

This frog is leaping.



FOURTH EDITION

LITERACY

Helping Children Construct Meaning

J. DAVID COOPER

Literacy

Helping Children Construct Meaning

Fourth Edition

J. David Cooper

Ball State University

with an introduction by

Kathryn H. Au

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Preface

Success in literacy learning for *all* children continues to be an important national goal and priority (Learning First Alliance, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Evidence supporting a balanced literacy program as the way to achieve this goal continues to mount. *Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning*, 4th Edition, was written to support *all* preservice and inservice teachers' learning—to help them provide balanced literacy instruction for *all* students.

■ Background for this Edition

Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning, 4th Edition, builds on the extremely successful third edition. Not only was the third edition used in many college classrooms but it was also used as an inservice study group text for many elementary and middle schools. The practical nature of the fourth edition with its many sample lessons provides preservice and inservice teachers a wealth of ideas from which to develop their own instructional strategies.

Preservice and inservice teachers are becoming more and more aware of the need for research-based instructional programs and strategies. Preservice and inservice teachers are becoming more and more convinced that *all* children can learn to read and write. Therefore, the major goal for the fourth edition of this text was to provide *all* teachers of balanced literacy instruction strategies that are well grounded in the research.

■ Strategies and Lessons for Direct and Indirect Instruction

This text provides strategies and sample lessons for both direct and indirect instruction. Four complete pieces of literature are provided with updated sample lessons: (1) *Jamaica Tag-Along*; (2) *Mummies, Tombs, and Treasure*; (3) *My Brown Bear Barney*; and (4) *The Bicycle Man*. These lessons serve as models to help teachers develop their own lessons for a balanced literacy program. A new literacy lesson using a technology program, *The Little Planet and the Magic Hats*, is also provided.

■ Revisions in This Edition

The major thrusts of the revisions in this edition are in six major areas:

1. *Balanced Literacy Instruction*—The concept of balanced literacy instruction is maintained and updated throughout this text. A model for the balanced beginning literacy program presented in Chapter 4 shows how the beginning literacy program needs to differ from the program at grades 3 and beyond.

2. *Technology*—The use of technology has been woven into lessons and strategies throughout the text. Where appropriate, chapters conclude with a listing of technology resources. A new literacy lesson in Chapter 7 derives its instruction on prediction from *The Little Planet and the Magic Hats*, part of a literacy curriculum on a technology platform. In today's emergent technology explosion, it remains essential to put instructional goals first when evaluating the uses of materials now housed in technology.
3. *Direct and Indirect Instruction*—Strategies for both direct and indirect instruction are presented with emphasis on how they fit into a balanced literacy program. Instructional strategies with large and small groups and individual children are often a seamless combination and flow of approaches chosen by the expert teacher as a response to students' needs.
4. *Beginning Literacy Instruction*—A completely new chapter is provided on beginning literacy instruction. Numerous examples support all teachers' needs to give today's children grounding in word knowledge.
5. *Word Skills: Phonics and Structural Analysis for Teachers*—A new resource handbook at the end of the book helps all teachers learn the basic content of phonics and structural analysis. Its easy-to-find tabbed pages make it a handy reference.
6. *Spelling and Grammar*—Sample lessons for systematic and direct teaching of spelling and grammar connected to writing are included.

■ Text Features to Support All Literacy Instructors: Preservice and Inservice Teachers, Related Personnel, Family, and Community Members

Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning was written as a text for preservice and inservice teachers. A variety of instructional formats are provided to make the text user friendly:

- A graphic organizer for each chapter includes page numbers for ease of locating information.
- Both direct and indirect teaching strategies are presented with a clear explanation of the research and rationale behind the strategy.
- Photographs specifically taken for this text clearly illustrate key concepts and strategies.
- Fully developed literacy lessons, minilessons, and specific teaching strategies serve as models for developing additional lessons.
- Figures and tables bring out important strategies and information in an easy-to-use format.
- Examples of students' work are presented where appropriate.
- A bibliography of technology resources is presented at the end of appropriate chapters.
- Suggestions for additional reading are provided at the conclusion of each chapter to help teachers study areas of interest in more detail.

- ▶ A bibliography of all literature cited in each chapter is included to help teachers locate literature for classroom use.
- ▶ A complete list of references throughout the text is found at the conclusion of the book.

■ Organization and Scope of the Text

The eleven chapters and teacher resource handbook provide comprehensive coverage of topics important in helping teachers develop a balanced literacy program that utilizes both direct and indirect instruction.

Chapter 1, “Understanding Literacy: Learning and Constructing Meaning,” provides background on the changing views of reading, literacy learning, language acquisition, prior knowledge, and schema theory. Emphasis is placed on the appropriate roles of phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding as they relate to the construction of meaning.

Chapter 2, “Developing a Balanced Literacy Program,” presents the concept of a balanced literacy program and develops the need for both direct and indirect instruction using thematic units, literacy lessons, and minilessons. A sample literacy lesson is provided.

Chapter 3, “Activating and Developing Prior Knowledge,” presents background material supporting the importance of schema and prior knowledge for literacy development. It suggests strategies for helping students achieve independence in activating their own prior knowledge. A sample literacy lesson focusing on prior knowledge development is presented.

Chapter 4, “Beginning Literacy: Learning to Read and Spell Words and Construct Meaning,” is a totally new chapter focusing on the framework for a balanced beginning literacy program. The importance of heavier emphasis on decoding in the beginning literacy program is stressed. A set of instructional routines especially useful in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade is presented along with a sample literacy lesson.

Chapter 5, “Developing Vocabulary: Words and Meanings Beyond the Beginning Literacy Level,” focuses on how students develop vocabulary and emphasizes strategies leading to student independence. A sample literacy lesson is provided.

Chapter 6, “Responding and the Construction of Meaning,” presents responding as a source for student assessment and the development of students’ abilities to construct meaning. Techniques and strategies from journals to literature circles are presented.

Chapter 7, “Writing and the Construction of Meaning,” focuses on how to promote and support writing within the balanced literacy classroom. Emphasis is placed on how to teach spelling and grammar related to writing.

Chapter 8, “Teaching Strategies for Constructing Meaning,” shows elementary and middle school teachers how to directly and systematically model strategies for students. Five strategies supported by the research are presented.

Chapter 9, “Constructing Meaning Across the Curriculum,” applies many concepts developed in earlier chapters to the entire curriculum, and it gives a plan for developing cross-curricular thematic units.

Chapter 10, “Organizing and Managing the Balanced Literacy Classroom,” presents guidelines for planning and managing the literacy classroom at the elementary and middle school levels. Procedures for developing student routines are presented.

Chapter 11, “Assessment and Evaluation in the Balanced Literacy Classroom,” focuses on assessment as an integral part of instruction. A variety of alternatives and techniques for assessment are presented.

The Handbook Resource, “Word Skills: Phonics and Structural Analysis for Teachers,” is a new feature designed to help teachers develop a basic knowledge of the content of phonics and structural analysis. A practice exercise is provided for teachers to check their own knowledge.

Instructor’s Resource Manual

The Instructor’s Resource Manual that accompanies this text contains many ideas for using it in preservice courses as well as inservice training. The Instructor’s Resource Manual was developed in conjunction with Dr. Nancy D. Kiger of the University of Central Florida. For each chapter of the text, the manual provides organizing tools such as chapter outlines and summaries, questions and activities to encourage class discussion and active learning, and pedagogical aids such as transparency masters to reinforce key concepts in the text. The manual was developed as a flexible tool to complement individual instructors’ unique teaching styles.

Acknowledgments

This text continues to be a reflection of my continuing efforts to help preservice and inservice teachers do a more effective job of teaching *all* children to read and write. There are many people who have provided strong support and assistance in developing this fourth edition:

- Thousands of children and teachers over the last twenty years have provided many ideas and reactions that helped formulate my understanding of effective literacy instruction.
- Michael D. Robinson, Title I Instructional Specialist, read and reacted to every chapter and gave many valuable suggestions.
- Irene Boschken, K–6 Language Arts Coordinator; Janet McWilliams, literacy consultant; and Lynne Pistochini, Curriculum Resource Teacher, all gave many valuable suggestions for the new Chapter 4 on beginning reading.
- Dr. William Valmont, University of Arizona, made very helpful suggestions for the new Chapter 4.
- Dr. Nancy Kiger, professor, author, and special friend, not only developed the Instructor’s Resource Manual but gave many helpful suggestions for Chapter 4 and the Handbook Resource.
- Brenda Stone Anderson, my assistant, worked endless hours to input manuscript, proofread, and develop charts and tables. This project would not have been possible without her.

Ali Sullo, Editor-in-Chief and Vice President, Reading Language Arts at Houghton Mifflin, provided unbelievably strong support in revising this text. She read the entire manuscript in an efficient and thorough manner, offering many suggestions that helped focus the text. She also made it possible to continue the use of full pieces of literature as a basis for sample lessons. Her support reflects her continuing dedication to teachers and children.

Janet Edmonds, Development Editor, gave valuable suggestions for the revisions of each chapter. She provided solid leadership in developing the new technology focus. Nancy Benjamin, of Books By Design, saw the manuscript through production to a final user-friendly book. Loretta Wolozin, Senior Sponsoring Editor, continued to provide the strong support she has given me for fifteen years with this and earlier editions of this text.

The manuscript was also reviewed by college and university professors from across the country who gave valuable suggestions for improvements: Susan L. Brenner, Clarion University; Janie Knight, The University of Memphis; Jan LaBonty, The University of Montana; Karen M. Moore, California State University, Sacramento; and Jo-Ann Snyder, Wayne State University.

To all of the individuals mentioned—THANK YOU!

Finally, I find myself reflecting on the effort and time that I have put into this edition. I know that *all* children can learn to read and write if we provide good instruction. If we continue to provide balanced literacy instruction and avoid quick pendulum swings and fads, it is possible to have all children become successful readers and writers.

J. David Cooper

Introduction

Two groups of students in Jo Ann Wong-Kam's fifth-grade class were reading *Sing Down the Moon* by Scott O'Dell. The morning I observed, they were in the process of learning to conduct their own literature discussions. Jo Ann had the students prepare for these discussions by writing questions for their group to address. The students had discovered that some questions fostered discussion while others cut it short.

Jo Ann called the two groups together to discuss what they were learning about questions. Nicole said that some questions were just too easy. An example of such a question was, "Who was Bright Morning?" These questions only had one answer, Thomas pointed out.

Kanani said that harder questions seemed to work better. An example of such a question was, "What was the theme?" Renee stated that these questions had many answers and that you had to think about the whole book in order to answer them. Kanani observed that these questions forced you to explain why you chose your answer.

Jo Ann called the students' attention to the way certain questions started. The students decided that questions beginning with *why* usually required considerable discussion, while those beginning with *who* or *where* did not. Kanani suggested starting questions with *how come*, and Jo Ann noted that this was another way of saying *why*. Several students thought it best to avoid questions that could be answered with a *yes* or *no*, but Kona pointed out that a *yes* or *no* question was all right if it also made you give reasons for your answer.

It was a struggle for the students to compose their own discussion questions, and Jo Ann wanted to be sure they understood the purpose of the activity. "When I do all the questions, who's doing the thinking?" Jo Ann asked. "You are," the students replied. "Yes," Jo Ann said, "and when you ask the questions, who's doing the thinking?" "We are," the students answered.

In the fourth edition of *Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning*, J. David Cooper shows teachers how to help students do their own thinking about text, as Jo Ann was doing with her students. Creating opportunities for students to read, write, and make their own discoveries about literacy is an important first step. However, when the goal is higher-level thinking about text, even the most capable students benefit from a teacher's expert guidance. The least capable students absolutely require such guidance if they are to read and write well. Instruction and guidance provided by well-prepared teachers is the key to having students achieve the third of America's National Education Goals, which emphasizes higher-level thinking, including reasoning ability, problem solving, application of knowledge, and effective communication.

David recognizes that constructivist approaches leading students to higher-level thinking are much more complex and demanding for teachers than earlier

skills-oriented, behaviorist approaches to literacy instruction. In writing this textbook, he has translated his wealth of knowledge about current research and effective practice into teaching strategies, minilessons, and plans for units, all easily understood and readily applied in actual classroom settings.

David argues for a balanced literacy program. The need to understand the importance of balance is especially acute in the area of beginning literacy, the most controversial of topics in our field. This edition features a timely and sensible new chapter on beginning literacy. Traditionally, advocates of code-emphasis approaches have been pitted against advocates of meaning-emphasis approaches. In taking a balanced view, David shows why both decoding (or word identification) and meaning making (or comprehension) are necessary parts of beginning literacy instruction. In keeping with the consensus emerging in the field, he believes that children are best served when we provide them with both skill instruction and motivating contexts for real reading.

What needs to be balanced in literacy instruction? David highlights the need for a balance between the affective dimension, including motivation, and the cognitive dimension in the teaching of literacy. He emphasizes a balance between time spent teaching reading and time spent teaching writing, as well as opportunities to integrate the two. He stresses the importance of teacher-led instruction and modeling while pointing out that the teacher's support must gradually be withdrawn, to lead students to independence. He calls our attention to strategies and skills in areas such as word identification, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary, while placing these strategies and skills in the larger context of purposeful reading and writing. He argues for the value both of responding to literature and of reading for information. A balanced literacy program reflects a consideration of all these factors.

The movement toward balanced, constructivist approaches and away from skills-oriented approaches can be a cause of concern to those unfamiliar with the benefits of the new forms of instruction. About a week after I had made the observations in Jo Ann's fifth grade class, I received a phone call from a staff member at the Hawaii state legislature. The staff member wanted to know why teachers had stopped teaching phonics. He expressed the opinion that classrooms today were undisciplined when compared to those of the past, with far too much noise and activity. In his day, he said, teachers had enforced discipline and made sure that students sat quietly and listened. No, I replied, teachers had not stopped teaching phonics. Yes, I admitted, classrooms today were noisier and more active than in the past. Then I explained why students who learn nothing but phonics and do nothing but sit quietly and listen are not going to be excellent readers and writers.

This encounter reminded me of why we must spread the word about the virtues of a balanced literacy program. Our lives as literacy educators would be a lot easier if those simpler, skills-oriented models had worked. But they have not proved equal to the task of preparing students to do their own higher-level thinking about text.

To date, only constructivist, balanced approaches have shown the potential for leading students to become thoughtful readers and writers. We must guard against the mistaken notion that a return to the past will enable us to address the challenge of teaching reading and writing to the diverse population of students in today's

schools. Instead of looking back, we must move forward, applying the powerful new ideas now available. By making balanced literacy instruction understandable and practical for all teachers, this new edition of David's well-regarded textbook brings us closer to our goal of high-level literacy for all students.

Kathryn H. Au

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