

Literacy Framework: Language Arts Literacy Curriculum Grades K-5

**West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District
West Windsor, New Jersey 08550**

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“Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather it is preceded by, and intertwined with, knowledge of the world... Literacy involves not just the reading of the word, but also the reading of the world.”

- Paulo Freire

“Language arts or English should be a kind of intellectual ‘homeroom,’ where a student can see the totality of his symbolic life...If the rest of the curriculum is to be divided up mostly by topics, then language arts must be not only the guardian of literature but the patron of general communication processes.”

- James Moffett

“Language can be the means of creating worlds and exploring ideas.”

- Frank Smith

A meaningful language arts literacy program provides experiences in which students interact with text (both reading the words and deeply understanding the author’s message), compose texts on topics of their choice across a variety of genres, and investigate language to better understand how it functions so they can communicate clearly and easily. This approach is based on the research of The National Council of Teachers of English, The International Reading Association, The New Jersey Student Learning Standards, The Common Core State Standards, and Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University.

This disposition toward the teaching of literacy is deeply grounded in and aligned to the goals of the WW-P Strategic Plan: “We believe that every individual has intrinsic worth, that embracing diversity enriches and empowers our community, and that people reach their full potential when encouraged to believe it is possible. Therefore, building upon our tradition of excellence, we will guide and support our students’ growth, empowering them to value their individual learning journeys.” These experiences in reading, writing, speaking and listening exist in a synergistic relationship with the Strategic Plan, each overlapping, coloring and informing the other:

- Learning needs to be personalized to reflect the diverse needs of students; allowing for preferences and interests by honoring diverse backgrounds and experiences. The district’s approach to learning integrates tools and structures that empowers students as individuals. Using knowledge of students’ strengths and readiness to learn, educators challenge and enable each student to realize their full potential.
- Language is inherently social and is an active process to construct meaning from experience. Effective communicators use literacy to collaborate, to gain new ideas and insights about

themselves and the rapidly changing world around them, and to prepare them to participate in a global society.

- A supportive culture and structures for the well-being of the Whole Child are integral components necessary for a balance between and among physical, social, emotional, and academic needs. This is crucial to building a community that enables literate learners to explore ideas they find interesting, and to discover the world around them.

West Windsor-Plainsboro School District uses a standards-based balanced literacy approach. This includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. Teachers are able to guide students by modeling skills and strategies. Time is provided for students to practice those skills and strategies until they can use them independently. Balanced literacy allows for differentiation by providing opportunities for reading and writing practice at each student’s independent level, and small group and conferring at instructional levels. The curriculum is organized into units with the goal of having consistency across a grade and a logical progression of skills and strategies from grade to grade.

Balanced Literacy Components	Description
Read Aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher reads a book out loud, stopping to model reading strategies, or to notice writing techniques • Children are active participants as they talk about books with the teacher and each other
Shared Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The whole class reads an enlarged text together, such as a poem, big book, or a projected section of a text • The teacher guides the children to practice skills and strategies
Interactive and Shared Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The whole class composes a written piece together as the teachers does the actual writing, and the children practice skills and strategies • Interactive writing is shared writing but the children also take turns writing
Word Study (phonics, spelling, vocabulary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word study is the study of phonics, spelling, and vocabulary • All three are taught explicitly in context and in isolation through all components of balanced literacy
Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar is taught in the context of students’ reading and writing experiences. This approach allows students to try out what they’ve learned immediately, and makes the learning more meaningful
Reading Workshop & Writing Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher teaches a whole class mini-lesson, and meets with individuals and small groups • The students participate in the mini-lesson, then spend most of the workshop reading books independently or writing on a topic of their choice within the genre of study • Students also meet with the teacher for individual conferences and/or small group instruction • In reading, students spend time talking about their books with partners or in small groups • In writing, students give and receive feedback on their writing by

	working with a partner or in small groups
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Based on student data, all of the components of balanced literacy can be used within the workshop and are utilized based on students’ needs throughout the school year.

If “what” we teach is balanced literacy, then “how” we teach is through a workshop approach. A “one size fits all approach” does not match the realities of classrooms in the 21st century, and the structure of workshop teaching calls for teachers to adopt a responsive stance to instruction. By taking their cues from children and planning instruction that articulates next steps or goals that grow on their strengths, teachers are able to address the specific needs of individual students. The most important thing a teacher can do for any student is to study student data and plan instruction which is responsive to each child’s strengths and needs, knowing that children develop at different rates, in different ways, and their efforts are valued.

Part of the Workshop	What’s Happening
Mini Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happens at the beginning • Whole class instruction where the teacher introduces and models a new skill or idea • Students are given a brief opportunity to try what was taught
Independent Work Time Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Work • Small Group Strategy Instruction with teacher • Meet with teacher for a one-on-one conference • Peer Partnerships
Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happens at the end • Share insights, thoughts, and feelings about lesson • Self-assess and reflect on process • Revisit skills/strategies discussed in mini-lessons • Introduce a new lesson

How do teachers know what to teach on any given day? While the curriculum provides guidance with respect to the overarching goals and benchmarks of each unit, teachers need more information to be able to plan carefully and thoughtfully to meet the needs of individual students. This is where assessment comes in.

Assessment is ongoing and takes many forms, both informal and formal. Informal assessments happen as teachers sit side-by-side with students and observe what’s going well and what students are ready to learn. They collect notes in a variety of ways including, anecdotal notes, checklists, or learning progressions. These assessments give teachers immediate feedback to plan powerful instruction. More formal tools include pre- and post-assessments for each unit, benchmark assessments, and standardized tests.

Teachers monitor students’ progress toward grade-level benchmarks throughout the year. For more information on the expectations for each grade-level, please access the WW-P K-5 Report Card at the link below:

http://www.west-windsor-plainsboro.k12.nj.us/parents_students/report_cards