



Literacy Links

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Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

Successful teachers are supported by their students.

–Anonymous



Spotlight on...

Managed Independent Practice

Teachers frequently ask: *What are the rest of the students doing while I am teaching small groups?* Purposeful Practice...

Past issues of *Literacy Links* have spotlighted the topics of *Literacy Centers* and *Automaticity*. This edition will spotlight independent practice and the formats it may take that can provide a structure for promoting independence in literacy learning. Scientifically based reading research (SBRR) supports independent practice as a vehicle to ensure automaticity of new skills and strategies (SEDL newsletters). Managed independent learning stations (MILS) provide a management structure for daily practice in the classroom while the teacher is providing differentiated teaching to small groups of students.

Managing and differentiating practice to build automaticity can be accomplished in a variety of forms and structures in any given classroom. Whether your classroom organizational design uses Fountas' and Pinnell's Work Board and Centers, Linda Dorn's task cards, Debbie Diller's Literacy Work Stations, Bouchey's and Moser's Daily Five, those outlined from the Florida Center for Reading Research (fcrr) in the Student Center Activities Teacher Resource Guide or a combination of formats, all share certain basic criteria to achieve defined purposes for independence practice in literacy learning.

Essentially, managed independent practice activities:

- have a **purpose** for student practice;
- focus on skills/strategies/tasks that have been **previously taught**; and
- can be practiced **independently** by student or with a partner.

Managed Independent practice is not about the "stuff" of centers, it is about the practice needed to become independent readers and writers. Diller (2003,2006) outlines non-negotiable components for successful independent practice via literacy work stations; and Boushey and Moser (2007) take these principles a step further into student-driven independent literacy practice of the daily five (see professional text highlighted in this issue). The following modified list of guiding principles for managed independent practice come from these authors' work:

Guiding Principles for Managed Independent Practice:

- **Focus on practice and purpose:** Stations are used for meaningful independent work and are an integral part of each child's instruction. All students go to stations daily as part of their "work". The intension is to provide opportunities for over-learning skills and strategies previously taught.

Only when we are stopped in our tracks by a problem or situation that forces us to think or rethink is there the possibility of new learning.

---Eric Jensen



A good school for me is a place where everyone is teaching and everyone is learning—simultaneously under the same roof.

---Roland Barth

- **Link to your teaching:** Skills/strategies are taught by direct instruction. Then the task is placed in the work station for practice and independent use.
- **Balance process and product:** Include opportunities to create products at some **but not all stations**, and not every day. *The process of learning and practicing reading and writing skills is the overriding goal.* Products may occasionally be an ongoing project or process that takes several days to complete, or perhaps something assigned during another part of the day.
- **Slow down to speed up:** At the beginning of the year or whenever you start stations, first establish routines and teach tasks. The teacher and students should co-construct directions for activities to share and build ownership.
- **Less is More:** Start small and gradually add tasks and expectations to stations. Provide novelty by introducing one new task or material at a time. The novelty will last longer. Too many new items and /or tasks at once are overwhelming for both teachers and students.
- **Simplify:** Keep management system and materials simple. Stations /routines are set up all year long. Materials are changed to reflect children's reading levels, the skills and strategies being taught, and the topics being studied.

The most practical advice from successful practitioners is **keeping stations simple** and easy for students to learn. The design of independent practice is part of the culture of your classroom environment; it needs to work smoothly for both the students' needs and the teacher's goals. Smoothly operating managed independent learning allows more time for the teacher to differentiate instruction in small groups for all students. Managed independent practice is part of the established routines that set the stage for a year of meaningful literacy learning.

For more information about independent practice see:

Fountas and Pinnell (1996) Guided Reading. Heinemann.

----- (2001) Guiding Readers and Writers, grades 3-6. Heinemann.

Dorn L. (2001) Shaping Literate Minds. Stenhouse

----- (2002) Literacy Task Cards. San Diego: Teaching Resource Center.

Diller D. (2003). Literacy Work Stations. Stenhouse

----- (2005) Practice with a Purpose. Stenhouse.

Boushey and Moser (2006). The Daily Five. Stenhouse.

www.fcrr.org. Teacher Resource Guides for Student Center Activities.

Description of Instructional Idea...

Suggestions for

Managed Independent Learning Stations

Keep it simple when setting up learning Centers/Stations. Start out with five(5) or six (6) basic tasks, introduced one at a time. Boushey and Moser suggest:

- ✚ Read to self
- ✚ Read to someone
- ✚ Work on Writing
- ✚ Listen to reading
- ✚ Spelling/Word work

Upcoming Events

April 2, 2008~
Fluency Assessment and Instruction Workshop with Marcia Davidson. Sponsored by Maine Reading First and MDOE. More details to follow in upcoming Literacy Links editions.

August 5,6,7, 2008~
Annual Seamless Transitions Conference: Celebrating Literacy and the Arts, for Pre K-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

Others additionally suggest:

- ✚ Letter work/phonics
- ✚ Vocabulary
- ✚ Poetry

Decisions on which centers to include and what variations to use for managed independent learning should be based on the needs of your students to provide practice for fluency/automaticity.

Summary of Professional Literacy Text... The Daily Five: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades

Gail Boushey and Joan Moser (better known as "the sisters") have provided what appears to be a seamless structure for managed independent learning stations (MILS). They have synthesized literacy research and practice into an independent practice structure that not only enhances their ability to have more time for direct instruction but that helps students develop daily independent literacy habits. The Daily Five is a series of literacy tasks (reading to self, reading with someone, writing, word work, and listening to reading) which students complete daily while the teacher meets with small groups or confers with individuals. This book explains why and how to train students to participate in each of the five components. They show how to explicitly model, practice, reflect and refine the classroom structure during the launching phase, preparing the foundation for a year of meaningful instruction. This design ensures that all children work at their level of challenge, take responsibility for their learning, thus providing appropriate instructional blocks without extensive preparation time for teachers. The proper introduction of the structure of the Daily Five sets the "learning culture" of the classroom. It appears to be more than a management system or curriculum framework; it is "a student-driven management structure designed to fully engage students in reading and writing".

The Daily Five: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser was published in 2006 by Stenhouse Publishers the ISBN is 1-57110-429-1.

Children's Literature Title...

Danitra Brown, Classroom Clown

Written by Nikki Grimes and illustrated by E.B.Lewis

The Coretta Scott King award winning author, Nikki Grimes calls writing her first love and poetry her greatest pleasure. In **Danitra Brown, Classroom Clown**, Grimes successfully combines storytelling and rhyme, and E.B.Lewis's lively illustrations further detail the personalities of Zuri and her best friend. The story is told in a series of rhyming poems, where Zuri faces her fears about starting a new school year with the help of her free-spirited best friend, Danitra; until one day:

"Danitra wasn't there that day,
I felt so all alone
Until Miss Volchek pulled me close
As if I were her own."

The text can be read as a complete story or the poems may be used as separate entities. It would fit into text sets of poetry, friendship and ethnic studies.

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

Danitra Brown, Classroom Clown was published in 2005 by Harper Collins, Amistad the ISBN is 0688-17290-3.

Grimes has written two more books about Zuri Jackson and Danitra Brown
Meet Danitra Brown (1994) William Morrow.
Danitra Brown Leaves Town (2002) Harper Collins.

News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Department of Education's Maine Reading First Initiative is pleased to report the first round of 2007-2008 *Literacy Leaders Network Dine and Discuss* meetings were very well attended by about 80 Literacy Leaders statewide. If you would like more information about this group please contact: Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov.

Maine Reading First is also sponsoring a workshop on fluency assessment and instruction featuring Marcia Davidson on April 2, 2008. Marcia Davidson is a professor from the University of Maine. More details concerning this session will follow in upcoming *Literacy Links* editions.

Check it out...

For more details and ideas for centers and managed independent learning go to www.fcrr.org and click on *For Teachers*, then go to Centers Activities for grades K-1, 2-3 or 4-5 (found under Three Tiers of Intervention) and click on the **Teacher Resource Guide**. The guide for each grade level span has about ten pages of very explicit directions on two options for centers (managed independent learning stations) detailing how to:

Pre-Plan

- I. Form Flexible Groups Based on Assessment
- II. Identify Appropriate Center Activities Based on Assessment
- III. Design Center Management System

Implement and manage independent Student Centers

- IV. Implement a Behavior Management System
- V. Give Explicit Center Directions
- VI. Organize the Classroom
- VII. Manage Transitions
- VIII. Establish Accountability

www.sedl.org

This is the site for the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) featured in the October 2005 Links. SEDL provides excellent, **free** online professional resources in their Electronic Library. A wide range of literacy topics from teaching to coaching. The SEDL newsletter can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedl-letter>.

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 |



Old saying:

Practice makes perfect.....
 –Anonymous

New saying:

Perfect practice makes perfect.....
 --Vince Lombardi

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 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 |
| May-June 2007 | Grouping for Instruction |
| September 2007 | Making Instruction Systematic |
| October, 2007 | Pacing Instruction |



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.

