

What Matters Most:

Ensuring Literacy Engagement, Achievement & Equity for ALL Learners

with

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Wisconsin State Reading Association

2017 Convention

#WSRA17

Milwaukee, WI

February 11, 2017

Achieving the Unexpected

requires

- **Commitment**

to meaningful change, to excellence, to doing better,
to sustaining the learning

- **Culture**

of trust, celebration of strengths, shared beliefs,
significant ideas, useful feedback, empowerment

- **Collaborative expertise**

through Professional LITERACY Communities, shared
leadership, mentorship

- **Challenging curriculum**

of asking “big” questions, connecting to real-world
audiences and purposes, using first-rate literature and
resources, responsive teaching and assessment

Crucial Concerns

- **Celebration as teaching** (noticing everything learner does well, building on strengths, joy in learning)
- **Commitment to students** ("What do you stand for?" fidelity to students, not to program or standards; relentless focus on student learning; sufficient time for guided practice; differentiated instruction)
- **Culture of the school** (trusting relationships based on mutual respect, sense of urgency, safe environment, high expectations, inclusiveness, kindness, openness to worthwhile change)
- **Collaboration** (mentoring, coaching, small group work, partnering across grade levels, seeing all school's students as our students)
- **Conversations** (hearing all the voices, embedded and ongoing professional learning, shared beliefs, critical thinking, complex texts, book talk, clear communication, "Who's doing the talking?")
- **Curriculum** (coherence, relevancy, authenticity, reading-writing connections, first rate resources and literature, Common Core State Standards in perspective, applying an Optimal Learning Model {OLM})
- **Checking for understanding** (responsive teaching, self-monitoring leading to self-determining learners, "What did we/you learn? "What did you notice?" "How did you figure that out?" "Are you right? Check.")
- **Classroom libraries** (organized for access and interest with students, connection to independent reading and to reading/writing program)
- **Choice within structure** (books to read, topics to write, OLM)
- **Conferences** (language of effective feedback, one-to-one writing and reading conferences with focus on student first, content second)
- **Common sense** (whole-part-whole teaching, authenticity, applying valid and reliable "research", counting something important (data), appropriate use of programs and standards)
- **Courage** ("positive deviant", taking a stand and speaking out when necessary, offering solutions, not complaining, remaining hopeful)

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Culture Matters

If you get the culture right, everything else can follow. If you don't get the culture right, nothing else will matter.

Characteristics of a thriving, empowering, achieving culture

High achievement and good test scores are a byproduct

Trusting

- Safety-physical and emotional
- All voices heard and respected
- Organization, schedules, procedures, routines
- Instructional walks and feedback- focus first on strengths

Collaborative

- Coaching, co-teaching, sharing lessons, "our students"
- Leadership Team at school, district/provincial levels
- Common times to plan and work together; ongoing mentorship

Intellectual

- Level of questions, conversations, quality of feedback
- Professional LITERACY Communities
- Shared beliefs and common language-connected to "best" practices
- Challenging curriculum connected to real-world issues

Responsible

- Assessment—balanced, used to improve student learning
- Literacy plan—workable, improves student learning
- Initiatives, limited

Equitable

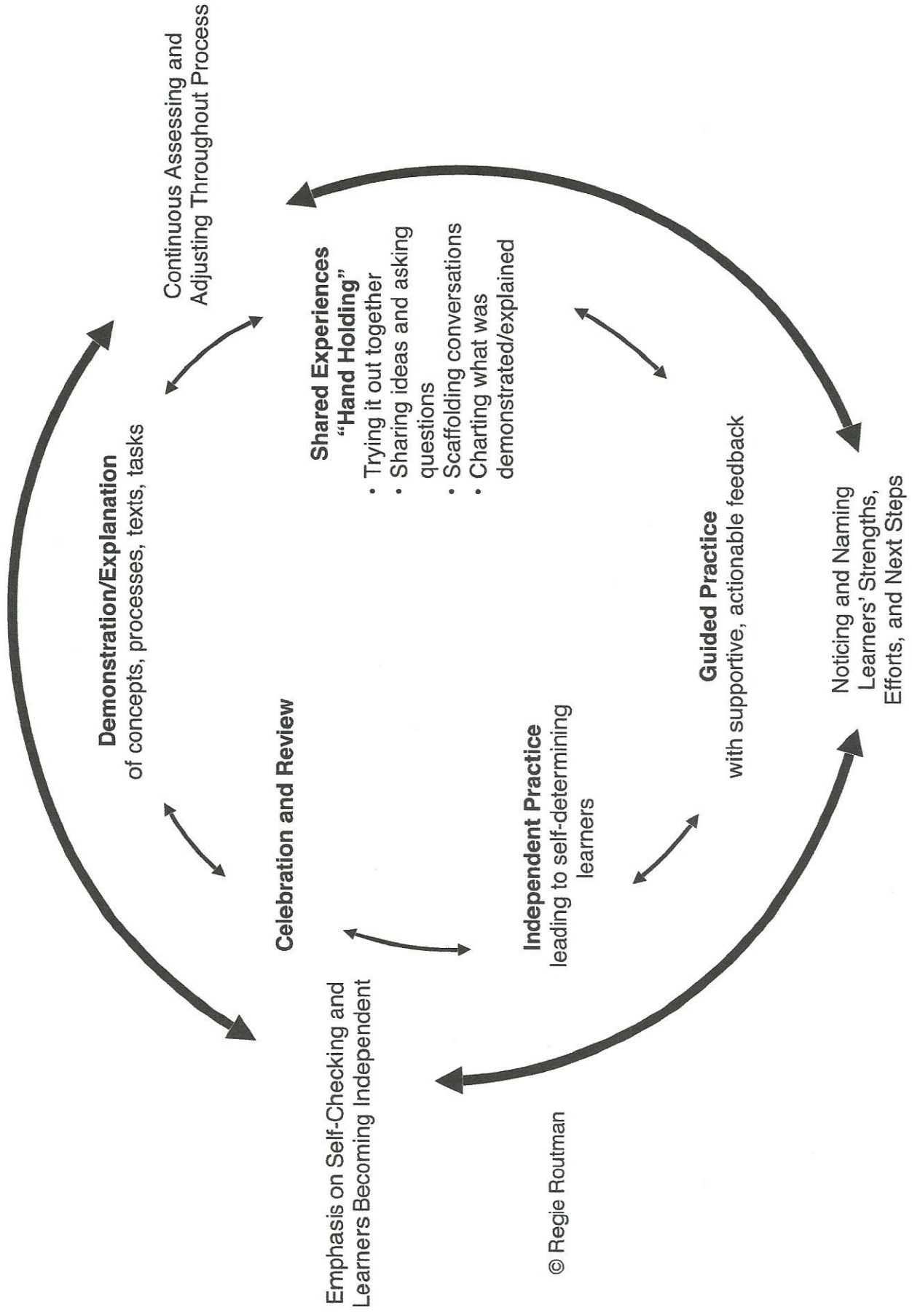
- Resources (includes technology)
- Opportunities

Joyful

- Celebrations
- Appreciations
- Positive mindset

Regie Routman, *WSRA 2017 Convention*

An Ongoing Cycle of Responsive Teaching: The Optimal Learning Model



Promoting a Love of Reading in the Classroom

5 most important classroom factors for developing a love of reading

1. Time and choice to read, every day (first priority)
2. Access to excellent literature—classroom libraries (organized with students), connected to 1.
3. Time to talk about books
4. Reading aloud daily by the teacher
5. Responsibility for ensuring students understand what they read (more likely with 1-4 in place)
6. Teacher as reader

5 classroom factors that prevent students from developing a love of reading

1. Lack of choice and access to a wide range of diverse, interesting, readable texts (most damaging factor)
2. Insufficient time for sustained reading, every day (connected to 1.)
3. Guided reading, often “misguided”; over-reliance on fitting in all the groups, leveled books, teachers doing most of the work, self-sustaining readers not a goal
4. Too little time given to “hearing students’ voices”--talking about books
5. Scant monitoring through conferring (especially 1:1) to check for deep understanding

The “why” for both lists is connected to teacher and school priorities and knowledge; assumes the “how” of reading is being taught.

12 Writing Essentials for All Grade Levels

Teach these essentials well in any genre or content area & with guidance and sustained practice students can adapt and transfer their use to all real-world writing.

- *writing with a specific reader in mind* and a clearly understood purpose
- *reading deeply, with a writer's perspective*
- *choosing an appropriate topic* (choice within structure) & narrowing the focus; deciding what's most important to include for the reader
- *applying agreed upon writing criteria* to the particular writing piece
- *organizing the writing* in a logical, easy-to-follow style (prewriting, putting like information together; elaborating with pertinent details, explanations, & evidence to expressed main ideas; knowing when & what information, words, and/or visuals to include; paragraphing; utilizing transitions to make it easier for reader
- *communicating clearly* in an efficient, effective & even elegant manner
- *applying author's craft* and playing around with language to engage, enchant, persuade, educate the reader (includes composing satisfying leads & closure)
- *writing with a personal style* that illuminates the writer's personality (may include dialogue, humor, point of view, writing stance)—writer's unique voice
- *rereading, thinking, & rethinking in act of composing* (includes revising & editing as you go, assessing, self-evaluating, writing as a recursive process)
- *employing correct conventions* (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, legibility)
- *ensuring accuracy in facts, analysis, sources, visuals, websites consulted, etc.*
- *taking responsibility for producing effective writing* (immersion in particular genre, drafting, revising, organizing, using technology wisely, proofreading, sustaining writing effort, editing, self-evaluating, & doing whatever is necessary to ensure the text is meaningful & clear to the reader as well as accurate & engaging.)

These essentials are applicable K-12 & beyond. The actual writing skills we teach across the grades are similar, which precludes the need for a separate list of skills for every grade level. What changes are the depth, complexity, length, & variety of texts students compose & the amount of writing support & practice students require. Also, while students do need to know & understand the particular attributes that define each genre & content area, successful writing in a specific genre or content domain involves being able to apply the writing essentials that comprise all effective writing.

Regie Routman, adapted Feb. 2017 from *Writing Essentials* (Heinemann, 2005)

Reflect and Take Action

- Do our literacy beliefs align with research-based practices?

Practices are our beliefs in action.

- Is what we are doing empowering all students to learn more and think deeply about meaningful and relevant matters?
- Are we hearing and honoring all the voices?
- Are we sustaining the learning?
- Are we creating self-sustaining, joyful learners?
- What are our most important next steps?

Narrow your focus to things that matter most and then prioritize relentlessly.