

Teaching for Independence in 2nd and 3rd Grade

Mahurt & Metcalfe 2007

Why focus on grades 2 & 3 ?

- Many resources exist for early grades and later grades, but few, if any, address the grades in between.
- We need to understand literacy learners in transition in order to provide instruction that bridges the gap in expectations from early to intermediate grades.
- Instruction should shift in response needs of literacy learners moving toward the challenges of intermediate literacy instruction.

Preparing early elementary children for the literacy demands of intermediate grades: What do we need to consider?

- Knowing learners in transition
- Shifts in instruction: content and context
- Moving toward strategic independence

How does it look in practice?

Transitional learner: writing

- Uses basic narrative structure with different topics
- Begins to carry pieces over several days
- Has variable use of end punctuation; experiments with other punctuation
- Has control over a core of high-frequency words
- Uses invented spelling of many complex words
- Does some editing
- Revises, but often limited to adding more text
- Uses some planning
- Supplements text with illustrations

From Building Bridges From Early to Intermediate Literacy, Grades 2-4, Mahurt, Metcalfe, and Gwyther, in press

Changes in writing workshop

- Making instructional decisions
- Modeled writing
- Shared writing
- Interactive writing
- Writing workshop
- Minilessons
- Independent writing and conferring
- sharing

How does it look in practice?

Transitional learner: language & word study

- Has knowledge of consonant clusters, more complex visual vowel patterns to represent sounds
- Uses inflectional endings, simple suffixes, and compound words
- Knows many high-frequency words
- Uses sound analysis for spelling unknown words and begins to use visual analysis
- Uses more precise vocabulary

From *Building Bridges From Early to Intermediate Literacy, Grades 2-4*, Mahurt, Metcalfe, and Owyther, in press

Instructional changes

- Learning about words
- Phonological and phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Structural analysis
- Linking to real world reading and writing

How does it look in practice?

Change over time requires:

- Understanding what transitional learners know and can do now, and what challenges they will face in intermediate grades
- Shifting both the content and context of instruction
- Providing experiences to develop strategic independence and sustained control over increasingly more complex reading/writing tasks
