Essential “Look-Fors” in a Balanced Literacy Classroom

Read each statement below. Check the box if this practice is currently a daily part of your Balanced Literacy Instruction. If you are in the process of learning more or implementing it, circle the box.

- Teachers reading aloud to students from excellent examples of literature and informational texts
- Teachers explicitly teaching, modeling, and discussing skills, strategies, and his/her own reading process
- Teacher explicitly states, outlines the steps, demonstrated, and discusses the learning focus of the lesson so that students know what they are supposed to learn, do and show as result of the lesson
- Teacher observes during whole, small, and independent reading the application and demonstration of learning to assess the success of the lesson (Did 80-85% of the students get it?)
- Reading instruction focused on comprehension and the development of wise reading skills, strategies, and behaviors in the context of whole and meaningful literature
- Children are actively engaged and involved in direct, explicit skill and strategy instruction and know what they are supposed to do after the whole group lesson or mini lesson
- Students reading a wide and rich range of materials including both a variety of literary genres and informational texts
- Students reading with the teacher individually or in small groups while the teacher observes/guides/assesses
- Students reading in small groups and pairs and discussing the content
- Students grouped by reading interests, instructional strengths and needs
- Silent reading in small groups is followed by discussion
- Teachers guiding students reading, asking higher order questions and noting strength and need
- Students reading self-selected texts at their independent to instructional level independently
- Students are writing in response to reading and/or keeping a chart or log
- Ongoing, daily assessment observation, assessment, and conferring with data collection
- Periodic Formal assessment to screen, benchmark, progress monitor, and summate learning
- Data from assessments, observation, and conferring are used to design instruction and intervention
- Teachers modeling writing using authentic examples from the class and other samples in a shared process
- Teachers demonstrating the writing process
- Teachers guiding students writing while students write for authentic purposes selecting their own topics and for specific tasks
- Writing across the curriculum before and after reading

Developed from multiple sources from 30 years of Balanced Literacy Research by B.D. Houck, 2013 Houck Educational Services © Used with permission for professional development purposes.
Essential “Look-Fors” in a Balanced Literacy Classroom

- Students involved in all stages of the writing process
- Students using invented spelling while generating ideas and flow and edit using word analysis skills
- Students writing independently
- Teacher-student conferences provide the teacher with data about student strengths, needs, and interest
- Class time spent on writing whole original pieces for real audiences
- Students writing in small cooperative groups
- Books, books, books in a variety of genres and informational texts structures
- Multiple copies of books for shared and small group reading
- A print rich environment
- Children listening to reading of audio books, poetry, etc.
- Children talking to each other, sharing their ideas, discussing how they apply strategies and problem solve

Go back and find the statements that you circled. Highlight them. Choose the three that you wish to focus on this year and write a goal statement for each one below. Share with a partner. Find one you have in common and highlight it.

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________