

Sadlier School

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES

Literacy and Learning Centers:
Planning Lessons

Dr. Katherine McKnight



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
The Framework	4
Specific Grade-Level Examples for the LLC Model	6
Thinking About Planning	10
Resources	10
About the Author	11

In this Sadlier Professional Development eBook series, we have been exploring why learning centers are so effective for older students. Centers create the opportunity for students to develop literacy skills and content knowledge that are built on the balanced literacy framework. Literacy and Learning Centers (LLC) for the big kids also incorporates the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) framework as well as Differentiated Instruction and Formative Assessment (see eBooks: *Literacy and Learning Centers: Not Just for the Primary Grades*; *Literacy and Learning Centers: Planning for Diverse Students*; and *Literacy and Learning Centers: Making the Most of Assessment and Student Growth* at <http://www.sadlier.com/school/resources/core-literacy-ebooks> for more information).

This eBook focuses on planning at the unit and lesson level. Many teachers have contributed their wisdom and ideas to it. You, the reader, will also benefit from their trial and error learning process, as this framework was developed for real classrooms and students that are like yours.



If you're like me, you probably plan your classes by dividing material into lessons that are based on a weekly calendar: "On Monday we will do _____ and Tuesday is _____." I have discovered that this model is not conducive to the Literacy and Learning Centers model (LLC). Instead, think of each "chunk" of instruction as a cycle that will extend over several days, periods, or blocks. If you have students in a 90-minute block every day, then you may be able to finish a cycle in one day. If you have students for a 45-minute period every day, then a cycle could take several class periods over a number of days. As we prepare to look at a LLC cycle, keep the following in mind.

A Literacy and Learning Centers Cycle

- Consists of a mini lesson, guided practices, and centers
- Is built to develop clearly articulated learning goals and specific content knowledge
- Provides ample practice time
- Provides student choices, as appropriate
- Integrates formative assessment

As we look at the following template, notice that each LLC cycle begins with an articulated learning goal and focus.



LITERACY AND LEARNING CENTER PLANNING TEMPLATE

<p>Topic</p>	<p>The Topic focuses on the specific skills to be taught in the LLC Cycle. Some examples might include: Narrative Text, Systems of Government, Life Cycles, or Basic Equations.</p>
<p>Essential Question</p>	<p>Essential Questions are BIG questions that require a student to explore, reflect, and are not easily answered. Some examples might include: Why are some stories worth telling more than others? Why do human beings create governments?</p>
<p>Teacher Led Mini Lesson or Whole Group Instruction</p>	<p>The Mini Lesson is designed to introduce a particular skill or important content information. Mini Lessons should be 10–18 minutes long (depending on the grade level of the students) and the teacher should be modeling a skill for the students.</p>
<p>Pairs/Small Group In small groups</p>	<p>In Small Groups or Pairs, the students practice the skill that was introduced in the Mini Lesson.</p>
<p>Centers Teacher-Led Center Vocabulary Writing Reading Together</p>	<p>Centers provide students with the opportunity to practice their skills in clearly focused articulated activities at each of the centers. The centers also provide students with small group instruction with their teacher. The teacher-led center facilitates formative assessment, and tiered interventions. (see eBook Vol. 2, <i>Literacy and Learning Centers: Planning for Diverse Students</i>, for more specific information and descriptions for each center.</p>

(Additional Centers can include grammar, literary devices, viewing, speaking and listening)

SPECIFIC GRADE-LEVEL EXAMPLES FOR THE LLC MODEL

Now that we have looked at the template, I want to remind you of a few things. As discussed in eBook Vol. 2, *Literacy and Learning Centers: Planning for Diverse Students*, this model is flexible. Although there are recommendations for the different centers, it is up to the teacher to determine the activities for each center. Teachers also have the flexibility to duplicate a center. For example, if the students have significant reading to complete, you can create a LLC cycle in which two Reading Together centers are included. The following is an example from JoAnn Maddox, a Grade 6 teacher, in Anderson, IN.



LITERACY AND LEARNING CENTER CYCLE

JoAnn Maddox, Anderson, IN (6th grade)

Sample Lesson Plan 1

Topic: Analyzing Word Choice

Essential Question: How do words impact my personal stories and authors' texts?

Teacher-Led Mini Lesson or Whole Group Instruction

"Analyzing Word Choice" from *Progress English Language Arts*, Grade 6, pages. 116–121

Paired/Small Group

Finish reading the passage "My Trip to China", and Comprehension Check pp. 121–122 (The students can be assigned this reading online)

Centers:

Teacher Led Center

The teacher will check the students' responses for the Comprehension Check on pages 121–122 and discuss.



SPECIFIC GRADE-LEVEL EXAMPLES FOR THE LLC MODEL

Read Together

Students will analyze word choice in their “Just Right” book. (Remember the “Just Right” book is one that the students have selected to read.)

Vocabulary Activity

The students will select words that they do not recognize or understand from their “Just Right” book and complete the following organizer.

Word and Page Number	Sentence in which the Word Appears	Word Meaning and Examples

Writer’s Craft

How do words impact messages? The students will respond to this prompt by:

- Stating the claim, “Words impact message by ...”
- Providing specific evidence from the Progress selection, “My Trip to China” and from the student’s “Just Right” book.

Additional practice: *Grammar for Writing*®, Grade 6, Unit 2 Exercises 1 and 2 pages 31–33.



SPECIFIC GRADE-LEVEL EXAMPLES FOR THE LLC MODEL

Here is another version of JoAnn Maddox’s LLC cycle, in a more detailed format.

LITERACY AND LEARNING CENTER CYCLE

JoAnn Maddox, Anderson, IN (6th grade)

Sample Lesson Plan 2

Topic: Analyzing Word Choice

Essential Question: How do words impact my personal stories and authors’ texts?

Mini-Lesson/Whole Group Instruction	
Learning Goal	Closely examine and determine how word choice impacts meaning in a text
Activity	Guided lesson with the teacher
Material	“Analyzing Word Choice” from <i>Progress English Language Arts</i> , Unit 5, pages 116–121
Small Group Work	
Learning Goal	Closely examine and determine how word choice impacts meaning in a text
Activity	Finish reading the passage “My Trip to China” and complete Comprehension Check
Material	<i>Progress English Language Arts</i> , Grade 6, pages 121–122 (The students can be assigned this reading online)
Centers	
Teacher-Led	
Skill	Understanding Word Choice
Review	Review of mini-lesson & small group work (re-teaching or intervention)
Activity	Reading Passage & Comprehension Check
Material	<i>Progress English Language Arts</i> , Unit 5 pages 121–122

SPECIFIC GRADE-LEVEL EXAMPLES FOR THE LLC MODEL

Writer's Craft	
Skill	Figurative Language and Word Choice
Activity	Read Guided Instruction twice, then complete Guided & Independent Practice
Material	<i>Progress English Language Arts, Grade 6, Unit 6, page 147</i>
Additional Material	<i>Grammar for Writing, Grade 6, Unit 2, Exercises 1 and 2, pages 31-33</i>
Vocabulary	
Skill	Word Choice, Unknown Words, and Confusing Words
Activity	The students will select words that they do not recognize or understand from their "Just Right" book and complete a graphic organizer.
Material	"Just Right" books and graphic organizer
Reading Together	
Activity	Students read together in their "Just Right" books
Material	"Just Right" books



Thinking About Planning

Teachers often tell me that the substantial planning involved in the LLC model, is a cause for concern. Without a doubt, this is true. However, I would like to point out that whenever we receive a new teaching assignment or curriculum, more planning is always necessary. I recommend that as you integrate and develop the LLC model in your classroom you should begin to slowly and gradually build towards mastery of the model. It takes time to transform a classroom.



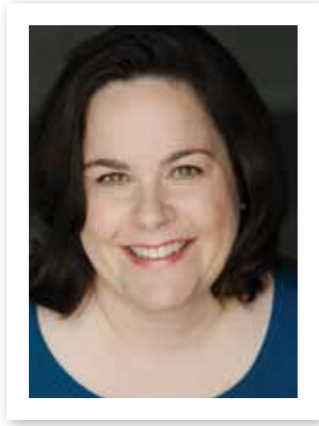
RESOURCES

Literacy and Learning Centers: Not Just for the Primary Grades eBook, by Dr. Katherine McKnight, <http://go.sadlier.com/school/literacy-learning-ebook>

Literacy and Learning Centers: Planning for Diverse Students eBook, by Dr. Katherine McKnight, <http://go.sadlier.com/school/literacy-learning-diverse-student-ebook>

Literacy and Learning Centers: Making the Most of Assessments and Student Growth eBook, by Dr. Katherine McKnight, <http://go.sadlier.com/school/literacy-learning-diverse-student-ebook>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Katherine McKnight currently serves as a Distinguished Professor of Research at National Louis University. She is an author, speaker, consultant, and passionate literacy advocate—but most of all, she’s a teacher.

Dr. McKnight travels worldwide as a professional development consultant and is a speaker in the fields of elementary & adolescent literacy, inclusive classrooms, state standards, interdisciplinary literacy, and integrating technology in the 21st century classroom. She is completely committed to the development, sharing, and promotion of strategies that develop student literacy. That’s why she spends many days each year in classrooms, working with teachers to help students grow into productive, creative adults.

Because Dr. McKnight’s work takes her into all kinds of schools (public, private, parochial; rural, urban, and suburban), she’s able to complement her vast expertise with relevant classroom experience.

Dr. McKnight regularly publishes in professional journals and is the author of many award-winning, professional books.

You might also be interested in:

Progress English Language Arts, Grades K–8

[CLICK HERE](#)

Vocabulary Workshop, Grades 1–5

[CLICK HERE](#)

Vocabulary Workshop, Grades 6–12+

[CLICK HERE](#)

Grammar Workshop, Grades 3–5

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Grammar for Writing, Grades 6–12

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