

AN OVERVIEW

# A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction

Supporting student success in reading, writing, listening and speaking





# A balanced approach to literacy instruction

Supporting student success in reading, writing, listening and speaking

This document is designed as a reference tool for K-12 educators.

“Literacy is the ability to critically analyze and make meaning from diverse texts and to communicate and express oneself in a variety of modes and for a variety of purposes in relevant contexts.” (Graduation Literacy Assessment Specifications, BC, 2018) It is cross curricular and important in all areas of learning.

Balanced Literacy is an instructional approach, integrated across the curriculum, for the learning standards in English Language Arts. It combines the teaching philosophies of whole language and phonics-based instruction, teacher directed with independent practice, and a literacy rich classroom environment with quality teaching.

Balanced Literacy is attained through a combination of instructional activities, with the goal of developing competent, literate learners. The teacher purposefully differentiates strategies to meet individual student needs based on ongoing formative assessment.

## Considerations for implementing a balanced literacy approach

**Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being**, contributes to a more holistic and experiential experience of literacy, and benefits all learners. There are many thoughtful and authentic ways to teach YFN history, languages and culture. Localizing lessons for your students in literacy, and in all other subject areas will help students understand and appreciate YFN views, languages and culture.

**English Language Learners** are students whose primary language of the home, is a language other than English. For students developing language abilities, it is important to focus on the development of oral language and ensure they have intentional language instruction and practice. While developing social and academic language, ELLs will benefit from all of the balanced literacy components at their language level. For more information, consult the “Intake and Assessment of Developing Language for English Language Learners in Yukon” document.



## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction

### A balanced literacy approach:

- Develops the learning competencies of all students using a variety of tools, materials, resources and strategies through an integration of all content areas.
- Emphasizes and integrates the development of oral language, thinking, and collaborating as the foundation of literacy learning.
- Uses formative assessment to guide instruction and determine levels of support, to meet individual literacy and learning needs, in order for students to ‘master’ curricular competencies.
- Provides explicit instruction of skills for problem solving, strategic thinking, and creativity.
- Makes explicit the links between oral language, reading, and writing.
- Is founded on Universal Design for Learning, which means:
  - There are multiple ways to acquire knowledge.
  - There are multiple ways to demonstrate what students know.
  - There are multiple means of engagement where student interests and abilities are used to motivate and challenge.
  - Instructional materials are authentic, multi-level, and cross-curricular.
- Releases responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student.
- Combines strategies for whole group, small group, and individual instruction.
- Provides continuity in student learning from grade to grade.

### The conditions for learning

Students are engaged through inquiry, quality teaching, play, and a literacy rich environment. Student choice is important for engagement. Learning is a process of playing, figuring things out, asking questions, making connections, inquiring, taking risks, making mistakes without fear of failure, trying again, and eventually experiencing the satisfaction of accomplishment.

Teachers rely on ongoing assessment for learning practices to guide and improve their instruction and student learning. Descriptive and immediate feedback is important.

# A balanced approach to literacy instruction

## Comprehend & Connect (reading, listening, & viewing)

### Read aloud / Modelled reading

- teacher demonstrates proficient reading
- teacher expands access to text, vocabulary, and language features beyond student's abilities
- teacher exposes students to a variety of genres

### Shared reading

- teacher models reading strategies
- teacher explicitly instructs reading strategies
- teacher extends understanding of the reading process
- teacher and student choose text
- teacher and student share reading
- teacher encourages student to read when able

### Word work

- integrated into all balanced literacy components
- teacher introduces new vocabulary, grammar, and word structures
- teacher reinforces print concepts skills
- teacher explicitly instructs phonological and phonemic principles
- students practice phonological and phonemic principles

### Guided reading

- teacher explicitly teaches and reinforces skills
- teacher engages student in conversation to activate prior knowledge, refine knowledge and express ideas
- teacher acts as a guide by scaffolding learning
- student does the reading
- student practices strategies
- student builds independence

### Independent reading

- student chooses the text
- student practices at his or her independent level

## Create & Communicate (writing, speaking & representing)

### Write aloud / Modelled writing

- teacher demonstrates proficient writing
- teacher expands access to writing, vocabulary and language features beyond student's abilities
- teacher exposes students to a variety of genres

### Shared writing

- teacher models writing strategies
- teacher explicitly instructs writing strategies
- teacher extends understanding of the writing process
- teacher scribes
- teacher and student choose topic
- teacher and student compose together
- teacher encourages student to write when able

### Word work

- integrated into all balanced literacy components
- students practice spelling and sight words
- students practice vocabulary and grammar strategies
- teacher explicitly instructs phonological and phonemic principles
- students practice phonological and phonemic principles

### Guided writing

- teacher explicitly teaches and reinforces skills
- teacher engages student in conversation to activate prior knowledge, refine language and express ideas
- teacher acts as a guide by scaffolding learning
- student does the writing
- student practices strategies
- student builds independence

### Independent writing

- student chooses the topic
- student practices at his or her independent level

High teacher support



Low teacher support

← Formative assessment to inform differentiated instruction. →

## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction



### Balanced literacy in kindergarten

- Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being, along with the needs of English Language Learners, are incorporated in all planning and assessment. (See page 1)
- An emphasis on learning to learn behaviours is critical to the development of routines and social skills that support group and individual learning. (For example listening to a story, sharing at play-centers or following directions in the gym).
- Oral language development is the **priority**. Frequent and sustained periods that include purposeful language-based learning such as at Circle Time and during Centres, should form the core of a literacy program.
- Literacy is rooted in inquiry and play-based activities.
- A literacy rich environment supports oral and literacy language development, such as phonological awareness and concepts about print. A literacy rich environment includes such things as labels with pictures for materials, a classroom library, and access to a variety of writing tools.
- Integration of cross-curricular areas in science, social studies, arts education, mathematics, and Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing, and being should support overall language and literacy goals.

## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction



- The kindergarten program should include purposeful, uninterrupted playtime with opportunities for both self-directed and assisted play. Suggested times include: a minimum of **45 minutes per day for half-day programs** and **1 hour 15 minutes per day for full-day programs**.
- Time guidelines for kindergarten need to be flexible to integrate a variety of topics based on developmental needs within a play-based program.
- Fine motor activities are integrated to support pre-writing skills and development.
- Student centered lessons should be no more than 5-15 minutes long and include movement, playfulness, and variety to support student focus and learning.
- **Read-aloud and shared reading** are important components of an early literacy program and should be included as part of the daily routine.
- Ongoing assessment to inform and guide teacher instruction and differentiation.
- Students are given regular opportunities to develop the core competencies.

## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction



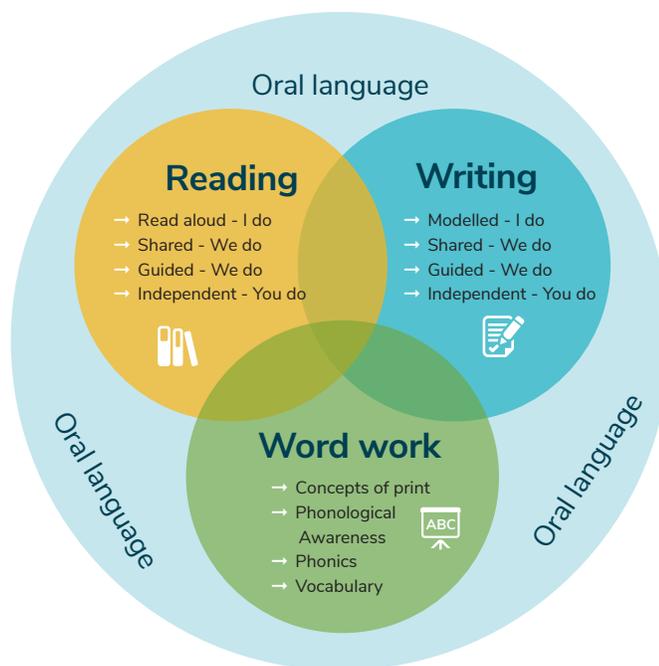
### Balanced literacy in grades 1-3

- Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being, along with the needs of English Language Learners, are incorporated in all planning and assessment. (See page 1)
- The English Language Arts program has uninterrupted blocks of time **totalling 120 minutes daily**. Other subject area content and interdisciplinary resources are used during English Language Arts to develop skills in reading, writing, listening, viewing, representing, and speaking.
- Each day, teachers **read aloud** to students in order to help them develop an appreciation of reading. Hearing adults read fluently models what good reading sounds like and gives access to more complex language development.
- Each day teachers and students **share the reading** of new or familiar stories. Teachers must explicitly teach and model concepts about print, reading and comprehension skills.
- During **guided reading**, teachers lead students in reading a new text. Reading and comprehension skills are explicitly taught and students are given the opportunity to immediately practice these skills. Each student reads his/her own text in its entirety. As well, students will engage in structured talk about their reading to support thinking skills as the foundation of literacy.
- Each day, students **read independently** from their personal selection of easy/familiar books, in order to build fluency. Fluency is the cornerstone of comprehension.

## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction

- Each day, teachers and students **share in the composing and writing** of a meaningful piece of work. Teachers model writing skills and allow students to contribute.
- During **guided writing**, teachers give explicit instructions as they lead students in composing and writing a meaningful piece of work.
- Each day, students **independently write** something meaningful. Writing everyday provides invaluable practice, opportunities for feedback and reflection about writing.
- **Word work** is integrated into all teacher lead components of Balanced Literacy. Teachers explicitly teach language features, spelling patterns, language structures, grammar, conventions and phonological and phonemic principles. Teachers expose and build on students' vocabulary.
- Ongoing assessment, including running records, school-wide write and the DART, inform and guide teacher instruction and differentiation.
- Students are given regular opportunities to develop the core competencies.

Balanced literacy components	Grades 1-3 120 total minutes/day
Read aloud/Modelled reading	daily
Shared reading	daily
Guided reading	daily*
Independent reading	daily
Word work	integrated
Shared/Modelled writing	daily
Guided writing	2-3x/week
Independent writing/ conferencing	daily



Content subject material can be embedded into the ELA program in order to ensure literacy components and time allotments are met.

\* May include literature circles with an instructional focus

Note: The sections are fluid and change size depending on grade level, the time of year and the needs of students.

## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction



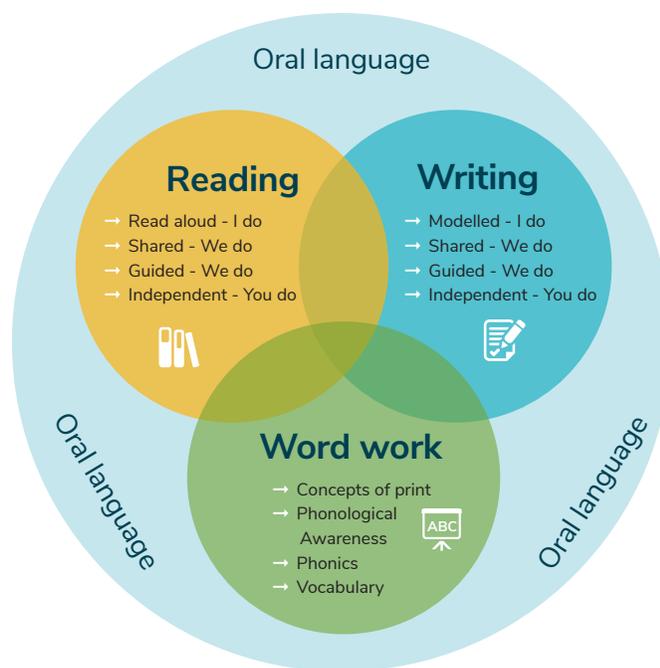
### Balanced literacy in grades 4-7

- Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being, along with the needs of English Language Learners, are incorporated in all planning and assessment. (See page 1)
- The Language Arts program has uninterrupted blocks of time **totalling 120 minutes daily**. Other subject area content and interdisciplinary resources are used during Language Arts to accomplish reading, writing, listening, viewing, representing, and speaking.
- Each day, teachers **read aloud** to students in order to help them develop an appreciation of reading. Hearing adults read fluently models what good reading sounds like and gives access to more complex language development.
- Teachers and students **share the reading** of new or familiar stories. Teachers must explicitly teach and model reading and comprehension skills.
- In **guided reading**, which may include literature circles or novel studies with an instructional focus, teachers lead students in reading a new text. Reading and comprehension skills are explicitly taught, and students are given the opportunity to immediately practice these skills. Each student reads his/her own text in its entirety. Students will engage in structured talk about their reading to support thinking skills as the foundation of literacy.
- Each day, students select books to **read independently** with fluency and comprehension. Text should be at an independent level.

## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction

- Teachers and students **share in the composing and writing** of a meaningful piece of work. Teachers model writing skills and allow students to contribute.
- During **guided writing**, teachers give explicit instructions as they lead students in composing and writing of a meaningful piece of work.
- Each day, students **independently write** something meaningful. Writing everyday provides invaluable practice, opportunities for feedback and reflection about writing.
- **Word work** is integrated into all teacher lead components of Balanced Literacy. Teachers explicitly teach language features, spelling patterns, language structures, grammar, conventions, and phonological and phonemic principles. Teachers expose and build on students' vocabulary.
- Ongoing assessment, including running records, school-wide write and the DART, inform and guide teacher instruction and differentiation.
- Students are given regular opportunities to develop the core competencies.

Balanced literacy components	Grades 4-7 120 total minutes/day
Read aloud/Modelled reading	daily
Shared reading	daily
Guided reading	3-5x/week*
Independent reading	daily
Word work	integrated
Shared/Modelled writing	weekly
Guided writing	2-3x/week
Independent writing/ Conferencing	daily



Content subject material can be embedded into the ELA program in order to ensure literacy components and time allotments are met.

\* May include literature circles with an instructional focus

Note: The sections are fluid and change size depending on grade level, the time of year and the needs of students.

## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction



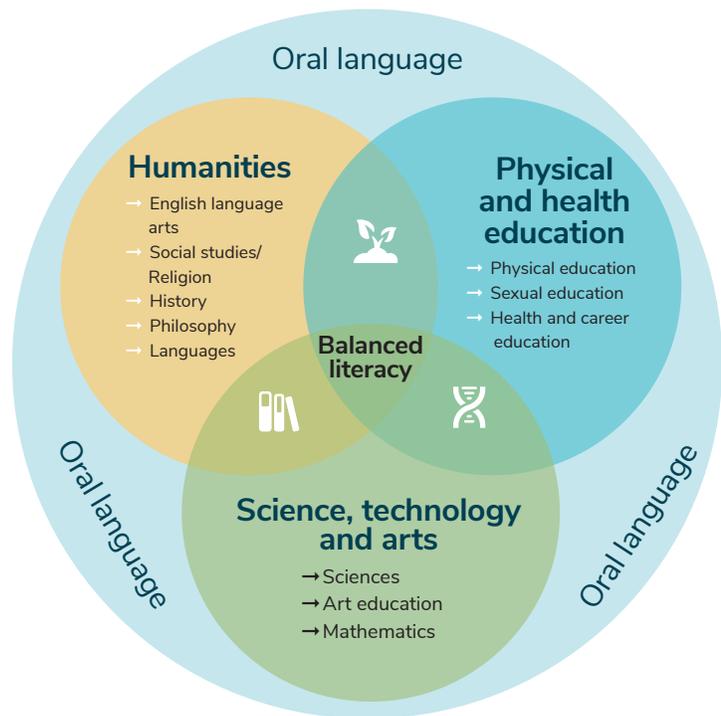
### Balanced literacy in grades 8-12

- Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being, along with the needs of English Language Learners, are incorporated in all planning and assessment. (See page 1)
- Curricular competencies in the areas of reading, listening, viewing, writing, speaking, and representing are integrated across all curricular areas in secondary school.
- Students are taught appropriate communication strategies based on the text they are reading. Reading like a scientist/historian/artist, etc. develops discipline-area curricular competencies.
- Subject area vocabulary is taught.

## A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction

- Students are given regular opportunities to develop the core competencies.
- Literacy development supports students in understanding and critically analyzing subject area text and content. Students demonstrate their learning through a variety of forms of communication, including oral, written, visual, digital, and multimedia.
- Teachers are encouraged to use high interest and culturally appropriate books and resources that are relevant to subject areas.
- Reading and writing instruction is taught in every subject area based on subject content. For example, in an Anatomy and Physiology class students may learn to write a lab report.
- Ongoing formative assessment informs and guides teacher instruction and differentiation.

Balanced literacy components	Grades 8 - 12 120 total minutes/day
Read Aloud/Modelled reading	1x/week
Shared reading	weekly
Reading and analysis	weekly*
Independent reading	daily
Word work	integrated
Shared/Modelled writing	weekly
Guided writing	2-3x/week
Independent writing/ Conferencing	daily



Content subject material can be embedded into the ELA program in order to ensure literacy components and time allotments are met.

\* May include literature circles with an instructional focus

Note: The sections are fluid and change size depending on grade level, the time of year and the needs of students.

## Text Level Correlation Chart

This chart provides an approximate correlation of grade level and various levelling systems. Teachers are encouraged to apply the levels according to their professional judgement and Yukon Education guidelines. The leveling characteristics among varying leveling systems may differ.

Grade Level	Reading Recovery Level	PM Levels		F&P Guided Reading Level	Lexile		
		Number	Color				
Kindergarten/Grade 1	1	1	Magenta	A	n/a		
	2	2		B			
Grade 1	3	3	Red	C	200-299		
	4	4		D			
	5	5		E			
	6	6	Yellow	F			
	7	7		G			
	8	8	Blue	H			
	9	9		I			
	10	10	Green	J			
	11	11		K			
	12	12	Orange	L			
	13	13		M			
	Grade 2	14	14	Turquoise		N	300-499
		15	15			O	
		16	16	Purple		P	
17		17	Q				
18		18	Gold	R			
Grade 3	19	19	Silver	S	500-799		
	20	20		T			
Grade 4	21	21	Emerald	U		800-899	
	22	22		V			
	23	23	Ruby	W			
24	24	X					
Grade 5	25	25	Sapphire	Y	900-999		
	26	26		Z			
Grade 6	27	27		Z	1000-1100		
	28	28					
Grade 7	29	29					
Grade 8	30	30					

## Yukon Education Primary Reading Level Expectations

	Beginning of Year	End of November	End of February	End of Year
1	0-3	6-7	11-12	15-16
2	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-22
3	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25

Màhsi' choo	(Gwich'in)
Màhsi' cho	(Hän)
Máhsin cho	(Northern Tutchone)
Tsin'jj choh	(Upper Tanana)
Sógá sénlá'	(Kaska)
Shàw níthän	(Southern Tutchone)
Gunałchîsh	(Tlingit)
Shro neethun	(Tagish)
Thank you	
Merci	









Contact the Department of Education, Curriculum and Assessment Unit.

Primary Curriculum Consultant

Intermediate Curriculum Consultant

Secondary Curriculum Consultant

Phone 867-667-5141/5607

Website: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca>

