



Literacy Links

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Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

Spotlight on... Pacing Instruction



Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique: good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.

--Parker Palmer



Pacing of instruction is the *fine art* of teaching. Walpole and McKenna urge us to be “planful and flexible”. Explicit teaching and systematic instruction highlighted in past issues of Literacy Links are part of planful and flexible instruction; a third part is **pacing**.

Pacing can be compared to fluency in reading. As fluency is the bridge between skills and comprehension in reading, pacing of teaching is the bridge to students understanding and comprehending what they are learning (metacognition). Learning to read fluently occurs at several levels (letter, word, sentence, passage); in teaching, being aware of pacing of instruction is also required at several levels:

- Curriculum
- Classroom instruction
 - Whole class
 - Small group
 - One-on-One
 - Independent practice

WHAT DOES PACING LOOK LIKE AT EACH LEVEL?

At the *curriculum level*, mapping of instruction assures us that skills and strategies are scaffolded and retaught across the grade spans, using a hierarchy (systematic instruction). We know the pace or time needed for students to learn priority skills is regulated by prerequisite skills and students prior knowledge. This ‘big picture’ is important to insure that a logical continuum of balanced literacy occurs.

However, pacing at the *classroom level* goes deeper than curriculum needs. Pacing is neither cranking through skills and strategies or a particular program, nor is it perseverating on one area of literacy, one skill, or one strategy until mastery learning occurs. It is, rather, like a fluently read poem using intonation, expression, and purposeful pauses. Pacing lessons within the curriculum while being aware of children’s needs requires the teacher to: pause, clarify, make shifts, emphasize or highlight, and repeat aspects of literacy learning in order for all students to achieve mastery. It is an artful dance between the teacher and the learner. In all settings, “Be aware of your pacing. Watch your student’s faces, and check for comprehension. Do the students need more (or less) explanation? More (or less) time to practice?” (hopelink-online@www.eastsideliteracy.org).

The pace of *whole class* teaching should be regulated but not stalled by student needs. This is part of what defines the need to **differentiate instruction** in whole group, small group, and individual instructional settings. In daily lessons, when the learning is enhanced by sequential, explicit

Upcoming Events

November 2, 2007 ~

Linda Dorn is returning, this widely read author of professional literacy texts will present, "Providing Differentiated Instruction in a Reading and Writing Workshop" Held at Spectacular Events Center in Bangor. Sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development— Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for registration information.



teaching, the rate of learning can be accelerated and the time spent on each lesson minimized or maximized by students' needs. For *small group* teaching, Tyler (2004) explains this more clearly: "**The most important factor that drives student reading achievement is appropriate instructional pacing.** In other words, are students moving too quickly or too slowly within a reading group? My experience has been that as cautious, conscientious teachers we tend to err on the side of moving students too slowly. We want to make sure that they have truly mastered the material. Most students don't have time to repeat what they already know in their reading lesson; this should be left to *independent practice*. A good rule of thumb is to do what is instructionally challenging yet achievable for the group." (p.27-28). Teach students at their instructional level, remembering that as the text level increases, individual skills and strategies will be revisited. This again, is confirmation of the need for systematic assessment including routine progress monitoring.

Debbie Diller in her newest book: **Making the Most of Small Groups: Differentiation for All** (2007), provides wonderful guidance for all teachers, on when to move a student into a different small group (p.168), and many practice tools for grouping, organizing and maximizing our teaching time. This text is a '**must have and read**' for all of us as we make decisions concerning pacing of instruction.

Description of Instructional Idea...

Differentiation of Whole Class Main Selections

The use of a main selection with the whole class to model a comprehension skill and strategy is a common practice. The text selected is usually one that is at the instructional level for a typical student performing at grade level. So what happens to students above and below grade level? This is how the differentiation occurs:

All students participate in the whole class introduction of the text, where: the teacher builds the students' background knowledge, vocabulary is introduced, the focus of a comprehension skill and strategy is taught, and the purpose of reading is set. At this point students are divided into homogeneous groups.

To differentiate for ability groups:

- Above level readers (for whom the text should be easy) are paired to read or read the selection independently and respond to extension activities.
- On level readers (for whom the text should be instructional) continue through the selection in a teacher led guided reading activity where the choice of guided reading instructional techniques is regulated by the teacher, to meet the needs of the particular group of students.
- Below level readers (for whom the text may be hard) are sent off to either trace read with a tape recording or CD of the selection, partner read with an expert other, read as shared reading, or as a read-aloud.

In this way, all students in the class have experienced the selection in a way that is appropriate to scaffold their learning. They now have a common background to draw from: the rich language of the selection.

Save the dates:

September 27, 2008 ~ 2nd Annual Nonfiction Institute,
Featuring Susan Kirch, science education scholar and associate professor at NYU. Sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development— Literacy Unit; Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for registration information

August 5,6,7, 2008 ~
Annual Seamless Transitions Conference: Celebrating Literacy and the Arts, for PreK-Grades 12. University of Maine, Orono. Organizers of this conference are excited to announce J. Patrick Lewis, children's poet extraordinaire a keynote. Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for more information

Finally, using a wrap around method of teaching, the class meets to share the content of the story and respond to their connections to the text. The use of vocabulary is revisited and the focus for instruction for the pre-selected comprehension skill and strategy is reviewed.

This does not replace appropriate leveled small group reading (guided reading groups). It is a way to scaffold whole group instruction when introducing (modeling) new literacy concepts.

Summary of Professional Literacy Text...
Differentiated Reading Instruction: Strategies for the Primary Grades

Once again, Walpole and McKenna provide us with a clear and concise resource by asking and answering the question: "How can we meet children's diverse needs and accelerate literacy development for all within regular classroom instruction?"

This book was written for both classroom teachers and literacy leaders. It is structured so the ideas can be used within any larger literacy curriculum, as long as they are "nested carefully inside the time that is protected for meeting children's individual needs." The first two chapters deal with the general model and assessment for differentiating instruction. These chapters clarify how and why to use the instructional ideas in chapters 3 to 7. Chapters 8 to 11 outline a four step plan for differentiated literacy teaching at each grade level K-3. This text is a well designed "how to" book.

Differentiated Reading Instruction: Strategies for the Primary Grades by Sharon Walpole and Michael C. McKenna was published in 2007 by Guildford Press. The ISBN-10 is 1-59385-412-9.

Children's Literature Title...

A Day in the Salt Marsh

Written by Kevin Kurtz and illustrated by Consie Powell

Kevin Kurtz's rhyming verse and Consie Powell's realistic water color illustrations introduce the reader to hourly changes in the salt marsh as the tide comes and goes. The factual verses lead the reader into this informational text. Magnified inserts lead the eye to focus on the featured creature of each verse. The two inserted pieces of information (text and picture) are cleverly layered over the background illustration and a second layer depicts the landscape of the salt marsh. The pictures support the text and give a visual hint of foreshadowing as the hours tick by in the salt marsh.

This book would be a rich addition to a variety of text sets: stories in rhyme, poetry (a science link), an estuaries study, ecological systems. The typical rhyme in each verse might be used to model listening for onset and rime, and noting similar spelling patterns.

A Day in the Salt Marsh was published in 2007 by Sylvan Dell and the ISBN is 978-1-934359-19-8.

News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Reading First is in the process of setting up **The Maine Literacy Leaders' Network** as initiated with the first *Dine and Discuss* meeting last spring. The initial dates for the 2007-08 will November 8th in the Portland area and November 15th in the Bangor area. This first meeting will include the use of protocols for video viewing and selection of professional texts for study groups. Participants will choose a professional text to read and discuss at the Spring 2008 Network meeting. Anyone interested in joining the group, or if you need to update your contact information please e-mail leeann.larsen@maine.gov



"If we want children to learn to read well, we must find a way to induce them to read lots. If we want to induce children to read lots, we must teach them to read well."

Marilyn Jager Adams



Check it out...

www.fcrr.org

In the February and September 2006 editions of *Literacy Links*, the "Check it out..." section described the K-3 Student Center Activities developed by The **Florida Center for Reading Research**. It is exciting to announce that The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) have completed the Student Center Activities for Fourth and Fifth Grades. The activities for these grade levels are compiled in a similar fashion to those for Kindergarten through Grade 4, and are categorized by the 5 essential elements (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). A Teacher Resource Guide is also available and includes ideas about implementing and managing student centers within the classroom. All of these materials are available for download at <http://www.fcrr.org>. Again, please be aware these downloadable files are extremely large.

www.linkslearning.org

Links learning began in 1998 as a multi state project. It has grown to become a state of the art, E-learning, professional development resource, managed by Washington State. The site is organized in two basic ways – by roles of key educational stakeholders such as kids, teachers, principals, superintendents and parents, **and** by areas of subject matter content. One of its valuable resources for educators at all levels is **Reading Links**. Reading Links is a set of 18 multimedia lessons that demonstrate reading strategies. The videos at this site are free for professional development use and can be found in the index of the home page: <http://www.linkslearning.org>.

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
February, 2006	Literacy Centers
March, 2006	Interactive Read Aloud

“We shouldn’t teach great books; we should teach a love of reading.”

B.F. Skinner

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
May-June 2007	Grouping for Instruction
September 2007	Making Instruction Systematic



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