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Dear Teaching Colleagues and Literacy Champions,

As another school year draws to a close, we want to express our appreciation for teachers that are making literacy an important part of their instruction, realizing the power it holds in transforming students' lives and our communities' futures. We stand with educators who express and advocate literacy being taught with scientifically based practices that address both language comprehension and word recognition strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope and the Simple View of Reading Model. Putting an overemphasis on one strand over the other limits the power we have as teachers to support our students in developing literate life-long practices and habits.

In Issue 2 of our 52nd volume of the Indiana Literacy Journal, we once again bring you practical applications of research to inform and refine your literacy instructional practices. Jennifer Altieri shows us how print we see in our classroom environments can be leveraged to teach students the purpose of print and support their literacy growth in reading and writing. We hope you will take advantage of her step-by-step routine to complete a scan of the print in your classrooms this past year and reflect on how you can use it more effectively in the coming school year.

Teachers who want to support students in using literacy to become change agents in their classroom, school, and communities will find Melinda Langeberg's article on multimedia text sets that can be used in social justice curriculums inspiring. This resource provides teachers with lists of texts in a variety of genres and modes that can support students in respecting themselves and others, raising awareness of social justice issues, and taking action to make a difference. The resources span many content areas and grade levels, making it a valuable resource for all K-12 teachers.

Finally, we are again pleased to present guest column writers for this edition. These short columns highlight topics that play an important role in literacy teaching and learning. Haiyan Li, a lecturer at Purdue's Language and Cultural Exchange (PLaCE) examines Indiana's new reading retention bill that addresses English Language Learners. Haiyan Li outlines some flaws in the bill before discussing specific ways to improve the bill to support these students that are often left out of the conversation. The second column, from Darolyn Jones, tackles the age-old writing prompt and how to not only improve crafting better writing prompts for your students but also how to get better writing from your students. These columns are not to be missed!

We hope this summer provides you with many opportunities to rest and rejuvenate for a literate-rich school year ahead. Thank you for being a supporter of the Indiana State Literacy Association and literacy in Indiana!

Your editors,

Benjamin Boche and Sharon Pratt

## **Making the Most of the Print Students See in the Early Childhood Classroom**

Jennifer L. Altieri  
*Coastal Carolina University*

### **Abstract**

This article reinforces the power of using displayed print in the classroom environment to develop literacy skills. It discusses the type of print to be examined in the early childhood classroom, how to complete a room scan, and four key considerations for each type of print. These considerations include purpose for the print, origination of the print, student representation, and engagement with the print. The article emphasizes that not all print is of equal value and that a regular reflection on the print and modifications made based on that reflection is key to making the most of the literacy-rich environment. With minimal time required to complete a room scan and reflection, the print in the classroom environment can serve as a valuable tool for developing literacy knowledge with early childhood students.

As teachers seek to develop students' literacy skills, thoughts often focus on identifying strategies, activities, and texts that can enhance learning. However, it is important to remember that the classroom environment needs to also be taken into consideration (Nyabando & Evanshen, 2022; Sunday, 2020). It isn't unusual to walk through an early childhood classroom and see a great deal of print. This print may include sheets of paper listing hand washing steps, charts graphing students' favorite colors, posters of famous people, and student-created work. When conversations and instructional activities are tied to it, this print can serve a valuable purpose in developing literacy skills (Stone et al., 2018).

Research continues to strongly support the importance of a literacy-rich environment on literacy gains (e.g. Axelrod et al., 2015; Reutzell, 2015). In fact, the value of a literacy-rich classroom is a point that few if any will debate, and displayed print plays an important part in the literacy rich classroom. (e.g. Stone et al., 2018).

Having print prominently displayed in the classroom environment can also increase second language learners' exposure to academic language. Students already enter the classroom with a wide variation regarding exposure to academic language, but it is evident that English Language Learners have an even larger range (Barnes et al., 2016). Exposure to print can help take students from where they are currently in their language development and strengthen their literacy knowledge (Dydia et al., 2018).

While a literacy-rich early childhood classroom filled with visible print is important for all children regardless of socioeconomic level, Nell Duke's (2000) seminal study showed that often lower socio-economic schools have less informational print displayed in the environment than higher socio-economic schools. The early childhood classrooms she examined were found to vary in the quantity of print, the kinds of print and how it was used with children. This is especially important because ethnic minorities are more likely to come from lower economic backgrounds than Whites. In fact, in 2021, 19.5% of Black people living in the United States came from low socio-economic homes versus 8% of white people (Statista Research Department, 2022).

However, not all print is equally valuable, and it is important to periodically reexamine the print on display and its use in the classroom to ensure it is best meeting the needs of the classroom participants. The purpose of this article is to encourage educators to look at the classroom environment and determine the value of the print students view and what modifications can be made to the print on display to maximize literacy growth. After learning the type of print that should be examined, four key considerations for the print will be discussed.

**Taking a Classroom Scan**

The first step to examining classroom print is to take a scan of the environment to capture everything children view in the physical classroom. Consider taking a few snapshots on a cell phone or iPad of the various parts of the classroom environment in order to document all the print that is displayed. Then jot down each example of print displayed in the classroom. Focus attention on the print that is primarily displayed for the students in the class. Table 1 below is a chart that has been modified from its original form and can help teachers organize the information (Altieri, 2023/2024).

**Table 1**  
*Room Scan Form for Print Displayed in the Early Childhood Classroom*

Print on Display	Origination	Purpose	Representation of All Students	Engagement

Some types of print don't need to be included. Notes directed to adults in the classroom such as teachers and paraprofessionals do not have to be included. Also, semi-permanent print, such as writing on a whiteboard, which will typically be erased at the end of the day, doesn't

need to be listed. Once the scan is done and a list of visible print is made, it is time to reflect on some key considerations for each example of print on display in the classroom environment.

### **Key Considerations**

Think about the following considerations for each type of print that is visible:

#### **Purpose of Print**

First, there should always be a reason behind print that is in the classroom environment. If the print isn't meaningful to the teacher, the teacher and students will not engage with it (Gerde et al., 2016). The purpose for the print may be to develop letter knowledge or sight word knowledge through classroom rules, to enhance content knowledge of animals by creating guidelines for class pets or to introduce the months of the year or seasons through a class calendar. Student work is also often on display to reinforce content learning whether that be about plants or their neighborhood. There are many purposes for print to be on display, and these are just a few examples.

It may be that an example of displayed print initially served a purpose but that now the print needs modification to retain its value, or perhaps the print needs removed so that other print can replace it. Think about the purpose that the print on display currently serves and ensure that students are benefitting from it. If it is difficult to articulate the purpose, it may be time to modify the existing print or replace it with newer print.

#### **Origination of Text**

Where did the text originate? Did students create the text or was it brought into the classroom? Perhaps classroom print includes a glossy poster displaying various occupations or a timeline the students created to show their class day. While print brought into the classroom is valuable, print that students create often is more meaningful to students (Maloch et al., 2004). Not only do students gain from the actual learning reinforced with its creation and the discussion or collaboration with peers that may have been part of the process, but there is a sense of pride in the fact that they played a part in the creation of the final product (Maloch et al., 2004).

We want to ensure that student-created print is visible in the class. Consider whether each type of print on display is student-created, brought into the classroom, or developed by the teacher with minimal feedback from the students. If the majority of print on display was brought into the classroom, think about how the various print present can be extended to connect with student-created print. For example, if a calendar is present in the classroom, perhaps students can draw or write according to their capabilities or preferences about their favorite month on the calendar, and this writing can be displayed. If there are content specific terms with definitions, consider having students create a visual to help them remember the various terms. Creating these connections to student-created print can strengthen the literacy environment by helping students to understand the various purposes of print (Dowhower & Beagle, 1998).

#### **Student Representation**

It is important that all students in the classroom participate in activities and be represented in the print visible in the classroom. This ensures that all students' voices are seen and heard. By modifying groupings in class and the type of scaffolding needed, teachers can

ensure that every student feels valued and plays a role in creating the print (Johnson & Busby 2015).

Check print that is visible to students. Are all students represented? Often some students may leave the classroom for special classes or may not be present when some assignments are completed. In addition, it may be that certain students have their work displayed much more than their peers on the classroom walls. It is important to monitor the print on display and the representation of students so that the room is a welcoming place for all.

Research clearly indicates that students' academic performance and sense of belonging will be influenced by visuals in the classroom (Graham et al., 2020). Through student-created work, students can ensure they see themselves in the classroom environment.

### Engagement with Print

While the physical environment is important, also consider how students engage with the print on display. The findings from a recent study by Lee et al. (2021) which looked at 21 classrooms (grades 1-3) emphasize that it is important not to focus solely on the physical environment but instead to take into consideration the relationship of the environment with those in the classroom and instruction. If students are not engaging with the print, then changes need to be made to the print or the instruction. A study conducted with very young learners found that 95% of the print in the environment was not referenced as part of instruction (Gerde et al., 2015). Having print on display in the environment without meaningful student engagement with it, greatly limits the text's value and potential (Lee et al., 2021).

Think about the print in the classroom. How recently have students had the opportunity to actively engage with the print? Can instruction be modified to increase the learning potential of the print? Finally, if students walk past the print without really seeing it, then they really aren't benefiting from it being on display. The active interaction and engagement must be visible and a vital part of the classroom. Drawing students' attention to the print as part of classroom activities can ensure that the print is reinforcing their learning. If there is minimal engagement, and it is difficult to modify instructions to encourage interaction, replace the print.

### A Look in One Classroom

A third-grade teacher completed a room scan of the print in her classroom and wrote the information shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Third Grade Teacher's Completed Room Scan*

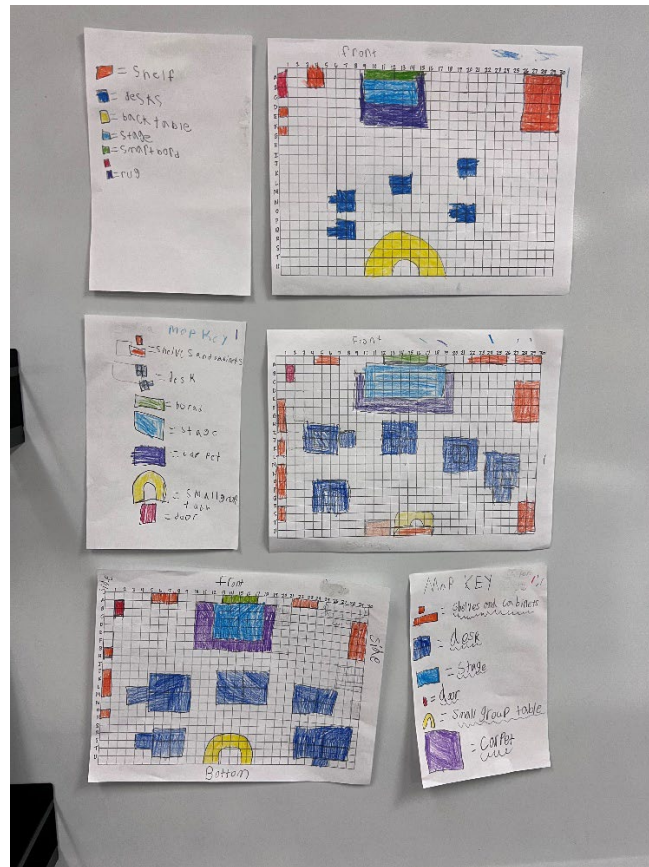
Print on Display	Origination	Purpose	Representation of All Students	Engagement
Maps of Classroom Using Alphanumeric Grid	Local	Learn alphanumeric Grid	Yes	Partners make up questions about maps
Picture Word/Definition	Local	Academic Vocabulary	Yes	Review at beginning and end of each

Social Studies Cards				social studies lesson
World Map	Imported	Mapping Skills	Yes	Use to initially tie into mapping
Math Vocabulary	Imported	Develop Math Vocabulary	Yes	Use in differentiated math time
Word Parts Poster	Local	Decode Unfamiliar Word	No	Students reference for reading and writing
Genre Posters	Imported	Reinforce the Various Genres	Yes	Students refer to during lessons involving reading and writing.

As shown in Table 2, the teacher has both local and imported print on display in her classroom that ties to a variety of content areas. Science and social studies are alternated at the grade level she teaches so that each subject is taught for four-week time periods. At the time the form was completed, the students were studying social studies.

While this teacher has a purchased map of the world and genre posters in the classroom, she also has local text comprised of some student-created classroom maps and sheets of paper with math vocabulary. Unlike the picture/word/definition social studies cards and word parts her students created and put on the wall, the math vocabulary terms and definitions that were placed in the classroom were entirely teacher selected, and students didn't have input into the terms selected and definitions created. Therefore, the social studies cards and the word part posters were labeled as local text while the math vocabulary she labeled as imported.

As the teacher and I discussed the results of her room scan, she talked about the maps students made using alphanumeric grids (Figure 1). The students created a map of the classroom and used the alphanumeric grid to locate objects on the map. This was the beginning of the social studies unit she teaches that develops map skills and the Earth's features. She stated that it is a precursor to learning latitude, longitude, and coordinates.

**Figure 1***Student-Created Classroom Print: Classroom Maps*

Knowing this teacher is currently planning ideas for the next social studies unit, I asked her about the unit and what changes she might make regarding the print she has on display. She mentioned that moving forward into the next social studies unit, students will demonstrate an understanding of varied human, cultural, and economic characteristics across earth's surface. She felt she could use the imported print (world map) to encourage multilingual learners and those who have experiences with various places to share their knowledge. Doing that will incorporate various perspectives into her lessons. While she felt the student-made maps of the classroom were an excellent way of teaching how to understand an alphanumeric grid, she expressed a desire to expand on that and create a more personalized experience so that all maps won't be identical. She is considering having the students create a map of a space that is familiar or important to them. Through the completion of this chart, the teacher was able to reflect on the displayed print and create plans to improve her use of classroom print in the future.

### **Moving Forward**

While print has been visible in early childhood classrooms for years, not all print is equally valuable. It is also important to keep in mind that the quantity of print in an environment is not the best indicator of the value the print serves in the classroom (Alsalihi, 2020). After examining 245 classrooms, Dynia et al. (2016) found the teacher child interactions with the print

in the environment cannot be ignored. As they clearly state, presence and use are not the same thing. Therefore, it is important to complete room scans to examine print in the classroom and ensure that it is quality print with which the students are engaging.

Depending on the early childhood classroom, room scans might be done monthly or quarterly. That time frame ensures that print is regularly being reexamined for its value. Although all print won't be removed at the end of each quarter, modifications can be made to the print already present to increase its value as a learning tool. While an informal print assessment can be ongoing throughout the year, make an easy to remember plan to reassess all print in the classroom at regular intervals.

Stone et al. (2018) found that intentional planning, strategic arrangement of the classroom and careful selection of materials will ensure that the literacy-rich environment benefits all students including those with disabilities. However, it should be noted that those with disabilities are often presented in a negative way or underrepresented in materials within the curriculum, so it is imperative that print in the classroom is reviewed for representation (Favazza et al., 2016; Price et al., 2016).

Reflecting on the purpose, origination, student representation, and engagement level, as well as regularly making modifications to existing print ensures that print continues to be a valuable part of the early childhood classroom. When thinking about the literacy development of young learners, the power of the print in the classroom environment cannot be ignored.

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#### **Author Information**

Jennifer is a professor of literacy education and serves as the coordinator of the M. Ed. in Language, Literacy, and Culture at Coastal Carolina University. Her interest is the development of disciplinary literacy skills through elementary and middle school grades. She has written many articles on the topic and been an invited speaker at conferences. Jennifer is the sole author of three textbooks published by the International Literacy Association related to making content connections and *Reading Science: Practical Strategies for Integrating Instruction* published by Heinemann.

## **Expanding Social Justice Curriculum: A Collection of Multimedia Text Sets for Elementary Teachers**

Melinda E. Langeberg  
*Viterbo University*

### **Abstract**

This article provides elementary teachers with multimedia text set resources paired with Picower's (2012) established social justice elementary curriculum: *Six Essential Elements of Social Justice Teaching*. Such a union builds student's background knowledge, starts discussions, and spurs writing. Selected resources align with Lexile scores and social justice elements. Materials were sorted into categories such as children's books, chapter books, artwork, or websites. This article includes practical and accessible resources that save teachers time and support social justice teaching goals.

A common myth about children is that they do not recognize racial differences. This colorblind myth posits that children are not developmentally able to grasp complex ideas (Kimura, 2022). This illusion is accepted even though multiple researchers assert that even infants can sort and organize the world around them. This myth is a well-used argument against utilizing elementary school anti-biased curricula (Kimura et al., 2022; Marks et al., 2015; Sugden & Marquis, 2017). However, young children need instruction in the language of race and the ability to process inequalities and resist normalizing oppressive systems (Kimura et al., 2022). Elementary anti-bias or social justice curricula provide these lessons. Appropriate curriculum can help children organize their understanding of the world and “enable students to sort through the minutia of divisive cultural rhetoric that affects so much of their modern lives (Thomas, 2020, p. 84). Social justice teaching helps students unpack their world.

### **Teachers and Social Justice Curriculum**

Social justice instruction labors to undo the social phenomenon where some community groups are more valued than others (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014, p. 2). This type of instruction is fraught with unease. As Wilson et al. (2019) and Odebiyi (2023) asserted, teachers may be uncomfortable or unable to include anti bias teaching in their daily lesson plans because there is too little time to teach it or to locate appropriate materials. First, mandated learning outcomes hamstring teachers from including additional curriculum and discussing social justice issues in the classroom can create a politically divisive environment (Kelly et al., 2004; Meckler & Natanson, 2022). Some teachers even report fearing for their physical well-being; “I would be lying, one confessed, if I told you every day I leave school, I don't walk out to my car and wonder if someone's going to be out there” (Meckler & Natanson, 2022; Kelly et al., 2004). Lastly, teachers worry about termination, as Meckler and Natason (2022) described. Researchers noted that teachers are afraid because of educational gag orders. Such directives allow students, parents, or even school employees to file complaints against those who violate the laws regarding presumed critical race theory instruction (Watson, 2023; Wong, 2022). Yet, despite this turmoil, teachers still fight for social justice.

Even if teachers found classroom time, the most dedicated social justice-minded educator might still struggle locating materials. Available social justice minded resources, teachers report,

are frequently regulated to the textbook sidebars or are too simplified (Kelly et al., 2004). Picower (2012) echoed this sentiment and reported that teachers often feel inundated by multiple tasks, such as finding appropriate SJ resources. Picower (2012) noted that teachers are confused; they do not know how or where to start; teachers need help organizing a framework and locating resources to guide their SJ teaching.

### The Picower's Framework

In response, Picower (2012) developed a structure that helps SJ educators ease the burden of planning. This outline described six social justice elements in a scripted order. Each element provides a rationale coupled with suggested classroom activities. For example, element one, *Self-Love, and Knowledge*, helps students unpack who they are. The second element, *Respect for Others*, assists students in deconstructing negative racial beliefs (p. 3) Every element description ends with suggested classroom activities like writing poetry, developing self-portraits, or completing family interviews. Each essential element is displayed in Table 1. Where this framework ends, my work begins.

**Table 1**

Picower's Essential Elements of Social Justice Curriculum

Element	Description
1. Self-Love	Students explore identity and the histories associated with identity.
2. Respect for Others	Students share their culture and start to break down stereotypes through listening.
3. Issues of Social Injustices	Students explore how diverse populations experience oppression.
4. Social Movements and Social Change	Students share examples of how icons and everyday people create positive change.
5. Awareness Raising	Students teach others about social justice issues.
6. Social Action	Students take action to create their own positive change.

### Research Purpose

I expand this framework by developing a multimedia text set for the six elements. Text collections such as this include materials that introduce diverse and underrepresented voices and points of view that connect topics and “build a metaphorical bridge” to the classroom curriculum (Cappiello & Dawes, 2023; Opatz et al., 2022 p. 521). Others noted that text sets are “collections of resources from different genres, media, and levels of reading difficulty that supports learning using a wide range of experiences and interests” (Egawa, n.d.; Tussey & Haas, 2020). Text sets add texture to the curriculum by building voice and perspective and support teaching difficult or complex ideas (Tschida, & Buchanan, 2015). Pairing each component with a multimedia text set supports teachers because they provide much-needed resources and are easily incorporated into daily lessons. They can build background and vocabulary knowledge in ELA or Social Studies curricula (Lupo et al., 2019). Finally, the prepared resources are appropriate for upper elementary based on Lexile scores or interest level. Each element includes various materials that

can be read independently or with guidance and can be used as a background builder, discussion starter, or writing prompt. All weblinks are hyperlinked within the charts for each text set.

**Text Set One: Self-Love and Knowledge**

This text set explores identities and histories.

Picture Book	Fiction	Nonfiction	Web Resource	Art	Audio
<p>Skin Like Mine by LaTashia M. Perry</p> <p><i>Brown Sugar Babe</i> by Charlotte Watson Sherman, illustrated by Akem</p> <p><i>The Colors We Share</i> by Angélica Dass</p> <p><i>All the Colors of the Earth</i> by Hamanaka Sheila</p> <p><i>Showers</i> by Paul and Kathleen Kuchera</p>	<p><i>The Blacker the Berry: Poems</i> by Joyce Carol Thomas and Floyd Cooper.</p>	<p><i>The Antiracist Kid</i> by Tiffany Jewell Chapter One p. 1-35</p>	<p><a href="#">PBS Kids</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Portrait of a Woman with a Hat, 1962 by Pablo Picasso</a></p>	<p><a href="#">How do you define yourself? A TEDx talk by Lizzie Velasquez</a></p>

**Text Set Two: Respect for Others**

This text set expands cultural background knowledge.

Picture Book	Fiction	Nonfiction	Web Resource	Art	Audio
<p><i>Equality's Call: The Story of Voting Rights in America</i> by Deborah Diesen, illustrated by Magdalena Mora</p> <p><i>A Ramadan to Remember</i> by Marzieh, A. Ali</p> <p><i>What Your Ribbon Skirt Means to Me: Deb Haaland's Historic Inauguration</i> by Bunter Alexis</p> <p><i>Spanish is the language of Family</i> by Michael Genhart</p> <p><i>Rene' Do I Belong Here?</i> by Lainez Colato</p> <p><i>Jayylen's Juneteenth Surprise</i> by Lavette Lavaile</p>	<p><i>Beautiful You, Beautiful Me</i> by Tasha Spillett-Summer, illustrated by Salini Perera</p> <p><u><i>This is How We Do It</i></u> by Matt Lamothe</p> <p><u><i>I Am New Here</i></u> by Ann Sibley O'Brien</p>	<p><i>We Rise We Resist We Raise Voices</i> edited by Wade Hudson &amp; Cheryl Willis</p>	<p><a href="#">News Omatic</a> Includes non-fiction and fiction articles aligned to the standards. Students can have the article read to them to hear important vocabulary. Also, it has multimedia tools which includes videos, infographics, polls, and interactive maps.</p>	<p>(poem) <a href="#">KKK Nicolás Guillén</a></p> <p><a href="#">Abracadabra</a> Mia Kang</p>	<p><a href="#">Flyest Fables by Morgan Givens</a></p> <p><a href="#">Mija Podcast</a></p>

**Text Set Three: Issues of Social Injustices**

This text set explores how diversity is experienced as oppression.

Picture Book	Fiction	Nonfiction	Web Resource	Art	Audio
<p><b><i>Ruth and the Green Book</i></b> by Calvin Alexander Ramsey</p> <p><i>Salat in Secret</i> by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow</p>	<p><i>Where We Come From</i> by Diane Wilson</p>	<p><i>Stamped (For Kids)</i> by Jayson Reynolds and Ibram X Kendi Ch 10 <i>Truth Tellers</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Smithsonian's History Explorer web-based Interactives</a></p> <p><a href="#">EdSitement webpage explores humanities and culture</a></p> <p><a href="#">The BackStory: The Melting Pot Americans and Assimilation</a> This resource includes recorded interviews, videos, and photographs.</p>	<p><a href="#">Santos Dumont- The Father of Aviation II</a> by Kehinde Wiley, United States</p>	<p><a href="#">Code Switch episodes for kids by NPR</a></p>

**Text Set Four: Social Movements and Social Change**

This text set shares examples of movements and of iconic and everyday people collectively addressing social justice issues.

Picture Book	Fiction	Nonfiction	Web Resource	Art	Audio
<i>Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community</i> by Susan Verde and John Parra	<i>March (Trilogy Slipcase Set)</i> by John Lewis	<i>Stamped (For Kids)</i> by Jayson Reynolds and Ibram X Kendi Chapters 14-16	<a href="#"><u><i>12 Kids who are changing their communities and the world.</i></u></a>	<i>Guernica</i> by Pablo Picasso <a href="https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/guernica"><u>https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/guernica</u></a>	<i>Interview with Ford Foundation</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwqI3YOkTOI"><u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwqI3YOkTOI</u></a>
<i>Ganesha Goes Green</i> by Lakshmi Thamizhmani and Debasmita Dasgupta	<i>There's More to the Story: Using Literature to Teach Diversity and Social-Emotional Skills in the Elementary Classroom</i> by Gwendolyn Cartledge		<a href="#"><u><i>40 Incredible Kids Who Changed the World</i></u></a>		

**Text Set Five: Awareness Raising**

This text set helps students learn about important social justice issues.

Picture Books	Fiction	Nonfiction	Web Resource	Art	Audio
<i>Where the Butterflies Fill the Sky: A Story of Immigration, Family, and Finding Home</i> by Zahra Marwan	<i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> by Thanhá Lai  <i>Included: A Book for All Children about Inclusion, Diversity, Disability, and Equality and Empathy</i> by Jayneen Sanders, illustrated by Camila Carrossine	<i>A Kids Book about Disabilities</i> by Kristine Napper	<a href="#"><u>Background: United Nations: World Day Against Child Labor June 12</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles</u></a> by Faith Ringgold	<a href="#"><u>The Wrong Rock</u></a> by Michael Cawood

**Text Set Six: Social Action**

This text set models how children can impact each other and their communities.

Picture Book	Fiction	Nonfiction	Web Resource	Art	Audio
<p><i>Armando and the Blue Tarp School</i> by Edith Hope Fine and Judith Pinkerton Josephson, illustrated by Hernán Sosa</p> <p><i>The House that Jane Built: A Story about Jane Addams</i> by Tanya Lee Stone, illustrated by Kathryn Brown</p>	<p><i>Wild Robot</i> by Peter Brown</p> <p><i>Cardboard Kingdom</i> by Chad Sell</p>	<p><i>101 Small Ways to Change the World</i> by Aubre Andrus</p> <p><i>Pay it Forward: A Young Readers Edition</i> by Catherine Ryan Hyde</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Take Action: United Nations: World Day Against Child Labor June 12</u></a></p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Artists as Agents of Social Change Past and Present</u></a> by Lee Down</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Michael Platt Kids Can Solve Big Problems</u></a> by TEDx Jacksonville</p>

### Conclusion

Despite the colorblind myth, Watson (2023) noted that “almost one in four parents believed that instruction about racism should begin in kindergarten, and a majority agreed it should start in elementary school” (p. 495). The resources provided scaffold student learning and help them “engage critically in the world around them” (Picower, 2012, p. 1). They also prepare students to be active democratic participants because the text sets build skills that assist students in honoring multiple perspectives and recognizing and responding to unequal situations (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). “We need to know, share, and discuss accurate information about complex social issues and get to know other Americans as full human beings, including across political divides” (Pollock, 2017, p. 427). The resources provided aid students in making sense of their experiences.

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#### **Author Information**

Dr. M.E. Langeberg is an associate professor in the School of Education at Viterbo University in La Crosse, WI. She has presented at many national and local conferences regarding Literacy, Trauma Informed Care, and Teacher Education. Her professional career includes teaching middle school and high school as well as teaching undergraduate and graduate courses. Her research passion centers around language and how it can transform lives.

**Invited Column**  
**Indiana's Reading Retention Bill: A Flawed Approach for English Learners**

Haiyan Li  
*Purdue University*

Senate Bill 1, dubbed the "Every Child Learns to Read" legislation, has been signed into law in Indiana's latest effort to improve literacy rates across the state (Indiana General Assembly, 2024). The bill mandates summer school courses for students not meeting reading proficiency standards and retains third-graders who fail to pass the statewide IREAD reading exam. While aiming to address a critical educational issue, this one-size-fits-all policy has sparked widespread concerns about its detrimental impact on Indiana's growing population of English learners (ELs).

Proponents of the reading bill as it relates specifically to retention have argued that such measures are necessary to address Indiana's literacy crisis. They cite the concerning statistic that one in five third-graders in the state failed to pass the IREAD exam last year (Indiana General Assembly, 2024). They contend that allowing students to advance to fourth grade without essential literacy skills will perpetuate academic struggles and hinder long-term prospects for success. However, these arguments fail to consider the disproportionate and potentially discriminatory impact on EL students. As a new immigration gateway state, Indiana's support system for EL students are inadequate. This includes underfunding of districts with higher EL population concentrations (Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, 2020), a lack of qualified EL teachers, and insufficient implementation of research-based instructional programs (Chesnut & Dimitrieska, 2018; Li, et al., 2023; Morita-Mullaney, et al., 2020; Renn, et al., 2023). This systemic pattern of neglect, coupled with inequitable resource allocation, ill-equips Indiana schools to meet EL students' diverse linguistic, academic, and socioemotional needs. Consequently, the reading retention bill risks worsening existing disparities and further marginalizing this vulnerable population.

The third-grade retention policy, which relies solely on English reading test performance, risks overlooking the unique needs and challenges faced by EL students. This approach reveals a misunderstanding of the intricate and protracted process of second language acquisition (Appleton, 2024). The retention policy within the reading bill allows just language support services of less than three years ignoring extensive research on language acquisition timelines. Research consistently demonstrates that gaining proficiency in a new language is a multi-year, gradual process (Le Menestrel & Takanishi, 2017). ELs typically require 5-7 years to achieve academic English proficiency, as supported by earlier (e.g., Cummins, 1981; Hakuta et al., 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002) and current (e.g., Rhinehart et al., 2022) research. Additionally, the WIDA Consortium (2020), responsible for developing widely used English proficiency standards and English proficiency assessments, highlights significant individual variations in acquisition rates influenced by factors such as age, educational background, and native language. The challenges faced by long-term ELs are likely due to inadequate, coherent, appropriate, and long-term instructional support from schools (Le Menestrel & Takanishi, 2017). Extensive research indicates that ELs consistently outperform native English speakers by fourth or fifth grade when provided with appropriate language

acquisition support and accommodations (Appleton, 2024; Morita-Mullaney et al., 2020). Retention in third grade disrupts this positive trajectory, placing pressure on prioritizing high-stakes testing over robust language services and targeted interventions furnished by qualified specialists who can distinguish between literacy and language development: two fully different processes

Moreover, the bill raises pressing concerns about potential violations of ELs' civil rights (Morita-Mullaney, cited in Appleton, 2024, February 23). It appears to directly contradict and violate guidelines outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). As the federal education law, ESSA prohibits evaluating ELs solely on English proficiency before providing adequate time and fluency support. ESSA also guarantees ELs access to grade-level academic content, a principle third-grade retention policies undermine by holding students back confounding their English proficiency with their literacy development. Literacy experts and advocacy groups caution implementing such a policy risks significant consequences (Appleton, 2024). These include needing more third-grade classrooms and EL-qualified teachers, already a scarce Indiana resource. Valid critiques highlight the bill's lack of additional funding for summer programs and staffing requirements. Addressing these concerns ensures successful, equitable implementation for all students, regardless of linguistic background.

To create a truly equitable and inclusive educational system that values linguistic diversity, Indiana must explore alternative approaches for raising all students' literacy outcomes while preserving civil rights and adhering to evidence-based EL instruction practices. Advocacy groups and experts recommend linking EL exemptions from retention policies to language proficiency assessments rather than English reading tests designed for native speakers (Appleton, 2024), a flawed and invalid measure because language and literacy emerge from different sources and experiences. This approach better accounts for EL students' unique linguistic needs and developmental trajectories. Additionally, the state should prioritize robust, research-based language acquisition support programs and targeted interventions over retention policies. Sufficient time must be allowed for ELs to gain literacy proficiency per established timelines, instead of holding them to arbitrary, unrealistic expectations. Ultimately, the path forward requires an integrated approach that maintains accountability for academic progress while respecting and upholding ELs' linguistic rights and implementing instructional methods and policies that provide them with the time, resources, and support needed to develop literacy in accordance with well-established language acquisition research (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 2021; Wright, 2019). By prioritizing equity, evidence-based practices, and a genuine understanding of the challenges faced by EL students, Indiana can create a system that truly serves the needs of all learners and responsive to those with language backgrounds other than English.

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## Writing Guideposts that Work for Designing Writing Prompts

Darolyn “Lyn” Jones  
*Ball State University*

I have been teaching writing now for 33 years, in K-12 Hoosier schools, in community education as the Education Outreach Director with the Indiana Writers Center, and in higher education at Ball State University. I have designed and delivered many best practice writing strategies during my tenure in education. And as anyone who has been in education for several years knows, there are best writing practice trends that come and go.

Almost every best writing practice trend falls under the same best practice tenets we have always known to work; however, they are just presented in a different package. The trends that stand out to me in my career have been Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and then Writing to Learn (WTL) and then Writing in the Disciplines (WID; Klein & Boscolo, 2016). And of course, I remember talking tirelessly about the benefits of drafting through the writing process, the “five” paragraph essay, and daily journaling (Bromley, 2007; Jones & East, 2010). And now at my university, we are discussing how to integrate and embrace ChatGPT as a writing drafting, editing, and creativity tool. In the scholarly and in the classroom field, there are camps that agree and disagree on the effectiveness and impact of best practice trends. Suffice it to say, we have all been exposed to countless texts, professional development workshops, and conference presentations over the years where we are told that THIS best writing practice is the one to use.

Therefore, I will not present another writing best practice trend for you to consider. Instead, what I want to focus on is something more micro to the macro writing curriculum and instruction—the writing prompt itself.

### What is a Writing Prompt?

The word “prompt,” used as a verb with an object (or in our case, an objective), means:

- to move
- to induce
- to prepare for action (Dictionary.com, 2024).

A writing prompt is meant to direct the writer towards a topic of focus. A prompt can be presented as a statement or as a question to answer. A prompt might be accompanied with a passage, an image, or a video clip to provide context for the prompt. Writing prompts are used to help writers compose nonfiction and creative writing in any expository or genre form.

### What is a Bad Writing Prompt?

A bad writing prompt does not move or persuade a student to act or write. Every designer of a writing prompt must first know what they want the writer to demonstrate. What kind of response do you hope to elicit from the prompt? And more importantly.... Why? A writing prompt that stands alone might seem like a good one, but if it doesn’t support or meet the learning goals and objectives, then it’s not.

For example, here is a prompt I have used with student writers: *Tell me a story about a time when you lost something or someone.* Every one of us can speak to that. As you read this, you

can make a list in your head right now of your losses. But without context or a reason to write about this, it won't work as well. In fact, if you stop and write to this prompt right now, you will probably create a list of someones and somethings. And then you might try to write a quick summary of each one. Or perhaps you will speak to one person and that loss, but how do you know what story to tell if you don't understand who your audience is and what the purpose is for writing to this prompt.

I use this prompt in a workshop on Grief Writing/Writing to Heal. Writers who attend the workshop write about grief, but learn to turn their stories of grief into healing stories by the end of the workshop. There are many planned activities, instructions, and prompts that create what is worthy of enduring understanding—to heal in writing through grief.

The prompt *Tell me a story about a time when you lost something or someone* is shared after two other writing prompts, a modeling and demonstration activity, and two brainstorming sessions. And without context and a planned curriculum, I won't receive the kind of strong storytelling that was part of my objective in the workshop. I would not start out the workshop course on day one with that singular prompt, nor would it be the only writing prompt I use.

- A bad writing prompt is too broad and too vague, and the writer isn't sure what the prompter wants or where to start or what to write about.
- A bad writing prompt is too restrictive and doesn't allow for an individual response. The responses to these prompts often appear similar from writer to writer.
- A bad writing prompt asks a writer to write about something they don't know anything about—i.e. culturally biased topics, triggers, worlds, concepts, people they know nothing about.
- A bad writing prompt doesn't allow the writer to explain, describe, support, illustrate, synthesize.
- A bad writing prompt doesn't allow the writer to showcase her or his creativity or voice.

I remember giving the former ISTEP exam one year to a group of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and the required writing prompt was: *Describe your Perfect Amusement Park*. My underserved students who had hardly ever or never been outside of the 465 loop in Indianapolis couldn't speak to that. Most had never been to an amusement park, a carnival, or a fair. And even if they had, what does the prompt want? Describe the perfect physical space? Describe the experience you would have at an amusement park? Describe who would be there and what you would do? The prompt is too broad and vague. The prompt is culturally biased. The prompt does not allow the writer to be creative.

### **What is a Good Writing Prompt?**

A good writing prompt invites the writer in. It welcomes the writer into a new, but somehow safe and familiar space. It opens the door, asks them to take their coat off, to make themselves comfortable. It's a space that the writer feels comfortable enough to strike up a conversation.

Learning creative writing strategies can teach us how to be better educational and scholarly writers. While creative writing isn't (sadly) as much of a focus in our K-12 ELA standards as expository writing is, we can still draw upon elements of creative writing to help design writing prompts. Because we want our student writers to be able to show us not just tell us, to describe,

illustrate, and support with more vivid detail. Even if students are writing up an Egg Drop Science Report, we want them to show us their process and to support their design and process with stories of how they came up with their winning design where the egg didn't break.

A good writing prompt prompts the writer to use their senses. Even a nonfiction prompt such as *Describe how you just solved the quadratic equation. What did you do first? And then what? And next? And what you were you thinking and feeling as you moved through each step?* draws on the senses. I have used this prompt with students, and I loved reading words like: "I felt good because I remembered to substitute and figure out the value of a." or "I smell the cafeteria, and I'm feeling hungry. I can't wait for lunch!" Students are learning how they learn (metacognition) and learning how our senses and environment impact our learning and thinking process.

Or think about a prompt such as *Tell me why Auggie chose to forgive Jack. Tell me what he was thinking and feeling as he made that decision. Would you have? Explain your decision and how you feel about this decision.* This prompt urges the writer into that critical scene in R.J. Palacio's book, *Wonder*, where Auggie makes a decision and acts upon it. But students have to be able to speak to not only that scene, but the history between the two characters and to Auggie's and to the student writer's own beliefs and value systems.

How about a social studies instructor asking students to *Tell me the story about what happened when Paul Revere made his midnight ride.* Students aren't just telling, they are describing a scene, a character, a plot of events. When you use the fictional arc of *Tell me a story about what happened when*, without even trying, you propel the students into writing a beginning, a middle, and an end.

A good writing prompt doesn't just motivate a writer to *want* to write, but creates a *need* to write. When a writer is provided with a well-crafted prompt, the writer has to write—the writer experiences an urgency, a need to expel the words out of their head and onto the paper.

There are four guideposts that I have discovered that are tried and true when designing a good writing prompt. I have practiced these guideposts with writers who are ages 6 to 90 in and out of diverse classroom settings.

- 1) Guidepost 1: Explain the "gist".
- 2) Guidepost 2: Narrow the prompt.
- 3) Guidepost 3: Create exigence in the prompt.
- 4) Guidepost 4: Present a formula for how to craft the prompt.

Explain the "gist" means to provide context, criteria, the why, and the audience for the prompt. Plan instruction and demonstration. The narrower the prompt, the wider the response from the writer will be. Exigence creates urgency, a need to respond. It's so compelling that the writer can't wait to put words to it. When we present writers with formulas, templates, closed writing activities, we are demonstrating and modeling how the prompt can be crafted. We help the writer who is stuck with a road map.

In Guidepost 4, some align templates and formulas with “scripted.” The most talented creative, educational, and scholarly writers will tell you they have a formula they follow. I have participated in workshops and writing retreats where creative writers share their formulas for crafting creative nonfiction, poetry, fiction, and script writing. Academic researchers will share their formulas for how to cull data, code data, and write scholarly articles about that data.

“Formula” and “templates” are not bad words. The trick is finding what formulas work. Successful writers know what formula works for them, and they repeat it every time they write. Think about your favorite pieces of fiction, your favorite poets, your favorite movie genre. We all know how to identify an E.E. Cummings, Emily Dickinson, or Rupi Kar poem. We all know the formula of the Lifetime Christmas movies. We recognize works by fiction writers Toni Morrison, John Green, and Ernest Hemingway. In teaching writers, I like to present different formulas, allow them to practice, until they find the formula that works for them.

### **How Do You Design a Good Writing Prompt that Follows the Guideposts?**

For me, writing about how to design a writing prompt is a very intimate and emic position and process. As educators, we can design writing curriculum and writing lesson plans, but if the writing prompt itself built into that curriculum and that lesson plan does not elicit good writing, then the writing curriculum and the lesson plan have failed.

Writing prompts for student writing is something all teachers do and most of us can easily show how our prompts support our SLOs. Harder to measure and assess is:

- Did the student grow as a writer?
- Did the student writer craft something worthy of enduring understanding, both for the student writer and for the educator?
- Did the prompt create a writer? A student who isn’t just writing for school, but someone who feels they are directing and perhaps in command of their message, their story, their composition.

Backward Design requires educators to identify what is worthy of enduring understanding. Then working backwards, educators design curriculum that defines student learning goals, student evidence, and plan activities and instruction that ensure that understanding is met and enduring. In working backwards educators determine what is worthy of being familiar with and knowing so that the desired goal of enduring understanding is met (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

- Does the writing prompt ensure that the learning goal of understanding is met? Or does it just measure a discrete task that doesn’t fulfil the overarching goal of enduring understanding?
- In preparing students to write to the prompt, have you taught your writers what they need to know to compose the desired outcome of the prompt?

English/language arts researcher and author of *Designing Writing Assignments*, Traci Gardner (2005), outlines ten criteria for designing good writing assignments. Tasks 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 10 work well in preparing to design a good writing prompt.

- Deal with the business details. Explain the “gist”.
- Identify the audience for the piece.
- Focus on a specific situation.
- Establish the reason for the assignment (if only for yourself).
- Share models and student samples.
- Talk about the evaluation criteria up front (paras. 2-10).

All of us who have been teaching know that as soon as you present a writing prompt, students will ask how long the writing has to be, if grammar and mechanics count, and why they are writing this. I use a strategy called RAFT to cover the gist, the audience, and the criteria. RAFT stands for Role, Audience, Format, and Topic.

- **Role:** What is your **Role** as a writer?
- **Audience:** Who is the **Audience** for your writing? Who are you speaking to?
- **Format:** What **Format** (the gist) does the writing need to take?
- **Topic:** And what is the **Topic** (narrowing the topic; Santa, C., Havens, L., & Valdes, B., 2004).

After we establish this, then I can explain why we are writing to this prompt, how it meets our learning goals. I can share out writing models, demonstrate strategies for how to best address the writing prompt, and explain criteria for assessment. This is part of those learning activities and goals that will help my students achieve enduring understanding goals through a well-designed writing prompt.

### **Create Exigence**

Exigence is part of the Western Aristotelian rhetorical situation. “Exigence is the *urgent demand* that writers feel to respond to a situation, his or her motive for writing. The exigencies of a situation are a demand put on the writer to respond immediately and urgently in attempt to take action or raise a concern about a specific issue” (Alfano & O’Brien, 2016, p. 9)

All of us experience exigence daily. Someone makes a comment, and we have a strong urge to respond. We might want to commiserate, validate, or disagree. Social media creates exigence for us daily. Someone posts a meme, a comment, an image, a political statement, and we immediately respond with a comment, a sad crying face, a hashtag, or a like. And those emoji’s, likes or unlikes, and hashtags are a response with a defined purpose and audience in mind.

When designing a good writing prompt, it’s important to create this kind of urgency so students feel the need to immediately respond. Students understand the prompt. They are prepared to answer the prompt. They have made a connection to the prompt. They have something to say about the prompt.

I am a fan of using social media in classrooms. My university students create TikTok documentaries over their Write for Change research papers in the Writing Program courses I teach. Students love watching TikToks. We are seeing the use of TikToks not just to promote a fashion trend or product to buy, but to promote a social justice issue or topic in need of change such as #byu or to promote books to read as is the case with BookToks.

The most popular social media tools used by students today are YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram (PEW, 2023). And students experience exigence and write and reply or use emojis to respond daily on these social media platforms. Creating the kind of exigence students experience on social media is something we can emulate and apply when designing a good writing prompt.

Memoirist Natalie Goldberg is famous for her 7 Rules for Writers. Rule number 1? “Keep your hand moving. No matter what, don’t stop. Write whatever comes to your mind. Outrace the editor with your writing hand. If you keep your hand moving the writing will win” (Goldberg, 1990, p. 1). Exigence keeps the writer’s hand moving.

Part of the exigence rhetorical situation is that the writer must attend to purpose and audience. In that moment of urgency to respond, the writer is motivated to respond and has a purpose or something to say in response. And that message is clearly directed at an intended audience. “An author’s purpose might be to describe, to define, to influence, or to call action” (Alfano & O’Brien, 2016, p. 10).

**Present a Formula**

“Cloze” it or provide some of the words so the writer can fill the rest in with his or her own, use the personal pronouns “I” or “you” so the writer can draw upon the self, and finally narrow the prompt so the writer can zero in on one person, place, or time. These can be written as questions or as statements. It allows the student some agency and choice within the context of whatever subject or text you are teaching.

In creative narrative nonfiction writing, I use examples such as:

- Before \_\_\_\_\_ and After \_\_\_\_\_
- I remember a good day. It started out . . . and continued. . .and ended with. . .
- Tell me the story about the first time you.... (whatever). (Jones & Shoup, 2022).

The following are examples from Discovery Educator, Kathy Shrock:

Do you agree with the actions of ...? Do you agree with the outcomes of ...?  
 What is your opinion of ...?  
 How would you prove ...? disprove ...?  
 Can you assess the value or importance of ...?  
 Would it be better if ...?  
 Why did they (the character) choose ...?  
 What would you recommend ...?  
 What data was used to make the conclusion?  
 How would you rate the ...?  
 What would you cite to defend the actions of ...?  
 How would you evaluate ...?  
 What choice would you have made ...?  
 How would you prioritize ...?

What judgment would you make about ...?  
 Based on what you know, how would you explain ...?  
 What information would you use to support the view ...?  
 Can you design a ...?  
 What changes would you make to solve ...?  
 How would you improve ...?  
 What would happen if ...?  
 Can you elaborate on the reason for ...?  
 Can you propose an alternative ...?  
 How would you adapt \_\_\_\_\_ to create a different...?  
 How could you change the plot ...?  
 Can you create new and unusual uses for...?  
 What could be done to minimize/maximize...?  
 What way would you design ...?  
 What could be combined to improve ...?  
 Suppose you could \_\_\_\_\_ what would you do ...?  
 Can you think of an original way for the ...?

And formulas work very well. Most of us who have taught in E/LA have taught our students how to use the Acrostic Poem or the Haiku formula. But you can use formulas to help design writing prompts in any discipline or with any genre.

- You can use many templates from the *They Say, I Say* series of books that teach students how to write persuasively and to support claims with evidence. There are several available online.
- You can use the 6 Word Memoir to craft a 6 Word Summary, a 6 Word Story, a 6 Word poem.
- You can use Blackout Poetry not to create poetry, but to identify key words or ideas about even a textbook reading excerpt.
- You can use a Golden Shovel Poetry response not only in poetry, but also in response to critical passage from a textbook or a quote.
- You can use the Marion Roach Smith (2021) algorithm she uses with much success in crafting memoir. “It’s about X as illustrated by Y to be told in a Z.” She illustrates further by saying It’s about something universal as illustrated by something deeply personal to be told in some length of a piece of memoir. The z is always the form — blog post, essay, op-ed, long-form essay or book (paras 4 & 5). You can substitute this algorithm into any kind of prompt for a student focusing on the X and Y. *The specific topic we are discussing or studying is about X (student decides) as illustrated or evidenced by Y (student generates that evidence).*
- In Art Museums, dossiers use a strategy called Visual Thinking Strategies or VTS.
  - What’s going on in this picture?
  - What do you see that makes you say that?
  - What more can you find?
- You can easily adapt this into a writing response over any kind of text, visual or written.
  - What’s going on in this passage, this discussion, this image, this video clip?
  - What do you read or see that makes you say that?

- What more can you say about this \_\_\_\_\_?

If you search for writing templates there are many wonderful graphic examples available out there. I think practicing writers benefit from templates to help them get started and they have a road map for how to continue.

### **What happens if my writing prompt fails?**

Experiment and fail. Read student writing responses, and ask yourself what's missing? What did you visualize or hear that they would write or say? How can you fill that gap? How can you recraft the prompt using the Guideposts? Ask your writers what didn't make sense. Ask them to critique.

Revise it and try again. This allows you to see what is working and it allows students to revise. Keep a log of your tried-and-true pieces and student writer models. Most importantly, write to what you prompt. And see if it supports those guideposts. Share your writing model and your strategies for writing to the prompt. Share your own critiques and suggestions and process with them.

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### Author Information

Darolyn “Lyn” Jones is activist, writer, and retired educator. She is passionate about storytelling and community engagement. Lyn is the author of *Painless Reading Comprehension*, co-author of *Memory Workshop*, a former editor with two Indie Presses, INwords Publications and the 409 Press, where she edited sixteen public memoir anthologies. Lyn’s scholarly research and academic writing is centered in both community writing engagement and disability studies and has appeared in a variety of peer reviewed academic journals and books such as *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, *Journal of Transformative Education*, & *Journal of Teaching Writing*. Lyn’s creative narrative nonfiction has appeared in Belt Publishing, Indy Writes Books, and the Facing Project Press. She writes a monthly column for the *Indy Special Needs Living* magazine. Lyn retired after 33 years of teaching in K through 12 Indiana schools and from Ball State University. And Lyn served as the Education Outreach Director of the Memoir Project for the Indiana Writers Center for 16 of those 33 years.

## Indiana Literacy Journal

The *Indiana Literacy Journal* is the peer-reviewed journal of the Indiana State Literacy Association, which is composed of and serves classroom teachers, literacy specialists, educational leaders, teacher educators, and university faculty. The journal publishes on diverse topics related to literacy, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, visually representing, technology, and literature for children and young adults. Submissions are invited in any of the categories below, though we are particularly interested in manuscripts that connect literacy and social justice, address new literacies (e.g., technology, graphic novels, podcasts, etc.), current literacy legislation, and other literacy topics relevant to the state of Indiana.

**Our Fall 2024 issue is an open-themed call**, so we welcome submissions on a variety of topics and methods.

**Deadline for submission: October 1st, 2024**

### **Bridging Research and Practice Articles**

Articles submitted in this category present original descriptions of research-based instruction that improves the literacy learning of students ranging from birth to college age. Articles describing research-based practices in literacy teacher education will also be considered. Manuscripts in this category must include practical steps to guide readers in applying the research to their practice. Manuscript submissions should include APA formatted references to the relevant research literature and must not exceed 5,000 words (including tables, figures and appendices; excluding reference list) in 12-point font and left-aligned. Any charts or graphics must be of high-quality and in black and white. These manuscripts undergo blind review by members of the journal's editorial review board.

### **Voices from the Region**

Articles submitted in this category will showcase evidence-based literacy practices being implemented throughout the state and region in such varied spaces as classrooms, districts, libraries, after school programs, online schools, homes, daycares, preschools, etc.. We are specifically interested in submissions from practitioners who can share tips and ideas about what is working in their context, why they are engaging in these ideas, and how others could do this, too. Our goal is to hear from a range of practitioners in and around the state who are interested in literacy. Manuscripts in this category should begin with an introduction to the authors and the context of their work. Please also include APA formatted references to the relevant research literature, if appropriate to the piece. Manuscript submissions should be between 750 and 1500 words (including tables, figures and appendices; excluding reference list), double-spaced, and in 12-point font and left-aligned. Any charts or graphics must be of high-quality and in black and white. These manuscripts undergo blind review by members of the journal's editorial review board.

### **Visual Artifacts and Graphics**

Submissions in this category share visual artifacts of literacy teaching practices through photos of teachers and students engaging in literacy, literacy projects, literacy centers, and artifacts of student learning. Each image should be clear, in focus, of a high resolution/quality, and sent as a

full-size jpeg or tiff file attachment, accompanied by a brief, 50-100 word description. Documents must be scanned, not photographed; the latter will not be of high enough quality for publication. By submitting an item in this category, the individual indicates that he/she has obtained consent from the district, school, teacher, parent, and child to use the image for publication. The journal's editorial team reviews submissions in this category

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