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The Literacy Triangle: 50+ High-Impact Strategies to Integrate Reading, Discussing, and Writing in K–8 Classrooms

By LeAnn Nickelsen and Melissa Dickson

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *The Literacy Triangle: 50+ High-Impact Strategies to Integrate Reading, Discussing, and Writing in K–8 Classrooms* by LeAnn Nickelsen and Melissa Dickson. *The Literacy Triangle* provides a framework for improving student literacy and developing effective instruction for successful text journeys.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. Individuals, small groups, or an entire team can use it to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and provides strategies for planning effective literacy lessons.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to increase students' literacy skills.

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Chapter 1

Teaching Literacy Effectively

1. Why is literacy an essential ability for active and successful global citizens?
2. What are the four steps of the instructional cha-chas cycle? Define each in your own words.
3. What are the three key elements of effective literacy instruction? How can integrating all three of these elements before, during, and after reading improve students' comprehension and literacy growth?
4. Consider the differences between the simple view of reading from 1986, balanced literacy in the 1990s, the National Reading Panel's "big five" from 2000, the Scarborough reading rope, reinterpreted balanced literacy from 2012, and structured literacy from 2015. How do the authors' interpretation of effective literacy instruction build off and expand on these earlier ideologies?

Chapter 2

Making the Right Choices for Reading, Discussing, and Writing

1. Consider table 2.1. Have you utilized similar tools to determine student reading abilities and select texts? Recount a time you worked with your students on a frustration-level text and how you helped them improve their comprehension.
2. What are Richard Allington and Rachel Gabriel’s six common factors of successful reading instruction? Why is independent reading so vital to students’ improved fluency?
3. Consider table 2.3. Which of the various reading methods have you employed in your classroom? Name a particularly notable experience with one of these methods in your classroom for each of the following: large groups, small groups, and individuals.
4. List the three types of writing for deepening student comprehension and explain their uses in your own words.

Chapter 3

Using the Literacy Triangle to Improve Literacy Mindsets

1. Define a literacy mindset in your own words.
2. How do educators' implicit biases limit what students can accomplish? What are ways educators can combat their biases to best assist students' literacy development?
3. Explain the difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. List three strategies for helping your students adopt a growth mindset.
4. Consider the questions concerning your personal growth mindset on pages 48 and 49. In what ways does your mindset affect your students' mindsets?

Chapter 4

Embarking on a Successful Text Journey—Before Reading

1. What are Robert Marzano’s six steps for teaching vocabulary?
2. Consider the strategies for pre-exposing and priming the brain listed on pages 61 through 87. Choose one strategy and describe an instance you could use it in your classroom.
3. When activating prior knowledge, what is your goal, and how can you ascertain whether you have successfully prepared your students before diving into the text itself?
4. Why is it so important for students to begin reading new material with a predetermined purpose?

Chapter 5

Staying Focused, but Flexible, on the Text Journey—During Reading

1. What is comprehension? Define it in your own words.
2. What is a thinking job, and how does it improve readers' absorption of reading materials?
Why does visible thinking so impact student metacognition?
3. Consider Kelly Gallagher's compiled reasons for impeded student comprehension on page 123. Choose one activity from this chapter and discuss how it can improve your students' self-monitoring toolkit.
4. Why are discussions a vital aspect of reading comprehension? Describe one time you successfully led a rich, active discussion in your classroom.

Chapter 6

Wrapping Up a Successful Text Journey With Discussion and Writing—After Reading

1. What are the six steps for the direct instruction of a skill? Why is being as explicit as possible so important when teaching a minilesson?
2. Consider the four forms of discussion that can occur in the classroom and describe, in your own words, the advantages of each type.
3. Why is writing such an effective memory tool? What are three ways you can motivate your students to write?
4. Describe four ways to incorporate close reading skills into your classroom. What are ways you can better craft questions to guide and encourage your students' reading?

Chapter 7

Celebrating the Journey—Bringing It All Together

1. List the five steps for planning literacy lessons with the literacy triangle and describe them in your own words.
2. Consider figure 7.4 on pages 316 and 317. What is the ultimate goal for your students' reading journeys?
3. What is a SMARTER goal? Utilize the reproducible “Steps to Designing a SMARTER Goal” to design a SMARTER goal for your school's literacy efforts.
4. Building your ability to instruct literacy more effectively is a fundamental aspect of following through on the literacy triangle. What would you recommend a school or district take as its first step on a new literacy journey?