Planting the Seeds of Balanced Literacy
Cultivating Strong Readers and Writers in the Classroom

Montclair Public Schools
Academic Office
K-5 Balanced Literacy Workshop
May 2014
### Balanced Literacy Classroom Expectations

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Terms to Know

A **grade-level read** is a book that meets the Common Core State Standards requirements for text complexity in both quantitative measures such as Lexile range and qualitative measures such as text structure and knowledge demands.

An **instructional reading level** is the level at which a student successfully reads with coaching from a teacher. This level challenges the student through new vocabulary and structures. At this level, a student reads with 90-94% accuracy or better and possesses at least 80% comprehension on simple recall questions about the story.

An **independent reading level** is the level at which a student can read a text on his/her own with ease. The student makes hardly any errors when reading the text, maintaining 95-100% accuracy, and has excellent comprehension of the story. A student’s independent level is determined through assessment data such as DRA scores, running records, etc. A book at a student’s independent level can also be called a “just right” book. Students who know their reading level can find a good independent book in a leveled library or can use a method such as “the five finger method” when presented with a book that is not leveled.
Interactive Read Aloud 3-5

Definition: Everyday, the teacher reads aloud (20 minutes or less) materials that are at the students’ listening level, which can be above their grade level.

Purpose: To improve students’ listening skills, reading comprehension, attitudes toward reading, and to build vocabulary

Key Elements
- Teachers need to have a specific purpose and reason for choosing each read-aloud text.
- Teachers should prepare to read the text so that her/his voice, intonation, and oration are clear, dramatic, and engaging.
- The classroom schedule should provide adequate time to read (and sometimes reread) the text and reflect/write/talk about the text.
- Teachers need to have solid understanding of the text and should be fluent in the text, rhythm, and subject matter before reading to the class.
- Teachers should arrange rugs, furniture, etc. so that students can sit comfortably and easily see the text.
- Teachers explicitly model effective reading strategies during the read aloud, while questioning and prompting students.

Types of Text
- Include multicultural books of various genres that support the standards/curriculum/theme.
- Use texts that support rich vocabulary and “big ideas” to promote deep conversations and connections.
- Focus on fluency with texts that use rhythm, rhyme, and repetition.
- Choose texts with lively plots, engaging characters, and effective use of language.
- Include informational texts that are connected to curricular topics in science, social studies, health, or math.

Role of Teacher:
- Read texts aloud to students, stopping periodically to ask questions while modeling effective reading strategies, including think alouds.
- Lead discussions about the reading material encouraging students to think and talk about it.
- Establish a literacy-rich environment, sharing books with students and model use of other materials (including magazines and newspapers).
- Read aloud texts should be made available to students in the classroom library.

Role of Students:
- Enjoy listening to and discussing fiction and non-fiction literature read aloud.
- Retell main ideas and key details in narrative stories and use descriptive language to explain and explore ideas in the texts.
- Retell main ideas and key details when nonfiction is read.
- Reflect on what is being read and question author’s technique, craft, and structure.
- Engage with peers and teacher in analyzing texts.

Tips for Planning
- Practice reading the text aloud.
- Plan stopping points: places where you can stop and model effective reading strategies, questions to ask before, during, and after the read aloud, places where you ask students to turn and talk/jot.
- Use sticky notes to mark the places where you stop and think or model.
- Plan ways to enrich or extend the text by having multiple copies of text available; plan for reading response activities.
Interactive Read Aloud

**Value**

- Involves students reading for enjoyment
- Demonstrates reading for a purpose
- Provides an adult demonstration of phrased, fluent reading
- Develops a sense of story
- Develops knowledge of written language syntax
- Develops knowledge of how texts are structured
- Increases student reading achievement
- Supports inter-textual ties
- Increases vocabulary; expands linguistic repertoire
- Creates a community of readers through enjoyment and shared knowledge
- Makes complex ideas available to students
- Promotes oral language development; establishes known texts to use as a basis for writing and other activities through rereading
- Helps English Language Learners acquire new vocabulary and syntactic awareness

**Where does Interactive Read Aloud Fit in the Literacy Block?**

**Reading**

Whole Class Activities
- **Interactive Read Aloud**
- Mini-lesson
- Shared Reading

Small Group/Independent Activities
- Guided Reading
- Strategy Groups
- Independent Reading
- Student Conferences

Whole Class Activity
- Share/Reflection

**Writing**

Whole Class Activities
- Modeled Writing
- Shared Writing
- Interactive Writing

Small Group/Independent Activities
- Guided Writing
- Strategy Groups
- Independent Writing
- Student Conferences

Whole Class Activity
- Share/Reflection

**Word Study**

Whole Class Activity
- Phonics
- Spelling
- Vocabulary

**Questions for Reflection and Ongoing Assessment**

1. How will I select appropriate books for read alouds? Am I helping students to expand their “comfort zone” in the book selection? Will I connect this book to a unit study? Thematic unit?
2. Will my students find joy in my voice? Will they find personal connections to the text?
3. How can I teach comprehension strategies?
4. How can I help students appreciate literature and written work that expands their view of themselves and the world around them?

**Further Exploration**


**Sources**


REFLECTIONS

Interactive Read Aloud

Where I Blossom

Where I Need to Grow
**Shared Reading 3-5**

**Definition:** When a text is too difficult for the student(s) to read without help, the teacher reads aloud at a rate that allows the students to join in, although usually slightly behind the teacher.

**Purpose:** The teacher will model the three cueing systems of reading: phonics, grammar, and meaning by making his/her thinking transparent as he/she asks: Does this make sense (meaning)? Does this sound right (phonics)? Does this look right (grammar)?

**Key Elements**
- Shared reading allows students to work with a challenging text with very little risk.
- The teacher and the students read together. This is not round-robin reading or an independent read-aloud. The teacher models and students join in.
- The teacher selects a specific text that focuses on or highlights a specific reading strategy.
- All students can see and/or have a copy of the text being used.

**Role of Teacher:**
- Demonstrate and develop specific reading behaviors and strategies
- Encourage students to talk about reading experiences
- Read interesting and concept-rich materials with the students
- Help students build vocabulary
- Provide many opportunities for students to explore and identify sound-letter relationships in meaningful contexts
- Add words from the text to the word wall

**Role of Students:**
- Read along with the teacher
- Make predictions about the reading
- Match spoken words with written ones

**Types of Text**
- Grade-level Reading Materials
- Literature
- Poetry
- Informational Text

**Tips for Planning**
- It can be beneficial to focus on “surface” structures when conducting Shared Reading. These include word strategies and fluency.
- Students who may need more practice with a challenging text can be given opportunities to Partner Read with the text after the Shared Reading has occurred.
- Using Shared Reading in small groups allows teachers to differentiate instruction during the experience.
- As students progress and instruction evolves, adapt Shared Reading experiences to include Partner Reading. For optimal Partner Reading, make a list of student readers beginning with the strongest. Cut the list in half and match the tops of each half. This allows for pairings that typically benefit one another better!
- Consider utilizing Readers Theater as another opportunity to involve students in Shared Reading experiences.
Shared Reading

Value
- Explicitly demonstrates early strategies, such as word-by-word matching
- Builds sense of story and ability to predict
- Demonstrates the processes of reading extended text
- Like reading aloud, involves students in an enjoyable and purposeful way
- Provides models of different language structures in a variety of fiction and nonfiction genres
- Provides social support from the group
- Creates body of known text that students can use for independent reading and as resources for writing and project work
- Provides opportunity to participate and behave like a reader

Questions for Reflection and Ongoing Assessment
1. What specific skill and/or strategy do I want to teach? Is there a big book, poster or chart that lends itself to this specific focus? (Make sure the material selected clearly connects to the skill/strategy that is being taught.)
2. How will I set up opportunities for students to practice this specific strategy independently? How will I continue to focus on this strategy for a few days? Re-read text? Apply strategies to new text selections? How will I know my class is ready to move on? Am I tracking my most struggling readers as I do this shared reading?

Further Exploration
- Montclair Public School K-5 Balanced Literacy Pinterest page: http://www.pinterest.com/mpsk5bl/
- Read, Write, Think resources for Shared Reading http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/shared-reading-opportunities-direct-38823.html

Where does Shared Reading Fit in the Literacy Block?

Reading
Whole Class Activities
- Interactive Read Aloud
- Mini-lesson
- **Shared Reading**
Small Group/Independent Activities
- Guided Reading
- Strategy Groups
- Independent Reading
- Student Conferences

Whole Class Activity
- Share/Reflection

Writing
Whole Class Activities
- Modeled Writing
- Shared Writing
- Interactive Writing

Small Group/Independent Activities
- Guided Writing
- Strategy Groups
- Independent Writing
- Student Conferences

Whole Class Activity
- Share/Reflection

Word Study
Whole Class Activity
- Phonics
- Spelling
- Vocabulary

Sources
Illinois Reads, Principal’s Flipchart for Reading

REFLECTIONS

Where I Blossom

Where I Need to Grow
Guided Reading 3-5

**Definition:** The teacher works with a small group of students (no more than 6) who are reading at about the same level or have similar needs. The teacher sets a focus and purpose for the reading and students engage in guided practice. Group sessions should last 15-20 minutes.

**Purpose:** To allow students an opportunity to internalize strategies and become skilled, fluent, life-long readers

**Key Elements**
- Teachers create small, flexible groups that do not remain static and are based on common needs identified through assessment data.
- Guided reading groups typically use texts at students’ INSTRUCTIONAL reading levels (1-2 levels above students’ independent level) with all students reading the same texts.
- Strategy groups may involve students using different texts to practice a common skill.
- Students have individual copies of the text and independently whisper read as the teacher observes, coaches, prompts, and evaluates their performance. The teacher encourages students to think critically about text.

**Types of Text**
- Include all types of texts: informational, magazines, literary, poetry, etc.
- Include multicultural books of various genres that support the standards/curriculum/theme.

**Tips for Planning**
- Use formal reading table.
- Invest time upfront, teaching your students the procedures to follow while you are working with a guided reading group.
- Design meaningful literacy learning based on other components of Balanced Literacy (Independent Reading, reading responses or journals, partner reading, etc.) for students who are not participating in groups.
- Structure of Guided Reading:
  - **Pre-reading (4-5 min)**
    - Intro of text/strategy
  - **During reading (7-10 min)**
    - Observe, evaluate, and coach
  - **After reading (5 min)**
    - Teachers check for understanding of text/strategy and addresses needs observed

**Role of Teacher:**
- Choose appropriate instructional texts and focus the lessons to meet specific instructional needs of the group.
- Support the development of students’ fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies.
- Before reading, teacher introduces reading strategy focus.
- During reading, teacher monitors, coaches, and evaluates group and individual progress, recording to inform instruction.
- After reading, teacher reinforces main teaching point or lesson objective.

**Role of Students:**
- Read and retell/summarize literary and informational texts.
- Read orally with fluency.
- Use sound-letter associations, word parts, and context to decode new words.
- Use strategies (rereading, predicting, questioning, visualizing, contextualizing) when comprehension breaks down.
- Respond to questions about content and reading technique.
Guided Reading

Value
- Ensures students receive individualized and differentiated instruction from teachers
- Allows teachers to closely monitor and evaluate students’ reading progress
- Provides the opportunity to read a wide variety of texts
- Challenges the reader and creates contexts for successful processing of new texts
- Provides opportunity to problem solve while reading for meaning
- Increases student reading achievement

Questions for Reflection and Ongoing Assessment
1. How do I assess the students during independent reading so that I know how to form groups according to student need?
2. How do I select appropriate materials that focus on the particular needs of the selected students?
3. How do I assess and collect information about each student in the Guided Reading Group? Should this student be a part of a different Guided Reading Group?

Further Exploration
- Montclair Public School K-5 Balanced Literacy Pinterest page: http://www.pinterest.com/mpsk5bl/
- Continuum of Literacy Learning (Grades K-2) by Irene Fountas & Gay Su Pinnell. (2010). Heinemann.
- http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/De/PD/instr/strats/guided/others.html#centers

Sources

Where does Guided Reading Fit in the Literacy Block?

Reading
Whole Class Activities
- Interactive Read Aloud
- Mini-lesson
- Shared Reading
Small Group/Independent Activities
- Guided Reading
- Strategy Groups
- Independent Reading
- Student Conferences
Whole Class Activity
- Share/Reflection

Writing
Whole Class Activities
- Modeled Writing
- Shared Writing
- Interactive Writing
Small Group/Independent Activities
- Guided Writing
- Strategy Groups
- Independent Writing
- Student Conferences
Whole Class Activity
- Share/Reflection

Word Study
Whole Class Activity
- Phonics
- Spelling
- Vocabulary
## Guided Reading vs. Strategy Lessons

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<th>Guided Reading</th>
<th>Strategy Lesson</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Book:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Type of Book:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Unfamiliar text that is one level above the students’ independent reading level</td>
<td>➢ Can be a familiar text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ All students have the same book</td>
<td>➢ Students may have different texts since they need a book that is at or even below their independent reading level</td>
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<td><strong>Students in Group:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students in Group:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Short term, transient, same level groups</td>
<td>➢ May contain students from different reading levels who struggle with the same skill</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Book Introduction:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Book Introduction:</strong></td>
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<td>➢ Teacher gives overview of the text: <em>title, setting, plot, tricky words or text features, picture walk</em></td>
<td>➢ May not be a book introduction if students are rereading a familiar text to practice the strategy being taught</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Take the students to particular pages that might pose some difficulty</td>
<td><strong>Naming the Strategy:</strong></td>
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<td>➢ Lesson always begins with teacher naming the strategy, briefly demonstrating the strategy, and then inviting students to try it out</td>
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<td>➢ Strategy Lessons resemble mini-lessons</td>
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<td><strong>First Reading:</strong></td>
<td><strong>First Reading:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ All students have their own text, read the text quietly and simultaneously, and usually in its entirety</td>
<td>➢ All students have their own text, read the text quietly and simultaneously</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Teacher may ask certain students to whisper read so that she can listen in and even probe for comprehension</td>
<td>➢ Teacher observes the students using the strategy</td>
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<td><strong>Rereading:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rereading:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ If a student finishes the text early, he or she rereads it or rereads a favorite page</td>
<td>➢ If necessary, students are encouraged to reread their text to practice the strategy so that the teacher has time to coach all readers in the group</td>
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<td><strong>Teaching Point:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Point:</strong></td>
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<td>➢ Occurs at the end of the lesson based on teacher’s observations of a “tricky part”</td>
<td>➢ Teacher makes one more teaching point based on what she/he observes during the students’ reading of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ For Word Work, teacher may use a white board or magnetic letters, but there tends not to be many accompanying teaching materials</td>
<td>➢ Subsequent strategy lessons build upon this day’s strategy lesson just as mini-lessons build upon one another</td>
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blogs.scholastic.com/files/guided-reading-vs-strategy-lessons.doc
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REFLECTIONS

Guided Reading

Where I Blossom

Where I Need to Grow
Montclair Public Schools

Independent Reading 3-5

Definition: Students self-select books at their Independent reading level (books they can read with at least 95% accuracy). Students take responsibility for working through the challenges of the text independently. The teacher’s role is to observe, acknowledge, and teach the student during conferences.

Purpose: To provide opportunities for students to apply reading strategies, develop fluency, and build their confidence as readers; and to work on their own to improve their reading comprehension.

Key Elements
- Students are given time to read their books, and reflect about what they are reading either verbally or in writing.
- Students have the freedom to select what they read (with teacher assistance when necessary) and where they read.
- There are clearly designated times for students to read independently on a daily basis.
- Classroom library has a rich collection of appropriate books, including a range of genre and levels, fiction and non-fiction.
- Books are clearly organized to foster independence and are presented in such a way as to support curiosity and interest.

Role of Teacher:
- Create a community of literacy learners and a climate that encourages students to engage in analytic evaluation and reflective thinking.
- Give students opportunities to practice and build stamina through independent reading.
- Match text to students’ levels of fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.
- Actively support and monitor students’ choices of reading material for independent reading.
- Confer with students to evaluate their reading and provide guidance in reading strategies.
- Engage in book discussions with students.

Role of Students:
- Read fluently and discover enjoyment in texts.
- Use reading for various purposes, including to research topics of interest.
- Use word-identification strategies effectively and appropriately when unknown words are encountered.
- Use reading strategies efficiently (rereading, question, clarifying, predicting, summarizing, and contextualizing) to support comprehension.
- Recognize and discuss elements of different genres.
- Make critical connections among texts by responding to text, verbally or in writing.

Classroom Libraries
- Classroom library should include multicultural books of various genres and reading levels.
- Include other print materials, such as magazines, journals, graphic novels.
- Classroom library should be organized systematically and easy for students to find just right books.
- Mix current literature and classics.
- Books should be attractively displayed and easily accessed.

Tips for Planning
- Use the results from reading assessments (DRA2, running records) to help students choose appropriate books to read independently.
- Independent reading time is sacred time; students should NOT be shopping for books during reading time. Instead, teach students to shop for books during down time (first thing in the morning, pack-up time).
- Share titles through read-alouds, book displays, and book talks to motivate students.
- Hold students accountable during independent reading time: reading logs, reading journals, responding to reading, book chats, partner reading, goal setting.
- Give students time to talk (5 min.) about their reading with a partner after independent reading time.
# Independent Reading

## Value

- Provides opportunity to apply reading strategies independently
- Provides time to sustain reading behaviors
- Challenges the reader to work on his/her own and to use strategies on a variety of texts
- Promotes fluency through re-reading
- Encourages the reader to solve words independently while reading texts well within his/her control, leading to increased vocabulary
- Provides the opportunity for students to support each other while reading
- Sustained, successful reading builds confidence and increases reading achievement

## Questions for Reflection and Ongoing Assessment

1. How do I help students select appropriate books? Am I helping students to expand their “comfort zone” and set goals?
2. How do I ensure that students have enough books during independent reading time? Are majority of the books leveled? Is the classroom library inviting and sorted by genre, topic, levels?
4. How do I make sure I conference with each student on a regular basis?
5. How do I hold students accountable during independent reading time? How do I make sure students are fully engaged and keep them motivated?

## Further Exploration

- International Reading Association: [http://www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)
- Supporting Students As They Read Independently: [http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/supporting-students-they-read-30817.html](http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/supporting-students-they-read-30817.html)

## Where does Independent Reading Fit in the Literacy Block?

### Reading

**Whole Class Activities**
- Interactive Read Aloud
- Mini-lesson
- Shared Reading
- Small Group/Independent Activities
  - Guided Reading
  - Strategy Groups
  - *Independent Reading*
  - Student Conferences

**Whole Class Activity**
- Share/Reflection

### Writing

**Whole Class Activities**
- Modeled Writing
- Shared Writing
- Interactive Writing
- Small Group/Independent Activities
  - Guided Writing
  - Strategy Groups
  - Independent Writing
  - Student Conferences

**Whole Class Activity**
- Share/Reflection

### Word Study

**Whole Class Activity**
- Phonics
- Spelling
- Vocabulary

## Sources


Where I Blossom

Where I Need to Grow
**Word Study**

**Definition:** Word study is about the direct study and exploration of words, it involves the decoding (reading) and encoding (phonics and spelling) of our symbol system.

**Purpose:** To allow students to investigate and understand the patterns in words and to build word knowledge that can be applied to both reading and spelling.

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<tr>
<th>Key Elements &amp; Definitions</th>
<th>Role of Teacher</th>
<th>Role of Student</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phonics:</strong> Phonics is the study of the alphabetic principle (the predictable relationship between letters and sounds). Phonics is taught in order to facilitate word recognition, reading comprehension, and spelling.</td>
<td>➢ Teach phonological decoding – using knowledge of letters and sounds to reproduce the pronunciation of unfamiliar words in print, or to spell words.</td>
<td>➢ Learn the knowledge of sound/letter relationships to decode unfamiliar words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling: Spelling instruction focuses on letter-sound correspondence, identifiable patterns, and exceptions to rules in order to increase reading fluency and improve written expression. (It is NOT memorizing a list of words.)</td>
<td>➢ Instruct using a systematic and purposeful sequence of letter-sound concepts.</td>
<td>➢ Apply the knowledge of sound/letter relationships to write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary:</strong> Vocabulary study teaches students to apply multiple strategies such as context clues and morphology to expand knowledge of words and their meanings.</td>
<td>➢ Build a word rich environment that develops oral and reading vocabularies.</td>
<td>➢ Use knowledge of known words to understand new words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Teach vocabulary directly by providing students with specific word instruction and teaching students word-learning strategies.</td>
<td>➢ Identify and use new words when listening, speaking, reading, and writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Teach vocabulary indirectly through conversation and by reading to and with students.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Model strategies, such as, using context clues and morphology to learn new words.</td>
<td>➢ Encourage students to use new words in their speech, writing, and comprehension of texts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Word Study

Value
- Ensures that students have the tools to read and write text in order to become successful readers and writers
- Promotes fluency by internalizing the most frequently occurring sound/letter patterns
- Helps students decode words automatically as they read
- Strengthens reading comprehension and improves written and oral expression
- Reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge are strongly correlated to reading achievement

Questions for Reflection and Ongoing Assessment
1. How can I monitor to ensure students are using phonics skills to decode and spell unfamiliar words?
2. How can I help students who do not “hear” the sounds easily?
3. How can I support English Language Learners and students with limited vocabulary?

Further Exploration
- Montclair Public School K-5 Balanced Literacy Pinterest page: http://www.pinterest.com/mpsk5bl/

Where does Word Study Fit in the Literacy Block?

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Whole Class Activities
• Interactive Read Aloud
• Mini-lesson
• Shared Reading
Small Group/Independent Activities
• Guided Reading
• Strategy Groups
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• Student Conferences
Whole Class Activity
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Writing
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Word Study
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