

# **THE LITERACY STUDIO**

## **Essential Elements**

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### The Literacy Studio

Setting	Description	Teaching Tactics	Focus	Frequency
<p><b>Crafting Sessions</b> Reading and Writing are most frequently taught in the same lesson (e.g., if the lesson is on character traits, the teacher thinks aloud about how readers and writers use their knowledge of character traits to make meaning).</p>	<p>Large group, heterogenous, typically deep-structure instruction (related to creating meaning as a reader and writer)</p>	<p>Thinking aloud while reading, some modeling (showing and discussing what readers and writers do to be successful), students interact, including turn and talk or share thinking with whole group “Writing Aloud” on a document camera, thinking aloud about the decisions a writer makes, strategies and tools he/she uses</p>	<p>Strategies and skills on which all students need instruction, though they will apply what has been taught in different level text.  Writer’s Tools and tactics in which all students need instruction</p>	<p>At least 3 times a week</p>
<p><b>Composing</b> Independent reading and writing/reading</p>	<p>Independent reading and/or independent writing - the student chooses whether to read and/or write on a given day, can switch focus during Composing, but must maintain an equal balance on reading and writing over the course of the week. (e.g., may read for two days, but then must write for two days)</p>	<p>Students apply what has been taught in the Crafting Session or Invitational Group  Students apply what has been taught in the Crafting Session or Invitational Group</p>	<p>Teachers confer to assess present performance level and press students to higher levels of application  Teachers confer to assess present performance level and press students to higher levels of application</p>	<p>Every day</p>

<p><b>Invitational Groups</b></p> <p>Small group instruction for children who share a need (not a level). Can be focused on reading and/or writing</p>	<p>Small, needs-based groups, homogenous by need, not by level</p>	<p>Thinking aloud and modeling with frequent opportunities for students to practice and apply the skill or strategy in the context of the group with immediate reinforcement and instruction</p>	<p>Can be focused on reading and/or writing for students who need more instruction in order to apply what has been recently taught and/or children who share a need for more advanced instruction</p>	<p>As needed - groups convene, may meet several times; students return to the Invitational Group to show how they have applied the skill or strategy in their own reading and/or writing</p>
<p><b>Reflection</b></p>	<p>Reflecting on what has been learned in a way that will instruct others -- can be done in whole class, pairs, trios, quads or with students from other classrooms</p>	<p>Demonstrating a variety of ways for students to share what they have learned - particularly new applications of recently learned skills or strategies</p>	<p>Children share their applications of recently learned strategies - they do the "teaching" --- they plan for their learners needs and ensure that learners understand</p>	<p>Each child "reflects" at least once or twice a week in pairs, trios, other small groups, and/or the whole class setting</p>

## What are Crafting Sessions?

- ✍️📖 A time to study readers' and writers' craft
- ✍️📖 A time when all class members gather to experience the beauty of written language and the magnetism of story
- ✍️📖 An opportunity to become an apprentice to the finest readers and writers
- ✍️📖 A time to observe the teacher model and think aloud and demonstrate
- ✍️📖 A time for intimacy, rigor and ritual
- ✍️📖 An opportunity for explicit teaching that extends well beyond a particular task or assignment
- ✍️📖 The moment when readers and writers are invited into new challenges and leave to pursue them in independent reading and writing
- ✍️📖 A time for precision and clarity in teaching
- ✍️📖 A time when all children view themselves as scholars

## A closer look at Crafting Sessions

### Some key ideas for deep structure Crafting Sessions

∞ **thinking aloud** helps children peer into the mind of a proficient reader or writer - most frequently, reading and writing are taught in the same lesson

∞ the **literature or informational text** a teacher chooses is fundamental to the success of the lesson - select text that is conducive to thinking aloud for reading and select authors whose craft you can scrutinize for writing

∞ **clarity** about the teaching intention leads to precise and elegant language in the lesson - precise and elegant language leads to a tone of rigor and intimacy

∞ **modeling** from your own experience grounds the lesson in the real world -- read and write as they children observe

∞ help children see **connections** beyond today - how can they use this strategy, skill, or writer's tool in other contexts including in the content areas?

∞ use **silence** to help children understand the gravity of certain points and to reinforce that readers and writers take their time to think before responding and teachers don't move on to the next child with their hand raised

∞ limit the **focus** of the lesson to one teaching intention (e.g. how readers and writers use questions to create meaning) unless the goal is to link to previously learned material

∞ send them off to **meaningful** independent work in the Composing Session

### Some key ideas for surface structure Crafting Sessions

∞ thoroughly understand the possibilities and limitations of teaching surface structure skills -- surface structure strategies are best taught at the moment children need them, so will rarely be taught to the whole class

∞ emphasize **short, engaging** lessons including word play, rhyme, song and games

∞ **focus** on teaching goals truly needed by the whole class

∞ **record and post** children's learning

∞ encourage children to use posted records when **solving problems** at the word and sentence level as both readers and writers

∞ help children see **connections** beyond today

∞ **demonstrate** use of the skill in literature and writing so children can see real world application

∞ send them off to **meaningful** independent work

### What is Composing?

∞ An extended time each day for children to immerse themselves in reading (challenging and interesting texts in a wide variety of genres) and writing (in writers' notebooks, collecting and gathering short pieces they may choose to develop into more formal pieces later) applying what they have been taught in Crafting Sessions and Invitational Groups.

∞ An opportunity to choose whether to read and/or write during a Composing session depending on the energy the child has to do one or the other and depending on the mode (reading or writing) in which the child feels he/she can best apply what has been taught. Children are expected to keep track of the time they spend in reading and writing and must devote equal time (on that day or later in the week) to focusing on the other.

∞ An opportunity for children to select text that is interesting to them and appropriate, given their goals as readers and to select writing topics about which they are passionately interested and that permit them to apply what they have recently learned in Crafting Sessions and Invitational Groups.

∞ The time when individual children meet in conferences with their teacher to show application of deep and surface structure strategies (in reading and writing) recently taught.

∞ The time when children read and write independently while their teacher hosts Invitational Groups.

∞ An opportunity for children to meet in pairs and small groups to discuss their application of recently taught deep and surface structure strategies in reading and writing.

∞ A time for children to meet in pairs and small groups to apply speaking and listening learning targets taught during Crafting Sessions or Invitational Groups.

∞ An opportunity for children to meet in book clubs and/or writers groups to discuss books they have read in common and tactics they are using as writers.

⌘ An opportunity for children to confer with each other about their reading and writing.

⌘ A time to plan (with the teacher in a conference or with other students) what a student will share and teach others during the Reflection time.

### What is characteristic of effective Composing Sessions?

⌘ Children are **deeply engaged** in independent work -- they read and write with intensity for long periods of time.

⌘ The classroom is filled with a **sense of urgency** - children are eager to apply what they have learned in Crafting Sessions and Invitational Groups and they work in texts that are challenging to them, at the conceptual level as well as text complexity. They write to apply what they have learned from instruction and from scrutinizing the work of authors they admire.

⌘ There is an atmosphere that supports **rehearsal**. Children experiment with the deep and surface structure strategies they have learned, taking risks in their reading and writing and spend a substantial amount of time re-reading and re-writing.

⌘ Children **plan to demonstrate** their new strategies for their teachers in conferences and with their classmates during Reflection.

⌘ **Children feel independent and trusted** to make the right choices - they know it is up to them to choose the right text to read and writing topics - when they encounter problems, they know to attempt to solve the problems independently first.

⌘ There is a spirit of **camaraderie**. Children eagerly share their insights with other children in small group discussions, book clubs, and writers' groups.

⌘ **Teachers move around the classroom** engaged in a variety of tasks - observing the children at work, taking anecdotal notes and running records, conferring with individuals, encouraging experimentation, helping book clubs get started and hosting Invitational Groups.

## What is an Invitational Group?

- ⌘ A time during Composing when the teacher identifies small groups of children based on a shared need for intensive instruction and discussion in reading and/or writing.
- ⌘ A time to read instructional level texts in order to experiment with or reinforce deep and surface structure intentions recently taught.
- ⌘ A time to write short pieces in which children can experiment with or receive more intensive instruction in deep and surface structure intentions recently taught.
- ⌘ A time during which a small group of children explores ideas with an eye toward sharing them with others later in Crafting Sessions or Reflecting Sessions.
- ⌘ Children have an opportunity to practice, with teacher support, surface and deep structure strategies recently taught in Crafting Sessions or earlier Invitational Groups.
- ⌘ Children have an opportunity to observe the teacher think aloud and/or model in a more controlled, focused setting than in a Crafting Session.
- ⌘ An opportunity for the teacher to think aloud about a deep or surface structure strategy in reading and/or writing and to observe children closely as they begin to apply it.
- ⌘ An opportunity to introduce a surface structure strategy in reading and/or writing that the rest of the class already demonstrates independently.
- ⌘ A time for students to read and write silently and discuss problems they encounter immediately.

### What is characteristic of an effective Invitational Group?

- ⌘ Invitational groups are **short, focused and active**.
- ⌘ Children are actively and **enthusiastically involved** as they have been effectively prepared - their teacher has created a **learning environment** conducive to enthusiastic student involvement.
- ⌘ The group has a **spirit of support** for other group members.
- ⌘ The **teacher is free to focus** exclusively on the small group, having taught the rest of the class to read and write independently for long periods of time.



∞ Students and teachers **plan to share** what they've discussed with other children in the Reflection time.

### Some Words of Caution About Invitational Groups

✧ Invitational Groups are not static - the same group of children may meet one to three times to focus on an area of need, usually identified through conferences

✧ Invitational Groups are not convened because the children have the same assessed reading or writing "level"

✧ Small groups are not necessarily homogeneous in terms of the complexity of the text they are reading or the sophistication of their writing - they simply exhibit a similar need

✧ Invitational Groups are designed to offer instruction in the groups' zone of proximal development - in other words, instruction closely matches a clearly identified need for each child in the group

✧ Invitational Groups are not used as an opportunity for the teacher to listen to children read aloud in a round robin style or each read their writing aloud

✧ When the teacher is working with an Invitational Group, the other children are reading and writing

✧ When the teacher is working with an Invitational Group, he/she does not permit interruptions from other students nor does he/she initiate the interruption to manage other children

✧ The teacher creates a sense of anticipation and excitement for those invited to a group -

✧ Children who have participated in an Invitational Group are often invited to teach or demonstrate to others what they have learned during Reflecting

## What is a Reflection Session?

∞ **Reflection is a time for readers or writers to share with classmates what they have learned or tried.** It is a time for the teacher to highlight and “get behind” something that a few readers/writers attempted or did successfully (most often, in connection with a Crafting Session) from which the whole group would benefit.

∞ **Reflection is a time for readers/writers to reflect out loud and teach others about their use of a certain strategy (or literate behavior) will help them as a reader or writer making their learning is more permanent and applicable to future learning situations.**

∞ **Teachers demonstrate various ways in which responsible learners might respond to their classmates’ work.** In responding to a child who is sharing his work, the teacher might model and then expect the listeners to:

- praise the attempt or successful use of a taught (or “child generated”) strategy,
- question the child’s process, future plans, ideas about how this will be useful to her as a reader/writer,
- suggest other strategies or behaviors, ways to continue the work, next steps, etc, and,
- challenge (even argue diplomatically about) what is being shared in order to push the child to expand his/her thinking.

∞ **Teachers model various forms of Reflection before asking students to use them.** Different forms might be Reflection in which:

- a few individuals share with the whole group,
- children share within small groups,
- partners share (pairs, trios, etc.) with other pairs or trios
- the whole class shares (ex: children reading snippets of their writing into a circle, or saying one sentence about a mental image they made while reading, etc.),
- Open Forum in which children sit in a circle and conduct their own response group related to a book they have read or heard and/or strategy use and/or what they learned about themselves as a reader or writer that day, or
- children teach students outside the immediate class members.

∞ **Teachers model and explicitly teach children to “teach” their peers in a Reflection.**

While reflecting/sharing their work, children should eventually be expected to:

- clearly explain how the strategy or skill will help them as a reader or writer,
- emphasize ways in which their “students” can apply what they learn to future situations (i.e. how they might use the strategy being shared in other books or in their own writing),
- conclude their share with a challenge to their classmates to apply what has been taught to their own reading and writing.

☞ **All class members need opportunities to share and conduct Reflection.**

- This is a time for the group to benefit from hearing about something that a classmate did that will enhance their own work in the future and is intended for the good of the group’s learning, not necessarily the person sharing.
- The teacher needs to be sure he/she isn’t having children share just for the sake of giving them “air time” in front of the group. The thoughtful teacher is able to facilitate or identify successful attempts at the strategy/skill taught that day, however emergent they may be, in all her students so that each child has opportunities to share during the course of the year.

## A Classroom Created for Scholars: Essential Elements

<b>Visible/Audible</b>	<b>Invisible/Inaudible</b>
Teachers create rituals rather than rules, an orderly and predictable daily structure, routines that are unique to this group of learners.	A climate of respect and civility, a tendency to engage in fervent learning and to reflect on ideas of great import.
Teachers construct a warm and inviting environment that is as comfortable for adults as it is for children -- using bookshelves to create separate spaces for small group, large group and independent learning and cozy places to curl up and read, softer lighting, curtains and cushions, carpet and artifacts from shared experiences, teachers create spaces for different kinds of work.	A sense that everything that can be done has been done to make children and adults feel that this room is their sanctuary, apart from the troubled world outside and absolutely safe, physically, emotionally and intellectually.
Music and art are permanent and predictable elements of the classroom culture - children discuss beauty and work to leave an aesthetic legacy in the classroom.	An impression of being surrounded and engulfed in an aesthetic world - a world in which a learner can be immersed in something luminous and worth seeing or hearing merely by being present each day.
Teachers have created spaces for in-depth discourse about books, writers and the ideas represented in language - it is visually evident which parts of the room are set aside for scholarly talk, which are kept for independent work that requires quiet concentration	An aura of reverence for words and their power, a determination to grow continually stronger in using language to define and describe the world, a respect for others' need for silence.
Teachers serve as lead learner, modeling how readers and writers live in the world and speaking frequently and openly about their interests, frustrations, successes, routines, rituals and tactics that make the way somewhat smoother.	A feeling that “we’re all in this together” and that there is no perfect, completed reader or writer - it is the work of a lifetime to use language effectively and that adults are working just as hard as children to use language well.
Teachers use think alouds daily to show what readers and writers think about in order to read with greater insight and sculpt language more	A sense of clarity and precision for all learners about the “mysterious” workings of the human mind - knowledge that smart is not

effectively when writing and speaking.	something you are, it's something you get.
Children make most book and topic choices, pursue topics of passionate interest, teach each other rather than share with the class - they have equal access to all materials, not just those at their "level".	A significantly enhanced sense of ownership and engagement, a willingness to tackle challenging tasks because the children have chosen to do so and keeping a commitment matters.
Children know when and why they work in text to practice their word learning (surface structure skills) and when and why they work in text with challenging ideas for comprehension purposes (deep structure learning). They can articulate learning goals in both surface and deep structure learning.	An awareness of purpose - children read not only for the joy in language but because they have very specific and ambitious goals toward which they are working and they are being mentored, at any given time, by other students and their teacher.
Children know when and why they select a particular writing topic or genre in which to write. They can articulate goals in the conventions of print (surface structures) and meaning they are trying to convey (deep structures).	An awareness of purpose - children write for specific audiences and purposes and in particular genres because they have particular goals with respect to the communication of their ideas to the broader world.
Children move about the room purposefully, collecting the materials they need, replacing what they have used, caring for the spaces as they go, obvious attempts to move gently through the space, eagerness to guide visitors through the room, describing how it works for all within its walls.	A pervasive impression of caring for a precious space and the people within it, evident pride, clarity about how people mutually care for a space, closely shared with others.
Children teach rather than share when they have done work of great import with respect to their goals - they plan their teaching sessions with care, ensuring that they meet a variety of learning needs in the classroom and that their learners will be engaged and active - they seek to ensure that their learners will retain and reapply what they have taught.	Children share their ideas, not for the sake of sharing but because they believe others will benefit.

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