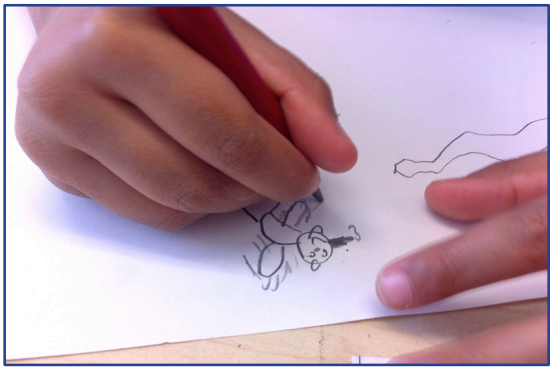
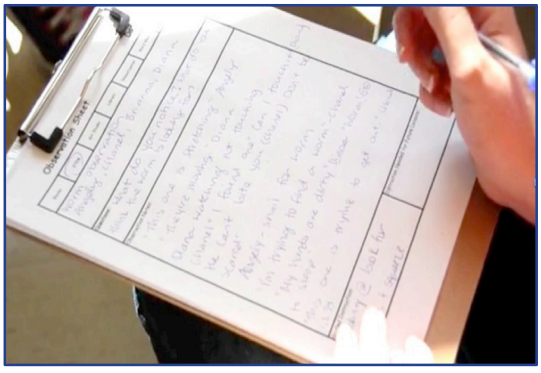
Focus on K2:
An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning





FOCUS ON K2

Teaching & Learning for the 21st Century
Boston Public Schools

Focus on K2:
An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning

This guide was created through a collaborative process of the Department of Early Childhood, Boston Public Schools teachers, colleagues in curriculum departments of the Boston Public Schools, and consultants from local universities.

Curriculum development is an ongoing, collaborative effort. Please regard this document as a work in progress. It will come alive as you use it in your classroom. We look forward to your feedback and ideas as you use the resources provided here.

Lead Authors: Megina Baker, Beth Benoit and Ben Mardell

Contributing Authors: Marina Boni, Mayra Cuevas, Melissa Luc, Melissa Tonachel, Michelle High-McKinnon, Abby Morales, Marie Enochty, Brian Gold, Carmen Lico, David Ramsey, Jason Sachs, Karen Silver, Nicole St. Victor, Mary Pike, Anna Housley Juster, Annemarie Powers Algozzine, Sara Sweetman, and Nora Elton

Thanks to Lesley University, the Lynch Graduate School of Education at Boston College, the Making Learning Visible Project-Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the Early Childhood Learning Lab at Boston University, the Boston Children's Museum, and Wheelock College.

Focus on K2: An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning

Guiding Documents

Contents List

Part 1: **Introduction**

Part 2: **Schedules**
- Instructional Minutes
- Guidance for K2 Literacy Block
- Sample Schedule

Part 3: **Components of the Day**

Detailed guidelines for implementing Focus on K2
- Introduction to Centers
- Center Time
- Thinking and Feedback (or Sharing Our Research)
- Read Aloud/Close Read
- Working on Words Guide
  - Small Group Instruction
- Storytelling/Story Acting
- Resources
  - Arrival
  - Community of Learners
  - Class Meeting
  - Writing Time

Part 4: **Center Overviews**

Setting up and facilitating Centers
- Planning for Variability
- Art Studio
- Blocks
- Dramatization
- Listening & Library
- STEM Center
- Writing & Drawing

Units of Study and Related Resources

Our Community, Animals and Habitats, Construction, *and* Our Earth.

Resources are included with each unit, as well as on the Early Childhood Website: https://www.bostonpublicschools.org

Part 1:
Introduction

Introduction to *Focus on K2:*
An Integrated Approach towards Teaching and Learning

"I'm going to have so many adventures!"

Graziela, a K1 student, describing her vision for what K2 will be like

Focus on K2 was written for Boston's kindergartners by Boston educators. It was written to help teachers promote children's creativity and their abilities to collaborate, communicate and think critically. It was written to develop essential literacy and numeracy skills. It was written to connect children with their city. It was written to give our K2 students the adventure in learning they deserve.

Research Based Practices[1]

Focus on K2 is a comprehensive, integrated curriculum that combines the most current research on teaching and learning and supports the high standards for achievement put forth in the Common Core State Standards.[2] Research shows that kindergarten-aged children learn best from hands-on experiences in which they can interact with the world, ask questions, and seek answers to these questions. The *Focus on K2* approach supports children in engaging and applying the skills articulated in the Common Core State Standards necessary to be successful in the 21st Century, values each child as a learner, and allows each child to reach their highest potential.

Designing *Focus on K2*

Focus on K2 is designed through an iterative process of collaboration between the Boston Public Schools Curriculum and Instruction Department, the Early Childhood Department, current and former BPS teachers, and consultants from local universities. These groups reviewed the existing curriculum and observed in a variety of K2 classrooms across the district. It became clear that a redesign of the K2 curriculum was needed in order to keep pace with the new standards of the Common Core. This current version of *Focus on K2* includes changes based on feedback from early adopting teachers during the 2013-14 school year. The curriculum will continue to evolve based on input from BPS teachers.

Focus on K2 Structure

Focus on K2 integrates learning experiences from all content areas and is arranged around in-depth themes relevant to the lives of young children. Concepts and materials from the FOSS science learning kits, TERC Investigations math curriculum, Fundations Intervention, Writer's Workshop, and Storytelling/Story Acting have also been incorporated into the instructional day. Children are provided with ample time for hands-on experiences with concrete materials and opportunities to reflect on their leaning. Engagement in varied projects and exploration allows young children to grow and thrive in a community of learners.

---

[1] Please see http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/focus-on-k2.html for a literature review of the research foundations upon which *Focus on K2* is based.

[2] See "Student Learning Outcomes" on the Focus on K2 website (http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/focus-on-k2.html) for information on Common Core State Standards and Focus on K2.

Units of Study:
Four in-depth units of study structure the yearlong implementation of *Focus on K2*: **Our Community, Animals and Habitats, Construction**, and **Our Earth**. Each theme builds on the concepts and skills learned in previous themes, allowing children to deepen their understanding and apply these skills and concepts with creativity and innovation.

Starting in September, the first six weeks of school are devoted to building ***Our Community*****.** This is a time for establishing a supportive community of learners, building relationships, fostering peer collaboration, and becoming confident with the routines and expectations of kindergarten while experiencing how individual needs can be met in a group setting. The lens of community and the concept of citizenship introduced in this unit permeate the year, with children first learning what it means to be a citizen in their own classroom communities and gradually applying this idea to broader contexts.

From October to December, the ***Animals and Habitats*** unit focuses on caring for living things and learning about animals through investigation and research. Students will engage in author/illustrator/ artist studies and collaborative projects, and will explore concepts of care and safety, responsibility, courage, and respect.

Beginning in January, the ***Construction*** unit invites children to make physical science connections through construction of structures, measurement and comparison, and experimentation with materials. Children are introduced to a design process that involves envisioning, researching, planning, executing and revising. The definition of construction is expanded to include constructing buildings, songs, dances, plays, and stories. The unit culminates in the *Our Boston* project, with children working as a class to build a model that answers the question of how to make our city a fairer and more interesting place for children.

From April through June, the ***Our Earth*** unit explores the natural world through investigations and research of the earth's properties and systems, including the earth's surface, gardening, recycling, and reuse. Concepts of sustainability, urban renewal, economics, healthy lifestyles, authority, honesty, respect, courage, responsibility, and stewardship frame discussions and projects. The unit and year culminate in a capstone project where children choose a sustainable practice and work towards convincing a local audience to adopt this practice.

Daily *Focus on K2* Components:

Centers: At the heart of Focus on K2 are rich, interdisciplinary centers in which children learn through play, projects, peer interaction and hands-on materials. Kindergarteners engage in critical thinking and creativity, integrate concepts, and practice new skills independently and with peers. They explore literacy concepts, for example, by making a shopping list in the Dramatization center, labeling structures in the Block center, and recording observations in the STEM center. Center activities are authentic, motivating, and connected to the lives of the children. Children develop organizational and self-regulation skills as successful learners and problem solvers.

Whole Group: Children meet for whole group instruction in read-alouds of literature and non-fiction texts, storytelling, discussions about ongoing integrated projects, and reflections on classroom life. Foundational language and literacy skills such as phonemic awareness and vocabulary development are embedded during these group times.

Small Groups: Teachers meet with small groups of children to teach and support specific reading foundational skills and to facilitate ongoing project work.

Writer's Workshop: Through mini-lessons, mentor texts and independent writing in different genres, children are provided time each day for motivating, authentic writing activities.

Storytelling and Story Acting: Supporting literacy development and social and emotional development, children are given frequent opportunities to share their stories, which are then enacted by their peers.

Math Investigations: The current TERC Investigations curriculum continues as a time for developing mathematical understandings through hands-on manipulation of materials.

Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions

The Enduring Understandings (big ideas) and Essential Questions are the critical aspects of the content of student learning. In each area the Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions were developed from careful examination of BPS students' work, the Common Core State Standards, the MA Curriculum Frameworks for Kindergarten, and critical aspects of 21st Century thinking and learning.

Area	**Enduring Understandings**	**Essential Questions**
Reading	• Children will listen and construct meaning from to a wide range of text for a variety of purposes including literature and informational text. • Children will practice the behavior of effective, strategic readers. • Children will demonstrate understanding of new vocabulary and concepts and use them accurately in reading, speaking, and writing.	• Why did the author write this book (text)? • What strategies do you use as a reader to figure out the word and what it means? • How do the author and illustrator help you learn the meaning of a word you do not know? • How can you use this word in your own play?
Writing	• Children will write, draw, and dictate stories for a variety of purposes (narrative, informative, and argumentative). • Children will engage in a feedback/editing writing process, answering questions and adding details to pieces of work based on	• Why do writers write? • What are the different purposes and ways we can write or capture our thoughts in pictures and words? • How do writers develop and edit their work so the reader understands their

	adult and peer feedback. • Children will participate in shared writing and research experiences to produce and publish writing with friends.	point of view or purpose? • How can evaluation and reflection be used to improve writing?
Communication	• Children will participate in multi-exchange conversations with increasingly complex information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking, including asking and answering questions to gain understanding of information and seek clarity. • Children will use appropriate voice level, gestures, facial expressions, and visual supports to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly. • Children will begin to speak and write using Standard English grammar and conventions.	• What do good listeners and speakers do to participate in a conversation? • How does the choice of words, tone, and body language affect the speaker's message and the listener's response? • How do rules of language affect communication?
STEM	• Children will engage in a scientific process to make discoveries that includes planning and carrying out investigations by: o making predictions o experimenting and testing their predictions o gathering evidence o recording what is happening o determining and evaluating results through analysis, answering comparative questions, and reflection o adding or subtracting variables to see change in results, then following the process again • Children will use inquiry to make decisions – forming a question and defining the problem. • Children will compare questions to learn more about, observe, and reflect on information, concepts, and problems. • Children will use evidence to engage in an argument regarding STEM related topics with peers to solve authentic problems and answer and ask provocative questions. • Children will think of themselves as	• How will you (did you) solve the problem and how does your evidence support your point of view? • How do you know? • Why did that happen? • Why is this information important?

	scientists, technicians, engineers, and mathematicians engaging in larger concepts related to engineering and physical science, life and earth science, robotics, measurement and data, geometry, number sense, counting and cardinality, and operations and algebraic thinking.	
Social Studies & History	• Children will honor themselves as individuals, as part of a family, as part of a community, as part of a community of learners, and as part of a world. • Children will honor, respect and value individuals and their similarities and differences, and families and their similarities and differences. • Children will understand the need for rules to keep our community, our environment, and ourselves safe. • Children will understand that citizenship involves responsibility for themselves and to others. • Children will understand and participate in problem solving processes to solve disagreements in a peaceful and democratic way. • Children will understand that organizations have leaders.	• What do you value about yourself individually, as part of your family, your community, your classroom, and the world you live in? • How are people alike and different? • How are families alike and different? • Why do we have rules, what purpose do these rules serve, and how do we organize to follow these rules? • How can you help solve a problem? • What is the role of a leader and why?
The Arts	• Children will respect, value, and honor the arts as an expression of their own and others interpretations of thoughts, concepts and ideas. • Children will engage in art as a process that requires creativity, reflection and critical thinking including access to previous work to think more extensively about their experience and critique their work to extend or change it when appropriate. • Children will engage in art experiences that move from exploration of materials, music and movement to more purposeful work focused around thoughts that draw out what is happening in their minds. • Children will make connections through	• How do you want to set up your space and materials so you can produce your work? • What do you think art is? • Why do people make art? • How do we make art? • What are you thinking about that you could capture? • What media, materials, or movement is best to help you capture your thoughts in your art piece? • How does thinking about your art piece help you improve? • How as an artist do you use work you have done previously or work of other artists to inspire you now? • How do the different materials/tools

	the arts to other content areas including reading, writing, communication, math, history, social studies, and science.	help you or frustrate you in creating your art piece?

Standards and Curriculum Frameworks

Throughout this guide there are references to the Common Core State Standards and the MA Curriculum Frameworks for Kindergarten. For elaboration on any of these standards, please visit the Early Childhood Department's Weebly at:

http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/massachusetts-curriculum-frameworks.html

For Teachers New to *Focus on K2*

Mastery takes time, and your skills in supporting children's learning in the Focus curriculum will unfold over months and years. A willingness to take risks and trust in your children's natural desire to learn, their abilities to collaborate, and their abilities to have powerful ideas are essential in this learning process.

Terms that you will come across in this guide that have specific meanings are:

Documentation: observing and collecting artifacts (video, photographs, notes, student work) and sharing these artifacts with children and colleagues in order to deepen and extend learning. For example, a photograph of a block tower shared at a Common Planning Time can lead to suggestions from colleagues about new provocations to provide in the Block Center to extend learning. That same photograph can be shared with children at Introduction to Centers to re-launch an investigation of creating tall block structures. In *Focus on K2,* the purpose of documentation is not only to provide evidence that the children have learned, but to shape the learning that is taking place.

Provocation: an activity and/or experience aimed at stimulating children's thinking that teachers can respond to with additional activities and experiences. For example, a Block Center activity in which children are presented with images of Boston area structures becomes a provocation when a teacher observes and documents children's interests in creating a connected neighborhood where no one gets lost, and then challenges children to create signs for these buildings (so people know where they are going). Loris Malaguzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, described this back and forth between teacher and children as a friendly game of ping pong, where the objective is to have long and lively volleys.

Re-launch: to re-introduce a topic or project to children, using artifacts to remind children about their ideas. For example, a block project can be re-launched by sharing photographs or drawings of previous structures.

Integrated learning: where children explore across domains/subject areas simultaneously rather than in isolation. For example, during Centers, as children learn about animals and habitats during Unit Two, they reference non-fiction books and photographs of actual animal habitats to build their own habitats using blocks and natural materials. As children build animal habitats with the blocks, they are encouraged to collaborate with each other, building social competencies, developing emotional control (such as self-restraint), and cultivating oral language skills, including key vocabulary related to the unit, through conversation about their structures. Physical development is fostered as children move about the area, lifting large and small blocks that require both gross and fine motor skill. And cognitively, children are learning about geometry and engineering as they manipulate the blocks to carry out a plan for their habitat structures.

Feedback: sharing thoughts to improve a person's or group's ideas or products. To be productive, feedback should be kind, specific and helpful. In *Focus on K2*, Thinking and Feedback meetings provides daily opportunities for children to receive and provide feedback, supported by protocol-guided conversations grounded in documentation.

Protocols: Steps that guide conversations for children (and adults), supporting the group in learning together. For example, a suggested protocol for Thinking and Feedback involves:

- Looking (the group silently observes the work for a minute)
- Noticing (children describe what they see in the work)
- Listening (the presenting child(ren) tells about the work and asks any questions or requests feedback from the group. Children may need support in describing what they are working on)
- Wondering (children asking questions to the presenter about the work)
- Suggesting (children provide feedback, based on the presenter(s) questions) and
- Inspiring (children saying how the work gives them ideas of what they could do during Center Time)

Collaboration: In *Focus on K2* not all work is individual. Throughout the curriculum, children work together to identify and solve problems, ask and answer questions and create products. These products include class books and a model of how to make Boston fairer and a more interesting place for children (see the *Our Boston* project in Unit 3).

Projects: Long term inquiry that incorporates individual, small group and whole class activities. Projects can emerge from center activities in Units 1 and 2. Units 3 and 4 include two large projects (Our Boston in unit 3 and the Capstone Project in Unit 4), where, as citizens of Boston, children share their ideas with their communities.

As you go through your first year with *Focus on K2* there are supports: colleagues (many whom have previously worked with curriculum), members of the Early Childhood Department, and video examples and other resources on the Department's website: (http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/index.html).

Final Word

Kindergarten children should love coming to school, feel confident about themselves, and become deeply engaged in their learning. Curiosity, creativity, and a sense of wonder should be encouraged and fostered, and children should have many opportunities to experience success through their efforts. *Focus on K2* provides research-based strategies that enable BPS teachers to provide rich, integrated learning experiences. Children develop confident, inquisitive dispositions, and are challenged to explore ideas deeply over time. They will finish the kindergarten year poised and ready for first grade and beyond, eager to learn.

About *Focus on K2*

A note to Para-Professionals and Adult Volunteers

The *Focus on K2* curriculum was written by Boston teachers for Boston kindergartners. During the year children explore four units of study: *Our Community, Animals and Habitats, Construction,* and *Our Earth*. Each day children learn by listening to and discussing books, telling and acting out stories, and writing and drawing. They also learn through play. For example, during daily time in Centers children:

- build in the Block center, learning about shapes (math), how to make stable buildings (engineering), and how many blocks they need to make a tower (math);
- pretend in the Dramatization center, using their imaginations, counting coins to make change at a pretend store (math), or writing orders down at a pretend restaurant (writing); and
- paint in the Art Studio, carefully using a brush to make lines (fine motor skills), mixing different paints to make a new color (science), and describing their work (language development).

In all these activities children are learning how to explore, ask questions, make choices, work together, solve problems, and use their imaginations. After Centers the learning continues as the teacher guides the children in talking about some of their ideas and discoveries during the Thinking and Feedback meeting.

You can help the children learn during **Centers** by:

- Asking children questions about what they are working on. Make these questions "open ended" (not having a single or simple answer):
  What is your plan?
  How can you work together? How will you decide who does what part?
  Can you tell me about what you are trying to do?
  What's your next step?
  What materials will you need/use?
  What inspired you?
  How will you represent that?
  Please tell me about your block tower.
  What story is happening here?
  Where did you get this idea?
  What research do you need to do?

- Observing and taking notes about what the children are doing (and then sharing the notes with the teacher). Write down interesting things children say. This helps the children remember their thinking and tells the teacher what children are learning and doing.

- Taking photographs of what children are making and doing (you can use your cell phone). Like notes, photographs help children remember what they have done and let the teacher see what all the children are doing during center time.
- Write down (scribe) children's ideas about their drawings, painting and writing. Use sticky notes or separate pieces of paper, or whatever system is set up in your classroom.
- Bringing literacy into activities. If children are constructing specific buildings, suggest they label their buildings so everyone will know the buildings' names. If children are pretending to go shopping in dramatic play, provide them paper to write shopping lists.
- Providing support when children ask for help, but allowing them to solve their own problems. For example, if a child is upset because her block tower keeps falling over, you can ask, "How do you think we can make the tower stronger?" Or say, "Mayra is really good at building towers. Let's ask her if she has an idea of how to help keep your tower from falling down."

You can help the children learn during **Thinking and Feedback** by:

- Taking notes about what the children are observing and suggesting, and sharing the notes with the teacher.
- Offering a suggestion or observation about what is being discussed [Note: It is important that the children get a chance to share their ideas, so limit yourself to one comment each meeting time].

You can help the children learn during **Writer's Workshop** (and whenever children are writing) by:

- Asking children to explain their pictures and writing, and letting children know that what they are doing is important.
- Honoring children's beginning attempts at writing, encouraging them to try writing letters and words (and not crossing their writing out, erasing it, correcting it without permission, or judging their mistakes harshly).

Throughout the day you can help children who are learning English by translating words and ideas they don't understand into their home language. You can also translate their words into English so their ideas can be understood.

Children learn best when they are part of a caring classroom community that includes everyone being interested in everyone else's ideas. You are part of this community.

Take some time to read the *Focus on K2* Guide (particularly the center time activity descriptions) to see how you can help children learn.

Part 2:
Schedules

Daily Instructional Time
Sample Schedule

Daily Instructional Minutes: *Focus on K2*

An integrated Kindergarten day includes ample Center Time combined with time for large and small group instruction. Each day, children will engage in the following curricular components:

Component	Details	Number of minutes/day	Notes
Focus on K2 Centers	Intro to Centers	10	
	Centers	60	various content areas
	Thinking and Feedback	20	
Literacy (teachers select) *see following pages for guidance	Fundations© or	30 or	
	Working on Words, Whole Group	20	
	Working on Words, Stations	20	
Read Aloud		20	
Storytelling/Acting		10	collect children's dictations at another time of day (e.g., arrival or Centers)
		about 160 total	**about 2 hours, 40 minutes**

Additional Kindergarten Instructional Minutes

In addition to the *Focus on K2* curriculum, the Kindergarten grade day includes or may include the following:

Content Area	Details	Number of minutes/day	Notes
Math	TERC© or Engage NY©	60	
	Number Talks©	10	
Writing Time/ Writer's Workshop		30	curriculum/approach varies per school and teacher
Social Emotional Curriculum	Second Step or "Community of Learners"		varies per school and teacher
		100	**1 hour, 40 minutes**

Guidance for K2 Literacy Block

school year 2017-18

With the recent District-wide implementation of Fundations© (K2-2nd), K2 teachers will make decisions about how to create their explicit literacy block. Because *Focus on K2* already includes Working on Words (WOW), teachers have several options in which to provide literacy experiences.

Option A, recommended

Fundations©, 30 min
WOW Stations, 20 min, small groups during Stations
Centers 80 min (Intro 10 min, Centers 55 min, Th/F 15 min)

Option B

Fundations© (30 min)
WOW Whole Group, Shared Writing (10 min)
WOW Stations (20 min)
Centers 70 min (Intro 10 min, Centers 45 min, Th/F 15 min)

Option C

Fundation© (30 min)
Centers 100 minutes (Intro 10 min, Centers 70 min, Th/F 20 min)
pull small groups (20 min)
include Word Work from WOW

Additional recommendations:

- Incorporate the WOW Shared Writing lessons in daily Writing Time
- Incorporate the WOW Shared Reading in Arrival or Intro to Centers
- Integrate the poems and songs from WOW Shared Reading in transitions

Sample Schedule: Kindergarten, with *Focus on K2*

*schedule includes Option A from previous page

Minutes	Component
8:30 - 8:40 (10 min)	Arrival • Community of Learners (or other social emotional curriculum) OR • Adult Storytelling
8:40 - 8:50 (10 min)	**Centers: Intro to Centers**
8:50- 9:45 (55 min)	**Center Time** • Collect Stories for Storytelling/Acting • Informal Assessment (observation/documentation and collection of children's work)
9:45-10:00 (15 min)	**Centers: Thinking and Feedback**
10:00 – 10:45 (45 min)	P & D
10:45 – 11:15 (30 min)	Writing Time • Writers Workshop or other program
11:15 – 12:00 (45 min)	Lunch and Recess
12:00 – 12:20 (20 min)	**Read Aloud**
12:20 – 1:30 (70 min)	Math • Number Talks (10 min) • District Curriculum
1:30-2:00 (20 min)	**Fundations©**
2:00-2:20 (20 min)	**WOW Stations**
2:20 - 2:30 (10 min)	**Story Acting**
2:30	Dismissal

To meet the developmental needs of young children, include movement breaks as needed.

Part 3:
Components of the Day

- Introduction to Centers
- Center Time
- Thinking and Feedback (or Sharing Our Research)
- Read Aloud/Close Read
- Working on Words
    - Shared Reading
    - Whole Group Writing
    - Small Group Instruction
- Storytelling/Story Acting
- Resources
    - Community of Learners
    - Arrival
    - Class Meeting
    - Writer's Workshop

Introduction to Centers
(10 minutes, before Centers)

Introduction to Centers involves demonstrating Center activities, children planning for Centers, and transitioning to Centers. Teachers use rich vocabulary and enticing explanations to show Center materials and demonstrate activities. They embed explicit instruction on how to engage in Centers and help children plan work, considering how the previous days' activities and ideas can inform the current work in Centers. Although teachers may occasionally want to group children for a particular "challenge" in a given Center, the routine should encourage children to choose and regulate their own activities, with guidance and scaffolding from adults to develop executive functioning skills.

Goals:
To engage children in organizing and self-directing their learning during Centers including explicit vocabulary support, building and activating background knowledge, honing executive functioning skills, and building on previous work in Centers as children learn from and with one another.

Common Core ELA Standards:
SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions
- Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges

SL.K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood
SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood
SL.K.6 Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly
L.K.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content

Materials:

- large basket or container to organize materials
- materials/artifacts from Centers (will vary depending on activities)

Preparation:

- Select the one or two activities that will be highlighted during Introduction to Centers. Place artifacts, samples of children's work, and other center materials into the basket. Highlighting work and suggestions discussed at the previous day's Thinking and Feedback time helps children solidify and build their knowledge and make plans for the day's work.

- For Centers not highlighted, include an artifact from that center (a block, paper and a marker from Writing & Drawing) to indicate that these centers will also be open**.**

Procedure

1. Demonstrating Centers

- Show the materials for the first center you want to highlight ("Today in the Block Center, there are materials for building habitats. You might want to…"). As you demonstrate the use of the materials, label them clearly, using intentional and rich vocabulary and repeating these words in context, setting clear expectations for the work in this Center. See activity descriptions for specific advice for introducing a new activity.
- As Centers are introduced to children, teachers might explicitly tell children the skills they will be learning or working on. For example, "In the Block Center today, you'll be learning more about building stable structures." Children should be able to explain what they are learning, taking ownership of the learning experience.
- If highlighting a child/children's previously completed work as a way to reintroduce the center, invite that child to comment about the process and product.
- If introducing two Centers, repeat this process for the second center. For centers not being highlighted that day, it will suffice to hold up a representative material, and say, "The Block Center is open today."

Considerations for Introducing Centers:

- Stagger the introduction of Center activities so children are introduced to something new each day, rather than starting all new centers on Monday.
- Limit the number of Centers introduced at once. Select only one or two to highlight in-depth each day.
- Highlight children's work to re-launch center activities and provide models and ideas to entice other children to the area. Feature work discussed at the previous day's Thinking and Feedback. Share suggestions offered as possible new directions for work in a center. Highlight suggestions you feel will lead to fruitful inquiry.
- Introduce Center books, "How to Books", or "Inspiring Books" for a particular Center to give children additional information to plan for their work in that area. For example, non-fiction books about a unit topic (fish, wolves, etc.) may be provided in the Dramatization Center for children to reference and expand their dramatizations.
- Invite children to return to a particular Center to finish their work from the previous day. This might be part of plan you made with small group of children or an individual child. Show a sample of the work and invite the child/children to describe how they might resume and proceed with their work/project.
- Pose a "Challenge": Occasionally, assign a group of children to start in a center, perhaps because they would benefit from a particular grouping or exploration with particular materials. In this case, it can be helpful to introduce the grouping as a "challenge" and communicate a sense of importance of the task. This can be very motivating for the children, and allows you to steer specific children to a Center or activity in an engaging way.

- Write the title of the challenge and steps to complete the challenge on chart paper or dry-erase board. Read this with the children as part of the Introductions to Centers. For example, “Block Challenge: Work together to construct a house with three stories and at least four rooms.”
- Write the names or initials of the children participating in the challenge on a separate paper, and introduce this by saying, “The children starting with this challenge today are.... If your name is not on this list, but you also want to try the challenge, add your name to the turns list and someone will let you know when space is available.”

2. Planning for Centers:

- **Model** how to plan for Centers, both choosing centers and how to get started with the work. You might say, “Now it’s time to think about where you would like to start working today. If I already went to Blocks yesterday, I might try something new. I will start at the Writing and Drawing Center, and I will need a blank book to work on my ‘Fish is Fish’ book. I will also need markers. That’s where I will start at Center Time today.”
- Ask children to think about options if a Center is full. “If there is no space in that Center, what is your back-up plan? What is another center you could go to instead?” You can model, “If there isn’t space in Writing and Drawing right away, I’ll put my name on the turns list. Maybe I’ll go to the library and do some research about fish, or find some long paper so can paint a picture of a long fish at the easel."
- Teach children to **“Turn and Talk”** to a partner. The children should tell each other their first and second (back-up) choice for starting in Centers (“I want to start in the Block Center to build a tall building. My back up plan is the STEM Center.”). Children should also talk with their partner about what they plan to do in a given center, what materials they will need, and if they are hoping to collaborate with a friend on the work. Initially, children will need help remembering what they are supposed to be talking about. You can remind them to talk about "Center, Materials, Friends" as a way to think about where they will go, what they will need, and who they will work with.

3. Transitioning to Centers:

- After children have planned for Centers, dismiss them in pairs or groups to start working. Use a transition song or a game (see below), or hold up an item from each center in turn, and say, “If you would like to start in the (Center name) today, raise your hand.” The teacher uses his/her judgment of how to call on children and acknowledge their choices.

  Suggestions for transitioning (if you are using number limits for Centers):
  - If more children raise their hands for a center than space allows, remind them that they can put their names on the turns list.
  - If a child does not choose a Center, say, “Let’s go see where there is space,” supporting the child to find an area to work. If he or she still hesitates, offer a

choice, “Would you like to start at the Writing and Drawing Center or in the Art Studio?”

Center Time
(60 minutes)

Facilitating Centers:
Integrated Centers that invite active learning, inquiry, and exploration are the foundation of *Focus on K2*. The following are resources for supporting the daily 60 minute Center Time. Teachers may develop additional systems for facilitating and guiding learning in Centers, but the expectations, following best practices for young children, are that:

- Children choose Centers and move freely between them. Teachers support children in developing self-regulation to complete projects, either in one session or over time, depending on the child and the nature of their work. Teachers and other classroom adults spend significant time in Centers daily, scaffolding, observing and listening, and extending learning.
- Clear, predictable systems and routines provide structure, support children moving between centers, and illustrate *what to do* to engage thoughtfully within centers.
- Children are encouraged to collaborate, talk with each other, be playful, and be actively engaged and motivated by their work in centers.

Below are best practices that have been used by teachers and children who have found them effective in structuring learning in Centers. If you design your own system, you must provide evidence that each of the key points above is being met.

Scheduling Centers:
The *Focus on K2* Center Time includes two whole group meetings (Introduction to Centers beforehand and Thinking and Feedback afterwards) and a 60 minute work period in Centers. Ideally, this occurs in the morning, and is one continuous 90 minute block. However, as school schedules and specialist times vary from school to school, individual teachers and administrators may need to negotiate this time configuration. Some guidelines:

- If the only time that a 90 minute block is available is in the afternoon, schedule Centers at this time rather than in the morning.
- If you must interrupt work time in Centers, be sure that children have at least 30 minutes to work prior to the interruption, so that they can get deeply engaged in a project. If an interruption is necessary, do not require children to clean up at this point; develop a system such as a laminated “save name” for each child to use as a placeholder and return to their work after the interruption. Clean up only once, at the end of Center Time.
- This will not be possible if the specialist needs to come into your classroom and use the classroom space. In this case, Centers will need to be scheduled at another time of the day.
- If none of these options are possible in your setting, speak to your principal about adjusting your specialist schedule.

Choosing Centers:
At the end of Introduction to Centers, children choose a Center in which to begin working. Teachers support this transition from whole group to Centers work by dismissing children based on their indicated interests, considering group dynamics and the needs and curiosities of individual children. See transition suggestions in *Introduction to Centers.*

Children choose the order in which they complete Center work, and when to move between Centers. This allows them to develop executive functioning skills such as planning and decision-making. Children should have a range of experiences during Center Time, both by visiting different Centers and having teachers integrate different learning experiences into Centers (such as labeling and counting in the Block Center).

Use Center Sign In or Sign Out sheets (see *Moving Between Centers*) to keep track of which centers a child has visited each week. Other systems can be developed, providing they meet the expectations for child Choice outlined above.

Engaging in Activities
Center activities are carefully designed to enable children to develop competencies aligned with CCSS goals, and to do so in ways that are engaging and motivating. During Centers, the expectation is that children can have flexibility of choice among Centers and that once they choose a Center, they will engage with materials and activities in purposeful ways. This is different from "must do" activities, because *all* activities in the Centers are meaningful and valuable. While children are encouraged to be playful in their work, this is not a "free play" period.

Exploration of materials is essential for young children's development in all domains and much exploration is embedded in the activities provided. In addition, children should have an opportunity to explore materials included in Centers in self-initiated ways at some time during the course of each unit. Ideally, this exploration will take place before children are asked to use the materials for a particular curriculum-driven purpose or activity.

Skillful teachers scaffold children's engagement in meaningful ways without coercion or force by gathering information about individual children's interests and skills and appealing to these as "entry points" for particular activities. True engagement with materials and ideas will lead children to take activities in different directions or to use materials in novel ways; teachers should be attentive to these possibilities and how they can extend children's learning.

When engaging in activities developed by the curriculum or by the teacher, children should be allowed to add materials that are kept in Centers to enhance and extend their work. When children veer significantly from the activity planned by the curriculum and/or teacher, the teacher should consider whether or not the children's activity still meets the objective of the original activity and/or helps to reinforce the enduring understandings that the original activity or project are meant to teach. If the objectives and/or enduring understandings are not reinforced by the activity the children have initiated, the teacher should redirect the children to one that does meet the objective. This might be the activity that was originally planned, or it

might be an adaptation of the activity the children have initiated. Using a version of the activity the children initiate to teach a skill or an enduring understanding could very likely be more successful than redirecting the children back to the original activity, since there is a good chance children will be more engaged in the activity they have initiated themselves.

The children's abilities to engage in projects will develop over time. The activities in Unit 1 provide children the opportunity to learn the routines and expectations of Centers and support children's abilities to participate in center-based projects.

Moving Between Centers:
When children are given a clear, consistent system for moving between Centers, teachers do not need to assign children to a Center or set time limits. The following suggestions provide a structure to help children direct their transitions between Centers independently.

Number Limit Signs: Each Center can have a number limit sign (see example in the Resources section), indicating how many children can use the center at one time. Children should be involved in the process of deciding number limits in Centers. The system can be negotiated by children and by adults, but the system must be used faithfully during the first part of the school year so that children find it reliable.

As children become confident in their use of the system, number limits can be flexible. "Exceptions" or permanent changes can be made for particular projects, social reasons, or other legitimate requests.

Turns Lists: In addition to the number limit sign, each Center should have a "turns list" (see Resources). If a child approaches a Center and wants to work there, he or she first counts the number of children and any "I will be right back" signs (see below), and decides if there is space to play. This is an opportunity for mathematical thinking. If there is space, the child enters. If the area is full, the child writes her or his name on the turns list. When a child leaves the Center, she or he should check the turns list and let the next child know that a space has become available.

Children should find another place to work until space is available. If no space becomes available that day, keep the turns list and refer to it at Introduction to Centers the following day, so a child who didn't get a chance to work in that center may begin there.

"I will be right back" signs: If a child needs to leave a Center to use the bathroom, have a snack, or to check in briefly with a teacher, the child should leave a placeholder in the Center, indicating that she will return shortly. Teachers can make these signs in advance and laminate them for durability. Children can also participate in making signs. Have the signs easily accessible throughout the classroom. If children want to use the signs to hold a space while they go to work in another Center, this is another opportunity for teachers and children to have a dialogue about fairness.

Center Sign Out Sheets: In each Center, place a Center Sign In or Sign Out Sheet on a clipboard. When a child arrives at or finishes working in a center, he signs in or out on the sheet. These sheets provide a system for keeping track of which centers children are using. See the appendix for a template, and further ideas for using this scaffold.

Work in Progress:
Many of the Focus on K2 activities are complex, and could require more than one session to complete. If, at the end of Centers, a child or group is not finished with an activity:

- Encourage them to make a "work in progress" or "save" sign to place on their work, also a motivating and authentic literacy opportunity. Work may be saved directly in a Center if space permits (such as a block structure), or on a "work in progress" shelf.
- If space does not permit, children could also draw a representation. Through writing or dictation, children can record their thoughts about the activity. Children might also take photographs to revisit and continue work the following day.
- During Introduction to Centers the following day, ask children to continue their work at this Center first. This teaches key planning skills and encourages deep, meaningful work over time.
- For longer-term or group projects, provide a system for the group to plan and record their work. Create a planning sheet for children to organize and document their process. Completing a project includes reviewing this plan.

The Teacher's Role in Centers:
Teachers and other classroom adults are engaged in Center work, supporting children. During the last several minutes, teachers help children think about wrapping up their work and to prepare for Thinking and Feedback. Teachers can structure this time depending on what is best for the group. It is strongly encouraged to plan the Center block during a part of the day when there is another adult in the room to provide additional support in Centers. During Centers, teachers and paraprofessionals should be:

- *Asking critical thinking questions,* such as, "I wonder what would happen if...?" and "What do you think about...?" Each Center activity lesson plan includes essential questions that help children to think deeply about their work.
- *Providing materials* to extend, differentiate, or enhance the learning experience. For example, if children in the Block Center are experimenting with balls and ramps, provide other small objects of varying sizes and shapes to roll on the ramp.
- *Reviewing procedures* if children need redirection. Refer back to a visual scaffold (clipboard with instructions, or step-by-step cards), or model the procedure.
- *Discussing work* by noticing out loud something about a child's project ("I notice that you used tape to adhere this piece of paper, but you used glue to attach the cardboard"). Often children will elaborate on their work when an adult comments in detail without judgment. Ask them, "What do you want to say about ____?"
- *Encouraging collaboration* by supporting children to move from parallel play (using similar materials near each other) to associative (sharing materials) or collaborative play

(working together towards a common goal) by directing their attention to each other, joining in the work for a short time and modeling, or posing a shared challenge.

- *Fostering problem solving* when problems arise, either with materials or peers ("This is really a problem! What do you think you will do about it?"). Children will often generate acceptable solutions to small problems themselves, with some teacher scaffolding.
- *Documenting children's learning* as you move around the room to different centers, keep documentation tools (sticky notes, clipboards, camera and/or video camera) handy to record dialogue, observations of children's work, learning strategies, and social interactions. Place small baskets at adult height throughout the classroom, containing small pieces of paper, sticky pads, and pens and pencils. After writing a note, drop it back into the basket. Collect, review, and organize notes into children's portfolios at a later time. Photos and video can also be organized and reviewed in the same way.

Communicating with Other Classroom Adults During Centers:

Ideally, schedule Center Time when there is more than one adult in the room. In order to maximize additional adult support from paraprofessionals, volunteers or specialists, create a system for communicating with them quickly about the Center activities and ways they can support children. Some suggestions:

- On the wall near each Center, hang a small sign for adults that indicates the name of the area, learning goals addressed there, and questions for supporting children's exploration and learning there.
- Direct classroom adults to the same scaffolds that children are using in a Center. For example, if there is a clipboard or picture cards with step-by-step directions for completing a Center activity, encourage adults to model reading these with the children. This will help them to understand the goals of the activity and will also model thoughtful use of the Center resources.
- Inform colleagues of the documentation system in place for capturing children's dialogue and ideas during Centers, and encourage them to take anecdotal notes and photographs as well.
- Direct other adults to centers that need additional support, such as a Center with a newly introduced project.
- The "About Focus on K2" is a paraprofessional/volunteer friendly document that you should share with adults in your room so they can better support children's learning during Centers.

Thinking and Feedback
(following Center Time, ~20 minutes)

Thinking and Feedback is a time for children to learn from and with one another, discussing and reflecting on their work. The conversations during this time help build a supportive, intellectually engaged, and dynamic classroom community. Through the process of observing, listening, and asking and answering provocative questions, children deepen their understandings of content. As they consider works in progress, children generate new ideas, integrate different perspectives, contribute to each other's learning, and build group knowledge.

Goals

- Children develop critical thinking skills such as self-reflection and problem solving.
- Children use oral language and focused vocabulary to reflect on and describe their work.
- Children discuss ongoing projects, respect multiple viewpoints, give and receive constructive feedback, and support peers.

Materials:

- artifacts or documentation of center work (painting, sculpture, written work; projected photographs or video of group working; materials from the center; etc)
- teacher note-taking supplies (clipboard and pen, notebook, post-it notes, or other system)
- visuals with Thinking and Feedback protocol

Process

Thinking and Feedback follows Center Time. Children should not be solely focused on the steps, but on the content of the conversation.

Preparation During Centers:

Identify one piece of work from a child or a group of children to highlight by observing during Centers. Perhaps some children have discovered something that might inspire others in the group. A child might be struggling with her work and benefit from feedback. There may be a piece of work to highlight for curriculum purposes. Or a child who normally isn't recognized by her peers might have made a discovery that you to acknowledged.

Prior to the meeting, plan with the child(ren) who will be sharing their work. See if they have specific questions, or would like any specific feedback from the whole group. Gather any necessary documentation or artifacts to bring to the meeting. This preparation will allow for a process to elicit feedback and descriptive conversations, and move beyond a "Show and Tell".

During Thinking and Feedback:

- Invite the children sharing to sit in a circle. Place the documentation or artifacts in the center, or on an easel so that everyone can see.
- At the beginning, introduce the "Agreements for Feedback" to the children. The basic guidelines are:
  Give kind, helpful and specific feedback. Receive feedback in the constructive spirit in which it is given. It is your choice to take or not follow feedback.
- Introduce the child(ren) who is sharing (e.g., "Today, Lauren and Diego were working on a sculpture in the Art Studio. They were using Beautiful Stuff to create a sculpture, and used several types of adhesives.").

Use the Thinking and Feedback protocol and visuals to structure the conversation:

Looking	the whole group silently and carefully looks at the work
Noticing	children in the group describe what they see in the work (presenters remain quiet)
Listening	presenting children tell about the work and ask questions and/or request specific feedback from the group
Wondering	children in the group ask questions of the presenters
Suggesting and Inspiring	children provide feedback and articulate ideas that are inspired by what's shared

Note: Phase in the use of the protocol during the first few days of school. Begin with Looking, Noticing and Listening and then add Suggesting/Wondering and Inspiring as children master the protocol.

- Take notes on the feedback provided ("Suggesting" and "Inspiring" will be particularly important times to take notes). These notes will serve as a reminder so you can share the children's ideas back with the group the next day.

- Remind children when there is “time for one more suggestion or comment.”

The following day:
Remind the children of important feedback offered at the previous Thinking and Sharing time. This can happen at Introduction to Centers as children plan for centers (e.g., “Yesterday at Thinking and Feedback time Kervin suggested that to make a block structure more stable you could put blocks around the base. If you want to try this today in the Block Center…). Feedback can also be shared during Center Time in specific centers (e.g., “Yesterday you said you were inspired by Javon’s painting…).

Guidelines for sharing work:

- Highlight just one activity or piece of work each day in order to allow for a deep conversation about the topic.
- Invite groups, rather than individuals, to share collaborative work whenever possible.
- Focus on works-in-progress so that feedback can be used to improve work.
- Invite adults to give feedback in order to model how to provide kind, helpful and specific feedback and provide children additional ideas about their work. Modeling can include asking open-ended questions during the “wondering” phase of the protocol (e.g., How did you decide to sort these stones?; How did you construct that habitat? What materials did you use?; What are you planning to do next?) and providing specific ideas during “Suggesting.” While it is helpful for adults to offer ideas, **the vast majority of feedback should come from the children**.
- The children should lead this process as much as possible, with a gradual release of responsibility.
- Use documentation and artifacts to support and ground the conversation. For projects that cannot easily be moved to the meeting area (a block structure, mural, etc) it may be helpful to gather in that center for sharing or take a picture to bring to the group.
- Keep a list to let children know in advance when they will have a turn to share. All children should have opportunities to share work over time. Consider the particular needs of the children in the group when devising a system for keeping track of who has shared.
- For children who have more limited oral language skills, use other communication strategies such as visual aids.
- Thinking and Feedback is also an opportunity for group self-reflection on Center Time. Teachers can also engage children in assessing the group learning experience by posing questions about a particular activity or event that occurred during Centers that day. Use open-ended questions to encourage thinking, and group problem solving. For example:
    - What worked well?
    - What did you notice?

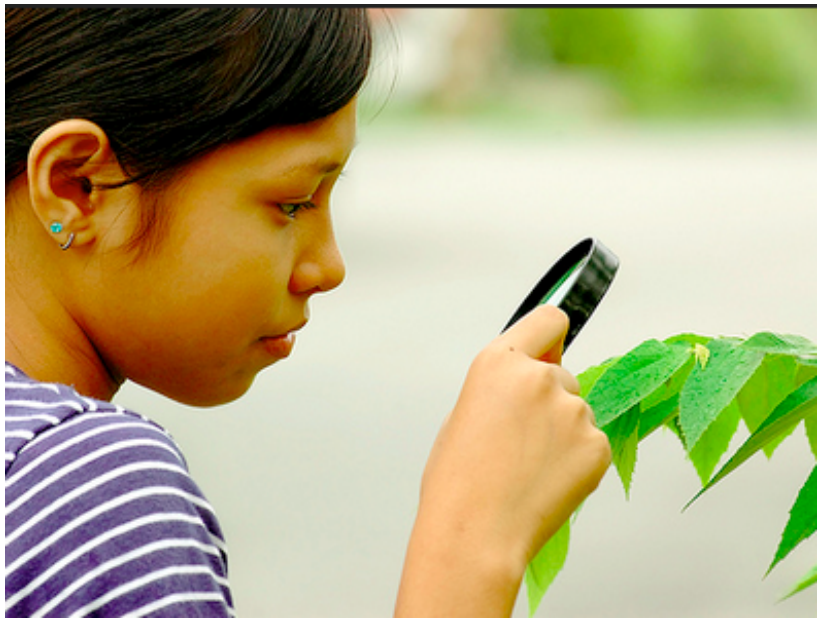
- What do we need to change to make it better tomorrow?

Looking

Noticing

I notice that…

I see…



Listening

Wondering

How did you?

I wonder why?

Suggesting

Inspiring

You might try…

Did you think about…

I am inspired to…

I might try…

Read Alouds
(10 minutes, everyday)

Reading to children is a core literacy practice of early childhood education. Children's love for information, stories, and adventures are natural motivations for reading. Tapping into these motivations (at times selecting books attuned to the children's interests and allowing children to choose books), reading with enthusiasm, and engaging children in actively participating in the reading enhances their literacy development.

Books to read
Prescribed books that connect to unit themes and activities are listed in the weekly plans. These books will be read several times using strategies listed below. There are also days that are open to select books based on children's and teacher's interests. Draw on the supplemental book list provided for each unit, as well as accessing your and your children's favorite books.

Spontaneous and informal reading
There will be other times during the day when occasions arise to read to children. During Center Time you may read a favorite book to a small group of children in the Library. During a transition time, you may read a chapter book over the course of a couple of weeks. Share the pleasure of books and reading throughout the day.

Reading strategies
During Read Aloud sessions, teachers model and explicitly teach strategies used to comprehend text, supporting children's learning of reading strategies. Metacognition, or thinking about one's own thinking, is the backbone to this approach.

A seven-step process, researched and studied through Mosaic of Thought and Strategies That Work, includes opportunities for children to interact with the text. These seven steps are:

1. activating prior knowledge
2. asking and answering questions
3. making inferences
4. summarizing and retelling the text
5. visualizing the text
6. evaluating the text
7. synthesizing the text

Each unit of study includes Read Aloud lesson plans. Multiple reads of the same text emphasize specific strategies highlighted below:

1st Read

Comprehension Strategies**:** Read for enjoyment and knowledge seeking. Children should work with the teacher to gather the main idea, discuss the important Tier 2 vocabulary words and quickly define Tier 3 vocabulary. Tier 2 vocabulary words are words from the book that children will use throughout their work in centers. Tier 3 vocabulary are words that are specific to understanding the text but may not be words that students need to embed in their vocabulary throughout the unit of study.

Isabelle Beck's Three Tiers of Vocabulary[1]

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Basic words that most native speakers know before entering school. Children learning English may require support with these words.	Words that appear frequently in texts, have high utility, and are less likely to be learned through everyday conversations.	Content-specific and technical words that are best taught when the need arises in context.

2nd Read

Comprehension Strategies**:** Ask and answer questions, make inferences, summarize/retell and visualize the text. The individual lesson plans will help you determine which strategy you are working on with the given text. Teachers should only model one or two strategies so that children do not get confused by a mixture of multiple strategies at one time. It is important that children understand that good readers use a combination of strategies, but during this reading we are focusing on one or two strategies to help the children understand how they could use a particular strategy when they are reading independently.

3rd Read

Comprehension Strategies**:** Evaluate and synthesize the text. It is important to help children evaluate and synthesize their understanding of the text as it provides opportunities for them to think more deeply and critically about the content of the text, how they will use the content within their own lives, and how the content impacts the world they live in. This allows children to think about aspects of the story or text that they may not have considered independently.

Note: For long, complex texts, break readings into two or more sessions. Read aloud periods should not exceed children's attention spans. The read aloud lesson plans account for this.

---

[1] Beck, Isabel. & McKeown, Margaret G. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York: Guilford Press.

Supporting English Language Learners:
Each unit includes a list of key vocabulary words with child-friendly definitions and visual supports. In each read aloud, teachers employ strategies before, during, and after reading that benefit English Language Learners specifically and are supportive of all children.

- Before reading, teachers conduct picture walks to preview the story and tap into children's background knowledge. They may also preview some words or concepts from the story using realia, photographs, or actions.
- During reading, teachers define extended instruction (Tier 2) vocabulary in context, using examples and non-examples, child-friendly definitions, acting out words, or referencing images or realia to aid comprehension. Turn and talks may be used to engage children in actively saying the words and discussing their meanings.
- After reading, teachers lead a discussion about the book, revisiting vocabulary taught during the story. They may also scaffold conversation using sentence frames or prompts.

Close Read (15 min, one book per unit)

Close Reading is the methodical investigation of a complex text through answering text dependent questions to demystify its meaning. This approach levels the playing field for all learners, as it does not privilege background knowledge in determining understanding of content. Simultaneously, it offers opportunities to engage in rigorous discussions that align with the goals of the Common Core. Close Reading directs students to examine the text itself through a series of activities that focus children's learning on the meanings of individual words and sentences as well as the development of events and ideas. The choice of complex texts ensures that children will be able to extract evidence as well as make inferences that logically follow in response to text dependent questions; these can then be assembled into written analyses and oral presentations. Ultimately, Close Reading motivates children to listen inquisitively to discover the beauty and insight within the text that makes it worthy of reading multiple times.

Key Elements of Close Reading Instruction

Close Reading stresses the following essential instructional priorities:

a. Focuses multiple readings on those portions of a text that pose the biggest challenge to comprehension so as to build reader capacity, confidence, and stamina
b. Asks text dependent questions and assigns tasks that are neither overly general nor schematic, but rather direct readers to carefully analyze the text in front of them for evidence (Teachers choose a few sections of the lesson plan to focus on. The menu of text dependent questions provides options. The teacher should choose purposefully, based on children's misconceptions or biggest challenges with the content and the text.)
c. Offers sequenced questions that build on each other to ensure that children follow the line of argument in the text while remaining actively engaged with what they read
d. Poses not only questions about specific ideas within the text but also asks children to make inferences based on evidence beyond what is explicitly stated

e. Helps children become aware of nuances in word meaning as well as acquire knowledge of general academic vocabulary to aid in understanding a wide range of complex texts
f. Requires that children synthesize and present both orally and in writing (through drawings/dictation and writing) ideas and information drawn from the text in an organized fashion to demonstrate understanding

Close Reading and Background Knowledge

Close Reading gives priority to the role of the text in constructing understandings. When done well, close reading uncovers the text as a rich source of knowledge. Always providing background knowledge before reading a text denies children the opportunity to develop this essential skill. While Close Reading does not rule out the use of background knowledge, it raises the crucial questions of when to access information outside of the text and what information to utilize. During a Close Read, children should first grapple with the text itself, and only if they need additional information for the purpose of explicitly understanding the text itself, should outside information be accessed.

Close Reading and English Language Learners

Close Reading provides instructional support to ELLs in a variety of ways:

- Offers scaffolding in an ongoing way by asking text dependent questions throughout the text
- Provides opportunities for children to develop fluency through rereading and following along when text is read aloud
- Targets vocabulary development, a key element in strengthening reading comprehension
- Supports emerging readers and encourages participation by privileging the text itself instead of prior knowledge
- Informs children of the text characteristics that challenge comprehension and provides text-based contextual strategies for grappling with these
- Begins to equip children with the skills needed to understand non-scaffolded text encountered on assessments and in college and career environments

Effective ELL support results in the reader encountering the text on his or her own terms. When children encounter difficulty comprehending the text, support should explicitly direct them to re-read challenging portions of the text and answer additional questions that help focus the child's attention on key phrases and statements in the text or on the organization of ideas in the paragraph. Scaffolding and support should not over-simplify by translating the text contents or preemptively announcing what will be learned – thereby diminishing the need to read the text itself carefully. Instead, scaffolding that directly and consistently solicits understanding and addresses confusion through close reading has been shown to be the most direct path to developing proficient independent readers.

Working on Words (WOW)*, Explicit Literacy Component (40 minutes)
Guide

*can be used in conjunction with Fundations©, refer to the Guidance for K2 Literacy Block Document

An important goal of the *Focus on K2* curriculum is to create a literacy rich Kindergarten day. As young children are learning about the world around them, they are noticing the role that print and language play at home, in school, in their community, in our everyday lives. Just as children enjoy exploring with blocks and paint, children are as curious about letters and words.

The purpose of the Working on Words (WOW) component is to explicitly introduce, teach, and model literacy foundational skills such as phonological awareness, phonics, concepts about print, and reading strategies in a developmentally appropriate, cognitively demanding, and engaging manner. Children practice explicit skills and strategies and build language and knowledge through the use of poetry, songs, activities, and games.

Goals:

- Adults use developmentally appropriate and effective methods for teaching young readers/writers.
- Adults model strategies/skills.
- Children develop and practice necessary reading foundations skills/strategies.
- As children engage in independent work, they build confidence and mastery as they apply skills and strategies.
- Children see reading as a means to attaining new knowledge and writing as a means of communication.

A successful *Focus on K2* literacy day includes both explicit and embedded literacy opportunities: children practice isolated skills during WOW time and then make sense of and further internalize these skills through contextualized experiences (e.g., the letter **Ss** is important when building the "s-s-s-school" in the *Our Community* Unit). It is essential that teachers consider the authentic, cognitively demanding, embedded literacy within Center Time and other parts of the day.

MA Curriculum Framework for ELA:
All Reading Foundational Skills (R.F.K) standards

Materials:

WOW Whole Group and Stations activities will require the following materials:

- teaching board (white board, bulletin board, etc.)
- poems and songs (provided in the teacher guide)
- chart paper
- sentence strips
- pocket chart(s)
- markers
- highlighters and/or highlighting tape
- index cards
- sticky notes
- magnetic letters or teacher made letters
- pointer
- baskets or bins (to hold the Station materials)
- games (templates provided)
- stiff paper to create longer lasting games
- white boards, markers, erasers (4-6, for a small group)
- any supplemental big books, poems, songs relevant to the skills and/or theme

Procedure:

WOW is divided into two parts. First, teachers lead the WOW Whole Group. Then, children work in independent small groups in WOW Stations while teachers pull small groups of children to work on identified targeted skills.

Working On Words Minutes

Component		Number of Minutes/day	Notes
Working on Words (WOW)	WOW Whole Group	20	
	WOW Stations	20	4 Stations and teacher pulls small groups (e.g., guided reading groups)
		40 TOTAL	

Working On Words Details

Component		Details	Notes
Working on Words (WOW)	Whole Group	**Shared Reading**	
		Whole Group Writing	2-3 times per week
		Targeted Practice	phonics instruction, formation of letters, High Frequency words
	WOW Stations (each activity should be about 10 minutes)	**Teacher Group**	teacher pulls children based on formal and informal assessments targeted instruction based on assessments could be interactive writing, guided reading, vocabulary/oral language development
		Writing Practice Station	fine motor development, drawing, letter/word practice
		Word Work Station	sound practice, sorting, segmenting, blending, HF words
		Talk Time Station	vocabulary development, language development, turn taking
		Reading Time Station	poem/song charts, book browsing, buddy reading, read around the room

*NOTE: The scope and sequence of skills is loosely based on that of Fundations©, therefore, if teachers choose to use Fundations in addition to WOW, it makes sense to skip the "Targeted Practice" portion of the WOW Whole Group.

Working On Words Whole Group (20 minutes)

Teacher's guide and instruct children during a whole group explicit literacy instructional time that includes two to three parts. Each part is planned and intentional. This time should move efficiently and smoothly and should last approximately 20 minutes.

1. Shared Reading
2. Whole Group Writing
3. Targeted Practice

Shared Reading

This time capitalizes on children's natural enjoyment of sounds, rhymes, and language patterns through poems and songs. Through these familiar texts or big books, children build vocabulary and oral language, the foundation for beginning readers. Children are soon able to hear and manipulate letter sounds and rhymes.

Leading lessons with a song or rhyme on a chart or pocket chart and encourages children to build print awareness skills such tracking words, print features, and conventions.

Whole Group Writing

Whole Group Writing occurs two to three times each week as a part of the WOW Whole Group. As children are beginning to build their confidence with writing, teachers engage children in modeled, shared, or interactive writing related to the poems/songs and/or *Focus on K2* themes. Children should guide this process, as their engagement is dependent on their interest in the topic, their motivation, and readiness: the content of the writing should always come from the children. As you share the writing process with children, they begin to see and understand the conventions of writing and the connections between language, reading, and writing.

Because the intention is for this time to run smoothly and swiftly, very often, this writing continues over the course of several WOW sessions.

Targeted Practice

Teachers explicitly teach letter knowledge: letter names, sounds, and proper formation. Teachers build phonological awareness skills such as sounds, rhymes, blending, segmenting, and manipulating sounds. High frequency words are also taught and practiced.

It is critical that this portion of WOW is enjoyable for the children. It may be helpful to remember that this is not the only time in the day where children practice letter sounds, therefore, the lessons be should be fluid, playful, and joyful.

Working on Word Stations (20 minutes)

After the WOW Whole Group, children independently practice the targeted skills through activities and games in different Stations. While children are engaged in Stations, teachers pull children for small group instruction. In Stations, children engage in the provided activities; they are practicing and experimenting. It is important to note that while children may not master a certain discrete skill (e.g., a letter sound) in a particular time frame, through more practice with applying the letter in different ways, children will eventually internalize the skill.

Teacher Group

Based on what you know about your children, you will pull children for small groups with targeted instruction in mind. It is important to keep these small group sessions to about 10 minutes per group.

The content of the small groups will change over the course of the school year. In the beginning of the year, these small groups will focus first on routines and how to work in a small group. Then the groups might transition to name writing practice and letter sound games. As children are ready for them, perhaps around January, these small groups will become more formal guided reading groups.

You will see in the guide that at times multiple activities are offered, The plans will provide suggestions about small group work, but teachers can plan each group's work and pace based on the needs of particular children.

Writing Practice Station

Children engage in activities that involve fine motor development such as drawing and letter/word practice. To ensure developmentally appropriate practice, the Writing Practice Station includes activities beyond paper and pencil writing, such as dough letters/words.

Word Work Station

Children play games that encourage the practice of sounds and words. For example, children will manipulate sounds through segmenting and blending.

Talk Time Station

In this Station, children develop vocabulary and oral language, and in turn, build conceptual knowledge. At Talk Time, children engage in focused conversations with one another. They ask and respond to given prompts. Talk Time begins in Week 4.

The use of props such as puppets from dramatic play and/or human and animal figures from blocks will encourage conversation, as will storytelling activities.

Videotaping the conversation and interaction at this Station might provide valuable assessment information.

Reading Time Station

Children engage with reading and interacting with a variety of texts (e.g., poems, songs, books) in multiple ways. They may browse books; they might listen to audiobooks; they may read class books they authored. Children will each compile a poem and song book throughout the school year. As children become more comfortable with these familiar songs and poems, they interact with text as they make decisions about their illustrations.

Facilitating WOW Stations

Station activities are areas in which children work independently and collaboratively, without the support of the teacher. While it is true that children will need more guidance in the beginning of the year with building routines, it is important to trust that children will learn to and greatly benefit from working with one another.

Choice

As with Center Time, WOW Stations is another opportunity for children to develop their executive functioning skills: planning and self regulation. Children choose which Station to work in during this time, making sure they visit each Station two times within a week.

It is helpful to develop predictable systems that support children with choice.

Environment and Routines

Setting up the environment for WOW Stations in a clear, organized manner will help children to be successful. Decide on what systems you feel comfortable with implementing. Organize each Station in a clearly labeled basket/bin.

To support children with moving between Stations, it might be helpful to consider some of the ideas below. Sometimes, experimentation with various systems with different groups of children is helpful.

- *Number Limit Signs:* Keep in mind there are only four Station options for children to choose from (not including the Teacher Group), therefore, be flexible in setting these number limits. For instance, rather than deciding the number limits based on the number of available seats, allow children to stand and work if there is space at the table. If you are comfortable, the children can be an active participants in deciding these numbers.
- *Choice Board:* Create a large board that defines the Station and the number of children that can visit the space at one time. Children can make decisions about where to move to according to the board.

- *Passport:* Children keep track of their own movement throughout the week on a foldable or a card, ensuring they visit each Station twice.
- *Work in Progress Signs:* The time for Stations is purposefully limited, therefore, allow for children to continue their work the following day.

A Note about Technology

Some teachers/schools may have access to various types of technological resources (e.g., laptop carts, ipads, etc.). Incorporating these learning tools into WOW Stations is encouraged. In thinking about how to seamlessly integrate the technology, consider the learning goals for the given Stations and attempt to meet the same goal(s) with the tool/game.

Teacher Group: Small Group Instruction
(10 minutes during WOW Stations, Guided Reading begins Unit 2)

Goals:
Small group instruction during Stations is a focused opportunity to engage in concept development, topic exploration, development of foundational reading skills and guided reading. Children are grouped flexibly according to word study and reading level.

- Small groups might be study groups organized around an interest or content area
- Writing and vocabulary development
- Use of numerous leveled books; focus on decoding and comprehension; variety of reading strategies; systematic word study (beginning with alphabet knowledge and continuing through variant vowel patterns)

Common Core ELA Standards:

- All Reading Literature (RL.K.) standards
- All Reading Informational Text (RI.K.) standards
- All Reading Foundational Skills (RF.K.) standards

Materials:

- dry erase boards
- markers
- magnetic letters
- leveled readers
- small group recording sheet to document observations of student applications of strategies and skills

Scheduling:

- Small groups should be intentional and timely, no longer than 10-15 minutes.
- Another option is for small groups to meet during the second half of Centers.
- Depending on skills and interests, your Para-Professional or Adult Volunteers can facilitate some of the small groups.

Literacy Small Group Trajectory:
The levels of instruction build in complexity over time.

- September: Small groups are focused on establishing classroom routines/expectations and building basic foundational skills.
- October - December: Small groups begin to focus on a literacy strategy or skill. The skill or strategy introduced are based on the WOW scope and sequence or Fundations, student work, and assessment data. Some children may engage in guided reading if they are ready. Children who are not ready for guided reading should engage in pre-reading activities such as letter naming games, rhyming games, and/or listening to books read aloud.

- January - June: Continue to focus on strategies and skills with the levels of complexity building upon the earlier strategies and skills introduced (utilizing either the WOW scope and sequence or Fundations) and student data and work.

Literacy Grouping

The small group should be a group of 3 to 6 children with flexible membership. Observations of children and data should assist in the determination of groups. Groupings are based individual strengths and needs, allowing for members to access the teaching of target skills, and should change often as children's needs change.

Guidelines:

- The teacher may introduce or reintroduce a new literacy skill or strategy. Skills and strategies presented vary depending on the group of students, time of the year, and the school's expectations for children.
- The teacher observes and records the different ways children practice the application of the skill or strategy.
- The teacher scaffolds for children while they are learning the skill or strategy.
- The teacher names the children's accomplishments as a wrap up to instruction.

Note on Guided Reading

Your guided reading program may be determined by your school. If there is a not a school-wide approach to guided reading, you can use the Reading Street books to support instruction.
We strongly recommend each classroom have level A through I books available. Information about Guided Reading can be found in: Fountas, I. C. & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Storytelling/Story Acting

Storytelling/story acting (ST/SA) capitalizes on children's love of stories and play. A joyful activity, ST/SA allows children and adults to have fun together while promoting a great deal of learning.

Goals: To strengthen language and literacy skills, social and emotional development, and creativity, and to nurture classroom community.

Storytelling (children's dictation of their stories) can occur at Arrival, during Centers or at Writers Workshop. Story acting (dramatization of children's stories) should occur in a ten-minute whole group gathering at the end of the day.

Common Core ELA Standards:

RL.K.2 With prompting and support, retell a familiar story, including key details

RL.K.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings and major events in a story

RL.K.9 With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in a familiar story

RI.K.3 With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text

W.K.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/ explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic

W.K.3 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened

W.K.5 With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed

W.K.6 With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers

W.K.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question

SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion)
- Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges

SL.K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood

SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood

SL.K.4 Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail

SL.K.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail

SL.K.6 Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly

L.K.6 Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts

Materials:
ST/SA has only a few material requirements: paper, a pencil or pen, and perhaps a clipboard and masking tape. You may also want individual binders or notebooks for each child in your classroom.
You will need an area where children can comfortably sit in a circle (or oval or square) with space in the middle for acting. It is very helpful to delineate the acting area—the stage—with tape. Adults can take a child's dictation anywhere in the classroom that is comfortable and conducive to listening.

Example of Procedure:
At its core, ST/SA involves getting dictation of a story from a child and bringing that story to the group to be acted out. For a detailed description of how to maximize learning in these interactions, please see the ST/SA section of this guide.

Community of Learners
(a resource)

It is important for children to feel connected to each other as they prepare for the day. Community games, songs, participatory stories, and interacting around a morning message acclimate children and allow them to engage with each other prior to *Focus* learning experiences. This important community building time honors and values each class member. The class acknowledges any absent children and/or adults and welcomes those present. The Community of Learners meeting sets the tone for how the class learns with and from each other.

Goal:
To establish connections among children and engage them in meaningful community building activities where they demonstrate skills and strategies in oral language, phonemic awareness, physical development, and mathematical reasoning.

Common Core Standards:
RF.K.2 Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes)

- Recognize and produce rhyming words

K.MD.2 Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has more of or less of the attribute, and describe the difference

Materials:

- Attendance Chart or Feelings Chart with photographs and names
- Music player and selected songs with visual prompts
- Whiteboard and dry erase marker (for alphabet letter clues)
- Soft (fabric or foam) ball, scarves, other materials for community building activities
- Morning Message
- Pointer
- Markers to highlight/write parts of the Morning Message

Suggested Procedure:
Transition Song: Signal the start of Community of Learners/Introduction to Centers and prompt the children to clean up materials from Arrival and gather in the meeting area with a familiar song. A song that incorporates physical movements helps children self regulate by gathering them in an active, pro-social, and joyous way.

Sit in a Circle: As the song plays, invite children to sit in a circle in the meeting area. This gathering fosters a sense of community and sets the tone for other daily whole group times such as Writers' Workshop.

Community Leader: Create a classroom job of “Community Leader.” Each child takes a turn to select the gathering song/game, signal the transition, or lead the attendance review. Incorporate phonemic awareness and knowledge of alphabet letters: “Today, the community leader has these initials: (write on a whiteboard): MW” or “The community leader’s name rhymes with Tiz [Liz].”

Greeting Activity: Children and teachers greet each other through a playful song or movement game. See below for suggestions.

Attendance: Review the Attendance or Feelings Chart with the children. Count the children who are present, and make note of any who are absent. If a child is out sick, model empathy by saying, “I hope she feels better soon.”

Suggested transition songs:

- “Getting to Know You” (James Taylor version)
- “Three Little Birds” (Bob Marley)
- “Jambo” (Ella Jenkins)
- “You’ll Sing a Song and I’ll Sing a Song” (Ella Jenkins)

Community Building Activities (suggested one per day, repeating children’s favorites)

- *Welcome Waves**: Children lie on their bellies in a circle. Guide the children to look around the circle, making eye contact. Then everyone waves to each other and shares greetings (“Good morning Ms. Lin; Hi Keshaun; Buenos Dias, Linda…”)

- *Name Ball**: Sit cross-legged in a circle. Introduce the Name Ball (any soft ball) to the group. When each child has the Name Ball in her hands, she says her name any way she likes (if feeling happy, in an upbeat or happy way; if sleepy, with a yawn, etc.). The group echoes the name and manner.

- *Name Movements*: Children and adults stand in a circle. Each child makes a whole body movement (jumping, waving arms, wiggling hips, stomping feet) while greeting the class, "Hello, friends!" The class responds by repeating the movement and greeting that child, "Hello, Andre!"

- *Feelings Ball**: The ball has 3 or 4 feelings written on it. The group passes the ball, and each child or adult finds a feeling to identify with, names it and then talks about a time she or he felt this way.

- *News Ball**: Sit cross-legged in a circle. Introduce the News Ball (any soft ball) to the group. When the child has the News Ball in her hands, she can share news of any kind. Before a child shares news, the teacher asks, “How would you like us to respond to your news?” The child can choose silent applause, saying hurray, etc., which is how the group then responds after the child shares the news. Depending on time, sharing can include a few children or the entire group.

- *Name songs*: Sing a song that includes all the children in the class. Possibilities include: "We Are All a Family Under One Sky","The More We Get Together" and "The Name Game." Lyrics and ideas for suggested melodies can be found in the Teacher Resources section of the guide.

- *Participatory stories*: Tell a story where the children, as a group, are the main characters/heroes and have opportunities to shape the story with their input. Examples include *The Crazy Raccoons* and *The Popcorn Story*, which are included in the "Modeling Storytelling, Ideas for Stories (Fiction)" subtab in the Storytelling Section of the Early Childhood Department weebly.

- *Favorite _____ Share*: Pick a topic (food, color, game, animal). Like the *Name Ball*, as a child receives the ball, she calls out a favorite item in that category. Use the responses to make connections between children (Kervin and Alice both like cats).

- *I'm Thinking of a Person Who*: After modeling several times by the teacher, a child silently chooses a classmate (or teacher) and give clues to identify that person. The child begins, "I'm thinking of a person who _____ (has a younger brother, likes soccer, is a good drawer, is wearing blue)."

- *Collective, guided imagery*: Engage the group in a movement activity that involves a story where the children achieve a goal. For example, tell the children, "Let's go watch the Boston Celtics play basketball. First, we have to drive to the Boston Garden where the Celtics play. Let's get on our bikes and ride." Act out riding bikes down a city street: "OK, it's a green light, let's peddle. Watch out for that pot hole…" Once at the Garden, act out going in to the stands and watching the game. In this particular game, however, the Celtics are losing and need the children's help. Tell the children, "Let's get on to the court to help the Celtics. Remember, they need five baskets to win. OK, pass the ball. Now shoot. It's a basket! [model for the children passing and shooting]…Only one basket and the Celtics win, but there is only 10 seconds left in the game…" Other activities could be assisting the Red Sox, climbing a mountain, or making smoothies for other classes in the school.

- *Morning Message*: This is a highly motivating routine that engages children in interactive writing and builds community. Let the children know that every day there will be a written message that may ask a question or tell the class about something happening that day. During the first few days, model decoding an already written message. Highlight concepts of print by pointing at the text, indicating directionality by sweeping left to right, and making sound-symbol connections.

  Out of this shared experience, children begin to participate in composing the message themselves. Begin by thinking aloud while writing: "I am going to leave a space here, because I'm making a new word." Or ,"Did you come to school on wheels or on feet is a question, so I am going to make this mark [**?**] at the end of the sentence." As the year

progresses and children's familiarity with print advances, omit letters or words that children fill in. Eventually the group will write an entire message together.

Make sure the message consists of only a few sentences so that the practice is short and lively and offers opportunities for children at different levels of literacy development to participate.

* From *Life is Good Playmaker* training

Class Meeting (Problem Solving, Open Circle, Second Step - 15 min)

The Class Meeting is a group discussion where children solve problems and discuss social-emotional issues that impact the classroom community. These meetings allow children to talk about their feelings in a nonthreatening environment and are opportunities to integrate social/emotional programs that your school has specifically adopted such as Open Circle, Second Step, etc. Class Meetings should be held regularly (on a weekly basis) and when the need arises (e.g., a large conflict occurs at recess that should be addressed).

Goals:

- Children discuss issues that relate to classroom social and emotional dynamics
- Children learn the necessary steps for resolving conflicts and solving problems peacefully

Common Core ELA Standards:

SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions
- Continue conversation through multiple exchanges

SL.K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood

SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information or clarify something that is not understood

SL.K.4 Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail

SL.K.6 Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly

L.K.6 Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts

Materials:

- puppets
- social stories
- chart paper for brainstorming
- visuals of Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution steps, charts, and graphs
- materials for specific social/emotional program the school has adopted

Preparation and Procedure:

The teacher determines ahead of time the focus of the problem solving meeting and how to engage children in the discussion. The teacher can present the problem through a social story, with puppets, oral storytelling, or a book that describes the problem. Children can also suggest issues to discuss during the class meeting. Teachers should brainstorm with children possible solutions to the problem. All suggestions offered are written on the chart. Adults can offer suggestions as well. This is not the time to evaluate the solution, but simply to brainstorm ideas.

- Teachers and children discuss the solutions, considering why they would or wouldn't work. It is helpful to role play the various solutions. Allowing children to visualize the implementation of the strategy will support them in evaluating the suggested solutions.
- Adults and children highlight the strategies they believe would be most effective.
- Children have an opportunity to practice using these strategies.
- Throughout the day, teachers "look for" children engaging in using the strategies suggested and provide feedback on their usage. Children should be asked to provide feedback as well.
- Subsequent Class Meetings might be used to solidify a shared understanding of strategies to use when encountering a particular kind of problem.

Teachers using Open Circle, Second Step, or other programs should follow the procedures outlined by the particular curriculum or program.

Writing Time
(30 minutes)

If your school has its own stand alone writing program (Literacy Collaborative, Teachers' College), this document provides ideas for aligning this program to the *Focus on K2* unit topics. If your school does not have program, this document outlines the basics of how to proceed with Writer's Workshop. The document also includes developmental expectations for writing during the K2 year. The document begins with the goals for Writer's Workshop and the Common Core goals it addresses. For more assistance in conducting Writer's Workshop, contact the Early Childhood Department or your school's literacy support person.

Goal:

For children to orally tell stories, present known information and understand how oral language translates into drawing & writing.

Common Core ELA Standards:

RL.K.2 With prompting and support, retell a familiar story, including key details
RL.K.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings and major events in a story
RL.K.9 With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in a familiar story
RI.K.3 With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text
W.K.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about the topic or book
W.K.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/ explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic
W.K.3 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened
W.K.5 With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed
W.K.6 With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers
W.K.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question
SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion)
- Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges

SL.K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood
SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood
SL.K.4 Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail
SL.K.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail
SL.K.6 Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly
L.K.6 Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts

Aligning Writer's Workshop Programs with *Focus on K2* Unit Topics

	Module 1: **Becoming a Close Reader & Writing to Learn**			**Module 2:** **Researching to Build Knowledge & Teach Others**		
Topic	***Our Community***			***Animals and Habitats***		
Central Texts	Literature/Narrative			Informational and Literature/ Narrative		
Writing Tasks	*Routine*	*Analysis*	*Narrative*	*Routine*	*Analysis*	*Narrative*
	drawing & illustrating labeling		storytelling & story acting short narrative	drawing & illustrating labeling invented spelling	info and opinion writing	storytelling & story acting
Lucy Calkins Units of Study	Launching the Writers' workshop			Narrative: Writing for Readers		
School-wide	How Writers Work			Narrative: Donald Crews Author Study (loose connection to Focus)		

	Module 3: **Considering Perspectives & Supporting Opinions**			**Module 4:** **Gathering Evidence & Speaking to Others**		
Topic	***Construction***			***Our Earth***		
Central Texts	Informational and Literature/ Narrative			Informational and Literature/ Argumentative		
Writing Tasks	*Routine*	*Analysis*	*Narrative*	*Routine*	*Analysis*	*Narrative*
	drawing & illustra-ting labeling invented spelling	How To books	Story-telling & story acting	drawing & illustra-ting labeling invented spelling	info books (field guides) persua-sive letters	Story-telling & story acting short narrative
Lucy Calkins Units of Study	Informational Writing: How To Books			Argument: Opinion Letters & Persuasive Projects		
School-wide	Informational Writing: How To Books			Informational: FUNctional Writing		

Structure for Writer's Workshop (for schools without a stand alone writing program):

Writer's Workshop begins with a whole group mini-lesson, during which children either engage in listening to mentor text or participate in a mini-lesson that explores the craft of a writer/author and illustrator. This whole group meeting is followed by a period during which children write and draw independently. As children work, adults support children with their writing through individual meetings or conferences.

Materials:

- chart paper
- writing & drawing books
- colored pencils
- pencils
- individual booklets
- paper (all different sizes/colors)
- crayons
- various skin tone crayons
- various skin tone colored pencils
- felt pens
- stapler
- conference sheet
- sharing can/sheet

Mini Lesson (5-10 min):
During this time, the teacher may:

- Highlight what she sees in the student work: " This is what I noticed..."

- Demonstrate what children should do as writers: “Let me show you what I mean....”
- Remind children what writers will do during their independent drawing/writing: “Today as you write....”
- Read aloud a mentor text. A mentor text provides an example of the work children will be exploring. It might be a published work, or, if a child in the class has exhibited the craft the teacher wants to emphasize, the child’s work could be the “mentor text.”
- Share work of children, either to provide feedback to the child or as an exemplar for the class:
    - children read their work to an audience of their peers
    - the audience provides the writer with feedback by naming what they admire about the work and asking questions they may have about the writing
    - the teacher serves as the mediator guiding the writer to next steps based on the audience’s feedback
- In Units 3 and 4, mini-lessons are occasionally linked to the content of the units. See descriptions of these units for details.

Independent Writing and Drawing (25-30 min):

- Children draw and write stories about things they know using invented spelling, selecting alphabet letters to represent sounds in the words they wish to write. For example, the word “dog” may be written as “dg”.
- The process develops over the course of the year:
    - At the beginning of the year most children write via drawing, as children are engaged in the telling of stories, checking understanding of their audience, and writing together as a collective group in either a shared or interactive writing experience.
    - At the beginning of the year children have a Writing and Drawing Book, (a blank book) which becomes an anthology of the child’s 1-2 page stories.
    - During the middle and towards the end of the year children are transitioning to small booklets that have a beginning, middle, middle, middle, end. The booklets are initially 6 pages long (including a cover page), with longer books provided as the year progresses, according to children’s needs.

Conference (during independent writing time):

- The teacher and a child engage in a discussion of the child’s writing.
- The teacher listens and acknowledges what the child has accomplished as writer.
- The teacher:
    - checks her or his own understanding of the child’s work
    - negotiates next steps with the child, such as adding more detail so the message is clearer to the reader, adding spaces between words so the reader knows where one word ends and the new word begins, etc.
    - may teach the child a new writing skill
    - observes and takes notes on the child’s development as a writer
    - considers ideas for next steps

Developmental Expectations for Writing during the K2 Year:

Please note: This rubric represents a continuum of writing achievement for Kindergarten. We expect Kindergartners to be at a 1 or 2 level early in the year, progressing towards 3 at the end of the year. 4s would be exceptional for a Kindergartner. A child with 3s in all areas is "just right" for a late-in-the-year Kindergartner.

Criteria for Writing	Emerging 1	Progressing 2	Mastering Expectations 3	Exceeding Expectations 4
Content Development for Informational Text				
Topic: The writer (using drawing, dictation and/or writing) names what she is writing about and supplies some information about the topic (WK.2)	Information is indiscernible or unconnected to the topic.	Information is slightly connected to the topic.	Topic and information are connected.	A strong connection links topic and information.
Evidence: The writer organizes through dictation, drawing and writing her information about the topic (WK.2)	Information is indiscernible or unconnected to the topic.	Unclear information related to the topic.	Simple details and facts explain the information related to the topic.	Complex details and facts explain the information related to the topic.
Content Development for Argumentative Text				
Topic: The writer (using drawing, dictation and/or writing) names what she is writing about and supplies some information about the topic (WK.2)	Information is indiscernible or unconnected to the topic.	Information has slight connection to the topic.	Topic and information are connected.	A strong connection links topic and information
Evidence: The writer (using drawing, dictation and/or writing) explains the topic with facts and details to inform about the topic (WK.2)	Information is indiscernible or unconnected to the topic.	Unclear information related to the topic.	Simple details and facts explain the information related to the topic.	Complex details and facts explain the information related to the topic.
Content Development for Narrative Text				

Development: The writer (using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing) narrates a single event or several loosely linked events and provides a reaction to what happened (WK.3)	Provides little if any information to explain the event and writer's reaction.	Provides minimal details or information to describe the event and writer's reaction. Disconnected or tangentially related information.	Includes ideas that are focused on the event. Provides relevant information to describe the event and writer's reaction.	Includes ideas that are focused on the event. Provides complex relevant details to explain what happened and writer's reaction.
Structure and Organization				
Organization: The writer groups information in logical categories (W K.2)	Drawing only without clear connection to the topic. Non-representational drawings.	Use of drawing and dictation offers slight connection to the topic. Drawing offers minimal details.	Use of drawing, dictation, and writing with simple details connecting to the topic. Detailed drawing complements the writing.	Use of drawing, dictation, and writing with complex details connecting to the topic. Detailed drawing supplements and provides an extended voice to the writing.
Clarity and Conventions				
Mechanics: the writer demonstrates command of the conventions of capitalization, spelling, and punctuation (LK.2)	Writes using drawing, scribble writing, or mock letters. May also dictate ideas.	Segments some phonemes to write initial sounds to represent words. May also dictate ideas.	Uses some proper capitalization (I and beginning of sentence), end punctuation, and spacing between words. Uses invented spelling to write simple words phonetically. May also dictate ideas.	Uses proper capitalization (I and beginning of sentences), end punctuation and proper spacing between words. Spells some high-frequency words correctly. May also dictate ideas.

Please select rows that are applicable to a particular piece of child's writing.

Part 4:
Center Overviews

Planning for Variability
Art Studio
Blocks
Dramatization
Listening/Library
STEM
Writing and Drawing

Planning for Variability

Young children arrive in our kindergarten classrooms with a wide variety of competencies and challenges. They express their ideas and questions in many ways and demonstrate their particular approaches to tasks and problems in countless languages: with words, movements, gestures, artwork, symbols, stories. Some children's learning paths have been codified by diagnoses and specific recommendations have been written into Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). While these documents lay out goals, benchmarks and accommodations, we know that our most precise attention is required to understand how all children learn and to design progressive and provocative learning experiences. In the framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), teaching and learning is crafted around carefully articulated goals, achievable by all children through multiple paths of access. This represents a shift away from designing curriculum for most children and then planning accommodations for others. Instead, a variety of materials, tools and processes allow children and teachers to approach learning experiences from different points and in different ways, while maintaining the expectation that all children will develop and express understandings, enhance new strategies, and demonstrate skills as they develop.

Recognition of variability among all learners has led us to change language in this guide referring to "special learners." All children benefit from having available a broad menu of specialized tools and strategies in order to best access various activities and we share some suggestions here.

To expand accessibility in the brain's recognition networks (gathering and categorizing information)**:**

- Use visual images to:
  - —support understanding of the steps of a process
  - —reference resources ("Your building reminds me of this house.")
  - —inspire (ideas for building, writing/drawing, acting, experimenting)
  - —document children's work and support conversation about it
  - —give instructions
  - —list needed or possible tools and materials
- Use a slow pace of speech and simple phrases abby please continue to bullet
- Use songs and rhymes for transitions, leave a word out and ask children to fill in the
- blank
- Answer questions with one or two words
- Ask questions that can be answered with one or two words (e.g., "What are you doing?"
- "I'm dancing")
- Ask yes/no questions
- Ask explicit questions (who, what, when, where, how many)
- Provide one-step directions
- Make predictions: "What will happen if you build higher?"
- Incorporate specific vocabulary pertaining to each unit
- Demonstrate and repeat book vocabulary
- Retell stories with illustrations or pictures
- Record stories and non-fiction texts for listening center
- Adapt stories by offering simplified language and plot
- Restate facts from non-fiction text
- Start phrases for children to finish ("I am pretending to be a….")
- Use non-verbal signals (thumbs up/down to refer to facts and to answer questions, thumb to self for "Me, too.")
- Verbally label children's actions ("You are using the brush to paint the box." "You are building a tall structure.")

- Verbally label and describe attributes of materials (shapes, colors, sizes)
- Provide concrete or realistic props (e.g., hats, buckets, photographs related to the unit)
- Identify the features of academic material (parts of a book, concepts of print, communication and thinking processes)
- Label tools, materials and features of the environment in children's home languages
- Provide name tags for dramatic roles
- Limit clutter
- Encourage collaboration with other children

For English Language Learners:
The emphasis on oral language, work in small groups, conversation, and interaction with rich materials are all research-based strategies that support language development and acquisition. Hearing teachers use and label objects with specific vocabulary, both during Introduction to Centers and while scaffolding in Centers, will enhance the vocabulary development of all children.

To expand accessibility in the brain's strategic networks (planning and performing tasks, organizing and expressing ideas)**:**
- Create a picture schedule of the flow of the day, using Boardmaker icons, photographs or sketches to remind children of what to expect next
- Provide sequencing templates and other graphic organizers
- Provide picture cards to make sentences and express ideas
- Provide sentence frames
- Invite children to point to express understandings and ask questions
- Make available a small choice board that offers a limited number of Centers at a time
- Provide visual menu of activities
- Put all materials needed for a project on a tray
- Use tape to define work spaces (building space in block area, work space on table)
- Provide name tags for dramatic roles
- Encourage children to use non-verbal signals (thumbs up/down to refer to facts and to answer questions, thumb to self for "Me, too.")
- Encourage collaboration with other children
- Provide writing papers with various templates for more/less space for drawing and writing
- Provide papers with and without lines
- Provide sentence starters for stories, descriptions of work, questions to research to be used for writing and with picture-word cards
- Provide flannel boards for retelling, restating (stories, life cycles, processes)
- Clip paper to a binder to provide a slant for writing/drawing
- Provide variety of materials such as Wikki Stix, straws, and pipe cleaners for making symbols, letters, figures
- Add grips to pencils and markers to facilitate grasp; offer markers, crayons, pencils, brushes in a variety of thicknesses
- Provide tongs to pick up materials
- Provide gloves
- Provide pre-torn tape on a block in the middle of the table
- Demonstrate the use of materials and tools with step by step instructions and options for variability in approach
- Limit number of materials, gradually adding more in number and type over time
- Ask children to help identify materials and tools needed for a particular task and set them aside in designated work space

- Create picture cards for gestures and actions children develop for acting out stories
- Participate in play (as a minor character), interacting directly to expand play themes
- Be consistent with set up of materials and tools
- Limit clutter
- Provide small work spaces with limited visual stimulation

To expand accessibility in the brain's affective networks (getting engaged, being challenged and staying motivated)**:**

- Offer a variety of seating at group meetings and at tables: chairs with arms, rocking chairs, exercise balls, cube chairs, T-stools, beanbag chairs
- Stretch elastic material between front chair legs
- Allow children to stand while working
- Allow and encourage movement breaks: wall push-ups, jumping jacks, floor-tape "balance beam," arm circles
- Clip paper to a binder, to provide a slant for writing/drawing
- Provide headphones or earmuffs
- Add or remove environmental scents
- Offer a child a personal box of materials
- Create a cardboard box office that provides a semi-private work area, either for one child or two children
- Offer opportunities to work with partners
- Provide a mat to designate a protected space for a child to work – adjust size of space depending on needs or child/task
- Model expanding on or making adaptations to a repetitive activity, narrating through the process
- Provide different textures of blocks by covering some with pantyhose, fabric, felt, sandpaper
- Soften sound environment with large towels or yoga mats
- Offer squishy balls or other concentration tools for group meetings
- Invite children to move and lay on belly while looking at books
- To support transitions into and out of centers, use a visual timer so that children can see when it is nearly time to clean up

In addition to the guidelines above, further consideration may be needed to assure accessibility for the variability of all learners, based on the context of your classroom and classroom community. Adaptations outlined in children's specific IEPs will inform your preparations and processes. For excellent ideas on expanding access to center activities and routines, please refer to: Gould and Sullivan's *The Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom: Easy Ways to Adapt Learning Centers for All* (Prentice Hall, 2005).

Art Studio

Guidelines for creating and facilitating the center

Purposes of the center:

- To explore ideas through two-dimensional and three-dimensional visual art media
- To express understanding through two-dimensional and three-dimensional media
- To engage in collaborative multi-media projects
- To notice and try different techniques used by visual artists

The center environment:

Space and location:

- Preferably near a sink and windows for good lighting
- Away from sand and water tables
- Could be near science
- Space for one large table and easels

Furnishings:

- easel (commercial or created—plastic drop cloth hung on a wall with a clothes line to hang paper)
- two tables: smaller one to use as a work station (e.g., color mixing); larger one for collaborative projects
- shelves for materials: at least two shelves, depending on size of the space

Basic materials:

Introduce materials slowly and deliberately over time.

- Crayons of various thicknesses
- clear plastic containers for holding materials (could be recycled)
- paper of different sizes, shapes, colors and weights
- glue (sticks and liquid)
- tissue paper
- drop cloth for floor (plastic table cloth, shower curtain, etc.)
- small containers with lids for mixing paint
- tempera paint
- skin color paint
- paintbrushes of various types and sizes
- colored pencils
- watercolor paint
- recycled materials such as buttons, toilet paper rolls, lids (much will come through the Beautiful Stuff process)
- scissors
- natural materials (rocks, shells, etc.) – much will be gathered from the Beautiful Stuff process
- examples of 2-D and 3-D fine art (available from books, the Early Childhood Department weebly)
- tape
- thin black markers or pens
- CD player and CDs of varied music (can be played during Centers to create a focused mood)
- rolls of white paper
- markers
- clay and clay tools

Approximate number of children: 4-7 depending on space and type of easel.

Scaffolds to support center work:
These can be created by the teacher and/or in collaboration with the children, and can remain in the area all year once they are introduced and modeled

- Step-by-step cards or charts for using materials, such as watercolors (see example in Teacher Resources)
- Examples of children's work (from current and past years) to inspire further exploration

Beautiful Stuff project:
The Beautiful Stuff project allows children to individually and collectively explore natural and recycled materials in order to create art and express ideas and emotions. The project begins in Week 5 of the Our Community unit, when children and teachers brainstorm together in small groups what materials they would like to add to the art studio. The following week a letter goes home, requesting materials sent from home; these are then sorted and organized by small groups. The materials are used in subsequent units (in Animals and Habitats to create wolf dens; in Construction to create a model for the Our Boston project; in Our Earth to create imaginary trees). Further explanations are found in the Beautiful Stuff guide and in the art studio activities of each unit.

"Water World," a place for children to play created from Beautiful Stuff material for the Our Boston Project.

Trajectory for the year:

	Sept/mid-Oct	Late Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June
Unit	Our Community	Animals and Habitats	Construction	Our Earth
Materials What materials change in the center over time?	Materials should be added to the area gradually. Once materials have been added and children have learned to use them, they should stay in the area for the remainder of the year.			
	crayons pencils watercolors tissue paper glue primary color tempera paint tape pastels thin black markers skin color paints colored pencils brushes and paper <u>Beautiful stuff project:</u> paper bags to gather materials at home; letters to send home to tell families about the project and the gathering of natural and recycled materials; clear containers to organize the materials	images of fish, tadpoles, frogs, owls and wolves, and their habitats from Beautiful Stuff: natural and recycled materials to be used for exploration and for the design and construction of dioramas, habitats and other creations	clay from Beautiful Stuff: natural and recycled materials images of structures from Boston	images of trees and gardens from Boston and around the world flowers and tree branches to observe
Activities What do children do in the area as the year progresses?	Children learn habits of using the materials and systems in the art studio; Adults model and support the children's structural research.			
	self portraits crayon resist color mixing	creating habitats in both 2-D and 3-D formats life cycles (both 2D and 3D) textured art work (rubbings, layering, etc.) observational drawings and paintings from life	self Portraits construction using Beautiful Stuff materials clay paintings inspired by Boston *Our Boston* construction	collage creating imaginary trees observational painting

Block Area

Guidelines for creating and facilitating the center

Purposes of the center:

- To explore different types and sizes of blocks (unit blocks, hollow blocks, Kapla blocks, foam blocks, nature blocks) and recycled materials (tiles, rocks, etc.)
- To enjoy building different kinds of structures
- To engage in research about balance, symmetry, measurement, and size
- To develop oral language and literacy skills through symbolic thinking, planning, creating written props, and documenting
- To develop math skills such as counting, estimating, and adding
- To engage in collaborative inquiry and work with other children in the class

The center environment:

Space and location:

- If the classroom space permits, a separate rug area or in the meeting area away from quiet areas such as the library
- Helpful if area is single-purposed so that children can save structures for multiple days
- Large area
- Might be situated near Dramatization

Furnishings:

- flat rug
- shelves to store blocks and props

Basic materials:

Introduce materials slowly and deliberately over time.

- variety of blocks: Unit, hollow, Kapla, foam, nature blocks
- tiles and other recycled materials from the art studio
- props such as animals, vehicles, road signs, people
- materials for constructing ramps such as moldings
- writing caddy stocked with clipboards, paper, writing implements, tape, index cards, measuring tape, sticky notes.
- images of different types of structures from Boston and around the world posted on the wall, on rings or projected for children to reference
- books about structures and architecture
- photographs or documentation panels of children's work in this area (could be from previous years as a source of inspiration)
- baskets or containers to store props and smaller blocks
- photos of each child in the class affixed to individual blocks

Approximate number of children: 4 to 8 depending on the size of the space and the needs of the group

What work should look and sound like here:

- Children working on the floor and moving around on the rug
- Children conversing with each other, collaborating on the structures they are building
- Children using blocks and props such as vehicles, animals, people to act out scenarios
- Conversational voices but may also be more excited depending on what the children are discovering and constructing

Scaffolds to support center work:
These can be created by the teacher and/or in collaboration with the children, and can remain in the area all year once they are introduced and modeled

- Visuals that outline Center expectations, such as:

1. Think about what to build
2. Sketch your idea (optional)
3. Make a list of the materials you might need (optional)
4. Find materials you want to use
5. Work on your structure
6. Work with other children (optional)
7. Sketch or take a photo of the structure to record your idea (optional; documenting will give the children a chance to revisit their ideas)

- Blocks covered with various different textures, such as sandpaper, smooth paper, fabric

Trajectory for the year:

	Sept - mid-Oct	Late Oct - Dec	Jan - March	April - June
Unit	Our Community to Animals and Habitats	Animals and Habitats	Construction	Our Earth
Materials What materials change in the center over time?	unit blocks, with different kinds of blocks added over time community worker props and other block people images of the community clipboards, paper, writing utensils books from the unit and others about community	blocks continue introduce nature blocks natural materials from the art studio (sticks, rocks etc.) images of animals and habitats, animal props, clipboards, paper, writing utensils books from the unit and others about animals and habitats	images of structures in Boston blocks continue introduce tiles natural materials from the art studio construction vehicles images of different structures from around the world clipboards, paper, writing utensils books from the unit and others about construction and architecture	images of forests and other natural areas from Boston and around the world blocks continue, natural materials from the art studio continue clipboards, paper, writing utensils books from the unit and others about earth, gardens and farming around the world
Activities What do children do in the area as the year progresses?	children learn habits of using the materials and systems in the block center; adults model and support children's structural research children explore and play with the materials to learn about properties, attributes and concepts relating to blocks	children design habitats for various owls and birds using non-fiction images as a reference children design habitats for various wolves and dogs using non-fiction images as a reference	children are inspired by buildings in Boston and challenged to build more stable, accurate and interesting structures	children are inspired by nature and challenged to create trees and forests and to depict the recycling process

Children gradually take over routines with increasing independence. The systems for using the materials in the Blocks center remain the same throughout the year, so that children can use the same strategies and scaffolds for constructing with a variety of different media.

Dramatization

Guidelines for creating and facilitating the center

Purposes of the center:

- To use imagination to interpret and represent understandings
- To use dramatization as symbolic representation, a foundational literacy skill
- To collaborate, share skills, solve problems, and negotiate
- To develop self-regulatory skills through creating, conversing, and socializing
- To learn perspective-taking through role-playing
- To develop oral language and apply literacy skills

The center environment:

Space and location:

- Sufficient space for movement, dance, and gross motor activities
- Adjacent to or near Blocks and/or Writing and Drawing centers
- Away from quieter areas such as Library

Furnishings:

- child-sized table and chairs
- low shelves to store props and define space
- full length and hand-held mirrors

Basic materials:

- fabric and scarves of various lengths and textures
- simple fasteners such as clothespins, napkin rings, or chip clips
- paper, pencils, markers, tape, cardboard boxes and other materials to make props (can be available from the Art Studio and/or Writing and Drawing Centers)
- props related to specific units, provided or child-made
- baskets for storing props

Approximate number of children: 4-6 depending on space and the needs of the group

What work should look and sound like here:

- Children engaged in imaginary and creative play
- Children creating props
- Children writing plans, scripts, and stories
- Children taking turns, collaborating, negotiating, giving and receiving feedback
- Children writing signs to label and inform others about their play and the purpose of the props/setting

Scaffolds to support center work:

These can be created by the teacher and/or in collaboration with the children, and can remain in the area all year once they are introduced and modeled.

- books related to theme for children to reference
- visual chart outlining area expectations, problem-solving protocol
- story journal for each child or one for the class

Trajectory for the year

	Sept/mid-Oct	Late Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June
Unit	Our Community	Animals and Habitats	Construction	Our Earth
Materials What materials change in the center over time? *Teachers provide materials such as buttons, bottle caps, bean bags that encourage children to use props in creative ways.*	books related to unit simple dress-ups, some related to community workers fabric of various lengths and textures simple fasteners such as clothespins, napkin rings, or chip clips	books related to unit materials to make headbands with ears, fur, feathers buckets, netting, flashlights clipboards	books related to unit hardhats, pretend or child sized tools shovels, hoes, rakes various sized shoeboxes clipboards	books related to unit recycling bins and materials to recycle and sort (soda cans, milk jugs, cardboard, newspapers) materials to evoke gardening and/or a famers market (cash register, watering cans, planters, seed packets) clipboards
Activities What do children do in the area as the year progresses?	learn and practice the expectations and routines of the center adults model and support collaboration, turn taking, and problem solving. children act out their own and their friends' stories, books they have read, and other ideas and concepts	children continue to act out their own and their friends' stories, books they have read, other ideas and concepts introduce use of materials from other centers such as the Art Studio (props can be made using Beautiful Stuff and brought to this area) children are introduced to recording their stories through drawing, dictation, or writing	children continue to act out their and their friends' stories, books they have read, and other ideas and concepts the dramatization space will be used to construct and choreograph music and dances	Ideas from the unit that maybe dramatized include gardening, recycling and a farmers market

		adults model choosing and using materials purposefully		

Children gradually take over routines of the center with increasing independence. Children use strategies and scaffolds they develop with the support of adults as opportunities arise. For example, children may use a “toolbox” to solve problems. The toolbox may include “tools” represented by visual prompts such as “share,” “take turns,” “take a break.”

Library/Listening Center

Guidelines for creating and facilitating the center

Purposes of the center:

- To enjoy books and cultivate a love of reading
- To explore concepts of print
- To engage in independent and shared research

The center environment:

Space and location:

- Quiet and comfortable space
- Far from drama and blocks
- Could double as meeting area for whole group time

Furnishings:

- soft pillows, rugs, and/or sofa or comfy chairs
- shelves and baskets for displaying books
- Listening Center and books on tape/CD
- easel or wall space for shared reading charts

Basic materials:

- books: a variety of literature and informational texts (including alphabet books) as well as class-made books (some related to the unit of study, some not)
- writing caddy stocked with clipboards, paper, writing implements, and sticky notes for research
- charts of poems and songs (rotate to display one at a time)
- pointers for shared reading of poems and songs on charts
- books on tape/CD

Approximate number of children: 4-6 depending on space and the needs of the group

What work should look and sound like here:

- Children seated comfortably on the floor or in cozy chairs
- Conversational voices while reading and discussing books and charts, with possible spikes in volume as interesting research is uncovered or favorite books are enjoyed
- Children choosing books to read and explore for research and/or enjoyment
- Adults encouraging children to read any books in the library and to make decisions about when to move on to a different topic based on their interests

Scaffolds to support center work:

These can be created by the teacher and/or in collaboration with the children, and can remain in the area all year once they are introduced and modeled.

- Small chart with instructions for listening center use
- Chart with instructions for caring for books

Trajectory for the year:

	Sept - mid-Oct	**Late Oct - Dec**	**Jan - Mar**	**May - June**
Unit	Our Community	Animals and Habitats	Construction	Our Earth
Materials What materials change in this center over time?	books related to community	books about animals and habitats, keeping some favorites from community	books related to construction, keeping some books from prior units	books about our earth, keeping favorite books from other topics throughout the year (especially those made by the children)
Activities What do children do in this center as the year progresses?	Children learn habits of using the materials and systems in library; adults model and support research	Children gradually take over routines with increasing independence. The systems for using the library remain the same throughout the year, so that children can use the same strategies and scaffolds for researching topics over time.		

STEM Center (Science Table and Discovery Table)

Guidelines for creating and facilitating the center

Purposes of the center:

- To observe, investigate, watch, listen, design, build, redesign, and learn from experiences
- To engage in the world in a hands-on, physical way
- To build on children's natural desire to engage with the world, extending their learning about content and practices linked to core standards and important STEM vocabulary
- To start with children's concrete, physical experiences, and then build to support broad, conceptual understanding of STEM topics

The center environment:

Space and location:

- Comprised of two parts: Science Table and Discovery Table
- Near a water source
- Not on a carpeted floor

Furnishings:

1. Table and chairs (for Science table)
2. Water table or large tub on a table (for Discovery table)
3. Shelf or basket to store materials

Basic materials:

- hand lenses (magnifying glasses)
- writing supplies and paper
- clipboards
- journals
- sensory materials for discovery table (see below)
- informational texts related to unit of study
- live animals (e.g., fish)
- materials from the natural world
- bucket for filling discovery table with water
- towel to mop up spills
- dustpan and brush to clean up sand (perhaps 2 child-sized sets)

Approximate number of children: 2 children at Discovery table, 4 at Science table – separate area limits for each, depending on space and the needs of the group

What work should look and sound like here:

- Children asking questions and seeking answers to these questions through hands-on investigation
- Children exclaiming, making discoveries, discussing their work excitedly with each other
- Children focused on making scientific observations

Scaffolds to support center work:

These can be created by the teacher and/or in collaboration with the children, and can remain in the area all year once they are introduced and modeled.

- Vocabulary cards or word rings with related science words
- Investigation questions written on chart paper, with notes added from whole group discussions

Trajectory for the year:

	Sept - mid-Oct	**Late Oct - Dec**	**Jan - Mar**	**April - June**
Unit	Our Community	Animals and Habitats	Construction	Our Earth
Materials What materials change in the center over time?	Discovery Table: sand see above list for science table	Discovery Table: water, then natural materials	BeeBots Legos	worms
Activities What do children do in the area as the year progresses?	sorting beautiful stuff investigating materials mapping the classroom environment	exploring water comparing structures of the human body to the structures of a fish's body	documenting constructions creating the *Our Boston* model	archeological dig

Writing and Drawing Center

Guidelines for creating and facilitating the center

Purposes of the center:

To understand that ideas can be represented and communicated through print and illustrations

- To develop emerging writing skills through drawing, dictation, and invented spelling
- To apply understandings from read alouds and close reads through writing, drawing, and dictating about topics related to the texts

The center environment:

Space and location:

Centrally located, so that children can use materials housed here to make props for Dramatization and plans for the Block Center

Furnishings:

- table
- chairs
- shelf
- class mailboxes or message board for storing and sharing work, writing letters to each other

Basic materials:

- paper in a variety of weights, colors, sizes
- envelopes
- cards or pieces of cardstock
- variety of writing implements (pencils, markers, colored pencils, crayons) in various thicknesses
- simple blank books (made by stapling a construction paper cover on 2-3 blank sheets of paper)
- tape
- scissors
- hole punches
- clipboards
- name rings (laminated cards with each child's name, for reference in writing notes to classmates or writing own name)
- alphabet letter and numeral charts (for reference)
- glue sticks
- writing folders for storing work in progress
- "Reuse tray" for paper
- vocabulary cards

Approximate number of children: 4-6 children, depending on space and the needs of the group

What work should look and sound like here:

- Children seated or standing at table
- Children talking with peers, sharing ideas, collaborating on shared writing projects, or perhaps working independently
- Children writing/drawing about topics related to the read aloud or unit of study
- Children writing fiction or non-fiction books about something that is enticing and interesting to them (these books can later be added to the classroom library)

Scaffolds to support center work:

This can be created by the teacher and/or in collaboration with the children, and can remain in the area all year once they are introduced and modeled.

- Written/pictorial chart with ideas for what to do if you need help figuring out how to record an idea (sound it out, draw a picture, ask a friend, use a book for reference, etc.)

Trajectory for the year:

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Sept/mid-Oct</th><th>Late Oct/Dec</th><th>Jan/Mar</th><th>April/June</th></tr>
<tr><td>Unit</td><td>Our Community</td><td>Animals and Habitats</td><td>Construction</td><td>Our Earth</td></tr>
<tr><td>Materials
What materials change in the center over time?</td><td colspan="4">Basic materials in this center remain the same throughout the year, but are restocked and organized regularly to ensure that they are appealing.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Activities

What do children do in the area as the year progresses?</td><td colspan="2"></td><td>Use design process to represent/choreograph dances, write songs and create construction drawings</td><td>Write hypotheses about where lettuce comes from and where recycling goes

Generate ideas for conserving paper</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">Throughout the year, children use the Writing and Drawing center as a place to complete culminating tasks from read alouds and close reads, to write or dictate stories, and to write letters or notes to family and friends.

Over the course of the year, depending on each child’s individual development, children will progress towards writing more conventional alphabet letters and selecting alphabet letters to represent the sounds in the words they want to write. Teachers will continuously monitor each child’s literacy development through observation, offering scaffolding, support, and direct instruction as needed to help children move towards conventional writing at their own pace.

Children should always be encouraged in their writing efforts, whether they are using scribble writing, mock letters, or conventional letters with invented spelling. This is essential in order for children to develop an intrinsic motivation to want to learn to write. Explain to children that there are many ways to communicate on paper and support the diverse modes that children are using at each point in time.</td></tr>
</table>

Boston Public Schools
K2 STEM Investigations
Introduction and Overview

The following research-based, theoretically grounded K2 STEM Investigation Program addresses the critical need for children to engage in rigorous, developmentally appropriate STEM practices and to gain foundational content knowledge in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The K2 STEM investigations are a series of active, hands-on inquiry investigations that involve students in the practices of scientists and engineers while developing an understanding of core STEM concepts outlined in the Next Generation Science Standards.

Teachers are trained in how to support content knowledge, inquiry, and STEM practices in the classroom and beyond.

Overview of STEM Investigations

The STEM curriculum is comprised of weeklong investigations. The template (or structure) for each investigation is based on empirical evidence regarding the best practice for drawing children into science content. The investigations are based on the 4 content-based units that will be studied during the school year:

- **Our Community**
- **Animals and Habitats**
- **Construction**
- **Our Earth**

Each of the 4 sets of content-based unit investigations engages students in the following 3 key Cross Cutting Concepts highlighted in the Next Generation Science Standards for Kindergarten:

- **Patterns**
- **Cause and Effect**
- **Structures and Systems Models**

The above three key NGSS concepts serve as 'through-lines' that provide a set of fundamental connecting themes and conceptual threads. Additionally, in each of the 4 sets of content-based unit investigations students will engage in the following 8 scientific practices highlighted in the Next Generation Science Standards:

- **Asking questions and defining problems**
- **Developing and using models**
- **Planning and carrying out investigations**
- **Analyzing and interpreting data**
- **Using mathematics and computational thinking**
- **Constructing explanations and designing solutions**
- **Engaging in argument from evidence**
- **Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information**

Each of the STEM investigations consists of the following components:

- **Overview**

  The overview describes the goal/ outcome of the investigation and provides the teacher with a brief description of the procedures involved, as well as key vocabulary that will be learned.

- **Big Idea**

  In STEM, we want children to stay based in physical reality, and from this grounding in reality, to construct a bigger meaning. As teachers, we have a big idea, but we need to focus children in on the concrete and *then* help form their conceptual understanding. Students will engage in concrete, hands-on investigations and initially discuss their ideas in concrete terms. The teacher then builds the bigger conceptual development. The big idea for each investigation also provides teachers with tangible connections between what naturally happens in play with loose parts and the specific learning goals for the investigation.

- **Engagement: Whole Group**

  Whole group engagement is the first step in each Investigation. During this period the teacher utilizes children's prior knowledge and previous experiences (in play with loose parts) to help students make an initial connection to the content of the investigation. The teacher begins by providing students with an initial prompt which the students discuss using a 'turn and talk' protocol. The teacher then provides a focus question or develops a focus question for the investigation in collaboration with the students. The teacher emphasizes to students that as scientists, they need to be aware of certain key words in the focus question, which the teacher highlights and clarifies. The teacher helps students create a plan and procedures for investigating the focus question and gathering the data that will be necessary to answer the focus question.

- **Active Investigation: Small Groups during Center Time**

  At Center Time during throughout the week students actively engage in the investigation, exploring materials and using the plan and procedures for data collection that were explicitly developed during the whole group engagement period. Students work independently, in small groups, and in collaboration with the teacher or paraprofessional who might join them in the STEM center during this period throughout the week.

  The Active Investigation component has 2 parts. All students must complete the 'STEM Investigation' each week. This is a required activity. Each investigation also includes 'STEM Explorations', which are optional activities, extensions, and challenges for students who have completed the STEM Investigation and who are interested in exploring concepts and content in greater depth.

  During the Active Investigation it is important that the teacher write down questions that students ask as they are engaging in their research. These questions should be written on a piece of chart paper located in the STEM Center. These student-generated questions will be discussed during the Sharing Our Research section, and they will also be used to develop one or more student-generated investigations which students will engage in during the last two weeks of each unit.

- **Sharing Our Research: Whole Group**

  Shared reflection occurs at the end of the week, when the investigation has concluded. This is the time for students and the teacher to review the investigation and to make meaning from the data that has been collected. There are three key questions that the teacher works with the students to answer during this period:

  - What did you do this week in the STEM center?
  - Looking at our data, what did we discover?
  - What shared meaning and understanding can we arrive at based on our data?

The meaning developed during the shared reflection builds toward the understanding of particular Disciplinary Core Ideas highlighted in the Next Generation Science Standards.

- ## Making Connections and Communicating our Understanding

  During this period the teacher works with students to connect what they learned in the STEM investigation to their own lives, to their play, and/or to other contexts and areas of the curriculum that have been studied.

  The teacher engages the students in a shared writing exercise using the prompt "I noticed" in conjunction with the 'turn and talk' protocol to articulate clearly and precisely what they learned from the week's investigation. The goal is for the students to learn how to express their knowledge and understanding in a clear way to people who might have no awareness of either the investigation or the content that was studied.

- ## Student Questions

  At the end of each investigation, read some of the questions children asked throughout the STEM Center investigation during the week. Discuss which questions have been answered and which questions might be good to investigate in the classroom. What other questions might children have about the particular subject being investigated?

End of Unit Student-Generated Investigations

At the end of each unit, when the series of unit investigations is complete, the teacher should help students review the student-generated questions that have been collected and 'banked' during each investigation. The teacher and students should work together to decide on one question which they will then turn into an 'investigable question', crafting a focus question, thinking about how to collect relevant data, etc. During the last two weeks of each unit, students will work to investigate this student-generated focus question. The teacher may decide whether all students will investigate the same question, or whether the students will be split into two or three groups, with each group investigating a different question. If students are split into groups to research different questions, it is important for the teacher to ensure that each group has the opportunity to report back their data to the whole group.

Layout of Each Printed Investigation

Each printed investigation follows a precise format. There are two columns for each lesson: The left, wider column provides detailed, explicit instructions for the teacher to successfully implement the investigation in the classroom. In this column each of the above steps (whole group engagement, active investigation, etc.) is explained with details relating to the particular investigation at hand. This column also supplies important background and explanatory information to provide the teacher with a broad conceptual understanding of the purposes for the investigation.

The right, narrower column contains an abbreviated version of the information found in the left column, as well as information such as vocabulary words to be included in the STEM word bank and information on the particular STEM standards being addressed in the investigation.

Storytelling/Story Acting

At the heart of storytelling/story acting (ST/SA) is **listening**—adults listening to children, children listening to their classmates, and children listening to adults—all in service of better understanding each other's ideas and enjoying each others' stories.

The benefits of such listening are multiple; ST/SA promotes language and literacy skills, creativity and social and emotional development.

Based on the experiences of 65 Boston Public School teachers, this guide identifies components that make for successful ST/SA.

At the same time, each group of children and each teacher is unique, and so there are options for ST/SA, some which are listed here. You and your children will discover other options. In the words of Vivian Paley, "A teacher's own observations will inform her best about all these details."

Logistics page 2
Getting Started page 3
Key Components
- Modeling Storytelling (Adult Stories) page 4
- Children's Storytelling (Dictation) page 7
- Story Acting (Dramatization) page 13

Communications page 16
Family Involvement page 17

Support materials (videos of practice, explanations of the approach) are available on the BPS Early Childhood weebly's storytelling tab (http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/index.html). Hyperlinks to the weebly are embedded throughout the electronic version of this guide (available on the weebly).

Logistics

Materials
ST/SA has only a few material requirements: paper, a pencil or pen, and perhaps a clipboard and masking tape. You may also want individual binders or notebooks for each child in your classroom.

Physical Space
You will need an area where children can comfortably sit in a circle (or oval or square) with space in the middle for acting. It is very helpful to delineate the acting area—the stage—with tape.

Adults can take a child's dictation anywhere in the classroom that is comfortable and conducive to listening. If stories are dictated during arrival or centers, it may be helpful to designate an area as the "storytelling table."

Who
Adult Models of stories can come from a variety of sources; teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, family members, community members, volunteers (Jump Start, Generations Inc.) and older students in your school all can share stories. This is a case where more is merrier. ST/SA is a great way for administrators to connect with your children and learn about early childhood education. Vivian Paley's book *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* has a wonderful example of a grandmother sharing a story with a group of kindergartners. Including a range of storytellers helps ensure children will hear stories from different cultural backgrounds.

Taking down children's stories provides the opportunity, on a regular basis, for teachers to have engaging, fun, one on one interactions with each child in the room. Further, it is helpful for the person leading story acting to take down children's stories. This said, volunteers and older students can be trained to take down children's stories.

When
Children's storytelling (dictation) can occur during arrival, Centers and/or Writers Workshop. Story acting (dramatization) can occur at the end of the day. If there is a better time for story acting (e.g., during a 10 minute transition time between math and a specialist), dramatize stories then. ST/SA can happen every day or several days a week. To provide predictability for children (helping them wait for their chance to tell a story), **it is essential that story acting be included in the daily schedule**.

Adult stories can be told throughout the day (transition times, waiting for dismissal). As community building activities, stories can be told during the Community of Learners whole group meeting.

Getting Started

At the beginning of the year it is likely that many of your students will be unfamiliar with ST/SA. These children will need to learn the routines of the activity. In particular, learning about story acting benefits from careful coaching.

To help children learn the routines of story acting (that you go around the circle to choose actors; that actors only pretend to touch) you can:

- Act out adult stories and books
  Tell a story or read a book and then suggest, "Let's act this out." Many of the read alouds in Unit One (Community) lend themselves to be dramatized. *Amazing Grace* and *Big Al and Shrimpy* are particularly good candidates. You can act out the entire book or just a scene.
  Big books provide helpful visuals to guide the actors. Donald Crew's *Freight Train* is another example of a book that is helpful to act out at the beginning of the year (children can be the cars of the train and the tunnel).

- Work with small groups of actors
  Story acting gets more complicated as more actors are added to the stage. You can limit the number of actors during initial sessions to two, three or four, explaining to the children that this will help everyone learn about story acting. In a story with many characters, you can focus the dramatization to a single scene in order to limit the number of actors on the stage. For example, in *Abuela*, the grandmother and granddaughter flying over the city are good scenes for two children to dramatize. In *Abiyoyo,* you can act the scene where the monster dances and disappears, with the children around the circle playing the role of the cheering crowd). See to see a dramatization of *Abiyoyo.*

- Repeat scenes
  After a small group has acted out a scene, you can say, "Let's try this again with a new group of children to see how it goes." In this way, inexperienced actors can learn from the peers how to participate in in story acting. The class can discuss what went well (and what might be improved) in a given scene.

Begin storytelling/story acting during the third week of school (you can start earlier if you feel you class is ready).

Modeling Storytelling (Adult Stories)

Adults' stories provide models for children to draw upon—ideas for how to organize stories, characters to include, and plot lines to spin out. Children will rarely copy these models directly, but rather mine them for inspiration. Hearing adults tell stories helps create a culture of storytelling, inspiring children to share their stories with their classmates. Thus children need to hear adult stories on a regular, even daily, basis.

This section offers guidance on:

- Stories to tell
- Engaging the audience

Stories to tell

You and your colleagues can draw from a wide variety of sources to find stories to tell children. These include:

A) Personal experiences. Children love to hear stories about the lives of valued adults. Experiences growing up, family members (especially children), and pets are particularly rich sources for stories. See the weebly for examples.

B) Folk tales. Folk tales were originally oral stories. The Three Billy Goats Gruff, The Big Bad Wolf, Abiyoyo, and other stories can all be shared in oral form. Such oral tellings allow for audience participation. See the weebly for examples.

C) Imaginary tales. Imaginary tales can originate in your or others' minds. Loud Mouse is a popular story that Boston storytellers have told for generations. See the weebly to view a telling of Loud Mouse.

   Teachers can create their own tales, combining elements of real life and fantasy (e.g.,a teacher's cat can visit the school, helping children solve mysteries). In *You Can't Say You Can't Play*, Vivian Paley describes how her story about Princess Annabella captivated her kindergartners and supported their learning over weeks and months.

D) Children's stories from previous years. Over time you will amass a collection of children's stories. You can tell some of these stories, which are particularly well suited to being acted out.

E) Stories connected to curriculum. For K2 teachers, many books connected to the curriculum can be acted out. These include *Abiyoyo*, *Abuela*, *Amazing Grace*, *Big Al and Shrimpy*, *Three Little Pigs*, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Lon PoPo* and *Roxaboxen*.

   For K1 teachers, many of the OWL books can be told orally and lend themselves to enacting (*Peter's Chair*, *Noisy Nora*, *Gilberto and the Wind*, *Max's Dragon Shirt*).

These enactments can take place during the fourth reading. Building Blocks also has stories that children can enact (*Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *Goldilocks*).
Teachers can also create stories that connect to unit themes (e.g., the children's families going on a trip together; how the wind blew a favorite umbrella away). We strongly discourage teachers from constraining children's choice in storytelling by prompting them to tell a story about one of the themes.

Note: A beginning storyteller may worry about remembering all the parts of the story they intend to tell. While children are very forgiving audiences (and will happily prompt you if you have forgotten an important part of a familiar tale), it is perfectly acceptable to use notes or even read from a script.

Engaging the audience
Because stories are so compelling, they are perfect for attracting and keeping the attention of groups of young children. Here are some suggestions for adult storytellers for engaging the audience:

A) Ritual opening. At the start of a storytelling session, rituals can help focus the group's attention. Rituals can include any combination of turning on a special light (lamp, electric candle), ringing a bell or chimes, reciting a chant ("Are we ready for a story? Are we ready for a story? Are we ready for a story? Yes! Yes! Yes!"). For examples of rituals, see the weebly.

   Rituals can be tied to cultural practices. Some teachers introduce the "Crick-Crack" call and response ritual (where the storyteller says "crick" and the audience responds "crack" three times), by explaining, "On the island of Haiti far from here in the Caribbean storytellers start their stories by saying crick. Now you say Crack. Crick. Now you say Crack."

   Inviting children's input in choosing rituals can be part of creating and maintaining a healthy, democratic classroom community.

B) Connecting stories to the children. Stories can be connected to children by having them be the protagonists of stories. For example, they can outsmart villains to help others in their school (see Baldwin K-1 teacher Kendra McLaughlin's Crazy Raccoon story on the weebly).

   Children's play can be mined for story themes and characters. For example, if children are pretending to have underwater adventures on the playground, octopi, sharks and dolphins can appear in adult stories. Stories can also be told to counteract stereotypes children are expressing.

C) Puppets and props. Puppets and props can help engage children in stories. This is especially true for those who are learning to master English. Note: it is likely children

will want to explore the puppets that adults use; teachers should decide in advance a policy about this.

D) Audience participation. Giving children a role in adult stories engages them and can help them learn more about storytelling. Participation can involve call and response (adult telling the story: “Do you think she was scared?” children: “No!”), motions and gestures (pretending to stomp down stairs as a character in the story is doing), and answering individual questions (“Ruthie, what are you going to bring to the popcorn party?”).

E) Songs and chants. Songs and chants that children can sing also engage children in stories. Stories like Abiyiyo and Way Down South have songs embedded in them. See the weebly for an example.

F) Repetition of stories. Tell favorite stories again. And again. And again. Children love hearing stories they enjoy multiple times, and repetition helps children better understand and master particular tales.

G) Consider pacing, voice and gesture. Slow down to help young children follow and make sense of your stories. Use your voice to draw children in, alternating between soft and loud for dramatic effect. Use gesture to convey meaning.

Children's Storytelling (Dictation)

Supporting children's storytelling involves careful listening and gentle scaffolding. It is an opportunity to engage children one-on-one in a joyful activity. While some children will begin the year telling lengthy stories, others' stories will be shorter. Even a one-word story can (and should) be celebrated and acted out. Over time, children's comfort with storytelling and their narrative abilities will grow.

During story dictation, "teacherly moments" will arise—times when, because a child shows interest, we can support children's literacy and language skills. However, it is critical that ST/SA not be turned into a phonics lesson. The adults' primary role in dictation is listener.

Included in this section are:

- Guidelines for storytelling (dictation)
- Expectations about children's stories
- Suggestions about scaffolding children's storytelling
- Advice on issues that likely will arise when children tell stories
- Supporting all children as storytellers
- How dictation can support literacy skills
- How dictation can promote language development

Guidelines for storytelling (dictation)

A) Choosing the storytellers: a list. To help children know when they will be sharing a story and to ensure fairness, a list of who will be telling stories is recommended. The easiest way to develop a list is to go down your class roster, assigning children to a day of the week or simply having a certain number of storytellers each day. While the number of children per day and the number of days per week that stories are told will depend on each classroom situation, we recommend that children be able to tell a story at least once every two weeks.

B) Some teachers prefer to have children sign up to tell stories. This can happen daily or at the beginning of the week. Children can then be assigned a day based on how many stories can be told each day.

C) Telling should always be voluntary.

D) One page limit. Lengthy stories take a long time to copy down (robbing other children the opportunity to tell stories) and can be **very** difficult to act out. Let children know at the beginning of the year that their stories can be as short as they like, but no longer than one page. The idea of "to be continued" can be introduced to children whose stories exceed the one page limit.

E) Taking dictation. Try to write down verbatim what the child tells you. There will likely be some conversation throughout the storytelling session (see scaffolding for suggestions about the nature of the conversation).

F) Read back the story. When a child has finished telling their story we recommend reading the story back to him or her and asking, "Is there anything you want to add or change in your story?" Treating the story as a text increases print awareness and provides an opportunity for more sophisticated narratives.

G) Organizing the story transcripts. Depending on how you want to use children's story transcripts, you can save their stories in individual notebooks or in a collective class story binder. For ideas on using story transcripts see "Communications" (page 12) and "Family Engagement" (page 13).

Note on laptops: Because of the literacy benefits of writing down children's stories by hand (see below), we discourage the use of laptops in taking down children's stories.

Expectations about children's stories

It is valuable to know what to expect when scribing children's stories. Children's abilities to tell stories expand during the preschool and kindergarten years.

- Three-year-olds' stories have been described as "leap frogs." While connected in the child's mind, to adults they seem to hop from one event to another ("I went to the doctors. Sarah came over. I had cake for breakfast.")
- Four-year-olds often tell "chronologies," also referred to as "and then and then and then stories." These stories are connected temporally, but do not have a well-articulated beginning or end ("I had cake for breakfast. And then I went to the doctors. And I got a shot. And then we went home. Sarah came over. We played with my dolls."). These stories can continue for a long time.
- Five and six-year-olds begin telling "classic narratives" with a beginning, middle and end; a story with a problem that is resolved ("One night my brother and I heard a knock. We thought it was something getting knocked down. So we grabbed hockey sticks, and my brother said, "If you see anyone, stab it with this hockey stick." We went downstairs to see what the knock was. We looked in the living room. In the family room. We looked in the kitchen. We looked downstairs. It was just my cat. The end.").

These characterizations do not constitute a hard and fast rule as children's narrative abilities develop at different rates, and older children may tell stories reminiscent of an early stage of development.

Children's cultural backgrounds influence how they tell stories (see McCabe, A. (1997). Cultural background and storytelling: A review and implications for schooling. *The Elementary School Journal*, 97 (5), 453-473).

Children may also choose to tell poetic stories, developing a mood rather than describing an event ("Sometimes when you catch wind, snow comes down. I caught the wind and

then it flew out of my hands.").

An awareness of children's levels of development and cultural background should guide the scaffolding provided during dictation.

Suggestions about scaffolding children's storytelling

While some children will begin the year confident in their storytelling abilities, others will have trouble getting started. The challenge of scaffolding children's telling is to provide just the right amount of support that aides children's development without taking away their ownership of the story (and decreasing their motivation to participate in storytelling).

If a child is having trouble starting, teachers can provide visual prompts to help them identify story settings and characters. Examples of prompts can be found on the weebly. Puppets and/or felt boards can also support children's efforts. Teachers can ask, "Who is going to be in your story?" and "Where does the story start?"

If a child's story seems to stall, teachers can ask, "Does anything else happen?" "What did [character] do then?" or "How did you feel when that happened?" Of course, dictation should never resemble a cross-examination. Only a few questions should be asked and these questions should be motivated by a genuine curiosity to better understand what the child is thinking. For examples of teachers scaffolding children's stories see the weebly.

Support can also be provided by peers; story dictation does not have to be a private affair. Knowing a friend's interests, peers can give suggestions about characters, settings, and sometimes provide language to support the storyteller. Vivian Paley's explanation of how peer support can help children share their stories is on the weebly.

Advice on issues that likely will arise when children tell stories

A) Inappropriate stories
   Some stories are inappropriate for sharing with the whole group, either because they concern private family matters or will reflect poorly on the storyteller (such as stories including bathroom language). We recommend you tell the child that this particular story can't be shared, but that you are happy to take down dictation of a different story to be acted out.

B) Stories with fighting and killing
   Some young children are exposed to violent images through the media or in their personal experiences. Grappling with issues of power and control, many children are drawn to stories involving superheroes and fighting. Whether or not to censor stories with violent themes is a controversial issue.

Because stories are a way children make sense of the world, we recommend that children be allowed to tell stories involving superheroes and fighting. Importantly, when children act out these stories we can help them learn how to enact these themes safely, using the idea of stage rules (explained below). Vivian Paley's perspective on the issue is enlightening (see the weebly).

C) "Stuck" on a theme

It is not uncommon for a child to tell stories with similar themes. Similarly, children in a class will tell the same kind of story as a way of connecting ("We are the kids who tell pirate stories"). Teachers may reach a point where they feel that they can't stand to hear another ninja (or princess or _____) story.

We have the following advice:

- Patience. While it can be grating on adults, repeating story themes is helpful for children who are learning story structure and other narrative elements. It makes sense to keep one variable constant while engaged in this process. Curley School teacher Laura Shea explains the virtues of patience, describing how her children's stories changed over the course of the year.
- Tell stories. Adult stories provide examples of other kinds of stories to tell.
- Use the children's interests to further learning. Repeated pirate stories provide the opportunity to introduce information about who pirates were (and are).
- Discuss the repetition. Have a class discussion about why certain story themes are repeated. Ask children what they like about these themes. A high level conversation is likely to occur.

Supporting all children as storytellers

The non-verbal elements of ST/SA provide children learning English and children with specific needs wonderful opportunities to participate in classroom life.

The verbal aspects of ST/SA mean that the variability in children's language and communication styles will emerge. Short stories—of one sentence or even one word—should be accepted and celebrated. When possible, children can tell stories in their home language (see weebly for an example).

Not all children will want to tell a story at the start of the year. Storytelling should **always** be a choice. Experience shows that over time, almost all children choose to tell stories.

Some children who are not immediately comfortable expressing themselves in spoken English will benefit from certain kinds of supports. These include:

- Adult stories. Children can use their teacher's stories as models for their own tales.
- Prompts based on listening. By observing children at play and listening to their conversations, teachers come to know their children. When a child is

having difficulty starting a story or expressing him or herself, teachers can make suggestions based on this knowledge.

- Visual props. Boardmaker images, "story stones," puppets and felt boards all provide images that children can use to "tell" their story, pointing to and manipulating images to explain their ideas. Teachers with iPads can use this tool to provide symbols and images to support children's storytelling.
- Going to the story. Children who are hesitant to tell a story may be creating wonderful tales in the block area or dramatic play. Teachers can go to the places children are playing to get their stories.
- Co-construction. Sometimes this involves teachers or peers giving suggestions to help children start their stories. Other times it involves providing a word the child can't express.

Decisions for appropriate adaptations are based on the specific children's IEPs.

BPS teachers share their experience supporting children's storytelling in interviews on the weebly:

Megan Nason, a K/0-K1 inclusion teacher at the Curley School, shares thoughts about supporting children with special needs through observing their play, providing props and co-constructing stories.

Erica Lilley, who teaches in a K0-K1 multiple disability classroom at the Blackstone School, shares thoughts about supporting children with visual props and co-constructing stories with them.

How dictation can support literacy skills

During dictation, moments will arise when children notice features of letters, their sounds, and the spelling of favorite words. Or they might comment on the unfolding layout of the words on paper. All of these moments are ripe for helping to cultivate children's concepts of print. Depending on the child's understandings of print, that attention can be given to spoken words becoming written words, words being written from left to right and top to bottom, or decoding. For example, after the story is completed the adult can go through the text and underline all the characters in preparation for dramatization. With assistance, some children will be able to decode some of these words ("Here is a character that begins with a K. Think about what sound the K makes. So this words is ___?").
For examples, see the weebly.

However, teachers will want to be very careful not to turn dictation into a phonics lesson. Stories are told to make meaning and to communicate.

How dictation can promote language development

Dictation can also be used to support language development. During dictation the opportunity to supply a new vocabulary word will appear (a child will talk about "cat hair" and you can explain that is called "fur"). Dictation is also an opportunity to discuss parts of stories: characters, setting and action.

Similarly, teachers can offer grammatical corrections. While there may be the temptation to correct children's grammar as they tell their stories, we caution that one should tread carefully here. Our recommendations are:

A. Write down exactly what a child says, staying true to his or her words.
B. If a child is making a grammatical error and you feel they are able to learn the standard grammar or the mistake will make it difficult for others to understand the story, offer them an option—"I can write this as you told me, or I can write it as it would be in a book. In a book it would go like this: '_____.' Which do you prefer?"

Note: In reading stories to the whole class, some teachers with a high proportion of children learning English will correct grammar so children hear the stories in Standard English.

Story Acting (Dramatization)

Story acting brings children's ideas to the group. It gives a compelling reason for children's storytelling, celebrates children's ideas, and provides an opportunity for the class to create meaning around a text of great interest. Conversations about stories and dramatizations extends children's literacy learning. For examples of story acting see the weebly. Useful advise from master dramatist Trish Lee can also be found on the weebly.

Included in this section is advice about:

- Acting out the story/choosing the actors
- "Stage rules"
- Rituals
- Supporting the actors
- Supporting the audience
- Conversations to extend learning after dramatizations

Acting out the story/choosing the actors
Begin the dramatization by reading the first words of story. When you come to a character, turn to the child next to you and ask, "Can you be the x?" Likely he or she will come on the stage and start acting the part. Of course, a child can always decline the role. Continue around the circle. Avoiding negotiating with children about roles they want to play—it should not be an option to say, "I don't want to be the princess, but I do want to be the knight." Going around the stage in this manner is fast and efficient, allowing many children to participate in dramatization and many stories to be heard.

Note: 1) We suggest letting the author of the story choose the character he or she wants to be or to watch the dramatization. This can be determined when the story is dictated.
2) Some children may be hesitant to take on gender specific roles (a boy being reluctant to play the mother). We suggest saying, "In acting, boys can pretend to be anything: girls, moms, dinosaurs, anything."

Continue reading the story, pausing as you encounter new characters and asking the next children sitting around the stage if they would like to take on these roles. You can be expansive in your definition of characters; a house, a forest, or a car can be acted out by the children. Including inanimate objects allows more children to participate in the dramatization. In stories with many characters, have actors sit down when their parts are finished.

Note: Early in her career, Vivian Paley had the author choose the entire cast. She changed this practice out of considerations of fairness (some children were asked to be actors far more than others). Going around the stage to choose the actors is also **much** faster system, allowing for more stories to be acted.

"Stage rules"
Stage rules create a safe environment for story acting. The basic rules are: 1) You have to stay one arm's or leg's length from one another when pretend fighting, and 2) No leaving

the stage. Children quickly learn these rules. See the weebly for two children's explanation of stage rules. These rules can also be invoked in dramatic play, as children learn how to separate their imagination from real actions.
See http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/the-wisdom-of-vivian-paley.html for Vivian Paley's explanation about how stage rules can help create a safe environment for acting out stories.

It is almost inevitable that stage rules will be broken by inexperienced actors. Here we recommend reenacting a scene to illustrate how actions can be acted out safely ("Let's practice how we can show that Batman is punching Joker without Ryan touching Tom.").

Rituals
Similar to adult stories (page 5), rituals can help engage a group in story acting. A special light and/or sound can signal to the children that it is time to attend to a dramatization. On the weebly, Blackstone K2 Sheltered English Instructor teacher Maggie Hennessy explains how inviting children's input in choosing rituals helped create and maintain a healthy, democratic classroom community.

Supporting the actors
New actors may be shy about performing on stage. Micro-acting (small, restrained body movements and facial gestures) are common. Teachers can point out and celebrate these actions. Teachers can also offer prompts ("Show me how a turtle crawls;" "Remember how you pretended to be a baby in the house area?"). Perhaps most effective, teachers can ask the other children to provide suggestions on how to portray a character or action.

Some teachers read the story twice—once before enacting begins so actors can anticipate their roles and a second time to prompt actors during the enactment. During the first reading the class can discuss how to act out different roles. Other teachers read the story line by line, so actors have to listen carefully and so the outcome is a surprise to the audience. In either case, we recommend reading slowly so actors have time to perform. Referring children to peers for suggestions can also help dramatization. Teachers find the need for such support decreases over time.

Songs (Going on a Bear Hunt) and whole group transitions also provide opportunities to practice acting ("Let's sneak down the hall like robbers;" "Let's stand like trees while we are waiting to go into the art room.").

Conversations about storytelling and acting, where children provide compliments and suggestions (see below) also enhance acting abilities.

Supporting the audience
Focusing the audience's attention on the actors, rather than spending time trying to manage the audience's behavior, helps everyone attend to the acting on stage. Trish Lee explains this technique on the weebly.

The audience can become involved in the dramatization (singing a song that is part of the story).

You can ask the actors to take a bow and encourage the audience to applaud at the end of stories. Solicit children's input in the creation of rituals in building a culture of storytelling/story acting.

Conversations to extend learning after dramatizations

Conversations about stories and acting can extend the learning provided by ST/SA and are most valuable immediately after a performance.

Teachers can ask children what they enjoyed about the story and performance (compliments) and if they have any suggestions or requests for the storyteller and cast. K2 teacher Kathleen Frazier's students give each other "compliments and suggestions" after each story performance. The result is a high level conversation and very sophisticated acting. A video of Kathleen explaining how she facilitates these conversations, along with examples of these conversations, can be found on the weebly.

Teachers can also draw connections between stories, share their impressions, and ask children their impressions about individual stories and emerging themes across stories. Terms such as characters, setting, plot and suspense can be included in such conversations. Vivian Paley discusses the value of sharing your interpretations with children on the weebly.

Over time, you and your children will establish your own way of dramatizations. Occasionally, you may want to discuss how your rules and rituals are working. An example of such a discussion is posted on the weebly.

Communications

After stories have been told and enacted, teachers can provide additional opportunities for children to enjoy the stories and communicate their ideas. In K2, much of this activity can take place in centers. In K1, these activities can take place during the OWL center time.

A) Art center
Teachers can print out the text of stories and have a child illustrate the page. These pages can be displayed on a bulletin board, put into an ever-growing binder of classroom stories (that are read by teachers, children and visitors to the classroom), or placed in individual portfolios. Stories can also inspire collage and painting.

B) Block area
Stories suggest themes for construction (with blocks and other materials). Teachers can invite children to build the settings in their stories, such as castles or pirate ships.

C) Reading, writing and language centers
There are a variety of programs (iBook Author; Storyrobe) that can be used to help children create books about their stories. These books can include illustrations, audio files and video.

Video or audio of dramatizations can be made available. Children enjoy watching these performances and, if transcripts are available, can read the story as it is acted out.

Activities in the centers will also help children generate ideas for stories.

Family Involvement

As children's first teachers, families can support children's learning through storytelling in multiple ways. It is helpful for teachers to explain to families how stories support children's success in school by increasing attention spans, enlarging vocabulary, learning about sequencing of events, using their creativity, learning to express themselves, etc. Family friendly facts sheets are available in Spanish and English. Newsletters can explain how storytelling works in the classroom. Danielle Gant, a parent of a BPS K2 student, explains how families can support storytelling in a short video that can be shared with families.

Teachers can also:

A) Share children's stories at conferences with parents/families
Sharing video and/or transcripts of children's stories delights families and provides the opportunity to explain the value of storytelling and how families can support children's learning through stories. They also provide opportunities for families to see children functioning in the classroom and witness their school performance.

B) Encourage families to tell stories and listen to the stories their children tell
Stories can help pass the time while waiting for dinner to be ready or on long bus rides. For families with limited books in their native language, stories are a particularly good way to share their culture with their children. Everyone can tell stories. Encourage families to listen to the stories children tell, explaining how important it is that they show interest. Suggest that families ask questions about the stories and act them out.

C) Invite families to share stories in school
Family members telling stories in school can be formal (at a group time) and informal if parents are uncomfortable with telling stories in front of the whole class (at the snack table). Teachers can then repeat these stories to the class. If families are unable to come to school, teachers can find out what stories are important to families, particularly stories that are traditional to their cultural groups, and share these in class.

D) Share stories from school
Send stories home via email or paper copy. Families can read these stories and celebrate them, and even act them out again at home. Teachers have found that families will send storytelling binders back to school with new stories in them. This is especially valuable for children who are reluctant to tell stories at school.
Teachers can also share video of story enactments, via email or during parent-teacher conferences.

E) Request stories from home
Asking families to send in stories from home allows children reluctant or unable to tell stories at school to share their stories with classmates. On the weebly, Megan Nason explains how stories from home enriches classroom life.

F) Hold a **family story event**

Teachers at the Blackstone organized a family storytelling event that had two parts: Family members attended a 45 minute workshop on the importance of storytelling and learned ways they could support their children's stories, including telling stories to their children. The workshop notes and a list of storytelling suggestions for parents in Spanish and English are posted on the weebly. At the end of the workshop families broke into classroom groups and wrote a short story to share with their children. The parents then went to their children's classrooms where they watched the children acting out their stories. They then acted out their story for the children.

Though the workshops were held during the school day, attendance was high. Teachers made posters and placed them around the school and sent home a bi-lingual flyer and invitation (that the children decorated). The day before the event, children were sent home wearing bracelet reminders. These materials can be found on the weebly.

Acknowledgements

This menu was written by Ben Mardell (Lesley University) and Marina Boni (Boston Public Schools) with input from the teachers in the BPS Storytelling and Making Learning Visible Seminars: Jenny Goldstein, Jodi Doyle, Laura Shea, Megan Nason, Vanessa Cid, Layla Hijab-Cable, Sara Gardner, Sarah Trantina, Patty Smith, Emily McPherson, Emily McLaughlin, Asha Park-Carter, Mary Pike, Caryn Sonnensthul, Maureen Shields, Lisa Llorente, Pam Richardson, Adrian Smith, Jennifer Aponte, Maggie Hennessy, Mary O'Neill, Nicole Smith, Sarae Pacetta, Lena Jar-Curran, Anna Ruane, Neca Mutawaliki, Christi Nelson, Alison Mann, Richard Martin, Martha McHatton, Kendra McLaughlin, Kim McPhillips, Ximena Mercado, Diana Mora, Zaida Rivera-Harris, Helenia Minaya, Marta Johnson Faldasz, Kim Copeland, Gail Graff, Carmel Higgins, Antonietta Brownell, Lelia Snow, Paul Sedgwick, Karla Settles, Brenda Mosetich, Jennifer Toscano, Kathleen Frazier, Boune Siliphaivanh, Malene Coombs, Laura Merdkhanian, Farah Wong and Rich Gosselin.

We want to thank our BPS colleagues Jason Sachs, Ben Russell, Nicole St. Victor and Hua He, as well as Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Gillian McNamee, Trish Lee and Patsy Cooper for their input. Our thanks to Julie Allen and Melissa Tonachel for their careful proof reading.

Our gratitude to Vivian Paley for her wisdom and deep faith in children.

Focus on K2: An Integrated Approach
Literature

Our Community (September – October) 6 weeks

How to learn in Kindergarten:

- Abiyoyo by Michael Hays
- Abuela by Arthur Dorros
- Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman

Our Names:

- Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes
- The Name Jar by Jarby Yangsook Choi

Friendship:

- Big Al and Shrimpy by Andrew Clements

Animals & Habitats (October-December) 10 weeks

Life Cycle of Fish & Tadpoles:

- The Life Cycle of a Salmon by Bobbie Kalman
- Fish is Fish by Leo Lionni
- From Tadpole to Frog by Wend Pfeffer

Owls/Birds:

- Owl Moon by Jane Yolen
- Owls by Gail Gibbons

Wolves/Dogs:

- Wolves by Seymour Simon
- Lon Po Po by Ed Young

Construction (January-March) 10 weeks

Three Little Pigs Book Study:

- The Three Little Pigs by Paul Galdone
- The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka

Construction of Homes & Structures:

- Houses & Homes by Ann Morris
- The Night Worker by Kate Banks
- How a House is Built by Gail Gibbons

Purposes of Constructing:

- Roxaboxen by Alice McLearran
- Dirt, The Scoop on Soil by Natalie Rosinsky

Our Earth (March-June) 10 weeks

The Earth Surface & Geography

- Tomas and the Library Lady by Pat Mora
- Fossils Tell of Long Ago by Aliki

Trees & Recycling:

- The Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry
- The Gift Tree of a Tree by Alvin Tresselt
- Recycle! By Gail Gibbons

Gardening & Community Gardens:

- City Green by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan
- From Seed to Plant by Gail Gibbons

Narrative Writing Rubric Grade K2

Student Name:	

Criteria for Informational Writing	Exemplary Performance	Meeting Expectations	Needs Attention	Critical Area for Improvement
Introduction and Development				
Development: The writer (using a combination of drawing, dictation and writing) narrates a single event or several loosely linked events and provides a reaction to what happened (W.K.3)	☐ Includes ideas that are focused on the event, ☐ Provides complex relevant details to explain what happened and his/her reaction	☐ Includes ideas that are focused on the event ☐ Provides relevant information to describe the event and his/her reaction	☐ Provides minimal details or information to describe the event and his/her reaction to what happened ☐ Disconnected or tangentially related information	☐ Provides little if any information to explain the event or his/her react to the event
Coherence and Organization				
Organization: The writer organizes through a combination of dictation, drawing and writing the event or events in the order in which they occurred (W.K.3)	☐ Use of drawing, dictation and writing demonstrates a logical sequences to the event and uses some transitional words (then, next, also) ☐ Drawing supplements writing, details in drawings provide an extended voice to the writing	☐ Use of drawing, dictation and writing demonstrates a logical sequence to the event ☐ Drawings complements writing	☐ Attempts to sequence the event; may begin or end abruptly ☐ Picture lacks detail	☐ Drawing only demonstrates an unclear sequence of the event ☐ Non-representational drawing
Clarity and Conventions				
Grammar: The writer through dictation or writing demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage (L.K.1)	☐ Language skills successfully support meaning with details (sentence variety is maintained through the piece and portrays a conversational tone)	☐ Language skills successful support meaning with simple details (basic vocabulary & some sentence variety)	☐ Language skills interfere with meaning (limited vocabulary and repetitive sentence patterns)	☐ No use of language skills
Mechanics: The writer demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing (L.K.2)	☐ Uses proper capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation and proper spacing between words ☐ Spells high frequency words correctly	☐ A few errors using proper capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation, and proper spacing between words ☐ Spells simple words phonetically	☐ Several errors using capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation, proper spacing ☐ Uses some phonetic sounds correctly but mostly dictated or translated by teacher	☐ May be pictures only, linear mock writing or a string of letters ☐ No use of writing

Informative/Explanatory Writing Rubric Grade K2

Student Name:	

Criteria for Informational Writing	Exemplary Performance	Meeting Expectations	Needs Attention	Critical Area for Improvement
Introduction and Development				
Topic: The writer (using drawing, dictation and/or writing) names what they are writing about and supplies some information about the topic (W.K.2)	☐ There is a strong connection between topic and information	☐ The topic and information are connected	☐ The information little connection to the topic	☐ The information is not connected to the topic
Evidence: The writer (using drawing, dictation and/or writing) explains the topic with facts and details to inform about the topic (W.K.2)	☐ There are complex details and facts used to explain the information related to the topic	☐ There are simple details and facts to explain the information related to the topic	☐ Unclear information related to topic	☐ No information
Coherence and Organization				
Organization: The writer organizes through dictation, drawing and writing his/her information about the topic (W.K.2)	☐ Use of drawing, dictation and writing with complex details connecting to topic ☐ Drawing supplement writing; detailed picture provides an extended voice to the writing	☐ Use of drawing, dictation and writing with simple details connecting to topic ☐ Drawing complement writing; detailed picture mates writing	☐ Use of drawing and dictation lacks details connecting to topic ☐ Picture lacks details	☐ Drawing only without any connection to topic ☐ Non-representational drawings
Clarity and Conventions				
Grammar: The writer through dictation or writing demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage (L.K.1)	☐ Language skills successfully support meaning with details (sentence variety is maintained through the piece and portrays a conversational tone)	☐ Language skills successful support meaning with simple details (basic vocabulary & some sentence variety)	☐ Language skills interfere with meaning (limited vocabulary and repetitive sentence patterns)	☐ No use of language skills
Mechanics: The writer demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing (L.K.2)	☐ Uses proper capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation and proper spacing between words ☐ Spells high frequency words correctly	☐ A few errors using proper capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation, and proper spacing between words ☐ Spells simple words phonetically	☐ Several errors using capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation, proper spacing ☐ Uses some phonetic sounds correctly but mostly dictated or translated by teacher	☐ May be pictures only, linear mock writing or a string of letters ☐ No use of writing
Sources: The writer gathers relevant information from provided sources to answer a question (W.K.8)	☐ Detailed vocabulary and facts related to source	☐ Use of simple vocabulary and facts related to source	☐ Disconnected use of facts or vocabulary from source	☐ Does not refer to source

Opinion Writing Rubric Grade K2

Student Name:	

Criteria for Argumentative Writing	Exemplary Performance	Meeting Expectations	Needs Attention	Critical Area for Improvement
Introduction and Development				
Topic: The writer (using a combination of drawing, dictation and writing) introduces the topic or name of the book they are writing about and states an opinion or preference about the topic or book (W.K.1)	☐ There is a strong connection between topic and opinion/preference	☐ There is a connection between topic and opinion/preference	☐ The opinion or preference is inconsistent or has little link to the topic	☐ Unrelated or inaccurate response ☐ The opinion or preference is not linked to the topic
Evidence: The writer (using a combination of drawing, dictation and writing) supports a point of view with facts, details and/or information (W.K.1)	☐ There multiple details and ideas to explain the link between the topic and opinion/preference	☐ There are simple details and explanation to link topic and opinion/preference	☐ Unclear opinion or preference	☐ No opinion or preference
Coherence and Organization				
Organization: The writer organizes through dictation, drawing and writing his/her thoughts about the topic or preference (W.K.1)	☐ Use of drawing, dictation and writing with complex details connecting the topic and opinion ☐ Drawings supplement writing; detailed picture provides an extended voice to the writing	☐ Use of drawing, dictation and writing with simple details connecting the topic and opinion ☐ Drawings complement writing; detailed picture matches writing	☐ Use of drawing and dictation lacks details connecting the topic and opinion ☐ Picture lacks detail	☐ Drawing only without any connection between topic and opinion ☐ Non-representational drawings
Clarity and Conventions				
Grammar: The writer through dictation or writing demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage (L.K.1)	☐ Language skills successfully support meaning with details (sentence variety is maintained through the piece and portrays a conversational tone)	☐ Language skills successful support meaning with simple details (basic vocabulary & some sentence variety)	☐ Language skills interfere with meaning (limited vocabulary and repetitive sentence patterns)	☐ No use of language skills
Mechanics: The writer demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing (L.K.2)	☐ Uses proper capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation and proper spacing between words ☐ Spells high frequency words correctly	☐ A few errors using proper capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation, and proper spacing between words ☐ Spells simple words phonetically	☐ Several errors using capitalization (I and start of sentence), end punctuation, proper spacing ☐ Uses some phonetic sounds correctly but mostly dictated or translated by teacher	☐ May be pictures only, linear mock writing or a string of letters ☐ No use of writing