



Philosophy of Literacy

Centennial School District maintains a theoretical belief that reading is a complex process, heavily involved with writing, listening and speaking across all content areas. Reading is a meaning-making process that continues through life.

We believe...

- ◆ All children can become readers and writers.
- ◆ Reading and writing are reciprocal, meaning-making processes.
- ◆ The language arts develop in concert.
- ◆ Literacy is a social process.
- ◆ Our schools should have vigorous leadership with high expectations for student learning.
- ◆ Our teachers endeavor to continually learn and apply instructional strategies within the balanced literacy approach in order to meet the needs of their learners.

What is literacy?

- ◆ Reading and writing are meaning-making processes. These involve active, constructive, and creative higher-order thinking strategies used before, during and after reading and writing.
- ◆ There are six systems or sources of information readers must manipulate: three surface structure (graphophonic, lexical, syntactical) and three deep structure (semantic, schematic, pragmatic).
- ◆ Readers can enhance each of the systems through use of strategies. These cognitive strategies are the “content” of reading –what children must be able to think about in order to read fluently and comprehend.
- ◆ Writing is a meaning-making process. It involves collecting and developing ideas to effectively and purposefully communicate with an audience.
- ◆ The process of writing helps students comprehend written language and control texts-an understanding they need for reading.
- ◆ Writers improve their craft when they have a real purpose, a real audience and a real investment in writing. These three conditions set the stage for teachers to encourage students to shift roles: reading as writers, and writing as readers.

- ◆ The “content” of writing includes the writing process: audience/purpose/forms; six traits; and self-evaluation. The thinking strategies are the tools we use to think about the content.

How is literacy best taught?

- ◆ Reading and writing are most effectively taught using a constructivist (apprentice) model of gradual release of responsibility: balanced literacy.
- ◆ Children become literate through a supportive, social environment that includes the elements of choice, time, responsibility and community.
- ◆ High academic engagement cannot exist until students understand, support and self-monitor classroom routines and behaviors. A workshop model provides the optimal organizational structure for literacy learning.
- ◆ Within a literacy workshop, effective instruction includes extended time for students to practice reading and writing daily. A blend of whole group, small group and individual instruction is used according to students’ needs. Additionally, the literacy workshop includes explicit instruction for making meaning at the word, sentence and text levels
- ◆ Students need to be engaged in purposeful activities and authentic opportunities for practice across the curriculum. As students learn to read and write, these literacy processes are incorporated into the learning within content areas.

How is literacy assessed?

- ◆ Authentic and on-going assessment (formative and summative) indicates what students know and are able to do in relation to grade level expectations.
- ◆ Instruction is driven by timely analysis of, and appropriate response to, assessment data.
- ◆ The best classroom-based assessment occurs when teachers observe and interact with students as they read and write texts for genuine purposes, and maintain anecdotal records of students’ literacy development.

What is a literate classroom?

- ◆ All students are engaged in literacy activities within print materials at their level in a risk-free environment that is supportive and non-threatening.
- ◆ Knowledgeable teachers are what matters most to students’ achievement. All staff must have access to professional development, materials and resources that support the written, taught and tested curricula.
- ◆ All students have access to a rich supply of reading and writing materials. All classrooms must be equipped with these materials in order to provide enormous quantities of successful reading.