Second Grade

Early Grades Crucial in Path to Reading Proficiency

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States press to ensure that children in the earliest grades get the literacy support they need to meet crucial 3rd grade milestones

By Christina A. Samuels

Children who are not reading proficiently by 3rd grade are widely seen as being in academic crisis. Educators are increasingly looking for actions they can take in the younger grades—even as early as preschool—to head off failure later in a child's school career.

The stakes are clear: Studies have shown that absent effective intervention, children who read significantly below grade level by 3rd grade continue to struggle in school and eventually face a much higher likelihood of dropping out altogether.

To tackle the problem, states have implemented a variety of policies intended to help identify reading problems before they become entrenched, and then steer children into instruction that will change their trajectory. Such policies include training teachers in research-based reading interventions, connecting students with specially trained reading instructors, offering one-on-one and group instruction in reading, and providing summer school to students who need help.

Another more controversial option, adopted by 14 states and the District of Columbia, is to hold some 3rd graders back for a year if they don't pass a standardized test. (Students with disabilities and those who are learning English are often exempted from retention policies.)
Full article here

Introduction to Balanced Assessment

ISBE's Dr. Diana Zaleski has recorded a short video entitled "Introduction to Balanced Assessment."
The purpose of this video is to introduce educators to the concept of a balanced assessment system that aligns the assessment process within classrooms, schools, and districts. You can find this video on the Teacher Resources page of ISBE's website under "Webinars, Presentations, and Videos."

Looking for the Perfect Curriculum?

"The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act forbids the Federal government from intervening in school curriculum development. States independently adopted the Common Core, a set of math and English Language Arts standards for K-12 students to reach by the end of each grade level. School districts design the curricula, and teachers create their own methods for instruction, selecting the resources best tailored to their lessons." (US News & World Report, Mar 4, 2014).

To that end, districts are allowed to purchase curriculum that they feel meets the needs of their students, teachers and the standards.

There are two tools that districts/teachers can use to determine if their current materials are sufficient to meet the standards or if additional materials are needed.

One is a clear set of expectations called the Publisher's Criteria for K-2 and 3-12 that district teams can utilize in selecting published materials.

Next, is the EQuIP Rubric which is designed to evaluate already created or newly written multi day lessons or units and assessments aligned to the CCSS that include integrated content. Gaps are noted easily if older materials are used and can be addressed. Using these two tools will keep districts on track with implementation of the CCSS.

Standard 4: Develop & Organize Writing
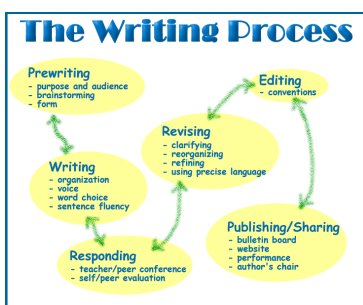
Second grade does not have a standard four which constitutes formally addressing the writing process regarding organization, task and purpose. Although the formality is not there, students should be aware of how text is structured by modeling through read alouds. Narrative standard 3 suggests using temporal words at second grade which introduces the concept of organization (first, second, last).

Writing conferences with students as in Writer's Workshop helps reinforce rules as they begin independent writing. Check out this video clip on how to set up conferences. During the writing process, the writer moves fluidly back and forth between the phases that contribute to creating the final written product.

ISBE has created a document that supports teachers in the implementation of Standards 4 and 5 which can be found here.

Explicitly teaching strategies at each writing phase along with allowing for collaborative conversation will promote better writing skills.

Standard 5: Develop & Strengthen Writing

To develop and strengthen writing, teachers need to teach skill lessons and strategy lessons in the context of the writing process. Some of those skills and strategies might include: activating background knowledge, identifying genre elements and infusing them into writing pieces, soliciting teacher and peer feedback, and understanding audience awareness and its effects on specific parts of writing such as tone, style, and content.

Monitoring for conventions, grammar and self-pacing are also critical skills and strategies that need to be taught in the writing process. Focusing on the traits of writing are also valuable which can be done with mentor texts. Click here for a preview of Ruth Culham's *The Writing Thief: Using Mentor Texts to Teach the Craft of Writing.*

Other ideas to keep in mind are modeling creative writing, poetry, writing journals, and using read alouds to watch other writers write! Short mini lessons in context are best.
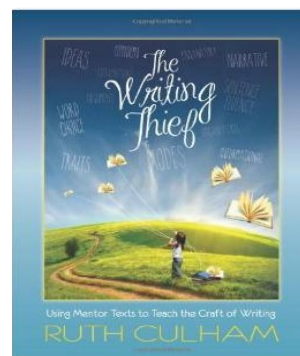
YouCubed

Youcubed.stanford.edu is a relatively new website with some great resources, especially dealing with fluency and basic facts. There are links to tasks that allow you to filter by grade, topic or concept. After reviewing the task, you can join the discussion to ask questions or explain how the task worked in your classroom.

Jo Boaler, a renowned professor of mathematics at Stanford has written several articles and books that can be downloaded or ordered here. Check out *Fluency Without Fear* under the Teaching Ideas tab, dealing with Number Sense. This article discusses where math anxiety comes from and provides ideas to help diminish the anxiety that starts in the early grades.

Other teaching ideas include Positive Classroom Norms dealing with mindsets and an article from Teaching Children Mathematics titled Depth Not Speed.

Have extra time in your class or want to give your students some fun homework, check out the Math Games and Apps. Mathbreakers, is a 3-D virtual world that runs similar to Minecraft but has students using flexible knowledge of numbers to conquer this math world.

Number Talks

Are you looking for more information regarding Number Talks? Do you want to understand the difference between a lesson and a number talk? Are you looking for some tips and suggestions on how to implement or improve number talks in your classroom? Check out http://www.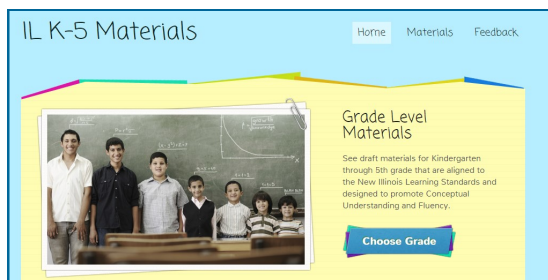mathperspectives.com/num_talks.html for a variety of information and resources to support number talks. This site includes articles, video, blacklines, pdf's and more from Kathy Richardson addressing everything you need to know about number talks.

> **"I love the weebly (IL Teach and Talk Website)! It is great, so user friendly."**
>
> -Karri F.
> Illinois Educator

Math Teach and Talk

K-5 Math Teach and Talk website contains information on several standards in each grade. For each standard listed there is a Teacher Guide and a Daily Discussion. The Teacher Guide includes an explanation with examples of the standard, connections to below/above grade and in grade standards, Higher Order Thinking Questions, classroom resources, and links to vetted, related websites. The Daily Discussions are PowerPoints intended to be used as a Math Talk. Teachers are encouraged to use 1-2 slides per day for no more than 8 minutes. Every PowerPoint is designed to last at least one full week. 2nd Grade Standards include:

- 2.MD.10
- 2.NBT.5,6,7,9
- 2.OA.1,2,4

Planning for Student-Led Conferences

Student-led conference (SLCs) have been shown to increase student achievement, hold students accountable for their own learning, increase students' understanding of the learning standards and increase parent connections to school. Implementing SLCs can achieve these positive outcomes when appropriate pre-planning occurs. As with any effective classroom practice, involving stakeholders in a collaborative manner to plan for implementing SLCs will offer an opportunity to incorporate unique perspectives and reduce the potential of issues occurring. SLCs can be implemented through grade-level teams or as a school-wide practice.

Successful SLC's include several steps to be completed by the student and the teacher (or advisor) during the months prior to the actual conference. Students should begin to curate a portfolio of items to be shared with the individual they invite to the conference. (See included article.) The design and structure of the portfolio can be as simple as a binder or an interactive online creation.

Teachers and students will need to also create an agenda for the conference time. By including multiple opportunities for students to reflect on the work being shared, not just "showing the work", conversations are prompted and positive interactions occur. Students can complete reflective writings about each item they have selected prior to the conference to keep the process moving efficiently.

Several weeks prior to students should also start practicing for their conference. Modeling the SLC process for students in a "fish bowl" style collaborative activity is a great way to show all students how the conference should progress and how long the conference should take to complete. The students can then work in groups of 3 or 4 to walk through their portfolios with each other one at a time. This will allow peers to give feedback and students to practice the structure and flow of the conference.

SLC's in Action

http://bit.ly/1CGLH51

Benefits of SLCs

The effort needed to implement SLCs can take time, but the benefits far exceed the effort. Studies have shown some of the benefits over time for students are:

♦ Students engaged in self-evaluation are more highly motivated to produce quality work.

♦ Students' skills of organization, leadership, and public speaking are strengthened.

♦ Students are empowered to make improvement through the goal-setting process.

♦ Home and school share the responsibility for supporting student achievement.

♦ The conference itself is a form of authentic assessment that increases the students' accountability and responsibility for learning. Students have the opportunity to learn and practice skills of evaluation and reflection.

♦ Positive communication between parent and student is fostered.

♦ A significantly higher percentage of parents attend SLCs than parent-teacher conferences.

♦ Students' self-confidence and self-esteem increase.

♦ Students and parent have a clearer understanding of the expectations for student learning.

(Kinney, P. (2012). Setting the Stage. In *Fostering student accountability through student led conferences*. Westerville, OH: Association for Middle Level Education.)

Book Study

Implementing Student-Led Conferences - Jane M. Bailey and Thomas R. Guskey July 2002
ISBN 9780803968561

Portfolio Keeping: A Guide for Students - Nedra Reynolds, Elizabeth Davis   Aug 2013
ISBN 9781457632853

Fostering Student Accountability Through Student Led Conferences - Patti Kinney Sept 2012
ISBN 9781560902492

Student Led Conferences Using Portfolios to Share learning with Parents - Janet Grant June 1995
ISBN 9781551380544

Student-Led Parent Conferences - Linda Pierce-Picciotto Jan 1997
ISBN 9780590896498

Changing the View: Student-Led Parent Conferences - Terri Austin   Nov 1994
ISBN 9780435088187

Student Portfolios

There are two major types of portfolios in which students collect their work—a portfolio for learning or a portfolio for presentation. The learning portfolio shows the process of the learning whereas the presentation portfolio focuses on the product of the learning. Both styles of portfolios can be used for the SLC, however a portfolio for learning tends to be a better tool to show the progression of skills that the student has mastered or is currently working to improve. Once the decision has been made as to which portfolio type will be used, artifacts can be collected.

Some artifacts that might be included are:

♦ Writing pieces—including all drafts

♦ Collaborative work–Including student reflections on how the group worked and completed the project.

♦ Science experiments—including lab notes and findings

♦ Mathematics problem solving—including process, solution and proof

♦ Book Reviews—including summary as well as all writings and discussions

♦ Research Projects– including notes, processes, reflections and student-created products

Some artifacts that maybe less effective at showing the student's progression on skills would be:

♦ Spelling tests

♦ Answers to chapter questions

♦ Mathematics timed test

♦ Multiple choice test

Related Conditions for Learning Indicators are included in the Rising Star on IIRC school improvement tool and accessible at the ISBE Learning Supports web site.

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