

Best Practices in English Language Arts Classrooms

These practices are the foundations of highly effective English instruction. This is the kind of instruction we hope one day to provide for every child in Lafayette Parish.

Activity	Why do it?	How often?	What it is not
Sustained Silent Reading / Individual Reading (with the teacher as a participant)	Develops fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension	Daily (for 10-20 minutes)	A time for the teacher to catch up on grading or for students to do homework
Read Alouds	Provides an opportunity for the teacher to model what good readers do through think alouds, questioning, and/or discussions about connections to self, text, and world	Daily	Putting on a tape or CD and sitting down
Shared Reading (may be used as the read aloud)	Commonality of experience for discussion and skills instruction; develops fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Should include the teacher reading to and reading with students, as well as students reading alone.)	Daily	Pop-corn or round robin-reading
Book Talks	Sparks student interest in books and creates a culture of reading in the classroom	Frequently	A series of 25 student-led book reports
Higher-level response to text, either through discussion or writing	Promotes critical thinking, plus an authentic enjoyment of the literature	Daily	A summary, nor necessarily a response to a teacher-cued topic
On-going vocabulary instruction in context	Aligns with current research about language acquisition (May take the form of word walls, graphic organizers, visual representations of words, vocabulary emerging from the reading.)	Frequently	Looking up lists of words and definitions; memorizing lists of roots without a reason for learning them
Some type of <i>valuing</i> of student reading	Validates reading as an authentic activity (May take the form of discussion/sharing, response in journals, “Read This” lists posted by students on the walls, and reading logs.)	Daily	No evidence of reading logs, discussion of books, reading lists, a well-used classroom library
Mini lessons on reading strategies, writing techniques, spelling, grammatical usage, etc.	Provides the background for students to understand and use the skills in the context of authentic literacy practices. (This is separated skills instruction.)	Frequently	Grammar worksheets; the focus of an entire class period
Writing of some type, either formal or informal	Develops fluency and the habit of using writing to think (May take the form of graphic organizers, notebook entries, journals, formal essays, etc.)	Daily	A skill-and-drill style worksheet or reliance on exercises from a grammar text
Coaching of student writing through teacher-student writing conferences	Fits the apprenticeship model of learning; demonstrates a reflective examination of writing	Frequently	Assigning and evaluating a piece of writing without scaffolded instruction or modeling
Some type of <i>valuing</i> of student writing	Validates writing as an authentic activity (May take the form of student work on display, informal sharing, Author’s Chair, projects, building and maintaining a literacy portfolio.)	Daily	No evidence of projects, student work, etc.
Student-to-student interaction	Facilitates student learning, engagement, and real-life social interaction	Daily	Students respond only to teacher-directed questions or comments
Combination of paired, small-group, and whole-group tasks or discussions	Facilitates student learning, engagement, and real-life social interaction	Frequently	No evidence of various learning configurations

