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Organizing the Early Literacy Classroom: How to Plan for Success and Reach Your Goals

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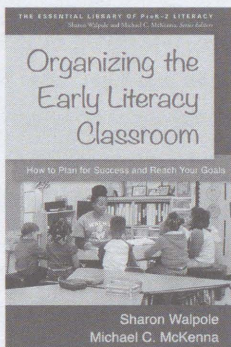
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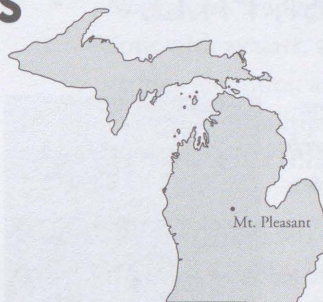
by Meghan K. Block, Ph.D.

Walpole, S., & McKenna, M. C. (2016). *Organizing the early literacy classroom: How to plan for success and reach your goals*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press. ISBN 9781462526529



The relationship between early literacy development and later academic achievement is strong; therefore, establishing an effective learning environment to support early literacy is critical. This book provides a detailed overview of important factors to consider and materials to include when organizing for literacy instruction in the early childhood classroom. The 11 chapters describe topics such as curriculum, assessment, space, and materials. Each chapter begins with three guiding questions that the authors address throughout the chapter through the discussion of pertinent research, explicit examples, and sometimes by using short vignettes from actual classrooms. For example, in the first chapter, readers learn about the importance of setting goals for both teaching and learning. After providing a research base for goal-setting and recommendations for how to set goals, the chapter includes a vignette describing one teacher's experience of setting goals based on her observations of her first-graders' writing performances. Not only do readers learn the teacher's process of goal setting, they also acquire specific resources and websites that might be useful as they begin to set teaching and learning goals in their own classrooms.

Though the book is useful for all early literacy teachers as they refine their craft, it is well suited for educators who are early in their careers and teacher candidates who are preparing for careers in early childhood classrooms. The language of the book is accessible to novices and the explanations of all concepts are thorough. Readers learn the fundamentals of establishing a literacy



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classroom such as how to build a professional library, how to connect assessments to report cards, and how to plan and manage time. The book best supports early-career teachers because it includes basic fundamentals as well as provides many practical ideas to use as they begin to plan their classrooms and organize their early literacy instruction.

The authors note that this book is the “cornerstone volume” of an entire library of books related to early literacy. In fact, in the book, the authors lead readers through a survey to help identify areas of early literacy for which readers might seek more information. Based on the readers' results, the authors include a table of information that identifies other books in the series that would be useful to further develop understanding. As such, this book provides a broad overview of establishing an effective early literacy classroom and the remaining books address more specific topics related to early literacy instruction (e.g., word recognition and spelling, vocabulary, fluency).

In reading this book, teachers gain an understanding of foundational considerations for setting up their early literacy classroom in order to establish an environment that effectively supports young children's literacy development.

Author Biography

Dr. Meghan K. Block is an Assistant Professor of Elementary Literacy in the Teacher Education and Professional Development Department at Central Michigan University. Her teaching and research interests focus on early literacy development and instruction. She can be reached at block1m@cmich.edu.