

LAUNCHING THE ELA BLOCK, K-2

(adapted from *The First Six Weeks: Getting Started With Guided Reading*, Fountas/Pinnell)

Teaching routines in the beginning of the year makes it easy to teach children to use materials and activities in a systematic way. Every moment invested in teaching routines is time well spent. There are two ways to think about teaching routines: (1) presenting a “big picture” of the entire year and (2) teaching specific tasks. *Launching the ELA Block* is one way of getting started with the first month of school. These examples may not fit you students or grade level perfectly, and you may want to vary the sequence or lessons. The important idea is to meet the unique needs of your own students.

The following teachers met with Linda Howard to develop *Launching the ELA Block*: Cristin Petisca (MH), Kathy Johnson (MH), & Beth McGonagle (NF).

	Suggestions for Working with Children	Suggestions for Materials	What Works for Me
WEEKS 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mostly whole group activities – reading aloud and interactive writing. • Consider whole-class art projects that bring children together: give them a product that they can take home and that can lead to writing. • Show children the various parts of the room (such as the book corner) and demonstrate how to work in them. • Practice using the parts of the room; give explicit directions and observe progress. • Build up a collection of interactive writing that will fill the walls with print and be used as a resource the next week. • Read aloud often, introducing a core of books that are strong foundations for interactive writing and for children to revisit during reading time. • Introduce independent reading time by demonstrating how to take out books, use them, and put them away. • Work with children’s names. • Give children praise and encouragement for using materials in the room. • Open new areas one at a time; for example, the writing and art center if not already used. Provide explicit demonstrations each time. Show how to use materials and how to put materials away when finished. • Begin to have children work in smaller groups in the centers that are being used. Observe the process, praising them for self-management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have only basic materials very well organized. • Be sure there is an uncrowded place for whole-group work. (A rug is good.) • Have a large amount of print on the walls and use all of it in shared reading. (Rhymes and songs are good.) • Pre-select a collection of read-aloud books, Big Books and picture books that are particularly appealing. • Have children’s names up in every part of the room. (Name chart, helper chart, stories about them, name cards in the pocket chart, envelopes with their cut-up first names in them, etc.) • Each time a new center opens, have materials organized in a standard way with materials labeled and a place for everything. • Set aside a round or kidney-shaped table for yourself with your own materials ready so that you can observe the whole class at once while working for a few minutes with an individual. • White boards for word work. • Designate a place and begin a simple word wall. • Organize <i>Reading Street</i> materials: vocabulary cards, high frequency cards by units, retell cards, sound spelling cards, Amazing Words, reproducibles. (Possibly into a binder.) 	

	Suggestions for Working with Children	Suggestions for Materials	What Works for Me
WEEKS 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to meet with individuals for assessment when children are working independently in centers. • Continue reading aloud and using interactive writing to establish the learning community and build up written language resources. • Teach children to use alphabet charts, the name chart, and a beginning work wall as a resource in their own writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarize yourself with work book and center pages in the <i>Reading Street</i> Teacher’s Guide. • Begin to assess students using the Baseline from <i>Reading Street</i>, the DRA, Running Records, and DIBELS (if applicable) 	
WEEKS 3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the routine of working in small groups in centers for a period of time-perhaps as much as one hour per day. • Emphasize independence during group work so you can work uninterrupted with one or two children. • Introduce the work board and help children follow it. Use only two or three activities at first. Circulate around the classroom to be sure that children understand the routines. • Teach children how to care for and keep some of their own records – putting away journals, etc. • Begin working with two small guided reading groups, at first for only fifteen or twenty minutes each. • Continue whole-group activities. • Introduce browsing boxes and observe children as they use them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce <i>Reading Street</i> new materials gradually. New materials may include: <i>Book of Poems</i>, <i>Amazing Words poster</i>, <i>Sing with Me Big Book</i>, <i>Audio CD</i>, <i>large charts/markers</i>, <i>white tape for corrections</i>, <i>letter chart</i>, <i>alphabet chart</i>, and <i>classroom library</i>. *Also check the teacher’s manual which specifically lists the materials needed to get started with the first story. • See “Weekly Plan” & “Small Group Plan” in the TG. (Both of these items can be found in the TG, on the pages after the tab for each story.) • Set up centers. Display icons for work board guidance. • Have a place for Guided Reading groups with all the materials available, e.g. the Leveled Readers. • Set up browsing boxes for each group. 	

Resources:

Reading Street, Pearson Education, Inc., 2008

Guided Reading, Good First Teaching for All Children, Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G.S., Heinemann, 1996

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