



**DOMINICAN  
UNIVERSITY**  
of CALIFORNIA  
*School of Liberal Arts and Education*

**Balanced Literacy Elementary: The Reader's Workshop**  
**EDUO 9200 3 Semester Credits/Units**  
**Instructor Doug Fannin**  
**[dfannin@dominicancaonline.com](mailto:dfannin@dominicancaonline.com)**

**Course Overview**

**Balanced Literacy** is an approach with a goal of developing lifelong readers and thinkers. It exposes students to the habits of good readers by interacting with many genres and styles of literature. Components of balanced literacy, including the reader's and writer's workshop models, will be explored. Creating effective mini-lessons, grouping students appropriately, and planning effective guided reading lessons will be an integral part of the course.

**Course Objectives**

**By the end of Session 1, participants will be able to:**

Identify the components of *balanced literacy*: the reader's workshop.

1. Read-aloud
2. Independent reading
3. Guided reading
4. Response to literature
5. Reading conferences

**By the end of Session 2, participants will be able to:**

Explore the structure and format of the mini-lesson in the reader's workshop model.

1. Investigate the format of the mini-lesson
2. Identify mentor or anchor texts that can be used to support lessons
3. Assess a mini-lesson for effectiveness

**By the end of Session 3, participants will be able to:**

Plan for and conduct guided reading groups.

1. Explore guided reading as one component of balanced literacy
2. Understand the varying levels of literacy development and how to plan instruction aimed at meeting these individual needs
3. Identify characteristics and behaviors of students at different reading levels
4. Establish guided reading groups through effective assessment

**Materials**

1. Videos:

- *A Morning in a Kindergarten Classroom*
- *A Literacy Program in a K-1 Classroom*
- *Balanced Literacy: 2 Hours 10 Minutes in a Second Grade Classroom*

## 2. Professional Development Materials

- Annotated Content with Essential Questions and Supplementary Resources
- Menu of Key Concepts, Inquiry Questions, and Related Resources

### Session 1: Identifying the Components of Balanced Literacy

#### Overview

Balanced literacy is an approach to teaching reading and writing that attempts to balance the teaching of phonics while exposing students to a rich body of literature through the use of whole language. The skills that all students must learn in order to become effective readers and writers include phonemic awareness (matching sounds and letters), decoding or sounding out words (phonics), advancing vocabulary, practicing reading, and building comprehension skills. The ultimate goal is for teachers to create fluent readers who use reading as a tool to learn.

There are many components to an effective balanced literacy program. Teachers make time during their literacy block to include many of the following components in their instruction. In her article, **Understanding the Language of Balanced Literacy**, Arlyne LeSchack defines several of these components:

- reading aloud - In the balanced literacy model, the teacher reads aloud to the whole class or small groups. The texts are carefully selected from children's literature and a variety of genres are represented. Favorite texts may be reread several times. The model we are using includes "read-alouds" that provide opportunities for students to "turn and talk" to each other about various story-related subjects.
- shared reading - The teacher uses an enlarged text that all the children can see, and involves the students in reading together, perhaps using a pointer. Big books, poems, songs, or the class' own interactive writing may be used for this activity.
- guided reading - Working with small groups who have similar reading levels, the teacher selects and introduces new books and supports the children who are reading the text to themselves. The teacher makes teaching points before, during, and after the reading of the text. When the teacher uses guided reading during a conference, he/she allows the children nearby to benefit from the teaching point provided to one student.
- reader's workshop - The children read on their own, or with a partner, from a wide range of materials. Most important is that some of the reading should be exactly at their reading level. If a student is going to learn to read by reading, then the books have to be "just right." This is also called independent reading.

#### Assignment for Session One

Explore the information about balanced literacy presented on the various websites

#### COMPONENTS of BALANCED LITERACY

1. Identify the components of balanced literacy that you already incorporate into your teaching.
2. To what extent have they been effective?

3. Cite your evidence.
4. Which components do you need to investigate further?
5. What are your thoughts about implementing these additional components?
6. What are the challenges of incorporating a balanced literacy program?
7. What will be the benefits of developing a balanced literacy program?
8. After coming to an understanding of these components, create a graphic organizer in Microsoft Word that clearly explains what you have learned. Your organizer should list the components and briefly summarize the role of each in a balanced literacy classroom. (Take a look at: <http://www.mywebspiration.com>, a free online site for creating graphic organizers. Organizers created on this site can be easily shared with others.)

### Resources for Session 1

#### 1. Videos:

- [\*A Literacy Program in a K-1 Classroom\*](#)

#### 2. Articles:

- [The Value of the Balanced Literacy Components](#)
- [Standing on a Rock or a Balance Beam? Looking at the Foundations of Literacy](#)

#### 3. Additional Online Resources:

- [Components of a Balanced Literacy Program](#)
- **Balanced Literacy: Teaching the Skills And Thrills of Reading**  
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb20/vol77/num05/The-Skill,-Will,-and-Thrill-of-Reading-Comprehension.aspx>
- **Balanced Literacy**  
<https://www.readinga-z.com/literacy-frameworks/balanced-literacy/>

### Session 2: The Structure of the Mini-Lesson in the Reader's Workshop Model

#### Overview

Through the use of the mini-lesson, the workshop approach allows the teacher to guide students toward meeting standards and building various skills needed to develop their reading and writing proficiency. Teachers conduct workshops by creating learning experiences that model correct reading and writing strategies. Content area texts and various genres of literature are used to anchor the lessons. According to Arlyne LeSchack, both the reading and writing workshops start with a 10-to-15-minute mini-lesson. The mini-lesson has a definite structure. The first part is the connection; the teacher starts by connecting the current lesson to something previously done. Next comes the teaching point, when the teacher states explicitly and repeatedly exactly what she is teaching in this lesson. Next the teacher models or demonstrates exactly what she wants the students to do. Then the active engagement occurs, when all the students try out or discuss what it is they are supposed to do. The last part of the mini-lesson is the link when the teacher tells the students what they will do during the independent work time of the workshop. During this period, the students work independently while the teacher walks around and confers with individual students. After about 30 minutes, the teacher briefly shares, using a student's good work as an example.

Mini-lessons are brief, focused on specific skills, appropriate for the whole class, and allow time to apply the new skill. They are followed by a period of practice via independent or small group work, and then sharing.

### **Assignment for Session Two**

Explore the information about mini-lessons presented on the various websites.

1. Using the mini-lesson format found in the readings, develop a reading mini-lesson for your classroom. Include the lesson the grade level you teach when typing out the lesson, as well as any materials necessary to present the lesson. Deliver the mini-lesson.
2. As part of the mini-lesson you share, cite at least two mentor or anchor texts that would support the lesson. Be sure to identify the title, author, and grade level for which you used it.
3. In what ways can you adapt an anchor or mentor text to make it appropriate for your students who are struggling or lack proficiency?
4. Reflect on the lesson. Why did you choose this mini-lesson?
5. What were the successful parts of the lesson?
6. What might you change, if anything, the next time you present it?
7. What would the next mini-lesson be? Why?
8. In response to your viewing of the video clip, identify the benefits of planning with a colleague.
9. In response to your viewing of the video clip, identify: what you saw, what you wonder, and what you will take and use.
10. How is the Reader's Workshop structured?
11. In what ways does the Reader's Workshop help students to meet Common Core Standards?

### **Resources for Session 2**

#### **1. Videos:**

- [\*A Morning in a Kindergarten Classroom\*](#)
- [\*Balanced Literacy: 2 Hours 10 Minutes in a Second Grade Classroom\*](#)

#### **2. Articles:**

- [Determining What to Teach During the Readers Workshop](#)
- [How to Teach Independence: The Key to Teaching Small Groups in Reading Workshop](#)
- [Readers' Workshop, "The Look"](#)
- [Teaching Effectively Using the Workshop Model](#)

#### **3. Additional Online Resources:**

- [A Closer Look at Reading Mini-lessons](#)  
\*\* (Focus on Slides 5 - 14)

### **Session 3: Guided Reading**

#### **Overview**

Guided reading is the heart of a balanced literacy program. It is a small-group approach to teaching reading where the teacher works with a small group of students with similar reading ability. The book must be at the students' instructional level. The teacher spends the first part of the lesson discussing concepts in the book and scaffolding information. This lays the groundwork for reading success.

To establish an effective guided reading group, teachers must assess and place groups of no more than five or six students with similar needs. Teachers must also account for meaningful activities for the rest of the class while they are working with their guided reading group. Assessment is ongoing, and instruction is differentiated as readers transition from one group to the next when they have achieved a higher level of proficiency.

### **Assignment for Session Three**

**Explore the information about guided reading presented on the various websites.**

1. Develop and present a guided reading lesson in your classroom.

- A. Describe the students you worked with.
  - B. What level were the students?
  - C. What was the focus of the guided reading lesson?
  - D. What text did you use?
  - E. How did you present the lesson?
2. Reflect on the guided reading session.
- A. What went well?
  - B. What would you change for next time?
  - C. What are the next steps for these students?
  - D. In what ways were your students evaluated?

### **Resources for Session 3**

#### **1. Videos:**

- [\*Balanced Literacy: 2 Hours 10 Minutes in a Second Grade Classroom\*](#)

#### **2. Articles:**

- [Conducting Guided Reading Lessons](#)
- [Identifying Students for Placement in Your Guided Reading Groups Part I](#)
- [Identifying Students for Placement in Your Guided Reading Groups Part II](#)
- [Laying the Groundwork for Effective Guided Reading Instruction in Your Classroom](#)
- [Placing Your Students in Guided Reading Groups, Part III](#)
- [The Pros and Cons of Heterogeneous Grouping](#)

### **Assessment**

Plan a content unit for your class employing balanced literacy strategies. Identify the content area. Identify and describe the anchor text(s) you will use for guided reading. What concepts do you plan to teach using this text? Describe the reading skills you will emphasize in your mini-lessons. Which strategies will engage and motivate a diverse group of learners? Describe your formal and informal assessments. What culminating activity will bring this unit together and celebrate student achievement?

### **Supplementary Materials**

**How-To Articles-Early Childhood Literacy**

[Assessing Student Writing](#)

[Author Study: Vera B. Williams](#)

[Breaking the Ice](#)

[Charts in the Classroom \(A Pictorial View\)](#)

[Conduct Parent-Teacher Conferences](#)

[Conducting Guided Reading Lessons](#)

[Create a Fall Bulletin Board](#)

[Creating an Interdisciplinary Unit for Elementary School](#)

[Designing Center Activities](#)

[Establishing Productive Record Keeping Practices](#)

[Get to Know Your Students on the First Day](#)

[Getting Started in Early Literacy With Read Aloud](#)

[Getting Started in Writing Workshop](#)

[Getting Started with Literacy Centers](#)

[Grouping for Guided Reading](#)

[Guided Reading](#)

[Helping Parents Get Ready for Summer Reading](#)

[Helping Struggling Readers](#)

[How to Do a Word Wall](#)

[How to Plan for a Successful End to Your School Year](#)

[Learning Centers in the Early Childhood Classroom](#)

[Make the Home-School Connection at the Beginning of the Year](#)

[Managing Guided Reading Groups](#)

[More Management Tips for Guided Reading Groups](#)

[Planning Mini-Lessons for Writing Workshops](#)

[Survive That First Day](#)

[Teaching Non-Fiction Reading and Writing](#)

[Teaching Young Learners to Cross Check Using Guess the Covered Word](#)

[The Classroom Library](#)

[The Pros and Cons of Heterogeneous Grouping](#)

[Thinking Through Planning Your Curriculum](#)

[Those First Few Weeks Using Shared Reading](#)

[Using Assessment Data](#)

[Using Error Analysis in Reading Instruction](#)

[Using Shared Writing to Teach Writing Skills](#)

[Using the Language Experience Approach to Build Confidence in Early Reader](#)

## **How-To Articles - Upper Grade Literacy**

[Assessing Student Writing](#)

[Assessing Your Students' Writing](#)

[Author Study: Vera B. Williams](#)

[Conducting Guided Reading Lessons](#)

[Connecting Research-Based Reading Practices to New York City's Reading Program](#)

[Determining What to Teach during the Readers Workshop](#)

[Developing Your Classroom Library](#)

[Facilitating Accountable Talk in Your Classroom](#)

[Getting Started in Early Literacy with Read Aloud](#)

[Getting Started in Writing Workshop](#)

[Grouping for Guided Reading](#)

[Helping Parents Get Ready for Summer Reading](#)

[Helping Parents Help Their Children](#)

[Helping Struggling Readers](#)

[How to Assess Small Group Conversation About Text](#)

[How to Confer in Your Writers' Workshop](#)

[How to Make Your Writers' Workshop Work](#)

[How To Quantify Reading Progress With A Letter Grade While Teaching In A Reading Workshop](#)

[How to Set Up a Writing Center](#)

[How to Teach "Hard to Teach" Students](#)

[How to Teach Editing in Your Writers' Workshop](#)

[How to Teach Independence: The Key to Teaching Small Groups in Reading Workshop](#)

[How to Teach Reading through Conferring in Writing](#)

[How to Use Assessment Data to Meet the Needs of Your Students](#)

[Identifying Students for Placement in Your Guided Reading Group \(Part I\)](#)

[Identifying Students for Placement in Your Guided Reading Group \(Part II\)](#)

[Launch an Oral History Project](#)

[Laying the Groundwork for Effective Guided Reading Instruction in Your Classroom](#)

[Managing Guided Reading Groups](#)

[More How to Teach Reading through Conferring in Writing](#)

[More Management Tips for Guided Reading Groups](#)

[Non-Fiction Reading: Grade 3](#)

[On guided reading and readers' workshop](#)

[Placing Your Students in Guided Reading Group \(Part III\)](#)  
[Planning Mini-Lessons for Writing Workshops](#)  
[Preparing Your Middle School Students for the New York State ELA Exam](#)  
[Setting Up Literary Circles \(Book Clubs\)](#)  
[Talk the Talk: How to Look At and Learn from Student Writing Work](#)  
[Teaching Effectively Using the Workshop Model](#)  
[Teaching Non-Fiction Reading and Writing](#)  
[Teaching Spelling Within the New Literacy Curriculum](#)  
[The First 20 Days of Independent Reading](#)  
[The Pros and Cons of Heterogeneous Grouping](#)  
[The Value of the Balanced Literacy Components](#)  
[Third Grade Reading Workshop: Character Study](#)  
[Those First Few Weeks Using Shared Reading](#)  
[Understanding "The Look" of the Readers Workshop](#)  
[Understanding the Language of Balanced Literacy](#)  
[Understanding the Readers Workshop Component of Balanced Literacy](#)  
[Understanding the Writers Workshop Component of Balanced Literacy](#)  
[Using Error Analysis in Reading Instruction](#)  
[Using Shared Writing to Teach Writing Skills](#)  
[Using Your Writers' Workshop to Prepare Students for Standardized Tests](#)  
[Walk the Walk: How to Look at and Learn from Student Writing Work](#)  
[What Is Guided Reading and Why Should I Use It in My Classroom?](#)  
[What to Teach in Your Writers' Workshop](#)

**Suggested Reading:** Fountas, Irene C. and Pinnell, Gay Su (2001). Guiding Readers and Writers: Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing.

**Instructions for coursework submission:**

When you have completed your assignments, post all coursework either Session by Session or all at one time in the Completed Assignments DropBox(s) at the top of the course. You are allowed 9 months to complete the course. If you have questions, you can reach your instructor at [dfannin@dominicancaonline.com](mailto:dfannin@dominicancaonline.com)