

BALANCED LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY CURRICULUM

The Balanced Language Arts Literacy Curriculum is divided into four blocks: **Guided Reading**, **Self-Selected Reading**, **Working with Words**, and **Writing**.

In **Guided Reading**, teachers choose materials for children to read and a purpose for reading, and then guide them to use reading strategies needed for that material and purpose. Teachers provide guidance in a variety of whole class, small group, and partner formats.

Guided Reading is always focused on comprehension. Students learn to predict what might happen or what they might learn. Students learn to connect text to prior knowledge and to extend their knowledge with text. They learn about the story elements of characters, setting, and plot, and they learn how to organize and compare information learned from information text.

Guided Reading is done with all types of reading materials—big books, smaller version of big books, basal readers, anthologies, magazines, multiple copies of trade books, and sections from science and social studies texts.

The goals of the **Guided Reading** Block are for students to:

- Respond appropriately, both orally and in writing, to comprehension questions through retelling, predicting, and making connections
- Identify literary elements in stories
- Recognize and apply comprehension strategies to gain understanding and/or extend learning
- Read a variety of materials with fluency and expression

The purpose of this block is to build comprehension and fluency with reading and to introduce students to a variety of literature, including stories, informational text, and poetry.

Self-Selected Reading is that part of a balanced literacy program in which students choose what they want to read. Opportunities are provided for children to share and respond to what is read. Teachers conference with students about their books.

The **Self-Selected Reading** Block begins with a teacher read-aloud. The teacher reads from a wide range of literature. Next, students read on their own level from a variety of materials, including the widest possible range of topics, genres, and levels. While students read, the teacher conferences with approximately one-fifth of the class each day. This block ends with students sharing their books with the class in a “Reader’s Chair” format.

The goals of the Self-Selected Reading Block are for students to:

- Listen and respond appropriately
- Apply read-aloud comprehension strategies during conferencing
- Choose appropriate material at his/her level
- Read for a specific period of time
- Read for enjoyment and/or to gain information

The purpose of **Self-Selected Reading** is to encourage reading, develop fluency in reading, and to allow students to enjoy text that is appropriate to their own independent reading levels. This block allows students the opportunity to apply strategies learned in guided reading, to build confidence in students as readers, and to encourage a love of independent reading. This block provides time for teachers to assess key comprehension strategies through individual conferencing.

In the **Working with Words** Block, students learn to read and spell high-frequency words and learn the patterns which allow them to decode and spell words. Students practice new and old words daily by looking at them, saying them, chanting the letters, writing the words, and self-correcting the words with the teacher.

The **Working with Words** Block is divided into two sections: Word Wall Activities and Decoding and Spelling Activities. Activities in this block are multi-level in a variety of ways. During the daily Word Wall practice, students who have learned to read the words being practiced are learning to spell them. Other students who require more support with words are practicing the process of decoding and reading words.

The goals of the **Working with Words** Block are for students to:

- Read and spell high-frequency words
- Use phonic and spelling patterns to decode other words

- Apply word knowledge independently to reading and writing

The purpose of this block is to ensure that children read, spell, and use high frequency words correctly, and that they learn the patterns necessary for decoding and spelling.

The **Writing Block** includes both self-selected writing, in which students choose their topics, and focused writing, in which students learn how to write particular forms on particular topics. Students are taught to use process writing to improve their first drafts. Process writing is carried out in “Writer’s Workshop” fashion.

The goals of the **Writing Block** are for students to:

- Write on a topic for a designated period of time
- Express ideas clearly, orally and in writing for a specific purpose and audience
- Apply basic rules of penmanship, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph development
- Use the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, publishing)

The purpose of this block is to build fluency in writing, to apply the writing process, to refine and apply knowledge of phonics, and to build students’ confidence as writers.