Carson-Dellosa Publishing

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Children with Disabilities:

Reading and Writing the Four-Blocks® Way

The Four-Blocks® Literacy Model

- Extensive Examples of Assistive Technology
- Lessons for Each of the Four Blocks
- Variations for Students with Disabilities
- Teacher's Checklist for Each of the Four Blocks
- Commonly Asked Questions

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Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company, Inc.

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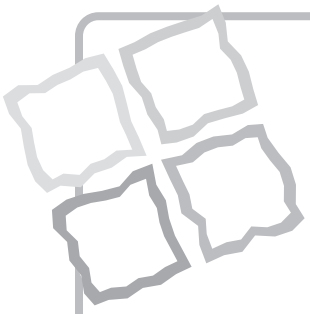

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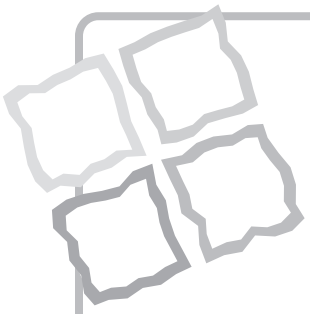

Why Did We Write This Book?

The Four-Blocks® Literacy Framework was initially created in 1989 in an attempt to develop daily instruction that responded to individual differences in classrooms (Cunningham, Hall, and Defee, 1991). The Four Blocks—Guided Reading, Self-Selected Reading, Writing, and Working with Words—represent four different approaches to teaching children to read. The Four-Blocks® Framework acknowledges that children do not all learn in the same way. Consequently, the framework provides them with a range of experiences to support various learning preferences and profiles of relative strengths and weaknesses. Four Blocks also acknowledges that children differ in their literacy competence and consequently attempts to make each Block as multilevel as possible (Cunningham, Hall, and Sigmon, 1999).

We first learned about Four Blocks in the early 1990s from Jim Cunningham, our professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Through our collaboration at the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, we have used the Four-Blocks® Framework to help children with a broad range of disabilities learn to read and write. We have used Four Blocks to help children with severe cognitive impairments improve their ability to read with understanding. We have used Four Blocks to help children with learning disabilities learn to decode and apply those skills in real reading and writing. We have used Four Blocks to help children who could not talk improve their ability to converse with peers and teachers through improved spelling and writing. We have even used Four Blocks to support an entire field of assistive technology service providers and manufacturers in developing a comprehensive view of effective literacy instruction.

As calls for systematic instruction have increased in recent years, we have held firmly to the Four-Blocks® Framework as an example of research-based, systematic instruction that addresses literacy instruction in a comprehensive manner. We have found that the Four-Blocks® Framework can address the type of systematic phonics instruction many children with disabilities require without neglecting the need to support their continued development of fluency, comprehension, and motivation to read and write. Our experience and research with students with a broad range of disabilities have left us convinced that there is no single program that will address all of their literacy learning needs, nor is there a single program that will address any individual child's needs over time. While there is no simple answer to the reading difficulties experienced by children with disabilities in our schools, the Four-Blocks® Framework provides an organizing structure for the complex answers.

We have written this book first and foremost to support the efforts of general education teachers and the children they teach with disabilities in their inclusive classrooms. We have learned firsthand that children with disabilities require significant supports and informed teachers to succeed in any instructional

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setting. We believe that the Four-Blocks® Framework provides that significant support. We hope the ideas, strategies, and resources shared in this text will contribute to informing teachers of ways to truly meet the learning needs and preferences of **all** students in the general classroom.

In writing this book, we also hope to help teachers working in special education classrooms have more success in teaching their students to read and write so that these students might gain greater and more successful access to the general education program. While we believe the social, linguistic, and cultural contexts of general education classrooms create richer and more varied supports for literacy learning, the principles of instruction in the Four-Blocks® Framework apply equally to children in general education or special education environments. The critical issue is how to make good instruction accessible given the nature of children's significant differences in areas such as understanding what a teacher says, accessing writing tools, seeing texts, or attending to lessons.

Individual Differences That Impact Literacy Learning

In order to make the Four-Blocks® Framework accessible to children with disabilities, we consider six general areas where children with disabilities often differ in significant ways from their classmates. These differences are significant because they impact the relative success or difficulty that children experience while participating in literacy activities. The six areas include **communication**, **cognition**, **physical abilities**, **senses** (primarily vision and hearing), **affect**, and **attention**. As educators, we find that these areas of potential difference are more informative to instructional planning than the label assigned to characterize a student's type of disability (health impairment, learning disability, etc.).

For example, if a teacher is told that Edgar is going to be in her second-grade class and that Edgar has autism, she is unsure of what, if anything, she must modify to help Edgar learn to read and write. If, however, the teacher reads in Edgar's student file that he can respond successfully to direct questions and requests, but he has difficulty initiating conversations or asking his own questions (i.e., he has significant communication differences), then the teacher can structure Guided Reading lessons to support his successful participation. If a teacher learns that Edgar can attend closely and for long periods of time to computer-supported activities but that he has difficulty engaging in paper-and-pencil tasks (i.e., significant attention differences), then she can incorporate technologies to support Edgar's writing. If the teacher observes that Edgar is successful participating and learning in small groups but that he is frustrated by working independently (i.e., significant affective differences), then the teacher can use Edgar's peers to support his engagement in Self-Selected Reading.

Once we have identified one or more significant differences, our problem-solving efforts focus on identifying or developing adaptations that neither change the fundamental nature of an activity nor make it more difficult or less desirable for children to achieve than the original activity. For example, the Word Wall is a central component of the Working with Words Block. The purposes of the Word Wall are to teach children to read and spell words with automaticity and accuracy, while teaching them strategies to use the known words on the wall to read and spell unknown words. (For a more complete description, see pages 123–124 in *The Teacher's*

Guide to the Four Blocks® by Cunningham, Hall, and Sigmon, Carson-Dellosa, 1999.) One possible modification for a Word Wall might be to provide children with a portable chart that has each of the words written on a card and attached with hook-and-loop tape. Such a modification might serve several purposes such as:

- increasing the child's attention by providing materials to manipulate
- increasing the child's ability to indicate if she cannot speak
- increasing the child's ability to see the words if she has low vision
- increasing the child's success in selecting the correct words for the activities that involve the Word Wall

During a Word Wall lesson, this modification would allow children to participate by selecting whole words that the teacher has asked the class to identify or write. This particular modification should **not** enable children to participate without ever spelling the words letter by letter. If this were the only modification provided, children would be less likely to develop automaticity and accuracy in spelling or to use knowledge of those words to read and spell other words. However, providing children not only with whole words to use in identifying and talking about the Word Wall but also with individual letters to use in spelling the words would enable them to engage in the same spelling practice as the rest of the class. The instructional goal of the original activity would be maintained while access to the activity has been modified.

Children may have significant differences in one or more of the six areas that require adaptations of the materials, instruction, or environment. These differences may be mild as in the case of children who have partial hearing loss in one ear. These differences may be moderate as in the case of children with Down syndrome who struggle with conceptual learning, such as responding to **wh-** questions. These differences may be severe as in the case of girls with Rett syndrome who have limited or no use of their hands and little or no speech.

Some teachers may find it difficult to plan and implement literacy instruction for children with significant communication impairments. These teachers may find it difficult to imagine how children who cannot talk can learn to read and write, or they may be unsure of how to interact with children who point to pictures in lieu of talking. Other teachers may find it difficult to plan and implement literacy instruction for children with multiple disabilities (i.e., those students who may have severe communication, cognitive, **and** physical impairments). These teachers may find it difficult, for example, to support writing when children cannot spell, hold a pencil, or convey in speech their interests or experiences. It is our intent in this book to suggest specific adaptations, strategies, and resources to support the learning of these and other children with disabilities.

A Technology Primer

We wrote this book for one final reason: to increase teachers' awareness and use of the wide variety of technologies that now make it possible for children with disabilities not just to participate in, but, more importantly, to succeed in the general education reading and writing

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curriculum. Technologies can increase children's productivity, simplify complex tasks, provide informative feedback, supply a voice for children who cannot speak, replace pencils and books for children whose fingers or hands cannot manipulate traditional tools and media, and meet a variety of sensory needs. We hope that readers will view these technologies as tools (i.e., as means to ends). Technology **does not** replace good instruction; it makes good instruction more accessible given the nature of children's significant differences. When we consider the use of technology in the classroom and beyond, we constantly remind ourselves that technology involves both method and material. Its value is determined by children's increased participation, understanding, and feelings of competence, not to mention classmates' and teachers' greater awareness of these students' capabilities and feelings.

This initial discussion of technology is intended to provide a few examples of the types of technologies we will address in this book. It is also intended to highlight some of the rules and problem-solving strategies that we employ in making decisions regarding the types of technological supports we provide children with special needs engaged in literacy learning and use.

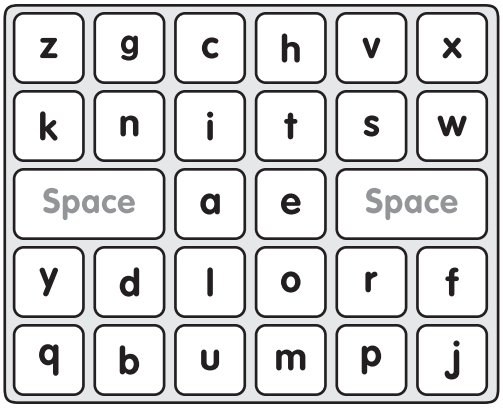
Technology in special education is called "assistive technology" because it serves a supportive role. Within the category of assistive technology, there are both light-tech and high-tech methods and materials that support children in accessing classroom instruction. Light-tech involves tools that are not computer based, such as a headstick pointer for children with cerebral palsy who cannot use their fingers. High-tech includes computer-based tools, such as software that enables children with significant health impairments, who may not be able to hold a pencil or who fatigue rapidly, to dictate text into a word processor or control a computer with voice commands. Assistive technologies extend well beyond classroom use and include such items as wheelchairs and leg braces. We will limit our discussions in this book to instructional applications of assistive technologies that support participation and learning in literacy experiences.

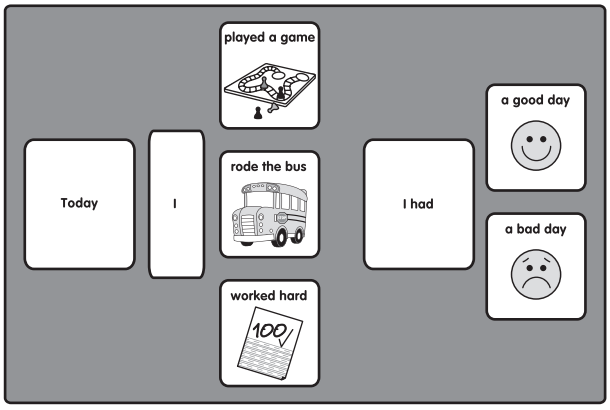
Many of the light-tech suggestions in this book require little more than a new way to use many of the materials already in classrooms, schools, and homes. On the other hand, some of the high-tech suggestions extend well beyond the scope of the computers that line the back wall of the classroom or the computer lab down the hall. While we will attempt to provide examples for uses of existing technologies, such as word processing and drawing programs, we will also attempt to highlight new technologies that may support particular children.

High-tech solutions for reading and writing can be described in terms of the level of support they provide children. For example, one common solution to significant differences in hand use is a word processing program on a standard computer. We often see computers with word processors listed as modifications on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Children who need modifications to meet physical needs often achieve dramatic improvements in the quantity and quality of their writing when schools support them in using a word processing program and standard computer keyboard rather than a pen or pencil.

Children with severe or multiple impairments, however, often require more than a word processing program. For example, sometimes a talking word processor provides additional support that children with attention or mild cognitive impairments require. Hearing the computer say letters as they are typed, pronounce whole words when a space is typed after a string of letters, or read whole sentences when end punctuation is typed provides the feedback they require to remain focused on the writing task at hand.

Sometimes children's physical limitations are so severe that an alternative to the regular keyboard or typing is required. Alternative keyboards have much larger keys and are flexible in terms of key arrangement (for example, frequency order instead of QWERTY) and content (for example, pictures or words or phrases instead of letters). Touching a picture key can result in a whole word or phrase being typed into the word processing program (talking or not).





Alternative keyboards can also support children with visual impairments because textured symbols or Braille can be used on the keyboard layout.

Sometimes children's physical impairments, language impairments, or spelling difficulties are so severe that word prediction software is required. Word prediction software is used in combination with a child's word processor. As the child types the first letter of a word, the prediction software

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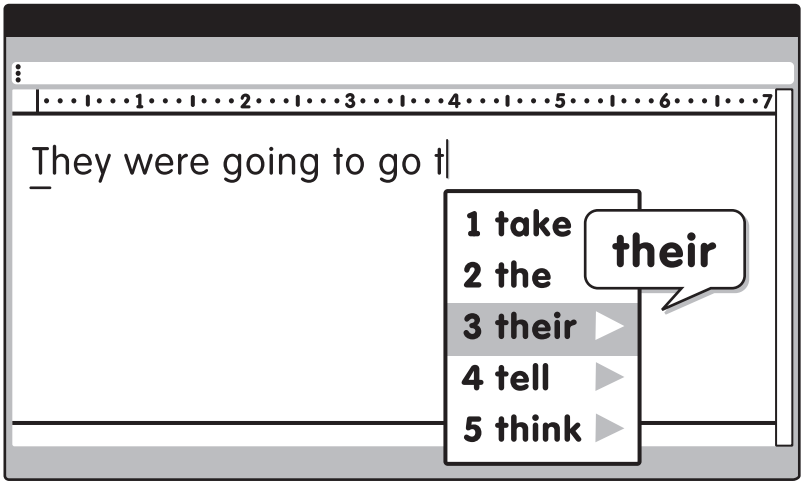
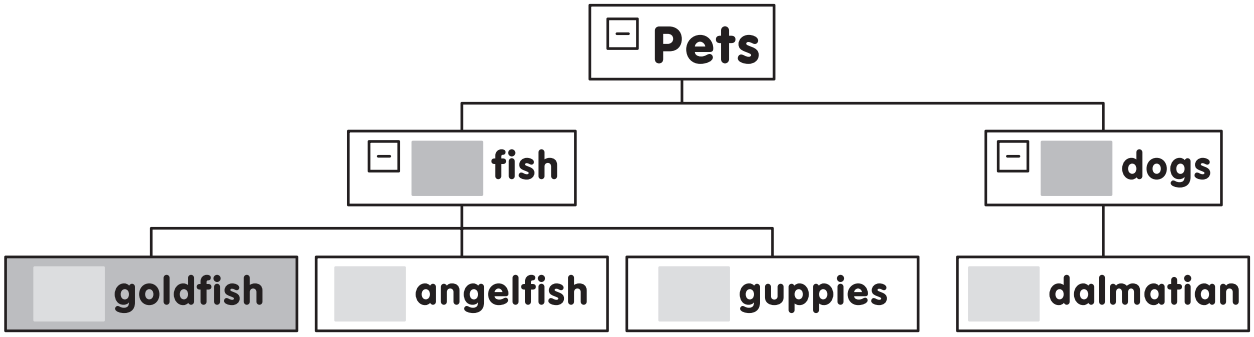
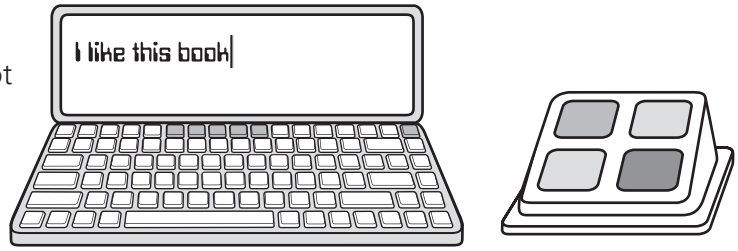
shows a list of words it predicts the child is trying to type. This prediction is based on the child's written vocabulary, words the child has typed most recently, frequency of words in the English language, and rules of grammar. If the word that the child is trying to type is in the list, the child can select the word with a second keystroke. If the child is unable to read the words, she can point to each with the cursor and hear the computer speak the words aloud.



Sometimes children's cognitive or learning impairments are so severe that planning software is required. Planning software is typically used with a teacher or another adult's assistance for children in grades 1–3. Planning software allows children to generate ideas they want to write about. The software enables brainstorming, connecting of ideas, or sequencing of information. Picture and graphic support can be added to the resulting computer-based web. Planning software also will transform a web into a sequential outline that can be pasted into a word processor to guide the child's writing.





Some children's communication impairments are so severe that they cannot speak intelligibly or they cannot speak at all. These children often require augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices that provide a means to converse with others. Communication software and hardware provides such children with the tools that they require to interact with classmates and adults. Typically, communication devices enable children to select pictures, letters, or words and combine them into messages that are spoken by the device using synthesized or digitized speech. Many of these devices can also be attached to computers to become alternative keyboards and allow the child to use the same device both for spoken and for written communication. There are also communication software programs that can be loaded into a computer, typically a laptop, that can accompany children in different environments.

Good sources for additional information about technologies for supporting children with disabilities may be found on the Internet. Linda Burkhart's Web site (*http://www.lburkhart.com/*) includes ideas for adapting instructional materials, using the Internet in classrooms, and teaching in single-computer classrooms and links to other useful resources. The Web site of the National Center to Improve Practice (*http://www2.edc.org/NCIP*) has information about classroom technology as well as video clips of children with disabilities using these technologies to participate in both general education and special education classrooms. Finally, Special Education Training British Columbia (*http://www.setbc.org*) has information specifically about technologies that support the implementation of the Four-Blocks with students with sensory or communication impairments.

The Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) is a not-for-profit membership organization of manufacturers, sellers, or providers of technology-based assistive devices and/or services. Their members include those who are focused on a variety of assistive technologies including augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. ATIA hosts an annual conference and their Web site offers links to all of its members' Web sites. For more information go to http://www.atia.org.

To reiterate, we see this book as a companion text to *The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks®* (Cunningham, Hall, and Sigmon, 1999). We have used Four Blocks long enough with sufficient success to believe that good instruction is good instruction. We do not believe that a different curriculum is required in order for children with disabilities to succeed in learning to read and write. We have learned, however, that teachers must attend consciously and thoughtfully to the significant learning differences of children with disabilities in order to make good instruction accessible to these students. We hope that this book will help teachers accomplish the goal of teaching **all** children to read and write.

Overview

The remaining chapters of this book largely parallel those of *The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks*® (Cunningham, Hall, and Sigmon, 1999). We have not attempted to explain the Blocks in detail. The original authors did that wonderfully. What we have attempted is a succinct explanation of the impact of individual differences on learning opportunity and access to the materials and experiences central to each Block. We describe adaptations and modifications of tools, materials, experiences, and the classroom that we have developed or observed other teachers use in teaching children with disabilities to read and write. Following are two descriptions of a day in a Four-Blocks primary classroom. The first is a look at the same classroom described on pages 4–19 in *The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks*® but with the addition of children with disabilities. The second description is that of a special education classroom implementing the Four Blocks. While we include a schedule with activities, such as snack and physical education, so that teachers may have a clear view of the flow of the day, we describe in detail only the literacy instruction.

Sample Four-Blocks Day in an Inclusive Classroom

Children with disabilities have special needs that may require significant support of special educators and related services personnel, such as speech-language pathologists (SLPs), if they are to succeed in general education. They require instructional adaptations and the integrated use of technologies. They push the concepts of multimethod and multilevel beyond the current comfort level of many of us as classroom teachers.

This inclusive classroom has three children with special needs. The first is a boy, James. James has an educational label of language and learning disabilities. What is important to know about James is that he has difficulty following multistep verbal directions. He can attend for long periods of time when he is in interactive settings, if he has the supports of visual models and step-by-step verbal directions. He enjoys social interactions with his peers. He is very much aware of the differences between his reading and writing skills and those of his peers.

The second child is a girl, Linda. She has a medical diagnosis of Down syndrome and an educational label of mental retardation. It is important to know that Linda is highly motivated to pursue her own broad interests. She is very social and enjoys being with other children at all times. Given opportunity, she attempts to take a leadership role in play and academic pursuits—even if she doesn't quite understand the activity. Her speech is difficult to understand and is limited to three- and four-word phrases, but her peers seem to have little difficulty in communicating effectively with her. Fine motor impairments make it difficult for her to write with a pen or pencil; nonetheless, she prefers them to the computer. Linda loves books.

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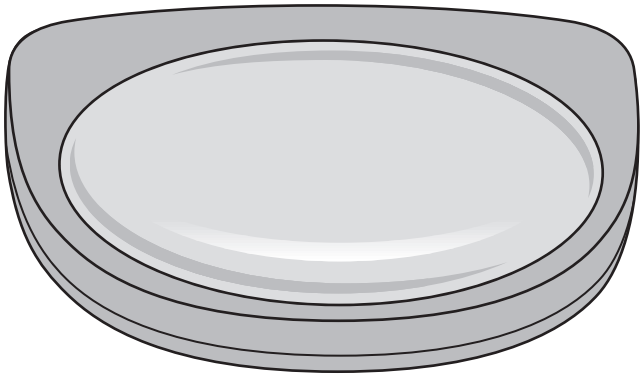
The third child is Alyssa. Alyssa has a medical diagnosis of spastic cerebral palsy and an educational label of multiple impairments. Alyssa's body language suggests that she enjoys being in school. She can communicate via facial expressions and is learning to use her eyes to look at choices presented approximately two feet in front of her on a clear acrylic board called an eye-gaze frame. It is unclear what her cognitive level is because she has no clear way to demonstrate what she does and does not know. Her physical impairments are such that she is unable to use her hands purposefully.

One of the key tenets of inclusion is that the proportion of children with disabilities in any given class should match the natural proportions of people with disabilities in the community. Clustering children with disabilities in classrooms designated as "inclusion" classes is often viewed as a more efficient means of including children with disabilities in order to pool resources and support services. Unfortunately, having more than one child with significant disabilities or a few children with mild or moderate disabilities can stretch teachers and general education resources to frustrating limits. Nonetheless, for the purpose of describing how children with a range of disabilities can be included in mainstream Four-Blocks classrooms, James, Linda, and Alyssa are all members of this classroom.

10–20 minutes

Opening (10–20 minutes)

The children enter and prepare for the day. One of Linda's friends has walked with her from the bus and reminds her that the teacher is waiting for them on the rug. Linda and her friend sit down as the children begin to share the activities that they enjoyed over the weekend. A teaching assistant gets Alyssa's BIGmack® (AbleNet, Inc.) out of her backpack and puts it on her wheelchair tray. Before another child has finished talking, Alyssa puts her hand on the four-inch round BIGmack® producing the recorded message, "I got to go to the mall this weekend." The teacher reminds Alyssa to wait for others to finish before she shares. She also reminds the teaching assistant to leave the BIGmack® on the wheelchair tray to help Alyssa learn to listen and wait rather than responding reflexively and touching the BIGmack® whenever it is placed on her tray. When the first child finishes, the teacher returns to Alyssa, "What were you telling us about your weekend, Alyssa?" It takes a few seconds, but Alyssa touches the BIGmack® again. Other children chime in with their own family adventures.



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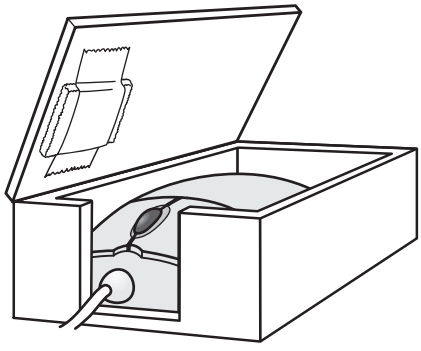
Then, the teacher shows the children several new books about animals that she is going to place in a book basket. One child asks, "Does that mean we're gonna learn about animals?" The teacher responds, "You're right! Whenever we start a new unit in social studies or science, I gather new library books." All of the children are anxious to look at the books, but it is the teacher's policy that they have to wait until Self-Selected Reading time. She has found that this practice heightens children's interest. However, she quickly learned this year that what enticed other children merely frustrated Linda. In the first week of school, Linda missed Guided Reading twice when her insistence on looking at the books escalated into emotional outbursts that required her temporary removal from the classroom. Rather than give in to Linda's demands or continue to remove her from instruction she needed, the team devised a plan to allow Linda to explore the books for a few minutes until a timer signaled a transition to Guided Reading. Now three weeks later, Linda needs only a verbal reminder that she can look at the book for just a few minutes until Guided Reading begins. Over the next few weeks, the team will work with Linda to select the book she will look at later and put it in a special spot. The team is confident that before the end of the year, Linda will be able to wait just like all of the other children.

30–40 minutes

The Guided Reading Block (30–40 minutes)

This morning, the teacher has selected *Spiders* by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House, 1994) for the Guided Reading lesson. The book relates to their new unit on animals and is at the average reading level of her class. The class will read this book for three days this week and will read an easier book on Thursday and Friday. The school has 15 copies of *Spiders*, which the teacher has checked out. With the help of the occupational therapist (OT) and the SLP who work with Alyssa, the teacher has also created an adapted version of the book for the computer. The OT scanned and imported the illustrations into a multimedia software program. She also added a few mpeg videos of spiders to augment Alyssa's understanding by searching the Internet with the AltaVista video search engine (*http://www.altavista.com/video/default*). The SLP added the text, which the computer will read aloud in synthesized speech when the volume is turned up. Clicking the mouse can turn the pages of the resulting electronic book. The mouse has been put into a small cardboard box that has been turned into a "mouse house" so that Alyssa will not push the mouse away accidentally and instead can turn the pages independently by hitting the top of the box.



When the special education team first suggested adding these electronic, adapted versions of the books to the school's multiple-copy library, the librarian raised concerns about copyright law. The OT's research revealed that books can be adapted to be accessible for individual children with special needs as long as the adaptations are not reproduced or distributed separately from the original version. The multiple-copy library now stores one adapted copy of each title on a read-only CD inside a plastic pocket on the back cover of the book. The electronic version can only be used with the disk inserted, and the original version of the book is placed right next to the computer, often in the hands of a reading partner, when the CD is in use.

Before the children arrived this morning, the teacher marked a good stopping point in the books with paper clips and index cards. She put the same reminder on a sticky note attached to the computer screen where Alyssa will read with her partner. The teacher carefully assigns partners to work with Alyssa and the other children with special needs in the class. Her goal is to create pairs that can work together productively and independently. The first pair she calls always includes Alyssa because it takes a few minutes to load the electronic version of the book. As she calls each remaining pair to the reading area, she hands them a copy of the book and tells them that they may look at the book while they are waiting but that they cannot remove or go past the paper clip. She gives Linda's partner a reminder to make sure she gives Linda a chance to talk about the illustrations, and she gives James's partner a reminder to give him enough time before helping with difficult words. The entire routine is familiar to everyone since the teacher often uses a paper clip to show students where to stop and encourages them to look at the illustrations while they wait for everyone to gather.

Once the class has assembled, the teacher notes how comfortable she has become with the mixture of children sitting in chairs and on the rug during Guided Reading. She recalls the first few weeks of school when she and the aide tried to take Alyssa out of her chair to sit on the floor with her peers so that everyone was physically equal. Putting her back in her chair and getting set to read took almost all of the time they had allotted for partner reading. The teacher remembers what a difficult time James and Linda had sitting in undefined spaces on the floor with their peers all around. She remembers that first difficult conversation with the special education teacher, when she wondered how she would ever manage with such difficult children in her already busy room.

Now, the solution seems so simple. Some children can sit better and attend more easily when they are in chairs. Others do better on the floor. Alyssa is now sitting next to a peer in the "chair row." James sits in a child-size rocking chair that allows him to move without disturbing his peers. Linda, motivated to sit with her friends who were in the "floor row," has learned to use a carpet square to help her remain in her personal space.

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Picture Walk
The teacher introduces the new book with a "picture walk." She asks everyone to look at the book cover in order to identify the title and author. After students discuss the cover, they continue exploring the remaining pages up to the paper clip. They name all of the things they see and read captions and labels together with the teacher. The teacher highlights phonetic spellings, like **uh**-**RACK**-**nid**, pronouncing them herself and asking children to pronounce them with her. After they have read three words together, she says, "Okay, everyone, let's read them once more. This time, let's read them in our heads like Alyssa does. Ready?" Then, she points to each part and hums each syllable as she points to it. Before Alyssa came to her class, the teacher knew that readers have inner voices that they use when they read, but she had never considered teaching children about their inner voices. Recently, she has noticed that her class is quieter during Self-Selected Reading. It seems that more children are developing their ability to read silently. She wonders how much her efforts to make Alyssa aware of her inner voice have influenced the development of this skill in all of the children.

The teacher reminds the class to write a few facts they learn about spiders on their index cards when they finish the assigned reading. Alyssa's partner knows that she and Alyssa will each pick a fact from a list that the teacher has written on a sheet of paper next to the computer. Since Alyssa doesn't have any way to talk about or write what she learned, the teacher has prepared a list of five facts about spiders from the book. All of the facts are in the book, but only three appear in the section the children are reading for today. After Alyssa and her partner finish reading, the partner will read each fact aloud and ask Alyssa if that is the one she wants to share with the group. Next she will record the fact on the BIGmack® (AbleNet, Inc.) for Alyssa to share with the group when they reconvene. Finally, the partner will select her own fact to share.

Partner Reading
The timer is set for 12 minutes of partner reading. Children spread out around the room. James and his partner would like to sit on the pillows in the reading area, but the teacher reminds them how difficult it is for them to remain on task when they are not sitting in chairs. They compromise and sit together in the teacher's big rocking chair. James holds the book, turns the pages, and describes the pictures while his partner does all of the reading.

Linda and her partner are sitting next to each other with their backs against the wall. Linda points to the title and reads, "Spiders," before turning the page, pointing to the title again, and reading "Spiders." Linda's partner, Katie, has figured out various ways to get Linda involved in the reading. Today, Katie stops when she comes to the word **spider** while reading, points, and says, "You read it, Linda." Linda eagerly examines the word and says, "spider," on each occasion.

Alyssa and her partner sit at the computer. Alyssa is hitting the top of the mouse house with her hand to "turn the page" each time her partner pauses at the end of a page of text. The instructional assistant turned off the sound before she left Alyssa and her partner at the computer to finish their reading for the day. Later, during Self-Selected Reading, Alyssa can chose to reread this section of her book with the sound turned on.

As the teacher circulates, she listens to partners read and compliments them on both their reading and their cooperation. She reminds James and Alyssa that they are listening to their partners read, so that they can share one new thing they have learned about spiders with the whole group.

After 12 minutes, the timer sounds, and the children move back to the reading area. Pairs who have not finished reading gather also and finish their reading while the teacher moves on with the lesson. While a couple of children continue to read, the teacher starts recording the spider facts that children share. She tries to include James and Linda early in the sharing process so that they can successfully share a new fact they learned. She often explicitly asks Alyssa for a contribution if Alyssa doesn't contribute independently with her BIGmack® (AbleNet, Inc.). Once all of the children have had a chance to share new spider facts, the teacher collects the books and reminds the children that they will finish reading the book and adding more facts to their chart tomorrow.

30 minutes

The Working with Words Block (30 minutes)

Following the Guided Reading Block, the children go to their seats and get ready for the Working with Words Block. Every day, the children complete a Word Wall activity and another activity that is designed to develop decoding and spelling skills. Linda goes to the computer that Alyssa had been using and independently launches the word processing program she will need. Using the computer keyboard during the first portion of the Working with Words Block allows Linda to keep up with the pace of the lesson since her handwriting is so labored.

Word Walls

Each Monday, the teacher adds five new words to the Word Wall. The five words are carefully selected to represent words that children need for their reading and writing. The words are arranged alphabetically by first letter and have colorful paper behind them to help children attend to the shapes of the words. This year, the words on the wall all have fluorescent colors behind them, and the teacher has had to be more careful than in the past in planning what color goes with each word. Instead of simply making sure that similar words were different colors, the teacher has to make sure that each of seven colors is used with each initial letter before any of the seven is repeated.

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