

Preface

The concept of balanced reading and writing has developed into a more mature philosophy over the past few years. Its roots were in the reading wars, those rancorous debates between whole language advocates and phonics supporters, but teachers have always known that the needs of their diverse learners could not be met with any single end-of-the-spectrum method.

Today, balanced reading is able to skillfully blend skill-based instruction and meaning-based instruction through a whole-part-whole philosophy. Balanced reading also includes integrating the language arts and balancing teacher- and student-centered activities. An expanded definition of balance includes adjusting levels of support and intensity of instruction, which were added in this edition to promote differentiation of instruction to meet the needs of various learners.

The second edition, written for preservice and practicing teachers, includes several new sections as well as updated resources. There is a new chapter on fluency and a new section on language acquisition. Resources for determining readability and locating children's literature, all with easy-to-use Web sites, are other additions. There are new teaching activities in every section, Web sites, and updated tests for phonemic awareness.

Chapters are generally organized in a similar manner. They start by explaining the background and developmental nature of the topics. Activities that teach a skill or strategy follow. Beginning teachers often ask for just the activities but, without knowing why the activities work and when they work, are not able to successfully adapt the procedures for their classes. Teachers need knowledge of both underlying principles and engaging activities to make the right lesson plans for their classes.

The first chapter gives a definition of balanced reading and the role that explicit instruction plays. Chapters 2 through 5 are about primary readers and older students who still need to develop the skills of emergent reading, phonemic awareness, word recognition, and fluency.

The remainder of the book applies to all grades. Guided reading and grouping for reading are addressed in Chapters 6 and 7. They include strategies for teaching the whole class, small groups, and individual students. This section also includes methods for finding the readability of books and locating children's literature.

Comprehension strategies, with ideas for before, during, and after reading, and a vocabulary chapter come next. They are followed by Chapter 10, on spelling, and Chapter 11, which includes strategies to teach both teacher- and

student-centered writing. The book concludes with chapters on reading and writing in the content areas and assessment.

Choose the sections that are needed for your classroom, but read Chapter 1 first to understand how theories and activities can be balanced successfully. Learning to read is a long and complicated process, but there are research-based strategies that can make the entire process more coordinated and effective in your classroom.