

# Glossary

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## A

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### **Anecdotal records**

Anecdotal records are brief, written observations taken during regular instructional time that describe a literacy behavior or social interaction. They are most effective when gathered over time to reveal patterns of learning that will guide the teacher's instruction. Teachers should record only what they see without making judgments or interpretations. Anecdotal records should focus on how students are progressing toward meeting grade-level benchmarks.

### **Assessment**

Assessment refers to specific informal and formal classroom-based, teacher-developed practices that measure students' understanding of the curriculum. Classroom assessments are authentic, multidimensional, collaborative, and ongoing. Assessments focus on both the process and the products of learning during regular instructional times. This might include a running record to focus on word analysis strategies, a retelling or discussion to focus on comprehension, or a written response to reading.

### **Authentic literacy**

Students engage in authentic literacy activities when they read and write for real purposes rather than to satisfy classroom assignments. They use literacy to learn or to develop understanding of specific concepts and are motivated to read and write based on their interests and questions. Authentic literacy activities often are designed to focus on a specific audience to communicate ideas for a shared understanding as opposed to completing worksheets or answering questions for school assignments.

## B

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### **Background knowledge**

Background knowledge is the collection of concepts and ideas one has for a given topic or situation based on personal experiences and/or reading. Background knowledge is directly related to effective reading comprehension; thus, it is important for teachers to develop and access this knowledge before, during, and after reading. The background knowledge of English language learners may differ from that of mainstream learners.

### **Benchmarks**

Benchmarks are specific standards of achievement for each grade level. For example, a reading benchmark for grade four may be that students read a nonfiction text and identify the main ideas and supporting details. Teachers would look for evidence that students were able to complete this task and would reteach it until they met the benchmark.

### **Brokering language**

A language broker is an individual who brings together two other individuals to facilitate a conversation. Professor Jiménez uses this phrase when referring to English language learners who translate in various settings in the school and community.

### **Bilingual books**

Bilingual books are books in which the same text is written in two languages. Text often appears in English on one side of the page and in another language on the facing page. English language learners benefit from reading bilingual books as a means of increasing proficiency in English. They also have the opportunity to read in the language of their choice.

## C

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### **Classroom contexts**

The way a classroom is organized creates a context for learning. This organization includes materials, desks, learning centers, wall displays, classroom routines, and grouping of students for instruction and practice. Classroom contexts influence the choices students make and how they will learn. In a well-organized classroom, students know where to find materials and information, where to go for assistance, and how to find answers to their questions.

### **Comprehension strategies**

Results of research studies have defined the strategies of proficient readers as the following: making connections between the text and background knowledge; asking questions; drawing inferences; determining important information; visualizing; synthesizing; and monitoring reading with "fix-up" strategies. Teachers can support students' comprehension by explicitly teaching these strategies within the reading program.

# Glossary, cont'd.

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## Contextual clues

Contextual clues are the words, phrases, and sentences that surround an unknown word and provide clues to its meaning. Most words are learned from contexts, either from reading or oral contexts such as conversations, lectures, or movies.

## D

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### Differentiated instruction

Differentiated instruction refers to instruction that is geared to each individual's needs and learning style. Students differ in learning profiles; therefore, they need to have options for taking in information, processing it, and expressing their understanding of it.

### Diverse learners

The term diverse learners refers to the differences in ability, interests, background knowledge, learning style, culture, and language that are represented in a classroom. Teachers need to consider all these factors when they plan for instruction.

## E

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### Editing

Editing is the stage in the writing process where students review their piece to change or correct standard writing conventions. These conventions include punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and spelling. The purpose of editing is to make the writing more accessible and comprehensible to the reader.

### English language learners

An English language learner (ELL) is a student whose first language is not English, and who is just developing proficiency in English.

## F

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### Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, smoothly, at an appropriate rate, and with expression. Fluent reading is an important characteristic of effective reading, both for word identification and comprehension.

## Funds of knowledge

A fund is a supply of something or a resource that is available for future use. Professor Jiménez suggests that students' becoming literate in as many languages as possible (knowledge) is a resource that will be increasingly valuable in the future.

## G

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### Gradual release of responsibility model

The gradual release of responsibility model depicts a progression in which students assume increased responsibility for their learning over time. Initially, the teacher assumes most of the responsibility for successful completion of a reading or writing task. Students gradually assume more responsibility so that the work is shared. Eventually, students assume total responsibility for completion of the task.

### Grouping plans

Grouping plans reflect a teacher's decisions about how to group students for maximum learning. Student groups are fluid and flexible throughout the year, depending on students' needs, achievement, and progress. The five basic grouping plans are whole class, small heterogeneous groups, small homogeneous groups, pairs, and individual work.

## H

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### High-success reading

High-success reading refers to reading opportunities that allow students to read accurately, fluently, and with comprehension. Texts used for high-success reading match the students' reading level and conceptual development. In many cases, students engaged in high-success reading have some background knowledge and experience with the text topic.

### High-stakes assessment

In high-stakes assessments, students are asked to read and write for specific purposes on a standardized achievement test. The results are used to determine proficiency in specific academic areas and to establish whether students progress in grades or graduate from high school. Many high-stakes language arts assessments are more closely related to classroom writing instruction than reading instruction.

# Glossary, cont'd.

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## High-stakes testing

High-stakes tests refer to tests whose results are publicized and used to rank schools and students. Often, students need to pass certain high-stakes tests in order to graduate from high school. Under the federal mandate of No Child Left Behind, school systems need to demonstrate that more and more of their students are passing these tests.

## I

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### Informational text

Informational or expository text presents facts, ideas, and concepts in a specific organizational pattern designed to promote learning. There are five organizational patterns of informational text: 1) description (main idea and details); 2) sequence; 3) compare and contrast; 4) cause and effect; and 5) problem-solution. Instruction in identifying and using these text structures promotes students' comprehension.

### Interactive journal

Interactive journals provide a context for writing between the student and the teacher. Students select a topic of their choice and write a journal entry. The teacher reads this entry and responds in writing with questions and comments. This process promotes students' independent writing and writing for an audience.

### Internet

The Internet is a system of networks that connects computers around the world, allowing users to disseminate and access large amounts of information.

### IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation)

IRE (Cazden, 1988) refers to a frequently used structure for classroom discussions: 1) teacher initiates discussion with a question and calls on a student to answer; 2) student responds to the teacher's question; and 3) teacher evaluates the student's answer as right or wrong and moves to the next question. A more effective discussion allows students to respond to each other based on one thoughtful question from the teacher.

## K

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### Kid culture

Originally devised by Ann Haas Dyson (Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture, and Classroom Literacy, 1997), this term refers to the print and media popular culture in a child's world. Children often use their experiences with the elements of this popular culture to write stories. Students' high interest in the topics of kid culture allows them to write comfortably about their lives and experiences.

## M

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### Multilevel instruction

In multilevel instruction, students can learn different things, the teacher interacts differently with each student, and all students experience success. For example, a multilevel lesson would include letting students choose their own topics, mini-lessons focusing on a variety of topics and levels, and writing conferences focusing on the individual needs of the student so that all students can succeed.

## N

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### Narrative text

Narrative text tells a story that involves the basic story structure elements of setting, character, problem/goal, events to solve the problem or reach the goal, and resolution. This is the basic story structure for all well-written narrative text.

### Navigate

Navigation is when one moves within and between Web pages to locate information.

### Needs-based groups

Needs-based groups are different from ability groups. While students in needs-based groups share similar needs and performance levels, the composition of the groups changes throughout the year as students progress in their literacy development. Teachers form needs-based groups for guided reading instruction and writing lessons.

# Glossary, cont'd.

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## **New literacies**

New literacies refer to the skills and strategies needed to access and process information on the Internet. These skills and strategies include posing questions in order to focus inquiry, locating information, evaluating the accuracy and usefulness of that information, synthesizing the information, and communicating the information to others.

## **Noninterruptive reading instruction**

When teachers allow students to finish reading a sentence after misreading text, they are using a noninterruptive reading instruction approach. By not immediately correcting students' miscues, teachers provide them time to determine if their reading makes sense and what to do if it does not. Research studies have shown that teachers immediately correct the miscues of struggling readers more than effective readers.

## **O**

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### **Onset-rime patterns**

Most words and syllables within words can be divided into onsets and rimes. The onset is the initial consonant or consonants (c- in cat, sh- in ship); the rime is the vowel and the letters that follow it (-at in cat, -ip in ship). Students in the intermediate grades can identify words more automatically by breaking whole words or syllables into onsets and rimes.

## **P**

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### **Portfolio**

A writing portfolio is an ongoing, systematic collection of authentic student performance that documents the achievements, strengths and needs, progress, and efforts of each child. It includes evidence of both the process and products of writing and continuously informs instruction. Contents of a writing portfolio could include responses to reading, personal narratives, graphic organizers used to plan writing, journal entries, and student self-assessments. Portfolios are especially useful in parent-teacher conferences to demonstrate a child's progress over time.

## **Portfolio assessment**

Portfolio assessment is an informal evaluation of a student's literacy development. Portfolios contain evidence of both the processes and products of learning. Teachers and students both individually and collectively choose pieces to be included in the portfolio. The focus of most portfolio assessments is evidence of grade-level benchmarks.

## **R**

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### **Revision**

Revision is a stage in the writing process where writers return to their drafts and "re-look" at the piece to make changes that will improve its message. During the revision process, students focus on organization, word choice, transitional sentences, and supporting details. When revising, students may add or move sentences, include metaphors or similes, delete information, and revise introductions and conclusions.

### **Rubrics**

A rubric is a criterion-based scoring guide that uses a descriptive scale to assess student performance on grade-level benchmarks. Rubrics can be purchased, teacher-made, or developed collaboratively between teachers and students. Benchmarks are used as a tool to assess student performance on specific assignments or projects. Rubrics provide students with a clear understanding of what is expected and allow teachers to systematically review student work with explicit criteria.

## **S**

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### **Scaffolding**

During instruction, teachers assist and guide students so that they can read, learn, and respond to text in ways they cannot without support. Teachers continue to provide this support or scaffolding until students can effectively read or write independently. Scaffolding is especially important when students are reading a challenging text or writing a difficult piece. Examples of scaffolded instruction include helping students figure out unknown words by using prefixes and suffixes or contextual clues, providing a graphic organizer and discussing the major parts of a text before reading or writing, and providing background knowledge or vocabulary instruction before reading a difficult text.

# Glossary, cont'd.

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## **Search engine**

Search engines are computer programs that retrieve information from a computer network, especially from the Internet. Examples of search engines include Google and Yahoo for older students and adults, and Ask Jeeves for Kids, KidsClick, and Yahoo!igans for younger students.

## **Self-monitoring**

Self-monitoring refers to students' ability to assess what they are reading as they go along. Readers who self-monitor know when their reading makes sense and when it does not. If comprehension is blocked, they know what strategies to use to repair it. Self-monitoring is a significant component of comprehension.

## **T**

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### **Text types**

The term text types is similar to genres of writing. However, it refers to a broader view of what students are asked to write in classrooms. In addition to the genres of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, etc., text types can also characterize classroom assignments such as quick writes, journal entries, and written responses to reading.

## **W**

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### **Wall displays**

Wall displays are charts, graphs, directions, maps, and other visuals that represent what students are learning each day, week, and month. These displays highlight words, concepts, strategies, and student performance. Both teachers and students create wall displays to reflect the curriculum, instructional practices, and student learning.

### **Web site**

A Web site is a page or set of pages on the Internet that includes information on a topic. These pages are maintained by a person, group, or organization.

### **Writing center**

The writing center is an area of the classroom designed to give students access to the necessary materials, procedures, and strategies for effective writing. The writing center includes all the materials needed for writing, including reference books, writing implements, paper, charts depicting the writing process, conference schedules, strategy use, and word lists. This center is a resource for students before, during, and after writing.

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