

# Creating a Culture of Readers & Writers: A Process Study



## **Purpose & Overview:**

The focus of this study is on establishing a community of learners who read, write, think, and engage in purposeful talk about their thinking in an environment that encourages sustained engagement and supports approximations and responses. Teachers and students are agentive learners actively constructing meaning and developing increasingly sophisticated skills and knowledge. The goal is to create a focused learning environment that supports the growth of the particular students in this classroom and generates opportunities for learners to be reflective about what and how they are learning.

## Creating a vision for this study:

"And so my priorities, especially early in the year, are to involve each class in a study of who we are as readers and writers and to turn a group of individuals who happen to be in the same room at the same time into a literate community," (Bomer, R., *Time For Meaning*, p. 19).

"In our study we found that all literacy work and learning was a form of identity work. Learners require some sense of self-efficacy – a belief that they could be competent as a certain kind of reader, writer, thinker etc... before they would be motivated to learn the strategies and attempt the tasks associated with that identity," (Smith, M. & Wilhelm, J., *Adolescent Literacy*, p. 241).

"Read a lot and read widely. By reading a lot, you learn to recognize the difference between good writing and bad writing. By reading widely—journalism, poetry, fiction and nonfiction—you find what kind of writing interests you most," (Martin, A. M.)

"When we construct classrooms that place a high value on the strategies and habits that make up our best and most generous vision of a reading life rather than on a narrow canon of literary works, we teach our students to fish instead of catching them a fish. We give them opportunities to develop adaptable, supple minds that can, given a new situation, learn to engage with any text and any community while still drawing upon the familiar strength of their own experience, personality, culture, and values," (Bomer, R., *Time for Meaning*, p. 99).

"By teaching our children to read, think, and talk about their thinking, we enable them not only to have purposeful conversations that construct meaning with others, but also to have raging conversations in their own heads, even when thinking alone. In this way, we create self-sustaining, purposefully literate beings who question, build on the thinking of others, pursue more information, seek out and actually listen to other points of view, and in the end, make up their own minds," (Nichols, M., Comprehension Through Conversation: The Power of Purposeful Talk in the Reading Workshop, p. 103).

"So the challenge is there: We must teach students how to direct their own work for a large chunk of the time we will devote to writing workshop," (Ray, K.W., *The Writing Workshop*, p. 59).

"Teachers always ask, 'But how do I teach my readers who struggle, the students with learning disabilities, those with emotional and behavioral problems, the growing number of [ELLs]?' You teach them the way you teach all students. You respect them as individuals. You hold high expectations for each one of them. You build on their strengths. You find out what their interests are. You make sure they experience immediate success. You give them the best instruction, first-rate materials, real books, challenging curriculum, and you continually evaluate their progress so you know what to teach next," (Routman, R., *Reading Essentials*, p. 8).

## Colorado State Standards

NOTE: Standards and expectations listed reflect those requiring particular emphasis in this study.

NOTE: Since pacing guides are aligned with 2002-2007 CSAP Standards Analysis, use appropriate grade level pacing guides.

## Reading:

**Standard 1**: Students read and understand a variety of materials.

Rationale: The goal for students at all levels is that they know and can use strategies--various ways of unlocking the meaning of words and larger blocks of text--to become successful readers. The strategies are applied in increasingly difficult reading material at each grade level. At all levels, students should be challenged to read literature and other materials that stimulate their interests and intellectual abilities. Reading from a wide variety of texts, both assigned and student selected, provides experience in gaining information and pleasure from diverse forms and perspectives.

- Use comprehension skills such as previewing, predicting, inferring, comparing and contrasting, re-reading and self-monitoring, summarizing, identifying the author's purpose, determining the main idea, and applying knowledge of foreshadowing, metaphor, simile, symbolism, and other figures of speech
- Make connections between their reading and what they already know, and identify what they need to know about a topic before reading about it
- Adjust reading strategies for different purposes such as reading carefully, idea by idea; skimming and scanning; fitting materials
  into an organizational pattern, such as reading a novel chronologically; finding information to support particular ideas; and finding
  the sequence of steps in a technical publication

 Use word recognition skills and resources such as phonics, context clues, picture clues, word origins, and word order clues; reference guides; roots, prefixes, and suffixes of words for comprehension; and use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and enhance language usage

Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

**Rationale:** Students use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to think and learn. By moving beyond a literal interpretation of text to an analysis of an author's, speaker's, or director's purpose and perspectives, students practice and improve their higher-level thinking skills. Students need to recognize and evaluate different points of view and to follow a line of reasoning to its logical conclusion. Students need to think about their writing and reading skills and work toward improvement.

- Use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to define and solve problems
- Recognize, express, and defend points of view orally and in writing
- Identify the purpose, perspective, and historical and cultural influences of a speaker, author, or director
- Evaluate the reliability, accuracy, and relevancy of information

**Standard 6:** Read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

Rationale: Literature records human expression in such forms as speeches, poems, novels, stories, nonfiction, essays, plays, films, biographies, and autobiographies by male and female speakers and writers. The study of literary traditions offers a perspective on enduring questions, a glimpse into human motives and conflicts, and a sense of the beauty and power of spoken and written language. In addition, literature transmits and transforms culture; it also enables students to think, communicate, and participate in society. The study of literature and writers of the United States honors the heritage and cultures of all people who live or have lived in America, and it thus helps students develop an understanding of our national experience. A comprehensive literature program fosters habits of reading that carry over into adult life.

- Know and use literary terminology
- Read literature to investigate common issues and interests
- · Read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar
- Read literature that reflects the uniqueness and integrity of the American experience
- · Read classic and contemporary literature, representing various cultural and ethnic traditions from throughout the world
- Read classic and contemporary literature of the United States about the experiences and traditions of diverse ethnic groups

## Writing:

**Standard 2:** Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Rationale: Writing and speaking are essential tools for learning, for success in the workplace, and for responsible citizenship. Developing a range of writing and speaking abilities requires extensive study, practice, and thinking. Students need frequent opportunities to write and speak for different audiences and purposes, and they need to be able to communicate expressively, informatively, and analytically. Growth in writing and speaking abilities occurs by applying skills to increasingly challenging communication tasks.

- Write and speak for a variety of purposes such as telling stories, presenting analytical responses to literature, conveying technical information, explaining concepts and procedures, and persuading
- Write and speak for audiences such as peers, teachers, and the community
- Plan, draft, revise, proofread, and edit written communications
- Use a variety of devices such as figurative language, symbolism, dialect, and precise vocabulary to convey meaning
- Organize written and oral presentations using strategies such as lists, outlining, cause/effect relationships, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, and narration

**Standard 3:** Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

**Rationale:** Students need to know and be able to use standard English. Proficiency in this standard plays an important role in how the writer or speaker is understood and perceived. All skills in this standard are reinforced and practiced at all grade levels and should be monitored by both the teacher and student to develop lifelong learning skills.

- Know and use correct grammar in speaking and writing
- Apply correct usage in speaking and writing
- Use correct sentence structure in writing
- Demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

### **Continuum Connections**

**Note:** The strands listed are appropriate for most students for varying levels of complexity. Depending on text and context, readers and writers are on different levels of the continuum at different times. Use appropriate strands and levels in response to student need.

# Reading

Early Middle	Late Middle/Early High School	Advanced High School
Constructs basic meaning from a variety of texts and is able to problem solve	Has strategies for unlocking difficult text in order to make meaning	Selects texts that are abstract or removed from personal experience by effectively
through difficult text	order to make meaning	applying meaning-making strategies
Analyzes and justifies inferences and predictions that support meaning making in informational as well as narrative text	Analyzes and justifies more sophisticated inferences and predictions in increasingly complex text	Analyzes and justifies more sophisticated inferences and predictions in complex text
Recognizes author's purpose and use of bias, propaganda and stereotypes in texts	Uses understanding of bias, propaganda, and stereotyping in text to read critically and evaluate ideas	Questions and analyzes author's purpose to detect layers of ambiguity and innuendo meant to influence readers
Demonstrates increased stamina during reading	Demonstrates stamina when reading longer and/or more complex text	Demonstrates perseverance with complex reading tasks even when challenged with frustrating and/or confusing text
Engages in reading increasingly complex text and recognizes when additional support is necessary in order to make meaning	Remains engaged when challenged with complex text and seeks support as necessary to make meaning	Remains engaged when challenged with complex text and seeks support as necessary to make meaning

## Writing

Early Middle	Late Middle/Early High School	Advanced High School
Uses background knowledge, personal experiences and questions to generate, explore and develop ideas for writing	Generates, explores and develops topics and ideas	
Selects genre to suit purpose and audience, demonstrating control over most essential elements	Recognizes the characteristics of various genre and text forms and experiments with these forms to suit purpose and audience	May choose to manipulate or abandon conventional text forms to achieve impact
Seeks out response to writing during revision and makes decisions about how to use it	Actively seeks out an audience for response and makes critical choices about how to use feedback	Seeks out an audience for response when needed and can articulate reasons why
Uses knowledge of text to recognize and follow patterns appropriate to genre, text form and purpose	Understands which text forms suit particular audiences and purposes, while exhibiting control over most essential elements	Effectively controls language and structural features of a large repertoire of text forms
Attends to basic standard conventions knowing that conventions support the reader in creating meaning	Demonstrates control over basic standard conventions	Experiments with writing conventions and sophisticated usage to achieve a desired effect

# **Enduring Understandings, Essential Questions & Learner Outcomes**

- EU: Readers and writers explore questions, ideas and issues about human nature, the human condition and society in order to broaden their vision of the world.
  - o EQ: How is our reading and writing helping us understand ourselves and the world around us?
    - LO: Readers and writers ask questions, make connections and reflect to better understand themselves and the
      world around them.
- EU: Readers understand that reading is making meaning from text, and writers understand that their work is to craft writing that is meaningful to their readers.
  - EQ: What is the work of a reader?
    - LO: Readers explore a variety of texts and use an array of strategies to make meaning.
  - EQ: What is the work of a writer?
    - LO: Writers consider audience when writing for a variety of purposes.
- EU: Readers and writers understand how to use purposeful talk and writing to deepen their thinking and enrich their reading and writing experiences.
  - EQ: What do readers and writers think, talk and write about to enrich their reading and writing?
    - LO: Readers and writers think, talk and write about text to explore ideas and issues.
- EU: Writers understand that through wide reading they can investigate their topic, make decisions about genre, audience, intended

effect and make other critical choices about their writing.

- EQ: How do writers use reading to support their writing?
  - LO: Writers select and read a variety of texts to support their writing.
- EQ: What are some ways writers use mentor texts to make their writing more effective for their readers?
  - LO: Writers use reading to support their writing, develop a vision, and create their own style and voice.

## Assessment: Assessment For and Of Learning

Shirley Clarke, Active Learning Through Formative Assessment (2008)

Formative assessment:

- o involves sharing learning goals with pupils
- aims to help pupils to know and to recognize the standards they are aiming for
- o involves pupils in self- and peer-assessments
- provides feedback which leads to pupils recognizing their next steps and how to take them
- promotes confidence that every pupil can improve
- involves both teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment data (and information)

Formative assessment in Readers/Writers Workshop is ongoing, based on the Teaching/Learning Cycle, and supports decision-making in standards-based education. Additionally, the fall interim assessment provides data that is both summative and formative to inform subsequent instructional decisions. Teachers establish quarterly expectations for completing independent reading selections and published writing pieces.

Opportunities to gather formative assessment data that show growth toward and movement beyond the standards are threaded throughout the workshop. Regular monitoring is essential within a standards-based educational system.

## Reading

Teachers regularly monitor for:

- Students making choices for reading that are engaging and appropriate and that support growth
- Students using notebooks to support meaning-making and deeper thinking in their reading
- Students taking on the learning from demonstrations in their independent practice
- Students engaging in purposeful talk during guided reading and beginning to extend this talk to other settings
- Students using feedback from guided reading and conferences to support their growth as readers

## Writing

Teachers regularly monitor for:

- Students making choices about writing topics that are of importance to them and that are appropriate for purpose and audience
- Students using notebooks to explore their writing with support from demonstrations, try-it-on's, and reflections
- Students using notebooks to gather ideas, write multiple drafts, and reread their writing and set future goals
- Students using mentor texts to support their vision for writing and the development of their own voice and style
- Students using feedback from conferences to support their growth as writers
- Students seeking out audiences for response and making choices about how to use feedback

## Students' self assessment

Shirley Clarke – "As with all formative assessment, pupils need to be actively involved in deciding, with teachers, what they need" *Active Learning Through Formative Assessment* (29).

Teachers use student self-assessment information as part of a body of evidence reflecting student learning and informing teacher instruction. Throughout the study, students are asking themselves:

- How am I selecting a broad range of texts, including poetry, for different purposes?
- How am I sharing and building upon the meaning I make, both orally and in writing?
- How am I generating, exploring, and developing topics and ideas?
- How am I experimenting with various genres, including poetry, and using mentor texts while considering purpose, audience, and intended effect?
- How am I seeking out audiences for response and making choices about how to use feedback?

# **Planning for Instruction:**

Use APS Teaching/Learning Cycle in Readers/Writers Workshop to guide and inform all phases of instruction.

# Instructional Frameworks used in APS Readers/Writers Workshop:

- Small Group Reading Instruction (daily guided reading)
- Reading Demonstrations
- Independent Reading (daily)
- Responding to Reading
- Writing Demonstrations
- Independent Writing (daily)
- Talking about the Writer's Craft
- Daily Craft Instruction
- Readers/Writers Workshop Studies
- Readers/Writers Notebooks
- Conferring

Readers and writers understand how workshop supports their ongoing learning. They understand and know how to use the resources available in their particular context, which include:

- Readers notebooks that support deeper thinking and extended pieces
  of writing about reading
- Writers notebooks filled with try-it-on's, multiple drafts, goals for writing, reflections about their learning, and ideas to keep them going throughout the year
- Demonstrations that support learning about reading, writing, and thinking and provide an opportunity to try on new learning then take the new learning to independent practice
- Anchor charts posted on the wall that capture the thinking work of students and teachers during demonstrations and support independent practice
- Purposeful talk with peers and/or teacher to support thinking and extend vision
- Small group guided reading and conferences that provide opportunities to extend their thinking, receive feedback from peers and teacher, take on new learning, and take new learning to independent practice
- Organized classroom libraries that provide a wide range of choice texts for independent reading and mentor texts
- Opportunities for readers and writers to seek out audiences for response and make choices about how to use feedback

# **Establishing a Learning Environment:**

- Know your classroom independent library and organize it for easy access (e.g., by genre, topic, author, etc.)
- Organize reference and resources materials for teacher demonstration and student use
- Organize the classroom to construct a learning space that allows for small group, whole group and independent learning

# Planning for reading and writing demonstrations and initial small groups:

- Establish own writer's notebook for writing demonstrations
- Begin a reader's notebook for reading demonstrations
- Plan for organization and daily use of students' Readers & Writers Notebooks
- Plan opportunities for students to talk to each other about their thinking in reading and writing in order to deepen and build understandings.
- Plan for conversations that will allow students to generate ideas and discover new titles to expand their range of mentor text (e.g., book talks, reader-to-reader conversations).
- Evaluate available summative data at the beginning of the year to know who your learners are, including English language learners, students with IEPs and ILPs, and advanced/AGATE

# **Establishing the reading/writing connection:**

Good writing begins with vision. For writers at any experience level, the most important question might be, "What have I read that is like what I am trying to write?"

We use mentor text on a number of levels throughout the year. Mentor text can inform us about how specific genres are written. We can use mentor text to model voice, style, organization, and conventions. We can also use mentor text to understand how authors make their writing more effective for their audiences.

Katie Wood Ray – "Writers write well because they have clear vision of the writing they are trying to do, not because they've been careful—in an operational sense—to piece together all the parts they've been taught to include that make writing good."

Ted Kooser, Former National Poet Laureate – "Before you write one poem, you need to read at least one hundred."

# Planning for use of mentor text:

Consider the *kinds* of mentor text you will want to put in front of students, including poetry, short story, editorial, commentary, memoir, and others. (Read grade level Long-range Planning and Pacing Guide to support your decisions.) Mentor text can be used as an exemplar for a particular kind of writing or as a model for close study of writer's craft.

- Teacher identifies mentor text, including poetry, for both form and close study of writer's craft.
- Teacher collects <u>a few</u> mentor texts, including poetry, to launch inquiry into crafting writing using mentor text.
- Teacher rereads writing from own writer's notebook to select a piece/pieces that could be made more effective by using mentor text.
- Teacher rereads own writer's notebook to identify when mentor texts influenced writing.

## Before teaching:

- Review standards, pacing guides, reading and writing continua, teaching/learning cycle, conditions of learning, and implementation continuum to develop a vision for workshop
- Understand the purpose, intent, and appropriate use of Daily Craft Instruction
- Develop a plan for monitoring that is flexible, useful, and informative (e.g., Snapshot, teacher-designed system)

# **Beginning Instruction:**

Regie Routman – "We can teach everything the student needs to know about reading and writing with a focus on what's most important to the child. That's why choice in writing is so important..." *Teaching Essentials* (57).

The most important goal is establishing a culture of readers and writers who use the support of the community to become independent learners. Support for independent learners includes a continuous cycle of whole group instruction, small group instruction and 1:1 conferring during student independent work time. Whole group instruction includes focused demonstrations that support an identified and specific learning objective. Demonstrations include teacher's own process as a reader and writer, examples and explanations, or explicit instruction about a specific teaching point.

Students are expected to try on the focus of the demonstration and make decisions about when and how to use the new learning in their own reading and writing. Periodically throughout this process, students and teacher notice and name the effects of the techniques, strategies, and habits they've been trying on.

## Reading:

- Provide opportunities for students to choose books for independent reading from classroom library.
- Structure time for students to read independently as well as to read mentor text provided by the teacher.
- Begin daily use of reader's notebooks so students can capture their thinking about their reading, including poetry, as they develop ideas and make deeper meaning of the text.
- Monitor students' reading behaviors and authentic responses to reading from a wide variety of texts.
- Use daily demonstrations to support students as readers.

# Writing:

- Structure time for students to write independently on a topic of their choice as well as opportunities to experiment with the focus of demonstrations.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for students to fill a writer's notebook with ideas, drafts, plans, and intentions.
- Use daily demonstrations to support students as writers.
- Collect monitoring notes for small group support and confer with writers as they write.
- As students begin developing ideas for writing, support them to use

mentor text, including resources from the classroom library.

## **Demonstration / Try it on:**

Use repeated demonstrations to support readers and writers in deepening their thinking rather than report surface observations or interpretations. After a demonstration ask students to notice what moves the teacher made so that they can try those moves themselves. Students and teachers chart shared understandings that support learning. These anchor charts remain posted to provide ongoing support for student thinking.

Possible demonstrations for reading include:

- How to set up a reader's notebook to support thinking and discover ideas for longer pieces of writing about reading
- How different genres, including poetry, affect reading and impact meaning at both the literal and deeper levels
- How purpose can influence text selection
- How authors use different structures, including poetry, to create an
  effect (e.g., variety of paragraphs and sentences, parallelism, syntax)

Possible demonstrations for writing:

- Setting up a writer's notebook to demonstrate how ideas come to a writer, including wide reading and an awareness of the stories that exist all around us
- How mentor text creates a vision for writing and helps develop sophistication
- How close reading gives insight to writer's craft and ways authors use language
- How mentor text supports writers in making author's decisions

Teachers are responsive to students' needs in relation to the standards, continua, and grade-level pacing guides as they plan precise instruction. Teachers establish a structure and pattern that include daily demonstration, small group instruction, conferring and extended time for independent practice.

### **Guided Practice**

Small group guided reading is a daily opportunity to provide targeted reading instruction based on data that informs teachers.

- Group students by focusing on what students know to do as readers, selecting appropriate text and planning next instruction
- Select compelling and challenge texts, including poetry and other short texts, and decide where to segment text as appropriate.
- After silently reading a segment of text, focus first on making meaning and then think, talk, and question toward deeper meaning.
- Monitor student learning along the reading continuum and discuss observations with the student.
- Students reflect about their experiences as readers in small group guided reading, independently, and when talking with other readers.

## **Monitoring Independent Practice**

Teachers maintain a daily monitoring system to build a growing body of evidence about each student's growth as a reader and writer, and they use the monitoring notes to develop instructional next steps in conjunction with the continua and grade level planning and pacing guides.

- Collect information about student reading and writing behaviors on a regular basis.
- Monitor students' independent practice to see how they are taking on the learning from small group guided reading.
- Support students through monitoring the goals they set.

# Conferring

A conference has a predictable pattern that includes researching, determining a teaching point, teaching and extending, recording the learning (both teacher and student), and reflecting. See APS Instructional Framework: Conferring.

# **Supporting Independent Learners:**

# Habits of Mind In order to ensure the success of Readers/Writers Workshop throughout the remainder of the year, it is essential to firmly establish a strong community of readers and writers who support each other to deepen their thinking as they read and write about the world around them. Together students and teachers notice and name what they do to develop agency as readers and writers across changing contexts. Anchor charts are co-constructed to reflect the thinking work students and teachers are doing and to serve as a reference throughout the year to support independent

practice.

Beginning with this study and continuing throughout the year, both teacher and students reflect and build upon what they are learning about themselves as readers and writers. Tools to support this reflection include:

- Enduring understandings
- Reader's/Writer's Notebooks
- Anchor charts
- Student self–reflection
- Monitoring notes
- Learning goals

### Sample online & print resources

NOTE: Some of the following resources require subscriptions. Check with your school's media center to request school subscriptions.

- American Girl (General content for girls; ages 8-12) http://www.americangirl.com/agmg/index.html
- Best American Magazine Writing, 2007 ISBN 9780231143912
- Best Newspaper Writing, 2006-07 ISBN-13 9780872892965
- The Best of the Rest: Non- Syndicated Newspaper Columnists Select Their Best Work, Vol. 39 ISBN-136 9780313285080
- Boy's Life (General content for boys; ages 8-12) http://www.boyslife.org/
- Consumer Reports 4 Kids (kids products, consumer education; ages 8-18) http://www.zillions.org/
- Dig (earth science and archaeology; ages 9-14) http://www.digonsite.com/
- EEK: Environmental Education for Kids (outdoors, environment; ages 9-14) http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/eek/index.htm
- FootSteps: African American History (African American history; ages 8-14) http://www.footstepmagazine.com/
- Kid's Castle (Smithsonian magazine for kids; ages 7-12) <a href="http://www.kidscastle.si.edu/">http://www.kidscastle.si.edu/</a>
- MidLink Magazine (general topics, world links; ages 8-18) http://www.cs.ucf.edu/-MidLink/
- National Geographic Kids (wildlife, adventure, geography, science; ages 8-14) http://www.nationalgeographic.com/ngkids/
- National Geographic World (general interest; ages 7-14) http://www.nationalgeographic.com/media/world/index.html
- Odyssey (science themes, explorations; ages 10-16)

# http://www.odysseymagazine.com/

- Ranger Rick (nature, environment, outdoors; ages 7-10) http://www.nwf.org/gowild/
- Remembrances and Celebrations: A book of eulogies, elegies, letters and epitaphs ISBN-13: 9780375401237
- Skipping Stones (international, multicultural themes; ages 8-16) http://www.skippingstones.org/
- Somebody Told Me: The Newspaper Stories of Rick Bragg ISBN-13: 9780375725524
- Sports Illustrated for Kids Online (sports stars, teams. Action photos; ages 7-14) http://www.sikids.com/
- Stone Soup (fiction, poetry, artwork, projects; ages 8-13) http://www.stonesoup.com/
- Time Magazine for Kids (current events, features, activities; ages 7-12) http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK
- Working At Writing: Columnists and Critics Composing ISBN-13: 9780809316861
- Yak's Corner (news and general interest; ages 8-12) http://www.freep.com/index/yak.htm