

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 Listening and Speaking station will likely be portable. Two children will listen to recorded texts read aloud from a device using headphones or earbuds. They will then talk about what they listened to and may write or draw together in response.

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 will provide sentence stems to help your multilingual students with speaking in response to what they listened to. There are reproducible conversation cards in English and Spanish available on the companion website, resources.corwin.com/simplystations-listening.

Around the classroom, pairs of students work together at a variety of stations, including a Listening and Speaking station (or two), a Writing station, two Partner Reading stations, 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 Listening and Speaking station, may be duplicated. In the Listening and Speaking station, two students listen to a recorded story on an iPad and then talk about what they read using conversation cards—speech bubbles that guide their discussion. In another Listening and Speaking station, two other children listen to a recorded informational text and jot notes about important ideas they hear. After listening, 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 in-depth suggestions for how to set up and introduce a station.

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!



TIME-SAVING TIP:

Set up this station wisely at the start, and it will save you tons of time in the long run. Include all the materials students need, so they don't have to run across the room to grab something. That way they'll "stay" at the "stay-tion"!

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.

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.

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)
- 8:10–8:30 Whole Group Lesson for Modeling Using Interactive Read Aloud or Shared Reading Integrating Word Study/Vocabulary
- 8:30–8:50 Whole Class Independent Reading Time (teacher confers 1:1 or may meet with a small group for reading)
- 8:50–9:00 Literacy Stations, Book Clubs, and Small Group (some teachers do another twenty-minute round of stations if schedules allow)
- 9:00–9:15 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 (or buy) 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 listen to recorded books more than once at the Listening and Speaking station, especially if it's a favorite text. **Spiral review** means that students keep practicing things multiple times throughout the year.

For example, if you've been teaching children about characters and their traits and relationships, students can keep practicing this all year long at the Listening and Speaking station, and then also at the Partner Reading station. You don't need to have kids do this only the week you've taught it. When students become familiar with characters and character traits, it will be easier for them to transfer what they're learning to new books in a series or to new characters with similar traits.

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

Simply change out **what** students listen to 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?

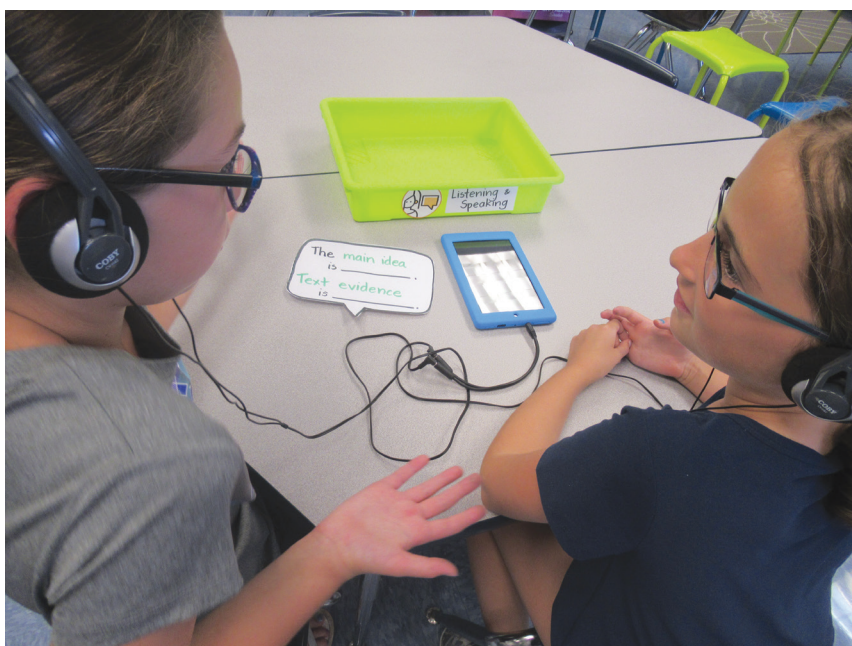
- This is **meaningful** work for the rest of the class during small group time.
- Children like to **talk** and to work with their **peers**. Enjoyment increases engagement!
- **Partner practice** helps students become **independent of the teacher**. Kids aren't working alone. They practice *with* a partner, doing tasks together.
- **Choice** and **student ownership** promote independence. At the Listening and Speaking station, students should have a choice of several recordings to listen to. They may also make recordings for others to listen to, which promotes student ownership.
- **Transfer of learning** occurs as scholars work with familiar tasks and materials previously modeled by the teacher. For example, at the Listening and Speaking station, partners respond to recorded text using graphic organizers and academic vocabulary taught during whole group instruction.
- **English Learners (EL)** and children with language-based learning differences especially benefit from additional time to work at the Listening and Speaking station. They need opportunities to listen to learn language. Look for EL Tips throughout this book.



Pairs of students work in well-defined small spaces around the classroom during stations time. Two kids use laptops as a Listening and Speaking station at desks against the wall.



The Listening and Speaking station is duplicated in this classroom. Each Listening and Speaking station is numbered and placed on either side of a cabinet to create defined, separate spaces and minimize distractions. Students listen to different texts at each station.



Partners use a conversation card to practice familiar academic vocabulary after listening to informational text on a tablet at this nonfiction Listening and Speaking station.