

Literacy Fundamentals – August 2005

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In this address, Sue Jackson and Judy Speirs look at literacy fundamentals and discuss strategies that work. Literacy is defined and effective classroom practices that principals should be seeing in their classrooms are discussed. Highlights from the *Literacy for Learning* document are emphasized. The session concludes with what principals need to do to promote literacy and professional learning communities within their schools.

Contact:

For more information on literacy, visit the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/

Resources:

Document: *Literacy for Learning* - available on the Ministry of Education's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca

Segments:

- 1...Introduction
- 2...UNESCO's Definition of Literacy
- 3...Effective Classroom Practices
- 4...Literacy for Learning
- 5...A Comprehensive Literacy Program
- 6...Shared Reading Technique and "Look Fors"
- 7...Conclusion

1...Introduction

(Length: 2 minutes)

Synopsis:

Jackson outlines the purpose of the presentation.

2...UNESCO's Definition of Literacy

(Length: 1 minute)

Synopsis:

Jackson reviews the UNESCO definition of literacy and emphasizes that literacy is an essential tool for personal growth and for active participation in society.

Look for the following:

- Literacy involves more than reading and writing

After viewing Segment 2:

- What are you doing to stress the importance of literacy within your community?
- Visit the UNESCO website at www.unesco.org/education/ and focus on what is being done globally to address the problem of illiteracy.

3...Effective Classroom Practices

(Length: 11 minutes)

Synopsis:

Jackson describes classroom practices that enhance literacy development.

Look for the following:

- The importance of planned, purposeful and scaffolded lessons
- The role of “accountable talk” in establishing classrooms as conversational communities
- Read aloud as a necessary classroom practice
- Making connections
- Think, Pair, Share strategy

After viewing Segment 3:

- How important is the role of talk in the classroom?
- How should teachers establish “accountable talk” in their classrooms?
- Why is making connections an important comprehension strategy?
- Make a list of “non-negotiable” literacy activities that your PLC would insist on having in each classroom in your family of schools.

4...Literacy for Learning

(Length: 10 minutes)

Synopsis:

Speirs highlights the information in the document, *Literacy for Learning*, with a particular focus on critical thinking skills.

Look for the following:

- Importance of critical literacy skills
- Definition of texts
- Role of the classroom teacher to address varying stages of student development
- Importance of principals to review student data with staff
- IF...THEN strategy

After viewing Segment 4:

- List the types of texts to which students in the 21st century are exposed.
- Why are critical literacy skills so important? What are good ways to teach them?
- What do effective literacy teachers do and how will you develop these characteristics?

5...A Comprehensive Literacy Program

(Length: 3 minutes)

Synopsis:

Speirs describes Vygotsky's theory of learning and its application to classroom practice.

Look for the following:

- A description of Vygotsky's theory of learning
- Gradual release of support
- Zone of Actual Development
- Zone of Proximal Development
- New Zone of Actual Development

After viewing Segment 5:

- With your PLC and staff, describe how a comprehensive literacy program would fit Vygotsky's theory of learning.

6...Shared Reading Technique and "Look Fors"

(Length: 10 minutes)

Synopsis:

Jackson describes one technique that should occur in all classrooms from JK to grade 8, i.e., shared reading, as this is where the bulk of explicit instruction occurs. A video clip is used so participants can see shared reading in action.

Look for the following:

- Importance of shared reading
- What shared reading looks like in the classroom

After viewing Segment 6:

- With your group, develop your own list of shared reading "Look Fors".

7...Conclusion

(Length: 5 minutes)

Synopsis:

Speirs outlines what role principals play in promoting effective literacy programs.

Look for the following:

- Importance of shared reading
- Necessity of blocks of uninterrupted time in the timetable
- Data collection
- Collaboration amongst teachers

After viewing Segment 7:

- Joyce and Showers say that, "Training is only effective when it involves peer coaching in the classroom." What will you do to develop a plan to ensure effective literacy instruction will occur at your school?