



Program Philosophy

Bookworms Reading and Writing began simply as Bookworms. It is a structured, high-volume, high interest approach to building meaningful literacy. It was originally the collaborative work of two researchers: Michael C. McKenna at the University of Virginia and Sharon Walpole at the University of Delaware. Dr. McKenna's death in December 2016 left the redesign described here and the addition of writing lessons to Dr. Walpole and her colleagues.

The most important thing to know about Bookworms Reading and Writing from the start is that research informs the design. We began with a small-group multiple entry skills curriculum. That curriculum is included in *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction: Resources for Grades K-3* Walpole, S., & McKenna, M.C. (2017). *How to plan differentiated reading instruction: Strategies for grades K-3* (2nd ed). New York, NY: Guilford Press. and in *Differentiated Reading Instruction in Grades 4 and 5: Strategies and Resources*. Walpole, S., McKenna, M.C., & Philippakos, Z. (2011). *Differentiated reading instruction in grades 4 & 5: Strategies and resources*. New York, NY: Guilford Press. These teacher-friendly, affordable professional learning books are published by Guilford Press. In 2011, we began to write the rest of the curriculum. The initial Bookworms sites began their work in 2013. In the design, we have honored teacher commitment to authentic texts and our commitment to simple, repetitive, evidence-based instructional routines. In 2017, with the support of a team of experienced Bookworms leaders and the support of Open Up Resources, we added genre-based writing lessons.

We define *Shared Reading* as teacher-supported grade-level reading, similar in purpose to the whole-group portion of a traditional core program. However, our curriculum is different from a traditional commercial core in three ways: (1) it uses only intact books, and (2) it is calibrated to the Common Core State Standards for text difficulty, and (3) the lesson plans and manual are available for free. After grade 1, shared reading texts include approximately half fiction and half information texts. Before grade 1, there are both narrative and information texts, but nearly all of the information texts are used for read alouds during English Language Arts rather than for Shared Reading. Our Shared Reading curriculum is deliberately unbalanced – it devotes little time to basic skills after grade 1 and instead targets spelling, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and text structure knowledge. We make this choice because we can teach basic skills quickly during the small group lessons for students who need that instruction.

We define *English Language Arts* as the combination of read-alouds, grammar instruction, and writing instruction. Our teacher-conducted read-alouds allow for comprehension strategy modeling, high levels of student engagement, rich discussion, and vocabulary growth. With input from teachers, we have typically selected books well above grade level because of their potential to increase student’s oral language and background knowledge. Informed by research on read-alouds, we provide teachers at all grade levels with lesson plans for read-alouds of specific picture books, chapter books, and information texts. Our grammar instruction uses sentences from the read alouds to reveal the nuances of word choice and order that underlie and inform good writing. Our writing instruction targets narrative, information, and opinion structures, and includes research projects.

We define *Differentiated Instruction* as a multiple-entry skills block. The design of that time allows for both diagnostically-driven instruction in foundational skills and extension of text access for students with strong foundational skills. Schools typically schedule intensive interventions in literacy at the same time as Differentiated Instruction. Bookworms Reading and Writing does not include tier 3 intensive interventions, but it provides space in the schedule for them.

The entire program requires all of the instructional time typically allocated to the elementary English Language Arts block. The block comprises three individual 45-minute chunks of time. One chunk is used for whole-class Shared Reading. A second segment comprises the English Language Arts. A third segment comprises Differentiation to develop foundational skills based on diagnostic data or to extend the curriculum; we allow for three groups to meet for 15 minutes each while the other students complete written responses and then engage in self-selected reading. These three segments may be scheduled in any order.



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