GRADES 4 TO 5

updated June 2023

General Education Leadership Network
a MAISA Collaborative

Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy

This document was developed by the **Early Literacy Task Force**, a subcommittee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN), which represents Michigan's 56 Intermediate School Districts. For a full list of representatives, please see the back page.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

This document is intended to be read in concert with Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy, Grades K to 3. *There is important overlap and continuity in these two documents, and some students will benefit from instructional practices identified in the K to 3 document beyond the K to 3 years.*

Purpose

The purpose of the document is to increase Michigan's capacity to improve children's literacy by identifying a small set of research-supported instructional practices that could be the focus of professional development throughout the state. The focus of the document is on classroom practices, rather than on school- or systems-level practices (which are addressed in the document: Essential School-Wide and Center-Wide Practices in Literacy). Research suggests that each of these ten practices in every classroom every day could make a measurable positive difference in the State's literacy achievement. They should be viewed, as in practice guides in medicine, as presenting a minimum 'standard of care' for Michigan's children.

The practices listed can be used within a variety of overall approaches to literacy instruction and within many different structures of the school day; the document does not specify one particular program or approach to literacy instruction. We limited the list to ten practices; there are other literacy instructional practices that may be worthy of attention. In addition, new literacy research could alter or add to the instructional practices recommended here. For these reasons, choosing to enact the practices on this list would leave considerable agency and choice for individual districts, schools, and teachers.

The recommended practices should occur throughout the day, including being integrated into opportunities for science and social studies learning, not exclusively in an isolated block identified as "English Language Arts" or "Literacy." At the same time, literacy instruction should not take the place of science and social studies inquiry nor addressing the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations for Social Studies nor addressing the Michigan K-12 Science Standards. In the long term, that approach is counterproductive; later academic achievement is predicted not only by literacy knowledge and skills, but by mathematics learning, knowledge of the natural and social world, and certain aspects of physical, social, and emotional development. Finally, it is important to read this document in relation to the State of Michigan's specific standards for literacy development in fourth and fifth grade , which should garner careful attention in all Michigan fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms and be one focus in observing classroom practice and children's development. The endnotes indicate some connections between the ten instructional practices and the Michigan Standards, and they reference research studies that support the practices listed.

1. Deliberate, research-informed efforts to foster motivation and engagement within and across lessons[4]

The teacher:

- Creates opportunities for children to identify as successful readers and writers (e.g., "I am a reader.")[5]
- Provides daily opportunities for children to make choices in their reading and writing across disciplines (choices may be a limited set of options or from extensive options but within a specific disciplinary topic or genre)
- Offers regular opportunities for children to collaborate with peers in reading and writing, such as through small-group discussion of texts of interest and opportunities to write within group projects[6]
- Helps establish meaningful purposes for children to read and write beyond being assigned or expected to do so, such as for their enjoyment/interest, to answer general or discipline-specific questions about the natural and social world, to address community needs, or to communicate with specific audiences[7]
- Builds positive learning environments that encourage students to set and achieve goals, as well as promote student independence
- Attends to and cultivates student interest by connecting literacy experiences to students' family and community experiences

2. Intentional, research-informed instruction using increasingly complex texts and tasks that build comprehension, knowledge, and strategic reading activity[8]

An important aspect of literacy instruction is foregrounding the use of reading and writing for the purpose of building knowledge about the world and about oneself. Ideally, comprehension instruction, including strategy instruction, is always in the service of supporting knowledge building. At times, the teacher needs to be very explicit about how to construct meaning from text, but this activity is always embedded in sense making with text. One dimension of comprehension instruction is signaling that there are many possible causes for comprehension breakdowns (e.g., poorly constructed text, insufficient prior knowledge, challenging concepts and vocabulary). It is important that students be encouraged to monitor their understanding and, when there has been a breakdown, have a repertoire of fix-up strategies. While teachers can model these fix-up strategies, the goal is for students to practice the use of these fix-up strategies so that they become independent readers.

To build comprehension, knowledge, and strategic reading, the teacher:

- Facilitates discussion of text meaning to support students to interpret the ideas in a text[7]
- Provides experiences for students to build knowledge to support their interpretation of text prior to reading (e.g., to build prior knowledge), during reading (e.g., to support text interpretation), and after reading (e.g., to extend learning)[9]
- Models and guides students to be metacognitive while reading (i.e., monitor for comprehension and use fix-up strategies when there are breakdowns in comprehension)
- Provides explicit comprehension strategy instruction (e.g., finding main ideas, summarizing, making connections between new text information and prior knowledge, drawing inferences). High quality strategy instruction includes:
  - Thoughtful selection of the text to use when introducing and teaching a comprehension strategy
  - Attending to the demands the text places on the readers to inform appropriate selection of texts
  - Demonstrating and describing how to apply the strategies that students are learning to different texts
  - Providing guided practice that reflects the difficulty level of the strategies that students are learning, as well as the demands of the text, and purposes for reading

3. Small group instruction, using a variety of grouping strategies, most often with flexible groups formed and instruction targeted to children's observed and assessed needs in specific aspects of literacy development[10]

The teacher:

- Is deliberate in providing quality instruction to children in all groups, with meaning-making the ultimate goal of each group's work, and ensures that children use most of their time actually reading and writing
- Provides and supports opportunities for small group discussion of literature and disciplinary text (e.g., Instructional Conversations and Literature Circles) so that students can draw on their own knowledge and the knowledge of their peers to co-construct the meaning of text
- Provides opportunities for developing reading fluency during small group work, such as paired and partner reading
- Uses small group routines (e.g., cooperative and collaborative learning, such as Reciprocal Teaching and Collaborative Strategic Reading) for fostering strategic reading and knowledge-building using text
- Provides opportunities for students to plan, draft, revise, and/or edit writing together, framed by specific guidelines for working together

4. Activities that build reading fluency and stamina with increasingly complex text[11]

Activities include:

- Listening to models of fluent reading (reading with appropriate accuracy, automaticity, and prosody) of age-appropriate books and other print or digital materials
- Engaging in repeated readings of familiar texts
- Engaging in wide reading of texts, including multiple modes (e.g., print, digital, visual, audio), genres, and topics
- Using reading materials of increasing text difficulty
- Opportunities to read independently for specific purposes, including for pleasure, for sustained periods of time
- Paired or partner reading

5. Discussion of the ideas in texts and how to construct text meaning across texts and disciplines[12]

The teacher:

- Reads aloud age-appropriate books and other materials, print or digital[13]
- Carefully selects texts that provide the grist for rich discussion, and analyses texts to identify specific learning goals, challenges (e.g., the complexity of the ideas in the text, insufficient information) and affordances (e.g., text organization, such as problem-solution or compare-contrast; text features, such as graphics or headings)[7]
- Uses discussion moves (e.g., linking students' ideas, probing children's thinking, having students return to the text to support claims about the ideas in the text) that help provide continuity and extend the discussion of the ideas in the text
- Provides tasks or discussion routines students know how to follow (e.g., Instructional Conversations and Literature Circles) when students discuss texts in small groups
- Provides regular opportunities for peer-assisted learning, especially for emergent bilingual learners, by pairing students at different levels of English proficiency

6. Research-informed and standards-aligned writing instruction[14]

The teacher provides:

- Daily time for student writing across disciplines, including opportunities for students to write using digital tools (e.g., word processing)[15]
- Opportunities to study text models of (e.g., mentor and student-written texts) and write texts for a variety of purposes and audiences, particularly opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative texts (real and imagined)
- Occasions for students to use writing as a tool for learning disciplinary content and engaging in disciplinary practices (e.g., writing scientific explanations), and that provide clear and specific goals for writing (e.g., address both sides of an argument)
- Explicit instruction in and guided practice using writing strategies for planning, drafting, revising, and editing writing
- Explicit instruction in spelling strategies, capitalization, punctuation, sentence and paragraph construction, purpose-driven text structure and organization, keyboarding, and word processing[16]

7. Intentional and ambitious efforts to build vocabulary, academic language, and content knowledge[17]

The teacher engages in:

- Teaching morphology (e.g., common word roots, inflections, prefixes, and affixes) and syntax[18]
- Attending to word relations (e.g., semantic maps, concept mapping, etc.)
- Providing explicit instruction in both general academic and content area vocabulary during reading and disciplinary instruction[19]
- Engaging students in wide reading that exposes them to rich and discipline-specific academic language, and provides the opportunity for vocabulary learning in the context of reading[20]
- Encouraging the use of new vocabulary in a variety of contexts and modes, including reading, writing, and discussion of print or digital texts for discipline-specific purposes[21]

8. Abundant and diverse reading material, including digital texts, and opportunities to read in the classroom[22]

The classroom includes:

- A wide range of books and other texts (e.g., print, audio, video, and digital), including information books, poetry, literature, and magazines[20]
- Books and other materials connected to children's interest and that reflect children's backgrounds and cultural experiences, including class- and child-made books
- Books and other reading materials children can borrow and bring home and/or access digitally at home
- Reading materials that expose students to rich language and vocabulary learning[21]
- Daily opportunities for children to engage in independent reading of materials of their choice, with the teacher providing instruction and coaching in how to select texts and employ productive strategies during reading, feedback on children's reading, and post-reading response activities including text discussion[20]

9. Ongoing observation of children's language and literacy development that informs small group and individual instruction[23]

The teacher:

- Observes and assesses students during reading and writing activities using an array of indicators (e.g., ratings of fluency, retellings/summary and discussion to assess comprehension, productivity to assess writing fluency, and accuracy of mechanics in writing)
  (Note: Use of formative assessments in these areas is particularly important for emergent bilingual speakers)
- Uses formative/benchmark assessments to monitor progress in literacy development and to guide instructional decision-making (e.g., differentiated instruction) for all students, including adding additional supports and providing opportunities for enrichment
- Uses diagnostic and ongoing assessment data to identify students who are struggling with reading and writing, and to design intensive, systematic instruction that focuses on identified learning needs
- Provides explicit feedback, related to reading and writing development, in which the teacher points out what the learner is doing correctly and incorrectly, and builds on earlier feedback

10. Collaboration with families in promoting literacy[24]

Teachers engage in:

- Supporting families to continue to provide reading and academic learning opportunities at home and during the summer months (e.g., book lending programs)
- Building on students' family and cultural resources and knowledge in reading and writing instruction
- Promoting children's independent reading outside of school
- Speaking with children in their home/most comfortable language, whether or not that language is English[25]
- Providing literacy-supporting resources, such as the following:
  - Books from the classroom that children can borrow or keep
  - Children's magazines
  - Information about judicious, adult-supported use of educational television and applications, or "apps," that can, with guidance, support literacy development
  - Passes to local museums (for example, through www.michiganactivitypass.info)

(Endnotes)

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6 See, among others, Speaking and Listening, Standard #1

7 See, among others, Reading Literature, and Reading Informational Text, Standard #9

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20 See Reading Literature and Reading Informational Text, Standard #10

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Process for Development and Review

This document was developed by the Early Literacy Task Force, a subcommittee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN), which represents Michigan's 56 Intermediate School Districts. The Task Force included representatives from the following organizations, although their participation does not necessarily indicate endorsement by the organization they represent:

Early Childhood Administrators' Network, Michigan Association of Intermediate School Districts

English Language Arts Leadership Network of Michigan Association of Intermediate School Districts

General Education Leadership Network of Intermediate School Districts in Michigan

Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning

Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators

Michigan Association of Media Educators

Michigan Association of Supervisors of Special Education

Michigan Department of Education

Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association

Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative

Michigan Reading Association

Michigan State University

Michigan Virtual University

Reading NOW Network

Regional Educational Media Centers Association of Michigan

Southwest Michigan Reading Council

Technology Readiness Infrastructure Grant

University of Michigan

Feedback on drafts of the document was elicited from other stakeholders, resulting in a number of revisions to the document.

Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy Grades 4-5

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