

Literacy Center Information For Volunteers and Classroom Aides

Thank you so much for coming in to help us. I really appreciate it. These are some guidelines and tips to make your job easier. The best advice I can give you is to follow your instinct when working with the kids. Please let me know if any questions or concerns arise. I want to make this time as worthwhile as possible for you and the students.

Background Information:

- **To develop independent and self-regulated learners, students must internalize the reading, writing, and spelling processes. This is done through daily practice in all three areas at literacy centers.**
- **Students work within their zone of actual development. This is where a child can accomplish a learning task independently.** I want students to be as independent as possible when they are at the centers. Therefore I've taught them to use a **whisper voice** to ask their classmates for help when they get stuck. Please let them try to solve their own problems this way. If they aren't able to solve the problem or ask appropriately then feel free to help them.
- I **do not** let the students interrupt me when I am working with a small group unless it is an emergency. They should know this.
- Please **help** monitor the bathroom situation. I have a few students who overuse the bathrooms.
- The **Option Board** tells students where they should go. When they are finished, they should clean up their center area before moving to **quiet reading** or **writing**.
- The students have a work folder where they keep any unfinished work. They **should** check this folder if they finish their center early. **It would be helpful if you would follow up on this task.**
- When finished with their literacy centers, they put their completed work in the box marked "**Finished Work.**" **Please monitor this closely. It would help if you would check their work and offer advice on how they can extend their thinking beyond the literal message.**

Ways You Can Help:

- Assist students who are unable to **problem solve** independently. Follow your own instinct on this.
- **Prompt** students who are daydreaming or off task. This may not take much, but sometimes they may need help getting back on track.
- Use the "**Helper Tips**" for each **Center** and "**Background Group.**"
- Help kids who are struggling to clean up the center when we they are finished before they move to a **CHOICE** activity.
- **Following is a list of language prompts that you can use to guide constructive and meaningful discussions about literature.**

Language Prompts

Invite elaboration. “Can you say more about that?”

Admit perplexity. “I’m not sure what you mean. Can you explain it to me?”

Paraphrasing a partially correct answer. “So you are saying that the character in the story was unhappy when he received a gift.”

Communicating standards for explanations. “I need to hear your evidence for predicting that the boat will sink before the rescue.”

Refocusing the discussion. “We all agree on that point, but let’s talk more about why you think the boy was misjudged for his crimes.”

Prompting for refinement. “When you say he went to the river, who are you referring to?”

Turning question back to the owner. “I don’t know. What do you think?”

Center Descriptions

Center Name	Student Procedures	Helper Tips
Red ● Literature Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students get a book from their reading box. This book should have been read during the independent reading block. • Choose one of the connection sheets to fill out. They need to write at least five sentences. • They should use at least 5 colors in their picture. 	<p>We have been working on connections a lot. They should be pretty good at this, but you can help them think of ideas if they are really stuck. Move them from a literal level to an inferential level if possible.</p> <p>Some might need help with written language. Encourage them to find a tool that might help them. For example: dictionary, ABC card, etc.</p> <p>Encourage them to add detail to their pictures and make sure they use 5 colors.</p>
Brown ● Literacy Task Cards Big Books, Charts, and Poetry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students choose the next task card to complete at their developmental level. Information is recorded in their literacy notebooks. • Students select a Big Book, Chart Story or Poem to read. There is a <i>Writing Wheel</i> inside the tub. One child spins the wheel and reads the text and does what it says. If there is only one child at this center, you may do this activity with him/her. 	<p>Students should complete most of the task cards independently. However, some might need help with the picture and category cards. Information is recorded in their literacy notebooks. Make sure they write the date at the top as well as the literacy task card #.</p> <p>Help students practice their oral reading. This center is to build fluency and expression. It also is to help struggling readers identify known words.</p>
Blue ● Handwriting/Skill Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students select a classmates' name. • They unscramble the letters of the name in the plastic bag. • They locate the story about that person in the binder and read it. • They fill out the page in their books. They write one or two sentences from the story. • Their picture should go along with the sentence they selected. 	<p>This center involves a skill building activity as students make sense of scrambled letters.</p> <p>Students should work independently. Letter formation and correct spelling is a must. Make sure students' pictures match the sentence they selected. Encourage students to add more details and a background to their pictures. You can have them go back and check pages they have already done.</p> <p>Extension: Make more words with the letters.</p>
Orange ● Squiggles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students select a "Squiggle" to turn into a picture. • The students use at least 5 colors and make sure there is a background. • They need to write at least 5-10 sentences. Some students may add more. 	<p>This task requires students to put it all together and create an organized piece of writing. They need practice with simple, short tasks before moving onto larger pieces of writing. Help them write more sentences and turn their writing into a story with a main idea and supporting details. Encourage students to add more detail to their pictures.</p>

<p>Purple Listening</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students listen to the story on tape. • Rewind tape. • Complete the paper “My favorite part was... because...” or another paper I have chosen to put in the center tub. 	<p>This task allows students to respond to a fiction or nonfiction piece. Focus may be on story elements, retelling, summary, etc.</p> <p>Encourage students to extend their thinking. What’s the author’s message? How does the piece connect to you? What is the book telling you? Encourage them to look back into the book to support their answers.</p>
<p>Pink Dictionary/ Letter formation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students find 4 or more words in a dictionary that begins with the letter sound. • Write the words in their books. • Choose one word to illustrate. Add detail. • Write the word somewhere inside the picture. 	<p>Focus is on locating known and unknown words using a beginning dictionary. Later a thesaurus and other dictionaries will be introduced.</p> <p>Work must be legible. Have the child do it again if you feel little effort was provided by the student.</p>
<p>Turquoise Top Ten</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students look at the chart on the chalkboard. The topic changes every 8 days. • Students are required to make a list of <i>Top Ten</i> ... • When done making their list, they must choose one thing on the chart to do. For example: making categories, alphabetizing, using descriptive words, etc. 	<p>Focus is on writing a list, making categories, alphabetizing, etc.</p> <p>Make sure they write the date at the top of their page as well as the center name.</p> <p>Work should be legible.</p> <p>They may use more than one page in their literacy notebooks.</p>
<p>Pink Spelling <i>Making Words</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students choose the letters from the container that are written on the top of the paper. • Line up the letters. • Put letters together to make a word. Write it on the recording paper. Continue until all spaces have a word. If they need more space for words, they may write on the back of the paper. • Nonsense words are not accepted. Spelling must be accurate. • They may use a resource to check the spelling of any word. • Attempt using all the letters to spell the <i>mystery word</i>. • Use the word in a sentence. 	<p>Write the name and date on the paper.</p> <p>Students manipulate letters to spell new words. Encourage the use of a dictionary to help them check their spelling.</p> <p>Emergent readers will have difficulty with this task. You may support them by saying: “Find 2 letters to spell the word go. Find 4 letters to spell the word good.”</p> <p>You may also help with the mystery word by giving them a clue. For example: The mystery word begins with the letter “?” and it ends with the letter “?”.</p>

Black Spelling <i>Find It</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Find It</i> is a word find activity. It calls for word observation with a stated criterion, finding and writing more words, and proofreading words. 	<p>The first word find activity is <i>Words with three letters</i>. Support students with references such as our Word Wall, Dictionary, etc.</p> <p>Provide assistance until students can complete the activity without direction.</p>
Black Spelling <i>Fix It</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fix It</i> provides practice on editing and proofreading. 	<p>At first grade, the errors for revision include spelling, homophone usage, capitalization, and punctuation. Provide assistance until students can complete the activity without direction.</p>
Black Spelling <i>Sort It</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sort It</i> helps students compare and contrast words. • <i>Closed Sort</i> Students are told the categories into which the words are sorted. • <i>Open Sort</i> Students examine the words and determine the categories. 	<p>Provide assistance until students can complete the activity without direction.</p>
Black Spelling <i>Finish It</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finish It</i> provides practice in thinking, writing, spelling, and proofreading. • Students use their imagination to create a conclusion to an open-ended idea. They write about it and proofread their work. 	<p>Provide assistance until students can complete the activity without direction.</p>
(CHOICE) WRITING <i>This is done at their center spot.</i>	<p>Students get their writing folders from the tub.</p> <p>Make sure they write the date on their papers.</p> <p>Use TAP to better help students to understand the writing process.</p>	<p>T-Think about a topic. Help them narrow their topics. I A-Who is their audience? P-Plan the writing</p> <p>Beginning Good Leads should grab the reader. They might begin with a question, dialogue, statement/fact, opinion, one word, or leaving the reader wondering. The beginning of a story includes characters, setting, and a problem begins to emerge.) Middle (Sequence events in story. Help them with transition words like: next, then, finally etc.) End Ties everything together. They may conclude by revisiting the beginning of their story and choose a word to use in the conclusion, reveal a character’s feelings or plan, revisit the main idea, or surprise the reader.</p> <p>Don’t worry a lot about spelling errors at this time. Don’t ever spell the word for the child. Ask him/her what they can do to help themselves spell unknown words. You could remind them to: articulate the sounds in a word, chunk the word, use an ABC chart, dictionary, thesaurus, etc.</p>

<p>(CHOICE) READING <i>This is done in the reading corner.</i></p>	<p>Choose any book to read. Quiet voices are required. Students should quickly make a good choice of reading material. After choosing, they need to stay in the same reading spot.</p>	<p>The students like looking at the books even if they aren't at their reading level, so let them look through the books independently.</p> <p>If you see a student getting distracted you may offer to read some to them. If all the students at the center want to listen that is fine.</p>
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<p>Background Groups</p>	<p>A Background Group is a group of students who work together independently or with assistance from an instructional aide or parent helper. The background groups may be rereading for pacing and fluency, working on extension activities using a previously read book, discussion topics etc. The Reader of the Day is chosen by the teacher. The teacher will give instructions to the Reader of the Day. The Reader of the Day is responsible for making sure the students are on task and good listeners. When the group is finished, they move onto their literacy center.</p>	<p>A Background Group is in close approximation to the teacher. Remind them to use a quiet voice so as not to disturb the teacher who is working with a small group.</p> <p>At times, students will be given cubes to hold. Each cube has a different purpose, but the rule is the same-- The one who holds the cube is the only one who is allowed to speak. The others listen. You may need to facilitate this process until independence is established.</p>
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