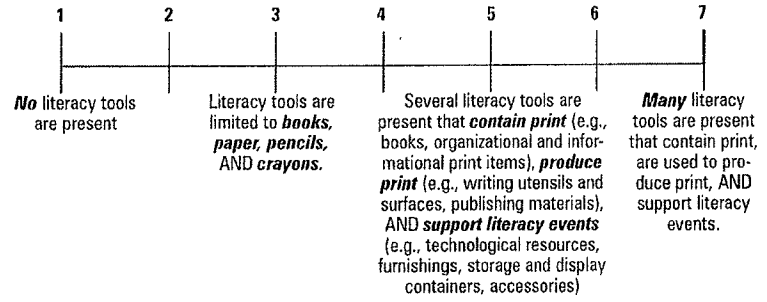
Literacy products

A concrete object or a demonstratable event that occurs as the result of interaction with literacy tools.

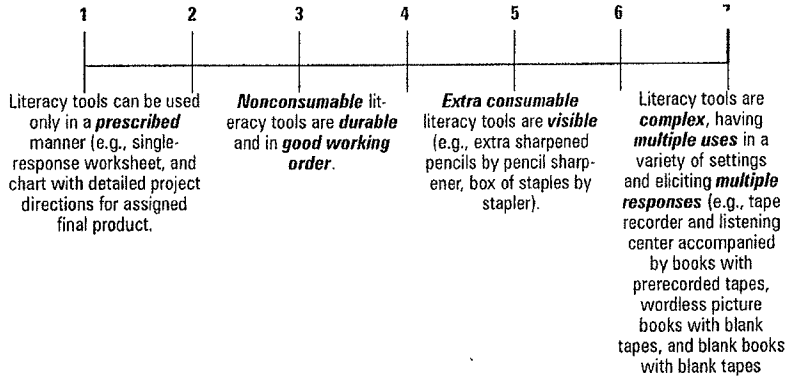
Literacy tools

Physical objects present in the environment which support the acquisition of literacy (e.g., paper, pencils, professionally published books and magazines, adult- and child-authored materials, computers, and bookshelves).

1. **QUANTITY** OF LITERACY TOOLS



2. **UTILITY** OF LITERACY TOOLS



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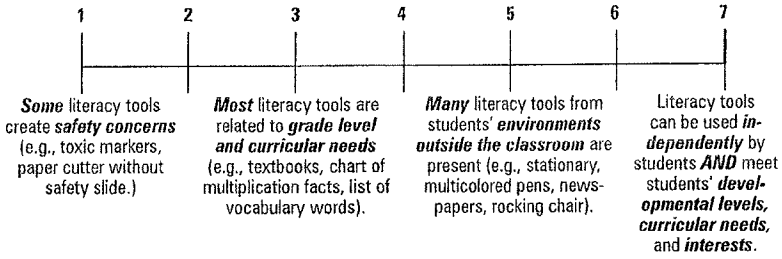
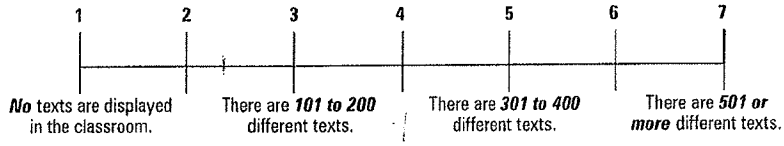
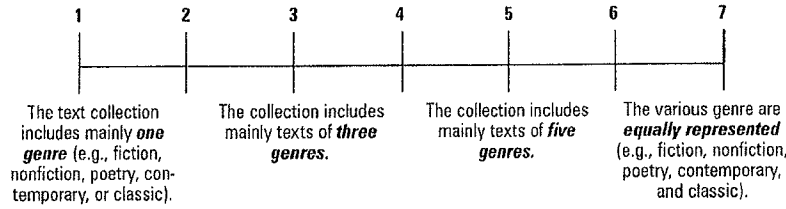
3. APPROPRIATENESS OF LITERACY TOOLS



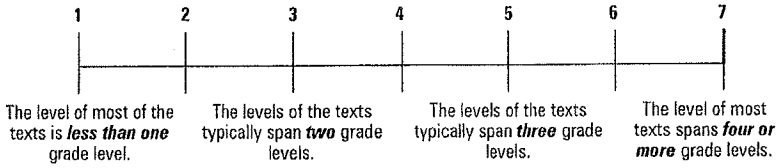
4. QUANTITY OF TEXT MATERIALS (including books, magazines, newspapers, etc.; count multiple copies as one)



5. GENRES OF TEXT MATERIALS



6. LEVELS OF TEXT MATERIALS



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7. FORMAT AND CONTENT OF TEXT MATERIALS

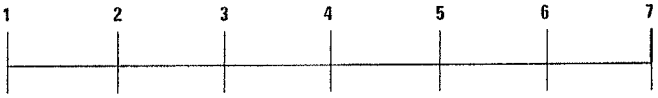
Only textbooks are present.

A few of the text materials include ***varying formats*** (e.g., newspapers, magazines, paperback books, hardcover books, big books, catalogues, directories) AND ***content*** (e.g., plays, joke and riddle books, books about movies or television shows, books reflecting cultural and ethnic diversity, picture books, wordless books, student-authored).

Many of the text materials include ***varying formats*** AND ***content***.

The collection of text materials includes a ***wide assortment*** of ***formats*** AND ***content***.

8. PRINT USED FOR CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION



No printed directions, schedules, OR labels are visible.

Some displayed print is used for ***organizational*** (e.g., class rules and expectations; daily, weekly or monthly assignments; school lunch menus) AND ***labeling*** (e.g., contents of shelves and storage containers) purposes.

Some displayed print is ***associated with literacy tools and events*** (e.g., timetables for use of materials and areas, project guidelines, sign-up sheets for reading/writing conferences).

A ***wide assortment*** of print in the form of directions, schedules, AND labels is clearly visible.

9. CLASSROOM *LITERACY PRODUCT* DISPLAYS

No displays of student or class activities ***include print***.

Several of the displays of student or class activities ***include print*** AND ***most*** of the print is ***teacher-produced***.

Many displays of student or class activities ***include print*** AND ***most*** of the print is ***student-produced***.

Both teacher- and student produced print is included in displays of student or class activities with the ***majority*** of the print being ***student-produced***.

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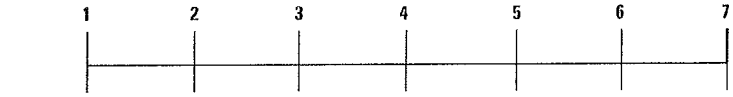
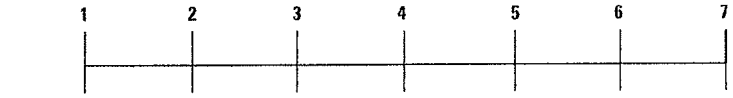
10. *REFERENCE MATERIALS*



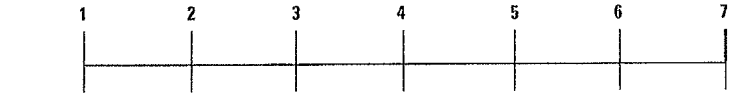
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No reference materials are present.	***Several*** reference materials of ***frequently used information*** are present (e.g., students' names, calendar, alphabet, maps, globe, student dictionaries, a set of encyclopedias, almanac, atlas).		***Several*** reference materials provide ***literacy guidelines*** (e.g., editing markings, writing format models, frequently misspelled words).		***Numerous*** reference materials of frequently used information and literacy guidelines are ***present*** with ***several*** designed to support the creation of ***open-ended literacy products*** (e.g., rhyming word book, thesaurus, spelling dictionary, address file word bank)	

11. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS



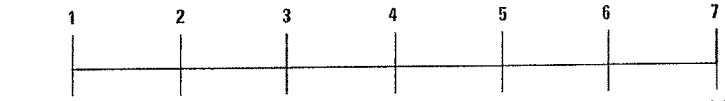
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No written communications are present.		***Most*** written communications are ***commercially published*** (e.g., books, posters, charts).		***Some adult-authored*** (e.g., school or classroom announcements, teacher-written directions on chalkboard) AND ***student-authored*** (e.g., books, notes, bulletin board titles) written communications are present.		There are ***about equal numbers*** of ***commercially published*** AND ***adult- and student-authored*** written communications.

12. WRITING UTENSILS



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No writing utensils are ***present.***		Writing utensils are ***limited*** to ***crayons, #2 lead pencils, white or yellow chalk,*** AND ***dry erase pens.***		Writing utensils include ***several*** different types of ***pens and pencils*** AND a ***computer with a word processing program.***		A variety of ***many*** difference ***types, sizes, shapes, and colors*** of writing utensils are present (e.g., lettering stencils, alphabet stamps with assorted colors of inkpads).

13. WRITING *SURFACES*



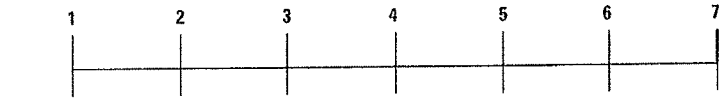
No writing surfaces are present.

Writing surfaces are limited to ***wall-mounted chalk or marker boards*** AND ***lined writing paper***.

Writing surfaces include ***individual chalk or marker boards*** AND ***different types of paper*** (e.g., chart, story, unlined, butcher, newsprint, construction).

A variety of different ***types, sizes, shapes,*** AND ***colors*** of writing surfaces are present (e.g., a computer printer, stationary, graph paper, post-it notes, postcards, blank books).

14. PUBLISHING MATERIALS



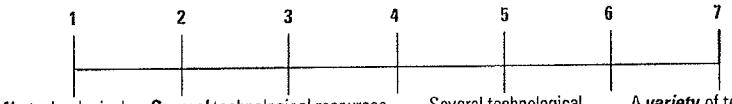
No literacy tools to use in publishing literacy products are available.

Several literacy tools are available to ***edit*** (e.g., revised draft, date rubber stamps and stamp pads; correction tape and erasers; paper clips), ***assemble*** (e.g., tape, glue, stapler, brads, plastic covers, stencils, stickers), OR ***decorate*** (e.g., fabric, ribbon, yarn, lace, buttons, pictures) literacy products.

Many literacy tools are available to ***edit, assemble,*** AND ***decorate*** literacy products.

About an ***equal number*** of a ***wide variety*** of literacy tools are available to ***edit, assemble*** AND ***decorate***.

15. *TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES* TO SUPPORT LITERACY EVENTS



No technological resources to support literacy learning are present.

Several technological resources are available for ***teacher use*** in supporting literacy events (e.g., overhead projector, laser pointer, computer with printer) AND for ***prescribed student interactions*** in literacy events (e.g., listening center with phonograph, cassette or CD player and books with text recorded on records, tapes, or CDs; television and VCR with recorded stories on video tapes; computer with literacy-learning programs).

Several technological resources support ***students' open-ended interactions*** in literacy events (e.g., video camera and blank videotapes; cassette recorder and blank cassette tapes; photographic camera with film; computer printer, and word processing program).

A ***variety*** of technological resources are available for ***teacher and student use*** in both a ***prescribed and open-ended manner***.

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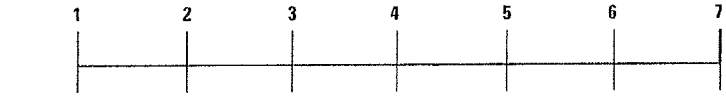
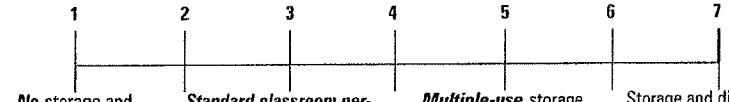
16. FURNISHINGS TO SUPPORT LITERACY EVENTS



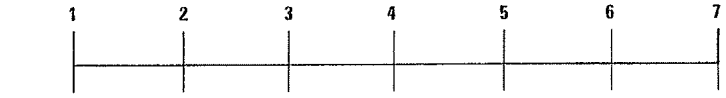
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Furnishings are ***inadequate*** (e.g., size of chairs is inappropriate, height of desks and tables not adjusted properly).		***Standard*** classroom furnishings are present (e.g., student-sized desks, tables, chairs).		***Comfortable, home-like*** furnishings are present (e.g., rocking chair, throw rugs, bean bag chair) AND at least ***one*** is labeled as ***supporting literacy learning*** (e.g., a sofa placed in the "Cozy Corner" library, an "author's chair").		A ***variety*** of ***standard and comfortable, home-like*** furnishings are present AND ***several*** are identified as ***supporting literacy learning.***

17. STORAGE AND DISPLAY CONTAINERS TO SUPPORT LITERACY EVENTS



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No storage and display containers are present.		***Standard classroom permanent*** storage and display containers are present (e.g., book shelves, cabinets, counter tops, bulletin boards).		***Multiple-use*** storage and display containers are present (e.g., baskets, boxes, crates, file folders, tri-fold display boards).		Storage and display containers are present for teacher use in ***literacy events*** (e.g., chart stand, pocket chart, big book easel) AND to ***display texts with covers forward*** (e.g., book rack or spinner).

18. ACCESSORIES TO SUPPORT LITERACY EVENTS

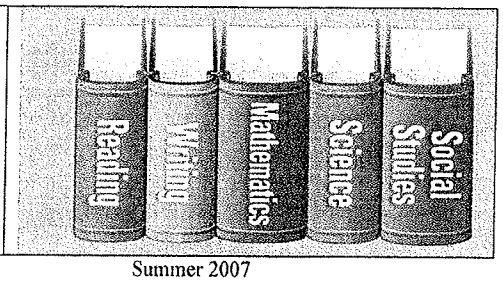


1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No accessories are present to support literacy events.		Accessories are present to ***support reading*** (e.g., text pointer, bookmarks, and pillows), ***support writing*** (e.g., mailboxes, clipboards, and collection of pictures), AND ***display literacy products*** (e.g., clothespins and fishing or clothesline).		Accessories are present from ***nature*** (e.g., artificial or live plants and trees, an aquarium, small animals) AND to use in reenactments or original ***dramatizations*** of literacy events (e.g., a puppet stage with puppets, costumes, masks, flannel board with cutouts).		There is ***about equal*** representations of ***many*** accessories to ***support reading and writing, display literacy products,*** AND present reenactments or original ***dramatizations*** of literacy events.

Sample Questions for Deep Understandings

- What do you think is going to happen next? Can you identify something that helped you make that prediction?
- Are there things you know about your life, yourself, this author, or this kind of book that helps you to understand the story better? Explain.
- Tell your group, in just a few sentences, what your book is about.
- What do you think the author thinks is the most important part of the story/text so far? What clues did you notice that made you think this is so important?
- How is the text structured to help you understand it better? What has the author done with organization or text features to help you?

MG ELA RESEARCH BRIEF



North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, North Carolina

Summer 2007
(919) 807-3831 or 3953

NOTE: *The following Research Brief is an excerpted summary of a more complete research document prepared by a North Carolina public school teacher, 2006. The complete document is housed at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the Division of Middle Grades and Secondary Education.*

Purpose

What does an adolescent literacy-rich environment look like?

To provide appropriate and useful choices for promoting literacy-rich environments research supports the following methodologies. For each, we have given overviews and tips for implementation.

- Paideia Seminar
- Literature Circles
- Teacher-Student Conferences
- Author's Circle
- Creating Independent Readers
- Grammar in Context

An effective classroom is a place where teachers and students come together with their different backgrounds, experiences, and abilities to create a dynamic community that fosters literacy.

- It must focus on the process (*how* students learn) and the content (*what* they learn).
- It involves teachers and students working and learning together.
- Teachers share in the role of learning rather than just the deliver of information to the learner.
- It establishes that interaction is key to providing purposeful ways for students to communicate.
- It is balanced with teacher guidance along with direct instruction to promote learner independence.

PAIDEIA SEMINAR

Overview

Adolescents are in the developmental stage where they enjoy challenging authority as well as questioning many aspects of society. The Paideia Seminar creates the environment where students are **encouraged** to tackle higher level questioning and thinking related to numerous concepts and topics.

Implementation
The teacher shares with the class the objectives and goals for the seminar. The teacher then provides background information and/or vocabulary that are needed to assist with the understanding of the text. Students are then given a copy of the text and are encouraged to take notes while the teacher reads the text a loud. When the reading is complete, the class is then opened for discussions. Students are lead to identify text's main idea, evaluate most important section(s), analyze the focus and details, and personalize and apply textual ideas. Teachers assess individual and/or group participation during discussions.

LITERATURE CIRCLES

Overview
When striving for students to write, read, and listen well, students must be given the opportunities to use the skills for authentic purposes. When laying the foundations for literature circles, it is recommended to begin slowly by providing clear modeling and guided practice of the components of literature circles. Begin the process by selecting a book accessible to the whole-class. This provides students the opportunity to develop the skills, strategies, and behaviors needed to conduct literature circles independently throughout the school year.

Implementation
When the class is ready to move toward working independently in literature circles, a suggested procedure is: at first, teacher provides copies of choices of texts from which each student selects a text to read; next the teacher places students in groups based upon their common choice of text, and last groups meet to establish requirements such as number of meetings, reading schedule and schedule to discuss and respond to text. Students are encouraged to take notes while reading and to share during group discussions. The role of the teacher is to become a facilitator not an instructor. As facilitator, the teacher can evaluate through observations and through students' self-evaluations.

TEACHER-STUDENT CONFERENCE

Overview
Teachers need to schedule consistent and frequent opportunities to meet and talk with each student throughout the school year. Conferences provide teachers opportunities to assess and give feedback to each student's progression of their literacy skills. Conferences create the environment where dialogue and interaction is accepted and encouraged.

Implementation
During conferences, teacher and student need to be engaged by providing suggestions, giving advice, and demonstrating solutions to the writing in which the conference is being held. After collaborating, each person is then encouraged to critique their own writing. Also after each conference, the teacher should take time to reflect on the conference and keep annotated records to assist with locating patterns of errors or misconceptions in students' understanding of various literacy skills. This task allows the teacher to use data to build and/or re-structure daily instruction.

AUTHOR'S CIRCLE

Overview
Students need the opportunity to work with partners in various settings to accomplish personal and/or group goals, and this technique provides such an avenue. Results from conducting author's circle demonstrate an increase in students' respect for one another and their awareness of others' opinions while challenging themselves to strive for higher standards as readers and writers.

Implementation
Students take on roles as author or critical listener. A student is the author when he/she is reading their created text orally to a group/ class, while the other students are expected to listen attentively and provide feedback when the author is finished. The listeners are expected to ask questions based on areas of confusion and/or state areas where additional development is needed. Students are always encouraged to focus on effective elements of the text. The author is then responsible for taking notes based on the feedback provided and is encouraged to implement.

CREATING INDEPENDENT READERS

Overview
The ultimate outcome for all students is to become independent readers. In her book, *When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do*, Kylene Beers addresses several strategies used by independent readers when confronting a "tough text" verses the lack of strategies used by dependent readers. She states that independent readers figure out quickly what's confusing them and apply strategies but when dependent readers become confused the most common result is to stop reading. She explains that independent readers set goals for getting through texts while dependent readers rely on teachers to set goals. She also identifies that independent readers have the knowledge of and the ability to apply multiple strategies for comprehending text while dependent readers are limited.

Implementation
Teachers need to provide students opportunities to comprehend various texts, to monitor their understanding, to determine meanings of words, to read with fluency, and to develop the stamina to continue reading difficult texts. Teachers need to model by: showing emotions invoked during reading, responding verbally to characters and/or events, using hands and arms for gestures, maintaining eye contact with audience, and finding authors and/or genres of interest through multiple resources.

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Overview
Constance Weaver in her book, *Teaching Grammar in Context*, recommends teaching *a minimum of grammar for maximum benefits*. She states that in the first half of the nineteenth century, learning grammar was mainly the memorization and recitation of "definitions, rules, paradigms, examples, and other grammatical features." It wasn't until the latter half of the nineteenth century, research supported that students needed to be active in their own learning. Weaver suggests that teachers examine their own students' writing, and offer the kinds of

guidance their students need--mostly at the point of need. Grammatical concepts must often be taught and re-taught to individuals as well as to groups or classes, and students may long afterwards continue to need guidance in actually applying what they have, in some sense or to some degree, already learned. There is no quick fix.

Implementation

The following instructional suggestions support teaching grammar in context:

- Engage students in writing, writing, and more writing;
- Immerse students in good literature, including literature that is particularly interesting and challenging syntactically;
- Teach the relevant aspects of grammar within the context of students' writing;
- Emphasize the aspects of grammar that are useful in helping students revise sentences to make them more effective;
- Emphasize aspects of grammar that are useful in helping students edit sentences for conventional mechanics and appropriateness, and
- Teach needed terms, structures, and skills when writers need them, ideally when they are ready to revise at the sentence level or to edit.

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Submitted by:
Phyllis Blackmon

Suggested Resources

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Suggested Resources (continued)

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Atwell, N. *Lessons That Change Writers.* Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann Publishers. 2002.

Beers, K. *When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do.* Portsmouth, NH. 2003.

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Weaver, C. *Teaching Grammar in Context.* Portsmouth, NH. 1996.

Wilhelm, J. *Improving Comprehension with Think-A-loud Strategies.* New York. Scholastic. 2001.

Book Lists

- www.nsta.org/publications/ostb/
- www.ncss.org/resources/notable/
- www.newbridgeonline.com
- www.heinemannclassroom.com
- www.lexile.com
- www.ala.org
- http://www.ala.org/ala/professionalresources/outreach/booklists/index.cfm
- http://bookwizard.scholastic.com/tbw/homePage.do