

# English Language Arts

## Resource Guide

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**NOTE:** This document is a work in progress. Parts II and III, in particular, are in need of further development, and we invite the submission of additional learning experiences and local performance tasks for these sections. Inquiries regarding submission of materials should be directed to: English Language Arts Resource Guide, Room 681 EBA, New York State Education Department, Albany, NY 12234 (tel. 518-474-5922).

# Teaching Self-Assessment & Setting Goals

ELEMENTARY

## Standards & Performance

**ELA 1** **SPEAKING AND WRITING** – *students will*

- ▲ present information clearly
- ▲ use details, examples, anecdotes
- ▲ include relevant information
- ▲ use process of pre-writing

**ELA 2** **LISTENING AND READING** – *students will*

- ▲ read aloud accurately/fluently

**ELA 3** **LISTENING AND READING** – *students will*

- ▲ recognize criteria
- ▲ Speaking and Writing
- ▲ monitor/adjust for competent performance

**ELA 4** **LISTENING AND READING** – *students will*

- ▲ listen attentively/recognize
- ▲ recognize kind of interaction appropriate

Here are some things I learned along the way:

1. You can make changes even if the system and other teachers do not.
2. Involving parents is critical to success.
3. Portfolio assessment fosters an environment where students can “own” their learning experience.
4. Portfolio assessment activities are valuable opportunities to review content and skills.
5. Portfolio assessment works well when combined with activities in which students regularly assess their own and their team’s performance.

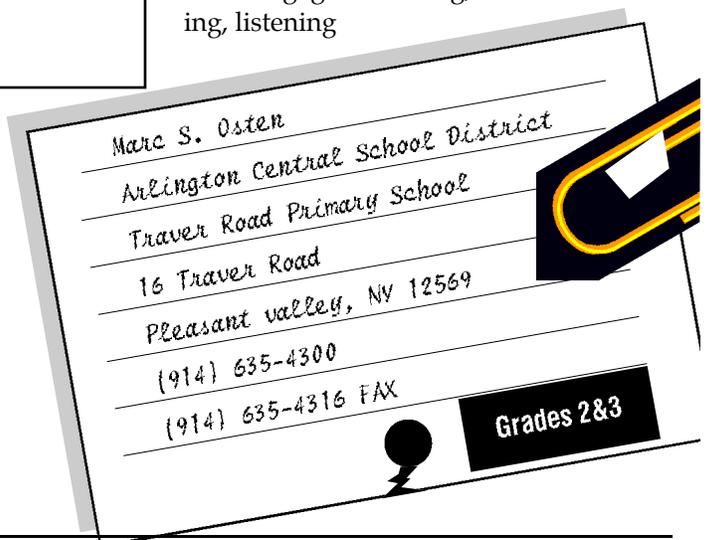
The primary purposes of this learning experience are:

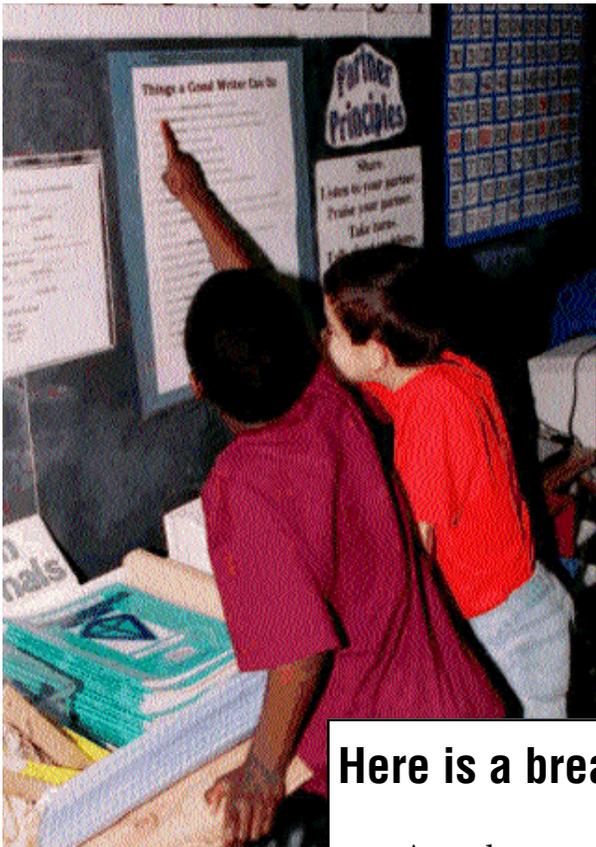
- To help students develop the ability to identify and discuss progress they make in writing.
- To help students acquire the capability to set specific goals to enhance the content of their writing and improve their mechanical writing skills.

Through the learning experience the students engage in reading, writing, listening

*I wonder if I should worry about grammar at this point in Danny’s development?*

Parent





*Two students check the writing skills list to see what goals they might decide to work on.*

and speaking activities about their writing and/or the writing of their peers.

The primary instructional connection in this learning experience is to the writing and speaking, listening and reading portions of the Arlington Central School Districts (ACSD) Language Arts Curriculum and Performance Standards which are based on the NYS English Standards Framework. Specific rubrics are used by the teacher and students to assess the students writing.

To succeed in this learning experience the students need to produce written materials that they can reflect upon and assess for inclusion in their portfolio. The nature of the learning experience is both instructional and assessment driven; all children can take part with appropriate adult support.

Throughout the year, the children review and then select pieces of work to include in their portfolio. They do this roughly every six weeks.

## **Here is a breakdown of the process:**

- As a class we regularly revisit and discuss the purposes of a portfolio. We also discuss the standards used to judge good quality writing. At this point students are exposed to rubrics used to assess handwriting, spelling, organization of story and other aspects of writing.
- Students review the goal they established for themselves when they made their previous portfolio choice.
- Students review their work and find a piece of work that demonstrates they have worked towards the goals they set.
- Students review that work to set a new goal.
- At this point the students will occasionally engage in a peer conference to get feedback on their portfolio choice.
- Students fill out a form which they staple to the top of the story they chose.
- I then take the portfolio and add my comments to their form.
- Each student meets with me for a mini-conference. At that time they defend their choice and I explain to them the goals I think they need to work towards. This conference is a critical time for me to carefully review their progress and help them set sights on mastering new skills.
- Students bring their portfolio home to explain and defend their choices to their parents.
- Parents return a form noting that they discussed the portfolio with their child.

## Things To Think About:

- a) In addition to this procedure for the actual portfolio choices, the students and I work with the portfolios at other times. Use them when teaching mini-lessons and when conferencing with children about works in progress.
- b) Regularly take dictation for students who have fine-motor or other difficulties filling out their portfolio forms.
- c) Recruit parent volunteers to give one on one support to students who need it.
- d) Make extensive use of cassette and videotape for students who feel more adept at expressing themselves verbally.

*Peter and I were impressed by his improvements in neatness and spelling. He was proud of his work and excited about sharing it with me. His goals are strong and I'm sure we'll see them achieved.*

Parent

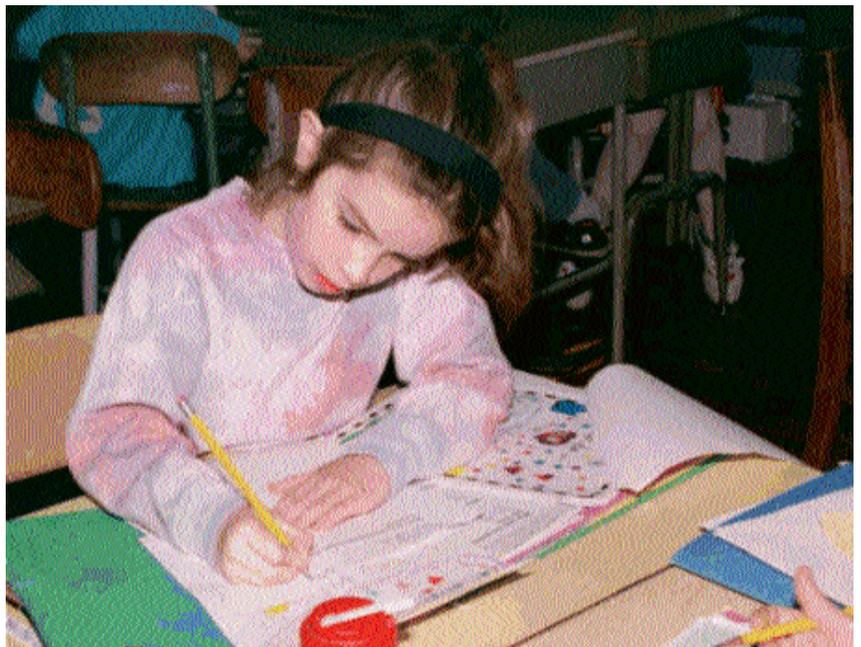
## Assessment

One of the positive aspects of this learning experience is that the techniques used to collect evidence of student progress are embedded in the experience itself. In the process of choosing and then reviewing the portfolio choices do the following:

- have discussions with individual students about what they'd like to choose for inclusion,
- listen in on peer-conferences,
- observe students as they make their choices,
- engage in group discussions,
- review the writing they have done about their choices,
- discuss the choices with the students,
- watch videotaped readings of stories,
- read stories to identify goals I have for the students, and
- review and discuss with primary care givers their views on the students progress.

Through these interactions and observations I am able to carefully assess the progress the students are making in very specific areas, help students set realistic goals, and inform my instructional plan.

*Student fills out her portfolio choice form after choosing something from her portfolio.*



## REFLECTION: *It Is A Difficult Dance*

As I have worked with my students on portfolio projects, I've hit many obstacles and learned a lot.

### PROBLEMS

### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

1. A major problem, for example, has been helping the children develop language to use when assessing their work. Second and third graders often use simplistic language to describe their work, "It was fun," or, "I did a good job."

I've had to spend a lot of time in one-on-one conferences with the kids to get them to verbalize their thoughts better. I plan on using more modeling to help them visualize the process and develop language to use in the process.

2. Getting the children to focus on the content of their work instead of the mechanics. They often looked for visual things like neatness or punctuation.

This has also required a lot of small group and one-on-one discussions, in which I ask the students to explain clearly all of the things they are pleased with in a certain selection.

3. Children often forget the goals they set for themselves in a portfolio choice. My assumption had been that if a student sets a goal, they would work on it.

I now spend more time reinforcing the goals set in one-on-one conferences and mini-lessons.

4. There are students who are notorious for setting goals they have already reached or they know they will reach very soon.

I try to get them to set their sights high, without setting them so high they can't succeed.

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*I think it is cool to have a portfolio because it is cool to go back and see how you've gotten better in the year and because I like to see what good choices I've made.*

Student

Below is a listing of all the performance indicators relevant to this learning experience. Following each performance indicator I have detailed the assessment methods I use to determine students progress.

## Standard 1 - Language for Information and Understanding

### Speaking and Writing

- present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms such as summaries, paraphrases, brief reports, stories, posters, and charts

*I review the comments they write on their portfolio forms and listen to them explain the reasons for their selections.*

- use details, examples, anecdotes, or personal experiences to explain or clarify information

*I review the examples in students writing that they use to demonstrate their progress in writing.*

- include relevant information and exclude extraneous material

*I review the students portfolio form to see if they can summarize the reasons for their particular portfolio selection.*

- use the process of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and proofreading to produce well constructed informational texts, basic writing conventions, such as correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, as well as sentence structures appropriate to written forms.

*I review the students portfolio forms to see if they have constructed a well crafted explanation for their selection and new set of goals.*

## Standard 2 - Language for Literacy Response and Expression

### Listening and Reading

- read aloud accurately and fluently, using phonics and context clues to determine pronunciation and meaning

*I listen to students read the stories they've selected for their portfolios. I also listen as they discuss their portfolio selections during peer conferences and as they defend their choice to me. I also review cassette and video tapes.*

## Standard 3 - Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

### Listening and Reading

- recognize that the criteria that one uses to analyze and evaluate anything depends on one's point of view and purpose for the analysis

*Observe how the students utilize the criteria in the rubrics to make their portfolio selections and set goals.*

### Speaking and Writing

- monitor and adjust their own oral and written presentations (e.g., in writing, the criteria might include development of position, organization, appropriate vocabulary, mechanics, and neatness. In speaking, the criteria might include good content, effective delivery, diction, posture, poise, and eye contact.)

*I review video tapes, portfolio forms and the progress students make from the time they first discuss their portfolio choice with me through to their final portfolio defense.*

## Standard 4 - Language for Social Interaction

### Listening and Speaking

- listen attentively and recognize when it is appropriate for them to speak (

*I observe students in peer conferences and small groups while they engage in discussions about students portfolio choices.*

- recognize the kind of interaction appropriate for different circumstances, such as story hour, group discussions, and one-on-one conversations.

*I observe students in peer conferences and small groups while they engage in discussions about students portfolio choices.*

# Reading The Newspaper Intelligently

ELA

1

**LISTENING AND READING – students will**

- ▲ use wide variety of strategies

**SPEAKING AND WRITING – students will**

- ▲ establish authoritative stance
- ▲ develop information with appropriate supporting material
- ▲ use process of pre-writing
- ▲ use standard English for formal presentation

ELA

2

**LISTENING AND READING – students will**

- ▲ read/view texts and performances
- ▲ recognize different levels
- ▲ read aloud with expression

**SPEAKING AND WRITING – students will**

- ▲ present responses to/interpretations of literature
- ▲ write stories, poems, literary essays, plays
- ▲ use standard English effectively

ELA

3

**LISTENING AND READING – students will**

- ▲ analyze, interpret/evaluate
- ▲ understand many different points of view
- ▲ evaluate their own/others' work

**SPEAKING AND WRITING – students will**

- ▲ develop arguments with effective details
- ▲ use standard English

ELA

4

**LISTENING AND SPEAKING – students will**

- ▲ listen attentively to others/build on others' ideas
- ▲ express ideas/concerns clearly/respectfully

**READING AND WRITING – students will**

- ▲ write social letters
- ▲ use appropriate language/style
- ▲ read/discuss social communications/use some of the techniques

I may call the newspaper unit, *Reading the Newspaper Intelligently*, but the unit overlaps most of the rest of the curriculum. The newspaper has become a tool to teach reading, writing, listening and speaking for the four English Language Arts (ELA) standard areas.

## What do the students do?

The students open up the “gift” of the newspaper every Monday (one local paper) and every Wednesday (a different local paper). They scan every page of the newspaper. This activity is called, “What’s in there?” Next, depending on the concepts we’re studying that day, they might do one or more of these activities:

1. “Settle In” and read whatever they like for 5-10 minutes.
2. “Pair and Share” what they’ve read.
3. Look for one thing in particular—often by rows.

*Example:*

Row 1 - Search for hasty generalizations

Row 2 - Search for false analogies

Row 3 - Search for false causes

Row 4 - Rewrite and slant several headlines by replacing key words with loaded synonyms

Row 5 - Search for propaganda techniques in the flyers

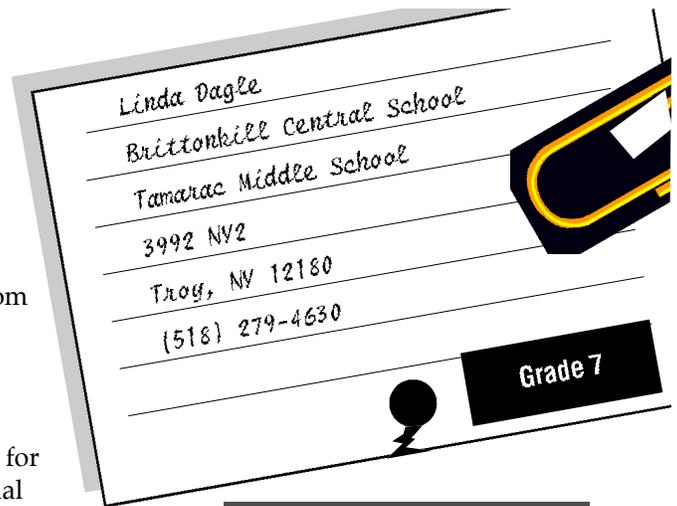
The whole class might:

- read and discuss an article. I call this, "Going to the bottom of the inverted pyramid." Later, during the *Special Friday* speech activity, we would do a cross-table debate on that subject.

The syndicated columnist, Heloise, told me in a meeting August 29, 1994 that the newspaper was a daily "gift." She inspired me to use the newspaper not only as a unit of study, but in all areas of my seventh grade English curriculum.

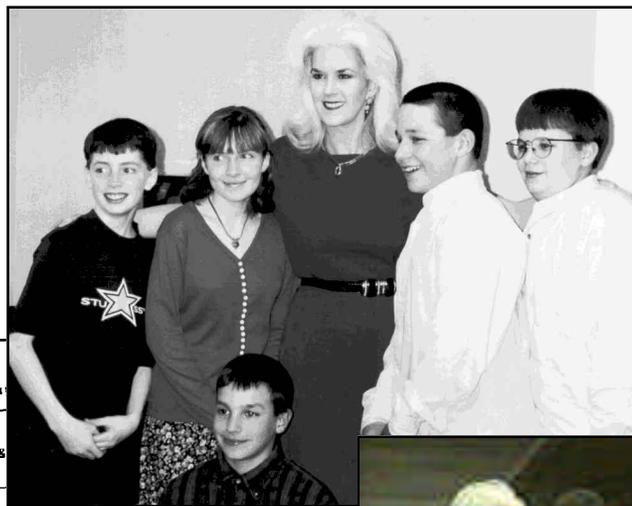
- search for editorial topics to begin writing a round of editorials to be sent to newspapers and appropriate magazines.

- read "Hints to Heloise" and respond by creating their own hints.
- have a Scissors Day where old newspapers are piled on a table in the center of the room and students choose one "new" product to create and display. Depending on what we are studying, choices might include:
  - a **Picture Product** where they cut out a picture and write a story or poem about it.
  - a **Name Acrostic** where they find adjectives to describe themselves.
  - an **Editorial Cartoon** made by cutting and pasting or making an original drawing.



*At the end of each newspaper delivery day, students are encouraged to take the papers home. Many disappear each time.*

Linda Dagle



**"HOW TO GET PUBLISHED IN HELOISE'S SYNBICATED COLUMN" RUBRIC**  
 (If you get published, you will be in over 500 newspapers in 20 countries. Be prepared. Only 1 out of 100 hints gets published.)

Criterion	Level 4 Publishable	Level 3 Minor revisions Publishable	Level 2 Major revisions Publishable	Level 1 Retouching
1. Be brief				
2. Explain one unusual, creative, workable hint				
3. Type				
4. Be direct				
5. Include your full name, age, grade, school, and return address				

Check One:  
 Teacher reflection \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student self-reflection \_\_\_\_\_  
 Peer reflection \_\_\_\_\_

Writer's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reader's Name \_\_\_\_\_

(Based on an interview with Heloise on August 29, 1994.)



Over 20 students were chosen for publication. Five students were chosen to explain their "Hints for Heloise" on the nationally syndicated television show, *Our Home*.

## Nobody Knows

By: Jillian Blodgett



*In order to succeed in this learning experience, students need to be willing to read, respond and connect with the newspaper on many different levels.*

Linda Dagle

Your troubles all seem to surround you, like prison walls and sties,  
And you look on in disbelief with sad and mournful eyes,  
The things that you remember, that are the closest to your heart,  
Are no longer there when you thought they were there, you've been torn apart.  
Those who were always there for you are gone when you need them the most,  
And all that is left is you and your sorrow that haunts you like a ghost.

Forlorn, forgotten, rejected, unknown and swallowed up in sorrow,  
You roam and wander listlessly, having no hope for tomorrow.  
You think and ponder and wonder and brood, not knowing what you have done,  
To be like you are, like you are today, despised, rejected, and shunned.  
And as you rethink all those hurtful memories, relive your awful past,  
You still understand less and less why you're forgotten, rejected, outcast.

When you were so young and ignorant, you thought they were good as gold,  
But now that you see how they were using you, now you know they're hard and cold.  
No one has mercy, no one has pity, and no one ever gives in,  
Everyone's mean, everyone's cruel, and no one can comprehend.  
You're all alone in a perishing world, where no one can understand,  
Your troubles, your problems, concerns, and sorrows mean nothing to this dismal land.



Dear Heloise:

Your hint has helped me from arriving late to my classes. First, I put my books in my locker in the order I need them. Then, I put the books going in opposite directions so I don't grab books I don't need. Therefore, I just grab the books on the top. Meanwhile, I simply slip the other books I just used at the bottom so they will always stay in order. Well, it's a lot better than searching everywhere just to find your social studies textbook. The method does work, as I have no more detentions or mad teacher!

Amanda Lussier

8. volunteer in teams of four to create a WTMS television news show with an anchorperson, a sports reporter, a news feature reporter, and a weather person. They would perform their news show during Special Friday behind a television frame set up for that purpose. The show would be videotaped and a Polaroid picture taken to be xeroxed for each person.
9. analyze a movie review in preparation for watching a film and writing a review. Before or after we sent the reviews to the newspaper or other appropriate audience, we would have a real film critic from the newspaper come to speak to the class.



April Newton



Ryan Ellis

Both cartoons were featured in *Editorial Cartoons By Kids—1996* Zino Press Children's Books, 1996.

10. a teachable moment might occur, and we run with it. For example, one day we read about the death of a young child one year after he was attacked by a dog. This one article resulted in the following moments:

- we had a cross-table debate on whether the dog was at fault.
- letters of condolence were sent to the family and editorials sent to our local paper.
- the editorials were published in a special feature called, "Power of the Pen," and the child's grandfather sent us a lovely thank you letter.
- the students collected money and sent it to a hospital in the child's memory.

### What does the teacher do?

The teacher is a facilitator who seizes teachable moments and orchestrates the moment using the newspaper in every possible way. He/she becomes a clearing house for:

- editorials,
- money collections for people we read about,
- phone calls to newspapers and individuals in the news, field trips to newspapers,

#### WTMS MORNING NEWS SHOW PERFORMANCE CHECKLIST

Do's	Don'ts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Be audible	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Talk so fast
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Dress up	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Stand up before you're done talking
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Have energy	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Stutter
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Be ready	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Let them see your cards
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Be happy	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Keep your head down while you're talking
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Sit straight up	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Touch your hair
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Smile	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Shake your head
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Anchorperson should wrap it up	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Read off paper
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Enunciate clearly	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Talk softly
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Write a script	<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Giggle
<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Look at the camera	<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Cough
<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Good transitions	<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Wave
<input type="checkbox"/> 13. Thank the person that introduced you	<input type="checkbox"/> 13. Fix clothing
<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Keep stage presence	<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Lift/fool with your paper
<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Have props as symbols	<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Repeat yourself
<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Have a commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Rush
<input type="checkbox"/> 17. Include the Five W's	<input type="checkbox"/> 17. Mumble
<input type="checkbox"/> 18. Finish before getting up	<input type="checkbox"/> 18. Act nervous

Check one:  
 Peer reflection  /  
 Self-reflection   
 Teacher reflection

**News dog story**

After reading an article in your paper titled, "Family, Friends, Bid Farewell to Brave Boy" on October 18, I was concerned about Dylan and the two dogs. I totally agree with what was done to the dogs. I think a dog who would hurt someone is not good to have roaming around the streets. I feel sympathy for Dylan's friends and family. What a way for a boy with so much life left to die. I wish I could say how sorry I am.

Travis Morris

- *Special Friday* visits from reporters and other individuals we may have met because of the newspaper, and
- a sender of hundreds of real pieces of writing to various places.

Using the newspapers requires no special modifications to the classroom. The ebb and flow of newspapers into the classroom becomes as normal as breathing.

We have full inclusion. A special teacher and an aide are integrated into the classroom on a daily basis. There is direct consultation between Special Education teacher and the inclusion students as well as indirect consultation between the Special Education and me. These students are able to participate in collaborative learning groups, get published, and have met and responded to many class guests.

For reinforcement of newspaper content material, they have a Study Skills class where concepts may be retaught and/or reviewed.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR RUBRIC**

Criterion	Level 4 "Automatic Writer" Accomplished Very polished	Level 3 "Studied Writer" Proficient Well-done	Level 2 "Learner" Practitioner Working hard (Reteaching is necessary)	Level 1 "Beginner" Needs improvement Getting started (Reteaching is necessary)
1. Develops a single point				
2. Appropriate length - brief, but long enough to develop a single point				
3. Follows newspaper guidelines				
4. Follows rules of fair play				
5. Makes no errors in mechanics (Ready to publish)				

A good thing about the piece is \_\_\_\_\_

Next time, why don't you try: \_\_\_\_\_

One thing I learned is \_\_\_\_\_

Check One  
 Teacher reflection \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student self-reflection \_\_\_\_\_  
 Peer reflection \_\_\_\_\_

Writer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reader's Name \_\_\_\_\_

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## MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

### STUDENTS

- Thirty newspapers once a week or 6 newspapers each day. (Local newspapers who are a member of NIE (Newspapers in Education) are often willing to help fund this.)
- Gluesticks, scissors, highlighters.

### TEACHER

- Support from the administration and parents.
- Envelopes for mailing out the real writing products your students will be writing.
- Polaroid camera to record some of the memorable moments newspapers will bring.
- Video camera to occasionally record news shows and Scissors Day.
- A wall map of the United States and of the world in order to find various datelines.
- A memorabilia book to keep special articles, correspondence, and copies of published student work.



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I know my students are progressing toward the appropriate standards because I assess them in many different ways:

1. They excel on written tests on newspaper terms, rewriting headlines, and reading comprehension.
2. They create new products such as stories based on pictures and new newspapers they have pasted together with the order of articles they would choose.
3. Thirty percent of my students are published every year in such places as the local newspapers, the Heloise column, and the React magazines. They also write hundreds of letters about various subjects introduced by newspapers. This accomplishment represents real writing for real audiences.
4. They love a day called Scissors Day where we create new language arts products with the newspaper. Their divergent thinking is impressive.
5. They gladly bring in newspapers from all over the world and enjoy comparing and contrasting them.
6. They willingly enter various contests including a nationwide editorial cartoon contest in which there were four winners.
7. In class discussions, their level of question-asking is high. Many teachable moments occur because of this. One of my favorites was the day they asked what "zeitgeist" meant. That touched off a round of discussion that resulted in students interviewing their parents on the difference the zeitgeist of their parents' younger eras and today.
8. Many parents have commented on how their dinner table conversations have been enriched by the student's knowledge of what's going on.
9. They use self-reflection and peer-reflection as they create and fill out various rubrics and checklists.



10. They are adept at suggesting new ways to use the newspaper.
11. They become involved in all facets of language arts. For example, they *read* about a man who was attacked for turning in drug dealers. They *wrote* encouraging notes to him. They *listened* to a policeman who visited my class to talk about the crime in the town involved. They *spoke* to the gentleman who was attacked as they *met* him in the classroom and received his thanks for their support.

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## TIME

Flexibility is the key word. We always do ten minutes of “What’s in there?” where we scan the headlines, deck, pictures and outlines. Sometimes, we decide to spend more time by reading an entire article or having a class cross-table debate on a topic we discovered in the newspaper. We also use the newspaper to make products to help learn the other units of study. For example, we’ll spend time using the newspapers to cut out pictures to represent the characters in a novel we might be reading.

The time varies from ten minutes to a full period.

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## FINALLY

I’ve found that newspapers reach **all** learners in wonderful, unexpected ways. I have seen the proud look of a Special Education student when he handed me a newspaper from Fairbanks, Alaska. I have watched my students meet reporters with ease and have seen their self-satisfaction as they read about themselves in the newspaper and evaluated whether the reporter did a fair job or not. I have watched what happened when my students created a Strength of Character Award for a man who was attacked for turning in drug dealers.

As I reflect on this whole program which started with a meeting with Heloise on August 29, 1994, all I know is that the newspapers have been a “gift” which connected my classroom to the outside world and which encouraged my students to excel in reading, writing, listening and speaking. To improve the program, I intend to have my students create a survey to assess how this newspaper program affects student and parent reading habits and conversations.