

K-6 Literacy Learning Activity Types^{1, 2}

Teaching K-6 literacy is a complex instructional task that requires knowledge of how children learn to read and write. The K-6 literacy learning activity types identified here attempt to simplify the complexity of teaching a child to read and write by subdividing these processes into manageable learning activities that effectively integrate technology, pedagogy and content. This list of literacy learning activity types is offered as a preliminary organizational structure to help scaffold teachers' thinking about how one might design engaging literacy learning activities that challenge young learners to read and write.

As one begins to think about all of the reading knowledge, skills and strategies that are included in teaching elementary literacy, it is easy to become a bit overwhelmed. Although there are several organizational structures that could be used to arrange this information into learning activity types, keeping the categories simple and related directly to the essential components of reading and writing seems most appropriate for primary grade levels. Thus, the K-6 literacy learning activity types focus on helping students develop two very important learning processes: reading and writing. There are also several subcategories within these two categories of activity types that address specific skills or strategies that are required in teaching children to read and write.

The Reading Process Activity Types

Successful readers thoroughly understand the processes involved in reading. The Reading Process activity types are divided into six subcategories that promote the processes involved in learning to read. Elementary children are typically taught specific literacy skills and strategies that they can use before they begin to read, while they read and after they read. Therefore the first three subcategories include: Pre-Reading activity types, During-Reading activity types, and Post-Reading activity types. Additional subcategories also must be included in this list because more skills are critical to the reading process and the development of good readers. These subcategories are components common to most beginning reading programs, and include Vocabulary activity types, Comprehension activity types, and Fluency activity types.

Each subcategory of the Reading Process activity types is presented in a separate table below that names the activity type, defines it, then suggests some technologies that might be used to support the particular type of learning activity named.

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The Pre-Reading Activity Types

The goal of the pre-reading activity types is to prepare students for reading and to activate their prior knowledge before they read.

Table 1: The Pre-Reading Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Develop Alphabetic Knowledge	Students name the letters of the alphabet and recognize the letter symbols in print	Educational software (e.g. Bailey’s Bookhouse), Read•Write•Think, Digital Alphabet Books, LeapFrog Tag Books, Gamequarium (online)
Develop Phonemic Awareness	Students hear, identify and manipulate sounds in words	Educational software (e.g., JumpStart Phonics), Living Books, podcasting, Gamequarium (online), Read•Write•Think
Develop Decoding Skills	Students learn the connections between letter patterns and the sounds they represent	Educational software (e.g., Reader Rabbit Series), Reading Pen, Interactive whiteboard, Gamequarium (online), Read•Write•Think
Introduce Vocabulary	Students are introduced to and learn unfamiliar key words before they read	Educational software (e.g., Clifford the Big Red Dog Series, I Spy), Read•Write•Think, Reading Pen, interactive whiteboard
Activate Prior Knowledge	Students think about what they already know about the topic prior to reading	Multimedia software, word processing, concept mapping software, Web-based video streaming, student response systems (“clickers”)
Make Predictions	Students make predictions about text that will be read	Multimedia software, word processing, Web-based video streaming, student response systems (“clickers”)

The During-Reading Activity Types

The goal of the during-reading activity types is to develop readers who check their understanding as they read, integrating their new understanding with existing knowledge.

Table 2: The During-Reading Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Read Aloud	Students actively listen to an oral reading of a book	Storyline Online, BookFlix, e-books, educational software (e.g., WiggleWorks), podcast, Leap Frog Tag Books
Think Aloud	Students say out loud what they are thinking while reading	Storyline Online, BookFlix, e-books, video creation software
Guided Reading	Students learn how to think about text by reading in small groups, engaging in discussion, and completing a mini-lesson/learning activity	e-books, BookFlix, WiggleWorks
Directed Listening/Thinking Activity (DL-TA)	Students predict and respond to a story while the teacher reads	Storyline Online, BookFlix, e-books, WiggleWorks, podcast, Student response systems (clickers)
Directed Reading/Thinking Activity (DR-TA)	Students make predictions about a story and then read to confirm or reject their predictions	Storyline Online, BookFlix, e-books, WiggleWorks, podcast, student response systems (“clickers”)
Discussion	Students discuss text being read with the teacher, other students or another individual	Blogs, wikis, online discussion groups
Whole Class Literature Study	Students participate in a literature study that includes reading aloud/along, whole-class/small-group discussions, and whole-class mini-lessons	e-books, Storyline Online, BookFlix, WiggleWorks, podcast
Literature Circles	Students choose their own books, form small-groups and meet regularly to read and discuss the books	Storyline Online, BookFlix, e-books, blogs, wikis, online discussion groups, podcast
Reader’s Workshop	Students participate in mini-lessons to teach reading strategies, spend time reading independently, and then meet to share, discuss and reflect	Storyline Online, BookFlix, e-books, blogs, wikis, online discussion groups, podcast
Book Clubs	Students read books, take part in peer-led discussions, and participate in a community sharing session	Storyline Online, BookFlix, e-books, blogs, wikis, online discussion groups, podcast
Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)	Students read silently for a designated period of time (10-30 minutes)	e-books, podcast, Storyline Online, BookFlix,
Independent Reading	Students make their own book choices, set independent reading goals and read for extended period of time	e-books, podcast, Storyline Online, BookFlix,

The Post-Reading Activity Types

The goal of the post-reading activity types is to assess students' interpretation and comprehension of the text that was read.

Table 3: The Post-Reading Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Summarizing	Students summarize or paraphrase the major points of a story after reading it	Timeliner XE, Read•Write•Think, video creation software, podcast, comic creation software, video sharing sites
Retelling	Students tell what they remember about a story	Timeliner XE, drawing software, video creation software, podcast, comic creation software
Sharing	Students share information with others about books they have read or heard	Video creation software, podcast, video sharing sites
Visualizing	Students use images and visual imagery to recall what they remember about a story	Drawing software, word processing, image editor, digital photography, Read•Write•Think, comic creation software, interactive whiteboard
Discussing	Students discuss favorite parts or elements of a story	Blogs, wikis, online discussion groups
Drawing Conclusions	Students use written or visual clues to figure out something that is not directly stated in the reading	Word processing, educational simulation software (e.g., Decisions, Decisions), video creation software, multimedia software, comic creation software, interactive whiteboard
Evaluating	Students form opinions, make judgments, and develop ideas after reading	Read•Write•Think, word processing, multimedia software, student response systems ("clickers")
Quizzing/Testing	Students take a quiz or test about a story or a selection of text they read	Integrated learning system (e.g., Accelerated Reader), online quiz software, student response systems ("clickers")
Creating Projects/Artifacts	Students create a project or artifact as a culminating activity that illustrates what they have learned	comic and/or video creation software, drawing software, multimedia software, iPhoto, podcast, Read•Write•Think, video sharing sites

The Vocabulary Activity Types

The goal of the vocabulary learning activity types is to increase the number of words that are recognized and used by a reader.

Table 4: The “Vocabulary”

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Vocabulary Awareness	Students increase their knowledge of words by building sight vocabulary and understanding phonological and morphological patterns	Read•Write•Think , educational software, drawing software, interactive whiteboard, Reading Pen
Vocabulary Analysis	Students build and sort words to study their patterns	Word processing, educational software, Read•Write•Think, drawing software, interactive whiteboard
Vocabulary Use	Students study how words combine to form sentences	Read•Write•Think, word processing, educational software, interactive whiteboard

The Comprehension Activity Types

The goal of the comprehension activity types is to ascertain a reader’s understanding of a passage of text.

Table 5: The Comprehension Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Cloze Technique	Students insert words that have been omitted as they read to complete and construct meaning from text	Cloze software, online “Mad Libs,” word processing, interactive whiteboard
Semantic Feature Analysis	Students use a grid to explore the similarities and differences among events, people, objects or ideas	Spreadsheet software, word processing (tables), interactive whiteboard
Graphic Organizers/Charts	Students use visual and graphic organizers that illustrate relationships among facts, terms or ideas	Concept mapping software, interactive whiteboard
Cause and Effect	Students identify how an action or event will produce a certain response to the action in the form of another event	e-books, concept mapping software, educational software, interactive whiteboard
Compare and Contrast	Students identify how things are alike and different	e-books, concept mapping software, educational software, Read•Write•Think, interactive whiteboard

Inferences	Students use clues to learn more about the story and make a conclusion or judgment based on that information	e-books, educational software, interactive whiteboard
Story Pyramid	Students summarize a story by building a pyramid of information (e.g., describe main character, setting, state the problem)	e-books, concept mapping software, word processor
Picture Walk	Teacher guides students through text by looking at and discussing the pictures before reading	Multimedia software, iPhoto, interactive whiteboard
SQ3R	Students use a 5-step reading strategy (i.e., survey, question, read, recite, review) to formulate a purpose for reading	e-books, word processor
Reciprocal Teaching	Students and teacher participate in dialogue structured by summarizing, question generating, clarifying and predicting to bring meaning to text	e-books, voice recording, video creation software
Reciprocal Questioning (ReQuest)	Students analyze their comprehension while reading by developing questions to ask the teacher after reading a selection	e-books, voice recording, word processing
Point-of-View	Students identify the author's point of view and purpose	e-books, educational software, digital photography
Question-Answer Relationships (QAR)	Students search for answers based upon the type of question that was asked (i.e., Right there, Think and search, Author and you, On my own)	e-books, online newspapers/magazines
Think-Pair-Share	Students talk about the content they are reading by thinking about a question or prompt, pairing up with a student to discuss and sharing their thinking with rest of class	e-books, online newspapers/magazines, Web sites
Story Map	Students identify and map the basic elements of a story (i.e., setting, characters, problem/conflict, point of view, resolution)	Concept mapping software, Read•Write•Think, interactive whiteboard
3-2-1 Chart	Students summarize and rethink key ideas by listing: 3 things they found out, 2 interesting things, and 1 question they still have	Word processing software, spreadsheet software, concept mapping software

The Fluency Activity Types

The goal of using the fluency activity types is to improve a reader’s speed or rate of reading and his/her ability to read with expression.

Table 6: The “Fluency” Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Model Fluent Reading	Students listen to readers who read words fluently and automatically	Voice recording, podcast, video creation software, video sharing sites, educational software, Storyline Online, BookFlix
Choral Reading	Students read aloud as an entire group in unison	Voice recording, podcast
Paired Reading	Student and a fluent reader read text together	Voice recording, podcast, educational software
Repeated Reading	Student reads the text aloud with a fluent reader, then rereads the text alone	Voice recording, podcast
Reader’s Theater	Students perform an oral reading with an audience present using a script	Voice recording, video recording, podcast
Radio Reading	Student reads aloud a selection of text and then initiates a discussion with an audience by asking specific questions	Voice recording, podcast
Recitation	Students present a spoken performance of a speech or piece of poetry in public	Voice recording, video sharing Web sites
Drama	Students perform, usually by memorization, a play or story for an audience	Video recording, digital storytelling, video sharing sites, podcast
Storytelling	Students tell stories or narratives often by improvisation or embellishment	Digital storytelling, video creation software, voice recording software
Debate	Students hold a structured discussion by debating both sides of an issue/proposition	Video recording, podcast

The Writing Process Activity Types

Good readers are good writers. The writing process activity types include five subcategories of activities that promote the processes involved in learning how to write. Elementary children are typically involved in writing programs like Writer’s Workshop and/or 6+1 Trait Writing to develop their writing skills. The three subcategories that contain activities related to the writing

process include pre-writin, during writing, and post-writing activity types. Two other subcategories included here contain writing conventions and writing genres activity types.

Each subcategory of writing process activity types is presented in a separate table below, naming each activity type, defining it, and suggesting technologies to support its use for learning.

The Pre-Writing Activity Types

The goals of learning that is structured using pre-writing activity types are to prepare students for writing and to activate their prior knowledge before they write.

Table 7: The Pre-Writing Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Brainstorming	Students list as many topics as possible to write about	Word processing, Timeliner XE, Read•Write•Think, interactive whiteboard, concept mapping software
Concept Mapping	Students develop a visual or diagram that illustrates the relationships among concepts	Concept mapping software, Timeliner XE, interactive whiteboard
Storyboarding	Students develop a series of panels that outline the sequence of what pictures will be seen and what audio and/or voice will accompany the pictures	Concept mapping software, Timeliner XE, multimedia software, interactive whiteboard
Visualizing	Students create mental images before they write	Drawing software, iPhoto, Read•Write•Think
Freewriting	Students start writing and just keep going, not worrying about style or mistakes	Word processing, drawing software
Journaling	Students write journal entries to brainstorm topics of personal interest, to note observations and to reflect upon their thinking	Word processing, blogs, wikis
Listing	Students generate a list of topics, phrases, and/or sentences before they begin to write	Word processing, concept mapping software, interactive whiteboard
Outlining	Students use a formal system of planning to think about and organize their writing	Word processing, concept mapping software, Read•Write•Think, interactive whiteboard

The During-Writing Activity Types

The goal of the during-writing activity types is to develop writers who constantly improve their writing by revising, editing, and considering feedback from others.

Table 8: The During Writing Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Drafting/Composing	Students write a draft of a story, putting ideas into sentences and paragraphs	Word processing, SubEthaEdit, Storybook Weaver Deluxe, drawing software, video creation software, multimedia software
Revising	Students improve their writing by adding details, rearranging information, deleting information, and/or replacing information	Word processing, drawing software, video creation software, multimedia software, collaborative word processor
Editing	Students correct mechanics, grammar and spelling	Word processing, drawing software, video creation software, multimedia software, collaborative word processor
Responding	Students offer suggestions to peers for improving content, organization and clarity of writing piece	Word processing, podcast, videoconference, educational software, collaborative word processor
Conferencing	Students meet with teachers and/or peers to discuss and evaluate a piece of writing	Collaborative word processor, podcast, videoconference

The Post-Writing Activity Types

The goal of the post-writing activity types is to provide opportunities for students to share, publish, evaluate and present their final writing pieces to an audience.

Table 9: The Post-Writing Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Sharing	Students orally share their writing with peers/others	Drawing software, multimedia software, podcast, collaborative word processor
Publishing	Students publish their writing for peers/others	Word processing, drawing software, video creation software, multimedia software, podcasting, digital storytelling,, online publishing sites, Read•Write•Think
Evaluating	Students evaluate writing of peers and provide feedback	Word processing, blogs, online discussion groups
Presentation	Students combine textual and visual elements to present their writing for peers/others	Drawing software, multimedia software, digital storytelling

Performance	Students present a dramatic performance of their writing for peers/others	Drawing software, multimedia software, digital storytelling, podcast
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The Writing Conventions Activity Types

The goal of the writing conventions activity types is to develop writers who can enhance the readability of their writing pieces.

Table 10: The Writing Conventions Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Letter/Word Formation	Students write/type lowercase and uppercase letters; Students write/type words (i.e., root, prefix, suffix)	Word processing, drawing software, Read•Write•Think, interactive whiteboard
Writing Sentences/ Paragraphs	Students construct complete sentences and combine sentences to compose a paragraph (topic sentence, supporting details, closing sentence)	Word processing, drawing software, interactive whiteboard
Spelling	Students use correct spelling when writing	Word processing, educational software, Gamequarium (online), interactive whiteboard
Mechanics	Students use correct punctuation and capitalization when writing	Word processing, Gamequarium (online), interactive whiteboard
Grammar	Students use formal rules about language usage including parts of speech when writing	Word processing, Gamequarium (online) Read•Write•Think, interactive whiteboard

The Writing Genres Activity Types

The goal of the writing genres activity types is for students to write across genres, understanding form, purpose and content for each. The activity types are listed in the table below.

Table 11: The Writing Genres

Activity Type	Brief Description	Example Technologies
Descriptive	Students describe people, places, objects, or events using details	Word processing, Read•Write•Think, drawing software, comic creation software, multimedia software
Expository/ Informative	Students give information or convey an idea to another person	Word processing, drawing software, comic creation software, multimedia software
Narrative	Students tell a story from a particular point of view	Word processing, Read•Write•Think, drawing software, comic creation software,
Summarizing	Students analyze information and then state in their own words	Word processing, multimedia software, drawing software, comic creation software,, iPhoto
Persuasive	Students present a case for or against a particular position	Word processing, Read•Write•Think, multimedia software
Technical/Procedural	Students explain instructions or directions for completing a task	Word processing, multimedia software
Poetry	Students express imaginative awareness by using repetition, meter and/or rhyme	Word processing, Read•Write•Think, drawing software, comic creation software, multimedia software
Creative	Students express their thoughts and feelings in a unique way	Word processing, Read•Write•Think, drawing software, comic creation software, video creation software, multimedia software
Transactional	Students write to communicate ideas with each other	Email, blogs, wikis, online discussion groups, Read•Write•Think