Literary Learning
The Newsletter for Vermont's English Language Arts Educators and Supporters

VERMONT
AGENCY OF EDUCATION

Winter 2024

How to Access this Newsletter:

- ✓ Subscribe to our listserv
- ✓ Request subscription by emailing Emily Leute (your name will be added to a Listserv)
- ✓ The *AOE Weekly Field Memo*
- ✓ The AOE Website: English Language Arts and Literacy Content Page

Early Literacy Professional Learning with Dr. Kate Beauchat

Over the past couple of years, educators have been participating in an Early Learning Networked Improvement Community (ELNIC) with researchers/subject matter experts Dr. Nell Duke and Dr. Sharon Walpole to improve literacy instruction in foundational skills and formative assessment practices in PreK-3rd grade. Learn more about the ELNIC and Dr. Sharon Walpole's work in the May 2023 issue of Literacy Learning. The latest addition to this literacy powerhouse is Dr. Kate Beauchat, early literacy expert.

Dr. Beauchat joined the ELNIC this year as the prekindergarten compliment to Dr. Walpole's excellent work with educators of students in grades K-3. The focus of the sessions I have attended so far has been oral language and vocabulary development, which early educators are uniquely positioned to support prior to students entering kindergarten. This helps level the playing field, as students' language development can differ greatly based on such factors as home environments.

We have heard a lot about how reading is not a natural process, hence the importance of teaching in a way that is reflective of the science behind how the brain learns to read (explicitly, systematically, etc.). Beauchat reminds us that language development, however, *is* natural; it is a natural instinct of humans to communicate. Since literacy is based upon translating oral language into written word, oral language is an important precursor to learning how to read and can be supported by early educators.

Beauchat introduced the Word Walk strategy for teaching vocabulary through the use of storybook reading in the classroom. She explained that so-called Tier 2 words are the most appropriate for this strategy, as children are exposed to Tier 1 words in everyday speech and Tier 3 words in disciplinary content instruction (Tier 2 words are those that are high-frequency words in children's literature, or written language, but they are not high-frequency words in everyday speech, or oral language). Word Walk is an instructional strategy that is implemented over two days; on each day, there are actions to take before, during, and after reading.

On Day 1 of Word Walk, the "before reading" activities begin with the teacher introducing a specific written word with an accompanying visual (vocabulary cards with pictures work well). The teacher says the word and asks the children to repeat it. Then, the teacher gives the children a child-friendly definition of the word and demonstrates an action they should do when they hear the word in the story. Finally, the children repeat the word with the action. During reading, the teacher pauses to see if children notice when the word is read, performs the action for the word, and restates the child-friendly definition. After reading, the teacher reintroduces the word

with the visual and the action and asks the children to repeat the word and action. Once again, the teacher provides the child-friendly definition. Then, the teacher goes back into the book to talk about how the word was used in the context of the story. The teacher then provides examples of using the word outside the context of the story. Finally, the teacher asks the children to say the word one more time.

On Day 2, the teacher reintroduces the word and visual before reading. Then, the teacher says the word and performs the action, followed by the children doing the same. The teacher then asks the children if they want to make any comments about the word. During reading, the teacher pauses whenever the word is read and provides the child-friendly definition. The teacher then asks the children to discuss how the word is used in the context of the book. After reading, the teacher follows the same steps as in Day 1, with the following exceptions: instead of the teacher providing examples of using the word outside the context of the story, the teacher asks the children for those examples. Also, the teacher asks the students to say the word they have been learning as well as define it.

For a more detailed description of this strategy, see: Blamey, Katrin and Beauchat, Katherine. (2011). WORD WALK Vocabulary Instruction for Young Children. The Reading Teacher. 65. 71-75.

Rationale for Content Subjects to Study the Science of Reading

By Robert Frantum-Allen, MA, CSLT Public Consulting Group

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the role of content teachers, encompassing science, social studies, and humanities, is expanding beyond subject matter expertise. It's time to delve into the science of reading and understand why this knowledge is indispensable for content educators.

Literacy Across Disciplines: The boundaries between subjects are becoming more porous. A science teacher may guide students through complex texts, a social studies instructor may explore historical documents, and humanities educators may delve into intricate literary works. Proficiency in the science of reading equips content teachers to navigate these diverse texts effectively.

Enhancing Comprehension Skills: Reading isn't confined to English classrooms. Content teachers play a crucial role in developing students' comprehension skills. Understanding the science of reading enables them to implement evidence-based strategies that enhance students' ability to grasp and interpret intricate subject-specific texts.

Supporting Diverse Learners: Every student is unique, with distinct learning styles and needs. Content teachers armed with knowledge about the science of reading can employ differentiated instruction to support diverse learners, ensuring that each student has the tools necessary to succeed.

Breaking Down Complex Texts: Scientific journals, historical documents, and literary masterpieces can be intimidating. The science of reading provides content teachers with the expertise to break down complex texts, making them accessible to students at varying reading levels.

Equipping Students for Lifelong Learning: The ability to read critically and comprehend complex texts is a skill that transcends academic disciplines. Content teachers who understand the science of reading contribute to equipping students for lifelong learning, preparing them for success beyond the classroom.

Meeting Educational Standards: As educational standards increasingly emphasize literacy across subjects, content teachers must adapt. The science of reading aligns with these standards, ensuring that educators are equipped to meet the evolving requirements of modern education.

Addressing Literacy Gaps: While the major reason why a student will struggle with comprehension is their ability to decode text, the number two reason for struggling with comprehension is lack of background knowledge. For decades science, social studies and humanities have been de-emphasized in the elementary classroom. On the contrary, content teachers, often the unsung heroes in literacy development, can play a pivotal role in closing the knowledge gaps.

Creating Literacy-Rich Classrooms: A classroom that values and prioritizes literacy benefits every student. Content teachers, by integrating the science of reading into their teaching practices, contribute to creating literacy-rich environments that foster a love for learning.

Personal and Professional Growth: Finally, learning the science of reading is an investment in personal and professional growth. It broadens the skill set of content teachers, making them more effective educators and lifelong learners.

The Vermont AOE has partnered with Public Consulting Group LLC to provide access to six [modules centered around the science of reading](). *Module 5: Developing Vocabulary* and *Module 6: Increasing Reading Comprehension* will be of a particular interest for secondary content instructors, as they will provide additional instructional strategies to both grow vocabulary and increase the understanding of text students will be required to read. This doesn't mean that the other modules are not as relevant. *Module 1: Understanding the Science of Reading* provides the necessary background and rationale for the necessary shifts in instruction. Modules 2-4 focus on word level reading, unlocking the mysteries of English that seem to perplex many adults and children.

The science of reading is not an isolated domain for language arts teachers. It's a transformative approach that content educators must embrace to empower their students with the literacy skills essential for success in academics and beyond. As we navigate the future of education, let's bridge the gap between subject areas and cultivate a holistic approach to literacy.

Learn more about the professional learning series on the [AOE's English language arts and literacy webpage]().

Resources

Evidence-Based Literacy Practices – The AOE has published documents that provide information about evidence-based practices recommended in the [What Works Clearinghouse/IES Practice Guides]().

- **Grades K-3 Foundational Skills** ([WWC/IES Foundational Skills Practice Guide]())

Emily Leute
English Language Arts and
   Literacy Specialist
Proficiency-Based
   Learning Team

Vermont Agency of Education
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

PHONE:
(802)828-6598

E-MAIL:
emily.leute@vermont.gov

- o Develop Awareness of the Segments of Sounds in Speech and How They Link to Letters
- o Teach Students to Decode Words, Analyze Word Parts, and Write and Recognize Words
- o Ensure That Each Student Reads Connected Text Every Day to Support Reading Accuracy, Fluency, and Comprehension
- o Teach Students Academic Language Skills, Including the Use of Inferential and Narrative Language, and Vocabulary Knowledge
- **Grades K-3 Comprehension** (WWC/IES Comprehension Practice Guide)
  - o Teach Students How to Use Reading Comprehension Strategies
  - o Establish an Engaging and Motivating Context in Which to Teach Reading Comprehension
  - o Teach Students to Identify and Use the Text's Organizational Structure to Comprehend, Learn, and Remember Content
  - o Select Texts Purposefully to Support Comprehension Development
  - o Guide Students Through Focused, High-Quality Discussion on the Meaning of Text
- **Prekindergarten** (WWC/IES PreK Practice Guide)
  - o Build Children's Knowledge of Letters and Sounds
  - o Intentionally Plan Activities to Build Children's Vocabulary and Language
  - o Use Shared Book Reading to Develop Children's Language, Knowledge of Print Features, and Knowledge of the World

Spotlight on Equity Resources – Educational equity means that every student has access to the resources, opportunities, and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, whatever their race, gender/identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, ability, family background, or family income may be. (Adapted from CCSSO, Leading for Equity.) The newly-updated Spotlight on Equity Resources for English Language Arts provides a list of considerations and resources for the purpose of supporting equity and access while emphasizing high-quality and culturally sustaining learning opportunities for all students.

How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction: Resources for Grades K-3 (Walpole and McKenna) – The authors provide a detailed framework for implementing differentiated small-group instruction over multiweek cycles. Each component of the beginning reading program is addressed—phonological awareness, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In a large-size format for easy photocopying, the book includes dozens of reproducible lesson plans, instructional activities, assessment forms, and other tools.

Professional Offerings and Opportunities

Lexile Webinar – The webinar recording of Making the Most of Lexile Measures in the Classroom is available on the Vermont Data Use website from Demonstrated Success. Participants will grow their understanding of the Lexile framework and learn how the tools on the Lexile® Hub can inform reading instruction and enhance student reading development. This webinar provides practical insights on effectively utilizing Lexile measures to guide book selection, differentiate instruction, and more. Participants will gain actionable strategies and a deeper appreciation for how Lexile measures can positively impact student learning outcomes. Visit the website for other data literacy opportunities.

VERMONT
AGENCY OF EDUCATION