


**THE FOUR BLOCKS**  
LITERACY MODEL


Using the Four Block Literacy Framework  
for  
Students with Significant Disabilities Who Use  
Augmentative Communication Devices

Charting the C's 2014  
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Wayzata Public Schools



**THE FOUR BLOCKS**  
LITERACY MODEL

- Developed in 1989-91 by Patricia Cunningham, Dorothy Hall & Margaret Defee
- First Implemented in 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes in North Carolina
- Recently expanded to include models for:
  - Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade – “Building Blocks”
  - 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes – “Big Blocks”




**THE FOUR BLOCKS**  
LITERACY MODEL  
PHILOSOPHY

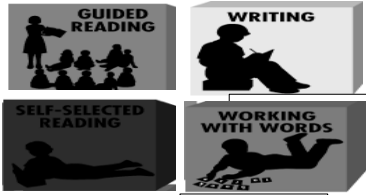
Children are different in the way they learn, so several different approaches are incorporated daily into reading/writing instruction.

Children enter our classes at varying language & literacy levels, so each instructional block is as multi-level as possible.


Children have different personalities/needs, so substantial instructional support is provided to students who struggle and who need challenge.



**THE FOUR BLOCKS**  
LITERACY MODEL  
FRAMEWORK




<http://www.four-blocks.com/1-3.htm>




Children With Disabilities: Reading & Writing the Four Blocks Way Developed by Karen Erickson & David Koppenhaver

- Implemented at the Center for Literacy & Disability Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  - Students with Communication Disorders
  - Students with Moderate – Severe Cognitive Impairments
  - Students with Learning Disabilities




Adapting the Four Block Model for Students with Disabilities

- Disability type or label does not provide instructional information
- Consider the areas of significant difference:
  - Communication
  - Cognition
  - Physical abilities
  - Senses
  - Affect
  - Attention



### Adapting the Four Block Model for Students with Disabilities

- Adapt only in the areas of need.
- Try to develop adaptations that do not significantly change the objective of the activity.
- Multi-level materials are available in each block.
- Use assistive technology as a tool to support students in Four Block activities.



### Guided/Shared Reading Block

- Goals are to increase students'
  - Build background knowledge, oral vocabulary meanings, and comprehension skills
  - Learn concepts about print
  - Reading fluency through repeated readings
  - Make connections between the spoken word and print
  - Sharing a love of reading

### What is Shared Reading?

- Typically done in small groups with an adult reading
- Important to use many types of text
  - Fiction, non fiction, poetry, plays, newspapers
- The goal is for the students to own more responsibility while reading
  - Turning the page, saying repeated lines, asking questions, making comments

Vandercook

### Shared and Guided Reading

- Shared Reading
  - Sharing the process of how books work
  - Building language and background knowledge
  - Lots of discussion throughout
- Guided Reading
  - Still focusing on language
  - Student taking on more responsibility
  - Guiding students' comprehension of the whole text
  - Teaching strategies to comprehend text

Hanser

### Emergent Readers need books that support....

- Active rather than passive participation
- Building background knowledge/concepts about the world
- Building vocabulary, receptive language and expressive communication
- Seeing the connection between language and print
- Words are separate units made up of letter
- Different punctuation carries meaning
- Getting the notion that reading is worthwhile and enjoyable
- How concepts about print work (book handling)
- How others make meaning from text

Vandercook and Hanser

### Before Reading

- Build or activate background knowledge
  - Kids with disabilities may have limited knowledge due to processing difficulties, inability to recall events, difficulty making connections between different experiences, understanding 2 dimensional pictures represent real life, unable to ask questions about their experiences, unable to actively explore their environment

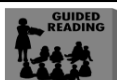
Erickson & Koppenhaver

### Before Reading

- Build or activate background knowledge
  - Enlist the help of parents by asking them to share child's experiences
  - Use pictures and have children sort, categorize, or indicate if they know something about the picture
  - Watch a related video
  - Develop vocabulary essential for comprehension
    - Focus on words that will appear frequently in the child's life
    - Make connections between new and existing vocabulary

### Before Reading

- Setting the Purpose
  - Pick one purpose per reading
    - See handout



### Sample Purposes for Shared Reading

- Knowing when turn the pages
- Talk about the pictures ("Picture Walk")
- Predict what the book is about
- Ask questions
- Make comments
- Point to the words as they are read
- Get an idea for journal writing
- Listen to know when it is your turn to read

### During Reading


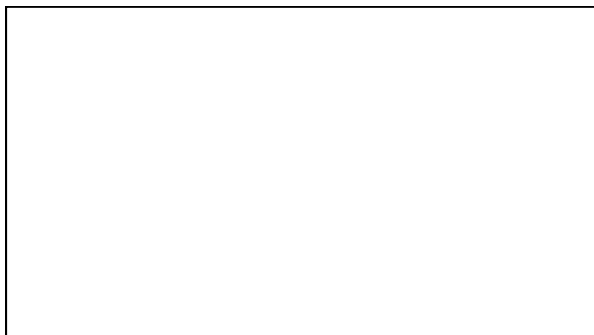
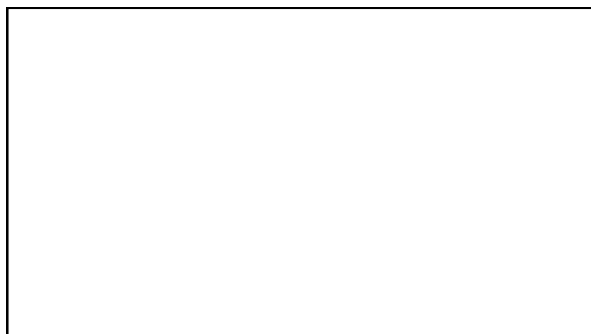
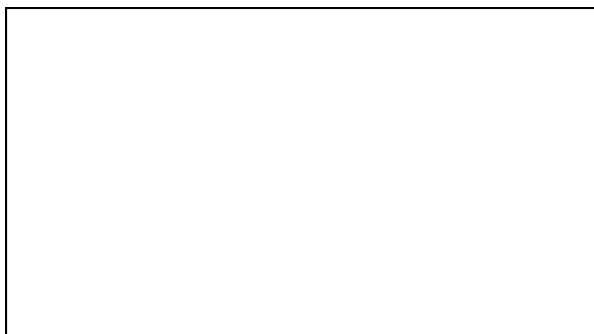
- Stop frequently and talk about the page and the purpose you set
- Remember the primary goal is INTERACTION

### After Reading

- Follow up with the set purpose and informative feedback


### Links

- Tactile Book Directions:  
<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/resources/deaf-blind-model-classroom-resources/tactual-book-kit-directions>
- Powerpoint Books Template:  
<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/resources/deaf-blind-model-classroom-resources/switch-accessible-powerpoint-book-templates-for-students-with-significant-disabilities-including-deaf-blindness>
- Readworks:  
<http://www.readworks.org/books/passages>



**Writing Block**


- **Goals are to improve students' writing skills**
  - Independent writing skills for real purposes
  - Written language skills at an individual pace
  - Expressive language skills by sharing what they've written.



## Emergent Writing

- Writing is valued
- Writing should be for authentic purposes
- Writing is not copying
- Everyone should have a "pencil" and "paper"
- Writing to get students excited-don't worry about errors!

## Alternative Pencils



- Eye-Pointing alphabet displays
- Computer Keyboarding
- Alternate keyboards
- Letter Stamps
- Labelers

## Motivating Students to Write

- Provide Choice
- There should be personal connection
- Incorporate variety

Examples...

Predictable Chart Writing      Writing for real purposes: sign in, charting, waiting list

Shared Writing

Remnant books

Blogging

Journals

Emailing

Writing about pictures      Cards (hallmark/smilebox)

Story Creator


## Links

- Predictable Chart Writing:  
<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/resources/deaf-blind-model-classroom-resources/predictable-chart-writing>
- Remnant Books:  
<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/resources/deaf-blind-model-classroom-resources/creating-using-remnant-books-for-face-to-face-communication-self-selected-writing>
- Partner Assisted Scanning:  
<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/resources/deaf-blind-model-classroom-resources/partner-assisted-scanning>

## Links


- Emergent Literacy Interaction Intervention:  
<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/resources/deaf-blind-model-classroom-resources/Emerg%20Wrtg%20Obs%20Inventory.pdf/view>

## Video



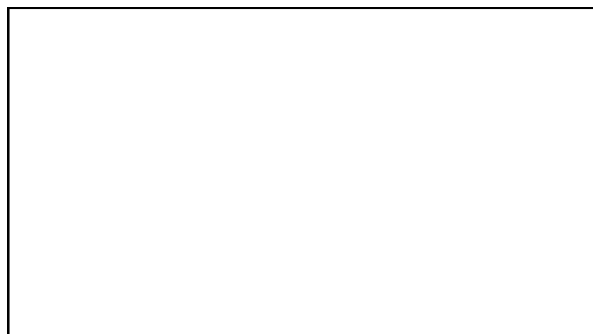
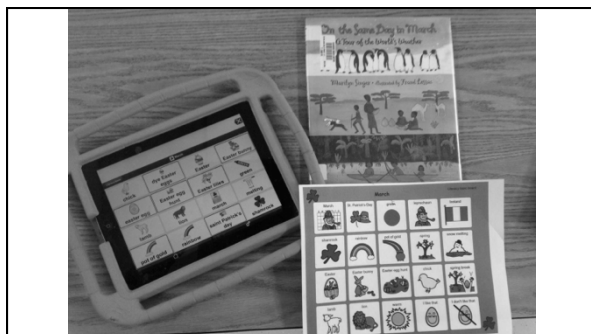
## Self Selected Reading

- **Goals to develop students'**
  - Receptive language by listening to read alouds
  - Skills for selecting interesting reading materials (at student's instructional level)
  - Reading comprehension
  - Expressive language by sharing what they've read
- **Components of this block are**
  - Teacher Read-Aloud (variety of fiction, non-fiction, topics and authors.)
  - Independent, self selected reading & conferences
  - Sharing Time



## Self-Selected Reading Technology

- Use adapted books
- Bookworm
- Choose multi-level books on same subject as classmates are using
- Electronic books such as:
  - Tarheel Reader
  - PowerPoint Books – made by classmates or teacher
- Conferencing:
  - Eye-gaze frame
  - Communication devices



## Links


Tarheel Reader: <http://tarheelreader.org/find/> (login: Literacy!)

Set: <http://www.setbc.org/setbc/accessiblebooks/freebooksforyou.html>

[http://www.priorywoods.middlesbrough.sch.uk/page\\_viewer.asp?pages=Talking%20Story%20Books&pid=75](http://www.priorywoods.middlesbrough.sch.uk/page_viewer.asp?pages=Talking%20Story%20Books&pid=75)

<http://www.pinterest.com/dwest6585/literacy/>

<http://www.pinterest.com/dwest6585/adapted-books/>



## Working With Words

30 minutes

- **Goals are to increase students'**
  - recognition and fluency of high frequency words
  - decoding and spelling of phonetically regular words
- **Components of this block are**
  - Rhyming, Reading & Writing Onset/Rimes
  - Making & Sorting Word Families
  - Using Patterns and ContWord Wall Activities
  - Decoding and Spelling Activities
  - Using patterns and context

### But first...

- Guided alphabet and phonological awareness activities
  - ❑ Point out letters in child's name while reading and/or looking at environmental print (have ABC books in centers)
  - ❑ Singing, Rhyming, and Alliteration (e.g., chore charts, word walls)
  - ❑ Play with letter names and letter sounds throughout the day (sign in, word walls, letter walks)
  - ❑ Segmenting of names for transition activity
  - ❑ Clapping, chanting out sounds/syllables
  - ❑ ABC toys, books, manipulatives, stamps,

### Phonological Awareness

- 20 mn, 3x week can make a dramatic difference in children's awareness
  - ❑

### More Than Just Sight Words

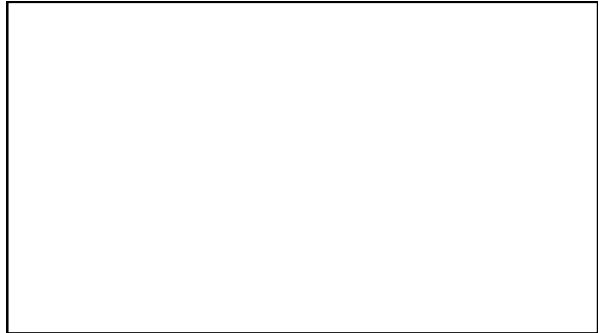
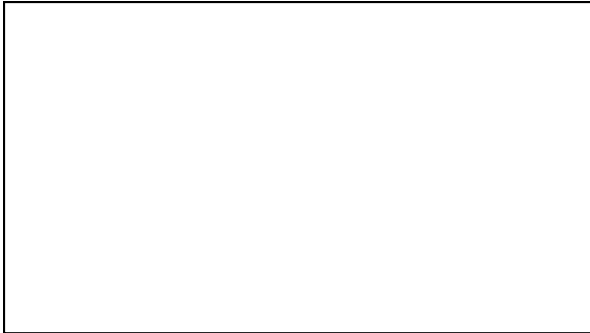
10-12 minutes per day is the most effective

- The best predictor of being able to read words is phonological awareness.
- The best predictor of understanding text is one's knowledge of vocabulary.
- The research says that this is most successful when presented in a group. Students learn from each other.



### Working With Words Ideas

- Portable word wall – corresponds to class word wall\*
  - Color coded on the wall to aid student using eye-gaze frame\*
  - Magnetic letters and index card letters
  - Smartboard activities
  - Letter Stamps
  - Apps
  - Letter tiles
- ADD MORE HERE



### Links

Working with Words:

[http://www.smithsroom.com/working\\_with\\_words\\_the\\_4.htm](http://www.smithsroom.com/working_with_words_the_4.htm)

<http://www.pinterest.com/tiffanymrice/working-with-words/>

<http://fourblock.wikispaces.com/file/view/Working+with+Words+Daily+Activities.pdf>

<http://www.sanjuan.edu/webpages/gguthrie/files/word%20work%20activities.pdf>

