



Literacy for All: Blocks for Building Literacy Success

Plenary presentation at the Inclusive Learning Technologies Conference 2012

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The Prezi for this presentation is located at <http://www.janefarrall.com/blog/2012/05/25/literacy-for-all-building-blocks-for-literacy-success/>. This handout is designed to work in conjunction with the videos and images shared in the Prezi.

Explanation of the Four Blocks Literacy Model

- A balanced and multi-level approach to literacy instruction developed by Patricia Cunningham and Dorothy Hall. For information about the Four Blocks to see www.four-blocks.com.
- Adopted (and adapted) for students with disabilities by staff at the Centre for Literacy and Disability Studies at the University of North Carolina <http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds>.
- Consists of Four Blocks:
 - Guided Reading
 - Self-selected reading
 - Writing
 - Working with Words
- Guided Reading
 - Primary purposes are to assist students to:
 - Understand that reading involves thinking and meaning-making;
 - Become more strategic in their own reading.
 - Must use a wide variety of books and other print materials.
 - Key resources mentioned for this block:
 - Books you already have in your school. Making these up in Clicker or PPT make them more accessible to more students.
 - Guided Reading packs as examples can be found at <http://www.janefarrall.com/html/guided.html>
- Self-selected Reading
 - Primary purposes are to assist students to:
 - Understand why they might want to learn;
 - Become automatic in skill application;
 - Choose to read after they learn how.
 - It isn't self-directed if you don't choose it yourself;
 - You can't get good at it if it is too difficult.
 - Key resource for this block is Tar Heel Reader www.tarheelreader.org



- Writing
 - Students who write become better readers, writers and thinkers;
 - Learning in classroom writing communities:
 - Write for real reasons;
 - See others do so;
 - Interact with peers and teacher about written content, use and form.
 - Key resource mentioned for this block is the Writing with Alternative Pencils CD
<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/available-for-purchase-1/available-for-purchase>
- Working with Words
 - Primary purpose is to help students become strategic in reading words;
 - Make words instruction:
 - Words based;
 - Experience based;
 - Age appropriate;
 - Should result in students who read and write:
 - More;
 - More successfully and independently;
 - With greater enjoyment.

Our Project

Willans Hill info

- Rural special school in Wagga Wagga. In 2011 had 69 students. All with moderate to severe intellectual disability and a range of other abilities and disabilities.

The Project

- Chris and I met at AGOSCI Literacy Intensive. Chris expressed her fervent wish to get Four Blocks happening in every classroom at Willans Hill – some blocks had already been happening in some classrooms – and I expressed my fervent wish to help her. We wanted to change the world – starting with Willans Hill.
- The vision was to have literacy instruction in every classroom for a minimum of 2 hours a day in 2011.

Willans Hill and the Four Blocks - history

2009 and 2010

Writing

- We got the notion that every child needs a pencil - we just didn't put it into practice.
- We removed tracing as a tool for name writing.
- We began 'signing on'.
- We introduced "Flip Charts"
- But we really didn't get writing!



- Teachers comments included:
 - Free Writing was a failure!
 - They loved writing – timetables, shopping lists, height charts, filling in forms.

Guided Reading

- We did lots of training.
- We included Guided Reading in our Teacher Assessment and Review schedule.
- But for many we were squeezing Guided Reading into old Culture.

Self Selected Reading

Oops!

Teacher comments included:

- Not good!
- We are listening to music on iTunes
- Looking at Shopping catalogues

Working with Words

Let's not talk about it!

Changing the Culture

- We purchased new resources including: Flip camera, Clicker 5, SMARTboards.
- We gave staff time off class to develop resources.
- We included one page of literacy feedback in each school report.
- We watched each other teach!
- We talked a lot!

- Teachers noted these changes in our school:
 - Positive feedback
 - More sharing
 - More fun
 - More talk of success



The Project

Two days of intensive training with Jane took place on 16/17th December 2010. Teacher responses were extremely positive although teachers still had some concerns.

Data collection

- Since we wanted to show how successful this could be - we wanted to put good data collection in place to track the results. Karen Erickson at the Centre for Literacy and Disability Studies helped us design the data collection.
- During the two day workshop at the end of 2010 we asked teachers to rank the students in their classroom from top to bottom in literacy skills. We then selected top, middle and bottom student and at the beginning of 2011 Jane assessed each of those students as a baseline. The teachers assessed the remaining students but that information wasn't used as part of the data analysed.
- Used two assessments – Universally Accessibly Emergent Literacy Battery (not yet commercially available) and the Qualitative Reading Inventory (3rd edition).
- Also collected
 - minimum weekly writing samples from all students
 - class videos
 - Feedback from teachers
 - Feedback from parents

Through 2011 all 9 classrooms each did 2 hours literacy instruction minimum per day.

Case Studies

- Mitch – see Prezi
- Tasma – see Prezi
- Sam – see Prezi
- Cody – see Prezi



Results (overall)

Assessment data:

27 students were assessed by Jane. At the beginning of the year, 17 of these were emergent readers and writers and the remaining 10 were conventionally literate.

- Many of the emergent students had a high rate of no-response to the initial assessments. They were unsure what to do when I asked them a question. Many of them had very few concepts about print, were unable to identify many letters and had a low level of phonological awareness. Their writing was at a very early emergent level. Those who were able to hold a pencil usually did a random scribble and those who weren't able to hold a pencil were unable to complete a writing sample as they didn't have a writing tool.
- The conventional students had a definite strength in word identification with an average level of grade 2 – reading single words. Most of them had pre-school or kindergarten level skills in reading chunks of text, with preschool being the average. Their listening comprehension was also mostly at pre-school or kindergarten level, with the average half way through kindergarten.

At the end of the year, there was a big change.

- For the emergent students, most of them were able to respond to a far greater number of the questions with a big decrease in the number of no responses. 3 students progressed from being emergent to being conventional readers and writers. Nearly all of the students demonstrated some knowledge of concepts about print. The majority of students were able to identify some letters of the alphabet and there was a jump in the phonological awareness skills across the group.
- For the conventional students, word identification continues to be the area of greatest strength. But we saw growth in other areas with most students. On average, the students improved one grade level with one student staying the same and one student improving three grade levels.

Feedback from teachers – see videos and comments in the Prezi.

Other changes noticed

- Speech and language development
- Students see themselves as learners with improved self-esteem
- Decrease in challenging behaviour
- Increased attention span across a range of activities.



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The Future

- Continue with Four Blocks!
- Willans Hill School will continue to support and teach readers and writers
- Need to continue to improve outcomes for students with complex communication needs across the school
- Continue to improve the use of the resources obtained e.g. Clicker and iPads
- Continue relationship with Jane – although less frequently.
- Jane now working with other schools through the same journey - Malkara in Canberra and Kilparrin in Adelaide

And Jane is slowly starting to share resources for everyone on www.janefarrall.com for other schools and people to use.

