

## The Four-Block Literacy Framework at the James Van Dierendonck Elementary School

For the past 3 years, the James Van Dierendonck Elementary School has gradually implemented the Four-Block Literacy Framework school wide. We are presently in our last year of implementation. The Four Blocks – Self-Selected Reading, Working With Words, Guided Reading, and Writing – represent four different approaches to teaching children to read and write.



The **Self-Selected Reading Block** focuses on allowing students to read and enjoy text of their own choosing. The teacher begins the block with a read-aloud. During this time, the teacher can introduce children to a variety of literature and model the enjoyment of lifelong reading. After this, students choose their own reading material from a variety of reading levels and genres. While the children are reading independently, the teacher conferences with individual children about what they are reading. The final part of this block is to provide the children with various opportunities to share what they have been reading.

The **Working with Words Block** has two purposes. The first is to ensure children can read and spell high frequency words correctly. The second is for children to learn patterns necessary for decoding and spelling unknown words. During the first part of this block, children practice new word wall words each week as well as review old word wall words. During the second part of this block, children use patterns to read and spell new words. These activities can include: Guess the Covered Word, Making Words, Rounding Up the Rhymes, as well as many other phonics based activities.

The **Writing Block** focuses on the full writing process – from brainstorming to published pieces. Each writing lesson starts with a focused mini-lesson that refers to one of the “Six Traits” of writing (Ideas, Word Choice, Voice, Sentence Fluency, Organization, Conventions). The teacher models and uses “think alouds” during the mini-lesson. Students then write on either a self-selected topic or a focused topic while using a Six Traits rubric. The lesson ends with opportunities for students to share their work with the class.



The **Guided Reading Block** focuses on comprehension skills. The teacher chooses a variety of literature depending upon the interests and abilities of students. Teachers guide students through the literature and use activities such as: choral reading, echo reading, partner reading, activating prior knowledge, developing graphic organizers, providing a purpose for reading, discussing pictures, thinking aloud, literature circles, etc. The ultimate goal of Guided Reading is to help students comprehend what they read.

The school staff decided on this intervention after they identified reading comprehension as an area that needed greater focus. All staff members are using Four Blocks – classroom teachers have adopted the complete model while specialists have modified the Four Blocks framework to meet the requirements of their program. Four Blocks is a research-based model that directly or indirectly focuses on reading comprehension.