

Margin Note 12.2: Guiding Principles for Literacy Education

Wisconsin's Guiding Principles for Teaching and Learning

<https://dpi.wi.gov/standards/guiding-principles>



THRIVE

<https://www.thriveliteracy.com/why-thrive>



Lessons in Literacy: 8 Principles to Ensure that Every Last Child Can Read

https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/10088/pdf/lessons_in_literacy_executive_summary_4web_-_eng.pdf



These are the principles that guide us, and we would like you to consider them as principles that can guide you as well. As you read the list of principles, think about how much you agree with each one. Consider your general beliefs that you developed earlier in the chapter and think about how they may cause you to want to include additional principles, revise some of them, or delete some.

Look at additional guiding principles, such as those we have in Margin Note 12.2. Guiding principles are like teaching identities that can vary with individual teachers. After reading our list and those in Margin Note 12.2, make your own list of guiding principles to provide a foundation for how you can think about how you intend to teach reading and writing in your own classroom.



Connection to the Field: Program Evaluation Form

As you develop your own guiding principles for reading and writing instruction, ask your mentor teacher whether the school or district has a program evaluation rubric. Bring the rubric to class and determine what the guiding principles are that the school or district uses to select and adopt literacy programs.

Organizing a Literacy Program

Your literacy program will include much more than just reading a textbook. Before we talk about specific reading programs, we want to emphasize that the way you organize your schedule, your classroom spaces, your bulletin boards or displays, and your centers (or stations) will be part of your overall literacy plan and reflects what you believe about teaching reading and writing. The bulk of your literacy program will be your reading program, and the kind of reading program you use will influence your schedule, your floor plan, your displays, and your centers. All of these decisions will be influenced by your belief framework and the guiding principles you develop and adopt.

DAILY LITERACY SCHEDULE. As a PreK–3 teacher, roughly half of your school day will be devoted to literacy-learning activities. How you decide to use this time may be influenced by outside factors such as when your students go to gym class or other special classes. If you are able, however, try to work with administrators to schedule an uninterrupted block of time for reading instruction in whole group, small group, and independent settings. Figures 12.2 and 12.3 illustrate possible literacy schedules for PreK–3 classrooms.

You'll notice that these sample literacy schedules illustrate several of the guiding principles we suggested earlier in the chapter. Foundational to each of these schedules is instruction based on authentic reading and writing experiences along with explicit teaching in reading and writing skills. Additionally, the schedule allows for a variety of grouping patterns to permit differentiation for individual students and for English Learners (ELs). Organizing literacy in this way provides a variety of grouping patterns, authentic experiences with reading and writing, choice, opportunities for differentiation, and explicit teaching. The way you organize your literacy program should reflect your beliefs.

Figure 12.2. Sample Literacy Schedule for K–3

Time	Activities	Instructional Setting
8:30–8:45	Sign in or other writing activity or free choice reading	Independent
8:45–9:15	Opening: Morning message, calendar, planning for the day Read aloud Shared reading Interactive writing	Whole group
9:15–10:15	Reading workshop: mini-lessons, guided reading groups, conferences, literacy centers	Whole group, small group, independent
10:15–10:30	Working with words	Whole and small groups
10:30–11:10	Writing workshop	Small group and independent
11:10–11:30	Read aloud	Whole group

Figure 12.3. Sample Literacy Schedule for PreK

Time	Activities	Instructional Setting
8:30–8:50	Opening: Morning message and calendar Read aloud	Whole group
8:50–9:20	Centers: Free choice and literacy centers	Small group
9:20–9:40	Story time (read aloud)	Whole group
9:40–10:00	Writing	Whole group, small group, and independent time
10:00–10:30	Centers: Free choice and literacy centers	Small group

Connection to the Field: Analyzing a Classroom Literacy Schedule

Write down the general or typical literacy schedule of the classroom where you have your placement. Note that on some days the schedule may be interrupted or changed, but you can still record the basics of the class literacy schedule. Include all times students are reading and writing. Bring the schedule to class and compare it with your classmates' classroom schedules. Try to infer what the guiding principles of the classroom teacher are from the schedule.



ARRANGING THE PHYSICAL SPACE. As you prepare to teach your students, you will also need to prepare the spaces in your classroom to facilitate learning and to help you and your students feel organized and able to move through the day with purpose and order. Let's first consider a key element: arranging the **floor plan in your classroom**.

THE FLOOR PLAN. Most of the classrooms where you'll work will not be as large as you'd like. However, if you are creative and sketch out your ideas before you start moving furniture, you will be able to make the most of the learning spaces you have.

It may seem strange to suggest this, but the way you arrange your classroom speaks to your beliefs about literacy learning. For example, if you embrace social constructivism, you will situate your students' desks or tables in groups so they can learn through social interaction. You may also decide to position your own desk on the side or in the back of the room, supporting your belief that the teacher is the orchestrator versus the dispenser of knowledge in the classroom. Lapp, Flood, and Goss (2000) wrote, "Desks don't move—students do in effective classroom environments" (p. 31) to explain their advocacy for active engagement in a busy, productive learning setting. Figure 12.4 displays one example of a kindergarten classroom's furniture arrangement. In that classroom, students are expected to collaborate throughout the day and the tables enhance collaboration. Materials are in bins that students can easily move from shelves to the tables and rug areas.

Figure 12.4. Example of a Kindergarten Classroom's Furniture Arrangement



Margin Note 12.3:
Classroom Architect

<http://classroom.4teachers.org/>



Just like in real life, we can't always arrange our furniture the way we want. Often, we just don't have the right-sized room or enough space. Most likely you won't be able to use this ideal classroom floor plan when you get your own classroom, but having the opportunity to draw your dream space will help you remember your priorities when you get your own classroom. In Margin Note 12.3 you will find a website that lets you design a classroom floor plan. Use the website to draw a floor plan that is consistent with your beliefs. Some factors to consider are furniture placement including student seating, group work areas, traffic flow, comfort, use of wall space, materials, storage, areas for centers, reading spaces, and your desk.

BULLETIN BOARDS. Remember discussing a print-rich environment in Chapter 5? Bulletin boards, displays, and anchor charts are places where you can show students what you believe about literacy. Bulletin boards play an important role in your classroom space as you use them for student learning, student work, and organizational functions. Giving students ownership of bulletin boards can help foster the kind of collaborative environment you want and signals your belief in the social construction of knowledge as well as shared power in the classroom. The website in Margin Note 12.4 provides examples of interactive bulletin boards that you could use in your classroom to extend students' learning.

Margin Note 12.4:
Interactive Bulletin Boards

<https://www.weareteachers.com/interactive-bulletin-boards/>



Engaging with Families: Home Literacy Bulletin Board

Consider reaching out to families to see if they can share photographs showing how they use reading and writing at home. You could create a bulletin board featuring these photographs with families' descriptions. By doing this, you make connections with students' literate lives beyond school.



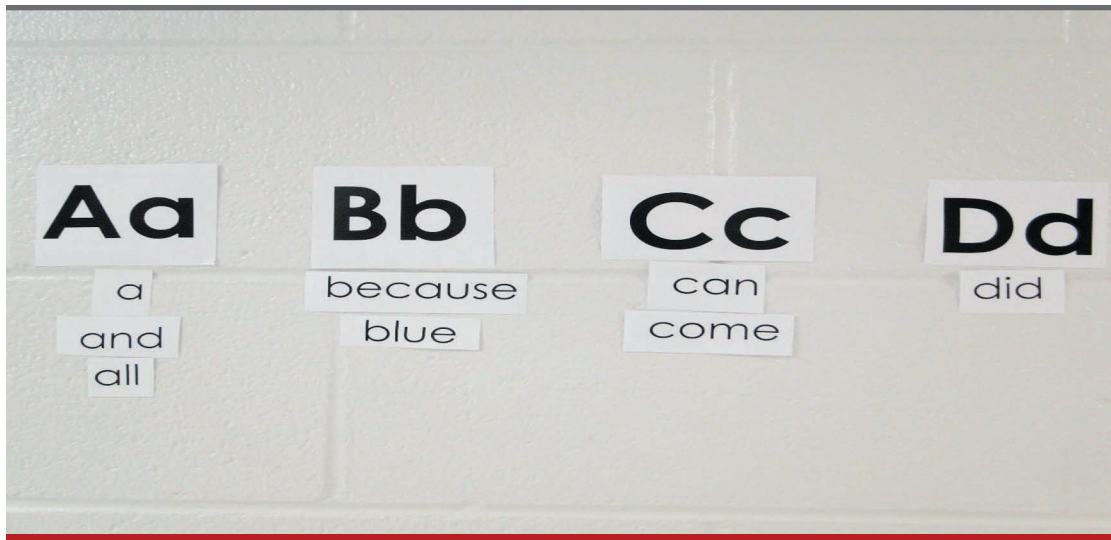
WORD WALLS. You might want to devote one of your bulletin boards to a **word wall**, which is described in Chapter 8. That chapter describes how word walls serve as a reference tool for helping students learn sight words. Remember to only display words on the word wall after they have been taught. If you start the school year with all the sight words already posted on the word wall, then it's not a collaborative effort and students may view it as wallpaper instead of a valuable reference tool. One example of a word wall from a kindergarten classroom appears in Figure 12.5. See Margin Note 12.5 for a blog filled with ideas about how to build a better word wall.

Margin Note 12.5: Building a Better Word Wall

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/building-better-word-wall>



Figure 12.5. Kindergarten Word Wall Example



Often, we teach units that feature words that are specific only to a particular content area. You learned about teaching tier 2 and tier 3 words in Chapter 9. Instead of posting those highly specific words to the word wall, consider creating posters that feature the unit vocabulary words and display them until the end of the unit. For example, a unit on plant life cycles may feature words such as *chlorophyll*, *photosynthesis*, *germinate*, *biennials*, *perennials*, and *pollination*. Although those words may be important for understanding the plant life cycle, they are not words that students will use in their everyday reading and writing.

ANCHOR CHARTS. Anchor charts are charts that serve as reference tools for students to revisit when they need reminders about processes, such as how to choose a writing topic, how to use context clues to figure out an unknown word, and other strategies. “Traditionally, anchor charts are created with the whole class. The teacher documents modeled steps, or thinking

processes, on large chart paper to anchor student learning” (Bacchioni & Kurstedt, 2019, p. 653). Anchor charts provide concrete reminders about learning and should be considered as a scaffold for learning. When you create such charts with your students, they provide evidence that anchor charts are important reference tools that students can revisit as needed. “The co-creation of anchor charts engages students as active participants in learning. Once created, an anchor chart is hung around the room for students to use while working independently” (Bacchioni & Kurstedt, 2019, p. 653). One example of an anchor chart from a third-grade classroom appears in Figure 12.6. Margin Note 12.6 features information about how to create anchor charts and provides several examples.

Although anchor charts are typically developed in the whole class setting, Bacchioni and Kurstedt (2019) used personalized anchor charts with second graders in their small groups to tailor the use of reading strategies to each group’s specific needs. We encourage you to use anchor charts to support your students’ learning with the whole class and with small groups as needed. You are the decision maker in your classroom, and it’s up to you to decide how to use all available resources to help your students learn to be readers and writers.

MORNING MESSAGE AND POEMS. Other displays that would demonstrate our guiding principles include items such as the morning message and poems. A **morning message** is a short letter that teachers write to the whole class. This is something that students can read when they arrive in the morning and then the class reads it together and talks about it during the whole class morning meeting. The message is typically written on chart paper and contains an overview of the day using sight words. Watch the video in Margin Note 12.7 to see how a third-grade teacher uses the morning message to stimulate students’ thinking about their science learning. In the video, students write their ideas on the chart paper prior to the meeting and the teacher reads what students wrote to stimulate further discussion.

The video in Margin Note 12.8 features a kindergarten class meeting during which students are working on reading and writing the morning message as an interactive activity. You will notice that the word wall is in the same area, and the class refers to it as they are spelling words in the message. This approach helps students learn to use the word wall as a reference tool. As she writes, the teacher makes intentional mistakes that the students catch, such as when to use a capital letter. She prompts students to help

Margin Note 12.6: Anchor Charts 101: Why and How to Use Them

<https://www.weareteachers.com/anchor-charts-101-why-and-how-to-use-them-plus-100s-of-ideas/>



Margin Note 12.7: Morning Meeting: Morning Message in Third Grade

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rlzu3BsFHA>



Margin Note 12.8: Kindergarten Morning Message

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64pOi7RsNcY>



Figure 12.6. Anchor Chart from Third Grade



her think of the missing letters for the words in the message by making the sounds for the letters. By doing the morning message this way, the teacher reinforces prior learning about reading and writing skills. A morning message is a perfect way to practice reading and writing together in a supportive environment.

Figure 12.7 provides an example of a morning message from a kindergarten class. The teacher displays the morning message on the interactive board each morning and prompts discussion about the message after reading it to the class. Students note which letters are capitalized and why. Students point out the words they recognize, as well as how many words there are in the message. In the kindergarten setting, the morning message provides a way to share the teacher's writing for a spe-

Figure 12.7. Example of a Morning Message from Kindergarten



cific purpose while reinforcing skills related to the identification of letters and words as well as print directionality.

You will want to leave wall space open for the many charted stories and poems that you and your students will read and write together. Poems do not have to be solely ones that you and your students author. You could introduce a poem each Monday that corresponds with a topic students will explore that week. Practicing reading the poem together as a whole class reinforces sight words, fluency, and other reading skills, such as considering the author's choice of words. At the end of the week, you could provide each student with a copy of the poem so they can illustrate it and insert it in their poetry folder to take home and share with their families. When students revisit and reread poetry and other short texts, they are working toward becoming more fluent readers (Nichols et al., 2018).

Providing a print-rich environment is discussed in Chapter 5. By creating anchor charts, morning messages, word walls, and featuring poetry and other collaborative writings, students can “read the room” where they can practice reading familiar items, which builds their reading fluency.

LEARNING CENTERS (STATIONS). Learning centers, or stations, are areas of your classroom that contain materials and activities that you have assembled to teach or extend skills or concepts your students need to learn. You may be familiar with learning centers from your own schooling background. Perhaps you had a classroom with a writing center where you could compose and illustrate stories, a math center, or a science center. You may recognize that learning centers require active participation in small social settings, supporting the social constructivist stance that we are encouraging and that fit with our guiding principles.

Centers should have activities that range in difficulty from easy to challenging so that all students can succeed regardless of their development. Margin Note 12.9 features a classroom where the teacher differentiates her small group instruction during literacy centers, and she explains how she

does that. Although the video in Margin Note 12.9 shows learning centers in a first-grade setting, some K–5 schools require literacy centers for all grade levels.

Learning centers support the gradual release of responsibility model. Let's look at an example of how this works. Let's say you've taught your students about the rime (or spelling pattern) *-ack*. You instructed them in a whole group (I do), and then you had them practice making *-ack* words in small groups with your guidance (we do). You gave a formative assessment during which you observed students in small groups as they wrote *-ack* words on small white boards and read them together. As you observed, you made anecdotal notes to record which students were able to write and read multiple *-ack* words correctly and which ones struggled to do so. You found that some students could read and write many words, so they were ready to move on to learning new rimes. Some other students could read and write a few words, and a small number of students were only able to read and write the words that you had taught to the whole group and written on chart paper that you posted on a classroom wall. Because knowing how to use spelling patterns allows students to read and write many words, you decided to develop a center for students to do individual practice (you do). In the center, you provided hands-on activities for students to make words using tiles with the *-ack* rime and onsets (initial consonants and blends). You decided to differentiate in relation to both content and level of support. For students who already could read and write many *-ack* words, you provided opportunities for them to work with other rimes, such as *-ain* and *-ake*. For students who could make and read some *-ack* words, you provided activities that allowed them to add to the number of *-ack* words they could write and read. Finally, for students who needed additional instruction and practice, you provided an app on an iPad that guided them to make and read a set of *-ack* words. Because you designed this learning center to meet the needs of your students, it provided them with valuable practice learning the skill of using spelling patterns to read and write words. In fact, you can continue to change the target spelling pattern to align with your instruction so this learning center can evolve during the year to match your students' needs and your curriculum.

When you develop a learning center or station, remember to ask yourself these questions:

- What is the purpose of this center?
- What kinds of activities will students engage in at this center?
- Does this center allow for differentiation to meet the varied needs of students?
- How will students independently manage the activities at the center?
- What materials do I need?
- How will I keep records of what students do?
- How will I introduce the center, demonstrate its use, and monitor students' progress?

The types of centers you develop for your classroom will need to stem from your curriculum, your teaching goals, and your students' ability to work independently. Although centers are unique to each classroom, we have provided three kinds of centers you might consider for your classroom. Remember that your centers can be interdisciplinary, where literacy is used to explore math, science, and social studies content. Learning across the content areas cannot happen without reading and writing, so think about how you can create rich opportunities to use literacy skills while exploring the curriculum. The brief article in Margin Note 12.10 explains how to create and use learning centers in your classroom.

Margin Note 12.9: Station Rotation: Differentiating Instruction to Reach All Students

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kg38A1ggYiE>



Margin Note 12.10: The Basics of Centers

<https://www.teachervision.com/learning-centers-0>



Students do well with predictable routines, so think about how you will manage an established set of centers while allowing elements of choice. For instance, you could have a center focused on word work and vocabulary, one on writing, another could be the classroom library where students listen to books on audio files and practice reading to build fluency, and a creativity or play center. In

Margin Note 12.11:
Literacy Centers

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/literacy-centers>



Margin Note 12.12: PreK Learning Center Ideas

<https://www.prekinders.com/classroom-photos/>



the word work center, students could engage in activities such as word sorts, building words, or practicing specific skills such as in the example described above with the *-ack* spelling pattern. In the library center, they could practice reading books of their choosing or follow along with a recorded book. Students could also have a center that is more open-ended to allow for creativity and literacy play. For instance, it could be a puppet theater one week, a restaurant another week, a maker space, and so forth. You have many decisions to make about your learning centers. The main thing to remember is that literacy centers are places for students to practice reading, writing, and learning in an environment where they can collaborate with others. The website in Margin Note 12.11 offers advice for how to get started with literacy centers, tips for organization, and includes a video of a teacher explaining how she uses literacy centers in her classroom.

For PreK and kindergarten, it is important that students have time to explore a variety of open-ended centers such as blocks, cars, sand and water, painting, clay, kitchen, and other play centers. Although those centers can have an academic focus, we need to honor play for socialization purposes and for students learning how to navigate their worlds. Margin Note 12.12 provides examples of PreK learning center ideas with academic and open-ended stations.



Engaging with Families: Getting Input for Centers

It's important to show that we use literacy beyond school. Invite families to demonstrate how to make a simple recipe or craft for the class. If they cannot attend in person, maybe they could send a brief video or written explanations. Based on this input from families, you could create a center where students follow step-by-step directions to make the recipe with a partner.

DEVELOPING THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT. Think about a class you loved because you felt accepted and energized. Perhaps you were able to talk with your classmates about ideas and concepts, and you felt comfortable participating in the whole class. Perhaps you knew that your teacher cared about you and your learning, and you felt like you belonged in the community of learners. This is the kind of classroom that has a positive social environment.

As you think about developing the physical space of your classroom, you also need to think about the social environment. How will students feel about learning in your class? We know from research that giving students choices increases motivation and participation (Gambrell, 2011). We also ground our beliefs about learning in the theory of scaffolded instruction (Vygotsky, 1978) that optimizes students' opportunities to read and write. We also know that having a low-risk environment, one in which students feel like mistakes and miscues are part of learning, promotes a healthy classroom environment. These characteristics of your classroom will help students feel comfortable, safe, and motivated to learn.

As you think of ways to create a positive social environment in your classroom, don't just draw on your own personal experiences. You may have loved school! Let's think back to Chapter 2 in which we described the characteristic of young children. Some children have not had many experiences outside of their home and their families, so they may be shy and unwilling to talk in class. That's okay. Being shy and/or an introvert is one personality trait that we should respect (Cain, 2013). You may also have ELs who are new to speaking in English. As we discussed in Chapter 9, newcomers often need time to observe and listen before they speak up. If you have a low risk social environment, you will be sensitive to all children and allow them time to be ready before nudging them too much to participate in class. Having students feel comfortable in your class will help them on their literacy journey. Clearly, there are a lot of considerations for organizing your literacy program!

Connection to the Field: Adapting Individual Principles to Programs

Think of ways you can adapt the guiding principles you developed to the literacy program used in your placement. Along with your instructor, develop a list of ideas of ways you could incorporate some of what you believe into lessons while remembering that you're a guest in your mentor teacher's classroom.



Adopting and Adapting Reading Programs

Your overall literacy program will most likely include a school or district **adopted reading program**. You might have been wondering how reading programs are selected and what your role as a student teacher—and then a beginning teacher—looks like in the process. We'd like to describe for you how reading programs are selected or adopted. The adoption process is important for you to know so you understand that you will eventually be part of the decision-making process for selecting reading programs in your school or district.

When we describe some of the common reading programs, think about which kind of program fits your guiding principles most closely. It is unlikely that you will have a say in the program that you use in your first job as a teacher. However, eventually you may be able to influence the kind of program that is used in the classroom. Therefore, we're going to describe the process of selecting and adapting materials. That's why we'd like you now to think about what kind of reading program you prefer and that fits your belief system best. When your school is ready to adopt a new reading program, you'll be better equipped to provide input so that the reading program in your school aligns with your beliefs and guiding principles about reading instruction.

TEXTBOOK ADOPTION PROCESS. Some states do state-wide textbook adoption where every public school in the state has the same textbooks, and others give that responsibility to the local education agency (LEA), often referred to as a school district. Go to Margin Note 12.13 to see a listing of which states use state-wide adoption and which give that responsibility to school districts. What does your state do? If you scroll down the document further, you can see additional information about the actual process used in each state.

If your state uses a state-wide adoption process, there may be few if any opportunities for you to be involved in the selection. Some states convene teachers from around the state to offer input into textbook selection,

Margin Note 12.13: Education Commission of the States Textbook Adoption

<https://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/09/23/10923.pdf>

