
Setting Up the Balanced Literacy Classroom

By Kathy Rhea Bumgardner, M.Ed., Ed.S.

*CEO, Founder and National Literacy Consultant at Strategies Unlimited, Inc.
School Improvement Specialist, Belmont, NC*

Introduction

The balanced literacy classroom must be set up to encourage and motivate students, as well as to help meet the requirements of the standards for English Language Arts & Literacy. The classroom should include space for whole-class instruction, areas for small-group work, and quiet areas for independent work.

Whole Group

- Large group area for students to sit together to learn and collaborate (desk arrangement or place on carpet to sit beside a partner for whole-group instruction)
- Texts for shared/close reading, such as the *Wonders* Reading/Writing Workshop, as well as big books and picture books as needed
- Word study resources, such as vocabulary and spelling cards
- Chart stand for visual charts and chart paper, markers, and sticky notes
- An interactive whiteboard (if available) or overhead projector to display digital lesson resources
- Hands-on literacy tools that support student learning

Small Group

- Table or area for small-group instruction and practice
- Leveled Readers
- Leveled Reader Lesson Cards (if available)
- Word study resources, such as vocabulary and spelling cards
- Small stand-up chart stand to display visuals
- Pencils, markers, sticky notes, index cards, dry erase boards
- Visual anchor charts from whole-group lessons (as needed) for reference
- Hands-on literacy tools and any other hands-on resources

Independent Work

- Areas for students to read, write, engage in word study quietly and independently or to work with a partner or small group
- Access to a rich classroom library, including texts of a wide variety of topics, genres, authors, content areas, and reading levels that is organized for easy identification and selection by students
- Resources for students to organize their work and writing, including response journals, vocabulary journals, book boxes, and graphic organizers
- Computer stations, listening stations, or handheld devices for digital access to interactive reading, writing, and word study games
- Leveled Workstation Activity Cards or other meaningful lesson extension materials