

Ten principles for looking at reading lessons

- ▣ **Nothing is better than reading and writing to develop students' reading and writing.**
Do kids read for at least one hour each school day? Do kids write for at least one-half hour each day? Do most kids read at home evenings, weekends and over the summer?
- ▣ **Most reading should be easy reading (high accuracy/good comprehension). An 80/20 ratio (easy to harder) seems about right.** *Do all students have texts of appropriate complexity? Is most reading high success reading? Across day? Do they choose some of the books they read in school?*
- ▣ **Students do not develop comprehension strategies by answering questions after reading.**
Are active comprehension strategies explicitly modeled on a daily basis? In content subjects as well as reading sessions? Is literate conversation modeled? Do students write daily to foster understanding?
- ▣ **Students do not develop composing strategies from red ink corrections (nor from just writing).** *Are composing strategies explicitly modeled in front of students on a regular basis?*
- ▣ **Students do not develop decoding strategies from drills or dittoes (nor from just reading).**
Are useful decoding strategies explicitly modeled on a regular basis? Is decoding instruction linked to spelling/composing? Is daily coaching of decoding strategies in context offered?
- ▣ **Students benefit from an integrated, content-oriented reading/language arts curriculum.** *Are the interrelationships between the language arts obvious in the curriculum students experience each, day, each week, each year? For instance, is the decoding strand linked to the spelling/composing strand? The composition strand to the comprehension strand? Do each day's instructional activities exhibit linkages? Do students learn useful content during their reading lessons?*
- ▣ **Some students need access to larger amounts of more intensive expert instructional support and enhanced opportunities to read and write with instructional support.** *Do lower-achieving students (e.g. Title 1, learning disabled) participate in instructional support efforts that substantially increase the amount of reading and writing they do each day? Are most instructional groups restricted to 2-3 students? Is expert instruction provided? Is personalized instruction provided?*
- ▣ **Thoughtful literacy is the new goal for reading and language arts instruction. Basic literacy/minimum competence will no longer suffice.** *Do daily school assignments emphasize summarizing, organizing, synthesizing, comparing, analyzing, creating, and presenting texts? Is discussion of texts a daily event? Are students asked to make connections between texts they have read?*
- ▣ **Developing independent, engaged readers and writers is critical to developing thoughtful, lifelong learners. Easy access to books is critical support for fostering independent reading activity.** *Do classrooms have large and enticing supplies of books and magazines nicely displayed and available to read at school and home? Are there many texts that can be read successfully by the lowest-achieving students? Do students read self-selected texts every day?*
- ▣ **Access to consistently high-quality classroom instruction is more important than the sort of parents students have or the special programs they attend.** *Good classroom instruction is absolutely central to student achievement. Do not expect either parents or special programs to solve students' literacy learning problems. Is every classroom providing all students with appropriate instruction?*

(@ R. L. Allington, 2011)