University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Graduate School
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Best Practices in Emergent Literacy: A Literacy Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten

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Molly Krejcarek
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This capstone project was approved by:

Advisor:_____
Robin Fox

Seminar Instructor:_____
Scott Peters

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

A unique aspect of kindergarten is that it is often a child's first experience with formal education. Because of this, students come to kindergarten with a huge range of experiences and abilities. Teachers of other grade levels have the benefit of knowing what instruction students have been exposed to, but the kindergarten teacher has the difficult task of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of children with vastly different home lives and educational experiences.

I have written a yearlong kindergarten literacy curriculum to use in my school district. There is a real need in my district for a literacy curriculum at the kindergarten level. The district kindergarten teachers have very different expectations for what their students should know by the end of the year. These inconsistent expectations lead to very inconsistent kindergarten programs from one classroom to the next. I found myself wondering - If there are such inconsistencies within a small district, how different are kindergarten programs within the region, state, and country as a whole? As I read professional literature, I found a wide variation of expectations for what children should know and be able to accomplish in the areas of reading and writing.

One of the most important accomplishments in a child's life is learning how to read. So many children struggle with reading not just throughout their education, but throughout their lives. The International Reading Association states that "the early childhood years—from birth through age eight—are the most important period for literacy development" (1998, p. 5). Since kindergarten reaches children during this critical period, it is important that literacy instruction is effective.

Although kindergarten is such a vital time for the development of literacy skills, I have found that many kindergarten teachers focus more time on activities that are “cute” or tradition-based; others believe kindergarten is a time of exploration when children should not be pushed to read and write. Based on the research I have read and my own personal experiences, I believe it is possible to build children’s confidence, help them discover the world of print all around them, and develop early reading skills in an imaginative, engaging, and developmentally appropriate manner. Research continually demonstrates that early literacy experiences have a large effect on students’ reading abilities as they go on in school. In their study of 4,000 students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, Hanson and Farrell found that

> Not only did the students who received formal reading instruction in kindergarten exhibit a clear pattern of (a) showing superior current reading skills, (b) having higher grades and better attendance in school, and (c) needing and receiving significantly less remedial instruction in both elementary and secondary school, but they were also from families with a significantly lower social class status and parent education as compared to those in the other two comparison groups (p. 923).

This is why it is so important to have a comprehensive program in place to ensure that students have a solid foundation of literacy skills.

In 2010, new Common Core Standards were adopted nationwide. While previous state standards outlined what children should know by the end of fourth grade, these new common core standards outline what children should know by the end of each grade level. The Common Core Standards help to solve the problem of disparate expectations for kindergarten students. However, many teachers are unfamiliar with the new standards. Also, while the standards outline what students should know, they do not give any guidelines on how to instruct children in order to have them reach these

expectations. My goal was to take what I have learned through teaching, reading, professional development, and college courses and create a guide that would help teachers plan instruction that will meet the Common Core Standards.

I have reviewed the research on the best methods for teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and concepts about print. I have looked at many studies in educational journals, reviewed literature relating to current trends that are popular in kindergarten classrooms, and spoken with and observed other teachers. After a full review of this literature, I have put together a comprehensive, yearlong literacy curriculum. My goal for the program is to have students meet or exceed state and national kindergarten language arts standards in an engaging, developmentally appropriate manner.

In the guide, I outline a basic framework and timeline for what should be taught, how it can be taught, and how it will be assessed. For example, I have created a plan for each of the five areas identified above (phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, concepts about print) and included objectives, activities, assessments, and the standards that align to each activity. I have made it flexible and include opportunities for differentiation. This way, it can be used from year to year and meet the differing needs of students as well as the different subject matter a teacher might be teaching at any given point in the school year. I have included many examples and resources. Besides the activities, I have included ideas on how to set up the routines, classroom environment, and management system needed to implement the program.

After writing a draft of the program, I gave a copy to the kindergarten teachers, reading specialist, and curriculum coordinator in my district to review and give me feedback. I used the feedback I received to further revise the curriculum.

I believe that this project has enhanced my professional voice by helping me to be a leader in my school and district. Once I have the chance to implement the program myself, my goal would be to be able to share any success I have with other educators as well.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

By the time children enter kindergarten around age five, they have already experienced a great deal of learning. Some children were raised in homes abundant

with books where they were read to for learning and pleasure. Others were brought up with limited exposure to reading. Some children have families who have exposed them to letters, their names, and the world of print around them. Others enter school unable to recognize any letters or their names. All children fall somewhere within this continuum of experiences. Emergent literacy does not begin when a child starts school, but it is the responsibility of educators to ensure that all children receive the best possible instruction and opportunities in order to become successful lifelong readers. Teale and Sulzby (1989) defined emergent literacy as consisting of "the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are presumed to be developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing…and the environments that help support these developments" (p. 2).

According to the framework developed by Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), the components of emergent literacy can be classified as outside-in and inside-out processes. Outside-in processes represent "children's understanding of the context in which the writing they are trying to read (or write) occurs" (p. 854). Outside-in processes include language, narrative, conventions of print, and emergent reading. Inside-out processes depend on the child "bring[ing] to bear knowledge of the world, semantic knowledge and knowledge of the written context" (p. 855).

It is important to offer appropriate support and challenges to all students. Since children come to school at very different skill levels, it would do students a disservice to teach them all the same information in a whole group setting. The material would not challenge those with more fully developed literacy skills, and students with less

preparation would not have the foundational skills needed to understand what is being taught.

Skills Necessary for Reading Development

Concepts of print.

Children also need to learn how print is organized. According to Wilson and Lonigan (2009), “First, children learn the conventions of print, such as knowing that text on a page progresses from left to right and top to bottom, knowing which part of the book is the front, and understanding the purpose of punctuation” (p.116). It is important for teachers to verbalize or “think aloud” print concepts when reading aloud to children. Some children will pick up on these concepts without much more instruction, but as Wren (2000) points out,

> For children who grow up with rich text experiences, print concepts often develop without any explicit instruction, but for children who grow up in a text-poor environment, understanding the mechanics of print may require explicit instruction (p. 42).

During shared and guided reading experiences, instruct students who require more explicit instruction to point to the word where they would start reading, touch each word as you read, find the first/last word on each page, find the first/last page in the book, etc.

Phonemic awareness.

When children are beginning to learn to read, it is important to have a strong foundation in phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is an “awareness of all levels of the speech sound system, including word boundaries, stress patterns, syllables, onset rime units, and phonemes” (Moats, 2000, p. 234). In other words, it means children understand that words can be divided into smaller parts – syllables and phonemes –know how these phonemes sound in words, and can manipulate the

sounds of language independent of meaning. It is often practiced and assessed by having children match pictures with common sounds, orally deleting or switching sounds, and orally blending sounds into words. It is the first step of many, in teaching young readers. According to Pufpaff

> Prior to formal instruction in reading, most children develop an awareness of words as discrete units of speech, then an awareness of syllables as units of words, and finally, an awareness of onsets and rimes. It is typically not until after some period of formal reading instruction that children develop an awareness that words are made up of individual phonemes. (2008, p. 679)

For years, teachers have believed that if students were not picking up on phonemic awareness skills as easily as the majority of the class, they were simply not developmentally ready and would learn it as they grow. While discussing the body of research on phonemic awareness, McEwan writes that “children do not outgrow phonological deficits or develop phonological awareness skills with physical maturation” (2002, p. 33). However, Pufpass’s research indicates that it is important to teach phonological awareness in a sequential manner. Students should begin by learning word-level skills, then syllable-level, and finally phoneme-level in order to be successful in phonemic awareness skills.

He writes that “within each unit of analysis (e.g., word, syllable), children are generally able to recognize phonological information before they can manipulate it, blend phonological information before they can segment it, and manipulate initial sounds before final sound” (2009, p. 690). Many of these skills are easy enough to overlook, but children do not inherently know the difference between a word, a letter, and a sound. They must be taught.

There are several important aspects of phonological awareness. The teacher needs to plan instruction so that each area is covered and mastered. Phoneme isolation is being able to recognize individual sounds in words. Identifying a common sound in different words is phoneme identification. Finding the odd sound, which does not belong, is known as phoneme categorization. A child should be able to blend a series of sounds into a word through phoneme blending. Phoneme segmentation is where children tell how many sounds they hear in a word. In phoneme deletion, a child is asked to say a word with a sound missing, i.e. 'mat' without /m/ becomes 'at' (McEwan, 2002). McEwan noted that these skills should be taught in a certain sequence, moving "from words to syllables to sounds, and that students are also taught the letters of the alphabet, but only after the sounds have been mastered" (p. 37). Kindergarten is the ideal time to begin teaching phonological awareness to children (Lie, 1991).

Phonics.

Phonics is the teaching method "aimed at matching the individual letters of the alphabet with specific sounds of English pronunciation" (Fries, 1963, p. 143). In other words, it is teaching students to sound out words. According to Shapiro and Solity, (2008), "delivering short, frequent whole- class sessions that include focused phonological and phonics training can have a significant impact on the reading development of children with poor phonological skills, and thus reduce the proportion of children experiencing reading difficulties" (p. 617). In their guide to developmentally appropriate practices in literacy instruction, the International Reading Association tells us there are benefits well into high school for students exposed to a carefully developed

kindergarten curriculum that focused on word study and decoding skills, along with sets of stories so that children would be able to practice these skills in meaningful contexts. “High school seniors who early on had received this type of instruction outperformed their counterparts on reading achievement, attitude toward schooling, grades, and attendance” (1998, p. 12).

There is a variety of ways to teach phonics, either large-unit (analytic) or small unit (synthetic), but studies have found that as long as instruction is systematic, similar gains are made (Torgenson, Brooks, & Hall, 2006, as cited in Wyse & Goswami, 2008, p. 701).

Inventive spelling.

Inventive spelling is related to phonics, and is another way for students to get meaningful practice with their knowledge of phonics. Ouellette and Senechal (2008) explained, “early spelling attempts provide children with insight into the role of the alphabet in representing sounds in words, and this knowledge is later transferred to word reading. In fact, when invented spelling is included in empirical investigations, correlations suggest that invented spelling predicts early reading” (p. 910) Beyond that Martins and Silva (2006) found that “phonological training programs could be replaced, or at least complemented, activities that stimulate children to produce invented spelling …appears to be a way of organizing and expanding children's abilities to analyze speech” (p.51)

Through invented spelling, a teacher will notice a progression over time. Children begin with one letter per word representing the beginning sound. They then move on to including ending sounds. Soon they are adding vowels and consonant blends. What a

concrete method of showing students' growth in their understanding of phonics. While phonics instruction is crucial for young readers and increases word-reading skills, it alone does not help students with irregular words (of which there are many in the English language), comprehension, or fluency. This is why it is only one part of a successful reading program.

Word study.

The study of words is another valuable way for students to learn and practice phonics skills. Looking at the structure of words will help children learn how words are related to each other and how they can be changed by adding letters and larger word parts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2003). Students can use known high frequency words to check on the accuracy of their reading and as resources for solving other words.

One way to study words is by looking at word families. According to Fry, knowledge of the main 38 word families gives a reader the ability to decode and spell over 600 one-syllable words simply by adding a consonant, consonant blend, or consonant digraph to the beginning of the word family. Beyond that, knowledge of these word families can help readers partially decode the larger words which contain these phonograms. One effective way to teach word families to children is through rhyming poetry (Rasinski, Rupley & Nichols, 2008)

Fluency.

Another important element of literacy is fluency. Fluent readers are not simply able to decode accurately, but can decode quickly and automatically. It is easy to observe which students struggle with accurately. These students might read in a stilted manner, pausing before almost every word. A study by Fuchs, Fuchs, Hops, and

Jenkins (2001) found that fluency is “highly correlated (.80) with the ability to comprehend what is read” (as cited in McEwan, 2002). When students are concentrating so much on decoding the words, it is difficult to think about what they are reading. Like all skills in life, fluency is best attained through practice. More than just reading a lot, rereading the same text is the best way to build fluency. According to The National Reading Panel, “repeated reading and other procedures that have students reading passages orally multiple times while receiving guidance or feedback from peers, parents, or teachers are effective in improving a variety of reading skills” (2000, p. 20). The feedback portion during rereading is especially vital to new readers. According to the research findings:

> For most younger and struggling readers repeated readings need to be under the guidance of a teacher or coach…The reader’s coach can select appropriate materials, model fluent reading, provide assistance while reading, evaluate progress within and between passages, give encouragement, and celebrate successes. (Rasinski, Homan, & Biggs, 2009, p. 194)

In kindergarten, nursery rhymes and poems are excellent passages for children to repeatedly read. In his study, Rasinski et al. (2009) found that the performance of a passage made the practice meaningful to students. They wanted to perfect their reading so that their performance was as good as possible.

Children are not simply memorizing when they reread the same passage. The children’s reading rate improves on other passages as well. Rasinski et al. (2009) indicated that:

> When students orally practiced a piece of text they improved on their reading of that text—rate, accuracy, and comprehension. Such an accomplishment is to be expected. However, he also found that when students moved to new passages, their initial readings of those new

> pieces were done with higher levels of fluency and comprehension than the initial readings of the previous passage, even though the new passages were as difficult as or more challenging than the previous piece. (p. 195)

This demonstrates that the power of rereading goes far beyond memorization and truly raises future reading achievement. Repeated readings have a positive effect on fluency by consolidating word recognition, strengthening problem-solving strategies, increasing reading speed, and improving comprehension (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1991).

Another imperative element in developing fluency in kindergarten is introducing and providing practice with high frequency words. Of the 23 most frequent words in written English, half have irregular vowel patterns. Since these 25 words account for one third of the total number of words in texts, it is imperative for these words to be recognized automatically (Hiebert & Fisher, 2007). If students have to decode words such as *the* and *of* every time they come across them, fluency will not be achieved. McEwan wrote, “the students who are most at risk of reading failure may need up to 30 repetitions of a word before it becomes automatic” (2002, p. 56). Once fluency is achieved, reading will be a much more enjoyable activity for the reader, leading the way to even more success.

Vocabulary.

Language is an important part of the beginning reading curriculum. Children need to have an understanding of the meanings of words, how to put words together to convey a message, and how conversations are carried out. Some students come into kindergarten with a great understanding of language. According to White and Watts (1973), “when parents or day care providers seriously engage in dialogue with language-learning preschoolers, children develop language more rapidly. On the other

hand, lack of dialogue delays language development" (as cited in McEwan, 2002, p.64). Many factors have an effect on the language development of children; one of the largest is family income and education.

Students must be able to convey a message orally and understand verbal messages in order write their own thoughts or comprehend a written passage. In his case for vocabulary instruction in schools, Biemiller maintains that language development is inextricably linked to reading success and since all students do not enter school with enough knowledge of language to read and write, it must be taught (1999). The most important method to accomplish this is to provide a model of excellent conversation, reading, and writing. Children may not be exposed to stimulating conversation or high quality literature at home. The teacher should also expand students vocabulary "through reading aloud, using new words during instruction and in conversation with students, directly teaching the meanings of new words, and exposing students to a wide variety of challenging texts" (McEwan, 2002, p. 68). The kindergarten classroom should be an environment filled with meaningful conversation and positive modeling.

Graves and Taffe (2008) recommend a framework for fostering word consciousness as follows:

1. Create a word-rich environment
2. Recognize and promote adept diction
3. Promote wordplay
4. Foster word consciousness through writing
5. Involve students in original investigations

6. Teach students about words

(p. 186).

These six areas are arranged from least to most formal, and are overlapping rather than a rigid classification system.

According to Maynard, Pullen and Coyne (2010), the following may help to decrease the widening vocabulary gap that exists between good readers and poor readers:

> (a) the use of explicit teaching of word meanings, (b) the effectiveness of rich vocabulary instruction, (c) the use of direct instruction of sophisticated targeted words, and (d) the use of repeated oral readings with substantial explanation of the words within repeated shared storybook readings (p. 212).

Vocabulary should not only be picked up incidentally in the primary grades, there is a need for explicit teaching and repetition in order to make the most of vocabulary instruction.

Comprehension.

Children should be learning to read for understanding, so it is important to teach them appropriate cognitive strategies to achieve true comprehension. Some of these tools to gain meaning and understanding include questioning, summarizing, organizing, and monitoring. In the kindergarten classroom, a great deal of the teaching of these strategies is done during whole group read alouds. In this setting, students can be questioned on events of the plot or their interpretations of certain events. These should not be simple yes or no questions. They should encourage critical thinking and give

students opportunities to expand on and defend their positions. McEwan (2002) stated, “when students are expected from the earliest grades to articulate explanations, they are forced and become accustomed to evaluating, integrating, and elaborating knowledge in new ways” (p. 80). The teacher can model summarizing a story after reading it, as well as explain what to include in a summary. This can be modeled day after day so that it is engrained in students. Summarization instruction is important because it helps students remember and think about what they have read.

Students at the kindergarten level can be taught to organize thoughts on a story through simple graphic organizers. As a class, with teacher support, students should be able to tell who was in the story, where it took place, important events, and how it ended. They can be introduced to terms like characters, setting, and conclusion. The National Reading Panel (2000) found that:

> Teaching students to use a systematic, visual graphic to organize the ideas that they are reading about develops the ability of the students to remember what they read and may transfer in general to better comprehension and achievement in social studies and science content areas. (sec. 4, p. 75)

The teacher can model monitoring while reading through think alouds. She can ask questions about what is being read as it is being read. The teacher should emphasize the importance of making sure that what she is reading makes sense to her before she continues reading. All of these skills can be practiced daily and informally while reading books to the class. It is also necessary to spend some time explaining the process in a more direct manner.

Santoro, Chard, Howard, and Baker conducted a study in which they compared the performance of students who participated in a structured read aloud curriculum that

was enhanced with comprehension strategies and discussions with students whose teachers used their own read-aloud texts and procedures. They found "higher levels of comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and included more accurate, higher quality retellings… [and] could speak with more depth and metacognitive awareness" (2008, p. 398) in the students who participated in the structured curriculum.

Students should also receive guided practice with these cognitive strategies during guided reading groups. This is a time to give students one-on-one instruction in these skills and to give them feedback as they practice themselves. With this type of instruction, students see these skills as a natural part of reading, which will stay with them for years to come. Since kindergarten is such an important age to be learning how to read and write, other subjects often fall by the wayside. However, research indicates that:

> The reading comprehension of students with poor decoding skills but high-level knowledge of the topic (baseball) to that of students with good decoding skills but poor knowledge of the topic. As expected, the reading comprehension of the knowledgeable poor decoders was superior to that of the less knowledgeable good decoders (Hirsch, 2006, p. 21).

The goal of educators should be to help students read for understanding. In order to have proficient comprehension, students need to have background knowledge on the subject of the book they are reading. Associating new vocabulary with concepts that are already known (background knowledge) is a powerful way to learn, as the context makes it easier for students to connect the new word to their existing knowledge about the larger concept (Rader, 2008). Without a strong knowledge of history, literature, and science, even the most fluent readers will not be able to comprehend text related to these subjects. This is especially important as students get older, but it does have a

place in kindergarten as well. Learning this content introduces a wide variety of new vocabulary. It also teaches children to access previous knowledge in order to understand new material; meaning that students will have to think back to what they read in previous books to understand the content of the current book. Hirsch also points out that since more assumed skills are really based on specific knowledge, “those who have already received literate knowledge from their homes are better able to understand what teachers and text books are saying and are therefore better able to learn new things than are children from nonliterate backgrounds” (1989, p. xi). The teaching of content truly makes children better able to learn new things from reading.

Reading Instruction

Research continually shows that in order to differentiate for all students, teachers must employ a variety of techniques including whole group lessons, small group targeted instruction, individual conferencing, and practice time (Boushey & Moser, 2006;McEwan, 2002; Reis, McCoach, Coyne, Schreiber, Eckert & Gubbins, 2007; Richardson, 2009). Fountas and Pinnel (2006) noted that “Matching books to readers is the foundation for helping students build and expand reading strategies across the grades. …You don’t get better by struggling through material you do not understand; you do get better by meeting challenges successfully” (p. 83).

One way for teachers to integrate large group, small group, and individualized instruction is through a reading workshop model. A typical reading workshop might begin with a short whole group mini-lesson followed by individual and small group work time (Fountas and Pinnel (2006), Richardson (2009). Boushey and Moser share how to

integrate the many facets of reading instruction including read alouds, shared and guided reading, independent and partner reading, and strategies to increase, comprehension, accuracy, fluency and vocabulary using their version of a reader's workshop known as the Daily 5. In this type of workshop, short mini-lessons are followed by independent work time where students may choose from read to self, read to someone, listen to reading, working with words, and work on writing. This way, the teacher can meet with small groups and individuals, while all students are engaged in meaningful literacy activities. In their 2009 study, Antrim and Beard found that "when books match the students' needs and interests, as well as their reading level, they will likely read more and develop their reading skills in areas such as reading engagement and comprehension" (p. 5). Hiebert noted, "Successful fluency interventions need to provide opportunities for students to transfer their skills to silent reading. Giving students a purpose for reading a text and a definite time period in which to accomplish it provides scaffolding for silent reading" (2006, p. 208).

Student Engagement

Students are much more likely to become successful readers if they enjoy reading. Students take risks and become more involved in classroom activities when they rate their learning environment as warm (Birch & Ladd, 1997). In order to create a warm environment, students must feel free to make mistakes, be taught to recognize and value their own strengths, and be engaged in daily activities. One way to ensure students are engaged in their literacy development is to help students set appropriate goals. The achievement of specific goals is more likely to raise self-efficacy because

they are much easier to evaluate than a general goal, like “do your best”(Schunk, 2003). These individualized goals allow children to track their own growth and progress as opposed to comparing their performance to others. Research suggests that students’ reading motivation is positively affected when students are allowed to choose books that interest them (Beard & Antrim, 2010; Boushey & Moser, 2006; Reis et. al., 2007).

Beyond simply enjoying reading more, engaged readers are able to make connections to literature and make meaning from what they are reading. Enciso (1996) stated,

> Engaged readers elaborate on and connect their own experiences with the text. [They] use their knowledge of textual structures, the world, and personal experiences to construct and evaluate meaning, and embed their reading in social purposes and interactions that facilitate intertextual, interpersonal, and societal understanding. (p. 172)

Children need to view reading as a meaning-making activity rather than simply a decoding process.

Common Core Standards

The Common Core Standards were developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and other experts. The standards were based on the best state standards; the experience of teachers, content experts, states and leading thinkers; and feedback from the general public.

The Common Core Standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education in order to ensure that there are consistent, appropriate

expectations for students across in all areas of the country. According to the Common Core Standards Initiative (2011):

> The Standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide *how* the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

While these standards are very helpful in clarifying expectations, they are not very specific and still call for teachers to determine how to plan instruction to meet these expectations.

Summary

The time in which children are becoming aware of the world of print and reading, all around them is a precious time. So many children are brought up in homes with limited exposure to books and reading. It becomes the responsibility of the early childhood teacher to ensure that all students have the literacy experiences necessary to reach their full potential. It is important that the literacy curriculum teachers follow covers all the important areas of literacy development , scaffolds learning, allows for differentiation, engages children, and creates an environment where reading is valued and children feel safe and comfortable taking risks.

Chapter 3

Goal of Curriculum Development Project

My purpose in creating the curriculum guide is to create a user-friendly document that will help teachers who are new to kindergarten understand what to teach, when to teach it, and how to teach it with regards to literacy. My own experiences as a kindergarten teacher have taught me that there is often very little guidance on what skills should be taught in kindergarten and how to appropriately teach those skills.

I have observed and read about many different ways of kindergarten teachers structure their classrooms and instruction: some are based mostly around play, others are very rigidly structured; some expect students to leave knowing most letters and sounds, while others expect students to be writing paragraphs independently. I feel that there is a need for more consistency between kindergarten programs within schools, districts, and states.

After spending a great deal of time reading professional development books, talking with other teachers, scouring teacher blogs, and taking graduate courses, I developed ideas on best practices in kindergarten literacy instruction. I wanted to put these together into a comprehensive program with enough structure to be a substantial starting point, but would also give teachers the chance to incorporate their own individual teaching styles, themes, and ideas. I also wanted to align the curriculum with the new Common Core Standards in order to ensure that every skill that the authors of the standards felt should be taught was included. I understand that every teacher has his or her own beliefs about what is appropriate and what is to be expected in kindergarten, and I do not intend to state my opinions in these areas. I want a program

that is research based and follows the national standards. I have included my ideas for how to incorporate this into the classroom in order to create a starting point for those who need one, or for those who are interested in trying something new.

In the creation of the curriculum guide, I did not follow any particular model. I wanted to create a document that I would find useful myself. In the time I spent reading, I found that most guides were either too vague - they gave few new ideas on how to structure a schedule or what to include - or they were too specific, and they required teachers to follow a very rigid schedule, sequence, and/or set of teaching topics. I tried to find a middle road that would satisfy those looking to start from scratch along with those who just want to make sure the skills they are teaching align with national expectations.

Sources of Information

In my three years of teaching, I have amassed quite a collection of notes. I find ideas that I want to try in my own classroom during workshops, in courses, in books, and often through other teacher's websites. Sometimes I write down these ideas, sometimes I just remember them. Sometimes I try to implement these ideas right away, other times I save them for a new year and a new group of children. All of these ideas, along with my own experiences, have created my own schema about literacy instruction in kindergarten. The curriculum guide was driven by this schema.

The Common Core Standards were integral to the development of the curriculum guide. I referred to it as I was writing the guide, and then I cross-referenced in order to ensure that I covered every standard. I included the standard numbers to make it easy

for teachers in districts who are required to post what standards they are working on each week.

I consulted research that has been done in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and concepts about print. I wanted to ensure that I only included practices that were backed up by research. I chose not to include information on the research within the guide in order to make it conversational and user-friendly. The research I read and included in my review of literature is what directed the choices I made of what to include. Once I finished a first draft of the curriculum guide, I looked back at my review of literature and went through it piece by piece. For example, I read over the section on phonemic awareness, looked back at the research I referenced, and then cross-referenced the implications from that research with what was included in the guide. I was able to see that since phonemic awareness is best taught in a certain sequence, that sequence was included through the shared reading/poetry journal routine as well as the morning message routine. Further connections between the research and the curriculum are found in chapters four and five.

Organization

The most difficult aspect of putting together the curriculum guide, was deciding how to organize it. I wanted it to be easy to read without flipping back and forth to different appendices. I always find it difficult to ensure that I am covering all of the

standards at an appropriate time, so I linked each skill to the common core standard it supports.

I wanted the guide to be conversational and not overly technical. I thought of books that had been helpful to me in my teaching. The books that I got the most out of and directly impacted my teaching were those which were very straightforward, gave examples, gave a structure, and then allowed the freedom to adjust it to my own needs.

I decided to organize my curriculum guide around routines in the classroom. These routines - such as, a morning message, writers workshop, read alouds, etc. - are building blocks of the day during which literacy instruction takes place. Organizing by routines allowed me to easily show where and how to cover these standards while still giving freedom to individual teachers. The routines make planning from week to week during the school year much easier, because instead of starting from scratch each week, there is a framework to plug in the skills your students need to work on.

Through these routines, students will cover all kindergarten literacy expectations. A sample schedule can be found in appendix A, which shows how you can incorporate all routines into a typical day.

Within each routine, I have included a key of which skill areas are practiced: CP=Concepts of Print, PA=Phonemic Awareness, PIW=Phonics/Invented Spelling/Word Study, V=Vocabulary, F=Fluency, C=Comprehension. These are the areas I researched for chapter two. I took what I learned from the research and used it to design the activities and scope and sequence for each routine.

Next, I included a brief description of what the routine entails, as well as ideas for how to vary it based upon your needs.

Finally, I have included a breakdown of specific skills that can be taught within each routine at different points in the year. I divided the year up into fall, winter, and spring. Fall = September, October, November; Winter = December, January, February; and Spring = March, April, May. I broke the year up in this manner in order to avoid having a very rigid timeline. I have found it difficult to follow plans divided by the week or month because it makes it more difficult to meet the unique needs of my own students. I have also found that kindergarten students need a great deal of repetition and exploration with any given skill before they have mastered it. If five new skills are taught every week, most students will have to move on to new skills before they have mastered the skills previously taught. Having a few key skills to focus on over three sections of the school year allows for far more exploration of and practice with those skills. The skills also carry over from one season to the next. Just because a skill is introduced in fall does not mean it should not be reviewed the rest of the year as well. It is important to scaffold learning, and tasks that require teacher support in the fall should be practiced the rest of the year as well, just with the understanding that students should be more independent over time.

Within the skill breakdown, I have also included the common core standard that aligns with each practice. I have ensured that all standards are addressed solely through the use of these classroom routines. I included these standards since they are now the national expectations for kindergarten. While the Common Core Standards solve the issue of end of year academic expectations, they do nothing to show teachers how to help students reach these expectations. I have also found that many teachers

are not familiar with the standards. I wanted to show not only what the standards are, but how all of the expectations can be met in a manner that is also research based.

Finally, I included a small list of recommended readings for each routine. These books, articles, or websites are resources I have found particularly helpful and will offer much more detailed guidance for teachers looking for more support in that particular area. These resources do not necessarily include the research, but I they do comply with the findings from the research I have found.

Process

My first step in creating the curriculum guide involved looking at the daily schedules I have used in teaching kindergarten. From these schedules, I made a list of all the routines which made up my literacy instruction. My list included: word wall, morning message, poetry journals, read alouds, phonics lessons, writing, and literacy centers. Under each routine, I listed the skill areas (CP, PA, PIW, V, F, and C) that could be taught and practiced within the routine. Then I wrote a brief description of what each routine might entail.

At this point, all that was written was based on my own teaching experiences. From here, I reread my review of literature and many of the articles I had used in the review. I took many ideas from these sources and plugged them into the routines. I also searched each routine on the internet to find out how other teachers have used these routines in their own classrooms. This ended up being a very valuable step, because it allowed me to get practical ideas that others had found effective. I made notes on all of these ideas. Several were eliminated or tweaked because they did not

align with the research I had read, did not seem developmentally appropriate for kindergarten children, or did not seem engaging for students. For example, a few books and websites recommended always giving a writing prompt to direct students writing. My own experience, however, has taught me that beginning writers are much more engaged in the writing process when they are writing about topics that are meaningful to them personally. The more general ideas I compiled were added to the descriptions of each routine and some of the more specific ideas were saved for the scope and sequence.

Next, I focused on creating a scope and sequence for each routine. I have read books with week by week or even month by month guides, but I personally always felt these were a bit too constricting. Instead, I decided to break up the year into fall, winter, and spring. Within each season, I listed the skills that could be taught. My principle guides during this process were my own experiences, Fountas and Pinnel's *Phonics Lessons: Letters, Words, and How They Work,* and the Common Core Standards. I added my own ideas first, and then consulted the Fountas and Pinnel book. This book contains a sequence for teaching phonics, phonemic awareness, and word-study skills that is research based and that I have used in my own classroom. Finally, I consulted the Common Core Standards for kindergarten. I aligned the skills I had already added to the scope and sequence first. Then, I thought of ideas on my own and looked for ideas from other books and websites which would meet the remaining standards.

Some of the routines listed in the guide had a few specific books or articles that I heavily looked to in my creation of the guide. For example, the Writer's Workshop I explain in the guide is significantly influenced by Calkin's *Launch a Primary Writing*

Workshop: Getting Started with Units of Study for Primary Writing (2010) and Jacobson's *No More "I'm Done": Fostering Independent Writers in the Primary Grades (*2010). In most cases, these were books I have read and then incorporated into my own teaching. After some teacher feedback, I decided to add these guiding resources into a recommended reading section at the end of each routine. Not only does it help give credit where credit is due, but it also gives readers of my curriculum guide a chance to read a more extensive explanation of any given routine.

In order to receive feedback on the curriculum guide, I gave copies to kindergarten teachers in my district, other primary teachers, a literacy coach, an elementary principal, and university professors. I wanted to hear their opinions on the organization of the guide and if it is easy to understand. I wanted to find out if they feel it is missing any important pieces, or if they disagree with anything I have included.

After developing a first draft of the curriculum guide, I gave a copy to several other teachers for their review. I asked for any feedback they had on what they liked about the guide and how it could use improvement. Due to time constraints, many teachers never responded. I received feedback from a few primary teachers at the school where I teach as well as other schools. I also received some feedback from an ESL teacher and a literacy coach. Most of the feedback was verbal, through one-on-one conversations about the curriculum guide. A few offered their notes.

Chapter 4 – Outcomes

Summary of Curriculum Guide

The guide begins with a brief introduction which sets a purpose for the creation of the program and explains how to use the curriculum to guide your yearlong planning. The introduction is followed by a section explaining the organization of the guide. This section makes it clear that this is not a series of daily lesson plans or thematic units. It explains how the guide is organized by a series of routines, and it gives a key of the key skill areas that are practiced within each routine. It explains how the scope and sequence breaks up the specific literacy skills to work on by season. Finally, this section describes how each skill is aligned to a Common Core Standard.

Next, the guide includes eight sections, each of which describes a daily routine to use within the classroom. These routines are:

- Word Wall
- Morning Message
- Shared Reading/Poetry Journal
- Read Alouds
- Phonics Work
- Writer's Workshop
- Dictated Writing
- Reader's Workshop

Within each routine, there is a description of what the routine entails, recommendations for how to carry out the routine, and ideas for variations. This is followed by a scope and sequence of the specific skills that can be taught and practiced, broken up by fall,

winter, and spring. These skills are also aligned with the Common Core Standards for kindergarten. Finally, each routine concludes with a list of recommended books or articles for teachers who are interested in learning more or having more specific guidance in the given area.

For example, the section on morning message (p.) explains that a morning message is a brief message written in large print for the class to read and/or compose together. Then, three variations on how to do a morning message are detailed: a repetitive message written by the teacher, a question posed to students, and a "sharing the pen" method where students contribute letters, words, and ideas to the message. For each of these methods, I explain the big picture skills (i.e. concepts of print, oral language development, phonemic awareness, etc.) that can be practiced within the routine. The following section is broken up into fall, winter, and spring skills. These bulleted lists offer specific skills that can be practiced during the morning message. For instance, the fall skills look like this:

- circle specific letters within the message. (RF.K.1)
- follow the words from left to right, top to bottom, and page to page with a pointer. (RF.K.1)
- count how many letters on each page, versus how many words. (RF.K.1)
- find letters that are uppercase and letters that are lowercase. (RF.K.1)
- follow agreed upon rules for discussion (SL.K.1)
- speak audibly and express thoughts and ideas clearly (SL.K.2)

The item in parentheses indicates which common core standard is met. Circling specific letters within the message meets standard RF.K.1 – Student demonstrates understanding of the organization and basic features of print- Recognizes and names all upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet. Winter and spring skills get progressively more challenging and build upon previously learned skills.

The curriculum guide concludes with some resources that will assist teachers in planning their year, including a sample schedule, a planning guide, and a copy of the Common Core Standards for kindergarten.

Feedback

After receiving feedback from a few other teachers and university professors, I made a few changes to the curriculum guide. Here is a summary of their feedback, most of which was delivered verbally:

What worked.

The teachers thought the guide did a nice job of including the most important components of an early childhood literacy curriculum. No one suggested any areas I had left out that they felt should have been included. They felt it was developmentally appropriate for kindergarten children.

Several teachers liked that I gave more than one option for how to teach each area. They felt that it gave them ideas while also honoring every teacher's unique style and beliefs. The younger teachers appreciated that specific ideas were given because it gave them a good starting point if they were not sure where to begin.

I received positive feedback on the way I separated skills into seasons of the year rather than a very specific schedule of topics. They felt that would make it easier to differentiate for the different needs of children within a class as well as the differing make up of a class from one year to the next.

Most teachers really liked the fact that the curriculum guide was easy to read and had a conversational tone. They stated that this would make it easier to follow than books that were more research heavy and had less practical applications. New teachers especially appreciated that the guide contained what they needed to know and not much more in order to get ready to teach kindergarten for the first time.

Overall, I was very happy with the positive aspects they noticed. The fact that the content was not missing anything, the organization was clear, there were specific ideas along with room for variations, and it was very practical were some of the most important guiding principles I had in mind when I began the guide.

What needed improvement.

Although the other teachers liked that it was written in a conversational style rather than sounding like a research paper, two teachers encouraged me to include the names of the books that guided my planning. I agreed that this was lacking and decided to add a section of recommended reading under each topic in order to give more background and offer opportunities for readers to get a more in-depth understanding of certain topics.

The other teachers noticed a few inconsistencies in how I laid out information from one topic to the next. For example, some of the bullet points of activities within the scope and sequences were written and punctuated as complete sentences, while others were just phrases. I made sure to correct those errors so the layout was consistent throughout the document.

Some teachers thought it would be helpful to include a sample of a daily schedule. I decided to add an appendix which would feature a schedule as well as other resources that might be helpful in planning and implementing the curriculum.

Results

After feedback from reviewers was complete, I made the recommended changes to the curriculum guide. The grammar has been adjusted, the formatting refined, and the content clarified. I feel the guide will always be a work in progress; able to be changed and adjusted in response to new experiences and research. It is now, however, at a point where I would feel comfortable giving it to a new kindergarten teacher to help guide her in planning for the school year.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Connections

As a relatively new teacher myself, I recognize that my own experiences – though valuable-are not broad enough to base a curriculum on. It is important to me that the curriculum guide is based on peer-reviewed literature and research as opposed to my own opinions. While I wanted the guide to remain conversational and easy to read, it is critical to draw connections between the literature I reviewed in Chapter Two and the curriculum guide. In this section, I will list the skill areas that I focused on in the review of literature and connect the research in those areas with the sections that link to the research in the curriculum guide.

Concepts of print.

It is necessary to teach children that text progresses from left to right and from top to bottom. They need practice tracking print as they read. They must learn the parts of book such as the cover, title, author, and title page. Wren (2000) indicates that "children from text- poor environments need explicit instruction in print concepts" and cannot be expected to simply pick up these skills on their own.

Several routines within the curriculum guide give the opportunity for explicit instruction in concepts of print. The morning message and shared reading offer instruction in tracking print. Children are given guided practice in tracking print through guided reading (part of reader's workshop) and poetry journals. Students are taught the parts of a book during read alouds and have practice locating these parts themselves during guided reading.

Phonemic awareness.

Phonemic awareness is an important building block of literacy and early childhood teachers should spend a large amount of time working to build phonemic awareness in children. There are some common misconceptions, however, when it comes to phonemic awareness. One of the largest misconceptions is that phonemic awareness develops naturally as children mature. McEwan writes that "phonemic awareness does not simply develop with maturation" (33). Others expose children to phonemic awareness activities, but do not sequence the skills in any way. Pufpass's research indicates that it should be taught sequentially – word level, syllable level, and then phoneme level. This is because children are able to" recognize phonological information before they can manipulate it, blend phonological information before they can segment it, and manipulate initial sounds before final sound" (2009, p. 690).

In the guide, phonemic awareness activities are embedded into the morning message, shared reading, poetry journal, read alouds, and phonics work. The scope and sequence for each of those routines allows for the skills to be taught and practiced following the suggested sequence. For example, the phonics scope and sequence has children recognizing rhyming words in the fall, producing them orally in the winter, and spelling them in the spring.

Phonics, inventive spelling, word study.

Since the research suggests that short, frequent whole class sessions of systematic phonics instruction has the most significant impact on reading skills (Shapiro & Solity, 2008), I made phonics work a daily fifteen minute session of whole group instruction.

The International Reading Association recommends that decoding skills be taught in meaningful contexts, such as through stories, since students instructed in this manner tend to outperform throughout their education (1998). For this reason, the phonics work routine is not the only time of day children receive instruction and practice with phonics. Phonics are also taught and practiced daily within the context of the morning message, shared reading, read alouds, writer's workshop, dictated writing, and guided reading. This gives students a variety of meaningful ways to utilize and practice phonics every day.

Inventive spelling is a meaningful way for students to put their phonics into use. Through the writer's workshop routine, students are encouraged to choose topics they are interested in. This engages them in using phonics skills to share whatever they are passionate about. Understanding the sequence in which phonics skills are learned will give teachers insight into what level of invented spelling they will see from their students.

Looking at how words can be changed by adding and deleting letters and looking at larger word parts gives readers the ability to decode and spell a huge number of words (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000; Fry,1998). Students need to practice their phonics skills within the context of reading and writing words instead of in isolation.

In the curriculum guide, word families are taught through phonics work and practiced weekly in shared reading and poetry journals. With word families, students learn how to make many rhyming words by simply changing the beginning sounds. Making words activities during guided reading gives students guided practice with creating words and then changing them one or two letters at a time. During these

activities, students are able to focus on changing just beginning and ending letters first, and eventually move on to changing the vowel sound and using diagraphs and blends. Reader's workshop also allows time for individual practice with making words within the word work section of independent work.

Fluency.

Fluency is often overlooked in kindergarten because children are just learning to read. It is true that when students are first learning to read, fluency is not to be expected right away. There are things a teacher can do, however, to facilitate fluent reading in students who are ready. Teaching students to recognize commonly used words by sight allows them to read emergent books much more fluently. In the curriculum, students learn and practice sight words during word wall time. Sight words are also reinforced daily through the morning message, shared reading and poetry, dictated writing, writer's workshop and reader's workshop.

Rasinski's research suggests that rereading the same text is the best way to build fluency (2009). Shared reading gives students guided practice with rereading a text, and poetry journals give students a chance to independently reread a simple text multiple times. Daily guided reading is also an opportunity to reread a text while receiving guidance or feedback from the teacher. This is detailed in the reader's workshop section of the guide.

Vocabulary.

Students enter kindergarten with a huge range of vocabularies. White and Watts (1973) write that a lack of dialogue delays language development. That is why it is

important to give students plenty of opportunities to engage in dialogue with the class and each other orally, before they are able to communicate through writing. The morning message gives many opportunities for students to share orally and listen to each other. The read aloud routines also offer many chances for students to discuss and make connections to stories.

According to Maynard, Pullen and Coyne, vocabulary should not only be picked up incidentally in the primary grades, there is a need for explicit teaching and repetition (2010). The read aloud routine outlined in the curriculum guide gives a structure to help teachers incorporate explicit vocabulary instruction and practice into daily read alouds.

Comprehension.

Reading is all about deriving meaning from print. When children are first beginning to read, the books they are able to decode do not typically have very complex plots, or really much of a plot at all. For this reason, reading aloud from high quality literature is a great way to teach comprehension strategies in young readers. Santoro, Chard, Howard, and Baker's study found that students had "higher levels of comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and included more accurate, higher quality retellings… [and] could speak with more depth and metacognitive awareness" (2008, p. 398) in the students who participated in the structured read aloud curriculum that was enhanced with comprehension strategies and discussions. The process given in the curriculum guide for read alouds gives teachers a structured way to discuss comprehension strategies with young children.

Limitations

The largest limitation of this project is the fact that it has not yet been implemented in a classroom setting. I have used many of the ideas in my own classroom in the past, but the literacy curriculum as a whole has not been field tested. Implementing the curriculum would give me the chance to assess the effectiveness and practicality of the curriculum guide. Though I am no longer teaching kindergarten myself, I will most likely teach it again in the future and have the chance to implement the curriculum myself.

Another limitation is the limited amount of teacher feedback I received. It was difficult to find teachers willing to take the time to read through the curriculum guide and then give feedback during a busy school year. Getting more feedback, especially written feedback, from a much larger group of teachers and from more diverse locations would offer a great deal of advice. This would make the curriculum more refined and help ensure that it is applicable in a wider variety of geographical and socio-economic areas.

Implications

Overall, I have found the research and development of this curriculum guide to be very worthwhile. Since beginning the project, I have mentored a new kindergarten teacher and switched grade levels myself. Both of these events helped me realize how helpful a document like this can be, especially in a small school like

my own where enrollment changes from year to year and teachers must switch from one grade level to another.

I feel that this project will be helpful in guiding teachers who have never taught at the kindergarten level before, and I would like to share it with anyone in that position. Now that I am teaching first grade, I recognize that the research is very valuable for all primary levels and can be tweaked to be appropriate for grades other than kindergarten.

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Appendix A

Kindergarten Literacy Curriculum Guide

Introduction

Welcome to kindergarten! The first year of schooling for many children, kindergarten is a time of enormous growth. It is also a time full of challenges for both the students and the teacher. If you are preparing to teach kindergarten for the first time, you are probably feeling excited to usher young, enthusiastic learners into a lifetime of learning. If you are at all like me, you are probably also full of questions. *How will I manage this classroom of little learners with little to no school experience? What skills can I expect kindergartners to enter the year with? What skills will they need to have in order to be ready for first grade? How do I challenge students at so many different levels? How do I go about planning what to teach and when?* Ask ten kindergarten teachers these questions and you will get ten different answers. We all have our own opinions on what work best for us in our own classrooms with our own unique students. My intention with this curriculum is to give you all the information that you will need in order to best answer these questions for yourself.

In this guide, you will find a scope and sequence of literacy learning based on the most recent educational research, the new national standards for kindergarten, and the experiences of my peers and myself. You will also find some sample routines, schedules, and frameworks which will give you a starting point to plan your year and incorporate your own ideas. Although literacy can and should be incorporated into all aspects of the kindergarten classroom, this curriculum guide does not include a scope and sequence of science, social studies, and math skills. You will find that many of the literacy routines I outline do include easy ways to incorporate science, social studies, and math skills into your day.

Organization

I have organized this guide into a series of routines which can be practiced every day. These routines - such as, a morning message, writers workshop, read alouds, etc. - are building blocks of the day during which literacy instruction takes place. Organizing by routines allowed me to easily show where and how to cover these standards while still giving freedom to individual teachers. The routines make planning eek to week during the school year much easier, because instead of starting from scratch each week, there is a framework to plug in the

skills your students need to work on. from w

Through these routines, students will cover all kindergarten literacy expectations. A sample schedule can be found in appendix a, which shows how you can incorporate all routines into a typical day.

Within each routine, I have included a key of which skill areas are practiced: CP=Concepts of Print, PA=Phonemic Awareness, PIW=Phonics/Invented Spelling/Word Study, V=Vocabulary, F=Fluency, C=Comprehension.

Next, you will find a brief description of what the routine entails, as well as ideas for how to vary it based upon your needs.

Then, I included a breakdown of specific skills that can be taught within each routine at different points in the year. I divided the year up into fall, winter, and spring. Fall = September, October, November; Winter = December, January, February; and Spring = March, April, May. I broke the year up in this manner in order to avoid having a very rigid timeline. I have found it difficult to follow plans divided by the week or month because it makes it more difficult to meet the unique needs of my own students. I have also found that kindergarten students need a great deal of repetition and exploration with any given skill before they have mastered it. If five new skills are taught every week, most students will have to move on to new skills before they have mastered the skills previously taught. Having a few key skills to focus on over three sections of the school year allows for far more exploration of and practice with those skills. The skills also carry over from one season to the next. Just because a skill is introduced in fall does not mean it should not be reviewed the rest of the year as well. It is important to scaffold learning, and tasks that require teacher support in the fall should be practiced the rest of the year as well, just with the understanding that students should be more independent over time.

Within the skill breakdown, I have also included the common core standard that aligns with each practice. I have ensured that all standards are addressed solely through the use of these classroom routines.

Finally, I included a small list of recommended readings for each routine. These books, articles, or websites are resources I have found particularly helpful and will offer much more detailed guidance for teachers looking for more support in that particular area.

Word Wall

Skills practiced: WS

Word wall time is a time to study high frequency words. These are words that children need to be able to recognize by sight (not sounding out) in order to be fluent readers.

You may choose to follow a list of words; Dolch and Fry are commonly used. If your school has a language arts series, that may come with its own list of words. In kindergarten, it makes sense to teach the words that kids will need to use in early writing and emergent reading. Words like *I, can, a, like, play, the,* and *my* are great starter words because students can create many sentences using them. If there is a word that students are using all the time, by all means, add it to the word wall. It is meant to be a resource, after all. It can also be helpful to add words that follow common spelling patterns. If your class is learning a word family, add a word from that family to the word wall. This word can be used as a reference when decoding or spelling any word from that family.

In kindergarten, words need to be added very slowly, as it takes a great deal of time and repetition for these words to become automatic. I have found that adding any more than two words per week can overwhelm kindergarteners. For the children who are ready to learn more words, do that in an individual or small group environment.

Chants and songs can be an excellent way for young children to learn to spell high frequency words. Make up your own or search the internet for easy to remember chants and songs.

The word wall should be placed in a central location so that children can easily refer to it during work time and gather around it when necessary. It should be organized alphabetically. It is so important that only words that have been taught are posted on the word wall. Imagine how difficult it would be to pick out the word you needed out of a mass of unknown words. Some teachers like to have words attached by Velcro or magnets so that students may take a word to copy when needed. Others prefer for each child to have their own personal word wall to use in their writing folder or notebook in addition to the large classroom display. Students will usually be able to recognize words before they are able to write them without a model.

Fall Skills

- finding our names on the word wall (RF.K.1, 3)
- pointing to words and reading them together (RF.K.1,3)
- learning songs and rhymes to learn to spell some words (RF.K.1,3)
- finding words with commonalities (i.e. all the words with the letter ‘a’) (RF.K. 1,2,3)

Winter Skills

- continue adding new words and reviewing(RF.K.1,2,3)
- finding words on the wall and using them during reading/writing (RF.K. 1,2,3,4, L.K.2)
- calling on individuals to point out words (RF.K.1,2,3)

Spring Skills

- continue adding new words and reviewing (RF.K.1,2,3)
- practicing writing words without looking at the word wall (RF.K.1,2,3, L.K.2)
- using word wall words to decode other unknown words (i.e. using ‘and’ to figure out ‘hand’) (RF.K.1,2,3,4).

Recommended Reading

Fry, E. (1998). The most common phonograms. *The Reading Teacher, 51*(7), 284-289.

Fountas, I & Pinnell, G. (2008) *Phonics lessons: Letters, words, and how they work.*

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

http://heidisongs.com/

Morning Message

Skills practiced: CP, PA, PIW, V

The morning message is a shared reading and writing routine common in many kindergarten classrooms, although there are many variations. It works best to have students sit in a circle around the whiteboard, overhead, or chart paper where the message is written to ensure everyone can see the message, students can easily come up front to point/read/write, and for easier oral sharing activities.

The morning message might be a repetitive message the teacher writes before the students arrive, such as “Good morning! Today is Monday. Our special today is music.” The teacher then leads the student in reading the message together while someone points to each word. Through this type of morning message, students learn about one-to-one correspondence, left to right tracking of print, and recognizing commonly used words. The teacher can call on students to find circle a certain letter throughout, find the uppercase letters, or find the punctuation, depending on the skills currently being taught. If some parts of the message change each day, teachers can work on decoding strategies for unknown words. (RF.K.1, RF.K.2, RF.K.3,

One variant of the morning message involves posing a question that each student will be able to answer aloud, such as “What is your favorite book?” When students are sitting in a circle, it is easy to pass around a small object such as a ball or bean bag to indicate whose turn it is to talk. Each student then gets a chance to quickly share their response using a complete sentence. Besides helping to create a classroom community, this activity also allows for the building of important oral language skills such as listening to others, taking turns speaking, speaking audibly and clearly, describing objects and event, providing details, and demonstrating command of standard English grammar an usage. (SL.K.1, SL.K.4, SL.K.6, LK.1) These important oral language skills are very important to develop and will lead to improved writing as well as speaking and listening skills.

The third variation of the morning message involves “sharing the pen”, or giving students an active role in writing the message. This could involve leaving off the first letter of a few words, omitting some high frequency words for students to fill in, or even asking students to write an entire sentence. These options make it possible for students to have an active role from the beginning of the year (filling in a missing letter) to the end of the year (writing a whole sentence).

The beauty of this activity is how easily adaptable it is. Teachers can tie in the morning message with any theme or topic the class is learning about. Different reading and writing skills can be taught and reviewed throughout the year. It is even possible to do a different type of morning message every day of the week. This keeps the routine fresh and exciting for students while still offering the opportunity for important skill practice. Some different topics include math, science, survey, phonics, and word study. It can even evolve into a different form each day such as a letter, story, paragraph, dialogue, etc.

No matter what type of morning message you decide to incorporate into your classroom, as long as there is a written message and time for oral responses, you can easily practice the following skills:

Fall Skills

- circle specific letters within the message. (RF.K.1)
- follow the words from left to right, top to bottom, and page to page with a pointer. (RF.K.1)
- count how many letters on each page, versus how many words. (RF.K.1)
- find letters that are uppercase and letters that are lowercase. (RF.K.1)
- follow agreed upon rules for discussion (SL.K.1)
- speak audibly and express thoughts and ideas clearly (SL.K.2)

Winter Skills

- add missing letters and words to the message (both sight words and phonetically spelled words). (LK.1,2, RFK.3)
- find word wall words within the text. (RFK.3)
- produce and expand complete sentences orally. (LK.1)
- recognize and name end punctuation. (LK.2)
- use newly learned vocabulary in conversation (LK.6)

Spring Skills

- add missing blends, word endings, and words to the message. (LK.1,2)
- correct mistakes in capitalization and punctuation (LK.2)
- continue conversations through multiple exchanges (LK.1)

Recommended Reading

http://www.mrsnelsonsclass.com/teacherresources/teachingwriting/morningmessage.aspx

Shared Reading/Poetry Journal

Skills Practiced: CP, PA, F,V

The repeated reading of songs, poems, and chants is a very common occurrence in kindergarten classrooms. Songs and poems written in large print are great ways to teach information on a topic, invite kids to play with language, and practice phonemic awareness skills. A poetry journal allows each student to keep a collection of these poems so that they can frequently reread them. Rereading a text is a great way to build fluency in young readers. A poetry journal can be made by gluing poems into a notebook or putting them in a three ring binder.

When picking poetry to add to a poetry journal, there are several things to consider: the topic of the poem, does it lend itself to any particular skill work (i.e. rhyming, suffixes, color words, etc.), length of the poem, and vocabulary. Once a poem has been selected, it should be used during shared reading many times over the course of the week. Once again, it is possible to change the focus of the reading each day to keep this from becoming monotonous to students.

Monday it could be introduced, taking the time to preview any new vocabulary words, and reading it several times while pointing to the words. (LK.K.4, LK.K.5, RF.K.1) Tuesday could consist of having each line written on sentence strips and put back together. Wednesday could be a time for word related work, such as finding high frequency words, words that start with the same letter or have the same ending, or words that rhyme. (RF.K.2, RF.K.3) Thursday could focus on reading with expression and following the punctuation. (RF.K.4) Friday is the day to add the poem to their journals. Give students a chance to illustrate their poem. It can be helpful,

especially early in the year when the students are inexperienced artists, to include some black and white images for them to color. This helps them remember what poem they are looking at when they are reading through their journals. Students love using highlighters or even yellow crayons to highlight certain letters, words, word endings, etc.

It is very important that the poetry journals are accessible to children at all times. One good way to do this is for each child to store their journal in their own book bins. That way, they can practice during silent reading and/or partner reading time. Young children are so excited to be able to read something, and they will read these poems over and over again to themselves and their friends.

In the fall, it is best to use short, simple poems so children can really focus on the print without being overwhelmed. It can also help, in the beginning, to use poems that children are already familiar with, such as nursery rhymes. As the year goes on, the texts can become more complex. When choosing a poem to teach, consider the theme children are currently learning about as well as what skills you will be teaching.

Fall Skills

- recognize poetry as a type of text. (RL.K.5)
- follow the words from left to right, top to bottom, and page to page with a pointer. (RF.K.1).
- find letters that are uppercase and letters that are lowercase. (RF.K.1).
- search for specific letters within the text. (RF.K.1).
- recognize rhyming words. (RF.K.2)
- count/clap syllables in words. (RF.K.2)
- substitute sounds in a word to make a new word, i.e.songs like *Willaby Wallaby* or *Apples and Bananas.* (RF.K.2)

Winter Skills

- search for sight words(RF.K.3)
- distinguish between similarly spelled words (RF.K.3)
- read with expression. (SL.K.6)
- replace words with other rhyming words (RF.K.2)
- identify color and number words within the poem (RF.K.3)

Spring Skills

- Cut apart sentences and put back together. Focus on spacing, multi-syllabic words as one word, different length sentences, punctuation. (RF.K.1, LK.2)
- finding words with certain features, i.e. endings, word family words, silent e words. (RF.K.3

Read Alouds

There is not enough time in the day for all the books that could be read aloud in a kindergarten classroom! Some should be read strictly for enjoyment, of course. There are two types of read alouds that also have a place in the kindergarten classroom: high quality literature read alouds and big book read alouds. High quality literature read alouds not only expose children to quality books, but allows for rich vocabulary and comprehension instruction. Big book read alouds often include much simpler text and allow for a focus on concepts of print, phonemic awareness, phonics and word study.

Literature Read Aloud

Skills Focused On: V, C

When choosing books to read during a literature read aloud, you should look for books relating to the theme/unit your students are currently learning about, books that have rich vocabulary to base instruction on, and books from a variety of genres. Be sure to read both fiction and non-fiction books, and teach children to recognize the difference.

In order to teach comprehension in a structured way, using a few consistent prompts after every story helps students think and talk about books. This is easy to make into a game students will enjoy. The teacher can split a large poster board into three or four sections. In each section, include a prompt along with a picture to help non-readers remember what each prompt means. Children will then have a turn after the story to throw a bean bag at the board and complete the prompt they land on. This game could be easily adapted to play with a spinner, on a digital whiteboard, or using dice. Some ideas for prompts to use with kindergartners include:

- “This book reminds me of...”
- “My favorite part was...”

- “If I could change something in this book, I would change...”
- “This book reminds me of...”
- “This story was about...”
- “The characters were...”
- “The setting was...”
- “The problem in this story was...”

These are just a few ideas, but be sure to include some factual questions as well as more personally meaningful responses. The teacher should model how to respond to these prompts as well as give feedback on student responses in order to encourage strong connections and understandings (RL.K.1,2,3,5,6,9).

Vocabulary instruction is often only incidental in the primary grades. This means that teachers may expose students to a lot of new vocabulary in books, but do not do much explicit teaching of vocabulary. One way to do this would be to choose three or four words in a book that are probably new to most students. If you are reading a non-fiction book, this is a great way to teach science vocabulary. Preview these words before reading, write them on the board, go over what they mean, say them together, and ask students to listen for them in the story and raise their hands when they hear one. After reading, have students answer questions about the new words or respond to sentences containing the new words. Make a conscious effort to use those words in the coming days.

Because comprehension and vocabulary instruction does not follow a linear structure where skills are based on those that came before, I have not divided up the skills over the course of the school year. You can choose to teach these skills in whichever order you feel is most appropriate. I have instead divided up the skills by comprehension instruction and vocabulary instruction.

Comprehension Skills

- Make text to self, text to text, and text to world connections. (RL,K.9)
- Identify the characters, setting, and major events in a story. (RL.K.3)
- With prompting and support, retell a story including key details and leaving out unnecessary details. (RL.K.2)
- Ask and answer questions about key details in a book. (RL.K.1, RI.K.1, WK.8)
- Define the role of the author and illustrator. (RL.K.6, RI.K.6)
- Describe the relationship between illustrations and the story. (RL.K.7)

- Compare and contrast different stories and characters within a story. (RL.K.9)
- Compare and contrast two books on the same topic. (RI.K.9)
- Complete shared research on a given topic. (RI.K.10)

Vocabulary Skills

- supply words that mean the same as and the opposite of a new vocabulary word. (LK.5)
- act out the meaning of various action words to show shades of meaning, i.e. jump vs. leap. (LK.5)
- use the new vocabulary word in a sentence. (LK.6)
- identify words that have more than one meaning, i.e. homonyms, homophones, homographs. (LK.4)
- use common prefixes (un-, re-) and suffixes (-ful, -less) as clues to a word's meaning.

Big Book Read Aloud

Skills Focused On: CP, PA, PIW, F, V, C

The use of big books in a kindergarten classroom is important, because the print is large enough for all children to see. This makes it possible to focus children's attention on concepts of print, specific words or letters, and word decoding strategies. While all big books offer opportunities for valuable instruction, in this section I will focus on big books with simple text. While reading a big book with simple text, the teacher is able to demonstrate appropriate reading behaviors and focus on specific skills. In order to maintain student interest, it helps to have fun props for students to use, such as wikki sticks to underline or circle in text, highlighting tape, post it notes, pointers, and glasses for reading helpers to wear.

Fall Skills

- follow the words from left to right, top to bottom, and page to page with a pointer (RF.K.1).
- count how many letters on each page, versus how many words (RF.K.1)
- find letters that are uppercase and letters that are lowercase (RF.K.1)

- search for specific letters within the text (RF.K.1)

Winter Skills

- find sight words in the text. (RF.K.3).
- search for words that begin or end with certain letters or diagraphs. (RF.K.1)
- use different decoding strategies to solve unknown words, i.e. stretch it out, check the picture, get mouth ready for the first sound. (R.F.K.3)
- teacher reads a word on the page and a student needs to find it using knowledge of beginning, middle, and ending sounds. (RF.K.3).

Spring Skills

- distinguish between similarly spelled words. (RF.K.3).
- find words with specific long and short vowel sounds (RF.K.3)
- use new decoding strategies, i.e. look for chunks you know, flip the vowel sound. (RF.K.3).
- find words with specific word endings, i.e. -s, -ed, -ing.(LK.1)

Recommended Reading

Santoro, L. E., Chard, D.J., Howard, L., & Baker, S.K. (2008). Making the very most of classroom read-alouds to promote comprehension and vocabulary. The Reading Teacher, 61 (5), 396-408.

Phonics Work

Skills Practiced: PA, PIW

One major difference between kindergarten today and kindergarten 10 years ago and beyond, is that you will not often see classrooms studying one letter per week. The “Letter of the Week” used to dominate kindergarten classrooms, but why should it take 26 weeks for students to learn about each letter? With the “Letter of the Week” format, students of course had some familiarity with the letters that had not been formally introduced yet. Research indicates it is best

to have a short amount of time each day devoted to the structured teaching of phonics. Fish week would be a great time to review the letter F, but when phonics instruction becomes structured rather than incidental, students' understanding of phonics will improve. Phonics instruction will certainly be embedded in other activities throughout the day, such as during the morning message, poetry journal, and writer's workshop; it should also be addressed at a separate time to ensure it is taught systematically.

In the fall, it is appropriate to teach a letter and sound each day. Follow the needs of the class, if they need to take a day or two each week to simply review letters, then by all means do so. Many classes will be able to handle five new sounds each week, with review sprinkled in as needed.

There are many great phonics programs which employ stories, songs, pictures, and/or actions to go along with each letter sound. If your district does not have a program, it is easy to make your own. The most important thing is to be consistent. You could link your program to the alphabet chart in your classroom. For example, if there is an apple for A, find an apple prop, make up a simple rhyme, and develop an action that kids will recognize as representing an apple. After you introduce each letter sound, brainstorm words that contain that sound. Names are an especially powerful link for kids this age. Next, give students an opportunity to practice writing the letter. It does not necessarily need to be with a paper and pencil at this point. Make it fun by using chalkboards, whiteboards, Magna-Doodles, or tracing it in rice or sand. I have found it helpful to have each child color a simple picture with the letter and the linking picture and place it in a binder or journal. That way, parents can see what letters their child has learned so far, and the children frequently practice what they have learned. This daily routine of learning a new rhyme and action, brainstorming words, writing the letter, reviewing previous letters, and adding a picture sheet to their binders will take 15 minutes or less each day.

Fall Skills

- introduce the 26 letters and the sound(s) for each letter (RF.K.1, 3)
- practice printing letters in a variety of media, including paper and pencil (RF.K.1, L.K.1)
- introduce common diagraphs such as th, ch, and sh. (RF.K.3)
- demonstrate how to refer to alphabet and sound sheets posted in the room when writing. (RF.K.3)
- begin putting sounds together to make words, i.e. teacher says "/c/ /a/ /t/", students say "cat" (RF.K.2, 3)

Winter Skills

- introduce vowel combinations such as ee, oo, ea, ie.(RF.K.3)
- begin working with short vowel word families such as -at, -op, '-in, etc. - possibly one per week. (RF.K.2, 3)

Spring Skills

- work with long vowel word families.(RF.K.2,3)
- introduce consonant blends.(RF.K.3)
- independently sounding out phonetically regular words.(RF.K.3)

Recommended Reading

Gay Su Pinnell and Irene Fountas *Phonics lessons: Letters, words, and how they work* (2003) Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH

The International Reading Association(1998*) Learning to read and write: Developmentally aproppriate practices for young children.* Retrieved from http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Position_Statements_and_Resolutions/ps1027_NAEYC.sflb.ashx

Writer's Workshop

Skills Practiced: CP, PA, PIW, V

It is very important to give kindergartners an outlet in which they can express their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences through print. Students are much more inclined to try to write if they get to write about themselves and things that are important in their own lives. There are plenty of other times in the day when the teacher can prompt students on what to write about, but the purpose of a writer's workshop is for exploration and expression.

There are many great books available on how to teach a writer's workshop in a primary classroom. I will simply give a brief overview of what the important guiding principles are, and of what skills can be worked on during the workshop.

A writer's workshop should begin each day with a very brief lesson. Gather students on the carpet, so they can listen and contribute without being distracted by their own writing or supplies. In kindergarten, a new skill should not be introduced every day. Kids may need to spend several weeks focusing almost exclusively on using beginning and ending sounds, putting spaces between words, or adding details. Lessons should be based on what your students need, using a child's text as a sample for the class. You may be able to use the work of a child who really struggles with writing but makes very detailed pictures, or prints their letters very neatly - whatever skill you want to review with the group.

Then, students may be dismissed to write at their tables on a topic of their choosing. Students should be encouraged to talk through their ideas and help each other, so writing time is not - and should not be - silent. The children may be moving around the room to refer to the word wall, other students' name tags, the calendar, books in the library to find words or pictures they would like to use. Children will need to be taught how to use quiet voices and move around respectfully so that the time can still be productive.

Finally, make sure to devote at least a little time for students to share their work with the whole group or a small group. Sharing gives students incentive when writing. Hearing the work of their classmates also gives students ideas for different topics and can give students something to aspire to.

Fall Skills

- understanding writing behaviors
- telling stories from life orally (SL.K.1,4,6)
- telling stories from life through pictures and print (Students may add random strings of letter or copy words they see. In the beginning, honor all attempts as writing.) (W.K.2,3, SL.K.5)
- understanding that print conveys a message
- making lists
- using the ABC chart, word wall, and any other classroom tools as references when writing. (RF.K.1, 3)
- sounding out words (RF.K.3)

- sharing their work with others (W.K.5)

Winter Skills

- putting finger spaces between words. (L.K.2)
- reading over what has been written to check for mistakes. (W.K.5)
- making our work easy to read. (L.K.2)
- writing in different genres, i.e. poems, letters, stories, informational texts. (W.K.1,2,3)
- elaborating on a topic (for some, this will mean multiple sentences; for others, multiple pages on the same topic, but still minimal writing) (W.K.3)

Spring Skills

- sharing information through writing, i.e. writing about animals, weather, or any topic they are interested in and/or learning about currently. (W.K.2,3)
- writing with a beginning, middle, and end.(W.K.3)
- publishing work (W.K.6)

Recommended Reading

- Calkins, L. (2010). *Launch a primary writing workshop: Getting started with units of study for primary writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Stenhouse.
- Jacobson, J. (2010). *No more "I'm done": Fostering independent writers in the primary grades* Portland, ME: Stenhouse

Dictated Writing

Skills Practiced: CP, PA, PIW, V

Dictated writing is a form of shared writing in which the whole group plans what to write, problem solves along the way, and each individual writes the same thing. The beauty of dictated

writing is that it allows students to really focus on skills like correct letter formation, spacing between words, and punctuation that are often overlooked during independent writing time. Dictated writing can be worked into the day in many different areas. It could be done at word wall time to practice writing simple sentences using word wall words. Dictated writing could be used during science or social studies time. It could be incorporated into phonics work as students work to spell unknown words. At the end of each day, the class could compose a sentence or two about the day to go home as daily news. Although it is possible for the teacher to sometimes come up with the words or sentences to write, I find kids are much more engaged when they have had the chance to contribute their ideas. Students also practice oral language skills as they contribute sentence ideas.

Fall Skills

- writing first names with a model
- drawing pictures and writing labels
- step by step instructions on letter formation. (L.K.1,2)
- sounding out words to label pictures (it can be helpful to do some step by step drawing instruction as well at this time, it really helps those kids who will struggle with drawing independently during writer's workshop.)
- writing simple sentences using word wall words

Winter Skills

- writing first and last name appropriately with a model
- using uppercase and lowercase letters appropriately (L.K.1,2)
- using ending punctuation (L.K.1,2)
- making adequate finger spaces between words (L.K.1,2)
- using handwriting paper appropriately

<u>Spring Skills</u>

- writing first and last name independently, and with proper upper and lowercase letters (L.K.1,2)

- writing more than one sentence on a topic. (W.K.3)

Recommended Reading

- Bergen, R. (2008). *Teaching writing in kindergarten: A structured approach to daily writing that helps every child become a confident, capable writer*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Reader's Workshop

Skills Practiced: CP, PA, PIW, V, F, C

Reader's workshop is the term I will use to refer to a part of the literacy block wherein the teacher works with small groups and the rest of the children work independently or in small groups on literacy related tasks. Some teachers refer to this as work stations or centers. These should differ from play-based centers, such as blocks, housekeeping, etc. In this section, I will cover both what to do when teaching the small group, as well as give ideas for what the rest of the class could be doing.

Small Group Instruction

Working with small groups allows teachers to further differentiate instruction based on students' needs. Many teachers wait to begin guided reading groups until the second semester, when more children are able to read, but small groups are very valuable in helping students get ready to read. Before beginning small groups, there are two things the teacher needs to do: a) Assess all students on their literacy skills (letters, sounds, words) so that you can put students into groups, and b) Teach students the routines they will be following when they are not in your small group. Do lots of modeling and practicing so students know exactly what to do and will not be interrupting the small group. Depending on your students, this could mean starting small groups anywhere from two to six weeks after school has started.

When grouping students, refer to the assessments you have conducted and group students with similar needs together. Groups should be flexible, meaning students may be moved from one group to another as needed throughout the year. Keep your groups small - no more than five children, or you will not be able to give the individual attention that is needed. Also keep in mind how long you will meet with each group and how much time you have in the

day for small groups. 15 minutes seems to be a good length of time for kindergarten students, so if you would like to meet with every group every day, you will need to carve out plenty of time in the schedule.

Small group lessons should focus on a few key areas: working with letters/words, working with books at an appropriate reading level, word-solving strategy work, a response to reading (may be oral, written, or both).

Since it is common to have some children who are reading independently in fall, as well as to have students who are still struggling with letters and sounds in spring; I will organize skills by student level rather than season.

Pre-Readers (students still learning letters, know few sounds, ELL students).

- identifying letter names and sounds - matching games, repeated reading of alphabet books, printing letters, sorting pictures by beginning sound, etc.
- working with names - magnetic letters, name puzzles, etc.
- working with books - taking picture walks, concept of a word, finding the first/last word/page, choral reading of simple, predictable text with one-to-one matching using a finger or pointer
- interactive writing - teacher dictates a short sentence based on text, students help her sound it out. Teacher writes it on sentence strip, cuts it apart, students put it back together.

Emergent Readers (students know letters, most consonant sounds, demonstrate print tracking - typically reading at guided reading levels A - C).

- introduce story through picture walk, new vocabulary
- students read *independently* while teacher gives pointers as needed
- teach strategies for word-solving, such as use picture clues, get your mouth ready, cross-check the picture with the first letter of a word, what makes sense.
- briefly discuss the book
- word making activities using letter tiles/magnets -CVC words (consonant,vowel, consonant) i.e. “Make big, turn it into pig, turn it into dig.”

- guided writing using sight words and possibly a topic from the text. Plan the sentence as a group, but each child writes their own. Sight words should be spelled correctly, all others phonetically.

Advanced Kindergarten Readers (know letters/sounds, can read and write 20-30 sight words - typically reading at guided reading levels D - I).

- reading for fluency and expression
- problem solving new words using a variety of strategies
- remembering and retelling what they have read
- applying phonetic principles such as blends, vowel combinations, and word endings in reading

Independent Work

While the teacher is meeting with small groups, the rest of the class needs to be involved in meaningful activities that they can do independently or under the supervision of an aide or volunteer. Some teachers prefer students to move from station to station with their reading group. Others prefer students to choose which station to go to in order to improve student engagement and allow them to work with other students at a variety of levels.

The books recommended below do a wonderful job of outlining the many different models a teacher can follow. It can be helpful to have several stations that stay the same throughout the year, but the activities can change from month to month. Some ideas for stations include:

- *Reading to self or reading with a buddy* – students can self-select books from the classroom library and read the words, pictures, or retell stories they already know. Give students an opportunity to share what they read about with someone else or the whole group. A volunteer could listen to students read emergent readers. (RL.K.5,6,7,9,10)
- *ABC station* – have a variety of materials for students to work with including, wiki sticks, noodles, sand, dried beans, etc. for students to use to make certain focus letters. Have

magazines available for students to cut out focus letters for an individual or class collage. Students can work individually on tracing, copying, coloring letter books to take home. Have self-correcting ABC games and puzzles available (matching upper/ lowercase letters, matching pictures with beginning sounds, ABC BINGO, etc.). (RF.K. 1,3, L.K.2)

- *Word work* – have a variety of materials including those listed above, magnet letters, letter stencils, letter stamps, etc. to make word wall words. Word sorts – students can use a clipboard and sheet to copy words around the room which have certain features, i.e. words containing the letter s, words that begin with 'th', sort words by vowels, words with more than 5 letters, etc. (RF.K.1,2,3)
- *Writing* – this could be a time for students to copy dictated sentences or for free writing in journals or making books.
- *Art* – have a simple art project related to a read aloud or theme that students can complete.
- *Listen to reading* – have students listen to books on tape/CD/mp3 players.
- *Computers* – if available, have students work on literacy building websites

Recommended Reading

-Foutas, G. & Pinnell, I. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children* (1996) Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

-Richardson, J. (2009). *The next step in guided reading: Focused assessments and targeted lessons for helping every student become a better reader.* New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

-Boushey, G. & Moser, J. (2006). *The daily five.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

- Diller, D. (2003) *Literacy work stations: Making centers work.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Conclusion

While it can be overwhelming to begin teaching a new grade level, I hope that this resource will help you feel confident that you are covering everything you need to in a fun and appropriate way. Understand that you will put your own spin on all of these activities. It takes time to figure out how to incorporate your own unique teaching style into a curriculum that best reaches all students. In the appendix, you will find some samples of schedules, planners, and forms that may be helpful. You will also find a full listing of the Common Core Standards for kindergarten.

Appendix B – Sample Schedule

8 - 8:30 - Morning Message and Calendar

8:30-8:45 - Phonics

8:45 - 9 - Snack and Read Aloud

9 - 9:30 - Gym/Music

9:30 - 10 - Writer's Workshop

10 - 10:15 - Recess

10:15 - 10:30 - Shared Reading/Poetry Journal

10:30 - 11:15 - Reader's Workshop

11:15 - 11:30 - Big Book Read Aloud

11:30 - 12:15 - Lunch and Recess

12:15 - 12:30 - Literature Read Aloud

12:30 - 12:40 - Word Wall

12:40 - 1:15 - Math

1:15 - 1:45 - Science/Social Studies

1:45 - 2 - Recess

2 - 2:40 - Social Centers

2:40 - 3 - Dictated Writing

Appendix C – Monthly Planning Guide

WEEK	Monthly Focus	Sept. 1-5	Sept. 8-12	Sept. 15-19	Sept 22-26
Morning Message		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-
Phonics		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-
Writer's Workshop		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-
Shared Reading/ Poetry Journal		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-
Reader's Workshop		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-
Big Book Read Aloud		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-
Literature Read Aloud		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-
Word Wall		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-
Dictated Writing		M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-	M- T- W- Th- F-

Appendix D

Common Core Standards - Kindergarten

Reading: Literature

Key Ideas and Details

· RL.K.1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

· RL.K.2. With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

· RL.K.3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

Craft and Structure

· RL.K.4. Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

· RL.K.5. Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems).

· RL.K.6. With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

· RL.K.7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

· RL.K.8. (Not applicable to literature)

· RL.K.9. With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

· RL.K.10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Reading: Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details

· RI.K.1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

· RI.K.2. With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

· RI.K.3. With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

Craft and Structure

· RI.K.4. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

· RI.K.5. Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.

· RI.K.6. Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

· RI.K.7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).

· RI.K.8. With prompting and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

· RI.K.9. With prompting and support, identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

· RI.K.10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Reading: Foundational Skills

Print Concepts

· RF.K.1. Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.

- Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.
- Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.
- Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.
- Recognize and name all upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

Phonological Awareness

· RF.K.2. Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

- Recognize and produce rhyming words.

- Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.
- Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single-syllable spoken words.
- Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words.1 (This does not include CVCs ending with /l/, /r/, or /x/.)
- Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

Phonics and Word Recognition

· RF.K.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary or most frequent sound for each consonant.
- Associate the long and short sounds with the common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels.
- Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., *the*, *of*, *to*, *you*, *she*, *my*, *is*, *are*, *do*, *does*).
- Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ.

Fluency

· RF.K.4. Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

· W.K.1. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., *My favorite book is...*).

· W.K.2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

· W.K.3. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred,

and provide a reaction to what happened.

Production and Distribution of Writing

· W.K.4. (Begins in grade 3)

· W.K.5. With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

· W.K.6. With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

· W.K.7. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them).

· W.K.8. With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

· W.K.9. (Begins in grade 4)

Range of Writing

· W.K.10. (Begins in grade 3)

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

· SL.K.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *kindergarten topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).
- Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.

· SL.K.2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

· SL.K.3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

· SL.K.4. Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

· SL.K.5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.

· SL.K.6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

Language

Conventions of Standard English

· L.K.1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

- Print many upper- and lowercase letters.
- Use frequently occurring nouns and verbs.
- Form regular plural nouns orally by adding /s/ or /es/ (e.g., *dog, dogs; wish, wishes*).
- Understand and use question words (interrogatives) (e.g., *who, what, where, when, why, how*).
- Use the most frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., *to, from, in, out, on, off, for, of, by, with*).
- Produce and expand complete sentences in shared language activities.

· L.K.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- Capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun *I*.
- Recognize and name end punctuation.
- Write a letter or letters for most consonant and short-vowel sounds (phonemes).
- Spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter relationships.

Knowledge of Language

· L.K.3. (Begins in grade 2)

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

· L.K.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.

- Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing *duck* is a bird and learning the verb to *duck*).
- Use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., *-ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less*) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word.

· L.K.5. With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- Sort common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
- Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjectives by relating them to their opposites (antonyms).
- Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at school that are colorful).
- Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs describing the same general action (e.g., *walk, march, strut, prance*) by acting out the meanings.

· L.K.6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.