Using the Four Block Literacy Framework for Students with Disabilities
Developed in 1989-91 by Patricia Cunningham, Dorothy Hall & Margaret Defee

First Implemented in 1st-3rd grade classes in North Carolina

Recently expanded to include models for:

- Kindergarten classes – “Building Blocks”
- 4th – 6th grade classes – “Big Blocks”
Children are different in the way they learn, so several different approaches are incorporated daily into reading/writing instruction.

Children enter our classes at varying language & literacy levels, so each instructional block is as multi-level as possible.

Children have different personalities/needs, so substantial instructional support is provided to students who struggle and who need challenge.
RESEARCH

- Four Blocks Literacy Model Website: http://www.four-blocks.com/research.htm
- Pat & Dottie’s Website: www.wfu.edu/fourblocks
- Children with Disabilities: Reading & Writing the Four-Blocks Way by Karen Erickson & David Koppenhaver
Guided Reading Block
30-40 minutes

- Goals are to increase students’
  - Background knowledge, oral vocabulary meanings, and comprehension skills
  - Application of reading strategies in various text types
  - Reading fluency through repeated readings

- Components of this block are
  - Before Reading Activities
  - During Reading Activities
  - After Reading Activities
Self Selected Reading
30 minutes

Goals to develop students’

- Receptive language by listening to read alouds
- Skills for selecting interesting reading materials (at student’s instructional level)
- Reading comprehension (1-1 teacher conferences)
- Expressive language by sharing what they’ve read

Components of this block are

- Teacher Read-Aloud
- Independent, self selected reading & conferences
- Sharing Time
The Writing Block
40 minutes

- **Goals are to improve students’**
  - Independent writing skills for real purposes
  - Written language skills at an individual pace
  - Expressive language skills by sharing what they’ve written.

- **Components of this block are**
  - Mini Lesson – Modeling Writing & Editing Process
  - Children write on self selected topics and have teacher conferences (1-1)
  - Sharing writing in small or large groups
Working With Words Block
30 minutes

- **Goals are to increase students’**
  - recognition and fluency of high frequency words
  - decoding and spelling of phonetically regular words

- **Components of this block are**
  - Word Wall Activities
  - Decoding and Spelling Activities
    - Rhyming, Reading & Writing Onset/Rimes
    - Making & Sorting Word Families
  - Using Patterns and Context
Children With Disabilities: Reading & Writing the Four Blocks Way
Developed by Karen Erickson & David Koppenhaver

- Implemented at the Center for Literacy & Disability Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  - Students with Communication Disorders
  - Students with Moderate – Severe Cognitive Impairments
  - Students with Learning Disabilities
Adapting the Four Block Model for Students with Disabilities

- Disability type or label does not provide instructional information

- Consider the areas of significant difference:
  - Communication
  - Cognition
  - Physical abilities
  - Senses
  - Affect
  - Attention
Adapting the Four Block Model for Students with Disabilities

- Adapt only in the areas of need.
- Try to develop adaptations that do not significantly change the objective of the activity.
- Multi-level materials are available in each block.
- Use assistive technology as a tool to support students in Four Block activities.
Guided Reading
30-40 minutes

- Adapt versions of text for the computer
- Scan and import illustrations to multimedia software program
- Include MPEG videos of topic to augment student’s understanding of topic
- Add text which computer will read aloud
- Click of a mouse will turn the pages of the electronic book
Guided Reading
30-40 minutes

- Student can hum/tap syllables while doing silent reading
- Choose a reading fact from a list the teacher has prepared and record it on the BIGmack for sharing at circle time
- When partner reading can say a specific word when the partner points to it in the book
Self Selected Reading
30 minutes

- Provides an opportunity to get out of wheelchair and relax during teacher read-aloud.
- Multi-leveled books are available for all abilities on same subject
- Electronic books are available on computer
- Power point books recreated by the teacher or other students
- Use eye-gaze to elicit answers during conferencing about the book
The Writing Block
40 minutes

- Student can participate by using communication device that asks editing questions to the class.
- Work on scanning and spelling
- Use word prediction program to assist in writing
- Use low-tech items such as a pencil grip, raised line paper, angle tray to assist “writers”.
- Participate in sharing stories using speech devises
- Program devices to say specific messages that pertain to a writing conference
Working With Words
30 minutes

- Use the computer to type the words when others are writing the words
- Color coded on the wall to aid student using eye-gaze frame
- Student goal is different yet using same class activity gives a meaningful opportunity to work on individual skills daily
- Portable word wall corresponds to the classroom word wall