

Travis Greenwood

Rubric for Synthesis Paper – TOTAL = 60pts.

## "Teaching Balanced Literacy in My Elementary/Early Childhood Classroom"

(CONTENT = 50 points) Explain **how and why** you will teach balanced literacy in your classroom and the **authentic assessments** you will use. Explain the 13 key concepts (best practices) below and give specific detail about the concept's importance in a balanced literacy classroom. Remember, your goal is student learning and your ability to teach with positive results. Your knowledge and pedagogy about reading/writing will be assessed) My advice is that you ponder "**how**" and "**why**" you will teach balanced literacy all semester long, and that you don't wait until the night before this is due to work on it. The paper will be a good representation of your reading/writing knowledge and pedagogy and it will serve as an interview preparation tool. (WRITING = 10 points): This paper will also be scored as a writing assignment using the 5 of the 6 Write Traits on the 6 pt. Write Traits rubric (Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency & Conventions))

Criteria Content:	Low Basic 7 = 28 6 = 24 5 = 20 4 = 16	Basic 8-9 Concepts 32 or 36 points	Proficient 10-11 Concepts 40 or 44 points	Advanced 12-13 Concepts 46 or 50 points
Key Concepts for Teaching Literacy in your Classroom Address: Instruction and Assessment: Paper clearly addresses the "how" you plan to teach balanced literacy and the "why" your students will learn in your classroom.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment described & resources (word wall) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individual student learning (RTI)-diversity-differentiated instruction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metacognition – self-assessment as lifelong learners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading Process strategies for primary students (K-2) & Reading Comprehension strategies (critical thinking & inquiry) (3-6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion for deepening comprehension</li> </ul> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment for Reading <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data teams and professional collaboration with peers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing Strategies: Process/Write Traits <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment for Writing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teaching for Vocabulary Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Schema & How it Affects Learning <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teaching genre & literacy across the curriculum <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literacy Lessons – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging students – creating interest &amp; making it fun</li> <li>• Gradual release of responsibility: modeling/guided practice/independent pr.</li> <li>• Importance of giving students purpose for reading &amp; writing</li> </ul> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Two examples of connecting reading and writing with authentic learning opportunities			

Total Points: Content Score 46 + Write Traits Score 10 = 56 /60

Course Grade A

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EDU375  
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Synthesis Paper

## “Teaching Balanced Literacy in My Theoretical 4th Grade Classroom”

How and why will you teach balanced literacy in your classroom?

Balanced literacy will be comprised of multidisciplinary instruction regarding the language arts core content. First, a model of balanced literacy will be comprised Reader’s Workshop where comprehensive skills are explicitly taught to my students. For example: during an interactive read aloud I would model a “think aloud” for my students, by periodically stopping to make connections that are relevant to my students prior experiences (schema) this make a meaningful connections to all of my students by modeling this approach. One way I would assess my student’s comprehension of this method of instruction would be, for my students to interactively write their thoughts, and connections are onto a “sticky-note”. After the mini lesson students would then either individually, or in cooperative groups have a book to read, and actively engage in “reading aloud”. Then my students would creatively to make connections to their particular book using their sticky notes. By allowing my students to work in cooperative groups allows for scaffolding and informal observations by myself to be actively engaged their learning.

Next component of balanced literacy is, shared reading where my students will work as a whole class, or cooperative learning groups based on my ability tracking. Students during shared reading will think aloud alongside of the teacher and share their connections with their peers. Often, anchor charts will be created during my lesson, I would then put it on display as a reference guide for my students. I believe think-pair-share is an authentic form of assessment for shared reading. First, my students would think while reading and stop when they have a connection. Then, my students would actively share their idea with a partner, or their small group. My

students would share their idea together, and then share with other small groups. This form of assessment allows me formal observation of my students who are mastering the share reading strategy.

Continuing the balanced literacy module, my next approach is guided reading. This approach allows the teacher to hold students accountable for their learning progress. This approach is also unique because my students are able to work in their ability groups which are based off of their SRI and my running records. During this module my students will use their skills and strategies learned in my balanced literacy method to increase their comprehension, reading fluency, automatic decoding. As the teacher, during guided reading my group is to be a facilitator of questions, teaching points, and praises. My students who are not being assessed during guided reading time will engage in reading workstations that reinforce the mini lessons skill. Students during guided reading will be assessed by their reading comprehension, and strategies. I will formally take running records, writing down explicitly what the student reads. Making a teaching point for my student(s) to improve on a particular skill/strategy is key, and meaningful praise for my student is vital.

Moving away from cooperative learning in the balanced literacy approach we move to an independent reading time. In my classroom the silent reading time will depict a calm mood and safe environment promoting student learning. During this time I will also take the opportunity to make sure my students have books that accurately suit their lexile level. In doing so, my method of instruction for choosing a silent reading book would be a five finger rule, where the students evaluate the books difficulty on their own. This pushes for the idea of metacognition where my students are constantly thinking about their reading level and comprehension.

Lastly, balanced literacy within my classroom takes great organization, structure, and modeling for all my students. I thoroughly believe that this method of instruction directed at language arts is a very powerful tool in education. Teacher's constantly have to be reflective learners, and push for constant monitoring of their students progression. My approach to this idea would be to have a binder for each individual student I have. This allows me to be organized, and to create a portfolio that I can use at parent teacher conferences, data teams, and for authentic

documentation for any other reason. Keeping a portfolio allows each of my students to physically see their progression over time, and it enables me to keep my students and myself accountable for learning.

Following the balanced literacy approach teachers constantly have to monitor their student's progress of learning within their classroom. We have to be able to analyze student work, assess/re-assess their knowledge, and cooperatively collaborate our ideas with colleagues. As a constructivist, I believe my entire classroom will be active, social, and creative learners each an everyday in my classroom. With the method of gradual release of responsibility my students will be exposed to the optimal learning experience of best practice in today's research in education.

There are many values in balanced literacy, with 13 key concepts that are vital to incorporating balanced literacy each an every day. These key concepts promote academic longevity within each individual student where they can carry their mastery of these strategies into furthering their education.

I will begin with my classroom environment. Visually picture a structured classroom that is organized to suit the students' needs for academic knowledge and the heavy traffic in my classroom will be utilized to maximum ability.. I will create an area for our mini-lessons and small group conferences where we model our thinking onto an anchor chart. Silent reading time is open to comfortable places for my students to independently read. Sticks will be drawn at random for these "places." I will establish a safe and care free environment day one of the school year, my students are held accountable each and every day to be the best learners they can be. Daily procedure will involve daily student's jobs that rotate in a timely fashion. The idea of holding students academically responsible for their learning goes hand-in-hand with the accountability of classroom jobs for specific procedures. Glasser's Theory believes students hold be meaning with the students develop rules, and are held accountable for those consequences. My classroom environment will enthusiastically promote longevity for learning for all of my students. Maslow's hierarchy of needs clearly state children need to feel safe and care free to

successfully learn within a classroom, and my ability to be a relationship building teacher will compel my students to achieve success.

Organizational attributes are essential for all educators and I believe that we continually have to strive to keep material new. Working in the primary and intermediate grade levels it is vital to have preparations “read-to-go” with the limit of plan time teachers like myself have to be very organized. This allows maximum learning time for each of my students and sets a perfect example of modeling organization for my student’s as well. One way for me to continue to be an exceptional organizer is the ability to “know” what and where to have organizational skills. First, I believe is necessary for my students to understand how their teacher (me) is organized and how they will contribute to that aspect. Students will have to maintain a journals and binders for reading, writing, and math. A student portfolio will be created; some of their work will be in their individual file: i.e. running record, anecdotal observations, student IEP goals, etc. Also, a whole class student binder or worksheets for certain content areas such as data cycles and data notebooks for teaming meetings. My teacher’s binder will consist of lesson plans, schedules, meeting notes, data team information, year-at-a-glance (curriculum information), and academic year calendar of events. I firmly believe in my last “binder” for substitutes who will be in my classroom. As a current substitute and teacher I find it very helpful to have those plans, guidelines, and expectations for the substitutes who will be in my classroom. This binder consists of forms such as: need-to-know information for bathroom, sharpening pencils, student job procedures, nurse, time out notes, disciplinary procedures, and filler activities, etc.

Gradual Release of responsibility allows myself to explicitly demonstrate the skill directly towards my students pushing towards maximum comprehension. This framework looks something like this: 10-15 minutes of mini-lessons and interactive feedback between my students and I. Extended time for guide practice allowing myself to observe and make informal assessments for each student. Following the guided practice leaves time for independent practice and formal assessments of the objective. Last but not least, is the idea of share time is

extremely important this creates a purpose and an audience to make the task much more meaningful for each individual student.

Reader' Workshop inside of my classroom will be vary depending time frame and if my school does a rotational schedule between grade level teachers. In most cases a mini-lesson will consist of 10-15 minutes working on a specific strategy. This mini lesson will be followed by guided practice where I will make anecdotal notes regarding my observation of student's mastery of the strategy. Students then will move onto individual work time where the formal assessments will be implemented. During my students independent work time I will meet in individual or small group conferences about recent observations. Here, I would have my students quietly read to me apart of their book and discuss the student's strategy they are currently working on. On my Reading Conferencing Record forms I will address needs of improvement, and make notes of student achievement. Another factor in modeling for students is the notion of showing my students good examples and not so good examples of student work. Reader's Workshop provides students ample opportunity to interact with peers, and their text. My students will learn how to make text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections. My students will learn to ask questions, make inferences, draw conclusions, and strive to achieve on grade level reading proficiency. Most importantly creating an audience for my students is essential for share time. I think getting other grade levels, the school, and community involved in students academic knowledge. Students will be creative, active, and social learners within the Reader's Workshop.

Writer's Workshop module is focused not specifically on product, but the process of writing. Using specific vocabulary makes the workshop authentic for my students, allowing my students to be authors, editors, and publishers give a meaningful task for all of my students. Writer's workshop follows the same gradual release of responsibility and the same time frame, but larger emphasis on uninterrupted time to maximize student's achievement. The entire workshop as a whole follows this time frame: 1-2 days or students creating an idea, 5 days writing entries, 2 days on choosing the "seed" piece, 2 days planning a draft, 2 days revising and changing content

quality, 1-2 days editing, 1-2 days publishing, and a final day for celebration. All of these components are essential and need specific guides during each day's mini-lesson. Where my students see explicitly what they need to know, and how they are demonstrate mastery of the objective. Mini-lessons can include, think aloud, dialoged within a story, end with a sound, voice, conventions, grammar, conjunctions, ending a story, creating visualization. After the min-lesson there is guides practice, independent practice, and a time for sharing which is extremely important. I always end the workshop with a authors chair share. TAG stands for - Tell one thing you liked about the story, Ask one question, and Give one suggestion. This approach pushes for the increase in metacognition in my students.

Conferencing give me the flexibility during my student's independent writing time to give low-key authentic feedback within several days of assessing a student's work. Working with elementary students in the primary grades I'm not quite as focused on spelling and conventions early on in their writing because they have the ability to use inventive spelling for unknown words. Reading and writing goes hand-in-hand, and as one progresses so does the author. During this period of time it give me the opportunity to talk with my students individually and provide reinforcement on their writing/reading strategies. I believe that not only the teacher is prepared for conferences, but the student too. They need to have open-ended questions preferably two or more for myself to answer or arrive at a solution. There are also roles in conferencing; the teacher and the student both play a vital role. My role, as my student's teacher is to provide meaningful feedback that first is positive. Whether the students work is an absolute mess, allow yourself time to make a personal connection to the students work and praise them for that. My student's role is to provide me with their misconception, and also after the conference, my students fill out a void reflection form. This allows me to see explicitly their thinking strategies. Overall conferencing has to be constantly reflected to improve the classroom's achievement.

Reading levels is a very unique and powerful concept. I am able to tell my students text difficulty by their SRI score. This doesn't necessarily gives 100% accurate details about my students, but it does give a guide to their

comprehension. Students are forced now more than ever to be “on grade” level reading. Common core standards are pushing for an even more challenging goal of having each and every one of my students “on grade” level no matter their exceptionalities. I am able to track my students based off of these ability groupings. Students can be placed in cooperative learning groups, and scaffold their classmates. Level text vary in their difficulty, a lower lexile leveled book is easy compared to a higher lexile leveled book. As the teacher I am able to differentiate my instructional strategies based off of these reading scores. I know that some groups of students will have a different objective than another group based on their leveled reading scores.

Assessments have to be meaningful and relevant to the student’s objective. Students need to be aware of their “I can...” statements. The need for accountability is extremely high not only for myself as an educator, but for my students’ academic achievements. For my assessments I provide formative and summative assessments for each of my instructional objectives. Formative assessments are strictly based off of informal observations of students and are used during students practice period during class time. These assessments happen regularly. Summative assessments are directly correlated to the student’s grade and happen periodically; my students have to be aware of their learning target and goals. My assessments have to be meaningful and relevant to my student’s prior experience. This will vary between students, this calls for my needs of targeting different learning styles during each instructional lesson. I need to meet the needs of all my students every lesson and every day. In fact, research shows descriptive feedback to be the most significant instructional strategy to move students forward in their learning. Descriptive feedback provides students with an understanding of what they are doing well, links to classroom learning, and gives specific input on how to reach the next step in the learning progression. In other words, descriptive feedback is not a grade, a sticker, or "good job!" A significant body of research indicates that such limited feedback does not lead to improved student learning.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an essential tool for students monitoring and closing achievement gaps between grade level students. My frame work of RTI simply revisits a student’s objective and I create the new



lesson to be more specific and more individualized. Students comprehend more, and get positive reinforcement through this module. RTI holds myself, and all other educators accountable for their monitoring of their own students. It also, gives teachers a chance to analyze a student's work beyond a grade. I want to "get inside" my students brain when I'm analyzing their work. RTI follows a number of core assumptions:

- 1.The educational system can effectively teach all children
- 2.Early intervention is critical to preventing problems from getting out of control
- 3.The implementation of a multi-tiered service delivery model is necessary
- 4.A problem solving model should be used to make decisions between tiers
- 5.Research based interventions should be implemented to the extent possible
- 6.Progress monitoring must be implemented to inform instruction
- 7.Data should drive decision making –(RTI.Org)

Metacognition is the ability to "think about your own thinking". My ability to be a reflective learner, as well as a lifelong learner stems from the notion of metacognition. I constantly evaluate and re-evaluate my teaching. My students will become metacognitive learners alongside of me. Journaling is a huge factor in reflective practices. My students are given time each and every day to journal. Whether it's, journaling about their day, their new skill, their new discovery, or simply something interesting to them. I continually model reflective practices and share my goals. I also share celebrations with my students because we are all here to achieve in school. My standard in the classroom is for students to achieve academic proficiency in all content areas. Through the efforts of metacognition all of my students can achieve their goals.