



Literacy Links

May and June, 2007
Volume 3, Number 9

Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

Spotlight on...

Grouping for Instruction

In the June, 2006 edition of *Literacy Links*, the Spotlight section described considerations for classroom design. This section encouraged teachers to design the physical environment of the classroom so it accommodates the following grouping structures:

- whole group
- small group
- individual

Each of these grouping structures has a different purpose and there is value in integrating all three grouping types within the instructional day. Incorporating opportunities for learning as a whole group, within small groups, or independently provides a variety of teaching and learning situations.

Overemphasis on one type of grouping structure at the expense of others prevents teachers and students from interacting with each other in various ways and may fail to target students' individual learning needs. Through the use of whole group, small group, and individual instruction, teachers can gather a wealth of information about students to better inform and guide their teaching so it clearly addresses students' needs.

Whole group instruction is often used to teach new concepts, skills, or strategies to the entire group of students. Situations where the whole group comes together can involve direct instruction by the teacher combined with opportunities for students to engage in conversations about the information presented. Whole group instruction is often used when introducing new information. Components of a comprehensive literacy program which can utilize whole group instruction include reading aloud, shared reading, reading mini-lessons, writing aloud, shared writing, interactive writing, or writing mini-lessons.

Small group instruction allows teachers the chance to work more closely and provide more focused attention to learners than is possible within a whole group. Small groups can be arranged to include either a homogenous (abilities of students within the group are similar) or heterogeneous (abilities of students within the group are different) mix depending on the instructional purpose of the lesson. Components of a comprehensive literacy program which may be done with small groups include shared reading, guided reading, reading mini-lessons, shared writing, interactive writing, or writing mini-lessons.

Individual conferences allow teachers to work directly with students to focus on their individual needs. Teachers can follow up with individual students who may be struggling with a specific concept or strategy, or extend the learning of individuals who are performing at higher levels. In addition to teachers regularly conferencing with individual students, opportunities for students to engage in independent reading and writing are also important.



"Be as careful of the books you read, as of the company you keep, for your habits and character will be as much influenced by the former as the latter."

Paxton Hood



Upcoming Events

June 27 -28, 2007 ~
4th Annual Maine Reading First Summer Institute will be held at Sunday River; registration information is included with this edition of *Literacy Links*

August 6-8, 2007 ~
Annual Seamless Transitions Conference; University of Maine, Orono
Organizers of this conference are excited to announce that Dr. Susan Bennett-Armistead, University of Maine Literacy Faculty Member, will offer a full-day institute on preK Literacy on August 9; Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for more information.

August 14-15, 2007 ~
Maine Reading First

Independent reading and writing times allow students to practice and apply what they have learned during whole group and small group instruction.

It is critical that connections are explicitly made between the instruction provided within the various grouping structures. For example, if students are learning about monitoring as a strategy to comprehend what they read, teachers can use instructional read alouds/think alouds (see the February, 2007 edition of *Literacy Links* for a description of the think aloud technique) and mini-lessons with the whole group to introduce, explain, and model the process of monitoring while reading. The teacher can then extend this whole group introduction within small guided reading groups for students to practice monitoring their comprehension while reading appropriate texts. Mini-lessons can also be used with small groups of students who may need more support with the process of applying the strategy of monitoring to their own reading. Additional reteaching can also be done with students during individual conferences. Purposefully establishing connections of new concepts, skills, or strategies across various grouping structures helps students more effectively internalize and apply new learnings to their reading and writing.

Description of Instructional Idea...

Word Webs

Word webs are flexible graphic organizers which can be created to build and expand students' understanding of a specific word. Word webs can be created with whole groups, small groups, or individual students. Targeted words for word webs can be selected from fiction or nonfiction books or from themes.

The first step in creating a word web is to write the targeted word in a box in the middle of the paper. Four boxes are then included as extensions from the middle box. The following labels are written in the four outer boxes:

1. **definition**—After a conversation about the word, students could create their own definition rather than consulting the dictionary.
2. **sentence(s)**—Students develop sentence(s) which adequately use the targeted word. Encourage students to come up with complex sentences which reflect the word's meaning.
3. **synonyms**—After students understand the concept of synonym, ask them to brainstorm words which have similar meanings as the targeted word.
4. **antonyms**—After students understand the concept of antonym, ask them to brainstorm words which have opposite meanings than the targeted word.

Summary of Professional Literacy Text...

Making the Most of Small Groups:

Differentiation for All

Well-known literacy consultant and author, Debbie Diller, has recently published a new professional text. (See January, 2007 edition of *Literacy Links* for a summary of Debbie's text, Literacy Work Stations: Making Centers Work. She has also written Practice with Purpose: Literacy Work Stations for Grades 3-6.) Debbie's latest text offers practical suggestions on how to design small-group instruction so it is powerful, effective, and efficient.

The first few chapters of Making the Most of Small Groups outline suggestions for scheduling small-group instruction, organizing materials, maintaining records of small-group lessons, and creating small groups with

will host the "All About DIBELS: How to Administer, Score, Monitor Progress, and Support the Planning of Classroom Instruction and Interventions" session at the Maine Principal's Association Conference Center in Augusta; see 'News from Maine Reading First' in this edition of *Literacy Links* for more information

September 27-28, 2007 ~
59th Annual New England Reading Association (NERA) Conference, "Literacy Learning: What Matters", will be held at the Augusta Civic Center; registration brochure for this conference is now available at <http://www.nereading.org>



students so they are flexible and best meet the needs of students. The remaining chapters focus on each of the five essential elements of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). A description of each of the elements is included, as well as several small-group lessons from K-3 classrooms, which target each element.

Making the Most of Small Groups: Differentiation for All by Debbie Diller was published in 2007 by Stenhouse Publishers and the ISBN is 9781571104311.

Children's Literature Title...

Fancy Nancy and the Posh Puppy

Written by Jane O'Connor and illustrated by Robin Preiss Glasser

The princess of sophisticated words and grand elegance is back! In the sequel to the first popular adventure, Fancy Nancy, Fancy Nancy returns in all her glory with a desire to own a dog. For those not familiar with Fancy Nancy, she would not be content with a plain, boring dog. She wants a papillon—a small yet posh puppy. Fancy Nancy's effort to get a posh puppy will delight readers of any age.

Fancy Nancy and the Posh Puppy was published in 2007 by HarperCollins Publishers and the ISBN is 9780060542139.

News from Maine Reading First...

- Maine Reading First is currently accepting requests from Districts interested in offering the Maine Reading First Statewide Course during the 2007-2008 school year. The Maine Reading First Statewide Course is offered as part of the federal Reading First Initiative. It provides educators with an overview of the scientifically-based reading research behind literacy development and instruction. There is a focus on research, instructional strategies, and assessments related to the five essential elements of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. The outline for this course is posted on the Maine Reading First website at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>. If you are interested in learning more about offering this professional development opportunity in your District or if you would like to submit a request to have the Maine Reading First course offered at a site in your District, please contact LeeAnn.Larsen@maine.gov
- Maine Reading First will host a 1½ day DIBELS training session in August. "All About DIBELS: How to Administer, Score, Monitor Progress, and Support the Planning of Classroom Instruction and Interventions" will be held on August 14 and 15 at the Maine Principal's Association Conference Center in Augusta. Participants in this workshop will learn how to administer and score the DIBELS subtests and then examine how the data can be organized and used effectively to plan instruction. A focus on linking DIBELS data to a three-tiered instructional model with a review of the key components of an effective reading program will be shared. It is recommended that teams of teachers and administrators attend as the importance of a school-wide model in implementing data-driven core and intervention supports for struggling readers will be emphasized. The registration fee for this session will be \$75 and participation will be limited to 30. Registration is included with this edition of *Literacy Links*.

"I must say that I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go to the library and read a book."

Groucho Marx



Check it out...

The Wisconsin Educational Communications Board, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and a team of educators, has developed a remarkable website focused on comprehension. "Into the Book" is designed to improve students' reading comprehension and is packed with resources for both students and teachers. The following comprehension strategies are highlighted on this website:

- using prior knowledge
- making connections
- questioning
- visualizing
- inferring
- summarizing
- evaluating
- synthesizing
- using strategies together

There are two sections within the "Into the Book" website: one for students and one for teachers. The portion of the website for students includes interactive reading comprehension activities for each of the strategies listed above. The teacher section of the website includes lesson plans, classroom design ideas, posters, and video clips focused on the strategies listed above. In addition, there are two video series, one for students ("Into the Book") and one for teachers ("Behind the Lesson"), which can be purchased on this website. Sample segments from each of these video series can be viewed directly on the site. (Although most of the elements on this website are complete, the goal for full implementation is the fall of 2007 so there are a few sections which are still under construction.)

Newsletter Archives

There are several earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available on the Maine Reading First website 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
February, 2006	Literacy Centers
March, 2006	Interactive Read Aloud
April, 2006	Nonfiction
May, 2006	Word Walls
June, 2006	Classroom Design
September, 2006	Shared Reading
October, 2006	Automaticity
November, 2006	Using Assessment to Guide Instruction
December, 2006	Deepening Comprehension
January, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 1)
February, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 2)

March, 2007	Making Instruction Explicit
April, 2007	Motivation and Engagement

For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email LeeAnn.Larsen@maine.gov

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website

<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

The professional development opportunities and materials are listed in *Literacy Links* for informational purposes only and are not necessarily endorsed by the Maine Department of Education's Maine Reading First Initiative.

