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# Supporting Early Literacy and Mathematics Education

by Brandy Archer



The Michigan Department of Education is intentionally focused on supporting early literacy and mathematics instruction. In an effort to combine the messages of implementing standards, integrating content, and focusing on student learning, MDE has spent the last year creating and promoting resources for specific instructional practices for early education, birth through third grade.

In alignment with MDE's School Improvement Framework 2.0<sup>1</sup>, the early literacy and mathematics instructional practices support classroom instruction that is both aligned with standards and designed to be student-centered in order to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom. In addition, the practices support relevance and rigor for student learning in ways that provide opportunities for students to connect ideas and transfer knowledge across content areas. Finally, the practices encourage student engagement in their own learning processes.

To support instruction, the following instructional practices were specifically selected because they are easy to implement as an enhancement to the current curriculum or programs used in the classroom. They are aligned to Michigan Standards and can be used across content areas and throughout the school day. Furthermore, each practice is supported by research. More information regarding the background of these practices can be found here<sup>1</sup>.

MDE resources are now available online to support the following early literacy practices:

## Interactive writing with focus on foundational skill standards

Interactive writing is a practice that combines reading and writing centered on student input and interest. In support of this practice, MDE offers these resources:



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- A video presentation by Kristine Schutz, from the University of Michigan Teaching Works, discussing the research to support this practice
- A video of Kristine leading a small group of students in an interactive writing activity

## Informational text to build literacy and content knowledge

Incorporating informational text is an intentional practice to build student literacy and content knowledge. Additionally, this practice provides opportunities to integrate content standards and pique student interest through real-world connections. To provide guidance on the importance of informational texts and ideas about how to incorporate more of them into instruction, MDE has these resources:

- A video presentation of Nell Duke, from the University of Michigan, describing the

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753\\_38959---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753_38959---,00.html)

research base and attention to Michigan Standards for the practice of increasing the use of informational texts in the classroom

- A video of Nell interviewing a second grade teacher on multiple ways to include informational text across content areas during the school day and year
- A webinar recording featuring Nell Duke discussing the topic of using informational text to intentionally build literacy and content knowledge
- A webinar recording that features Megan Schrauben, from the Michigan Department of Education, addressing integration of content learning and literacy instruction in the early grades leverage student interest

### Read aloud with attention to vocabulary

Read aloud is an ideal practice to increase student access to complex text. In addition, the practice allows for focused attention on vocabulary words. To support this practice, MDE offers the following:

- A video presentation by Tanya Wright, from Michigan State University, on the research to support this practice
- A video of Tanya teaching vocabulary while reading aloud to Kindergarten students
- A webinar recording featuring Tanya Wright discussing the topic of reading aloud with attention to vocabulary words

Along with these specific literacy resources, MDE has provided guidance for early math instruction as well. Instruction in early mathematics should ensure that appropriate learning progressions are addressed for number and operations, geometry, patterns, and data analysis. Instruction should also promote language-rich classrooms that incorporate play-based instruction to allow for multiple representations of ideas, processes, and solutions. Finally, similar to integrated literacy instruction, mathematics instruction should show up across content areas in ways that are applicable

to students' daily lives and that build on existing knowledge.

MDE's early literacy and mathematics webinar series highlights great examples of intentionally building play into the early mathematics classroom. Juanita Copley, formerly from the University of Houston, and Amy Parks, from Michigan State University, offer great examples of play in math instruction.

All of these resources can be found on MDE's Early Literacy and Mathematics webpage: <http://www.tinyurl.com/mde-elmi>

### Author Biography

**Brandy Archer** is the Content Area Literacy Consultant for the Curriculum and Instruction unit in the Office of Education and Improvement and Innovation at the Michigan Department of Education. Brandy's current work includes Intentional Instructional Practice training for teachers in the African American Young Men of Promise initiative and supporting MDE's early literacy and mathematics initiative. You can contact Brandy at: [archerb2@michigan.gov](mailto:archerb2@michigan.gov)

