

Student Activities

Students engage in meaningful and quality learning experiences that build on what they know and can do.

Ownership and Intellectual Engagement

- set, adjust, reflect, and work toward personal learning goals
- interact, collaborate, and contribute in group settings (e.g., partner, small group, and whole class)
- participate in self-assessment activities
- research topics of interest and organize information independently or in a group
- follow classroom routines and demonstrate responsibility for shared materials, personal tools, and work products (e.g., homework, classroom assignments)

Speaking, Listening, and Language*

- engage in purposeful discussions related to learning objectives; understand and are able to articulate the goal of the teacher's instruction
- actively listen and contribute in whole-class and small-group learning opportunities, such as guided reading, literature circles, shared reading, writing workshop, and peer conferencing
- participate in oral language activities such as recounts, interviews, readers theatre, presentations, and book talks
- participate in word work and vocabulary-building activities to understand how language works

* In Immersion and Intensive French classrooms, "Listen For" the students speaking in French.

Daily Opportunities for Reading/Viewing

- select and read independently a range of texts at an appropriate level of difficulty
- use reading strategies to decode and comprehend fiction and informational text
- read and respond to texts through differentiated learning experiences
- engage in reading activities (e.g., read aloud, shared and guided reading, literature response, literature circles, and book talks)
- express and demonstrate enthusiasm for reading

Daily Opportunities for Writing/Representing

- understand and use pre-writing skills such as webbing and completing graphic organizers
- integrate writing strategies/traits and processes that have been modelled
- write independently in a variety of formats about student-selected and/or teacher-selected topics
- use writing tools (e.g., word wall, dictionaries, thesauri) to demonstrate age-appropriate independence with editing and revising drafts
- engage in authentic writing opportunities (e.g., writing to an author, creating lists, notes to friends, letters to local artists, posting on writing sites or Wikis, keeping a writer's notebook)

Teacher Activities

Teachers use a combination of **curriculum outcomes** and information gathered through formative and summative assessments to inform and adjust instruction.

Assessment Informs Instruction

- a plan is in place to regularly collect individual student achievement data
- data is analyzed to inform next steps for instruction
- assessment reflects **curricular** expectations (e.g., grade-level outcomes and achievement standards)

Differentiated Instructional Practice

- Information is presented in a variety of ways. For example:
- inquiry: investigating examples to construct understanding
 - small- and large-group dialogue
 - teaching practices and student responses reflect multiple learning styles

Planning and Preparation

- Instruction is based on **curriculum** outcomes. Consistency in expectations is achieved through collaboration with colleagues. For example:
- use of common vocabulary for instruction
 - targeted and explicit instruction on comprehension strategies (visualizing, predicting, determining importance, summarizing, inferencing, self-monitoring, questioning, making connections)
 - efficient use of time (e.g., workshop approach, grouping for precision teaching)

Formative Assessments include: reading records, strategy checklists, oral language checklists, comprehension responses, individual trait marking, marking using the provincial Reading and Writing Achievement Standards

Literacy "LOOK FORs" Grades 3-6

The Literacy "LOOK FORs" document is an observational tool that describes indicators of effective literacy classrooms in grades 3-6. The centre pages feature the components of a balanced approach to literacy; the front and back pages present the following:

The **Classroom Environment** section includes examples of physical tools and potential organizational structures that support literacy learning.

The **Student Activities** section includes learning experiences in which children are continually engaged.

The **Teacher Activities** section includes the kinds of instructional and assessment activities used regularly by teachers.

The "LOOK FORs" document is a tool to help administrators provide specific and valuable feedback pertaining to effective practices in balanced literacy classrooms. The guidelines are not intended to limit teacher creativity or to suggest that all literacy classes should be identical.

Classroom Environment

The **classroom environment**, created by the teacher, has a profound effect on the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of students.

Cross-Curricular Literacy Instruction

- displays of student work include evidence of literacy learning from all curricular areas (e.g., science, art)
- instructional materials support literacy learning in all disciplines (e.g., anchor charts for science concepts, math-vocabulary word wall, differentiated social studies texts)

Literacy Materials

- a balance of fiction and nonfiction texts appropriate to age, interests, and students' abilities
- a user-friendly system for organizing the classroom library (e.g., baskets labelled by genre, topic/theme, and author)
- easily accessible writing tools (e.g., age-appropriate reference books, personal dictionaries, writers' notebooks/folders, graphic organizers, information about the writing process/traits, easel/stand, highlighters)
- technology tools (e.g., computers, overhead display, SMART Board) used to create engaging curriculum-related lessons and to make real-world connections
- tools (e.g., mailboxes, note boards, suggestion boxes, Wikis) are available to encourage real-life written communication

Classroom Arrangement

- furniture, resources, and centres are arranged to support student inquiry and engagement
- physical space supports, or is able to be rearranged for, collaborative work (e.g., conferencing, guided reading, literature circles)

Community Atmosphere

- routines and expectations are established to foster rapid and smooth transitions and to promote independence and positive interactions
- celebration of learning is evident (e.g., displays of student work, author's chair, praise notes)
- group and independent student work are evident
- students interact regularly and are actively engaged in learning with others

Print Rich (minimal prepackaged displays)

- teacher- and student-created materials to support curriculum (e.g., vocabulary charts, writing samples/exemplars, graphic organizers, and shared reading charts) are displayed
- word walls highlight commonly misspelled words, spelling patterns, homophones, synonyms, antonyms, affixes, and topic specific vocabulary (Note: early grade three will feature more high frequency words)

Components of a Balanced Approach to Literacy

Components are observable **across curricular areas** over a period of days.

WORD WORK

Through explicit teaching, students develop **interest** in words and how they work, while building **spelling** ability, **vocabulary** and language **comprehension**.

Word work

- is integrated, contextualized, and supports instruction across curricular areas
- is facilitated through hands-on, word-building materials
- develops knowledge of word families, affixes, irregular vowel combinations, combinations of letters, spelling patterns, and syllables
- involves students in investigating and thinking critically about words (e.g., spelling rules, word origins)
- encourages the use of reference tools, personal dictionaries, word walls (Note: phrase walls are used to support French language learning)

ORAL LANGUAGE

A focus on speaking and listening **fosters** communication, social skills, and an **awareness** of how **language** is organized. Oral language development happens **daily** and

- is enriched by the model provided by the teacher
- is purposeful and rich, with dialogue that extends learning
- is supported by mini-lessons to scaffold appropriate social interactions (evidence may be in wall charts)
- is assessed on a continual basis to inform instruction
- is developed through many opportunities for students to answer and pose questions, discuss learning and express ideas and opinions
- highlights the language of instruction, demonstrating proper structures (in French, if French is the target language)

MODELLED WRITING

The teacher uses the **Think-Aloud*** technique to make transparent the **internal dialogue** of the writer. Modelled writing

- supports, through mini-lessons, the writing process, characteristics of writing forms, the traits of quality writing, and the use of writer's tools
- is integrated with cross-curricular content
- is based on authentic situations (e.g., letters to parents, math journals, note taking, exit slips, procedures)

SHARED WRITING

Teacher and the students **collaborate** to write one **common text**. Shared writing is a whole-class, small-group, or one-to-one method of instruction, that

- allows the teacher to provide explicit instruction and demonstrate the thinking process while encouraging students to contribute ideas and suggestions
- reflects a topic related to a shared class interest or experience
- includes students taking the pen to write the text
- can evolve over several lessons to demonstrate the steps of the writing process

*Think-Aloud Technique

- the audience listens
- the thinker articulates internal dialogue (e.g., connections, questions, predictions, descriptions of images)

- provides time for students to integrate the strategies, processes, and techniques that have been modelled and time to work on writing which results in a collection of finished and unfinished pieces
- requires access to and knowledge about writing tools (e.g., word walls, print in the classroom environment, dictionaries, thesauri, spell checker, and personal word lists)
- includes peer discussions and teacher conferencing
- is often shared and celebrated

INDEPENDENT WRITING

The teacher ensures student writers have **dedicated time every day** to work on independent pieces of writing. Independent writing

- includes self-selected topics
- includes a variety of writing forms
- supports and extends learning

Components of a Balanced Approach to Literacy

"Look For" instruction featuring **smooth** and **meaningful** connections between components.

READ ALOUD

The teacher **reads aloud daily and uses the Think-Aloud* technique to make transparent strategies for comprehension**. The read aloud

- demonstrates fluency and expression
- provides opportunities for explicit strategy instruction and for higher level comprehension responses (interpretive and evaluative)
- increases listening skills and promotes dialogue
- includes rich texts which relate to and extend personal experiences; creates interest and builds knowledge and vocabulary
- includes excerpts from all curricular areas, including pieces from information texts, big books, chapter books, novels, picture books, poetry, brochures, math problems, and science experiments

SHARED READING

Together, the teacher and students read a **common passage** which is large enough for all students to see clearly. Shared reading

- provides an opportunity for students to observe expert reading behaviours
- supports reading with fluency and expression
- assists students in learning where to focus their attention (e.g., placing emphasis, reading punctuation, using text features)
- allows students to enjoy a variety of texts they may not be able to read independently
- provides opportunities to practise and discuss **reading strategies**
- supports vocabulary development

GUIDED READING

The teacher works with **small, flexible** reading groups to support **instructional needs** and build **greater independence**. It is considered the **cornerstone** of a balanced literacy approach. Guided reading

- provides an opportunity for precise instruction based on formative assessments (e.g., reading records, strategy checklists, comprehension responses)

Guidelines for instructing readers who require the following levels of support:

	Extra	Moderate	Some
Maximum Group Size	Four	Six	Six
Frequency	daily sessions	minimum three/week	minimum one/week

- features a group lesson followed by independent practice, teacher conferencing, and response activities (Please note: the purpose is not for students to take turns reading aloud)
- requires the teacher to monitor student progress and reconfigure groupings
- provides time for small group discussion and reflection

INDEPENDENT READING

The teacher ensures students have **dedicated time every day** to enjoy **individual** reading of a variety of texts. Independent reading time

- builds stamina for sustained periods of concentration
- allows greater choice and increases enjoyment for reading
- encourages practise of reading strategies and increases fluency
- includes teacher conferencing
- helps students develop the ability to choose "just right" texts (texts that can be read for understanding without support)
- provides opportunities to share and respond to reading (e.g., literature circles, response journals)

Time

Schools should minimize classroom interruptions to establish extended, focused instruction to support literacy development and to sustain learning flow.