



# Literacy Links

February, 2006  
Volume 2, Number 5

Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First



## Spotlight on... Literacy Centers

Literacy centers are a component of a comprehensive literacy framework. They are used for students to independently practice and extend their learning. Inclusion of literacy centers within a comprehensive framework allows teachers to work with students in guided reading groups or other small groups for direct instruction while the other students are actively engaged in the literacy centers. Literacy centers include activities which are purposeful, meaningful, appropriate, and can be completed by students in pairs or small groups. The activities reinforce and/or extend content, ideas, or skills which have been previously taught by the teacher. Each center activity should be taught and modeled prior to students working on it at a center to ensure the students will be able to complete it successfully and independently. Some examples of common literacy centers include: poetry center, word study center, listening center, or writing center. The activity included at each of these centers will change frequently to best meet the needs of the students. To be effective, literacy centers require:

- careful planning,
- organization,
- flexible grouping structures,
- clear expectations, and
- regular monitoring of students' progress.

A management system also contributes to effective and accountable implementation of literacy centers. Work boards or center boards are typically created to illustrate which center students should work at and the rotation they should follow through the centers on a specified day.

On the Florida Center for Reading Research website (<http://www.fcrr.org>) there is a "Teacher Resource Guide for Student Center Activities" available for download which includes many more details about establishing literacy centers in a classroom. (Refer to the 'Check It Out' section of this newsletter for more information about the center activities available on this website.)

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*"Reading is a fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends."*  
Louisa Moats, Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science, 1999

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## Description of Instructional Idea...

### Word Part Puzzles

A word part puzzle is a versatile phonics instructional activity where students explore how words can be broken down at various levels—syllables, onset-rime, or letters (including single letters or blends and digraphs). Begin by selecting a focus as determined by the needs of the students. Select words which illustrate the selected focus and write the words on index cards or cardstock. Cut the word cards into puzzles depending on the focus. The table

## Upcoming Events

March 6~  
Maine Reading First  
Informational  
Session on DIBELS,  
Portland

March 7~  
Maine Reading First  
Informational  
Session on DIBELS,  
Bangor

March 10~  
Maine Reading First  
Sub-Grant  
Applications Due



*"...I want to underscore that decoding is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for becoming a competent reader. Teachers need to keep the other components of reading, especially vocabulary and comprehension, present and active in their classrooms."*

below includes some examples:

Word	How to Create a Word Part Puzzle
rainbow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To focus on syllables, cut the word card into rain/bow</li> </ul>
rain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To focus on onset-rime, cut the word card into r/ain</li> <li>To focus on letters (including a vowel digraph), cut the word card into r/ai/n</li> </ul>
splash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To focus on onset-rime, cut the word card into spl/ash</li> <li>To focus on blends and digraphs, cut the word card into spl/a/sh</li> <li>To focus on letters (including a digraph), cut the word card into s/p/l/a/sh</li> </ul>

The students work to reassemble the word parts in the correct order while blending the sounds of the word parts together to create the whole word. Students can also be asked to write the complete word and/or use it in a sentence.

This activity can be used regularly because it can be adapted to focus on more complex levels as students' phonics knowledge and skills grow.

## Summary of Professional Literacy Text...

### Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys

Isabel Beck, the author of the best-selling book, *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*, has written a brand-new book on phonics. The chapters in this book mirror the systematic progression of phonics skills. After an introductory chapter on the alphabetic principle, the author explores letter-sound instruction. The next chapters focus on blending, word building, and multi-syllabic words, respectively. Each chapter includes theoretical underpinnings for each of the foci as well as ideas for instruction. Throughout this book, the author weaves her personal experiences of teaching young children to read with the content.

Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys was published in 2006 by The Guilford Press and the ISBN is 1593852576.

## Children's Literature Title...

### Carmine: A Little More Red

*written and illustrated by Melissa Sweet*

Melissa Sweet has created a delightful, multi-layered retelling of the traditional tale of Little Red Riding Hood. This book is packed with lots of elements to entertain and engage readers. Carmine loves her Granny who lives in the forest and taught Carmine how to read by making alphabet soup. Carmine also loves to paint. On her latest trek to Granny's house, Carmine is entranced by red poppies in the distance and tries to capture their beauty in her painting by finding the perfect hue of red. In addition to describing Carmine's not-so-smooth journey to her grandmother's house, the author creates an alphabet book with each letter highlighting a new vocabulary word pertaining to a portion of her journey. Read to find out how Carmine likes to "dilly-dally" and how she wonders if a mockingbird is an "omen" of what will happen on her trip to Granny's. Carmine: A Little More Red was published in 2005 by Houghton Mifflin and the ISBN is 0618387943.

Isabel Beck, Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys, 2006



*"I've traveled the world twice over, met the famous; saints and sinners, poets and artists, kings and queens, old stars and hopeful beginners, I've been where no one's been before, learned secrets from writers and cooks, all with one library ticket to the wonderful world of books."*  
Unknown

## News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Reading First will host two informational sessions on the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment tool in March (For more information on DIBELS, refer to the December, 2005/January, 2006 edition of *Literacy Links*.) On March 6, a session will be held at Keeley the Katerer in Portland from 9-12 p.m. and a session will be held at the Spectacular Events Center in Bangor on March 7, also from 9-12 p.m. More information and the registration form for these sessions are attached to this edition of *Literacy Links*.

### Check it out...

The Florida Center for Reading Research has created an invaluable resource for teachers in Kindergarten and Grade 1. They have compiled activities based on the five essential elements of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) which can be used in literacy centers. Activities are sorted under categories within each essential element for ease in selection based on the needs of students. Activity plans detail the objectives, materials, and steps of implementation. Most of the necessary materials needed to implement the activity are also included which makes the activities ready for use in the classroom. All of these materials are available for download. Please be aware these downloadable files are extremely large. The website address is <http://www.fcrr.org> The Florida Center for Reading Research is working this year to develop a similar set of center activities for grades 2 and 3.

### Newsletter Archives

There are several earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

Edition	Spotlight Topic
March, 2005	Maine Reading First
April, 2005	Maine Reading First Course
May, 2005	Reading Fluency
June, 2005	Vocabulary
September, 2005	Phonemic Awareness
October, 2005	Phonics
November, 2005	Comprehension
December, 2005/January, 2006	DIBELS



For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email [janet.trembly@maine.gov](mailto:janet.trembly@maine.gov)

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website  
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>