

West Linn-Wilsonville School District



ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

CURRICULUM RENEWAL AND ADOPTION RECOMMENDATIONS

July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2006

A Professional Culture of Inquiry

Educators in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District contribute to a professional culture of inquiry and learning. We wish to send special thanks to the many teachers who by their contribution truly lead the thinking about learning and teaching in our schools. Continually learning, individual teachers share strategies that work and pose puzzling questions with colleagues. It is those questions that lead us forward.

These questions come from teachers' observations. The answers emerge in study, reading, thoughtful consideration of ideas, and careful action research by teachers. The following are questions that are leading to productive learning:

1. How can we be more successful developing literacy with children who struggle
2. How can we help each child with her unique personal situation, go beyond her barriers and excel?
3. How can we increase the understanding of a particular difficult scientific concept with strategic writing and reading?
4. We spend time studying spelling but for some reason the carry over to their writing is not what we want. How can we do a better job with spelling?
5. The gap is getting wider earlier. It seems that more children enter kindergarten ready to read and there are also more children who have very little literacy experience. How can we meet the diverse needs of our children?

To all these teachers we express the grateful thanks of this learning community. Thank you to the committee and subcommittees whose thinking has informed this set of recommendations.

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Underlying Assumptions

The recommendations of the West Linn-Wilsonville School District Language Arts Curriculum Renewal and Adoption Committee are based on six assumptions about learning. These assumptions are derived from the latest brain research and from empirical research on cognitive theory. Each of these assumptions has significant implications for teaching and learning in the Language Arts.

Assumption 1. Learning is goal-oriented

Researchers and educators believe that learning is goal oriented, in fact, skilled learners have two goals: (1) to understand the meaning of the learning task or in other words, to construct meaning, and (2) to regulate their own learning.

This assumption describes learning as thinking, the active construction of meaning by the learner. The ideal learner or reader is then one who is active, strategic, and constructive in linking new information to background knowledge.

Assumption 2. Learning is linking of new information to prior knowledge

Learning theory suggests that one's prior knowledge and past experience is stored in memory banks called schemata. Schemata are mental maps that provide structure for understanding. A reader's schema contains the knowledge she has about a subject and allows her to seek and select what is important, make predictions and inferences, organize and evaluate text.

Assumption 3. Learning involves organizing information

The competent reader knows different ways to organize information and understands a range of organizational patterns used in text. The knowledge of organizational patterns exists both inside the head, as a conceptual framework and outside the head in printed texts. Graphic organizers are important tools to help readers organize information for understanding.

Assumption 4. Learning is acquisition of cognitive & metacognitive structures

Skilled learners know specific strategies for approaching learning and they know how to choose among the strategies to fit the task. Learners control their own learning by applying skills to the task and by monitoring the usefulness of a strategy, changing the strategy when needed. They know how to think in different ways and they know how to think about their thinking.

Assumption 5. Learning occurs in phases, yet is nonlinear

Learning generally proceeds through three stages, (1) preparing for the learning (2) interacting in the learning (3) reflecting on the learning to deepen understanding. Effective teaching of reading is intentional at all three phases,

- activating background knowledge and learning the organizational structure of the text
- interacting with the text, monitoring and adjusting reading strategies and checking for understanding
- reflecting on the reading, synthesizing and integrating the ideas in the text to gain a new and deeper understanding.

Assumption 6. Learning is influenced by cognitive development

While all children do not arrive at any text equally prepared to understand it, all children can be taught to use thinking and learning strategies. Strategy instruction is imperative for children who are not likely to develop cognitive and metacognitive strategies on their own. These children need instruction, practice and feedback to incorporate the strategies. Once children have an effective strategy for a given type of content, teachers should allow them to use that strategy.

Reference for this section is Billmeyer and Barton,
Teaching Reading in the Content Areas 1998.

Time to Teach and Learn

Time is a limited resource and time for learning is precious. The time given to various curricular subjects reflects the importance placed on those subjects by the school and community. With this adoption the West Linn-Wilsonville School District recognizes a priority for quality instructional time in the Integrated Language Arts—time to learn to read and write. The priority is expressed in the intentional use of instructional time for the development of literacy. We recommend the following guidelines for use of instructional time in the integrated language arts program K-12.

Kindergarten: Children attend kindergarten for a total of 2 hours and 40 minutes. Within the kindergarten day children should use a minimum of 1.5 hours with teachers engaged in the development of literacy with a varied set of integrated language arts activities.

Grades 1-3: Children attend school for 6 hours and 20 minutes. In the grade 1-3 day approximately 3 hours should be dedicated to children engaged in the development of literacy with a varied set of integrated language arts activities.

Grades 4-5: Children attend school for 6 hours and 20 minutes. Within the day grade 4 and 5 children should be engaged in literacy development with a varied set of integrated language arts activities for approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Grades 6-8: Children attend school for 6 hours and 30 minutes. The integrated language arts block of approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes should occur daily even while some other blocks might rotate on an A/B day or other rotating system.

High School: Children attend school for 6 hours and 30 minutes. The integrated language arts program is delivered in four full-year classes, English 9, 10, 11, and 12. The time given to each class is a minimum of 60 hours or one Carnegie unit per semester.

Pre-K	All day K	Kindergarten	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
1.5 hours daily	3.0 hours daily	1.5 hours daily	3.0 hours daily	2.5 hours daily	1.5 hours daily	One course each term

A Road Map

Every child is entitled to excellent instruction in reading, writing and speaking. Excellent instruction includes a balanced educational program with attention to all parts of the content of language arts.

Solid language arts skills are developed through extensive, meaningful experience with books and other printed materials and when learners are given daily opportunities to express thoughts and clarify thinking by speaking and writing. Literacy competence grows best in classroom environments that encourage intellectual risk taking and accept mistakes as a necessary and important learning opportunities. Students succeed when all elements within the system are organized for effective effort around an expectation that every child will succeed.

Classroom instruction is often most successful when the classroom mirrors the complexity of real world learning -- in other words when children learn holistically. This kind of instruction begins with the whole, the big picture, and then moves to analysis of the parts and relationships which are then taken back into the whole to solidify meaning.

Such classrooms are operating with an understanding of the way the brain naturally learns. The brain is naturally organized to recognize patterns. The brain is not particularly good at applying abstract rules. When instruction recognizes the way the brain naturally behaves, as a pattern detector and not in the application of rules, the school extends the ability of all children to learn and increases the pleasure of learning. Continued classroom success demands that children understand the meaning, purpose, and value of the learning. Classroom success builds background knowledge and experiences that provide vital association and meaning-filled connections. Classroom success leads to deep understanding and is exemplified by competence in reading, writing, speaking, and thinking.

For the purpose of this document we will look individually at each component part of the domain of Language Arts to insure that a balanced program is provided to all language learners in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District, K-12. In exemplary instructional practice these elements are woven together in rich and lively activities that mirror the complexity of the real world.

We have concluded that there are 10 strands for the purpose of this renewal document. Each strand carries with it a recommendation including a belief statement and supporting background information, philosophical references, best practices, teacher resources, and student resources. The 10 strands are:

1. Reading
2. Read Aloud
3. Early Literacy Instruction
4. Literature
5. Spelling and Vocabulary
6. Writing
7. Speaking and Listening
8. Assessment
9. Handwriting
10. Research

English/Language Arts Strands

Reading

Reading is a Life Long Journey

Belief Statements

Learning to read is critical to a child's overall well-being. If a youngster does not learn to read in a literacy driven society, hope for a fulfilling, productive life diminishes.

G. Reid Lyon

Reading is Thinking

The West Linn - Wilsonville School District recognizes that learning to read and think well is the primary competency of the educated person being prepared to graduate from our schools. Reading is thinking. West Linn - Wilsonville educators embrace the teaching of reading with commitment to developing our professional skills and with an understanding of the complexity of the reading process. We recognize that every child can be taught to use learning and thinking strategies. Intentional instruction in reading strategies is essential to student performance in all areas of the curriculum.

Reading transcends the mere transmission of information: It fosters an imaginative dialogue between the text and the reader's mind that actually helps people to think.

Stratford P. Sherman

Every Teacher Must Be a Teacher of the Literacy of the Domains

Students must learn to read in all content areas. Intentional instruction in reading strategies is necessary at every level and in every subject area. Best instructional practices define every teacher as a teacher of reading, as a teacher who teaches the literacy of the domains. The mathematics teacher teaches strategies that help students read and understand mathematical text. The science teacher teaches strategies that help students read and understand the scientific text used in the class. The language arts teacher teaches students strategies that help the student make meaning of literature. Each discipline has a unique literacy and a unique way of thinking.

Every good reader has a repertoire of reading strategies and knows how to select the appropriate strategy for the text at hand. When every teacher is an active reading teacher, student achievement in science, mathematics, history and literature improves.

Strategic Teaching Is Essential K-12

We believe that the teaching of reading strategies must be continuous through out the engagement with text at all levels K-12. We must teach strategies and skills for gaining meaning from print before, during, and after the physical reading of text. Teachers must help students learn how to prepare for reading through pre-reading activities, ensure comprehension through the use of meta-cognitive strategies during reading, and extend and refine the new knowledge they acquire. In the literature classroom children should be taught to read literature. In the science classroom children should be taught to read scientific text and so on with all subject and content areas.

Philosophical References	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teaching Reading in the Content Areas: If Not Me Then Who?</i>, Billmeyer and Barton, 1998 • <i>Mosaic of Thought</i>, Keene and Zimmerman, 1997 • <i>Strategies That Work</i>
Best Practices	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers' Workshop • Readers' Theatre • Guided Reading • Shared Reading • Reciprocal Teaching (video) • Language experience • Key word approach • Running records • Retelling • Silent reading (SSR, DEAR, ETC.) • Read-aloud • Book bags --take home reading program • Whole-to-part-back to whole • Pocket chart -- close strategies • Novel Studies • Literature Studies • Scaffolding reading of text in all subjects
Teacher Resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Linn-Wilsonville School District Professional Development Activities • Essential Readings: Reading Comprehension • Essential Readings: Every Child A Reader • Essential Readings: Reading As a Gateway to Learning Instruction in the Content Areas (Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, Literature) • 3-12: <i>Reading in the Content Areas-ASCD</i> (Rachel Billmeyer) • K-5: <i>Mosaic of Thought</i> (Keene) • K-12: <i>First Steps</i> • 1-3: <i>Guided Reading</i> (Pinnell) • 1-3: <i>Word Matters</i> (Pinnell) • K-5: <i>Making Words</i> (Patricia Cunningham) • K-5: <i>Matching Books to Readers</i> (Pinnell) • K-5: <i>Highlight My Strengths</i> Video Trial • K-5: <i>Literature Circles</i> (Harvey Daniels) • <i>Revisit. Reflect. Pretell</i> (Linda Hoyt) • K-5: <i>Invitations</i> (Routman) • Brain research books (Sousa) (Jensen) • K-5: <i>Teaching With The Brain in Mind</i> (Erik Jensen) • K-5: <i>Using the Right Brain in Language Arts</i> (Richard Sinatra) • 3-8: <i>Non-Fiction Matters: Reading, Writing, Research in Grades 3-8</i> (Stephanie Harvey)

- *Teaching Story Elements with Favorite Books* (Ellen Tarlow)

Student Resources	
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Literacy Place• Leveled reading books• Literature sets• Text books• Anthologies• Magazines• Library materials• Online text | |
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English/Language Arts Strands

Read Aloud

Belief Statements

May the road be free for the journey and may we spark our lives with moments of pure joy.

West Linn-Wilsonville Teacher
Statement Captured at English/Language Arts Adoption Meeting

Reading aloud is celebrating thinking

The West Linn - Wilsonville School District recognizes the power in shared stories. We support and encourage the practice of a teacher reading to a class at every level and in all curriculum areas. Teachers are encouraged to read aloud to their students each day, selecting from varied text sources – a poem, an essay, or a novel that continues from day to day. Reading aloud with a class allows the teacher to establish a warm and positive climate for learning to read. Reading brief, carefully selected pieces provides opportunities for serendipitous connections and deeper understanding.

Literature rich environments are essential

Our collected experience and the long time commitment of West Linn-Wilsonville teachers to reading aloud are supported in the evidence of research. Research notes that reading aloud helps children develop strength for reading and writing, speaking and listening and expands the power of children's thinking. Teachers use read aloud techniques to awaken the genius and spark the imagination of the children in their classroom.

Philosophical References

- *The Read Aloud Handbook*, Jim Trelease

Best Practices

In choosing read-aloud selections teachers should take care to select books that are not on the instructional list for the year or two following the class. The world is full of great books. The read-aloud time allows teachers to expand children's experience to literature that might otherwise be missed. In any instructional year the book cupboard offers a rich but limited set of resources. As a matter of respect for colleagues, teachers will leave books from the literature list for a fresh approach in the designated year.

Teacher Resources

- Novels
- Newspaper
- Magazines
- Poetry

English/Language Arts Strands

<u>Early Literacy Instruction</u>	
Belief Statements	
<p><i>Every Child A Reader</i></p> <p>Reading is the cornerstone of education and the foundation of lifelong learning. If children are not independent readers by the end of third grade, it is unlikely that they will be successful in the middle grades and beyond. Children who are not independent readers by the end of third grade rarely “catch up” later. (CIERA, Overview. 1998)</p> <p>Particular attention must be given to literacy instruction in the early years if every child is to have maximum opportunity for school success. This recommendation has special significance for kindergarten through grades three.</p> <p>All children’s progress with literacy must be monitored to assure continued growth. Children who are struggling must have attention early. The early intervention must be matched to the child’s learning profile. Teachers need a repertoire of strategies from which to choose the most effective strategy for the individual child. Children who are English language learners need special attention throughout their schooling to assure progress. See the West Linn-Wilsonville School District English Language Learners Program document.</p>	
Philosophical References	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The CIERA Study: Applying Reading Research in the Classroom</i> (www.ciera.org) <p>Many West Linn-Wilsonville early grade teachers are examining the CIERA study individually and in study groups. The eight topic study guides present research background and best practices applications for classroom teachers. We recommend these study materials for K-3 teachers and affirm the implementation of these best practice ideas in our classrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children</i>, Snow, Burns and Griffin 	
Best Practices	
<p><u>Topic 1</u> Oral Language and Reading</p>	<p>Children's oral language abilities are interwoven with learning to read and write. The oral language children acquire as preschoolers helps them to connect words and sounds with print. Throughout the school years, oral language is both a means whereby children learn about reading and a goal of reading instruction.</p>
<p><u>Topic 2</u> Concepts of Print, Letter Naming and Phonemic Awareness</p>	<p>Two powerful predictors of first-grade reading achievement are letter-name knowledge and phonemic awareness (the conscious awareness of the sounds in spoken words). To apply this knowledge successfully to learning to read, children need to understand the purposes and conventions of reading and writing.</p>
<p><u>Topic 3</u> Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy</p>	<p>To recognize unfamiliar words when reading, successful beginning readers use phonics (letter-sound associations). Phonics knowledge must be applied to unfamiliar words in reading text and requires monitoring for meaning. To prepare for middle-grade reading, children must augment phonics skills with knowledge of English morphology--meaning units such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes.</p>

<p><u>Topic 4</u> High-Frequency Words and Fluency</p>	<p>Proficient readers recognize the vast majority of words in texts quickly, allowing them to focus on the meaning of the text. Since approximately 300 words account for 65% of the words in texts, rapid recognition of these words during the primary grades forms the foundation of fluent reading.</p>
<p><u>Topic 5</u> Strategic Comprehension</p>	<p>The basic comprehension strategies that children build out of oral language skills in kindergarten and first grade become more complex in second grade and beyond. As topics and text structures become less familiar and the goal of reading shifts from understanding familiar ideas to acquiring new information, students must develop strategies for texts that extend beyond their own knowledge base.</p>
<p><u>Topic 6</u> Writing and Reading</p>	<p>Learning to write assists children in their reading; in learning to read, children also gain insights that help them as writers. But writing is more than an aid to learning to read; it is an important curricular goal. Through writing children express themselves, clarify their thinking, communicate ideas, and integrate new information into their knowledge base.</p>
<p><u>Topic 7</u> Engagement and Interest in Reading</p>	<p>From the earliest storybook reading with an adult and the first proudly scribbled message, children enjoy reading and writing because of the social communication and signs of cognitive competence the activities provide. The key to attaining and using literacy, even when sustained effort and attention are needed, is the sense of personal pride that children feel when they succeed.</p>
<p><u>Topic 8</u> School-Wide Reading Programs</p>	<p>In schools that are successful in fostering high levels of reading achievement, all adults in the school work together on the literacy program, build systematic program links across the grades, accept responsibility for all children, and closely monitor students' progress. Significant time must be given daily for activities such as Shared Reading and Guided Reading and the varied additional strategies for children who are struggling and for English language learners.</p>
<p>Teacher Resources</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Linn-Wilsonville Professional Development Classes • <i>Four Blocks in the Classroom</i> • <i>Every Child A Reader</i> • Guided Reading • Running Record • ESL Roundtables 	

English/Language Arts Strands

Literature

Belief Statements

Great and varied literature is at the heart of this recommendation. Children will be using a set of literature that is rich in meaning from the earliest shared reading experiences of kindergarten and first grade through the final shared literary work studied in the high school program.

The study of literature examines the range of literary genre, the forms and devices authors use, and the intellectual content of written literature. To study literature the student must develop a set of reading and thinking skills that allow the reader to construct meaning from a text and make connections to life experience, other texts, and other ideas.

Literature Investigations

We read to know that we are not alone.

The study of literature is the study of the human condition. It is the study of philosophy. Great literature asks essential questions regarding who we are, what we believe, and how we know. The power of literature resides in its ability both to evoke and to provoke – to call us forward and to challenge us. Whether it is Dr. Seuss's *Horton*, or Thomas Hardy's *Tess*, characters leap from the page to become real and to walk with us as we face our own lives. These characters can teach us through their own conundrums, can inspire us with their triumphs and can offer us solace that we are not alone in our humanity.

In West Linn Wilsonville we believe in the richness and power of literature to enhance the quality of our lives, and we believe that literature not only reflects the growth of individuals, but can also be a vehicle to empower young men and women as they mature. The psychological development of a child as an egocentric individual is reflected by the narratives of the journey to know the self – and the beginnings of empathy can be nurtured through identifying with characters that are different from the reader. The goal of the literature program is to encourage the psychological/philosophical/social development from children to young adults, from the egocentric through the empathic to the ethical and ultimately to a transpersonal understanding of the world. We want students to leave the school experience loving to read, to think, and to explore their world. We want students who are whole, ethical human beings who will consider compassion over self-interest. We believe the study of literature encourages students to treasure intrinsic human values. We believe the study of literature causes an individual to journey from an egocentric perspective to a universal perspective of humanity. What more is an education for?

Philosophical References

- *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas*, Billmeyer and Barton

Best Practices

Strategic teaching involves careful planning for learning before, during, and after text reading. Every text should be taught with intentional activities before, during, and after the reading of the text.

Pre-reading strategies

- anticipation guides
- problematic situations
- K-W-L
- DR/TA
- PrepP

- vocabulary strategies

Strategies to use during reading

- pairs reading
- reciprocal teaching
- graphic organizers for mapping ideas and relationships
- SQ3R
- structured note-taking
- sensory imagery

Strategies to use after reading

- informational paragraph frames
- proposition/support outlines
- QAR
- RAFT
- writing to learn
- learning logs
- creative debate
- group summarizing
- discussion web
- scored discussion

Student Resources	
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leveled book collections
Wright
Rigby
Scholastic • Collections of novels • Anthologies
Scholastic: K-5 Literacy Place – Primary school
McDougal Littell : Middle school
Prentice Hall: High School Novels |
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English/Language Arts Strands

Spelling and Vocabulary

Belief Statements

Language, be it remember'd, is not an abstract construction of the learn'd, or of dictionary-makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground.

Walt Whitman
Slang in America

One of the most important spelling skills is the ability to discern incorrectly spelled words. The skill calls upon the writer to be alert and relies upon visual memory that is best developed with lots of reading practice. Children who read widely are more likely to have a visual memory bank upon which to call. The use of technologies to aid correct spelling and word choice is essential.

Conventional spelling develops through successive approximations until children can spell most words correctly. We expect that the most frequently used words would be most often correct in the writing of children in grades 4 and 5.

Unlocking the mystery of why some of our children do not transfer the spelling skills they demonstrate on the spelling lists to their own writing remains a key question as we instruct learners. There is recognition that weekly spelling tests alone do not lead to carryover into the written work of many children. It is also noted that grades on weekly spelling tests should not be the sum total of the assessment of a child's spelling proficiency.

Spelling is an important component of a complete Language Arts program. Parents are natural partners in the teaching and reinforcing of spelling. Spelling homework is an extension and is often a consistent part of a child's routine.

Vocabulary

Brain research tells us that children have a particular ability to expand their working vocabulary in the years between infancy and age fourteen. We also know that a strong vocabulary is a consistent correlate of school success. Because of this strength, we recommend a formal program to develop vocabulary in grades K – 8.

Philosophical References

- *Making Words*, Cunningham

Best Practices

Children will be taught an intentional spelling program beginning in kindergarten and continuing for through grade 5. Children will be taught an intentional vocabulary program which will begin in kindergarten through grade 8.

Kindergarten, Grades 1-5

The result of the word wall/making words based strategy is paying dividends for many students learning. They are learning to spell correctly and using the correct spelling in their own writing. This work rests on the work of Cunningham, Mustafa, and Sitton. We embrace the Word Wall and Making

Words strategies as powerful instructional approaches in the primary grades.

Word walls and making words strategies are used to build a bank of frequently used words that children are expected to spell correctly. Embedded in this approach is an emphasis on word families, spelling patterns, morphological elements, and phonemic analysis. Children are assessed for spelling skills in dictation of sentences, spelling list/tests, and cloze activities.

Alternate for Grades 2-5

A substantial basal spelling program may be used as children advance in grade. The teacher teams in a school in consultation with the principal will be able to create a balance between the word wall approach and the basal approach to best support spelling instruction in that school.

The often practiced basal approach will use the spelling book, *Literacy Place*, Scholastic or *Laidlaw Spelling*, to guide the spelling instruction. Teachers must create the expectation that words used in writing are spelled correctly after they are studied on the word lists.

In addition, children will be taught to use the print and electronic aids to spelling; dictionaries, Franklin Spellers, spell-check, etc.

Vocabulary Grades K-8

Strong vocabulary is a significant correlate of academic success. Vocabulary learning is a strength of children from birth to age 14. The brain is naturally good at acquiring language and vocabulary during this period. This curriculum renewal recommends formal vocabulary work in grades K-8. The program recommendation for vocabulary development is *Wordly Wise* from grades 4-8.

Vocabulary programs assist children in bridging the gap between thinking they know what a word means and actually being able to put meaning to the word. The program will present words with more than one meaning and will reinforce learning to use words precisely in varied situations.

Vocabulary study deals with the morphology of words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Word study will include analogies, connotations and literal and metaphorical usage.

Teacher Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Wordly Wise</i>• <i>Making Words</i>	
Student Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Scholastic Literacy Place</i>• <i>Making Words</i>• Word walls• <i>Wordly Wise</i>• <i>Laidlaw Spelling</i>	

English/Language Arts Strands

Writing

Belief Statements

Writing clarifies thinking. I write to know what I think.

Writing is an integral part of literacy development. We teach children to write and at the same time we use writing as a tool for learning. As children compose written work, they synthesize and clarify their thinking about the concept or topic they are studying.

Writing is an act of revision, searching for ways to create meaning. At first there are the draft ideas and then the search for the words that most powerfully express those ideas. Writing is about ideas and meaning.

Philosophical References

- *In the Middle*, Atwell
- *Teachers and Children at Work*, Graves

Best Practices

Best practices include what many teachers call writers' workshop, a time when children are invited to write each day, when activities include planning, drafting, revising, getting response from a peer or teacher, editing, and polishing pieces of writing. Writers' workshop includes a short focused lesson on a writing device or strategy, grammar and usage applications, or writing traits such as word choice, organization, or sentence fluency. Children begin and carry pieces of writing forward day to day and choose which pieces they wish to take to the finished form.

Teachers are active during the writers' workshop. They are checking on progress, noting the needs for individual and small group instruction, and nudging children to higher performance with skillfully crafted questions. Writers' workshop is successful when the teacher is masterful in the art of listening to the child, knowing what is next for that child and then inviting the child to that next challenge.

Writing is taught most successfully in concert with literature and with the reading of authentic non-fiction text from social studies, mathematics, and science. Children, like all writers, write best when they write about something they know. In the process of writing the writer comes to know even more about what they are learning. Research is an essential part of the writing process.

Technologies

Many children and adults compose more successfully on the word processor where revision is easily accomplished. With increasing access to word processors teachers should be able to encourage children to compose their written work with a word processor.

Other

- Daily journal
- Learning logs
- Cloze Technique
- McCracken Approach
- Word wall
- High frequency

- Word families
- Making words
- Writing process
- Instructing traits
- Shared writing
- Interactive writing
- Free writing/quick writes
- D.O.L.
- Dictation
- *Month by Month Phonics* (Cunningham)

Teacher Resources

- *After the End* (Barry Lane)
- *Reviser's Toolbox* (Barry Lane)
- *Invitations* (Routman)
- *First Steps Writing*
- *Celebrations* (McCracken)
- (2) *Picture Books* (NWRL Spandel)
- *Classrooms That Work* (Cunningham)
- *The Whole Story* (Camborne)
- Word lists
- Graphic organizers
- *If You're Trying to Teach Kids How to Write... You've Gotta Have This Book!* (Marjorie Frank)
- *Word Wizard* (Cathryn Falwell)
- *Getting the Most Out of the Morning Message and Other Shared Writing Lesson* (Carleen Payne)
- *Teaching Reading and Writing with Word Walls* (Daniel Wagstaff)
- *Easy Lessons for Teaching Word Families* (Judy Lynch)
- *Interactive Writing K-2* (Pinnell)

Student Resources

- *Writers Express*
- *Write Source* handbooks
- *Inspirations* (elec)
- *Story Book Weaver* (elec)
- *Alien Tales* (elec)
- *Conversations* (Routman)

English/Language Arts Strands

Speaking and Listening

Belief Statements

How do I know what I think until I hear what I say?

Speaking is a significant tool for communicating thinking. Speaking in both formal and informal contexts is a natural part of schooling. Instruction in the strategies and techniques used by successful speakers requires attention.

Philosophical References

- *First Steps, Oral Language*

Best Practices

Sharing in a classroom community offers a context for instruction in speaking. Productive use of sharing contexts occurs when guidelines and developed standards for speaking are a part of the process. Skills will develop when the environment is safe and the expectations are appropriate to the age and development of the child.

Research reports offer another context for speaking instruction. The child gains more opportunity when the written report is accompanied by a presentation. These practices help students gain poise and practice speaking. Again, the development of skills develops with intentional instruction and the use of a scoring guide appropriate to the assignment in a safe and supportive environment.

The give and take of skillful discussion and dialogue is the most useful speaking and thinking skill for life. Guidelines for discussion can extend content learning, develop interpersonal skills, provide opportunities for reflection and expression, and deepen understanding.

Every primary child should have an opportunity to participate in a performance each year. These often flow from curriculum topics and include the arts, music, speaking and movement.

Other

- Sharing (creatively)
- Literature circles
- "Author's Chair"
- "Book Talks"
- Teaching Traits
- Video production (and other venues for sharing work)
- Talk Shows, Radio Shows
- Debate
- Socratic discussion
- Role play
- Skilled discussion
- Dialogue

Teacher Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toastmasters • <i>First Steps</i> • K-5: <i>Science Talks</i> (Karen Gallas) • Speaking Scoring Guides, Oregon Department of Education 	
Student Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Junior Great Books</i> 	

English/Language Arts Strands

Assessment

Belief Statements

All doors are hard to unlock until you have the key.

Robert C. O'Brien
Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH

For so many years we have held the keys to assessment. It is time we share a set of keys with the children. They are the learners who hold the power to improve their performance.

Bob Miller
WLWS Teacher

Literacy assessment is essential work for all teacher and students. Literacy assessment is appropriate when it comes from regular class work and leads to improved instruction and increased learning. Students must be involved in the assessment. Appropriate assessment becomes a tool teachers share with students to help them improve the quality of their own reading, writing, and speaking. Wide use of varied methods of assessment, with varied assessment tools and strategies is recommended. While those tools should include the State of Oregon scoring guides and standards, the state tools should not be used exclusively. There are many good assessment tools.

You don't fatten the cow by weighing it.

Farmer Brown

Proper assessment serves learning. It is formative. It gives the teacher and the learner information to guide the next instructional moves. The teacher uses assessment data to adjust the instructional program and students use assessment data to improve their own performance. Through continuous formative assessment the school will monitor children's literacy development and plan effective instruction to assure that all children are growing toward high levels of literacy competence. Sometimes, from a teacher's perspective the end of a project, the end of a class, and the end of a year often seem like the end, a time for summative assessment. However, the wise teacher is aware that for the student the journey of learning is continuous. There are no real *endings or finish lines for the reader and writer*. As the child moves from project to project, class to class, and year to year the development of skills, knowledge and understandings continues. We must reexamine even our language...finals, final grades, finals assessment scores... and the implications of the practices the language reflects. If educators learn to share the keys to assessment with the learner, the summative final judgments will be de-emphasized and the end of term will provide a launch pad for the next learning. Sound assessment will then be used in productive ways that mobilize effective effort for expanded learning.

Assessment as an Exercise of Power

...If you want to be successful in this business—in other words, if you want your students to learn – you will need to lose a lot of that ego. You will need to care more about your students' learning than about your dominance.

Leila Christenbury
Making the Journey

It is never acceptable for a professional to mis-measure a child. It is never acceptable for a professional to use the power of assessment to subvert, diminish, or destroy the power of the learner. Good teachers use assessment to mobilize the effective effort of students for learning. Good teachers measure their own success not by the number of students they fail but by the number of students they inspire, the student they can support and lead to authentic successful performance. Sound assessment serves learning.

Mobilizing Effective Effort of the Child for Learning

An examination of our own feelings about assessment and evaluation leads to some harsh revelations. No one likes to be judged a failure against standards that are fuzzy and indistinct and where there is too little information about how to do better. Good teachers provide clear expectations and many exemplars. The elements of quality work are revealed. Instruction is designed to demystify the process, and continuous assessment provides helpful feedback to the learner. In these classrooms children can see what to do to produce a closer approximation of high quality work. In these settings student achievement is high and learning is meaningful.

Oregon Statewide Assessment

The Oregon Statewide assessment program includes standardized reading and literature assessments, a formal writing assessment, and classroom work samples in writing, and speaking. The English/language arts classroom is the appropriate setting for the state assessments and for many of the classroom work samples. In addition, it is appropriate that classroom work samples in writing and speaking will occur in other content area classrooms. All classroom work samples should be derived from the regular work of the classroom. They should make sense within the curriculum and should be no mystery to the student. They should be integrated into the structure of the classroom and should not be added on. Work samples should not feel like a break in the flow of teaching and learning but a natural part of a well-designed program.

West Linn - Wilsonville teachers are becoming experts at weaving work samples into a rich and meaningful instructional program. Research is showing us that when we focus narrowly on a standard, the result is less successful than when we weave the same standards into good instruction.

Philosophical References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rick Stiggins • Grant Wiggins • Jeff Howard • Lorraine Monroe • Deborah Meier
Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple methods of assessment • Shared rubrics and scoring guides • Use of exemplars: How will I know I am doing good work? • Multiple opportunities to demonstrate competence • Revision – a student may always improve her grade with further effort and revision • Grading – not a tool of control to gain compliance but a measure of learning • Tools used are appropriate to the skill, performance or understanding being assessed • Clear expectations: No mystery, no surprises • Real audiences for public demonstrations of learning

Teacher Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom assessments • Running Records • Concepts of Print • DRA • Scholastic • DIEBLS • Spelling Inventory • Fluency/Accuracy • Harris Jacobsen 	
Student Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoring guides • Shared rubrics • Exemplars of good work • Response groups • Guides to revision • Grading practices that encourage successful learning 	

English/Language Arts Strands

Handwriting

Belief Statements

Futurists predict that handwriting may become a lost art as fewer people put pen to paper and more use keyboards and voice-activated technologies to communicate. We recognize that these predictions may come true in our students' lifetimes. We also recognize that the child of today must still communicate with the pen. The handwriting recommendation is based on that understanding.

Developing a personal style. Adults adapt handwriting to fit a personal style. For example, engineers, graphic artists and architects often select a simple block manuscript for much of their writing. In the West Linn - Wilsonville School District children will be given the tools for both manuscript and cursive writing in primary school and then in grades 6 and beyond they will be encouraged to develop a legible and pleasing personal style for writing.

Simplicity and Legibility

All children can be taught to produce legible handwriting. This recommendation suggests minimal yet sufficient intentional instruction to meet the goal that students have legible handwriting skills. The D'Nealian forms for both manuscript and cursive will be continued in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District.

Best Practices

Kindergarten and Grade 1

Children will be taught the forms of manuscript letters with emphasis on where to start the letter and how to proceed. Children will be taught to improve their legibility with attention first to shape, then size, and finally the spacing of letters in words. Kindergarten will begin with unlined paper moving to lined-paper as the year progresses. Teachers will note the grip of the pencil helping children develop a grip that facilitates writing with less stress and fatigue to the hand. When children learn to form letters well, the task is less complex for them and less instructional time will be needed for re-teaching over time.

Grades 2 and 3

Children will use manuscript print in their work with an increasing expectation for legibility. Children will be introduced to cursive forms and will have practice reading cursive messages. Children will be prepared to use cursive writing in grade 4 and 5. The exact time for introduction of cursive within grades 2 and 3 will be decided school by school based on the judgment of grade 2/3 staff in consultation with the principal.

Grades 4 and 5

Children will use both cursive and manuscript print with an increasing expectation for legibility in both forms. Children will be taught to choose the form that most fits the task. For example, the child may choose cursive for quick notes and formal letters and manuscript to label a scientific drawing or produce a poster. Teachers will provide practice in context for reading and writing cursive and will review shape, size, spacing and connections between letters periodically as needed.

Grades 6-12

Students will not be given formal instruction in handwriting beyond primary school. Since students will have skills in both manuscript and cursive, they will be encouraged to choose the form that fits the task at hand with legibility as the goal.

Teacher Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• D'Nealian Materials	
Student Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• D'Nealian Materials	

English/Language Arts Strands

Research

Belief Statements

Research is an essential strategy for thinking and learning. Research begins in the earliest grades continuing throughout academic life. The West Linn - Wilsonville School District research cycle represents a thoughtful structure to help guide the research process in our classrooms. This structure is suggested to facilitate the development of rigorous research practices within the academic setting. The need for a common language and structure was identified by teachers and library media specialists who recognize that children are confused by the many different structures used by teachers as children move from grade to grade and school to school.

Research Expands the Quality of Thinking

When students are taught to use a research structure such as this one they have a way of knowing how to proceed and of evaluating when they are doing good research work. After studying twelve different research cycles, all of which had commonalities yet dissimilar ways of representing a process, the subcommittee formulated this recommendation. Attention was given to the need for increasing complexity, as the student becomes more sophisticated. This recommendation carries with it the hope that common language within our schools might ease the work of both teachers and students around process, making the content and learning from student research more productive.

The West Linn-Wilsonville School District research cycle represents a dynamic and recursive process that moves through stages yet is not linear. Emphasis is placed on defining a sharp question that can lead to deeper understanding of an issue. The quality of the question determines the quality of the research. A weak or narrow question leads the researcher down unfocused or narrow paths where the learning is of little value. A generative question can lead to deep and expansive learning.

Philosophical References

- Jamie McKenzie Research Cycle
- *The Big 6*, Michael Eisenberg & Robert Berkowitz
- *Information Literacy Toolkit*, Jenny Ryan & Steph Capra

Best Practices

This committee recommends that teachers teach children to work with this research cycle so children can engage in more meaningful projects as they progress through the years. The research cycle rubric will help teachers and children build on experience year to year.

A Research Cycle defines stages or steps. A complete research project would take the student through all these steps with frequent cycling back to review and revise, sharpen and focus the study.

- Questioning and Wondering
- Planning
- Gathering ,Sorting and Sifting (Analysis)
- Seeking New Insights (Synthesis)
- Evaluating
- Reporting and Reflecting

In the earliest grades the research model may be introduced simply as a three-step plan: do, share, process. By fourth and fifth grades the children should be using the more complete process with scaffolding and support from teachers and parents.

Teacher Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information literacy checklist• Scoring guide• Exemplars	
Student Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graphic charts• Scoring guides• Exemplars	