

## A Dozen Ways Principals Can Support Best Practices in Literacy

1. **Be a reader and a writer.** Visit classrooms and read aloud or discuss books with children. Write and share your writing in the school community.
2. **Be an audience for students.** Read kids' work on the walls and in classrooms. Let the authors know you've read appreciate their words. Have a principal's mailbox, and enter into active correspondence with kids.
3. **Make sure classrooms have all the supplies and materials needed** to create a true workshop atmosphere; above all, this means books. Help teachers tap the right budget lines to buy books, encourage parents to raise money for more books, hold bake sales if necessary to get more books into classrooms. For their writing workshops, teachers and kids need plenty of paper, pens, folders, notepads, scissors, blank books, post-it notes, computers and typewriters. You can purchase a hot-glue book binding machine for less than \$300—a superb way to honor the importance of kid-made books.
4. **Celebrate literacy in your school.** Community incorporate reading and writing into special school events and programs. Create space and occasions for displaying and sharing written work noncompetitively. Everyone needs an audience, not a contest that stress only quantity of reading or writing degrade literacy and invite cheating. Example: DoDEA Reads activities.
5. **Help teachers communicate with parents *proactively*,** to let them know how reading and writing are being taught, and what the school has embraced this model of literacy education; and reactively, to step in and support the teachers when uninformed or skeptical parents question or attack their instructional choices.
6. **Use your role as instructional leader, supervisor, and evaluator.** Let teachers know it's good to use language arts/reading time to read aloud, do storytelling, conduct a daily reading or writing workshop, share dialogue journals, or adopt other promising practices. In your classroom visitations, evaluate congruently: if teachers are using a process approach, you'll see nonpresentational, highly individualized, student-centered workshop activities in which the teacher mostly takes a facilitator/coach role.
7. **Work at the school/district level to align the curriculum, (what is taught) and assessments to the ELA standards.** It may be necessary to help teachers find alternatives to skill-and-drill workbooks, and other materials that undermine the new standards-based curriculum. Talk to fellow administrators and help them understand and buy into the new paradigm.
8. **Lead and support a schoolwide commitment and approach to literacy.** High-achieving schools have also successfully shifted the responsibility for students' literacy from the English teacher to all teachers. The academic standards call for that shift, too, with their emphasis on reading, writing, and communication skills in all content areas. To make that shift takes time. Teachers need to learn about literacy, come to consensus on an approach,

and develop, try out, and refine new strategies. The whole school staff can choose to test some school proven strategies through school improvement efforts.

9. **Bring in teacher-consultants, the local reading and writing initiatives or other genuinely facilitative people to help your teachers** explore the philosophy and classroom practices of literacy-based instruction. After the workshop phase, provide the necessary follow-up and support to help teachers "install" new practices in their classrooms.
10. **Nurture continuing growth and emerging peer leadership among your staff** by sending volunteer teachers to workshops, courses, summer institutes, or teachers-training-teachers by giving them a chance to lead, to share with colleagues.
11. **Even though you don't have time, read the research, scan the journals, and pass along ideas and articles to your teachers.** Order books that teachers request for their own growth—from Heinemann, Stenhouse, Richard Owen, the NCTE, IRA, Teachers College Press, Boynton/Cook, and others.
12. **Help teachers get TIME to talk about teaching together, exchange ideas, work in joint projects, think and grow as a faculty.**