

A BALANCED LITERACY APPROACH

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS IN READING, WRITING, LISTENING AND SPEAKING



Photos: Yukon Government

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Education



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SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS IN READING, WRITING, LISTENING AND SPEAKING

This document is designed as a reference tool for K-9 educators.

Balanced literacy is an instructional approach for Language Arts.

Balance is attained through a combination of instructional strategies, with the goal of developing competent, literate learners. The teacher purposefully differentiates strategies to meet individual student needs. First Nations content and ways of learning are embedded throughout this approach.

A balanced literacy approach:

- Develops the competencies of all students using a variety of tools, materials, resources and strategies.
- Emphasizes the development of oral language, thinking and collaborating as the foundation of literacy learning.
- Uses formative assessment to guide instruction and to determine levels of support needed for mastery.
- Provides explicit instruction of skills for problem solving and strategic thinking.
- Provides uninterrupted daily blocks of time for literacy learning.
- Meets individual literacy and learning needs.
- Is founded on Universal Design for Learning, which means:
 - Multiple ways to acquire knowledge.
 - Multiple ways to demonstrate what students know.
 - Multiple means of engagement where student interests and abilities are used to motivate and challenge.
 - Uses authentic, multi-level and cross-curricular material.
- Releases responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student.
- Provides continuity in student learning from grade to grade.

BALANCED LITERACY APPROACH

← Listening and Speaking →

← Comprehending, Connecting, Creating and Communicating →

READING / VIEWING

Read Aloud / Modelled Reading

- teacher demonstrates proficient reading
- teacher expands access to text, vocabulary, and language features beyond student's abilities
- teacher exposes students to a variety of genres

Shared Reading

- teacher models reading strategies
- teacher explicitly instructs reading strategies
- teacher extends understanding of the reading process
- teacher reads
- teacher and student choose text
- teacher and student share reading
- teacher encourages student to read when able

Guided Reading

- teacher reinforces skills
- teacher engages student in conversation to activate prior knowledge, refine knowledge and express ideas
- teacher acts as a guide by scaffolding learning
- student does the reading
- student practices strategies
- student builds independence

Independent Reading

- student chooses the text
- student practices at his or her independent level

WRITING / REPRESENTING

Write Aloud / Modelled Writing

- teacher demonstrates proficient writing
- teacher expands access to writing, vocabulary and language features beyond student's abilities
- teacher exposes students to a variety of genres

Shared Writing

- teacher models writing strategies
- teacher explicitly instructs writing strategies
- teacher extends understanding of the writing process
- teacher scribes
- teacher and student choose topic
- teacher and student compose together
- teacher encourages student to write when able

Guided Writing

- teacher reinforces skills
- teacher engages student in conversation to activate prior knowledge, refine language and express ideas
- teacher acts as a guide by scaffolding learning
- student does the writing
- student practices strategies
- student builds independence

Independent Writing

- student chooses the topic
- student practices at his or her independent level

High Teacher Support



Low Teacher Support

← Formative Assessment

Differentiated Instruction →

Considerations for Implementing a Balanced Literacy Approach

A balanced literacy approach leads to the development of competency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. It is founded on knowing that the conditions for learning are firmly in place in each classroom.

The balance in the approach varies according to the needs and expectations of the students.

The Conditions for Learning

We know that learning is a social activity that is influenced by the environment inside and outside of the school and the academic, social, emotional and cultural capacity of the learner to engage in the process.

In summary, learning is a process of figuring things out, asking questions, making connections, getting ideas and testing them, taking risks, making mistakes without fear of ridicule or embarrassment, trying again and eventually experiencing the satisfaction of accomplishment.

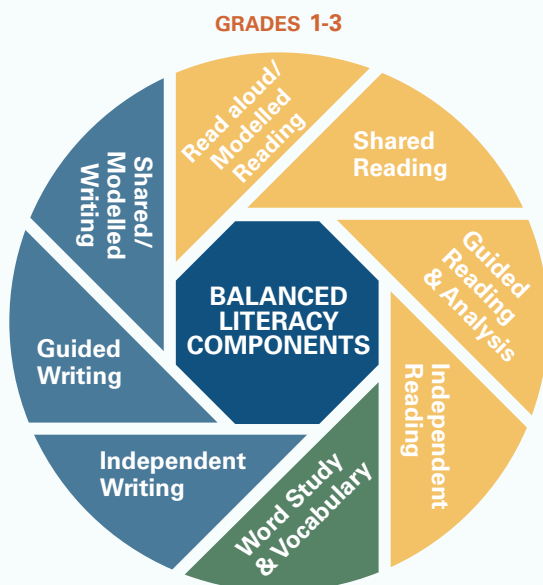
Balanced Literacy in Kindergarten

1. An emphasis on learning to learn behaviours is critical to the development of routines and social skills that support group and individual learning. (For example: listening to a story, sharing at play-centers or following directions in the gym.)
2. Oral language development is the priority. Frequent and sustained language times that include purposeful language-based learning centers should form the basis of a literacy program.
3. Integration of cross-curricular areas in science, art, math, drama, music and movement should support overall language and literacy goals.
4. The kindergarten program should include scheduled playtime (45 minutes per day for half-day programs, 1 hour 15 minutes per day for full day programs) with opportunities for both self-directed and assisted play.
5. Time guidelines for kindergarten need to be flexible to integrate a variety of topics based on developmental need within a play-based program.

Balanced Literacy in Grades 1-3

1. The language arts program has daily uninterrupted blocks of time with a minimum of 40 minutes each, total time of 100-120 minutes.
2. Each day, students read something of their choice with fluency and understanding. This means that teachers must explicitly teach and model comprehension strategies that students can use as a “toolbox.”
3. Each day, students have structured talk about their reading. Talking is thinking and is the foundation of literacy.
4. Each day, students listen to an adult fluently read aloud in order to hear what effective reading sounds like and to develop an appreciation of reading.
5. Each day, students write something meaningful. Writing everyday provides invaluable practice, opportunities for feedback and reflection about the writing.
6. Content area topics and interdisciplinary resources are used in Language Arts time to accomplish reading, writing, listening, and speaking goals as well as the expected learning outcomes of content areas.
7. The needs of English Language Learners (ELL) and First Nations culture and ways of learning are incorporated in all planning and programming.

Language Arts Time Allotments



BALANCED LITERACY COMPONENTS	GRADES 1-3 120 TOTAL MINUTES/DAY
Read Aloud/ Modelled Reading	daily
Shared Reading	daily
Guided Reading and Analysis	daily*
Independent Reading	daily
Word Study and Vocabulary	daily
Shared/ Modelled Writing	daily
Guided Writing	2-3x/week
Independent Writing/ Conferencing	daily

Content subject material can be embedded into the ELA program in order to ensure literacy components and time allotments are met.

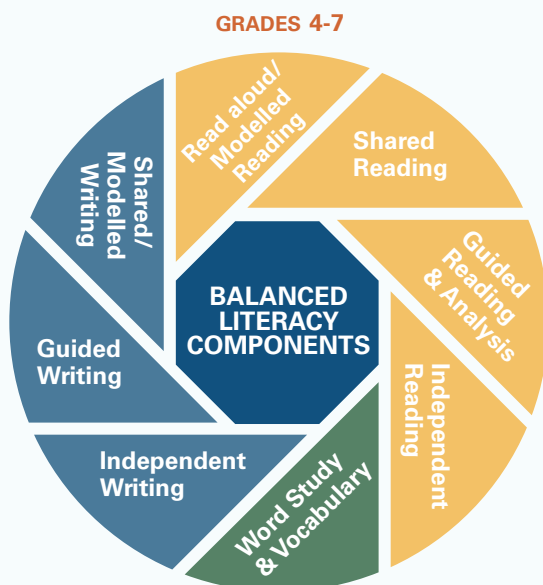
* May include literature circles with an instructional focus

Note: The sections are fluid and change size depending on grade level, the time of year and the needs of students.

Balanced Literacy in Grades 4-7

1. The language arts program has uninterrupted blocks of time with a minimum of 40 minutes each, total time of 90-120 minutes.
2. Each day, students read something of their choice with fluency and understanding. This means that teachers must explicitly teach and model comprehension strategies that students can use as a “toolbox.”
3. Each day, students have structured talk about their reading. Talking is thinking and is the foundation of literacy.
4. Each day, students listen to an adult fluently read aloud in order to hear what effective reading sounds like and to develop an appreciation of reading.
5. Each day, students write something meaningful. Writing everyday provides invaluable practice, opportunities for feedback and reflection about the writing.
6. Content area topics and interdisciplinary resources are used in Language Arts time to accomplish reading, writing, listening, and speaking goals as well as the expected learning outcomes of content areas.
7. The needs of English Language Learners (ELL) and First Nations culture and ways of learning are incorporated in all planning and programming.

Language Arts Time Allotments



BALANCED LITERACY COMPONENTS	GRADES 4-7 120 TOTAL MINUTES/DAY
Read Aloud/ Modelled Reading	daily
Shared Reading	weekly
Guided Reading and Analysis	3-5x/week*
Independent Reading	daily
Word Study and Vocabulary	weekly
Shared/ Modelled Writing	weekly
Guided Writing	2-3x/week
Independent Writing/ Conferencing	daily

Content subject material can be embedded into the ELA program in order to ensure literacy components and time allotments are met.

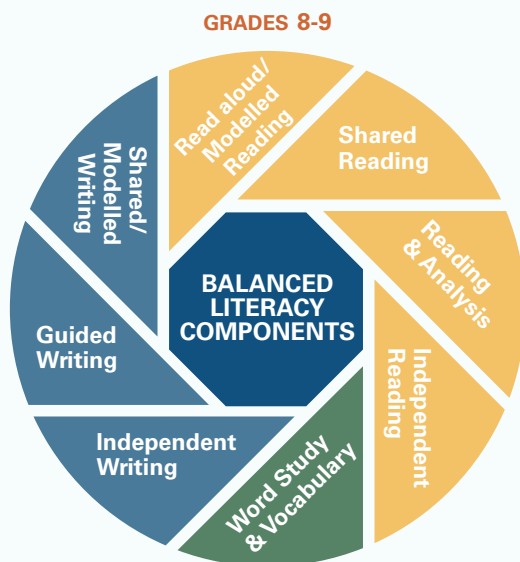
* May include literature circles with an instructional focus

Note: The sections are fluid and change size depending on grade level, the time of year and the needs of students.

Balanced Literacy in Grades 8-9

1. Competencies in the areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking are developed across all curricular areas in secondary school. Literacy will be a shared responsibility among all teachers, not just of those teaching Language Arts.
2. Students are supported in the literacy skills across curricular areas.
3. Students are taught appropriate comprehension strategies based on the text they are reading. Reading like a scientist/historian/artist, etc. develops discipline-area curricular competencies.
4. Students are given regular opportunities to work collaboratively and talk about their learning with others. Thinking, communicating and personal and social competencies will be fostered through these processes.
5. The needs of English Language Learners (ELL) and First Nations culture and ways of learning are incorporated in all planning and programming.

Language Arts Time Allotments



BALANCED LITERACY COMPONENTS	GRADES 8-9 120 TOTAL MINUTES/DAY
Read Aloud/ Modelled Reading	1x/week
Shared Reading	weekly
Reading and Analysis	weekly*
Independent Reading	daily
Word Study and Vocabulary	weekly
Shared/ Modelled Writing	weekly
Guided Writing	weekly
Independent Writing/ Conferencing	daily

Content subject material can be embedded into the ELA program in order to ensure literacy components and time allotments are met.

* May include literature circles with an instructional focus

Note: The sections are fluid and change size depending on grade level, the time of year and the needs of students.



Contact the Department of Education, Learning Support Services

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