

## Student Activities

Students engage in meaningful and quality learning experiences that build on what they know and can do.

### Speaking and Listening

- listen and contribute to discussions in partner, whole-class and small-group settings
- [participate in oral language activities](#) such as recounts, readers theatre, book talks, [partner-sharing](#)
- apply language learned through embedded vocabulary instruction (e.g., word work, read alouds, shared reading and writing, topics from other curricular areas)
- demonstrate awareness of social conventions in whole-class settings, group work and play

### Writing/Representing

- write independently in a variety of formats
- [use writing strategies/traits](#) and processes that [have been modeled](#) to engage with a piece of writing for a period of time or over a number of days
- use [writing tools](#) (e.g., word wall, personal word lists/dictionaries, age-appropriate editing and revision checklists)
- engage in writing for [authentic purposes](#) (e.g., lists, letters to the principal, notes to friends)

### Reading/Viewing

- select and read/view independently, and with others, a range of appropriate texts
- respond with personal connections to a variety of texts in different ways (e.g., oral discussions, drawing, writing)
- practice reading strategies to decode and comprehend fiction and informational texts
- engage in reading and viewing activities (e.g., a video clip/performance, literature response, book talks)
- express personal preferences for types of texts and authors

### Ownership and Personal Engagement

- collaborate to set classroom and [individual goals](#)
- make decisions about independent reading and writing
- [apply strategies from mini-lessons to independent practice](#)
- follow [classroom routines](#) and procedures for shared and personal materials

Whole- and small-group instruction should reflect appropriate times for listening followed by time for action/reaction (e.g., partner-sharing, independent work).

Expectations for sustained listening and attention:  
Age = # of minutes  
5 year olds = 5 minutes  
6 year olds = 6 minutes  
7 year olds = 7 minutes

## Teacher Activities

Teachers use a combination of **curriculum outcomes** and [information gathered](#) through formative and summative assessments to inform and adjust instruction.

### Assessment Informs Instruction

- a plan is in place to regularly [collect](#) individual student achievement data
- data is analyzed to inform next steps for instruction
- assessment reflects curricular expectations (e.g., developmental stages and grade-level achievement standards)
- feedback is provided to students and [parents](#)

### Planning and Preparation for instruction is based on:

- [curriculum outcomes](#)
- assessment of students
- identification of clearly-stated goals
- [collaboration with colleagues](#) to achieve consistency (e.g. common vocabulary, routines, expectations and approaches)
- short-term/long-term plans for efficient use of time

### Differentiated Instructional Practice

Teaching practices and student responses reflect multiple learning styles. For example, there is evidence of:

- a variety of literacy manipulatives
- [individual reading and writing conferences](#)
- flexible groupings
- appropriate and varied book selections
- [scaffolded learning through modelling, shared and guided experiences](#)
- [opportunities for practice](#) before independence is expected

**Formative Assessments include: phonological awareness assessments, alphabet recognition, sound-symbol correspondence, concepts of print checklists, writing samples, [reading records](#), comprehension responses, and observations based on the reading and [writing achievement standards](#).**

## Literacy “LOOK FORs” Grades K-2

The “LOOK FORs” are an observational tool and are intended to guide collegial discussions and to monitor the use of effective practices in balanced literacy classrooms in grades K-2. The centre pages outline the components of a balanced approach to literacy, and the outside pages describe the following:

**Classroom Environment:** physical tools, organizational structures, and atmosphere

**Student Activities:** level of engagement in learning

**Teacher Activities:** instructional planning and practice

## Classroom Environment

The classroom environment, created by the teacher, has a profound effect on the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of students.

### Classroom Arrangement

- clearly-defined areas for whole class, group and independent work
- inviting meeting area with appropriate materials (e.g., Big Books, [Morning Message](#), pocket charts, chart stand) to support [whole-class](#) and small-group focus lessons and demonstrations
- age-appropriate materials and areas for experiential learning (e.g., [blocks](#), role-play, art, science)

### Literacy Materials

- a balance of fiction and nonfiction texts appropriate to age, interests, and student abilities
- a system for organizing the classroom library (e.g., a combination of baskets labelled by genre, topic, author, text complexity)
- a system for organizing independent reading (e.g., book baskets)
- manipulatives to build phonological awareness and to support word work (e.g., magnetic letters, picture cards, whiteboards, clipboards)
- easily [accessible](#) writing tools (e.g., personal dictionaries, writers’ notebooks/folders, graphic organizers, writing process/trait charts)
- [technology tools](#) (e.g., listening centres, computers, overhead, [SMART Board](#)) used to create interactive lessons
- tools to encourage real-life written communication (e.g., sign-in sheet, calendar to record events, lunch orders, mailboxes)

### Community Atmosphere

- [routines and expectations are established to foster rapid and smooth transitions and to promote independence and positive interactions](#)
- celebration of learning is evident (e.g., student work displays, students sharing reading/writing)
- students work independently and in small groups

### Print Rich (minimal pre-packaged displays)

- teacher-and [student-created](#) materials are visible and changed frequently (e.g., [shared writing](#), graphs, rhyming words) Note: Grade 2 will [feature rubrics](#), editing checklists, reading and writing strategies
- word walls highlight high-frequency words (Note: kindergarten will [feature children’s names](#) and a few high-frequency words)

### Cross-Curricular Literacy

- displays of student work include [evidence of literacy learning from all curricular areas](#) (e.g., Art, Music, You and Your World)
- [teacher-](#) and student-created charts (anchor charts) to support literacy learning [across curricular](#) areas (e.g., [math vocabulary](#), representations of various writing forms – recipe, procedure, lists)



## Components of a Balanced Approach to Literacy

Components are observable **across curricular areas** over a period of days.

### WORD WORK

Through explicit teaching, students develop **interest** in words and how they work, [while building phonological awareness, spelling ability, vocabulary](#) and language **comprehension**. Word Work

- is integrated and contextualized
- is facilitated through [hands-on materials](#)
- develops knowledge of [rhyming, phoneme isolation, sound segmenting and blending](#), alphabet recognition, [sound-symbol relationships](#), spelling and vowel patterns, plurals, contractions, prefixes/suffixes
- is documented, for ongoing reference, in personal and [classroom word walls](#)


### ORAL LANGUAGE

A focus on speaking and listening fosters **communication, social skills**, and an awareness of how language is **organized**. Oral language development happens daily and

- is purposeful and rich, with dialogue that extends learning
- is enriched by the model provided by the teacher
- is supported by mini-lessons of appropriate social interactions for productive classroom talk
- is developed through many opportunities for students to answer and pose questions, [recount experiences](#), express and listen to opinions, and participate in discussions
- [incorporates sharing](#) in a variety of formats (e.g., [simple oral presentations](#), partner-sharing)

### MODELLED WRITING

The teacher thinks aloud to make explicit the internal dialogue of the writer. [Modelled writing](#)

- supports, through short, [focused mini-lessons](#), the [writing process](#), characteristics of writing forms, the traits of quality writing, and the use of writer's tools (Note: Kindergarten will also feature early print concepts – directionality, word-spacing, letter formation) 
- is integrated with cross-curricular content

### SHARED WRITING

[The teacher and the students collaborate to write one common text](#). Shared writing

- allows the teacher to provide explicit instruction and [demonstrate the thinking process while encouraging students to contribute ideas and suggestions](#)
- reflects a topic related to a shared class interest or experience which could be integrated with cross-curricular content
- includes students taking the pen to write the text
- [can evolve over several lessons to demonstrate revision, editing and publishing](#)

### INDEPENDENT WRITING

The teacher ensures student writers have **dedicated time every day** to work on independent pieces of writing. Independent writing

- includes self-selected topics
- includes a variety of writing forms
- [provides time for students to apply the strategies that have been modeled](#)
- requires access to and knowledge about writing tools (e.g., word walls, environmental print, personal word lists)
- includes writing for [authentic purposes](#) (e.g., cards, lists, dramatic play contexts)
- requires a variety of age-appropriate writing materials (e.g., unlined/lined paper, markers, date-stamps)
- includes [peer discussions](#) and [teacher conferencing](#)
- is shared and celebrated with some chosen pieces to be published and [show-cased](#)

## Components of a Balanced Approach to Literacy

“Look For” instruction featuring **smooth** and **meaningful** connections between components.

### READ ALOUD

The teacher reads aloud daily from texts that are chosen to support specific instructional purposes. Read aloud demonstrations include

- thinking aloud to make explicit strategies used to make meaning from texts
- [multiple readings of the same text](#)
- connections to writing instruction
- fluent and expressive reading
- rich texts which relate to and extend personal experiences, create interest, and [build knowledge](#) and vocabulary to support all curricular areas

**Mentor Texts** are exemplar texts which can be revisited numerous times in the Read Aloud and Shared contexts to illustrate text structure and writer's craft.

### SHARED READING

Together, the teacher and students read a common text which is large enough for all students to see clearly. Shared reading

- provides opportunities to observe, practise and discuss strategies for word-solving and comprehension
- [includes teacher-led choral/small-group and partner reading to allow students to experience a variety of texts they may not be able to read independently](#)
- demonstrates fluency and expression
- [assists students in learning where to focus attention](#) (e.g., directionality, voice-print match, punctuation)
- supports vocabulary development
- [makes use of materials such as Morning Message, Big Books, chants, poems, and anthologies](#)

### GUIDED READING

The teacher works with small, flexible reading groups\* to support instructional needs and build greater independence. [Guided reading is the cornerstone](#) of a balanced literacy program and it

- provides an opportunity for precise instruction based on formative assessments (e.g., reading records, strategy checklists)
- features a [pre-reading strategy](#) followed by independent practice and teacher conferencing (Important: the purpose is not for students to take turns reading aloud)
- requires the teacher to monitor student progress and reconfigure groupings
- provides time to share strategies used by students; daily opportunities for guided reading should be apparent; frequency of guided reading will vary according to student need

Note: understanding of early print concepts is a precursor to students' participation in guided reading sessions

**Flexible Reading Groups**  
Analysis of reading records informs the grouping of students according to common instructional needs (i.e., comprehension, word-solving, and fluency). Grouping should not rely entirely on levels of text complexity.

**Time**  
Schools should minimize classroom interruptions to establish extended, focused instruction to support literacy development and to maintain learning flow.

### INDEPENDENT READING

The teacher ensures students have **dedicated time every day** to enjoy individual reading of a variety of texts. Partner-reading is an alternate format for individual practice. Independent reading time

- builds stamina for sustained periods of concentration
- encourages [practice of reading strategies](#) and increases fluency
- helps students develop the ability to choose ‘just right’ texts (texts that can be read with accuracy and understanding without support) as well as topics of interest
- includes teacher conferencing