.org/download-assessments-and-resources
- Administering the Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST) Assessment https://thepasttest.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/PAST-Instructions-with-text-corrections-May-2021.pdf
- Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST) Assessment www.maspweb.com/resources/Documents/PAST%202016.pdf

Phonics

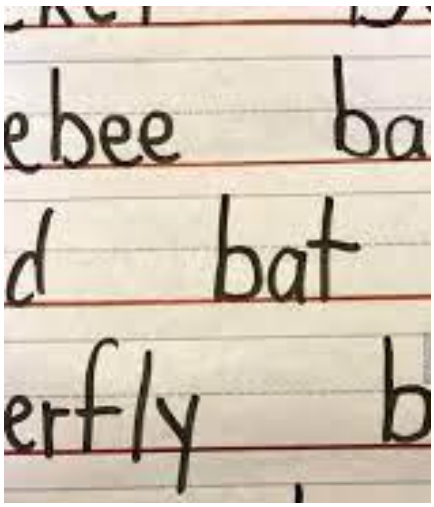
Instructional Strategies

Systematic, Explicit Instruction

- Uses effective lesson routines for teaching regularly and irregularly spelled words, connected to previous learned phonemes.
- Teaches all components of the phonics lesson template.
- Enables transfer of skills to accurate, automatic application of decoding in connected text, including reading words, phrases and sentences from the connected text.

Resources

- LETRS Unit 3
- LETRS Phonics Template
- LETRS Scope and Sequence for Word Study, Reading, and Spelling
- Explicit Instruction https://explicitinstruction.org/video-elementary/
- CORE: Teaching Reading Sourcebook
  - Phonics Section
  - Irregular Word Section



Advanced Phonics (Multisyllabic)

Instructional Strategies

- Recognize six syllable types and oddities
- Identify where syllable types and syllable division fit into instruction
- Explicitly teach use of syllable patterns in reading and spelling instruction
- Directly and systematically teach inflectional and derivational morphology and link to word meaning (vocabulary), spelling, and word recognition
- Encourage students to become ‘word detectives’ as they analyze word structure
- Directly teach Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek roots within a logical scope and sequence of word study

Resources

- LETRS Unit 4
- Explicit Instruction Video https://explicitinstruction.org/video-elementary/
- CORE: Teaching Reading Sourcebook
  - Vocabulary Instruction
  - Chapter 12 - Word-Learning Strategies Section
  - Chapter 8 - Multisyllabic Word Reading

Vocabulary

Instructional Strategies

- Directly teach key words in-depth and with reference to all linguistic features
- Use a direct and explicit routine for introducing new words
- Teach students independent word learning strategies

Resources

- LETRS Unit 5 – Vocabulary
- Academic Word Finder https://achievethecore.org/page/1027/academic-word-finder
- Nancy Fetzer's – Word Masters/ Front Loading Vocabulary www.nancyfetzer.com/
- Explicit Instruction Video https://explicitinstruction.org/video-elementary/
- Student-friendly definitions using the Longman Dictionary https://www.ldoceonline.com/
- CORE: Teaching Reading Sourcebook
    - Vocabulary Instruction

Fluency

Instructional Strategies

- Fluency consists of three interrelated components accuracy, rate, and prosody. Instruction should work to attend to all three components until mastered.
    - Model fluent reading and demonstrate correct phrasing of texts, expression, and strategies that fluent readers use.
    - Read familiar texts multiple times, and at increasing levels of text complexity.
    - Engage in a timed repeated reading and track their accuracy and rate.
    - When reading texts as a class, engage in various oral reading strategies such as echo reading, choral reading, cloze reading, partner reading, etc.
    - Receive feedback from their teacher or peers on their accuracy, rate, prosody/expression after reading aloud in a small group or individually.

Resources

- LETRS Unit 4
- Phrase-cued Text Lessons

  https://www.interventioncentral.org/academic-interventions/reading-comprehension/phrase-cued-text-lessons
- CORE: Teaching Reading Sourcebook
    - Reading Fluency

Comprehension

Instructional Strategies

- Reading Comprehension consists of three interrelated elements: the text, the reader, and the activity and/or related task.
    - Identify many variables that contribute to comprehension or the lack thereof
    - Identify multiple ways in which text, task, context can be varied to enable comprehension
    - Use the framework of surface comprehension, comprehension of the text base, and construction of a mental model to describe comprehension problems

Resources

- LETRS Units 6 and 7- Blueprint for Comprehension
- Explicit Instruction http://explicitinstruction.org/video-elementary/
- CORE: Teaching Reading Sourcebook
    - Comprehension

Writing

Instructional Strategies

- Preview and support writing with oral language
- Give meaningful and motivating assignments
- Emphasize thorough planning and “front loading” to enable student success
- Provide frames to support creation of written language; structure feedback and revision

Writing Connected to Text Shifts:

- Students will write about what they read.
- Writing takes on many forms: narrative, informational, and opinion/argumentative writing.
- Students should not write about disconnected, random topics (i.e., “what I did on my summer vacation”).
- Narrative writing, while based on text, still allows for creativity.

Resources

- LETRS Unit 8
- Nancy Fetzer’s Common Core Writing
  - K-1 https://nancyfetzer.com/courses/k-1-writing-training-course/
  - Grades 2-3 https://nancyfetzer.com/courses/2-3-writing-training-course/
- Writing Collection Project with rubrics https://www.uen.org/core/languagearts/writing-collection/

Resources

Shanahan, T. (2004, November). *How do you raise reading achievement?* Paper presented at the Annual Utah Council of the International Reading Association Meeting, Salt Lake City.

Shanahan, T. (2005). The National Reading Panel Report. Practical Advice for Teachers. *Learning Point Associates/North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED489535

[1]The National Reading Panel expressed that “it would seem wise to ensure at least 14-18 hours of phonemic awareness teaching be provided to young children (approximately 15 minutes per day for a semester of kindergarten).