

# Literacy Stations Basics

## and Frequently Asked Questions

### What Is a Literacy Station?

A literacy station is a small, defined space (stationary or portable) where students **practice** with a **partner**. Students work together on things they **can** do, using **familiar materials** and **tasks** to practice **reading, writing, listening, speaking**, and/or **working with words**. The children use previously taught **academic vocabulary** as they **engage** in **meaningful work** that has been **modeled previously** in whole or small group instruction.

The Partner Reading station can be portable or stationary. If you decide to have more than one Partner Reading station, you might choose to try both setups. Provide a basket with books for kids to read that can be carried to a designated space in the classroom (portable) *and* a cozy little bench or two small chairs (stationary). Two children will hold one book and read it together. They may give each other feedback on their decoding and fluency. Additionally, they will respond by talking, drawing, and/or writing together.

### How Do Literacy Stations Fit Into the Literacy Block?

In a reading workshop classroom, the literacy block is broken into segments: whole class lessons, small group instruction, and stations work time. Stations work happens simultaneous to small group instruction. As the teacher meets with a small group, the rest of the class works in pairs at **literacy stations** around the classroom. Literacy stations provide purposeful practice.



**EL TIP:** Conversation cards have sentence stems to help your multilingual learners respond orally to what they've read. You might include a QR code to record the sentence stem for kids to listen to before speaking. (There are printable conversation cards at [resources.corwin.com/simple-stations-partner](https://resources.corwin.com/simple-stations-partner).)

Around the classroom, pairs of students work together at a variety of stations, including two Partner Reading stations, a Listening and Speaking station (or two), a Writing station, an Independent Reading station, a Word Study station, and a Poetry station. Two children are using retelling pieces and a familiar book at a Drama station; several students are engaged in asking and answering questions at the Inquiry and Research station; and two scholars are talking about a fine art print at the Let's Talk station. (For more information on each station, please see the related title in the Simply Stations series.)

Some stations, such as the Partner Reading station, are duplicated. For example, in one Partner Reading station, two students reread a familiar story from small group and then discuss what they read using conversation cards from whole group—speech bubbles that guide their discussion. In another Partner Reading station, two other children read an informational text and jot notes

about important facts they learned. After reading, they talk about their notes and write a response together about what they learned.

Each station has been carefully introduced, one at a time, over the first month of school. Students know what is expected of them, they have everything they need, and they are working on tasks they *can* do successfully. In every book of the Simply Stations series, you'll find suggestions for how to set up and introduce a station in depth.

During the first few weeks of school while children are learning to work at stations, the teacher circulates freely around the classroom facilitating, listening in on students, and talking with them about what they are learning. Once children demonstrate independence with classroom routines for literacy stations (usually about four to six weeks into the school year), the teacher begins to work with small groups. A management board is used to help children move independently to several stations daily. Everything you need for your management board can be found on pages 17-21 of this book!

## What Is the Ideal Number of Students at Each Station?

I recommend having children work in pairs (yes, just two kids!) at each station. This increases student engagement and reduces classroom noise if you space children thoughtfully around the room. You will need more stations, but they will be easier to maintain because you don't have to change things out as often. Use the easy-to-follow directions throughout this series for how to introduce each station to ensure success for you and your students.

## How Do I Determine Partnerships?

At the start of the year, think about who gets along well and pair those children together. Once you begin small groups, try pairing students from the same flexible reading group. That way they won't lose their partners when you meet with a group. Also, you'll find that if you plan for things children *can* do, they will push each other further if paired with someone at about the same reading level. You might choose to sometimes pair a more fluent reader with a student who will benefit from hearing that child read at a Partner Reading station, but do so on a day when you're not meeting with those kids in groups (so they don't lose their partners).

## How Long Do Students Work at Each Station?

Each literacy station lasts about twenty minutes in Grades 1-4. In kindergarten, children may spend about fifteen minutes per station. Typically, students go to two rotations back-to-back while the teacher meets with two small groups. If you decide to meet with three groups a day, you might have a whole group lesson after two rounds of stations and then meet with a third small group while all students do independent reading or go to a third round of literacy stations.



### TIME-SAVING TIP:

If you establish stations well during your first few weeks with your students, you will save time in the long run (even if you are taking over a class partway through the school year). Get to know your students, so you'll be ready to start small groups as soon as possible. Building relationships and routines is a valuable use of time.

## How Do Literacy Stations Fit Into the Day?

Literacy stations are just one component in a balanced literacy or a workshop approach to teaching reading and writing. Below are several sample schedules from primary and intermediate classrooms to show where stations fit in the day. Be flexible and create a schedule that works for you.

### SAMPLE PRIMARY SCHEDULE for LITERACY

- 8:00–8:10 Morning Meeting (community building time)
- 8:10–8:25 Whole Group Lesson for Modeling Using Interactive Read-Aloud
- 8:25–8:45 Literacy Stations and Small Group (round one)
- 8:45–9:05 Literacy Stations and Small Group (round two)
- 9:05–9:15 Reflection Time for Stations and Small Group
- 9:15–9:20 Brain Break
- 9:20–9:35 Whole Group Lesson for Modeling Using Shared Reading and Word Study
- 9:35–9:55 Whole Class Independent Reading Time (teacher confers 1:1 or may meet with a third small group)
- 9:55–10:05 Whole Group Lesson for Modeling Writing
- 10:05–10:30 Whole Class Independent Writing Time (teacher confers with students 1:1 or may meet with a small group for writing)
- 10:30–10:40 Reflection Time for Writing

### SAMPLE INTERMEDIATE SCHEDULE for LITERACY

- 8:00–8:10 Morning Meeting (community building time; students do book talks/share what they're reading)
- 8:10–8:25 Whole Group Lesson for Modeling Using Interactive Read-Aloud or Shared Reading Integrating Word Study/Vocabulary
- 8:25–8:45 Whole Class Independent Reading Time (teacher confers 1:1 or may meet with a small group for reading)
- 8:45–9:05 Literacy Stations, Book Clubs, and Small Group (some teachers do another twenty-minute round of stations if schedules allow)
- 9:05–9:15 Whole Group Lesson for Modeling Writing
- 9:15–9:40 Whole Class Independent Writing Time (teacher confers with students 1:1 or may meet with a small group for writing)
- 9:40–9:50 Reflection Time for Reading and Writing

## How Long Is It Going to Take Me to Prepare for These Stations?

I've included time-saving tips in each book to help ease preparation. The most important thing to remember is to take what you're teaching and *transfer those materials and tasks* to each literacy station. Don't make a bunch of stuff just for stations!

## How Often Should the Teacher Change Things at a Station?

Stations are not changed out weekly but involve **spiral reviews** with young scholars returning to work multiple times over several weeks with the same

materials and tasks. It's okay for children to read a book more than once at the Partner Reading station, especially if it's a favorite text. Repeated readings develop oral reading fluency and comprehension, especially if students discuss what they've read. **Spiral review** means that students keep practicing things multiple times throughout the year.

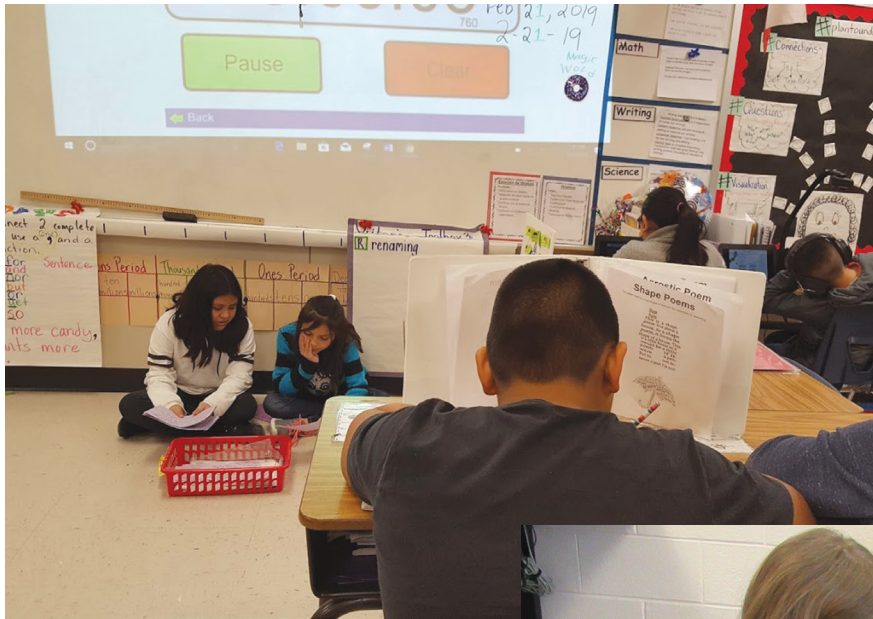
For example, if you've been teaching children how to use text features to locate or gain information, students can keep practicing this all year long at the Partner Reading station as they read informational text, as well as at the Inquiry and Research station. You don't need to have kids do this only the week you've taught it. When students become familiar with searching for information in a nonfiction text using features and graphics, it will be easier for them to transfer what they're learning to finding information in additional print and digital resources.

In Section 3 of this book, I'll show you how to teach and then have children practice for transfer in the Partner Reading station using what you've already taught. (No need to constantly create new stations materials!)

Simply change out **what** students read together and how they **respond** over time. Be intentional with your changes. Pay attention to student interests and how their understanding is deepening. Ask for children's input when possible.

## Why Are Literacy Stations Effective?

- This is **meaningful** work for the rest of the class during small group time.
- Children like to **talk** and to work with their **peers**. Enjoyment increases engagement!
- **Partner practice** helps students become **independent of the teacher**. Kids aren't working alone. They practice *with* a partner, doing tasks together.
- **Choice** and **student** ownership promote independence. At the Partner Reading station, students should have a choice of several texts to read together.
- **Transfer of learning** occurs as scholars work with familiar tasks and materials previously modeled by the teacher. For example, at the Partner Reading station, partners read and respond to text using familiar graphic organizers and academic vocabulary taught during whole group instruction.
- **English Learners (EL)** and children with language-based learning differences benefit from opportunities to read with a partner. They can help each other figure out new words, talk about what they understand (or are confused by), and develop language skills in the process. Look for EL Tips throughout this book.



Pairs of students work at a Partner Reading station and a Listening and Speaking station during small group time.

Two girls read a book together using one voice at the Partner Reading station. They sit on the floor to utilize every inch of space in the classroom.



A pair of boys read a picture book and talk about the characters using a conversation card. After they name the characters, they discuss the interactions of and relationships between those characters.