

## Self Selected Reading the Four Blocks Way

1. Teacher provides a good model of fluency in reading. She attempts to motivate students through a **teacher read-aloud daily**. Over the course of time, the read-aloud should include non-fiction, fiction, everybody “easy” books, chapter books, etc. Reading a variety of books is important. Teacher promotes reading through teacher read-alouds and book talks at several appropriate times throughout the day.
2. **Teacher makes books easily accessible** to children so that they will not lose time in choosing and trading books. There are many different ways to organize books: in baskets, in individual book baggies/cereal boxes, etc. The books can be organized by level, by author, by theme. The books can include leveled library books, but do not have. Teacher provides an adequate supply of books and other reading materials on various topics, of different genres, and on varied reading levels (above, below, and on grade level).
3. **Teacher has a system of tracking which students have been conferenced with**. Ideally meeting with each student weekly is a Self-Selected Reading goal. However, realistically meeting with students six times per marking period is an acceptable goal. The number of times a teacher meets with a student varies depending on the reading level of the student.
4. Teacher guides and encourages children during **conferences** to read books on appropriate levels, while still allowing freedom of choice. Conferencing time is an opportunity for sharing and celebrating and not an interrogation.
5. Teacher has a system in place for students to **share books with each other**.

## Writing the Four Blocks Way

1. Teacher selects a skill or strategy to introduce in the mini-lesson that is necessary to improve the students' writing. Teacher varies the topic, purpose, and audience of the mini-lessons on different days. At the most, the mini-lesson lasts 8-10 minutes daily.
2. Teacher provides a good model of writing, though not so sophisticated that students feel they cannot attain a similarly good piece of writing. **Teacher writes in front of the students daily.**
3. Teacher models the use of resources in the classroom when writing (word wall, etc.). This is not done daily. Teacher models how a student might "stretch-out" a word to figure out a temporary spelling. At the end of the mini-lesson teachers might use a class writing checklist or the strategy CUPS to edit and re-look at the piece of writing.
4. Teacher encourages students to write on their own topics. Teacher may require certain "focused" writings over the course of the school year depending on grade level expectations.
5. **Teacher conferences with the students.** What this looks like in different classrooms depends on each grade level, each teacher, and the specific needs of the students. All classrooms should have conferencing though. The conferencing method of Stars and Wishes works well.
6. Teacher provides opportunities for **sharing of children's writing.** This varies in the different classrooms. Some classes share daily, some monthly, some have an author's tea several times a year.

## Working With Words: Word Wall

### **Doing** A Word Wall vs. **Having** A Word Wall

Doing a word wall is not the same as having a word wall. Having a word wall might mean putting all these words up somewhere in the room and telling the students to use them. In many cases, struggling readers can't use them because they don't know them, and don't know which word is which.

Doing a Word Wall means:

1. Adding words gradually to the wall
  - In first and second grade there are 5 words added weekly.
  - In third grade there are 14 words added monthly.
  - In upper grades there are 10 words added monthly.
2. Making words very accessible by putting them where every student can see them, writing them in big black letters, and using a variety of colors so that the most often-confused words are different colors.
3. Being selective and stingy about what words go on the wall, limiting additions to those really common words that children use a lot in writing. Teacher adds only words to the Word Wall which are used frequently in reading and writing for her particular grade, and which should be spelled and used correctly. The word wall lists include high-frequency words that provide patterns that will enable students to spell other rhyming words (chunk words or word families). To guide teachers in making wise choices, Pat Cunningham developed a suggested word list for each grade level. This suggested word list is not a dictation. Teachers will add specific words to the wall based on what they see as necessary words based on the students' writing. The words should always be based on words that most students encounter in their reading and writing.
4. Practicing the words by chanting and writing them, because struggling readers are not usually good visual learners and can't just look at and remember words. Most teachers do at least one daily activity in which the children find, write, and chant the spelling of the words. The activity takes longer on the day that words are added because it is necessary to take time to make sure that students associate meanings with the words and point out how the words are different from words with which they are often confused. After the teacher calls out each word and models the chant, all the children clap and chant it's spelling before writing it. When all five words have been written, the teacher writes the words as the students check and fix their own papers.
5. Doing a variety of review activities to provide enough practice so that the words are read and spelled instantly and automatically.

On-the Back Word Wall Activities may include:

- Endings
  - Rhymes
  - Cross Checking
  - Be a Mind Reader
6. Making sure that Word Wall words are spelled correctly in any writing the students do.

## Working With Words (the rest of the goals)

In the Working With Words block, children learn to read and spell high-frequency words and the words and the patterns that allow them to decode and spell lots of other words. After the word wall practice, the remaining 20-25 minutes of Working with Words time is given to an activity which helps children learn onset and rime patterns and how to use them to decode and spell new words. A variety of activities are used. These activities meet goals 2-5.

2. Teacher provides opportunities for students to learn one and two syllable words that follow a pattern, but are used less frequently (Goal 2). Regardless of which activity the students participate in, the teacher provides transfer words. Students who can read Crest on the toothpaste tube should be able to decode and spell other rhyming words such as best, rest, pest, infest, and request.

Using Words You Know to Spell Other Words (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>)

Brand Name Phonics (Upper Grades)

Making Words: Make, Sort, Read, Write

3. Teacher provides opportunities for students to learn spelling words with two or more patterns (Goal 3). Teacher teaches students that spelling rhyming words is not as easy as decoding them because some rhymes, such as right/bite; claim/name; toad/code, have two spelling patterns. The reader has to develop a visual checking system and learn to use a dictionary when he is unsure about which pattern looks right.

What Looks Right? (End of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, Upper Grades)

Rounding Up the Rhymes (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades)

4. Teacher provides opportunities for students to learn decoding and spelling polysyllabic words (Goal 4). Teachers teach students key words containing the major prefixes, suffixes and spelling changes and how to use these to decode, spell, and build meaning for many polysyllabic words.

This goal is only in the Upper Grades book.

Nifty Thrifty Fifty

5. Teacher provides opportunities for students to learn to apply strategies while reading and writing (Goal 5). Teacher teaches students to use cross checking while reading and a visual checking system while writing to apply what they are learning as they engage in meaningful reading and writing activities.

Guess The Covered Words

Reading and Writing Rhymes

Applying Strategies When Reading and Writing

Observing Word Strategies in Writing

Observing Word Strategies for Spelling Unknown Words

## Comprehension — Guided Reading the Four Blocks Way

### **Before reading**

What do we read? All the students are usually reading the same text at this time. Multiple copies of the same text may be found in basals, or stories from an anthology, or class sets of novels. The text is not reading leveled material; rather it is age appropriate. The text varies in instructional difficulty.

What do we teach? Teacher presents a comprehension skill or strategy before reading. The goal is not to “cover” or “read” the literature. The goal instead is to teach reading comprehension strategies. The lesson is structured to support the diverse reading levels within the class. The purpose is teach reading comprehension strategies that will enable students to acquire, interpret, apply and evaluate text.

Teacher establishes and states a clear purpose for students’ reading. The teacher must preview each piece of literature or each chapter within the novel to determine which comprehension strategy this particular text lends itself. This then becomes the focus of the lesson.

All “set purposes” are connected to text strategies, thinking strategies or state objectives. What is it that the teacher wants the children to learn by reading this text? The set purpose is often referred to as a treasure hunt and is often neglected during the before reading. Give the students a specific question to search for as they read. This is powerful in building comprehension. It should be clearly stated. “Today when you are reading, I want you to...”

### *Thinking Strategies*

Connecting / Schema (pages 43-44, 77 GRTFBW book)

Predicting / Anticipating (page 44, Chapters 5-6, pages 77, 133 GRTFBW book)

Summarizing / Concluding (pages 44-45, 78, 133-134 GRTFBW book)

Questioning / Monitoring (pages 45-46, 78, 134 GRTFBW book)

Imaging / Inferring (pages 46-47, 78, 135 GRTFBW book)

Evaluating / Applying (pages 44, 78, 135 Chapter 12, GRTFBW book)

### *Text Strategies (pages 47-52), GRTFBW book)*

Fluency (“Doing the Book” and “Pick-A-Page”)

Following Sentence and Paragraph Structure (Chapter 13, GRTFBW book)

Who Took Our Caps?

Who Did What?

What’s the Missing Word?

Who Mixed Up Our Sentences?

Following Story Structure (chapter 10, GRTFBW book)

Following Informational Structure

## **During Reading**

- Teacher arranges a grouping during the reading time that is flexible and purposeful. Readers who need greater levels of support are paired with stronger readers. No grouping remains stagnant or easily identifiable, especially with struggling readers.
- During reading the teacher needs to consider three things: the reading level of the students; the reading level of the book to be read; and the number of copies available of the text to be read.
- Students read the text in a variety of ways. Instruction during reading is essential. Assigning might be easy for the teacher is bad learning for the students. Therefore, we would never say, “Open your book to Chapter 3 and read... Nor would we say, “Read chapter three for homework.” And we would never allow round robin reading to occur, as this is an ineffective instructional strategy. How then would we read the text?

### Different Methods for how to read during reading

Shared Reading (chapter 16, GRTFBW book)  
Choral and Echo Reading (chapter 17, GRTFBW book)  
ERT (Everyone Read To...) (chapter 18, GRTFBW book)  
Partner Reading (chapter 19, GRTFBW book)  
Playschool Groups (chapter 19, GRTFBW book)  
Three-Ring Circus (chapter 20, GRTFBW book)  
You’s Choose (chapter 20, GRTFBW book)  
Coaching Groups (chapter 21, GRTFBW book)  
Book Club and Literature Circles (chapter 22, GRTFBW book)

## **After Reading**

Teacher finishes the block with a discussion of what was learned. Teacher discusses with the whole group the set purpose. “Why did we read this?” “What did we learn?” Answering questions orally or in written format is not comprehension instruction. It is assessment of comprehension.