

## Part 2: Components



## Vocabulary and Language

### Goals:

- Children develop vocabulary and word knowledge through active word study and language-rich literacy experiences.
- Children develop facility with a variety of language structures and make choices about their use in their own speaking and writing.
- Children appreciate the complexity of language and strive to use it with playfulness and precision.

Vocabulary and Language activities in *2nd Grade for ME* are designed to help children develop powerful vocabularies and accurately use language to make statements, ask questions, and offer opinions. Throughout the day, children have opportunities to engage with words in ways that allow them to increase their knowledge and use of vocabulary and to better understand how word choice affects the meaning of texts. The work of the Vocabulary and Language lessons is reciprocal with children's efforts in both reading and writing; learning vocabulary is enhanced by and contributes to understanding of each unit's Big Ideas. In a cycle of weekly lessons, children encounter eight new words and draw on their own experiences to understand their meanings (Days 1 and 2), explore and practice specific features of language (Days 3 and 4), and demonstrate their understanding of the week's words (Day 5).

In a classroom rich with conversation, meaningful vocabulary words organically present themselves. Teachers listen to conversations and note words that children use frequently and accurately, words with which children grapple, and words of high interest. Beyond the formal Vocabulary component of the curriculum, these words can be collected, discussed, and added to vocabulary walls.

### Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Eight **Weekly Words** are introduced each week. These come from the week's texts and the Weekly Question. An illustrated card is provided for each of the Weekly Words; after the words are taught in the whole group, children use them in activities at the Vocabulary Station—as well as organically and experimentally in other activities throughout the day.

During each visit to the **Vocabulary Station**, children complete one of the following activities.

Choose 3!: Children choose from a menu of activities and demonstrate their learning through writing, drawing, speaking, and movement.

**Talk About It:** Children look at an image and read a question, then talk with a partner and draw and write a response, using the previous week's Weekly Words and other relevant vocabulary.

### Across the curriculum

**Text Talk lessons** include alphabetized lists of vocabulary words that are important for children's comprehension of the text. Some of these words are specifically referenced and defined in the lesson (these appear in bold type); others are listed because an immediately available, child-friendly definition may be helpful. An asterisk denotes those that double as Weekly Words.

In **Science and Engineering**, content-specific vocabulary is central to understanding. The mantra of language acquisition in science instruction is "activity before concept, and concept before vocabulary." Children have experiences, during which they name their understandings, and vocabulary is refined as they make meaning of their investigations.

In **Writing**, children develop domain-specific vocabulary to talk about their own writing and the writing of others with precision and clarity. Writing lessons emphasize particular and precise language features and use.

### **Language Learners**

*2nd Grade for ME* has been created with linguistically diverse groups of children in mind. The activities that children complete in the Vocabulary Station reflect the objectives of both Common Core and WIDA standards. Vocabulary teaching and activities can be modified to meet the needs of children with different levels of linguistic proficiency. Foundational and academic vocabulary in Text Talk vocabulary lists can be revisited at the Vocabulary Station to support the instruction of ELs, ensuring that ELs can participate with comprehensible and appropriate words in content-based discussions.

### **Assessment**

Teachers can review all of the written work from the Vocabulary Station, along with children's other written work and observational notes from Studios, Text Talk lessons, and other times of day. Further, on each Day 5 children work in small groups to apply their word knowledge and language learning. Alternating weeks, they collaboratively make and write sentences to answer the Weekly Question, and add suffixes to make new, related words and write sentences with them. Description of each routine follows. These routines allow children to take part in small group discussions that clarify, expand, and solidify understanding of vocabulary and key concepts.

## Days 1 and 2: Weekly Words

### Materials:

Weekly Words Routine chart  
chart paper and markers  
pointer  
Weekly Words cards, cut apart  
Weekly Words slides and projector, optional

### Preparation:

Create a chart for the routine (see below). Add images or icons as will be useful.

Each week, write out the Weekly Words and their definitions; this will be used during the lesson and for children's ongoing reference.

Cut apart the Weekly Words cards with images; sliding them into sheet protectors will help keep them in good shape and differentiate them from other words, such as sight (or "trick") words and high frequency words. (Beyond the Vocabulary lessons, these cards should be accessible for teacher use during Text Talk and for children's use throughout the day, especially in Stations, Studios, and Writing.)

Choose four words to introduce each day, using the cards, slides, or both.

In the span of ten minutes, for each word:

1. The teacher says the word aloud.
2. Children repeat the word.
3. Children indicate their familiarity with the word, with a thumb up, sideways, or down.  
The teacher asks a few children to share what they already know about the word.
4. The teacher gives the part of speech and reads the definition.
5. The teacher elaborates on the word, relating it to the image, text, unit content, and/or other relevant connection, and sometimes articulating something about its morphology.
6. The teacher asks a question, and children turn and talk to discuss it.

### Weekly Words Routine

Hear the word.

Say the word.

Rate the word: put thumbs up, sideways, or down.

Define the word.

Elaborate on the word.

Talk with a partner to use the word.

**Day 5: Answering a Weekly Question**

Used in Weeks 2, 4, 6, 8

Materials:

- Answering a Weekly Question sheet, one for each small group
- pencils, one for each group

Each group chooses one of the Weekly Questions from the current or previous week. For four or five minutes, the children discuss the question, using as many of the Weekly Words as they can (at least three). Once they have arrived at some consensus, they choose a scribe to write down their response. Other children can add drawings, symbols, or icons to this response.

The teacher chooses one small group to present their response to the whole class: they read the question and their response, highlighting the Weekly Words they used.

Other children then respond by affirming this group's use of vocabulary in context and by suggesting other words or ways of expressing similar or different ideas. Children can be encouraged to use accountable talk stems, such as "I agree with you and would like to add..." or "I hear your idea but would say instead..."

**Day 5: Making and Using New Words**

Used in Weeks 1, 3, 5, 7

Materials:

- Making and Using New Words sheet, one for each small group
- pencils, one for each group

For the first minute, the children identify the Weekly Words on a shortened list and familiar affixes. They choose one word to start with and identify its base word, if appropriate. Then, for four or five minutes, they play with this word, adding and changing affixes and discussing the new words' meanings. They conclude which words make sense and record them. Finally, they compose and write a sentence using one of the new words they have made.

The teacher chooses one small group to present their response to the whole class: they read their words and the sentence they composed with one of them. Other children respond by making connections to the ways in which they manipulated words, finding similarities and sharing strategies.

This activity provides children an opportunity to extend learning in *Foundations* to other contexts and thus develop the habit of analyzing morphology. It will be important for teachers to consider the pacing of *Foundations* lessons to make sure the children have appropriate words and affixes to work with.

## Text Talk

### Goals:

- Children learn how to analyze a variety of texts in multiple ways.
- Children discuss, draw, and write about text, grounding both conversation and written response in the text itself.
- Through discussion with teachers and peers, children flexibly use academic and content-related vocabulary and language.
- Children encounter different media, expanding their understanding of *text*.
- Children engage with grade level literature and informational standards.
- Children access affirming and enabling texts at grade level and above.

Every day, children and teachers gather in the whole group for a conversation centered on a text. Text Talk conversations simultaneously bring experiences with text to the center of classroom work *and* create a structure from which all other activities emanate.

### Design and Guiding Principles

During read alouds, as they interact with enabling and affirming texts, children build content knowledge, reading acuity, a confident sense of self, and personal investment in the topic of study through **multiple encounters** of both **narrative** and **informational** text. In some sessions, the lesson encompasses large chunks of text, perhaps an entire book; in others, teachers and children pause to deeply analyze one section of a complex text. With each read, children deepen their understanding of the text in targeted ways, discussing, analyzing, and writing in response to the texts, making connections to their own experiences and across texts—one way that many lessons support social emotional learning. The texts pop up to inform experiences at other times of day, across the classroom: in Stations, Studios, and sometimes during Science and Engineering and Writing lessons. To facilitate children's continual interaction and work with the texts, at least two copies of each are provided.

Targeted work with specific standards, a focus on vocabulary, and talking and writing about texts facilitates deep comprehension. For example, during read alouds, children may:

- identify and explain character and story structure in narrative text;
- identify and fluidly use text features of informational text;
- ask and answer questions that demonstrate understanding of key details;
- discuss word meanings; and

- speak and listen to peers, building on each other's ideas.

In addition, Text Talk lessons address the History and Social Studies standards upon which the units of study are constructed. Photographs, their captions, official documents, videos, data, and other texts—some of them primary sources—enrich and deepen exploration of a topic and expand children's experiences with literacy, perspective-taking, and communication. Many of these other texts serve to echo or enhance read alouds and discussions. Like the forms these texts take, the ways they are presented and discussed are varied. For example, in Unit 1, children create a text together in Week 1, watch a video in Week 3, view slides of an official document in Week 4, use Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) in Week 5, and read an original informational text in Week 6.

### **Weekly Question Charts**

*2nd Grade for ME* is built on Big Ideas and Guiding Questions. Each week, children explore a Weekly Question that emerges from the Big Ideas. Weekly Questions focus and guide conversations, and on the Weekly Question Chart children and teachers build a collective record of developing understandings; it serves as a common space to catch and preserve children's ideas and responses to the Weekly Question. It is formally introduced on Day 1 of each week, revisited throughout the week, and then wrapped up on Day 5. Related ideas are added to the chart by both teachers and children. (For a detailed description of how to implement the Weekly Question Chart, refer to the Routines, Introduction Part 1.)

### **Assessment**

Many opportunities for oral and written formative assessment of children's understandings of the text as well as unit content weave throughout Text Talks. Additionally, during Text Talk teachers take observational notes about children's meaning-making skills. These formative assessments and observational notes can inform small group reading instruction and the differentiated literacy block (Stations).

### **Logistics**

In setting up the classroom, the following will make Text Talks enjoyable and productive.

- a projector and screen
- whiteboard space
- chart paper and markers
- Text Talk notebooks

Children's seating should be arranged so that they can see the text, attend to whole group discussions, respond to reading in writing, and interact with partners and in small groups for discussion.



## Stations

**Goal:**

Children develop the skills and motivation to meet the decoding and comprehension challenges of complex texts.

Second grade is a critical year in reading development, where children move along a continuum from solidifying decoding skills introduced in Kindergarten and grade 1 to developing stamina and responding to increasingly complex comprehension tasks. Reading instruction in *2nd Grade for ME* is informed by established best practices, current research, and the standard. Multiple components of the *2nd Grade for ME* curriculum support these goals. During Text Talk, teachers read aloud and support children with shared readings that prepare them for the close reading they will encounter in third grade. Children engage in whole group discussions, engage with grade-level literacy standards, and develop comprehension skills and strategies. They also have weekly opportunities to respond to text in writing.

Stations provide opportunities for children to practice explicit literacy skills in developmentally appropriate, cognitively demanding, and engaging ways. This 45-minute component includes time for **Guided Independent Reading**, teacher-led **strategic small group instruction**, and the **Listening and Speaking, Science Literacy, Vocabulary, Writing, and Word Work** Stations. Activities build language and literacy through small group work and conversation. Critical are the connections to each unit's content, as children are more likely to learn academic skills when applied to things that intrigue and make sense to them. As children engage in this teacher-identified but independent and collaborative work, they build confidence and mastery in learning and applying developing skills.

The work during Stations will be meaningful only to the extent that it is **responsive and data-driven**. Thus, meaningfully differentiating instruction requires careful observation of children's literacy skills and text-based behaviors. The provided activities should be seen as the beginning of a library of resources for targeted practice from which teachers can draw as appropriate for the needs of the children in any given classroom. Where more than one activity is available at a station, teachers plan whether to allow children to choose or to direct specific children to specific activities, depending on their needs. (For many children a particular need will be the development of self-regulation, in which case offering choice is especially beneficial.)



## Facilitation

Careful attention to setting up **routines and expectations** in the early weeks will allow children to work independently and productively during Stations over the course of the year. These routines guide children in identifying which stations work to attend to, finding needed supplies, storing individual work, moving from one station to another, and cleaning up. While most children will be familiar with this component from Kindergarten and first grade, consider serially introducing each Station to make sure children know exactly what the work is and how to approach it with purpose in the particular setting of this classroom. As children are expected to develop increasing independence for their work, give them opportunities to express their ideas about what will make Stations run most smoothly and productively; this will build their competence, confidence, and investment for these activities.

At the beginning of the week, teachers provide a **brief introduction** to new activities; demonstrations will sometimes be helpful. However, all activities will repeat over time, so simply naming the activities will likely suffice once activities have become familiar. Occasional whole group meetings to debrief and troubleshoot the Stations experience will support children's independence and investment in the work.

Children should work in **heterogeneous language level groups**. Think strategically about which children will work together on various tasks.

The **schedule** is flexible. For the first ten minutes and building to twenty minutes over the course of the year, all children engage in guided independent reading. Once children are settled, teachers begin to gather small groups, and then children transition to activities in the Listening and Speaking, Science Literacy, Vocabulary, Writing, and Work Work stations. Through careful planning, teachers direct children to spend this time appropriately; some children will need more time in Word Work while others will benefit from more opportunities to listen to and talk about unit texts, for example. That said, it will be important to regularly and intentionally review and re-set schedules to support children as they practice and to attend to the frequency of work with each teacher-led group.

**Organization** in the environment will support children's learning and independence. Each station's activity sheets can be housed in a clearly-labeled bin with needed instructions and supplies. Keeping each station in a regular, designated space will ease transitions among them.

Finally, set up **spaces** around the classroom **that invite reading**, such as a reading corner with pillows and a rug. Allow children to decide where and how they will be most comfortable and successful. Some children prefer the rug, and others like to sit in a tight space such as in a

corner or under a table; others prefer lying on their bellies or backs, sitting in a chair, or even standing at a shelf or counter.

Specific information about each Station follows.

### Guided Independent Reading

Starting with ten minutes per day and building to twenty over the course of the year, children read independently and with partners. Depending on the needs of the class, teachers might spend this time circulating to observe and confer with readers and/or meet with small groups. It will not be productive to simply send children to read—thus, independent reading that is *guided*. A very general progression for this time might look like this:

Before school begins	Organize and label the classroom library by topic and/or author, so that children can choose books based on their interests. Design documentation systems for tracking children’s reading skills, behaviors, interests, and goals. Design systems for children to keep book collections and reading logs.
During Unit 1	Children learn to select books and navigate the classroom library. Establish individual book sets. Check in with children in teacher-led groups to assess children’s reading behaviors, interests, and skills. Create an anchor chart for selecting books. Create a rotating schedule for choosing books.
During Unit 2	Children learn to recommend books to classmates. Solidify a schedule and systems for documenting and checking in with children about their interests and reading behaviors.
During Unit 3	Children set and track goals for themselves as readers and researchers. Children develop stamina to remain engaged for the duration of independent reading time (20 minutes). Children apply teacher feedback about book selection and specific reading behaviors.
During Unit 4	Children talk about themselves as readers. Children begin reading books in a series or by an identified author.

## Strategic Small Group Instruction

Based on assessment data, children are pulled together in small groups for targeted, skills-focused instruction. Reading activities are scaffolded to support development of word-recognition, accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

**Strategic Small Group Instruction:** Through targeted, explicit instruction, coaching and prompting, children read and discuss a common text with a group of peers with similar reading skills and needs. Groups should be temporary and flexible. Decodable and grade-level texts are chosen that provide opportunities for targeted skills practice.

## Listening and Speaking Station

As they listen to and talk about texts together, children build oral language and conversational skills, vocabulary, listening skills, and conceptual knowledge. The Listening and Speaking Station provides multiple exposures to texts with opportunities to talk about the texts and use text-specific and academic vocabulary—all especially critical for English Learners.

Working in pairs or small groups, children listen to audio recordings of texts or excerpts of texts first encountered during the week's Text Talks and respond to conversation prompts. With the books themselves at the station, children can follow along with the texts as they listen. The recordings include signals for stopping and the questions read aloud, as well as printed.

Three conversation prompts (to be cut apart as cards) are provided for each text. Typically, two questions require stops on particular pages, and one asks children to consider the entire text after reading. These prompts might direct children to consider text, illustrations, print features, and concepts.

Notes:

- An audio player is required for the Listening and Speaking Station activities. Before achieving independence at this station, children will need to learn how to manage the recordings: play, stop, start.
- Audio files can be played through a variety of devices.
- Book pages will need to be numbered so that children can orient to the text and stops; follow the numbering guidance in corresponding Text Talk lessons.

## Science Literacy Station

Each week children will find a specific prompt for the Science Literacy Station in their Unit-specific Science and Engineering packets. These ask children to think about their own previous experiences in the world and to make sense of them in the context of the topic of study in the classroom. At this station children may also continue writing and drawing about investigations conducted as part of Science and Engineering lessons—either finishing or extending that work.

## Vocabulary Station

Children engage in individual and small group activities that help foster a culture of word and language acquisition. At the Vocabulary Station, children work with the Weekly Words *from the previous week*, after they have had a chance to explore the words in the context of texts, whole group discussion, and Vocabulary and Language lessons.

To support the vocabulary activities, give children opportunities to play with words in the whole group and in spontaneous ways. For example, using familiar words, propose a word for children to act out, ask them their connections to a word, suggest and ask for examples, opposites, or translations. This playful practice will prepare them for more independent Station work.

### Choose 3!

Children choose one of the focus words or other, teacher-identified words to complete the Choose 3! sheet. Children choose one activity from each category and complete these alone or with a partner.

### Talk About It

This activity begins in Week 3 and is based on an image chosen for its connection to the week's content. Working with a partner, children talk about what they see and a related question, draw and write their ideas, and then share their responses. To emphasize vocabulary use, they circle important words they have used in their writing (or record words that they have used in conversation).

## Word Work Station

The Word Work Station provides time for children to apply what they are learning in teacher-directed *Foundations* lessons. These activities support practice with and analysis of sounds, words, and sentences.

Teachers may need to swap out the week's Word Work activities, depending on the pacing of *Foundations* lessons.

While Word Work activities follow the *Foundations* scope and sequence and address specific skills and concepts, there are a limited number of different kinds of activities. As children are introduced to activities, those directions can be added to the station bin: on a ring, pasted into a file folder, or stored in an envelope.

## Writing Station

Writing Station prompts are introduced during Text Talk lessons, connected to those teacher-led interactions with and discussions about texts. These prompts give children the opportunity to integrate those whole group experiences and continue to respond to reading quietly, independently, and with a particular focus. The Writing Station is also used as a time and place for children to complete mid- and end of unit assessments.

## Science and Engineering

### Goals:

- Children investigate phenomena using hands-on materials.
- Children read, talk, and write about scientific and engineering ideas and experiences.
- Children record and analyze their findings to deepen thinking.
- Children use the science and engineering practices to make sense of phenomena and their own experiences.
- Children connect science and engineering concepts to real life situations.

Science and Engineering in *2nd Grade for ME* includes explicit instruction, further exploration in the Discovery Studio, and integration with unit content. In second grade Science and Engineering lessons and related Discovery Studio activities, children continue to develop the ability to think, act, and communicate as scientists and engineers. They engage in the doing of science and engineering, while applying the literacy skills connected to these disciplines.

Science instruction takes place throughout all four *2nd Grade for ME* units of study and is connected to the topic and texts of each unit. Two units—Unit 2: The Forces of Wind and Water and Unit 4: The Power of Pollinators—are heavily science-focused and will include discussing and reading and writing about science during Text Talk, Writing, and Studios.

### Logistics

Explicit Science and Engineering lessons in *2nd Grade for ME* take place during two 30-minute sessions each week. These sessions are connected and should be scheduled consecutively. In the days following the lessons, children continue to engage in science and engineering learning during the same 30-minute block at the Discovery Studio and sometimes the Research Studio.

Children typically work with partners during investigations. Pair children thoughtfully and strategically, and observe to determine when it is most productive for children to continue through an extended investigation with a single partner, or whether the work and/or children's interactions would benefit from new collaborations and cross-pollination of ideas.

Science and Engineering experiences are paired with a Science and Engineering Packet specific to each unit. In these, children record their observations and evolving understandings as they work through Science and Engineering lessons, the Science Literacy Station, and some explorations in the Discovery Studio. Extra pages are included at the end for insertion as needed. Occasionally, these pages include questions from the [BPS Science Can I? Did I? Practices](#) (based on the NGSS

Practice Standards) so that children can self-assess their development in scientific and engineering practices.

Lessons are designed to be taught by the classroom teacher and/or the science specialist.

**Classroom teachers** responsible for science instruction should teach the lessons as written. In schools with **science specialists**, the specialist and classroom teacher can take on the teaching of Science and Engineering together. In these arrangements, the role of the specialist is to teach and go deeper with the 30-minute Science and Engineering lessons, and to communicate with the classroom teacher to support the work in the Discovery Studio. The role of the classroom teacher is to expand Studios time from three to five days; support learning at the Discovery Studio; and communicate with the science specialist to convey the connections between the Science and Engineering lessons and other components of *2nd Grade for ME*.



## Studios

### Goals:

- Children experience agency and autonomy.
- Children grapple with and expand conceptual knowledge.
- Children access a variety of media and processes with which to express their understandings.
- Children use discrete skills in authentic ways.

**Studios provide opportunities for children to dig deeply into each unit’s Big Ideas and to express their developing understandings through diverse means.** Studios materials and activities are designed to further push children’s thinking about the Weekly Questions, thus deepening, expanding, and consolidating children’s understandings. Teachers find that new possibilities for the topic of study emerge from the discoveries and questions that arise as children direct their activity with purpose, seriousness, and playfulness. Adult observation, peer collaboration, and ongoing feedback all contribute to high quality work. In Studios, second graders apply their developing skills in literacy and language; their thinking as scientists, historians, and mathematicians; and new vocabulary in every discipline. In Studios, children and adults engage in a vigorous culture of creativity, exchange of ideas, problem solving, and revision as they negotiate the subject matter at hand.

There are six studios: **Art, Building, Discovery, Research, Math,** and **Writing and Storytelling.** They overlap by virtue of sharing links to the topics of study; each studio also offers distinct possibilities based on its particular materials and processes. Because knowledge building in one domain happens in concert with experiences *across* domains, studios provide the ideal conditions for the consolidation of knowledge and extension into new thinking. Ideas children play with and refine in the studios thread their way back to class and small group discussions and into their writing. Skills practice in Stations bolsters Studios work.

Studios provide time to foster unconstrained skills—those skills and dispositions not typically measured by standardized means: self-regulation and self-expression, creative and critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (often called 21st Century Skills). Children’s socioemotional engagement is stimulated by invitations to make personal connections to the topics of study and through multiple points of entry via diverse materials and modes of expression.

Studios also offer teachers opportunities to get to know children through the skills and knowledge they bring *to school*. With time and materials to explore and create, children can animate and present their whole selves, in any or many of “the hundred languages” described by Loris Malaguzzi in envisioning the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Teachers who pay close attention, who listen and watch with great appreciation and curiosity, can understand children’s particular ways of seeing the world and their most fluent and passionate ways of describing what they see. Children’s struggles and questions will similarly emerge. What children bring to Studios, they and their teachers can then bring to the rest of the classroom community, enriching all. In Studios, we make space for children’s imagination about the world they want to live in, the actors they want to be in it, and, hopefully, we make space for those ideas to take true shape, for the children to feel as big and powerful as they are.

### **How studios work**

The studios “lessons” for the first two weeks of school are all about establishing routines and expectations for how Studios time will work. Children are invited to tell something about themselves as learners, their experiences in school, and their ideas about what school might be. This gives classrooms time to develop and settle into systems and routines for working in Studios, including

- the set-up, care, and use of materials;
- clean-up, storage, and accessibility for each Studio;
- methods for children to choose Studios;
- numbers of children who can work productively and safely in each area and systems for fluid movement between Studios;
- signals for clean up and finishing work;
- places for keeping ongoing and finished work;
- tools for documentation (used by children and adults); and
- use of walls or other space for display of Studio work.

This set up time will be crucial for the ongoing success of Studios. When children have clarity about systems and shared expectations, they can apply their full attention to the work they undertake. Some specific guidance about setting up each studio is included in Weeks 1 and 2 of Unit 1.

Weekly, two sessions of Science lessons and three sessions of Studios occupy a daily 30-minute period, at the same time each day. Ideally, the Studios days follow Science days, since explorations in the Discovery Studio offer practice in the concepts introduced in Science and Engineering lessons. For example:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Science	Science	Studios	Studios	Studios

The Studios lessons in *2nd Grade for ME* intend to offer ways to investigate the Weekly Question and make connections among other parts of the day (Text Talk, Writing, Science and Engineering, Vocabulary and Language, Stations). In planning, teachers consider suggested activities and materials in light of their particular classroom communities and determine how and when best to introduce, continue, or replace ideas for a particular studio.

Each week, Studios time opens with a *brief* whole group meeting – five or so minutes to introduce new materials, highlight a successful technique or strategy, or pose a challenge. Once children have this information and ask clarifying questions, they plan their work, briefly thinking and chatting with a partner about their plans. This Opening meeting should happen quickly, in order to maximize active work time and need not happen every day.

***Children choose where to work.*** At very few points in their school days (and indeed outside of school as well) do children have the chance to make real decisions about what they will do next. Being able to choose from among studios supports children’s executive function *and* engages them authentically in work they care about, with materials that are intuitively challenging, aesthetically pleasing, and inspiring. Children’s investment in their work will be intrinsic and profound. Teachers may sometimes suggest that children experiment outside a preferred, familiar studio, both to stretch their capacities and broaden their skills, and to afford other children space in a coveted area. However, teachers will not force children to produce something in a particular studio or to visit each studio that is available.

In only 30 minutes, children might work at only one studio per session. With projects that extend across Studios sessions and days, children will be able to design, research/explore, work, revise, get feedback, revise again, and come to a satisfying completion. Add in time for collaboration with interested peers, and a single idea may evolve over a couple of weeks.

***Children will want to save their work.*** Because materials are shared and other children may want to use them the following day, encourage children to capture their work through a sketch or photo and then to clean up. Work that is truly in progress and work that has received feedback should continue. Devise a system for setting work aside. Children can make signs such as “Still working” or “Please do not disturb;” make sure they include their names. The class should make agreements about in what circumstances and for how long work can reasonably be saved.

***Some children will move around a lot.*** While some will become absorbed in their work in a single studio and be frustrated that the time passes too quickly, other children will

want to move around to see what the possibilities are. These children might generally be challenged to settle into their work, and the opportunity to move around freely may provide too much stimulation. Telling them to “pick a studio and stay there” will likely feel unsuccessful for teachers and children alike. Provide constrained choices; be present while they try new materials and processes; arrange partnerships with other children; and document successes. A timer might be useful, as well, with incrementally increasing expectations for sustained attention in one studio.

***Children solve problems.*** A particularly powerful opportunity inherent in Studios work is that children will encounter dilemmas with materials, with processes, and with each other. They will sometimes have trouble realizing their aspirations. Offer support and resources, and let children take on as much of the problem solving as possible. Taking a stance as teacher-researcher, curious about what will unfold with notebook in hand, helps teachers resist jumping in to offer solutions. The innovations and resolutions children come up with on their own, especially after a struggle, will be most satisfying, most informative, and most useful in developing perseverance and confidence.

At the end of Studio time, depending on classroom schedules but *at least* once a week, another brief whole group meeting might include a formal or abbreviated Thinking and Feedback routine about a piece of children’s work. During this meeting teachers may also choose to highlight a persistent challenge with a material (the clay won’t stick together), discuss how to communicate class work to a broader audience (essential components for a hallway bulletin board), or surface themes in work across studios (one child is exploring through a story what others are building or researching). As the Studios component is being established, and occasionally throughout the year, it will also be important to revisit the systems, routines, and expectations for how each studio works to make sure that all children are participating meaningfully and cooperatively.

## **Environment**

A purposeful environment supports learning as well as the logistical functioning of Studios. The short time allowed requires that materials and tools get into children’s hands efficiently; this in turn requires organization, labeling, accessibility, and systems for children to set up, maintain, and dismantle studios. The space for any given studio should accommodate children’s various ways of maintaining physical attentiveness to their task: they may wish to sit, stand, or move around as they work. Studios should provide possibilities for children to work side by side, in small groups, or independently, as they choose. The sound environment (noise level) should both encourage conversation and allow children to sustain their work with intention and focus. The visual space can host images, tips and strategies (from adults and children), models and/or photos of children’s work, and clear cues for learning, such as guiding questions, prompts, and/or specific learning standards.

## The role of the teacher

Once studios are up and running with increasingly smooth navigation of materials and space, classroom adults can begin to spend more time paying attention to the learning that is happening. As teachers circulate, they dip in and out of each studio, listening and observing, asking questions, and offering a balance of support and challenge as needed by individual children and by small groups. Teachers draw children's attention to each other's work and to the developing expertise of their peers, and encourage collaboration.

In the studios, teachers introduce *a vocabulary of possibility* that encourages children to work thoughtfully and with patience for mishaps. The language teachers use in Studios can appropriately complicate children's thinking about how a task might be approached and make problem solving an accepted—not frustrating—part of learning.

For example,

*Think about...*

*What if...*

*Experiment with...*

*It might be because...*

*Have you noticed how other children are...?*

Rather than simply praising or critiquing children's work, this kind of conditional or "maybe..." language provokes children to think more deeply about what they are doing, to look critically at the results of their efforts, to accept multiple ways of approaching something, and to persist through challenges.

In whole group meetings to introduce and reflect upon Studios work—guided by the Thinking and Feedback routine—teachers model strategies and techniques and facilitate conversations to address challenges children are encountering. This also sets the stage for children's investment in each other's ongoing projects. Please see the Routines document in Part 1 for a description of the Thinking and Feedback routine.

## Formative assessment

The process of **observing**, entering children's conversations and experiences, intervening and making suggestions, and then observing further helps a teacher understand a child's thinking. A bank of questions guides this assessment:

What words and language is this child using?

What ideas is she expressing?

What questions is he asking?

What understandings does this work reveal? What misconceptions does it uncover?

What concepts need further exploration?

What is the quality of the child's interactions? What is she learning from others?

Answers to these questions are collected in notes, transcriptions, photographs/video, children's work, and notes from small group conversations and whole group meetings; it may also be useful to keep logs of children's visits to each studio (children can sign in/out to create these logs themselves). Develop a good system for collecting documentation of Studios work.

**Reflecting** on these artifacts, both independently *and* with colleagues, is essential to appreciating a child's development and to planning next steps for individual children and for the group. This formative assessment will be used alongside assessments from Stations and standardized assessments to form a comprehensive picture of the child's learning trajectory.

### **Children's responsibilities**

Inherent in the opportunity to choose where they will work and how they will proceed with their projects is the child's responsibility to make very good use of their time. *This is not a "free choice" time.* Rather, in making careful decisions about their work, children are agreeing to embark on serious and fruitful exploration. Sometimes children will initiate activities that surprise us. Refer children back to texts, class discussions, work on the walls, and other resources, and remind them of the Weekly Questions that anchor class activity. Ask them how their work connects to this topic of study, and listen carefully to their responses.

Children will be tasked with taking care of materials, keeping things organized, and perhaps signaling clean up time. They may be given rotating jobs to oversee the care of specific studios or materials.

Children contribute to each other's work as they sink into compelling tasks: they exchange ideas about how to approach materials and activities, evaluate together the success of their evolving products, offer suggestions to one another, and put new vocabulary to use. Once Studios are established, children are likely to move around to see what others are doing, make connections, offer advice, and celebrate successes. Some children will prefer to work independently, and this should, of course, be respected. Teachers can remind the class that the studios provide opportunities for everyone to be working on a shared idea or question in various ways, so that children see the connections among their efforts.

### **Connecting with Families**

Teachers are encouraged to extend connections to children's home lives by creating invitations for family participation: Ask a family member to tell you a story about ...; See if you can find an artifact where you live about ...; Ask a family member to describe how she or he learned to .... The possibilities will be wide open. These invitations need not be bound by a family's facility with English (stories can be told in any language), nor life experience (all experiences inform who we are), nor access to extensive resources (every family throws things away that could be

useful in the Art Studio). See the Home Links for ideas for connecting families to classroom learning.

**A final word: Patience**

It will take time and practice for many teachers to become comfortable in and confident about the work in Studios. For some, the challenge will be in releasing decisional control to the children and trusting that the work they do in studios has real value for cognitive and academic growth. For some, management of materials will require rethinking and perhaps retooling classroom spaces. Others will worry about the “loss of instructional minutes.” Have patience. With agency in their learning, guided in positive and productive habits, and given supportive structures, the children will reveal themselves as competent, innovative, and engaged. They will make meaningful connections to all aspects of the second grade curriculum. All members of the classroom community, children and adults alike, will find themselves immersed in joyful, vigorous work.



## Beautiful Stuff

*To a young child, the world is full of materials to touch, discover, and explore. To find, collect, sort, and use materials is to embark on a special kind of adventure. For adults, gathering materials means rediscovering the richness and beauty in natural, unexpected, and recyclable objects that are all around us, but not often noticed.<sup>1</sup>*

Topal and Gandini, Introduction



**Beautiful Stuff** provides children with the opportunity to gather, explore, and build understandings about various **recycled and natural materials**. Children then use these materials to inspire and support their ideas across units of study, in the Art Studio, and beyond. “The goal is to allow children to become fluent with materials—as if materials were a language” (Topal & Gandini, introduction), in order to widen the possibilities of media that can effectively communicate ideas.

Many children will already have had experience with Beautiful Stuff in PreK, Kindergarten, and first grade. The “starter kit” of materials you present at the beginning of the year will act as suggestion for the kinds of materials children might collect from home to add to the classroom supply. In Week 5, with the conversation about materials well underway in Science and Engineering lessons and in the Discovery Studio, children begin to use Beautiful Stuff to add dimension to their puppets and perhaps to their structures; they may create new props to use with the Story Cubes for storytelling and writing.

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<sup>1</sup> Topal, C.W. and Gandini, L. (1999). *Beautiful stuff!: Learning with found materials*. Worcester (Massachusetts): Davis Publications.

## Logistics

In preparation, identify a space (open shelves are ideal) to accommodate materials and works in progress. Beautiful Stuff will be available throughout the year for children to access with other materials as they determine the best media to communicate their ideas. Children should be involved in maintaining the space and materials, which can be replenished and reorganized as needed. Families can be a constant source of materials, and collecting Beautiful Stuff is a concrete way that every family can contribute to classroom learning.

Aside from the Beautiful Stuff materials themselves, you will find it helpful to have:

- containers for sorting and storing, such as recycled trays, plastic containers, cups, jars
- materials to use as **bases**, such as cardboard squares
- trays, to define work space, organize materials, and transport works in progress
- paper and writing tools
- images for inspiration, unit-related, if possible
- Adhesives (scotch and/or masking tape, liquid glue) and attachers (paper clips, string, rubber bands)

## Introducing the materials

Begin with materials you have collected. When you introduce them to the children, you might have already sorted them and organized them in labeled containers.

Ideally, leave the task of sorting and organizing for the children. As children sort, they consider the various attributes of each object and make decisions about what categories to create. Is a cap from a water bottle sorted with other things that are round, made of plastic, red, or small? Is a piece of yarn wiggly, soft, something to hold things together? This consideration complements the exploration children are doing in Unit 1 Science and Engineering and may result in more purposeful and thoughtful use of materials over time.

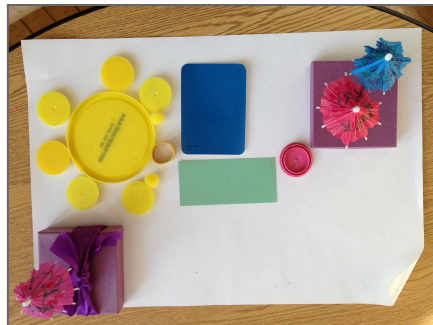
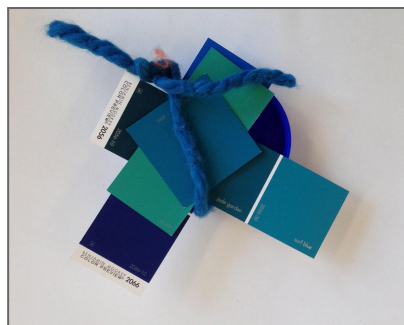
Have the children label containers with words that describe the materials in each one. As they become increasingly confident, these labels might also include suggestions for use.



## Exploration

Make sure that children have ample time to explore the materials—understanding their properties and entertaining possibilities for their use—before assigning something in particular to accomplish with them. With exploration, trying out different ways to use various objects, children are more likely to make intentional decisions about which materials will be most effective for a specific purpose. Children might explore materials individually or in small groups, or in a guided whole group conversation.

Document how children are using materials with notes and/or photographs. Take note of the language children use as they talk about materials, and support children with descriptive and precise vocabulary.



## Maintaining a robust and exciting stock

You'll become frustrated to be constantly collecting materials and then have them disappear.

- In Week 5 of Unit 1 and periodically throughout the year, send a letter to families asking them to participate in collecting Beautiful Stuff for the classroom.
- Keep a clipboard and pencil near the Beautiful Stuff collection so that children can record materials that are running low or new materials they would like to add.
- Children who are not able to bring materials from home might be invited to collect recycled materials from around the school (bottle caps from teachers in the office) or natural materials in the school yard or during a walk (acorns, pinecones, sticks).
- Keep a bag or box in your own home to gather materials.
- Be conservative with **adhesives**, offering them only when a piece of work needs to be saved. As long as materials are not glued or taped together, they can be deconstructed and used over and over again, as blocks are. You might take a photo of a finished piece of work to include in a child's portfolio, to share during Thinking and Feedback, or to send home. A community conversation might begin with, *I have noticed that we are running out of Beautiful Stuff. Where do you think it is going?* This can lead into a conversation about use of adhesives and re-use of Beautiful Stuff.

- Keep materials organized in the classroom. This will signal to children that these materials are as important as the others they use and encourage them to use Beautiful Stuff judiciously.

### Supporting and facilitating learning

As in other moments, as children work with Beautiful Stuff, talk with them about their intentions, challenges, ideas, and questions. Some guiding questions include:

- What words can describe this material?
- Why did you choose this material? How is it working?
- What is similar about these objects? What's different?
- How does this feel?
- Is there another material you can use to communicate your idea?
- What do you think this material might have been used for before?
- Which adhesive is best for this particular part?
- Have you looked at anyone else's work to see how they solved that problem?




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The term **Beautiful Stuff** is based on the book *Beautiful Stuff! Learning with Found Materials* and inspired by the pre-primary schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy.

## Writing

### Goals:

- Children learn the purpose, structure, and language of various genres of writing.
- Children write to authentic audiences for authentic purposes.
- Children write using a variety of media.

Throughout the *2nd Grade for ME* day, children communicate through writing, which continues to include drawing. Children write at the Writing & Storytelling Studio, during Text Talk, at Studios and Stations, and during the dedicated Writing block.

The *2nd Grade for ME* Writing block is grounded in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory and based on the work of Dr. María Brisk.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the year children become experts in writing in various genres through deconstructing mentor texts and jointly and individually constructing text. Children write for specific audiences, in the context of the content they are exploring during the unit.

Over the course of the year, children write across genres that fit into the three major categories of writing: narrative, informational, and argument. **Genres** in SFL are defined by their purposes and structural and language features. More detailed introductions to each genre can be found in the unit introductions.

In addition to writing in different genres, children produce work in different **media**, including books, letters, posters, brochures, and poetry. It is important to note that in SFL, poetry is a medium, rather than a genre, because a poem is a form through which any genre can be expressed. For example, both a personal recount and an argument can be written in the form of a poem.

### The Teaching and Learning Cycle

The Writing block takes place for 30 minutes each day. Through a teaching and learning cycle that includes **negotiation of the field**, **deconstruction**, **joint construction**, and **individual construction**, children are apprenticed in the **purpose** of each genre, as well as its **structure** and **language** features. Lesson titles direct teachers to the stage(s) of the cycle addressed in each lesson.

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<sup>1</sup> Brisk, M.E. (2015). *Engaging students in academic literacies*. New York, NY: Routledge.



All writing in *2nd Grade for ME* exists within the context of the content knowledge developed throughout the unit. Most of the content knowledge development—or, **negotiation of the field**—occurs throughout the day, including Text Talk, Studios, and Science. So while negotiation of the field is not explicitly named with children or identified in the titles of writing lessons, it is embedded within other components of the *2nd Grade for ME* day.

Children learn about the features of genres through the **deconstruction of mentor texts**. Together with the teacher and classmates, children listen to, read, and analyze mentor texts to uncover their purposes, structures, and language features. Several mentor texts are used for each genre.

During **joint construction**, the teacher and children compose text together in the given genre. This stage allows children to practice the aspects of the genre uncovered during deconstruction before they are sent to write individually.

After exploring a genre through deconstruction and joint construction, children move into **individual construction** of text. During this stage children write from what they have learned, with support from their classmates and the teacher. Conferences with teachers and feedback from teachers and classmates focus on the aspects of the genre they have learned, including its purpose, structure, and language, as well as the audience children are writing to and the topic they are writing about. Children then make revisions based on this focused feedback.

As its name indicates, the teaching and learning cycle is not a linear process. Units jump back and forth through the three stages to provide a supportive, coherent experience for children.

Although children do engage in the various stages of the writing process—as in Writer’s Workshop—the focus of instruction is on the development of knowledge about the genre, rather than on the steps of the writing process. The practice of apprenticing children in a genre before sending them to write addresses the concern presented by Lisa Delpit in *Other People’s Children*: “Although the problem is not necessarily inherent in the method, in some instances adherents of process approaches to writing create situations in which students ultimately find themselves held accountable for knowing a set of rules about which no one has ever directly informed them.”<sup>2</sup>

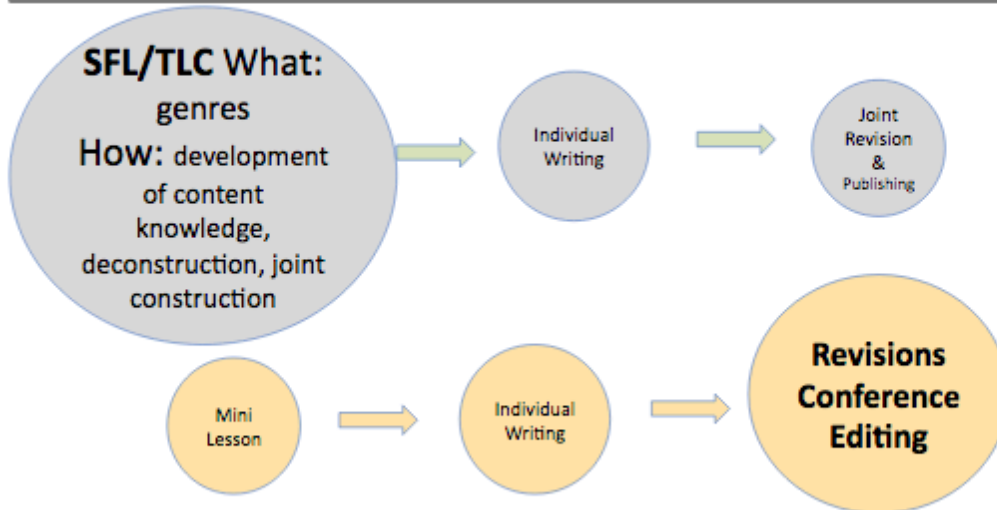
As evidenced in the following graphic, the bulk of instruction in SFL occurs at the beginning of the unit—with the development of content knowledge and through deconstruction and joint construction of text—before children are sent to write independently. In contrast, the bulk of instruction in Writer’s Workshop occurs at the end of the unit, with conferences that lead to children revising and editing their work.

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<sup>2</sup> Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people’s children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press, 31.

# SFL vs. Writers Workshop

Focus on genre units: Students become experts in writing in various genres



Focus on the process: pre-writing, drafting, revising/editing, publishing

Brisk, 2017

## Conventions

Because the focus of writing in *2nd Grade for ME* revolves around the purpose, structure, and language features of genres, detailed lessons in conventions are not provided, except for those features related to the genre or medium. For example, when jointly-constructing a letter in Unit 1, children learn to include commas in the greeting and closing. Teachers will, of course, continue to model proper writing conventions when writing with young children. In addition, time is provided during each unit for teachers to embed additional instruction in conventions, as needed.

Regular, explicit instruction in conventions occurs during the explicit literacy block. In addition, children should be held accountable to the same rules as they edit their writing. Further, attention to conventions will surface in other components, such as Vocabulary and Language lessons.



## Glossary

**audience:** the person/people for whom the text is written

**deconstruction:** analyzing mentor texts for genre features, such as purpose, structure, and language

**genre:** a type of writing defined by its purpose, structure, and language

**individual construction:** composing text individually

**joint construction:** composing text together with the teacher and classmates

**medium:** the form used to produce the writing, such as a book, poster, or poem

**mentor text:** a text that illustrates the features of a genre

**negotiation of the field:** the stage of the teaching and learning cycle in which children develop the content knowledge necessary for writing

**purpose:** the reason a particular genre of writing is produced

**stage:** the (structural) part of a piece of writing; for example, the title, orientation, or conclusion

## Storytelling and Story Acting

### Goals:

- Children’s voices are recognized and stories are honored.
- Children develop skills in language and literacy, creativity, communication, and social and emotional development.
- Children understand themselves as part of a larger community of storytellers and understand that storytelling enriches our world.

At the heart of Storytelling/Story Acting (ST/SA) is **listening**—adults listening to children, children listening to their classmates, and children listening to adults—all in service of better understanding each other and getting inside of each other’s stories.

ST/SA promotes **language and literacy skills** as children develop narrative structure and conventions, practice and consolidate emerging vocabulary, and travel the bridge between the contextualized language of early childhood speech (telling about the here and now of personal experiences) and the decontextualized language of formalized, printed language. When adults tell stories, they offer models of narrative and rich vocabulary on which children can build.

ST/SA gives children an outlet for **creativity and communication**. They tell their own stories, remembered or invented, and tell them in their own way. Even a story a child has heard before becomes her own when she adds details, assigns feelings, and uses facial expressions and gestures in the telling.

ST/SA supports **social development**. While children can write down or tell an individual and personal story quietly to their teacher or peers, story acting enlivens opportunities for the development of these language and thinking skills alongside the demands of collaboration. Children work together to create the experience and develop story characters, events, and resolutions.

ST/SA fosters **emotional development**. Children practice self-regulation and negotiate their responses in relation to their peers’ ideas. Through stories, children encounter and recognize their own and others’ emotions. ST/SA fosters a strong classroom community in which each child feels an integral part.

The Storytelling and Story Acting Guide identifies and explains specific components that make for successful ST/SA. You and your children will discover others. In the words of Vivian Paley, “A teacher’s own observations will inform her best about all these details.”

## **Logistics**

### **Materials**

- Storytelling Books, one for each child
- paper
- writing tools
- masking tape (optional)

### **Preparation**

Read the Storytelling and Story Acting Guide.

Identify times during the day when children may dictate stories to an adult (1-2 children/stories per day), such as during arrival, snack, Studios, or transitions.

Create a calendar or other system for letting children know when they will be dictating stories that will then be acted.

Designate time in the day and week for story acting (10 minutes, twice a week).

Prepare a notebook for each child.

### **Physical Space**

- Writing and Storytelling Studio or any place in the classroom where an adult and child(ren) can sit together and hear each other well, for dictation
- whole group meeting area, for Story Acting

## Storytelling and Story Acting Guide

### Logistics

**Materials:** Each child will have her or his own storytelling notebook. Beyond that, ST/SA has only a few material requirements: paper, a pencil or pen, and perhaps masking tape.

**Physical Space:** For storytelling, stories can be written down or dictated anywhere in the classroom. Studios are an ideal place for children to tell and write down their stories; it may be helpful to designate a “storytelling table,” corner, or chair for adults to take dictation.

For story acting, you will need an area where the whole group can comfortably sit in a circle with space in the middle for acting. It is very helpful to delineate the acting area—the stage—with tape.

**Who tells stories:** Any adult can model storytelling: teachers, paraprofessionals, classroom volunteers, administrators, family members, community members, and even older students in your school all can share stories. ST/SA is a great way for administrators to connect with the children. Including a range of storytellers helps ensure that children will hear stories from different perspectives and cultural backgrounds.

Taking dictation of children’s stories provides a regular opportunity for adults to have engaging, fun, one-on-one interactions with each child in the room. In addition, children who are fluent writers can write down their own or their peers’ stories.

**When:** Children’s storytelling (dictation) can occur during arrival, Studios, snack, or any other time when the class is not engaged in whole group activities. Story acting (dramatization) can occur at the end of the day, during morning meeting, or during a 10-minute transition time between other activities. ST/SA can happen every day or on certain days each week. To provide predictability for children (helping them wait for their chance to tell a story), *it is essential that story acting be included in the classroom schedule*. To build successful routines and get the most benefit from the practice, ST/SA should happen reliably at least a couple of days each week.

Adult stories can be told at any time throughout the day, including during transitions.

## Modeling Storytelling

Adults' stories provide models for children to draw upon—ideas for how to organize stories, characters to include, and plot lines to spin out. Children will rarely copy these models directly, but rather mine them for inspiration. Hearing adults tell stories helps create a culture of storytelling, inspiring children to share their stories with their classmates. Thus, children need to hear adults telling stories on a regular, even daily, basis.

You and your colleagues can draw from a wide variety of sources to find stories to tell children. These include personal experiences, folk tales, imaginary tales, children's stories from previous years, and stories connected to curriculum.

*Note: A beginning adult storyteller may worry about remembering all the parts of the story they intend to tell. It is perfectly acceptable to use notes.*

Stories are compelling—perfect for attracting and keeping the attention of groups of children. Here are some tips:

- Use a ritual opening. Rituals might include turning on a special light, ringing a bell or chimes, or reciting a chant. Rituals can be tied to cultural practices. Some teachers introduce the “Crik-Crak” call and response ritual: “On the island of Haiti in the Caribbean, storytellers often start their stories by saying *Crik*. Now you say, *Crak*. I say, *Crik*. Now you say, *Crak*.” Inviting children's input in creating rituals can be part of building and maintaining a healthy, democratic classroom community.
- Connect stories to the children, including them as the protagonists.
- Mine children's interests for story themes and characters.
- Tell stories that respond to ideas and counteract stereotypes children are expressing.
- Use puppets and props; this can be especially helpful for children who are learning English.
- Give the audience (children) a role such as participating in call and response or contributing motions and gestures.
- Include songs and chants. Stories such as “Abiyoyo” have songs embedded in them.
- Repeat familiar stories. Children love hearing stories they enjoy multiple times; repetition helps children understand stories and practice vocabulary.
- Modulate pacing, voice and gesture. Slow down; alternate volume and tempo; incorporate gestures.

## **Storytelling: Listening to and Collecting Children's Stories**

Supporting children as storytellers involves careful listening and gentle scaffolding. Listening to children's stories provides an opportunity for building relationships and getting to know children deeply. Over time, children's comfort with storytelling and their narrative abilities will grow. During story dictation, "teacherly moments" will arise—times when, because a child shows interest, we can support children's specific literacy and language skills. However, it is critical that ST/SA not be turned into a phonics lesson. The adults' primary roles in dictation are as listener and recorder.

### **Guidelines for Dictation**

- Begin the year by taking dictation yourself, so that you have a couple of stories from each of the children. As children become more comfortable writers, they can be invited to tell their stories to peers who will write them down, or to write down their own stories.
- Aim to collect and act out one story from each child about every two weeks (two stories per month will result in each child having a significant story collection by the end of the year). A calendar will help children know and anticipate their storytelling days.
- For stories that will be acted out, limit each story to one page. Lengthy stories take a long time to copy down (robbing other children of the opportunity to tell stories) and can be very difficult to act out. Let children know at the beginning of the year that their stories can be as short as they like, but no longer than one page. The idea of "to be continued" can be introduced to children whose stories exceed the one-page limit.
- Write down stories verbatim. Modeling this method will help children when they are scribing for each other.
- Read the story back to the storyteller. When a child has finished telling his or her story, ask, "Is there anything you want to add or change in your story?" At this point, also ask for a title.

### **Issues that may arise in children's stories**

Some stories may be inappropriate for sharing with the whole group because they concern private matters. We recommend that you listen to and scribe these stories and invite children to tell alternative stories to act out.

Some children are exposed to violence through the media or in their personal experiences. Grappling with issues of power and control, many children are drawn to stories involving superheroes and fighting. Whether or not to censor stories with violent themes is a controversial issue. Because stories are a way children make sense of the world, we recommend that they be allowed to tell and act out stories involving superheroes and fighting.

### **Supporting all children as storytellers**

While some children will begin the year confident in their storytelling abilities, others will have trouble getting started. The challenge is to provide just the right amount of support that aids children's development without taking away their ownership of the story (and thus decreasing their motivation to participate in storytelling). Variability in children's language and communication styles will emerge as children tell their stories. Even very short stories—even one-word stories—should be celebrated.

Some children who are not immediately comfortable expressing themselves in spoken English will benefit from certain kinds of supports. These include adults modeling storytelling, visual prompts (such as story cards or dice), verbal prompts ("Where does the story begin?" "How did you/the character feel when that happened?"), and co-construction (teachers or peers giving suggestions to help children start their stories or providing a word). Children can certainly tell stories in their home languages; they might then try telling the story again in English. Fortunate classrooms will include an adult who can transcribe these stories in their original languages. Others may look to other children, family members, or other members of the school community for assistance.

Not all children will want to tell a story at the start of the year. Storytelling should *always* be a choice. Experience shows that, over time, almost all children choose to tell stories.

### **Supporting literacy skills**

During dictation, first and second graders will read familiar words and recognize features of print. Without making it a formal reading lesson, teachers can support children's understanding of printed language and decoding. For example, after the story is completed, the child can go through the text and underline all the characters in preparation for dramatization.

### **Promoting language development**

During dictation adults have opportunities to supply new vocabulary words. Dictation is also an opportunity to discuss elements of stories, such as characters, setting, and action, and of genre writing, such as purpose, language, and audience. Grammatical errors will appear in children's stories.

- Write down exactly what a child says, staying true to his or her words.
- If a child is making a grammatical error, and you feel that they are able to learn the standard grammar or that the mistake will make it difficult for others to understand the story, offer an option—"I can write this as you told me, or I can write it as it would be in a book. In a book it would go like this: '\_\_\_\_\_' Which do you prefer?"

Note: In reading stories to the whole class, some teachers with a high proportion of children learning English will correct grammar so children hear the stories in standard English.



## **Story Acting (Dramatization)**

Story acting brings children's ideas to the group. It gives a compelling reason for children's storytelling, celebrates children's ideas, and provides an opportunity for the class to create meaning around a text of great interest. Conversations about stories and dramatizations extend children's literacy learning.

### **Getting Started**

Many but not all of the children in your class will have become familiar with ST/SA in K1, K2, and first grade. To help children learn the routines of story acting you can act out stories and books, work with small groups of actors, and act out scenes more than once with different actors.

### **Stage rules**

Stage rules create a safe environment for story acting. Two simple rules are usually sufficient:

1. Stay one arm- or leg-length from one another when pretend fighting.
2. Stay off the stage while you are a member of the audience; come onto the stage if you are acting.

### **Acting out the story/choosing the actors**

Begin the dramatization by reading the first words of story. When you come to a role (character or inanimate object), turn to the child next to you and ask, "Can I see you be the \_\_\_\_?" Likely she or he will come onto the stage and start acting the part. Of course, a child may always decline the role. Continue reading the story fluidly, going around the circle to invite actors to come on stage as parts appear in the story. You and the children can be expansive in your definition of characters; a house, a forest, wind, or rain can be acted out, as well as people and animals. Including inanimate objects allows more children to participate in the dramatization. In stories with many characters, have actors sit down when their parts are finished to make room on the stage for others.

Avoid negotiating with children about roles they want to play—it should not be an option to say, "I don't want to be the princess, but I do want to be the knight." Going around the stage in the manner described here is fast and efficient, allowing many children to participate in dramatization and many stories to be heard.

Notes:

1. Let the author of the story choose the role he or she wants: to act, narrate or watch the dramatization. This can be determined when the story is dictated.
2. Some children may be hesitant to take on gender-specific roles (a boy being reluctant to play the mother). You might say, "In acting, boys can pretend to be anything: girls, moms, dinosaurs, anything."

3. Early in her career, Vivian Paley had the story author choose the entire cast. She changed this practice out of considerations of fairness (some children were asked to be actors far more than others).

### **Further roles for first and second graders**

Once children are familiar with how Story Acting works, they can facilitate or direct the dramatization by calling on peers to act (still going around the circle) and reminding actors of stage rules and audience members of their role. First graders can also narrate stories by reading them aloud—either their own or their classmates’ stories. They will likely need support in maintaining the pace and scale of the acting to stay within established classroom boundaries. In second grade, children can begin to take over full ownership of narration and direction during dramatization. This may additionally include management of props, sets, and/or costumes.

### **Supporting the actors**

New actors may be shy about performing on stage and use only small body movements and facial gestures. Over time, children will expand their repertoire of movement. Some teachers read a story twice, so that during the first reading the class can discuss and practice different ways to act out particular roles. When acting is happening, read slowly so actors have time to perform.

#### **focus**

### **Supporting the audience**

Focusing the audience’s attention on the actors, rather than spending time trying to manage the audience’s behavior, helps everyone attend to the acting on stage. In addition, the audience can become involved in the dramatization (singing a song that is part of the story), and the audience might applaud at the end of stories.

### **Conversations to extend learning after dramatizations**

Invite children to offer compliments and suggestions immediately after story acting, taking time at the beginning of the year to define compliments and suggestions, teach some parameters, and practice as a group. These group conversations about storytelling and acting can produce high-level conversation and sophisticated acting. Teachers can also draw connections among stories, share their impressions, and ask children their impressions about individual stories and emerging themes across stories. Terms such as characters, setting, plot, and mood can be included in such conversations. Important concepts in writing can be reinforced, such as purpose, language, and audience. Over time, you and your children will establish your own way of dramatizations. Occasionally, you may want to discuss how your rules are working.

## Communication

In the Writing and Storytelling Studio (as well as at other times of the day), after stories have been told and enacted, teachers can provide additional opportunities for children to enjoy the stories and communicate their ideas. Teachers are encouraged to provide individual notebooks to collect stories and related drawings. Children may also choose to revise or develop additional chapters in these notebooks.

Specifically, in first grade:

- children may begin to dictate stories to peers;
- children may write down their own stories;
- children illustrate stories in notebooks and/or with diverse materials at the Art and Building Studios;
- children give and receive feedback about both their stories and the ways they are acted out.

In addition, in second grade:

- children revise stories based on peer feedback (in a group, with a partner);
- children can try to tell stories in a particular genre, as connected to writing; and
- children take ownership of how acted stories first emerge (told with friends, dictated to an adult, writing it down, etc.)

## Family Involvement

Many families have intrinsic knowledge and deep traditions about the value of storytelling. It may also be helpful for families to understand how stories support children's success in school by enlarging vocabulary, learning about sequencing of events, developing creativity, and learning to express and regulate, along with the strong ties to literacy development. Teachers can also:

- share children's stories at conferences with parents/families;
- encourage families to tell stories and listen to the stories their children tell;
- invite families to share stories in school;
- learn from families what stories are important to them and share these in class;
- share stories from school with families;
- share video of story enactments, via email or during parent-teacher conferences;
- request stories from home; or hold a family story event at school.

## Appendix: Developmental expectations about children’s stories

It is valuable to know what to expect when collecting children’s stories, as children’s abilities to tell stories expand over the course of the early childhood years.

age	description	example
3 year olds	“Leap Frog” stories While connected in the child’s mind, to adults they seem to hop from one event to another.	“I went to the doctors. Sarah came over. I had cake for breakfast.”
4 year olds	Chronologies, also referred to as “and then and then and then stories.” These stories are connected temporally, but do not have a well-articulated beginning or end. Can continue for a long time.	“I had cake for breakfast. And then I went to the doctors. And I got a shot. And then we went home. Sarah came over. We played with my dolls.”
5 and 6 year olds	“Classic Narratives” with a beginning, middle and end; a story with a problem that is resolved	“One night my brother and I heard a knock. We thought it was something getting knocked down. So we grabbed hockey sticks, and my brother said, ‘If you see anyone, stab it with this hockey stick.’ We went downstairs to see what the knock was. We looked in the living room. In the family room. We looked in the kitchen. We looked downstairs. It was just my cat. The end.”
7 and up	Over time, children’s ideas, use of language, and vocabulary in stories become more complex, as they continue to emulate and integrate, ever more smoothly, the language of print.	

These characterizations do not constitute a hard and fast rule, as children’s narrative abilities develop at different rates, and older children may tell stories reminiscent of an early stage of development.

Children may also choose to tell poetic stories, developing a mood rather than describing an event (“Sometimes when you catch wind, snow comes down. I caught the wind and then it flew out of my hands.”). Children’s cultural backgrounds influence how they tell stories. (see

McCabe, A. (1997). Cultural background and storytelling: A review and implications for schooling. *The Elementary School Journal*, 97 (5), 453-473)

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