

Chapter 8: Language and Literature

Some basic tenets of facilitating language development are that learning is integrated, tasks are authentic, learning is social, classrooms are learning centered, and literature is an integral part of the curriculum. Applications of these principles are found throughout the text.

Instead of separating the language arts into discrete time periods, teachers should integrate instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. When children learn language as an integrated whole, they are likely to view reading and writing as meaningful events.

Many similarities exist between reading and writing. Both are composing processes in which meaning is constructed. Teachers can use this natural connection by guiding children into activities that call for both reading and writing. Process writing is a child-centered approach to writing that consists of five steps: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Journal writing and reading enable students to record their ideas and, in many cases, read responses from their teacher. Writing and reading workshops provide minilessons and large blocks of time for students to concentrate on actual writing and reading.

Literature is useful for integrating language. Story reading and storytelling provide multiple benefits by enticing children to read and providing them with knowledge. Teachers should be aware of the characteristics of a variety of literary genres, and they should consider both literary merit and children's interests when helping children choose books. Teachers should also establish environments with an abundance of interesting books and attractive displays that create interest in reading.

Children may respond to literature aesthetically (by making emotional responses) or efferently (by seeking information). Their responses may take place in literature circles, or through oral reading, drama, written expression, art, and music.