A fourth grade balanced literacy curriculum

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Capstone Approval Page

Capstone Title: A Fourth Grade Balanced Literacy Curriculum

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Children come from all different socioeconomic backgrounds, past educational experiences, and levels of parental involvement. Each and every child will be at a unique literacy level with differences spanning in reading comprehension, word analysis, use of reading strategies, written communication, and other key areas. Education tends to follow "hot topics" and trends of research, but a balanced reading approach to literacy will continue to be vital in reaching the spectrum of students. Research was conducted through both a literary review of educational resources and a sixteen week student teaching experience to construct four individual units for use in a fourth grade balanced literacy program. In a balanced literacy program, classroom teachers have a great responsibility to provide students with instruction that meets the needs of those particular learners.
Literature Review

Phonics Instruction vs. Whole Language

Teachers have been struggling to find the best practice when it comes to teaching students how to read and write. Opinions have changed over the years, and seem to come in spurts. One of the best-known battles over this issue has come to be known as the phonics versus whole language debate.

In the 1950's, phonics instruction, with an emphasis on isolated skills, was being used in classrooms across the country. Basal readers, which generally included a student reader, teacher's manual, and student workbook, focused on the lives of a "perfect" family. Characters, such as a little boy named Dick and a girl named Jane, modeled the white middle class "American Dream." The package even came complete with a family pet, a dog named Spot.

Back then, phonics instruction included using countless workbook pages to overkill the idea of a particular phonics skill such as long or short vowels. Students would spend a lengthy amount of time concentrating on the skill, and then have to wait awhile to actually practice applying the new knowledge. To me, the problem with this type of phonics instruction is not found within the skills themselves because they are a vital part of our written language. The problem stems from the context (or lack of) in which the skills are introduced, and the lengthy amount of time spent focusing on just that skill. If the main goal for writing is for the author to communicate information to the reader, there needs to be a purpose given for reading the material. Comprehension needs to come into play.
Because of the backlash that skill and drill phonics came into contact with, there was a search for something new and original. In the 1980's, whole language became all the rage, and proponents of this method encouraged teachers to immerse students in reading material. Theme-based teaching became popular, with units such as dinosaurs filling lesson plan books. Students definitely received a good share of experience with literature and the written word, but did not always have the tools to be able to actually read on their own.

Cunningham and Allington put it best when they describe the relationship between phonics and whole language instruction:

"Both the research and our experience indicate that children need to be taught effective decoding skills and strategies. Most children don't become skillful at pronouncing unknown words just by reading. Phonics instruction is an essential part of a reading program—but it is not the reading program!" (5).

It is important to note that although these researchers have recognized the importance of phonics in a literacy program, they do not feel it should be the sole technique used in classrooms. Again, there is a call for balance between teaching the necessary skills that will be needed for reading, and being able to actually comprehend the written material as a whole.
What is balance?

From this point then, the remaining questions would be "What exactly is "balance" and what path might this program take?" This theory of balance seems to remain elusive to many educators who want to put some of the ideas into practice, but can't quite put their finger on what that would really mean. The journey begins with recognizing that the idea of balance includes taking into account that there are multiple ways children learn, and multiple references from which knowledge can come from. Goals can be set up for the classroom reading program that explains what components of reading they will be focusing on and what type of knowledge they will gain. The important thing is for the teacher to examine his or her own belief system, and then distinguish what direction to go from there.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

In just one single classroom in just one single hour, there are students learning and discovering in many different ways. Take into account that there are multiple students benefiting from hearing the teacher read aloud, manipulating objects, hearing a song from a video, or working collaboratively in a group. Howard Gardner would have to agree that this classroom is definitely taking advantage of the research done on multiple intelligences.

Gardner has identified nine intelligences that stand out in varying degrees within learners. "They are as follows: (Farris 2001)

1. Linguistic Intelligence: Involves the use of language, the ability to connect with written words, and the sounds, rhythms, and inflections of language.
2. Musical Intelligence: Consists of sensitivities to rhythm, pitch, and timbre. It emphasizes an individual's natural feel for music, not the reasoning or linguistic components of musical ability.

3. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: Involves the interaction with objects and is often called "scientific thinking." Deductive thinking and reasoning, numbers, and recognizing abstract patterns are included.

4. Spatial Intelligence: This intelligence is the capacity to perceive the physical world accurately, to perform transformations and modifications on these perceptions, and to produce or recreate forms.

5. Body and Kinesthetic Intelligence: Involves the ability to use the body in highly specific and skilled ways, both for expressive and goal-directed purposes.

6. Intrapersonal Intelligence: The ability to access one's own feelings and to label, discriminate, and symbolize one's range of emotions in order to understand behavior.

7. Interpersonal Intelligence: Involves the ability to notice and make distinctions about other people's moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions.

8. Naturalist Intelligence: Refers to the ability to recognize, classify plants, minerals, and animals.

9. Spiritualistic Intelligence: The ability to make distinctions between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors such as between right and wrong.

Because humans are naturally adept to various intelligences, we need to respect these differences in order to reach an optimal amount of students. Although it is easy to
agree with this statement, it is not as easy to actually put it into practice at all times in the classroom. For elementary teachers, directing many different subjects at one time (mathematics, science, language, etc.) may be overwhelming enough on its own. However, there is a need to differentiate even further for those students who won't be able to grasp the concept during the original plan. In order to limit the necessity of having to reteach the same concepts over and over again, it would be more beneficial to all those involved to create an original plan that would provide different learning environments from the beginning. In this way, all students would be involved and immersed in learning from the start.

Gardner 1993 states that "the fundamental goal of education should be genuine understanding—going beyond repetitive learning and short answers." Instead, students should be engaged in individual and group collaboration that puts the students into the "meat" of the subject at hand. For example, instead of just working on the specific skills that the teacher wants to focus on with practice worksheets, there needs to be an opportunity to show understanding by creating an original piece of work. Students learning about adjectives should be using this type of language in an actual setting, such as describing an environmental scene. Naturalist intelligence would be able to thrive in this type of situation. With this genuine experience of interaction, students could be recharged and approach new learning from a more motivated standpoint.
Comparison of Two Balanced Approaches

Fitzgerald, 1999 describes a comparison between two different approaches that are both considered to be balanced literacy programs. In one study, Baumann employs a second grade classroom in order to put some of the ideas into practice. The reading program consisted of "curriculum balance between literature envisionment and skills/strategy instruction." It also had an "instructional balance between teacher-initiated instruction and instruction responsive to students' needs and interests" (Langer 1995 p.2). In his study, Baumann did not give specifics for what types of reading aspects would be included.

In comparison, Cunningham and Hall have developed a program called the Four Blocks. In this program, which will be described in greater detail later in this review, the program is divided into four different aspects of reading approaches. It is a "literacy framework developed to meet the diverse needs of all children" (Cunningham et al. 1999). Each of the four reading approaches is developed into its own entity while coming together as one cohesive program.

One might first look at these approaches and obtain two totally different views on what having a balanced literacy program would entail. However, the important aspect to look at here would be the similarity between these two approaches. The first similarity is that there is a description of the key aspects of the program, such as the type of instruction or the key aspects of the curriculum. Another connection is that both programs demonstrate how to carry out the program. Most importantly though, "You can
infer the kinds of reading knowledge children should attain from the methods that the authors of the program agreed are most important" (Fitzgerald 1999).

In the search for balance it is not necessarily a one size fits all situation. Dorothy Strickland 1996 best describes this key point:

"Achieving balance in our literacy programs is not meant to imply that there is one specific Balanced Approach. Nor should it suggest a sampling method in which a little of this and a little of that are mixed together to form a grouping of disparate approaches ... Finally, balance does not mean having two very distinct, parallel approaches coexisting in a single classroom in the name of "playing it safe" - for example, literature-based instruction on Mondays and Wednesdays and skills worksheets the remainder of the week." (p. 32)

The roots of balanced instruction

"Balanced reading" actually has its roots in New Zealand where the Balanced Reading Programmes were quite popular several decades ago. Based on these programs, "the components of reading instruction include environmental design, assessment, modeling, guidance, interactivity, independence, practice, oral language acquisition, writing and reading processes, community building, and motivation. This concept of reading is sometimes referred to as 'Reading TO, WITH, and BY.'" (Farris 13).

From these roots, though, Vacca (2000) notes that there have been at least three major views on how a balanced literacy program would operate. For one, instruction in a balanced literacy curriculum can be seen as an extension to the back-to-basics movement. In this type of situation, some leaders in the field of education and legislation have seen
the balanced movement as a means for ensuring that students will come into contact with the basic skills needed to be a successful reader and writer. Instruction would include a strong, intensive direct approach that would focus on adapting phonics and other skills deemed necessary in effectively teaching reading.

Many believe that this approach came about as a response to the decline in district, state, and nationwide reading test scores. Many teachers had fully embraced the use of whole language techniques in classrooms across the United States, especially during the 1980's. After recognizing that test scores were apparently falling with the wide-spread use of a whole language curriculum, educators and policymakers alike became concerned. As Johns and Ellish-Piper comment (1997):

"Rightly or wrongly, test scores appear to have contributed to the call for balance. In California, for example, declining reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and state reports were considered by a Reading Task Force representing teachers, parents, principals, business people, superintendents, community members, professors, and school board members. One of the recommendations of the task force focused on a balanced reading program that would combine skill development with literature and language-rich activities. (p.xiii)

Because of the apparent need to add more skills and strategies into the mix of whole language, we move on to another view of a balanced approach, which is considered to be a more assorted or eclectic type of instruction. Using a combination of strategy and skill based techniques, and also throwing in some literature immersion into the mix seemed to be the logical solution to the problem. Of course, solving the problem of having too much whole language and too little skill and drill by combining both of
them together into a nice little package seemed pretty simple. It may have been too simple for its own good.

Supported by the findings that "although no single method proved best (in regards to reading instruction), combinations of methods were associated with the highest achievement" (Shanahan and Neuman 1997), the mixture of whole language and skills seemed to be the correct solution. However, because these ideas were seen to be so polarized in technique, actually implementing both of them into the classroom proved to be a difficult struggle for many educators. Unfortunately, there was still the issue of test scores to worry about too, which caused more stress when combined with the possibility of trying to implement a new strategy. Some educators felt more comfortable sticking to familiar ground.

From a starting point of replacing whole language with more of a back-to-basics movement and then moving on to put a mishmash of these two ideas together, there is a third view that may just prove to be quite effective. Using an integrated approach to literacy may be the most effective strategy when it comes to utilizing some of the ideas from both the whole language and skills based curriculum. It differs from using an eclectic approach in that it gives the teachers flexibility when deciding what type of program they will develop. As Vacca (1997) describes "Weaving approaches and strategies into a seamless pattern of instruction is one of the hallmarks of a balanced literacy program." (pg. 61)

From this point of view, then, a balanced literacy program would incorporate various strategies throughout the school day without having it appear as a disjointed, sampler mess. Instead, students would be immersed in a program that provides the
needed support of instruction from the teacher, along with an opportunity to practice these newly acquired methods in a real-life situation. For example, a student may be practicing how to visualize new words during a structured guided reading lesson, but later practice this method while reading a book of his own choosing. This method includes not only freedom for those students who are ready to use these strategies on their own, but also an opportunity for the teacher to provide a more intensive approach for students who may need a little more support.

Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development

A major component of providing students with a balanced literacy program is to first recognize where the students are in terms of literacy, and then work from this point on. Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, discovered that there is a zone of proximal development in which students are best adept to learning. A teacher has the duty to examine an individual or even a class as a whole to find out where new knowledge should be brought into play.

When utilizing the idea of the zone of proximal development, it calls for the teacher to take into account that there is a range of tasks that students can’t quite accomplish on their own, but can be successful with the help of a more knowledgeable other. In many cases, this more skilled person would be a teacher, parent, or another student who can benefit the learner by providing a solid basis for growth.

In a balanced program, the more knowledgeable other would take into account that different students will be on varying levels of background knowledge within a content area. Here lies a wonderful opportunity for students to receive a differentiated
path that will lead to the same type of knowledge. If a student isn't quite ready to begin learning at a certain point, it is beneficial for them to begin at a point where they will be more successful. By doing this, there will be less of a chance that frustrations will overcome the chance of the student developing and becoming independent. However, if a student is past the zone of proximal development, adjustments need to be made in order to prevent the student from becoming overly bored with the "easy material."

Vygotsky’s view of development suggests that children need not, and should not reinvent the knowledge of a culture on their own (Eggen and Kauchak; 2001). Language has been a part of our culture for thousands of years, and it would be a waste of time for students to try figuring out this mystery on their own. Learners need to know that it is okay to use others as a resource for gaining new knowledge, and to take advantage of what the more knowledgeable other has to offer. "Language allows learners to access knowledge others already have, and it provides learners with cognitive tools that allow them to think about the world and solve problems" (pg. 54).

Whether it be the use of the English language in particular or the human language in general (body language or facial expressions), children can benefit from being immersed in it from the very beginning. Language allows for the development of literacy to take place before children can ever even read and write. Social interaction that deals with language allows an individual to think about the world in a different manner than they would be able to conceive on their own. Many of the tools for thinking about problems and coming up with solutions are developed with this interaction between two or more individuals. Therefore, the engagement in language and social activity should be a major consideration when developing a balanced approach to a literacy program.
Scaffolding

In order for students to reach higher levels of literacy, they need to be provided with a steady support system that will allow for room to grow. The very idea of a scaffold involves providing a means for lifting one up to an area that wouldn't have been attainable without the support. An eloquent description of what it means to provide a scaffold as support is provided by Eggen and Kauchak (2001):

"A toddler was learning to walk. As she took her first tentative steps, her father walked behind her, holding both hands above her head as she lurched forward with uncertain steps. As she gained confidence, the father held only one hand, walking to the side, keeping an eye out for toys and other objects that could trip her. After awhile, he let go but continued at his daughter's side to catch her if she fell. When the child became tired or the terrain got bumpy, Dad grabbed her hand to make sure she didn't fall and skin a knee. Eventually, his daughter both walked and ran on her own." (pg, 58).

Using this as a model for scaffolding, teachers can also use this foundation as a tool for educational purposes. Eggen and Kauchak (2001) define scaffolding as "providing assistance that allows students to complete tasks they cannot complete independently" (58). Just like the father in the vignette, teachers need to take their students, by the hand at first and model a particular skill or concept. As the student becomes more comfortable with the basic idea of the skill, less explicit instruction needs to be provided. Guided practice would be appropriate at this stage. Eventually, students should be able to take the next step on their own, and become successfully independent with the concept.
When using scaffolds in literacy to provide a more balanced program, there are different options that can come into play. Similar to the very idea of a balanced literacy approach having multiple facets, there are also various ways to provide scaffolding. Among this list would be modeling, thinking aloud, asking questions, adapting instructional materials, and using prompts and cues to stimulate thinking. Like everything else in a balanced program, the idea is not to throw these types of instructional scaffolds at the students just for the sake of using them, but to have them be used in an authentic way that will benefit the students.

An example of an instructional scaffold being used effectively would be demonstrated within the context of reading a story about the rain forest, and then having the students write a persuasive letter to express their opinions about the rain forest. For scaffolding to occur in this situation, the teacher models how she would begin the greeting, body, and closure to that letter. Students may be familiar with writing a letter to a friend, but the teacher scaffolds an opportunity to allow the students to develop further by expanding their knowledge about professional letter writing.

Using think aloud strategies to figure out what an unfamiliar word means is also a great way to provide scaffolding. A learner would realize that even if there is a word that doesn’t make sense, that doesn’t necessarily mean that the reader should give up on the rest of the reading. Teachers can provide think alouds that suggest using a dictionary or looking back at context clues in order to distinguish what the word might mean. Again, these are issues that may not have been accomplished if the student did not have the benefit of scaffolding. Intertwined throughout a balanced literacy program, there should be ample opportunity for the use of scaffolding concepts.
Types of Reading Knowledge

If a balanced approach is sought after, there needs to be distinguishers that describe what types of knowledge the educators need to be scaffolding. Fitzgerald 1999 describes three broad categories of what types of reading knowledge learners should be acquiring. Involved in these three categories are local knowledge about reading, global knowledge about reading, and the love of reading or affective reading. All three of these areas are viewed as being equally important in the realm of becoming a reader.

Local knowledge about reading describes the phonological use of how words work. In order to be able to read new words, this type of knowledge needs to be developed. Sound-symbol relationships, orthographic patterns, and word identification would all fall under the realm of local knowledge. Strategies that increase word knowledge and sight words are all essential to the idea of this particular type of reading knowledge.

Besides understanding the relationship between the words written on paper and the sounds they can create, there is also the idea of global knowledge of reading. More of the comprehension aspects would come into play in this type of knowledge. Areas such as "understanding, interpretation, and response to reading; strategies for enabling understanding and response; and an awareness of strategic use (Fitzgerald 102) are all parts of global knowledge. Both local and global knowledge include strategies to help the reader figure out what is being read and what it means.

A third type of reading knowledge is considered to be an affective type of knowledge, or a love of reading. Some of the thoughts that stem from this idea is that the reader will be highly motivated to pick up a book and read it for pleasure. Instead of
choosing a book because the teacher assigned it, the student would decide to read because of the pure enjoyment of reading. Positive feelings from experiencing a new book would show through, and the reader would then be motivated to read another book.

Similar to the other parts of a balanced literacy curriculum, these three types of knowledge do not stand out on their own as separate pieces to a larger whole. Local, global, and affective reading knowledge are seen as being integrated together to provide for a well-rounded capability of reading. Affective reading is influenced by local and global knowledge in that if one is successful in sounding out the phonemes correctly and able to extract understanding from a piece of literature, it would motivate the individual to appreciate reading more.

Besides having a balance throughout the three categories of reading knowledge as a whole, there is also balance within the three categories themselves. For example, if a student needs help in identifying new words, a teacher can refer to local knowledge and investigate what types of word-identification strategies would be most useful. From a balanced outlook, there is not just a single correct way to identify words. Multiple word-identification strategies are available to help figure out words, and one method may work better for a certain individual. To discover this method, though, there may need to be multiple strategies presented in order to figure out which one works the best for that particular situation.
Teacher Philosophy

Balance is a term that elicits thoughts of equilibrium and content, but what do these ideas mean? Different people may have different thoughts about what it means to have achieved balance. An appropriate example of this can be found in Vacca 2000:

"Family physicians, nutritionists, and health and fitness experts espouse the importance of a balanced diet. Yet finding the "right" balance of foods to eat is a personal matter. The food pyramid provides a framework for making decisions about various foods, but achieving balance is a matter of individual choice in response to issues such as why, what, when, where, and how much to eat on a daily basis" (pg. 58).

Just as the food pyramid only provides a framework to refer to when creating a balanced diet, so too do the opinions of others only give an outline to follow when making decisions about a balanced literacy program. It is clear that there are many different interpretations of what it means to have a balanced approach, but in the end, it is the responsibility of the teacher to make the final decisions. Only the teacher herself has the ability to be in the classroom each and every day, and witness the strengths and weaknesses of her students. Because every child does not respond to various types of instruction in the same way, it is vital that the cookie-cutter shaped literacy programs do not prevail.

Teachers were once students too, and so the interactions they have had with literacy come into play. Undoubtedly, some of these teachers have had experiences that were a far cry from being positive, and this would definitely help shape the feelings they have towards how they choose to communicate literacy to future students. However,
there will also be past experiences that have proved to be very effective in creating a solid foundation and love for reading and writing.

After thoroughly assessing her classroom and identifying what her students’ needs are, the teacher is ready to construct a balanced literacy curriculum that will benefit these children in particular. Whether these students need both intensive experience with phonics and immersion in literature or a little more of one over the other will be up to the teacher to decide upon. With the research pointing in the direction of a balance between these two methods, it would be in the best interest that the teacher seamlessly weave these ideas together during instruction. Hopefully, the teacher can prevail over past negative experiences with literacy and not base entire judgment on what not to do. Instead, there needs to be a focus on what will be best for these particular students at the present time.

Having a balanced reading curriculum heavily depends on the outlook of the teacher. "A teacher who holds a balanced philosophical view of the reading process values multiple ways of learning and arranges his or her reading program to incorporate diverse instructional techniques and settings" (Fitzgerald 103). Not only does the type of reading knowledge being taught have to be balanced, but also the type of instruction that will support the gained knowledge. A balanced approach to teaching reading arises from a philosophical perspective about how children learn and what type of knowledge they need to gain about literacy. Along with these notions, the teacher is the one who can profoundly affect the manner in which these ideas are taken into consideration.
Teacher Resources for Balanced Approach

Having established a foundation for what a balanced literacy perspective might entail, it is essential to investigate some of the resources available to the literacy teacher to assist in developing a balanced program. One of the most comprehensive guiding forces in a balanced program is called the Four Blocks. This framework stems from the idea that although the educational population recognizes the importance of individual differences, much of the daily instruction occurs without including much differentiation. The Four Blocks program was developed by "teachers who believe that to be successful in teaching all children to read and write, we have to do it all! Doing it all means incorporating daily the different approaches to beginning reading" (Cunningham, et al. 1999).

Included in this framework are four blocks that represent four different approaches to teaching literacy: Guided Reading, Self-Selected Reading, Writing, and Working With Words. Each of these blocks focus on meeting the needs of different children, and compensate for the fact that not all children will be able to learn in the same manner. The existence of various literacy levels is also taken into consideration by the fact that the four blocks are created to be as multilevel as possible. In each of them, the teacher will discover ways to provide additional support for those who need it, and extra challenge for students who are prepared to take the next step.

Beginning with the Guided Reading block, the quest for literacy is well on its way! In this block the teacher is the guiding force who will choose the reading material (such as trade books, big books, magazine articles, or even basal readers) and develop a guided discussion about the piece. Much of the focus here will be on comprehension and
how the story "works." Questions as to why the author decided to include a particular aspect of a character or plot will be raised and pondered. Formats such as whole class, partner, or small groups will be created, and all students will be encouraged to use reading strategies appropriate for the material.

"How much a child reads is the best indicator of how well that child reads-the best readers read a lot. Children who don't like to read simply haven't found the right book yet!" (Cunningham, et. Al 1999). This poignant outlook is the basis for the Self-Selected Reading Block. In our world of computers, video games, and television, it is no wonder that children do not make the time to read books at home. Too many distractions prevent students from falling in love with books that will open them up to other worlds. This block ensures that children will come into contact with many different types of literature each day through teacher read-alouds, teacher-student book conferences, and independent reading time.

Along with reading, writing is also a large piece of a successful literacy program. The Writing Block provides readers with a chance to read words in their heads, and then transmit them onto paper. After being engaged in a writing mini-lesson, the student is then free to apply these important language skills and strategies to creating a work of his or her own. During the editing and revising process, there is continuous exposure to reading various pieces of personal works as well as peer writings. Sharing one’s work in the Author’s Chair also provides an opportunity to read aloud words that the student is familiar and comfortable with.

Working With Words is the fourth and final block in the Four Blocks literacy program. Leaning more towards the phonics aspect of reading, it utilizes skills that
illuminate the patterns and relationships between letter and sound correspondence. Many exciting, "fun" activities are included in this realm of word practice. Activities such as Guess the Covered Word and Rounding Up Rhymes allow the learner to play phonics games that increase experience with new words. Making Words is one of the most prominently used programs from this block, where students are able to touch and manipulate letters until they can create words from them.

Many more of these word activities can be found in Phonics They Use, which is a compilation of ideas also written by Cunningham. It was originally created in response to the virtual disappearance of phonics in a world of whole language literacy programs. As the author states, "I hope we have regained some balance and common sense, and I hope this edition can help promote phonics as part of a good balanced reading program" (pg. v). Valuable insight into the world of phonics is provided in this resource, which promotes phonics as less skill and drill and more differentiation. For older grades there is a Big Words section that allows teachers to demonstrate how to collect and decode larger words, and a Nifty Thrifty Fifty word list which provides students with a reference for the most prevalent prefixes, suffixes, and spelling changes.
Conclusion and Wrap-up

Just as there are various resources to refer to when creating a balanced literacy program, there are multiple perspectives on what a balanced program contains. "Balanced reading is not a singular approach or practice. There is no right or wrong balanced approach, and likewise, there are many different manifestations of balanced reading approaches" Fitzgerald 1999. Instead of being an absolute answer to creating a balanced literacy program, it is a perspective or a set of beliefs that teachers can use for guidance.

At the end of the day, however, it is the teacher's final responsibility to ensure that the type of instruction the students receive is aligned with the goals being strived for in terms of reading knowledge. There are no simple, prescribed answers to this elusive approach, and as Vacca 2000 describes, teachers have an especially large task in front of them:

"First, teachers must know a great deal about children's literature and be committed to learning much more. They must also understand decoding, comprehension, and composition processes well enough that they can explain these processes and model them for students. More than that, however, they must be able to re-explain and re-model the processes in light of particular student difficulties and misconceptions" (pg. 58)

As teachers are becoming more and more accountable for student performance, it is vital that they understand the balanced approach to literacy, and what this approach entails. Significant amounts of time and consideration will be given while formulating a balanced literacy plan specific enough for a particular classroom, but the end rewards of successful readers and writers win be immeasurable.
References


Fitzgerald, J. (1999). What is this thing called "balance"? *The Reading Teacher,* 53 (2), 100-117.


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Introduction

During my student teaching experience, I have been introduced to many different techniques for teaching literacy. A balanced approach to reading was clearly evident with the use of guided reading, leveled books, and comprehension questions that required the student to think about the material they were reading. Writing was used to extend literacy and help the student develop both a sense of creativity and repertoire of skills. Along the way, students also used the techniques of listening, viewing, and visually representing to be involved in a fully balanced literacy program. I have developed three separate literacy units throughout my student teaching experience, and have utilized these units during my instruction.
Biography Outline

During this unit, the following activities took place:

- Create a class web of what we know about biographies.
- Read aloud Benjamin Franklin and create our web using this information.
- Have the librarian do a presentation about biographies. Provide students with a biography reference list.
- Students choose books about someone they would like to know more about.
- Students begin to take notes on chosen person, using the blank biography web. Also, outline of report is given to students.
- Teacher example of introduction is given and students create his or her own.
- Teacher example is given for the rest of the paragraphs, and students’ papers are written and edited.
- Students peer edit and conference with the teacher.
- Timeline of subject created.
- Book cover and puppet are created and used in the oral presentation.
A Brief Biography Bibliography

Here is a listing of some recent biographies showcasing artists, musicians, sports heroes, and people who have changed history in a number of ways. Most of the books listed are designated for students aged 8-12; a few are included which will appeal to older students and/or more able readers.

One Giant Leap: The Story of Neil Armstrong
Don Brown

Black Whiteness: Admiral Byrd Alone in the Antarctic
Robert Burleigh

Home Run: The Story of Babe Ruth
Robert Burleigh

On the Court with ... Lisa Leslie
Matt Christopher

On the Field with ... Mia Hamm
Matt Christopher

Carter G. Woodson:
Father of African American History
Robert F. Durder

Nelson Mandela
Reggie Fijlayson

Martha Graham: A Dancer's Life
Russell Freedman

Chuck Close, Up Close
Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan

Women of Hope:
Madeleine Albright
Megan Howard

Princess Ka'iulani:
Hope of a Nation,
Heart of a People
Sharon Linnea

Fly, Bessie, Fly
Lynn Joseph

Quincy Jones: Musician, Composer, Producer
Lee Hill Kavanaugh

My Name Is Georgia:
A Portrait
Jeanette Winter

Dear Benjamin Banneker:
Andrea Davis Pinkney

Duke Ellington:
The Piano Prince and His Orchestra
Andrea Davis Pinkney

Louisa May Alcott:
Amy Ruth

William Bradford:
Plymouth ~ Faithful Pilgrim
Gary Schmidt

Thomas Jefferson:
Architect of Democracy
John B. Severance

Behind the Mask:
The Life of Elizabeth I
Jane Resh Thomas

Brainstorm! The Stories of Twenty American Kids
Tom Tucker

Chuck Close, Up Close
Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan

Lives of the Presidents:
Fame, Shame (and What the Neighbors Thought)
Kathleen Krull
Biography Book Report

For this report, you will write a report, create a puppet, and use your puppet to help you present your report orally to the class. Use the requirements that follow to complete your report and puppet.

* * Check off each requirement after you've completed it.

Part One: Book Report

[] Book Report Covers
-Creat an interesting book cover for your Biography Book Report,

1. Include your name, the author, and the title of the book in an imaginative way.
2. Include a creative illustration that shows something important about you or your subject.
3. Use colored pencils, crayons, or markers for the cover.

[] Book Report Contents
-Your report should follow the format below:

[] First Paragraph should include:
1. A brief description of the person and why he or she is important.
2. Three facts about the person's early years. (Family, jobs, where they were born, etc.)

[] Second paragraph should include:
1. Important significant events in his or her life.
2. At least (our-five sentence),
Third paragraph should include:
1. Three character traits of the person.
2. Why you think this person has these traits.
3. At least four-five sentences.

Fourth paragraph should include:
1. Contributions he or she made to the world.
2. Why these contributions are important.
3. At least four-five sentences.

Fifth paragraph should include:
1. Concluding paragraph that tells why you chose this person, and why he or she is important to you.
2. At least four-five sentences.

**Pqn Two: Puppet**

Create a puppet to represent your character.

1. Your puppet should be homemade using craft materials. Be creative. Do not use any store-bought toys.
2. Have the puppet hold something that represents your subject.
K-W-L Chart: Nonfiction

Before you begin reading your book, fill in the first two columns of the chart. First, write facts that you know about the subject of the book. Then write what you want to know about this subject. After you finish the book, write what you learned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Want to Know</th>
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Biography Web

Early Years

Significant Events in Life

Character Traits

Contributions
Who says grabbers are only for narratives? Some of the best expository pieces start out with sentences that capture the reader's attention. Here are some examples.

**Rhetorical Question**
Why do we only have 3 months of summer when there are so many activities to participate in?

**Dialogue**
"Hooray! School is out for the summer. Fun has just begun!"

**Mystery**
Beware! Sunshine is luring and summer activities await eager school children.

**Shocking**
A blissful snowfall has arrived and summer is only 2 days away!

**Humorous**
Don't ask me why but summer brings about a bunch of monkeys on the loose!

**Onomatopoeia**
Splash! Buzzzz! Summer sounds echo through the parks and neighborhoods.
Conference Form: Biography

Name ___________________________ Date of Conference __________________

Book Title _____________________________________________________________

Write responses to the following questions. Be prepared to discuss your answers at your teacher conference. Bring your book, your completed activities, and this form to the conference.

Who is the subject of your biography?
What made you interested in learning more about this person?

What is the person's most important accomplishment? Why?

What is the most difficult part of the book?
What questions do you have about it?

Choose an interesting passage to share at the conference. Write the page number and explain why you liked this passage.

Teacher's Notes:

Biography •
**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

You must name all of the sources that you used. Use the following to fill in the correct information. Then write this information in the bibliography section of your step book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author Last Name</th>
<th>Author First Name</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
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Publisher: ____________________
Date Published: ____________________
Biography Oral Presentation

You have worked very hard on your biographies, and now is your chance to show it! You will be sharing the person you have written about with the class.

Share with the class:

- who the person is
- An interesting fact about the person
- why the person is important

"Remember to use your puppet to help you talk about your person"
Make a time line about the biography you read. What events happened in the person’s life? Write them in the order they occurred, and include some information about each event. Cut along the lines shown and then tape the two strips together.

Some events to consider including:
- date and place of birth
- important accomplishments
- marriage and birth of children
Biography Ot-'ll Pt-esent'Ition

You have worked very hard on your biographies, and now is your chance to show it! You will be sharing the person you have written about with the class.

Share with the class:

- who your person is
- An interesting act about the person
- why the person is important

"Remember to use your puppet to help you talk about your person"
inside the area, Muhammad Ali had accomplished the impossible.

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Muhammad Ali gave many contributions to the

You're probably wondering why I picked

Muhammad Ali. Well, I picked him because he was

brought up in conversations but I never knew who

he was. I knew he was the greatest, but I didn't know

why. I saw him on tv but I didn't know who he was.

He was just some guy to me so I thought "why not".
Describe why I picked the greatest, Muhammad Ali.
Rain Forest Outline

During this unit, the following activities took place:

- Read aloud a rain forest simulation with rain forest music in the background.
- Think about vocabulary with introduction of a mural.
- Match up vocabulary words with definitions and draw own mural.
- In groups of two, read the Great Kapok Tree with comprehension questions.
- Perform a reader's theatre of the Great Kapok Tree in two groups.
- Read a non-fiction story about the rain forest. Take notes with highlighters about interesting facts.
- In groups of six, use the reading notes to create a "rap" to save the rain forest.
- Write an individual persuasive letter convincing people to not cut down the rain forest.
Meet the Rain Forest

Lost in the Wild

Teacher Note: This guided visualization would be enhanced by the use of a tape of soft rain forest sounds, and a darkened room. Have your students find a comfortable position. Guide them in taking slow, deep breaths to relax. When you are ready, read the following narrative to the class.

Guided Visualization

You are about to embark on an imaginary journey through a tropical rain forest. As you travel, try to visualize the sights, sounds, and smells of the jungle. Since there are many mysterious surprises in the jungle, make sure you bring your safari hat, binoculars, and, of course, your machete (a very sharp knife).

As you approach the jungle, you see a thick wall of greenery. Using your machete, cut a path into the foliage to make an entrance. It is an emerald green world here, so very dense and beautiful. Look up and see the green roof of the canopy layer high above. The air feels heavy and wet, yet cool. Listen! What do you hear? The sounds of birds screeching, monkeys chatter, and a million buzzing insects. What a symphony of sounds!

The sound of running water in the distance lets you know that there is a waterfall nearby. Suddenly, you are startled by the crashing sound of a branch falling through the trees.

Walking along the forest floor feels like walking on top of wet, squishy sponges. There are damp moss, the odor of decaying leaves, and branches crunching under our feet. Be careful; it can be very slippery here on the forest floor. Even though it is the middle of the day, it is dark and cool here.

What's that smell? It is kind of rich and earthy. As your eyes adjust to the darkness, you notice the ferns, ginger, herbs, and other small plants growing all around you. You bend down to tie your shoelace, and the forest floor appears to be moving. Upon closer inspection, you discover insects galore—crawling millipedes, creeping centipedes, scampering beetles, hungry termites, scurrying ants, and even squishy earthworms.

Even though the soil looks rich, it is really not very fertile because the rain washes most of the soil's nutrients away. The insects eat the decaying plants and dead animals, allowing nutrients to be quickly recycled into the forest soil. Rain forest trees have shallow roots that enable them to use these nutrients efficiently.
Meet the Rain Forest

Lost in the Wild (cont.)

Suddenly, a frog lands in front of you. Sidestepping the frog, you are careful not to step on the long column of army ants marching across the forest floor, looking for their next meal. Look to your right at that parade of leaves. Looking closely, you will discover that the moving carpet is really leaf-cutter ants carrying their bounty off to their underground nests. The leaves will become part of their home-grown fungus garden.

While instantly engrossed in the leaf-cutter ant's activity, you fail to notice the monstrous vine-like stilt roots of a nearby tree. Tripping and falling to the forest floor, you land on a soft bed of ferns just as a giant anaconda slithers by.

Looking up, you become aware of the next layer of the rainforest called the understory. The large green leaves growing in this dimly lit layer make this an unbelievable emerald world. The dim light makes you realize that densely growing enormous leaves make it difficult for the sunlight to stream through. The plants here are happily growing in this shady environment.

As you focus on the giant leaves far above you, a screeching spider monkey lazily hangs by its tail, munching on a leaf. Turning back at you. In yet another tree, you see a slow moving green blob. You realize it is the unusual sloth. You excitedly recognize that this is a mother sloth with its baby hanging from its belly.

You are distracted by a whooshing sound high above your head. Following the sound with your eyes, you see a swiftly swooping harpy eagle. It seems to be headed straight for the sloth. You frantically jump up and down and wave your hands in an effort to avert the eagle's attention. Luckily, it works! But now the eagle is after you. The howls of a howler monkey distract the eagle yet again. The howler monkey is able to hide among the dense foliage of the understory, and the eagle goes back to the emergent layer in frustration.

After all this excitement, you are tired and know you need to head for home. Even though you have explored only a small portion of the rainforest, your mind is filled with the sights and sounds of this emerald world. You look forward to coming back another day to continue your explorations.

Activity

- Draw your favorite part of the story.
- Use a 5 inch by 7 inch (13 cm by 18 cm) index card to design a postcard of your trip to the jungle. One side of the card should have a colored picture of what you saw. The other side should be divided in half. On one half write your message and on the other half put the address of the person to whom you are sending the postcard.
- rain forest
- canopy
- jaguar
- kapok tree
- understory
- sloth
- toucan

warm, wet ecosystem with millions of species of animals, birds, insects, and plants

area at the top level of the rain forest

species of large cats

unusually large tree that grows in the rain forest and is home to many living creatures

ground level of the rain forest

mammal found in Central and South America

'diversity of bird with large, colorful beak
The Great Kapok Tree
Partner Reading

Directions: As you and your partner read the story, stop and discuss the following questions. You can take notes if you'd like.

After reading page 91
What do you think this story will be about?

After reading page 93
Why do you think the man wants to chop down the Kapok Tree?

After reading page 98
Many animals came and spoke to the man. Can you think of any different animals that might want to say something?

After reading the entire story
What does this story have to do with our theme of "Teamwork"?

How can we relate this story to our own lives?
Narrator: One man was walking into the rain forest. Moments before, the forest had been alive with the sounds of squawking birds and howling monkeys. Now all was quiet as the creatures watched the man and wondered why he had come. The man stopped and pointed to a great Kapok tree. Then he took the ax he carried and struck the trunk of the tree.

The man: Whack! Whack! Whack!

Narrator: The sounds of the blows rang through the forest. The wood of the tree was very hard.

The man: Chop! Chop! Chop!

Narrator: The man wiped off the sweat that ran down his face and neck.

The man: Whack! Chop! Whack! Chop!

Narrator: Soon the man grew tired. He sat down to rest at the foot of the great Kapok tree. Before he knew it, the heat and hum of the forest had lulled him to sleep. A boa constrictor lived in the Kapok tree. He slithered down its trunk to where the man was sleeping. He looked at the gash the ax had made in the tree. Then the huge snake slid very close to the man and hissed in his ear.

Boa: Senhor, this tree is a tree of miracles. It is my home, where generations of my ancestors have lived. Do not chop it down.

Narrator: A butterfly flew near the sleeping man's ear

Butterflies: Senhor, our home is in this Kapok tree, and we fly from tree to tree and flower to flower collecting pollen. In this way we pollinate the trees and flowers throughout the rain forest. You see, all living things depend on one another.
Narrator: A troupe of monkeys scampered down from the canopy of the Kapok tree. They chattered to the sleeping man.

Monkey: Senhor, we have seen the ways of man. You chop down one tree, then come back for another and another. The roots of these great trees will wither and die, and there will be nothing left to hold the earth in place. When the heavy rains come, the soil will be washed away and the forest will become a desert.

Narrator: A toucan flew down from the canopy.

Toucan: Senhor! You must not cut down this tree. We have flown over the rain forest and seen what happens once you begin to chop down the trees. Many people settle on the land. They set fire to clear the underbrush, and soon the forest disappears. Where once there was life and beauty only black and smoldering ruins remain.

Narrator: Some bright and small tree frogs crawled along the edge of a leaf. In squeaky voices they piped in the man’s ear.

Frog: Senhor, a ruined rain forest means ruined lives...many ruined lives. You will leave many of us homeless if you chop down this great Kapok tree.

Narrator: A jaguar had been sleeping along a branch in the middle of the tree. Because his spotted coot blended into the dappled light and shadows of the understory, no one had noticed him. Now he leapt down and padded silently over to the sleeping man. He growled in his ear.

Jaguar: Senhor, the Kapok tree is home to many birds and animals. If you cut it down, where will I find my dinner?

Narrator: Two tree porcupines swung down from branch to branch and whispered to the man.

Porcupines: Senhor, do you know what we animals and humans need in order to live? Oxygen. And, Senhor, do you know what trees produce? Oxygen! If you cut down the forests you will destroy that which gives us all life.

Narrator: An anteater climbed down the Kapok tree with her baby clinging to her back. The unstriped anteater said to the sleeping man.
Anteater: Senhor, you are chopping down this tree with no thought for the future. And surely you know that what happens tomorrow depends upon what you do today. The big man tells you to chop down a beautiful tree. He does not think of his own children, who tomorrow must live in a world without trees.

Narrator: A three-toed sloth had begun climbing down from the canopy when the men first appeared. Only now did she reach the ground. Plodding ever so slowly over to the sleeping man, she spoke in her deep and lazy voice.

Sloth: Senhor, how much is beauty worth? Can you live without it? If you destroy the beauty of the rain forest, on what would you feast your eyes?

Narrator: A child from the Yanomamo tribe who lived in the rain forest knelt over the sleeping man. He murmured in his ear.

Boy: Senhor, when you awake, please look upon us all with new eyes.

Narrator: The man awoke with a start. Before him stood the rain forest child, and all around him, staring, were the creatures who depended upon the great Kapok tree. What wondrous and rare animals they were! The man looked about and saw the sun streaming through the canopy. Spots of bright light glowed like jewels amidst the dark green forest. Strange and beautiful plants seemed to dangle in the air, suspended from the great Kapok tree. The man smelled the fragrant perfume of their flowers. He felt the steamy mist rising from the forest floor. But he heard no sound, for the creatures were strangely silent. The man stood and picked up his ax. He swung back his arm as though to strike the tree. Suddenly he stopped. He turned and looked at the animals and the child. He hesitated. Then he dropped the ax and walked out of the rain forest.
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<th>Questions</th>
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<td>Orange</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Why do the animals in the story want to convince the man not to chop down the Kapok tree?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>How do the animals in The Great Kapok Tree work as a team?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>What do you think causes the man to spare the kapok tree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Green</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>How do you think the author of The Great Kapok Tree feels about the rain forest?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>What message is the author trying to give her readers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dark Green</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>What conclusions did you draw about the rain forest as you read The Great Kapok Tree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Tell me why the author includes a world map as well as pictures of the rain forest and its inhabitants at the end of the story.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
During your time in the computer lab today, we will be doing a web search for information on the rain forest. Your tasks are:

J Find two web sites where you can find information on saving the rain forest

L Find four sites that show pictures of rain forest animals

I Find two web sites where you can see the plants found in the rain forest

L Find a site that talks about the people who live in the rain forest

J Take a virtual tour of the rain forest
Directions: What do you think these words will be used to tell about? Write them on a square on the Predict-O-Gram. You may have more than one word on a square.

Predict-O-Gram for _______________________

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Characters</th>
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<td>Action</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Other Things</td>
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Rain forests are magnificent, but troubled ecosystems. A unit on rain forests wouldn’t be complete without mention of the destruction and a thoughtful discussion of possible solutions.

Paradise Lost
Bulldozed, sawed, and burned, 100 acres of rain forest—about 70 football fields’ worth—are being destroyed every minute. We’ve all heard the numbers, but what do they mean? Why are the forests vanishing at such an astounding rate, and what harm will it do?

Who’s to blame?
All of us in developed countries have, as one biologist put it, “our hands on the chainsaw.” From our mahogany chairs to our appetite for hamburgers, we share responsibility for the destruction of rain forests. While it’s easy to point accusing fingers at ranchers, loggers, and farmers, we need to understand the social and economic forces acting on them in order to offer practical solutions.

Economic impact
Most rain forest countries have weak economies, large national debts, and few resources to create new industries. The developed nations’ demand for forest products seems like a quick fix: burn the forest to raise cattle, cut the forest to sell the lumber. Developed nations and multinational banks have often provided huge loans for ill-advised projects, and although a handful have worked, many more have produced only short-term profit and long-term devastation.

Tropical Woods
In Asia and Africa, logging is big business, and the method of obtaining exotic woods takes its toll on the rain forests. Since individual trees of a species are widely spaced, taking just a few of them can lead to their extinction in a given area. And bringing in heavy equipment to get to those chosen trees causes other damage as well, by mangling roots and gouging trees that happen to be in the way.
The Burger Effect
Our demand for low-cost beef puts pressure on distributors to buy it from Central and South America. To create cattle pastures, huge forest areas are set ablaze. This results in nutrients being released into the soil, producing lush green meadows— for a short while. The cattle-trodden soil quickly erodes, the grassland turns to wasteland, and additional forest must be burned to replace it.

City Farmen
In many countries, the best farming land is outsidet~forest land and is already owned by corporations and wealthy individuals. So when government land to large numbers of poor city people, the offer is rarely refused. Unfortunately, the gifts don't come with instructions on how to farm in a sustainable way. Settlers use the popular slash-and-burn methods to clear the land because everyone else does, Instead of allowing the land to rest and replenish after a few harvests as the indigenous people do, they try to coax more from the thin soil until it's depleted. Then the settlers carve deeper into the forest and continue the destructive process.

What's at Stake?
Since rain forests can't replenish themselves in a few decades—or even a few centuries—there's a terrible finality about burning millions of acres each year.

• The loss of animal and plant species is estimated at six extinctions every hour. The wildlife is in the most immediate danger since these animals exist nowhere else.

• Rain forests plants that have already provided so many of our medicines might well be gone before they can be evaluated—and even before we know they exist. Scientists race against deforestation, trying to find cures for heart disease, cancer, AIDS, and other diseases.

• More and more indigenous people are being pushed out of forest areas to make way for new settlers. Their culture is being lost, and the newcomers are exposing them to fatal diseases.

• Rain forest vegetation absorbs carbon dioxide and releases oxygen. The more vegetation there is, the cleaner the air. The widespread burning of forests affects the climate all over the world as carbon dioxide pours into Earth's atmosphere. Many scientists feel strongly that this is a factor in global warming. When there's no vegetation to slow rain, erosive flooding occurs as rivers and streams overflow. On the flip side is drought. Much of the moisture in the air above a rain forest comes from the leaves below when the vegetation "sweats" the water out. But if there's no forest, there's Done of this evapotranspiration, and therefore little or no rain.
Tropical Rainforests

Rainforests have many effects on the environment. They collect large amounts of moisture in the gigantic canopy formed by the treetops. Much of that water returns to the air through evaporation. Rainforests also help prevent erosion and flooding by absorbing great amounts of water and by holding soil in place with tree roots. Finally, the green plants in rainforests take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen, helping to clean our air.

1. What do you believe would happen if our rainforests disappeared?

2. Deforestation: (destruction of forests) by farmers and lumber companies is destroying our rainforests. List three reasons why we should protect these lands.

3. Should people who do not live near tropical rainforests be concerned about the preservation of these lands? Why or why not?
GREAT BEGINNINGS!

Great stories are the ones that catch the reader's attention immediately and she wants to keep on reading! How do you want to catch your reader's attention? In the space below start writing great beginnings to your leHer. Did you see how I wrote GREAT BEGINNINGS—plural. Don't just write one. I'm giving you space below to write a lot or beginnings so you can And the one that works best for your leHer!
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It is '10:Ur job to write a letter to t'h~ S~l1~ral pl-fblic ~xplail lilS w'h'1 t'h~ rail1 forest ,,"l-fst be savcô. YOl-fml-fst be v~r'1l'~rsl-fasiv~ ~ccawse \1l-l-ffeel v~r'1 .stroll sl'l abol-ft tl1~ importal1c~ of tl1e rail1 forest!

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SVPPORT

Reason 1:


Reason 2:


Reason 3:


Rain Forest Rap Requirements

A save-the-rain-forest agency has hired you to come up with a catchy rap to appeal to the younger generation. It is your job to make the rap both informative and entertaining. The purpose of the rap will be to convince the younger generation to get involved with efforts in saving the rain forest.

Your rap should include:

- At least ten lines
- At least four different reasons why it is important to save the rainforest
- At least two ways someone could help save the rainforest
yo yo yo hear the deal were gonna
tell you about the rainforest and thats so real one day there were guys walkin through
and they chopped down a tree or 2 a chop chop chop a chopety chop the trees went down just like whap even though the
cutten through it may not seem like its effecting you but it is in many ways now heres the phrase that tells you those ways now 1 is that there cutten down the oxygen that comes to town now number 2 is easy for you cause thats were medicine comes from to now number 3 is easy to it helps us with the things we do this helps us get our food numb 4 gives us more it helps keep our bodys warm and tight so we can sleep good tonight 4 way you can help is go to schoo and tell the rule and please dont be a fool

Ya
Tall Tales Unit

During this unit, the following activities took place:

- Background of tall tales discussed. Examples such as stories from the past, oral tradition, and the lack of television are given. Introduce how people wanted to "out-tell" each other.

- Exaggerations and Writing Whoppers sheet gives students the opportunity to create his or her own exaggerations.

- Read Paul Bunyan and John Henry stories. Do a compare/contrast exercise with a Venn Diagram. Also, comprehension skill questions completed.

- Pecos Bill is introduced through a picture book, and discussed as a class.

- Students use a graphic organizer to develop their own tall tale character.

- A storyboard is used for students to create their own tall tale character.

- Students use the developed character to create a new tall tale.
TaU tales are filled with funny exaggerations.
Describe the exaggerations in ____________________________
Tall tales are filled with funny exaggerations. Describe the exaggerations in

- She outwitted a goose out of an egg.
- She danced with a bear.
- She outwitted a panther.
- She cracked a walnut with her front teeth.
- She can laugh the heart out of a pine cone.
- She watched an alligator for feet.
Writing Whoppers

Tall tales are full of whoppers or exaggerations. Write your own whoppers by finishing each sentence. Be sure to really stretch the truth!

1. It was so cold _every person on earth turned purple_.

2. The teacher was so hungry _she tried to run to a dead animal to eat it before a vulture got there!_.

3. The bell rang so loud _many people in North America__.

4. It rained so hard _it brreeecn b. $e 09 bill c6 the. ~i 0.1 Lo!_

5. He slept so long _he was deep in the time__.

6. The moon was so big _it trok (by \}_w~u,\{e \_.__

7. The snake was so strong _it assoed o. o. e l3oh.\{A-\]

8. The wind blew so hard _it blew the oceans out of their place__.

9. The horse ran so fast _it reached the sun in 2 seconds to__.

10. The plant grew so tall _it reached the sun so__
Compare/Contrast - Venn Diagram
Choose a character from the book (or your own story). Then complete the chart.

Name of Book (or Story):

Character's Name:

One thing character did:

Description of the character:

One thing character did:

One thing character did:

One thing character did:
Draw or write the events of the story on the story board. Record them in the correct order.
Reflection

While developing my literacy units, many teaching resources were utilized to create a balanced curriculum. The most valuable resources proved to be other educators that worked as part of a team to construct new ideas and provide resources, which have proved valuable in previous years. Out of the three units, I feel that the rain forest section provided the most opportunities for students to take advantage of the different intelligences of learning. All three units turned out to be successful in many ways, although there are always ways to improve or add new ideas into instruction. Educators definitely need to be aware of the techniques available to them, and be open to providing students with new challenges. By using a balanced approach to literacy, students can receive a thorough understanding of the material.