Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers

AGENDA

Engage, Reflect, Assess
Discuss Professional Readings: “Align Your Beliefs with Your Practices” (Teaching Essentials excerpt, pp. 37–39) and “Capitalize on the Reading–Writing Connection” (Writing Essentials excerpt, pp. 119–120), and downloadable from www.regieroutman.com

View Video (35 min.)
Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers
- Start with Your Own Stories
- Organize an Outstanding Classroom Library
- Let Assessment Inform You: What Do Good Readers and Writers Do?
- Connect Real-World Writing and Reading
- Independent Practice: Student Writing and Reading
- Celebration/Evaluation: Fourth-Grade Writing

Achieve a Deeper Understanding

Try It/Apply It in the Classroom

Professional Reading for Next Session:
"Organize an Outstanding Classroom Library” (Reading Essentials excerpt, pp. 63–77)

PLANNING

Before the Session
- Select an engaging opening activity.
- Review the Try It/Apply It activity from the previous session.
- Preview the video scenes and take notes on the session Notecatcher.
- Read “Align Your Beliefs with Your Practices” (Teaching Essentials excerpt, pp. 37–39) and “Capitalize on the Reading–Writing Connection” (Writing Essentials excerpt, pp. 119–120).

After the Session
- Collect and review participants’ session evaluations.
- Review, reflect on, and revise your plans for the next session based on these evaluations.
- Send a reminder about the professional reading, the Try It/Apply It activity and the date, time, and place of the next meeting.
- Read and prepare to discuss the professional reading for the next session.

RESOURCES

In this Session
- What to Look for in a Classroom: Self-Evaluation and/or Observation Checklist 4; PDN 4-6

On the Website
- Using the Goldilocks Strategy to Choose Books
- Choosing Books for Independent Reading
- Photographs of Classroom Libraries

PDN numbers refer to pages in the Professional Development Notebook.
AGENDA

The time segments listed in the agenda are geared for a 90–120-minute session.

1. **Engage, Reflect, Assess** (10–15 min.)
   - Welcome the participants and perhaps begin with an engaging activity. See the Getting Started Guide, “Ways to Engage in Five Minutes or Less” (pp. 45–46).
   - Begin by saying that in the last session we examined our beliefs about the reading/writing connection and thought about how these beliefs impact our teaching and learning.
   - Ask: “How did it go with the Try It/Apply It activity?” Take time to have teachers share their thoughts and ideas with a partner and/or their vertical teams. You might want to write these talking points on chart paper to guide their conversation (save and revisit these at the end of the professional development program):
     - Identify several schoolwide practices that promote high achievement and several that impede achievement.
     - How do schoolwide beliefs impact your teaching?
     - What have you noticed?
     - What are some possible suggestions for raising schoolwide achievement?

2. **Discuss Professional Reading** (10–15 min.)
   - Discuss “Align Your Beliefs with Your Practices” (Teaching Essentials excerpt, pp. 37–39) and “Capitalize on the Reading–Writing Connection” (Writing Essentials excerpt, pp. 119–120).

3. **Set Goals** (3 min.)
   - Share what participants may expect from the session:
     - Begin to establish and set expectations for a self-sustaining, independent classroom environment for readers and writers.
     - Begin to establish and organize, with considerable student input, an excellent classroom library and reading area.
     - Assess what their students know and do relative to choosing books to read.
     - Use a shared writing assessment to find out what their students know about reading and writing. Ask: “What do good readers do? What do good writers do?” Then adjust your instruction accordingly.
     - Assess what their students know about why people write in their daily lives and what forms that writing takes. Ask: “Why do people write? What do people write?”
4. **Introduce the Video**  
   (2 min.)
   - In this introductory video participants will observe and learn more about setting up a classroom for independent readers and writers at all grade levels. The scenes include a primary teacher's and an intermediate teacher's process and approach to setting up a child-centered classroom library accessible to all students. Teachers use shared writing experiences to assess what students understand about choosing books to read and about the place of writing in the world.

5. **View Video and Take Notes**  
   (30 min.)
   - Refer participants to the session Notecatcher. Remind them to take notes about anything that seems important. Anticipate the participants' responses, questions, and concerns.

6. **Respond to the Video**  
   (10–15 min.)
   - Ask participants to use the Discussion Questions as a way to share their thinking with their small-group and/or whole-group team.

7. **Achieve a Deeper Understanding**  
   (15–20 min.)
   - Invite participants, individually, to read and review the Deeper Understanding charts. The Notes, Teaching Points, and Ongoing Assessments in the charts include the language the teacher in the video used.
   - Ask participant teams to use the Deeper Understanding charts as a basis for discussing the video scenes.
   - Remind participants that this feature was designed to help them connect more deeply with their own notes, observations, and ideas. It challenges learners to continue their team/collegial conversations between sessions, to create lesson plans, and apply learning.

8. **Try It/Apply It in the Classroom**  
   (10–15 min.)
   (Allow 2–3 weeks before the next session.)
   *Ask participants, between this session and the next, to:*

   **PART 1:**
   - Share their reading life with their students (by sharing or starting a reading log or by talking about how they choose the kinds of books and other materials they read) and/or share their writing life (by sharing samples of things they’ve written recently, such as emails, letters, postcards, to-do lists).

   **PART 2:**
   - Examine their classroom library collection for balance of genres and student appeal and input: narrative, fiction, poetry, nonfiction, favorite authors, a variety of interesting reading materials.
Notice how their classroom library organization impacts students’ access to books and motivation to read.

Refer to the “What to Look for in a Classroom” checklist and assess and adjust their classroom’s learning environment.

**PART 3:**

Select one or all of the following topics to write about with their students (shared writing):

- *How do we choose books to read from the classroom library?*
- *What do good writers do?*
- *What do good readers do?*
- *Why do people write? What do people write?*

Use the information gathered from this shared writing to adjust and guide their teaching. See website resources: “Using the Goldilocks Strategy to Choose Books” and “Choosing Books for Independent Reading” for assistance and ideas.

Notice what their students know about authors, genres, reading for understanding, and so on.

Be prepared to share their class-generated shared writings (and their observations about them) with their team at the next session.

**9. Wrap-Up (5–10 min.)**

Celebrate and highlight learning.

Ask participants for feedback on the session. (See Session Evaluations in the **Getting Started Guide**, pp. 49–53).

Post the date, time, and place of the next session.

Ask participants to read for next session, “Organize an Outstanding Classroom Library” (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 63–77).

Encourage vertical, grade-level, and/or partner teams to meet weekly in between whole-group sessions to revisit the videos on the website and the Deeper Understanding charts, and/or plan together and try out new learning. Suggest they can jot down their ideas and thinking on their Response Notes page for easy reference later.

Remind participants to bring any charts, lessons, writing, or student work samples from *Try It/Apply It* to the next session.
SESSION 4  

NOTE CATCHER

VIDEO SCENES  

LENGTH  NOTES & REFLECTION

Start with Your Own Stories
2:57 min.

Organize an Outstanding Classroom Library

• Getting Started: Organizing and Choosing Books to Read from the Classroom Library, Grade 1
  2:48 min.

• Getting Started: Organizing and Choosing Books to Read from the Classroom Library, Grade 4
  5:30 min.

• How Do We Choose Books to Read from the Classroom Library? Grade 1 (Shared Writing Chart)
  3:48 min.
### Session 4

**NOTE**

**CATCHER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VIDEO SCENES</th>
<th>LENGTH</th>
<th>NOTES &amp; REFLECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let Assessment Inform You:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Do Good Readers and Writers Do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What Do Good Readers Do? Grade 1</td>
<td>2:30 min.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What Do Good Writers Do? Grade 1</td>
<td>6:26 min.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect Real-World Writing and Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher as Writer</td>
<td>0:55 sec.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Practice:</td>
<td>0:45 sec.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Writing and Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebration/Evaluation:</td>
<td>2:01 min.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth-Grade Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SESSION 4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What did you notice and wonder about when you observed the teachers share how they set up their classroom libraries?

- What did you observe being taught and assessed?

- What was the teacher doing to begin to help students become independent and successful readers and writers?

- What parts of the Optimal Learning Model ("I do it," "We do it," "You do it") did you observe?
WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CLASSROOM

Self-Evaluation and/or Observation Checklist

You can use this form for collegial observations, ongoing conversations, and self-evaluation.

THE CLASSROOM

☐ Are the bulletin boards or wall and hall displays by and for the students and other audiences? Is student work labeled and displayed everywhere, and is each student’s work unique? Are displays and classroom procedure lists mostly created with and by students, and do they include samples of writing, illustrations, and projects (as opposed to commercial materials)? Is written work error-free or appropriately labeled as “unedited”? Are students using classroom resources for reading, writing, and problem solving? Are visuals such as word walls appropriate and useful, at eye level, or otherwise easily accessible to all students?

☐ Is there a classroom library and cozy reading corner? Is there a balance of fiction, nonfiction, highly engaging books, and other texts attractively displayed and easily accessible? Have the students had a say in organizing the library? Are there classroom procedures in place for choosing books and returning them to the proper place? Is there an attractive reading area where students can read comfortably with a friend? Are there reference books and dictionaries available?

☐ Is there a writing center? Is there an area where students can easily find different kinds of paper and writing supplies? Are there many opportunities for written explorations of a topic of study?

☐ Does the seating and room arrangement allow for collaboration? Are students grouped so they can assist and confer with one another? Is the structure heterogeneous—that is, are students grouped to reflect the total makeup of the classroom?

☐ Is there a meeting area for the class to work as a whole group? Is this area supplied with an easel, chart paper, markers, an author’s chair, and so on?

☐ Does the room look and feel inviting? Are there touches that make the room unique and appealing, such as lamps, cushions in the reading area, an author’s chair, welcome messages by the students, the attractive arrangement and organization of desks, books, and materials?

☐ Would a visitor understand and value the posted work?
THE TEACHER

☐ Are the daily reading and writing opportunities meaningful and relevant? Do students know, understand, and value the purpose and audience for the activity? Do students take responsibility for doing their best work? Is the quality of much of the work excellent?

☐ Is the teacher ensuring success for every student? Is the teacher demonstrating and explaining what students are to do? Are students supported, through shared and guided experiences and appropriate resources, in trying out a task or activity before they are expected to attempt it on their own? Is instruction adjusted and differentiated according to students’ needs and interests? Are English language learners, gifted learners, typical and struggling students, all being challenged and helped to meet their full potential? Are expectations high enough?

☐ Does the teacher value conversation with students and among students? Does the teacher promote purposeful, open-ended talk that is more conversational than interrogational? Does the teacher speak with authority and at the same time respectfully lead and guide students to respond thoughtfully? Are there opportunities for students to turn-and-talk during demonstrations? Is the teacher mostly among students, demonstrating, guiding, and conferring?

☐ Does the teacher use a balance of assessment and evaluation practices? Does the teacher evaluate students regularly, giving them feedback and helping them set goals? Does she use mostly formative assessments (daily work samples, observational data, teacher-made tests) as well as required summative assessments (standardized tests, district assessments)? Are the students shown how and are they able to do self-assessments so they learn to evaluate their own work against a set of criteria (rubric), problem-solve, and set new learning goals?

☐ Does the teacher provide opportunities during the day to celebrate students’ work? Does he focus on students’ strengths before suggesting improvement?

THE STUDENTS

☐ Do the students know and apply the routines and procedures? Do they help establish some routines and procedures with the teacher, assume responsibility for following all of them, use peers as helpers, and undertake some self-management? Is there a well-planned flow from one activity to another? Does the classroom run smoothly even when the teacher is absent?
Are there opportunities for students to work together as well as individually? Are pairs and small groups of students reading, writing, and problem-solving together? Have students been taught and had guided practice in how to work well in a group? Is there time for sharing every day? Do students have ongoing opportunities in various group structures to participate and deliberate and make their voices heard?

Are the children excited about the opportunities for learning in their classroom? Is the tone of the classroom peaceful, happy, and energized? Do students take initiative and choose to go on learning even when it’s not required?

THE WORK

Is teaching and learning focused on comprehending? Do students have frequent opportunities to respond to open-ended questions and participate in high-level discussions? Are reading and writing focused on understanding content as well as on learning sounds, letters, and words? Are children spending most of their time reading and writing meaningful texts (and not only in activities centered on reading and writing)? Can students apply what they are learning to new contexts?

Are curriculum and standards being addressed in a relevant and meaningful way? Is content presented in an interesting and relevant manner, with accommodations made to meet the needs of all students? Is background knowledge provided and vocabulary explained so content to be read, studied, and written makes sense? Is test preparation appropriate—that is, are students taught how to be test wise without being asked to spend an excessive amount of time responding to prompts and taking practice tests?

Is reading focused on a variety of genres and authors, highly engaging texts, and students’ interests? Is there evidence that students are able to select just right books to read independently? How can you tell if students are understanding what they are reading and not just reading words? Is there evidence that students are doing a great deal of focused and intentional reading for enjoyment?

Do students use, apply, and transfer word work to reading and writing across the curriculum? What evidence of this do you see?

Is writing focused on purpose, audience, and content? Are students creating texts with purpose for an authentic audience? Are students learning to respect the reader by focusing on meaning and editing carefully for conventions and spelling? Are students given the opportunity to write in a variety of genres?
Is the independent work the students are doing worthwhile? Are students given purposeful activities that encourage open-ended responses that require them to think and apply their experience and knowledge? If there are learning centers, are they worth the students’ time and is the teacher taking the time to evaluate the work students do?

Do the students have enough choices? Are there opportunities for students to make decisions about their work for the day? Are there some reading and writing activities they can choose themselves? Can students choose their writing topics much of the time?
## Deeper Understanding

The teaching and assessing points reflect the total lesson but not all of these points are on the edited videos you are watching. However, the major points are represented on the edited videos.

### Video Scenes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points</th>
<th>Ongoing Assessment</th>
<th>Questions/Reflections</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The What, Why, and How of Teaching</td>
<td>Informing Our Instruction</td>
<td>For Professional Conversations</td>
<td>What Students Know and Are Able to Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SETTING**

The scenes in this session come from five classrooms in four schools where I was conducting weeklong demonstration teaching and coaching residencies. Each school has a large number of low-income students and students for whom English is a second language. In each school, reading and writing were being taught with a variety of approaches, programs, and materials with a heavy emphasis on skills in isolation (part-to-whole teaching).

**NOTES**

Bond with your students by sharing your own stories. Let yourself be known. Our students are much more likely to trust us and to take risks in their writing and verbal expression when we tell stories that let them know who we are and that show we care about them. I start with a story whenever I am teaching a new group of students and whenever I want to engage them immediately.

We begin with organizing the classroom library because in order for students to become independent readers and writers they must do a great deal of reading (and writing), have access to texts they can and want to read, and have lots of time to read them. This reading time must include teaching, guiding, and especially offering students the opportunity to practice and apply what they are learning. An excellent classroom library, especially when it is well organized with and by students, encourages lots of free choice. In these first scenes, I am talking with first-grade teacher Mary Yuhas, and then, fourth-grade teacher Ginny Vale, who discuss and show

**Start with Your Own Stories**

 bonded with your students by sharing your own stories. Let yourself be known. Our students are much more likely to trust us and to take risks in their writing and verbal expression when we tell stories that let them know who we are and that show we care about them. I start with a story whenever I am teaching a new group of students and whenever I want to engage them immediately.

We begin with organizing the classroom library because in order for students to become independent readers and writers they must do a great deal of reading (and writing), have access to texts they can and want to read, and have lots of time to read them. This reading time must include teaching, guiding, and especially offering students the opportunity to practice and apply what they are learning. An excellent classroom library, especially when it is well organized with and by students, encourages lots of free choice. In these first scenes, I am talking with first-grade teacher Mary Yuhas, and then, fourth-grade teacher Ginny Vale, who discuss and show

**Organize an Outstanding Classroom Library**

 bonded with your students by sharing your own stories. Let yourself be known. Our students are much more likely to trust us and to take risks in their writing and verbal expression when we tell stories that let them know who we are and that show we care about them. I start with a story whenever I am teaching a new group of students and whenever I want to engage them immediately.

We begin with organizing the classroom library because in order for students to become independent readers and writers they must do a great deal of reading (and writing), have access to texts they can and want to read, and have lots of time to read them. This reading time must include teaching, guiding, and especially offering students the opportunity to practice and apply what they are learning. An excellent classroom library, especially when it is well organized with and by students, encourages lots of free choice. In these first scenes, I am talking with first-grade teacher Mary Yuhas, and then, fourth-grade teacher Ginny Vale, who discuss and show

**Find out what students know (check for understanding):**

Tell how your library is organized. Did your teacher leave anything out?

Check that students know what to do and can use appropriate strategies (check for application).

- Can you read all the categories [on the bin]? What could you do as a good reader if you can’t read the words?

**How can an excellent library lessen the need to create “seat work”? (During guided reading and when meeting with small groups or individuals.)**

- Why is it essential to check for understanding before, during, and after a lesson?

**What are the benefits of connecting personally to students?**

- Understand how to use classroom resources (classroom library).

**Begin to self-manage classroom library and organization.**

The globe icon indicates that the example is also available when you visit www.regieroutman.com.
### DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video SCENES</th>
<th>Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points</th>
<th>Ongoing Assessment</th>
<th>Questions/Reflections</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEACHING POINTS</strong></td>
<td>how their libraries are getting organized at the start of the school year. In past years, both teachers had previously done all the organizing for students; now students own the process. Levels help the teacher select guided reading books. However, books are not leveled in libraries in real life. My recommendation is to give children free and open access to your classroom library and to teach children how to choose just right books. The exception would be those few struggling readers who are not yet ready to select appropriate books on their own.</td>
<td><strong>Informing Our Instruction</strong></td>
<td><strong>For Professional Conversations</strong></td>
<td><strong>What Students Know and Are Able to Do</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levels help the teacher select guided reading books. However, books are not leveled in libraries in real life. My recommendation is to give children free and open access to your classroom library and to teach children how to choose just right books. The exception would be those few struggling readers who are not yet ready to select appropriate books on their own.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regie tells the class that she's impressed at how the well students did in organizing their library. “I could tell right away that this was your library.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TEACHING POINTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set up an excellent classroom library to increase students’ reading comprehension, reading choices, and access to books.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organize books, with student input, so students can access them easily.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Help students categorize books, put them in bins, and label the bins (perhaps with picture cues on labels).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When choosing a book (if you can’t read the titles) look at the cover of the books and look through the books in the bins to help determine the category (counting, rhyming, animals, and so on).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Think out loud as you determine a bin’s category: “This is a book about birds. Here are some animals at the ocean. Here are some cats and pandas. Oh! This is the animals bin.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teach what students need. Because students don’t mention using the illustrations to help find/choose a book (or difficulty of reading level), we need to model that next. “The pictures didn’t come out [in student responses]. So let’s do a demonstration about how important it to look at that [the pictures].”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>NOTES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The way the classroom library looks and is organized is a strong indicator of what the teacher values, who the classroom belongs to, and how much students choose to read. Aim for a beautiful library that is content-rich and part of a cozy, eye-catching reading area. Have students carefully write the labels on the bins that house books and reading materials (this provides a more child-centered, unique feel than a word-processed label).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin to use features of fiction and nonfiction texts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use reading strategies in selecting text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do your students know how to choose books they can read? How do you know?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are students selecting books based on topics and interest, or is there an overemphasis on book levels?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do your students know how to choose books they can read? How do you know?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are students selecting books based on topics and interest, or is there an overemphasis on book levels?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers

#### Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING POINTS</th>
<th>Ongoing Assessment</th>
<th>Questions/Reflections</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Organize the classroom library by the categories kids come up with (with teacher guidance): sort classroom books first into fiction and nonfiction and then by topic. Place books in bins by category.</td>
<td>• Informing Our Instruction</td>
<td>• For Professional Conversations</td>
<td>• Identify and sort text by fiction and nonfiction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have bins for favorite authors (students’ and teacher’s).</td>
<td>• What important categories, authors, genres, are underrepresented in the classrooms library (for students’ interests, for the teacher’s needs)? Aim for about 50 percent nonfiction titles/authors.</td>
<td>• How can a library organized with and by students impact students’ desire to read and their access to books and other reading materials?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• With students, make a genre chart as part of your library to ensure kids know the characteristics of different types of books.</td>
<td>• Check to be sure students know how to find the reading materials they seek.</td>
<td>• How might you as a staff learn about new books and magazines?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Check that students are understanding what they read and are reading mostly just right books. (See Reading Essentials, pp. 94–95.)</td>
<td>• Ask students: “How is your library organized? How do you find the books you need or want? What is missing?”</td>
<td>• How might you as a staff acquire books for your classroom libraries?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### TEACHING POINTS

- Organize the classroom library by the categories kids come up with (with teacher guidance): sort classroom books first into fiction and nonfiction and then by topic. Place books in bins by category.
- Have bins for favorite authors (students’ and teacher’s).
- With students, make a genre chart as part of your library to ensure kids know the characteristics of different types of books.
- Check that students are understanding what they read and are reading mostly just right books. (See Reading Essentials, pp. 94–95.)

#### NOTES

- **Plan for and Monitor Independent Readers and Writers Start with Assessment.** This is the broader heading for the next clip, which is almost entirely about first checking what students know about choosing a book to read from the classroom library before teaching them what they need to know. This gentle, specific, and affirming questioning and response is an example of responsive teaching (primarily active involvement, which leads to higher achievement) versus telling teaching (primarily passive listening, which leads to lower achievement).

#### TEACHING POINTS

- Connect the classroom library to becoming a good reader and choosing books to read.
- Connect writing to reading. "See if you can figure it out" (said while beginning to write title of chart, How Do We Choose Books to Read?). "Watch me write. Now I have to see if I got it right" (rereading title). I’ve got to check my writing. Read it with me. "And, later on, "When you’re writing, you always have to reread. I left out a word. I'm going to put a caret here.”
- Record and make visible (on a chart) students’ thinking in order to assess what they know about choosing books to read (so you can validate what they know and see what’s needed for instruction).

#### Video SCENES

- **How Do We Choose Books to Read from the Classroom Library?** Grade 1 (3:48 min.)

- **Connect the classroom library to becoming a good reader and choosing books to read.**
- **Connect writing to reading.** "See if you can figure it out, (said while beginning to write title of chart, How Do We Choose Books to Read?). Watch me write. Now I have to see if I got it right (rereading title). I’ve got to check my writing. Read it with me." And, later on, "When you’re writing, you always have to reread. I left out a word. I’m going to put a caret here.”
- **Record and make visible** (on a chart) students’ thinking in order to assess what they know about choosing books to read (so you can validate what they know and see what’s needed for instruction).

- Think about the students who concern you most. Ask yourself: How did I give them opportunities to talk today? Did they seem actively engaged?
- Use shared writing to assess what your students know about the behavior of good readers and writers. Use their responses as an instructional guide to what they need. As students’ knowledge grows, keep adding to the chart (your evidence of student learning).
- Check that students know how to choose books they can actually read. "What does a good reader do?"
- Probe students’ thinking (so you know what they know and what you need to
**Session 4: Deeper Understanding: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers**

**Teaching Notes and Explicit Teaching Points**

- Tell students the chart is a draft (first thinking). “This chart is going to change as students learn more.”
- Affirm students’ smart thinking (so they and others will incorporate it). “David, that is so smart! Did you hear what he said? He said, ‘I look at the first two pages and see if I want to read the rest.’ You know I do the same thing.”
- Extend students’ thinking to attempt to get more explicit, thoughtful responses. “David, when you are looking at those first two pages, what are you looking for?” “I’m looking for something, like, interesting.” That was really great what you said, because if it’s not interesting who wants to read it?”
- Restate important points students make (to underscore their importance and to encourage others to use the stated strategy).
  - “If you read books that are too hard for you, it doesn’t really help you as a reader. If it’s easy, it’s good. Good for you.”
  - “You look through the whole box. You don’t just take the very first one, right?”
  - “You look at the pictures to help you read the book.”

**Ongoing Assessment**

- Informing Our Instruction
  - “What do you mean by that?” [After a student responds, “Pick up a book and read it” to “How do you choose a book to read?”]
  - “So you pick up a book and read it. What does that mean? What do you do?”
  - “Read the words.” Inviting individual students to share strategies they use. “What else do you do when you’re choosing a book? Anything else that’s not up here [on our chart]? Are we missing anything?”

**Questions/Reflections**

- “What does that mean [that it’s easy]?”
- “How do you use the pictures to help you?”
- “Do you mean . . . , or are you talking about . . . ?”
- “Are you thinking of . . . ?”

**Learning Outcomes**

- Use language that encourages students to think harder and to clarify their thinking: 
  - “What do you mean by that?”
  - “Do you mean . . . , or are you talking about . . . ?”
  - “OK, tell me what you mean when you say . . . Do you mean . . . or . . . ?”
  - “Are you thinking of . . . ?”
  - “What does that mean [that it’s easy]?”
  - “How do you use the pictures to help you?”

- Use oral language to communicate ideas. 
- Use listening and observation skills to communicate ideas.
- Struggling readers need more time to read. How can we ensure they do more reading during the school day?
- Use pictures to comprehend the text.
# Deeper Understanding: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers

## Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video Scenes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Intermediate Grades (no video)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points

- **The What, Why, and How of Teaching**
  - **Notes**
  - For grades 2 and above, the process is similar to what you have just seen in grade 1. See below for samples of charts from intermediate grades.

## Ongoing Assessment

**Ways We Choose Books**
- genre
- author
- interesting cover
- reading the book
- recommended by a friend
- interesting title
- award winners
- favorite series
- illustrations
- books from videos

**Why We Abandon Books**
- not interesting
- not right genre
- too difficult
- too easy
- too slow moving
- overly descriptive
- too many things going on
- not the right author
- disappointed in author
- too long
- too short

## For Professional Conversations

- **Questions/Reflections**
  - What do your students’ responses say about the teaching that has occurred?
  - Why is it important for students to verbalize and to record their thinking?
  - Why is it important to model and show examples from your life?

## Learning Outcomes

- **Learning Outcomes**
  - Self-select text for a variety of purposes.
  - Discuss and share favorite authors, books, and genres with others. Explain reasons for choices.
  - Begin to understand the use of informational texts such as book reviews.
  - Self-monitor reading accuracy at the instructional level (94%–96%) and independent reading level (97%–100%).
  - Apply different reading strategies to self-selected texts.
  - Apply different reading rates to match text.
NOTES
It is fall in an urban, diverse, first-grade classroom, and phonics is the main reading strategy that has been taught and practiced. Our goal in a weeklong residency is to get students to also use meaning-based strategies along with phonics.

TEACHING POINTS
• Review and affirm what students know about what good readers do. (We reread the shared writing chart we began the previous day, What a Good Reader Does.)
• Elicit what one student did to figure out a word (like) so other students will try the strategy when they read. “Cesar, what was the hard word you figured out [in guided reading group]? It’s on the word wall here.” Like. And how did you figure that out?” [No response.]
• Review what students did that worked in figuring out a word so they will do it again. “Remember how we kept going through the pages of the book because you [a group of four] kept saying ‘Danny looks red’ but that didn’t make sense with the story. And finally when you looked at the word, all of you and then we looked at the story, we looked at the word it had to be like because was the one that made sense.”
• Celebrate one student’s word-solving strategy: to “think.” “Wow, and I’m going to put a star here [on the chart] because that is what you did. Good readers think. Kids, you’re not just sounding out words. You’re thinking and it has to make sense.”

NOTES
In another classroom, students’ initial responses on our shared writing chart (before they write) indicate limited knowledge about writing meaningful texts. Until now, writing has concentrated on learning letters and sounds. Notice how children’s knowledge grows as they observe teacher demonstration writing, write their own continuous texts with the goal of publishing their stories for the classroom library, and revisit what good writers do by reviewing, with guidance, the teacher’s demonstration writing.

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers

SESSION 4: DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: SETTING UP THE CLASSROOM FOR INDEPENDENT READERS AND WRITERS
DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers

### Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points

**The What, Why, and How of Teaching**

Notice the chart at the top right in a second-grade classroom. What Do Smart Writers Do? The students who created that chart were exactly like these first graders a year ago. Notice from the responses on the chart how knowledgeable they are as second graders, a tribute to their teacher’s growing knowledge and her shift in beliefs and practices from mostly writing exercises in isolation to authentic daily writing of continuous texts for meaningful audiences and purposes.

**TEACHING POINTS**

- Connect publishing to writing interesting texts. “If we’re publishing, you’re doing all the things that good writers do.”
- Encourage students to do what good writers do by restating important student contributions. Use the word wall or a chart if you don’t know how to spell a word.”
- Affirm and acknowledge students who try out what you’ve been teaching (so they will do it again and other students will do it). “Raise your hand if you did that [reread story before starting to write again, add a title].”
- Revisit and reread demonstration writing to point out what a good writer does that students haven’t yet noticed but are ready to learn. “What do we call this?” [I reread the title to my demonstration writing story, “Getting to Love Norman”]. After a student responds, “Title,” I add “add a title” to our chart.
- Record and shape all meaningful student responses. “They read it again. “I’m going to use a big word here, reread....I’m going to put a star here [next to the word] because this is so important.” (See shared writing chart for all recorded responses.)
- Connect a writing action (crossing out) to a meaningful purpose (revision). “Good writers change their minds.” And, “I put in a better word. [I reread from my demonstration writing story and explain why I changed shiny to furry].” The word shiny wasn’t the right word. It didn’t sound right.”
- Set the expectation that giving an oral response requires thinking before speaking. “Now think before you put your hand up. If you hand is up, that means you know.”

### Ongoing Assessment

**Informing Our Instruction**

Check that students are trying out what you are teaching. (This also sends the message that you expect this behavior.)

- “How many of you did that yesterday?” [After student contributes “use the word wall.”] And, again, later, “Raise your hand if you put a title in your writing yesterday?”
- Revisit demonstration writing as a scaffold to jump-start students’ thinking and to assess what they notice. “What did I do here?” [I read and show crossed out line where I changed my mind and revised in the process of writing my draft.] Why did I do it?”
- Use what a student has done as a good writer to nudge others to do the same. “One of you yesterday when you were reading your writing over [in a public conference] had left out a word. And what did we do? Who remembers?”

### Questions/Reflections

**For Professional Conversations**

- How can you connect assessment with instruction when you do a shared writing with students? Why is this valuable for maximizing instruction and learning?

---

### Learning Outcomes

**What Students Know and Are Able to Do**

These are examples of shared writing to investigate what students know about writing.

---

**Video SCENES**

**Let Assessment Inform You**

- **What Do Good Writers Do? Grade 1 continued**

---

**SESSION 4: DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: SETTING UP THE CLASSROOM FOR INDEPENDENT READERS AND WRITERS**

---
DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers

Video

SCENES

Notes

Students see us as readers but rarely as writers. Share the kinds of writing you do in your life—notes, emails, lists, letters to parents, and so on. Bring in samples of your writing, and talk about why you write and what kinds of writing you do.

Teaching Points

• Name some of the types of writing you do and why you do it. “I was writing those notes to remember . . . I made a list so I wouldn’t forget . . . to thank someone . . . to make someone feel better . . .”
• Connect writing to life. “Think about the writing that your mom does, that your dad does . . . Do you think that writing is just something that people do in school or do people do it at their jobs? Do they do it in their daily life?”
• Show that authors write for readers. “This one is called Joe Louis: America’s Fighter, by David Adler [show book] and he writes wonderful books for kids. He writes biographies.”

A “What Do Good Writers Do” chart in progress, indicating students’ growing knowledge about the writing–reading connection.

Helping students make the connection between writing and reading: writers write for readers.

Notes

To assess if students have connected writing in school with real-world writing and to help them forge that connection, we begin by talking about and recording (through shared writing) the reasons people write and the forms this writing takes. Another equally important purpose is to help students and teachers see many varied, authentic possibilities for writing and to connect that writing with an audience of readers. During this scene, when I share two books with students, I have carefully selected them for cultural relevance, high interest, and literacy quality.

Teaching Points

• Show that authors write for readers. “This one is called Joe Louis: America’s Fighter, by David Adler [show book]; he writes wonderful books for kids. He writes biographies.”

A “What Do Good Writers Do” chart in progress, indicating students’ growing knowledge about the writing–reading connection.

Helping students make the connection between writing and reading: writers write for readers.

Notes

Students see us as readers but rarely as writers. Share the kinds of writing you do in your life—notes, emails, lists, letters to parents, and so on. Bring in samples of your writing, and talk about why you write and what kinds of writing you do.

Teaching Points

• Name some of the types of writing you do and why you do it. “I was writing those notes to remember . . . I made a list so I wouldn’t forget . . . to thank someone . . . to make someone feel better . . .”
• Connect writing to life. “Think about the writing that your mom does, that your dad does . . . Do you think that writing is just something that people do in school or do people do it at their jobs? Do they do it in their daily life?”
• Show that authors write for readers. “This one is called Joe Louis: America’s Fighter, by David Adler [show book] and he writes wonderful books for kids. He writes biographies.”

A “What Do Good Writers Do” chart in progress, indicating students’ growing knowledge about the writing–reading connection.

Helping students make the connection between writing and reading: writers write for readers.

Notes

To assess if students have connected writing in school with real-world writing and to help them forge that connection, we begin by talking about and recording (through shared writing) the reasons people write and the forms this writing takes. Another equally important purpose is to help students and teachers see many varied, authentic possibilities for writing and to connect that writing with an audience of readers. During this scene, when I share two books with students, I have carefully selected them for cultural relevance, high interest, and literacy quality.

Teaching Points

• Name some of the types of writing you do and why you do it. “I was writing those notes to remember . . . I made a list so I wouldn’t forget . . . to thank someone . . . to make someone feel better . . .”
• Connect writing to life. “Think about the writing that your mom does, that your dad does . . . Do you think that writing is just something that people do in school or do people do it at their jobs? Do they do it in their daily life?”
• Show that authors write for readers. “This one is called Joe Louis: America’s Fighter, by David Adler [show book] and he writes wonderful books for kids. He writes biographies.”

A “What Do Good Writers Do” chart in progress, indicating students’ growing knowledge about the writing–reading connection.

Helping students make the connection between writing and reading: writers write for readers.

Notes

To assess if students have connected writing in school with real-world writing and to help them forge that connection, we begin by talking about and recording (through shared writing) the reasons people write and the forms this writing takes. Another equally important purpose is to help students and teachers see many varied, authentic possibilities for writing and to connect that writing with an audience of readers. During this scene, when I share two books with students, I have carefully selected them for cultural relevance, high interest, and literacy quality.

Teaching Points

• Name some of the types of writing you do and why you do it. “I was writing those notes to remember . . . I made a list so I wouldn’t forget . . . to thank someone . . . to make someone feel better . . .”
• Connect writing to life. “Think about the writing that your mom does, that your dad does . . . Do you think that writing is just something that people do in school or do people do it at their jobs? Do they do it in their daily life?”
• Show that authors write for readers. “This one is called Joe Louis: America’s Fighter, by David Adler [show book] and he writes wonderful books for kids. He writes biographies.”

A “What Do Good Writers Do” chart in progress, indicating students’ growing knowledge about the writing–reading connection.

Helping students make the connection between writing and reading: writers write for readers.

Notes

To assess if students have connected writing in school with real-world writing and to help them forge that connection, we begin by talking about and recording (through shared writing) the reasons people write and the forms this writing takes. Another equally important purpose is to help students and teachers see many varied, authentic possibilities for writing and to connect that writing with an audience of readers. During this scene, when I share two books with students, I have carefully selected them for cultural relevance, high interest, and literacy quality.

Teaching Points

• Name some of the types of writing you do and why you do it. “I was writing those notes to remember . . . I made a list so I wouldn’t forget . . . to thank someone . . . to make someone feel better . . .”
• Connect writing to life. “Think about the writing that your mom does, that your dad does . . . Do you think that writing is just something that people do in school or do people do it at their jobs? Do they do it in their daily life?”
• Show that authors write for readers. “This one is called Joe Louis: America’s Fighter, by David Adler [show book] and he writes wonderful books for kids. He writes biographies.”

A “What Do Good Writers Do” chart in progress, indicating students’ growing knowledge about the writing–reading connection.

Helping students make the connection between writing and reading: writers write for readers.
**SESSION 4: DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: SETTING UP THE CLASSROOM FOR INDEPENDENT READERS AND WRITERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points</th>
<th>Ongoing Assessment</th>
<th>Questions/Reflections</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The What, Why, and How of Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explain vocabulary necessary for understanding important concepts. “What’s a biography? It’s a story of a person’s life.” And, “People write obituaries when somebody dies. They tell all about that person’s life.”</td>
<td>Attempt to get students to clarify their thoughts (so you can understand their thinking and what, if any, support they need):</td>
<td>For Professional Conversations</td>
<td>What Students Know and Are Able to Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nonfiction.</em> “Nonfiction, OK, good. And… one of the reasons that people write is to give information to tell you things… Maps give you information…charts…calendars [write on chart].”</td>
<td>• “Give me an example.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Write for own purpose (to communicate with friends).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scaffold and expand students’ responses. “When…there are all kinds of facts in the books, true things, what do we call that?” “Nonfiction.”</td>
<td>• “Tell me a little more about that.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Write in a variety of forms/genres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide options for writing choices. “Why can’t they [the students] write their own joke books and magazines and information and reports?”</td>
<td>• “You’re on the right track.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Select from a wide range of writing topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extend writing purposes beyond the classroom. “I want you to ask your parents tonight how do they use writing in their life?”</td>
<td>• “Who can tell me more?”</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Maintain focus on a specific writing topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connect writing parents do to real-world writing. Record and shape responses: invitations, email, bills, applications.</td>
<td>• “Where else can you find information? If you wanted to write information for somebody what, where could it be?”</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Use personal experience and observation to support ideas for writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show authentic examples (written by other students) to connect writing purpose with writing form and audience: rules of life, Welcome to Second Grade, advice to other students, playground rules.</td>
<td>Assess that students can justify responses (this pushes their thinking):</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Publish texts in various ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connect writing parents do to real-world writing. Record and shape responses: invitations, email, bills, applications.</td>
<td>• “Why is that important?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Connect Writing and Reading continued</em></td>
<td>• “Why does that matter?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Connect Writing and Reading continued</em></td>
<td>• “Why do people write their life stories down?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Connect Writing and Reading continued</em></td>
<td>Provide information in your question to help scaffold student’s response. “If you want to read something for entertainment what might you read?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Connect Writing and Reading continued</em></td>
<td>Make sure students know why people write in particular forms/types of writing (so they come to see that people write for a purpose and audience):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Connect Writing and Reading continued</em></td>
<td>• “Why do people write their life stories down?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Connect Writing and Reading continued</em></td>
<td>• “Why do you think their audience was? Who did they write this for?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Connect Writing and Reading continued</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES
When students are invested and know exactly what to do during independent practice, they are completely focused and engaged. This scene shows what that engagement and focus looks like (an expectation for all grade levels) for students as writers (as well as teachers as writers) and readers.

This scene takes place after fourth-grade students have written “life story” drafts. Up until now students did not see themselves as writers, did not write for an authentic audience or purpose, and did not write daily. What writing they did was focused on conventions, prompts, and test preparation. Teachers reported that standardized test scores were very low.

Students were used to connecting good writing mostly with correctness and conventions (handwriting, neatness, skipping lines, getting it “perfect”), which has limited their writing fluency, engagement, and achievement. This was the first time that students had been given topic choice and were asked to focus on the meaning and quality of their writing along with conventions.

This celebration/evaluation time serves two purposes. First, to help students recognize what they have done well, and second, to see what they value in writing, which we can then use to guide future instruction. Because these students had such low confidence as writers, it was especially important to celebrate and affirm what they had done well.

Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The What, Why, and How of Teaching</th>
<th>Ongoing Assessment</th>
<th>Questions/Reflections</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use this time for formative assessment (roving conferences, taking anecdotal notes, conferring with individual or small groups).</td>
<td>Assess, affirm, and extend students’ learning:</td>
<td>• How can you be sure that students are not just sitting quietly and looking like they are engaged but that they are actually understanding and problem-solving the text?</td>
<td>What Students Know and Are Able to Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers

VIDEO SCENES

Independent Practice:
Student Writing and Reading (0:45 sec.)

Celebration/Evaluation:
Fourth-Grade Writing (2:01 min.)

Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The What, Why, and How of Teaching</th>
<th>Ongoing Assessment</th>
<th>Questions/Reflections</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess, affirm, and extend students’ learning:</td>
<td>• How many of you think you did some of your best writing?</td>
<td>• Why do you think you did a better job?</td>
<td>What Students Know and Are Able to Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How many of you think you did some of your best writing?</td>
<td>• How come you did a good job today?</td>
<td>Buba: “I put my mind to it, I ignore people talking to me.”</td>
<td>• What do you notice about how an overfocus on conventions has impacted these students as writers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How come you did a good job today?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Michael: “I put my mind to it, I ignore people talking to me.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney: “I really thought about it.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Why did you put your mind to it? When I am writing, writing is such hard work that I have to put my mind to it. You said a really smart thing.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And also it was a pretty important thing, the story you told.” Michael: “Because it’s not messy.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What made you take the time to make it neater? Did you care about what you were writing about? That usually makes the difference.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SESSION 4: DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: SETTING UP THE CLASSROOM FOR INDEPENDENT READERS AND WRITERS**

**Video SCENES**

Celebration/ Evaluation: Fourth-Grade Writing continued

**DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Setting Up the Classroom for Independent Readers and Writers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points</th>
<th>Ongoing Assessment</th>
<th>Questions/Reflections</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The What, Why, and How of Teaching</td>
<td>Informing Our Instruction</td>
<td>For Professional Conversations</td>
<td>What Students Know and Are Able to Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buba: “It was my best thinking.”

“Were you interested in what you were writing about? When I am interested in what I am writing about, I do my best work. I put my mind to it just the way you said that.”

Clarify student’s understanding of revision:

- “That’s not a mistake. You were fixing it up to make it clearer for the reader. We call that revising. That’s what good writers do.”

Students demonstrate their pride as authors.
SESSION 4

RESPONSE NOTES

Engage,
Reflect,
Assess,
Celebrate!

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
Engage,
Reflect,
Assess,
Celebrate!