WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SAYING . . .

"In your hands, you hold a comprehensive guide to a much-needed framework integrating the art and science of evidence-based reading instruction. With her thoughtful inclusion of oral language, Nancy Akhavan gives teachers and school leaders the blueprint to comprehensive, student-centered ELA blocks. For anyone in school buildings who has wondered, 'How do I cover it all—every day for every student?'—this book shows you why and how."

Molly Ness, author and teacher educator, Dirigo Literacy

"One of the most brilliant educators, Dr. Nancy Akhavan, has blessed us with *The Lit Six*, a practical, research-backed framework that transforms literacy instruction by organizing six essential components around oral language development. The book artfully bridges theory and practice, offering specific strategies and time allocations that make evidence-based literacy instruction accessible to K–8 educators. This comprehensive guide gives teachers the structure and confidence to build effective literacy blocks that serve all learners."

Patty McGee, co-author of *Not Your Granny's Grammar*

"The Lit Six framework, detailed in this wonderful book, offers a clear, flexible roadmap for teachers, grade levels, and districts. Rather than a scripted program, it supports thoughtful, research-aligned curriculum design. It empowers educators to build comprehensive literacy plans that are practical, customizable, and rooted in real classroom needs."

Leah Mermelstein, literacy consultant/coach
and author of *"We-Do" Writing*

"Nancy Akhavan has been a trusted learning partner for many of our California schools and County Offices by providing cutting edge tools and knowledge that can be applied immediately. The Lit Six framework has helped increase daily coherence for teaching and learning within and across the grade levels. Essentially, Nancy's framework and resources make common sense common practices."

JoDee Marcellin, Director of District to
District Program, California Education Partners

"I've used Nancy Akhavan's Lit Six framework in my work with schools, and it consistently sparks meaningful change in classrooms. Grounded in the science of reading, its clear structure and practical strategies make it easy for teachers to implement, leading to stronger literacy instruction and measurable gains for students."

Robb J. Christopherson, EdD

"*The Lit Six* is a practical and inspiring guide for teachers who want to build confident, independent readers. Nancy Ahkavan offers clear strategies, authentic examples, and a framework that truly works in real classrooms."

Lisa Nix, Literacy Coach, Teacher on
Special Assignment, Elementary Teacher

"Nancy Akhavan's Lit Six framework anchored our district's literacy work and sharpened our leaders' vision for instruction. It connects research to classrooms with practical, evidence-based tools that strengthen literacy blocks and guide leaders in creating the conditions for great instruction. Clear and powerful, this book serves as a blueprint for achieving lasting literacy success in any school or district."

Cresta McIntosh, Associate Superintendent of Educational
Services in the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

The Lit Six®

Grades K–8

*For all the teachers and educators who have worked with me over the last
20 years giving me insight into The Lit Six® framework.*

The Lit Six®

What Every Teacher Needs to Build an Evidence-Based Literacy Block

Grades K–8

Nancy Akhavan

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Contents

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Acknowledgments

Books are created like journeys to a far-off destination. The destination is always important, but more important is the path that one took to reach the destination. This book came about because of the journey I was on over many, many years that culminated in a framework for effective literacy instruction. I am grateful to all the teachers and educators along the way who helped me shape my work into the work it is today. While there are too many to list here, I would like to thank the teachers and leaders who were part of the California Education Partners Preschool to third grade coherence cohort because they all helped put the finishing touches on the framework.

I have had the honor of serving in a leadership role for many teachers and school leaders over the last 20 years. Each one of the educators I worked with during that time gave me insight into effective literacy instruction, whether they were sharing lessons and success stories from their classrooms or sharing data from school wide implementation of strategies and lessons. I have learned so much from all these individuals. Thanks to you all.

Books become real because of the support of amazing editors and publishers. I would like to thank the entire team at Corwin for their continued support and contributions to my work.

Of course, this project would not have become a book without your work. I would also like to thank my editor, Liz Gildea, who stewarded this book from an idea to an actual book I can hold in my hands and share with the world. Liz saw the vision of The Lit Six® and helped me target the best parts of the framework in my writing. I appreciate her vision and her focus on producing high quality texts that have purpose and meaning for teachers. Wendy Murray was also an integral part of the writing process. Wendy has worked with me for years as editor and muse, and I appreciate all that she had done for me in the past and during the writing of this book. It is because of her focus on excellence and quality that I am able to produce a book that spans many grade levels and provides support for thousands of teachers.

I also want to acknowledge my patient and loyal husband, Mehran. He never stops cheerleading me on to write the next book project, all the while waiting patiently while I am glued to a computer screen. Thank you for all your support along my book writing journey.

About the Author

Dr. Nancy Akhavan, EdD, has spent more than 35 years as an educator and consultant. Dr. Akhavan is the founder of Nancy Akhavan Consulting, Inc. She recently retired from Fresno State as an Associate Professional Emerita. Dr. Akhavan has been a bilingual teacher, principal of three schools, and a district administrator of a large urban district for ELA, math, social studies, science, and world languages. She also served as Assistant Superintendent Secondary Division in a large urban school district. Dr. Akhavan is recognized for her expertise in teaching literacy practices and has published 13 books that focus on literacy instruction that increases student achievement. She has worked with districts and county offices in multiple states and internationally to increase student achievement in reading, writing, and content areas. She continues to provide professional development for leaders and teachers in literacy K–12, early literacy, content area literacy, and English language development.

Introduction

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When I started out as a principal, my leadership style was to get out of my office and into the classrooms. I believed then, and now, that effective principals work alongside teachers, supporting the hard work they do every day. An unexpected benefit of this approach was that it gave me ongoing, "ringside" insight into how students were responding to instruction, curriculum, and materials. When the teachers and I added or tweaked components of our literacy practices, we would look for evidence of student growth as readers and writers. I think because I was there as a mentor, we were all better able to see patterns and to notice, discuss, and quickly adjust practices when some students were not making adequate progress.

Over time this work with teachers led us to design intentional action research studies. The teachers and I would read professional articles, attend literacy conferences, and then decide together what we wanted to try out

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during literacy instruction. After implementing it, we would track student progress using a variety of assessment tools. We found out a lot during our action research trials about what worked, and what didn't work.

As a principal, I realized parents and the school community would want to know that what we were doing had a strong evidence base; what researcher John Hattie (2008) would describe as practices that have a "high-effect size" meaning practices that had been proven to advance student progress. So I brought in the findings of leading researchers to inform our practices, including Adams, Shanahan, Shefelbine, Pressley, Nagy, Biemiller, Samuels, Rasinski, Ehri, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, the National Reading Panel, Graham, and others. We honed our practices and continued to assess to monitor student progress and make adjustments. Later, once I was a faculty member at a university, I continued researching the best ways to ensure student academic growth in reading and writing, using more formal research methods.

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF TEACHING

As we applied research-based practices, certain ones arose as being most important. For example, we found that students learned to read best when foundational reading skills were taught explicitly (as shown by research over the last 40 years) and followed with immediate opportunities to practice reading independently with the teacher at hand to coach and provide real-time feedback. We found that students needed direct instruction in reading comprehension strategies, and they needed the opportunity to discuss their thinking about books as well as write about their thinking. We learned that open-ended writing workshops were not doing enough to teach explicit writing skills, and we morphed the writing instruction into explicit minilessons followed by time for students to practice what was taught during the minilesson. We also found that everything was based on strong oral language skills and developed knowledge about the world from all content areas including science and social studies. It is from this research that The Lit Six® model came to be.

> Adoptions and materials came and went, but the research-based practices stayed constant.

As my work changed with time and as I moved to new schools as principal or district office leader, I found that what was learned from the teachers' practices in the classroom could be applied to district adopted reading materials and also used in situations where there was no adoption. The adopted or supplemental materials became the tool, not the "what" of what was being taught. This was an important revelation because adoptions and materials came and went, but the research-based practices stayed constant.

We are in an era when evidence-based instruction reigns supreme. Yet as my own professional journey showed, good teaching isn't just data. Renowned researcher Timothy Shanahan (2024) noted: "Teaching is an

act of practical reasoning, persuasiveness, problem-solving, and communication. It need be shaped by science but much of it is improvisation rooted in experience. Science may contribute to that, but it will never be sufficient."

Researchers Chase Young, David Paige, and Timothy Rasinski (2022) refer to this blend of research and responsiveness as "the art and science of teaching reading." I like to think of it as science meets the sentient human being: Our students respond to our teaching on any given day with varying degrees of readiness to learn, feelings, gaps in background knowledge, and so on. That's when teachers' learned intuition kicks in: teacher knowledge, wisdom, artfulness—call it whatever you like. The important takeaway, as Shanahan (2024) said, is that "[t]he science of reading isn't one of blind compliance or high-fidelity implementation. Science reveals what *can* work. The art of teaching suggests what I might do to make the science work" (emphasis in original).

Let's turn now to the focus of this book, The Lit Six model, which combines evidence-based practices with the classroom routines that help students thrive.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ SHANAHAN'S BLOG POST ABOUT THE SCIENCE OF READING AND THE ART OF TEACHING.

To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

qrs.ly/6cgv6fr

Planning an Evidence-Based Literacy Block

Credit: iStock/FatCamera

Welcome to *The Lit Six: Six Daily Elements for Literacy*. I developed this framework to help teachers sustain a highly efficient, effective English Language Arts block. While this book grew out of decades of translating research into classroom practice, I want to give a big shout out to the universe that it's publishing in 2025, because it's great timing. Why? Because teachers and administrators everywhere hear the resounding cry of "follow the science of reading," but are at a loss for how best to implement the research. In my work with teachers, they often ask, *What skills should I address first? What routines do I abandon? How do I prioritize all that I have to teach during the literacy block?*

The Lit Six® model (Figure 1.1) answers these key questions. It's also a just-in-time framework because practitioners, scientists, and theorists in every field that touches literacy are all underscoring that reading and writing have to be intentionally built on top of spoken language. The Lit Six does just that. As an educator based in California, in an area with a high multilingual population, I knew from the very start that oral language development and oral language comprehension had to be central in the model.

Figure 1.1 • The Lit Six® model recognizes that oral language development is central to students' development of all literacies.
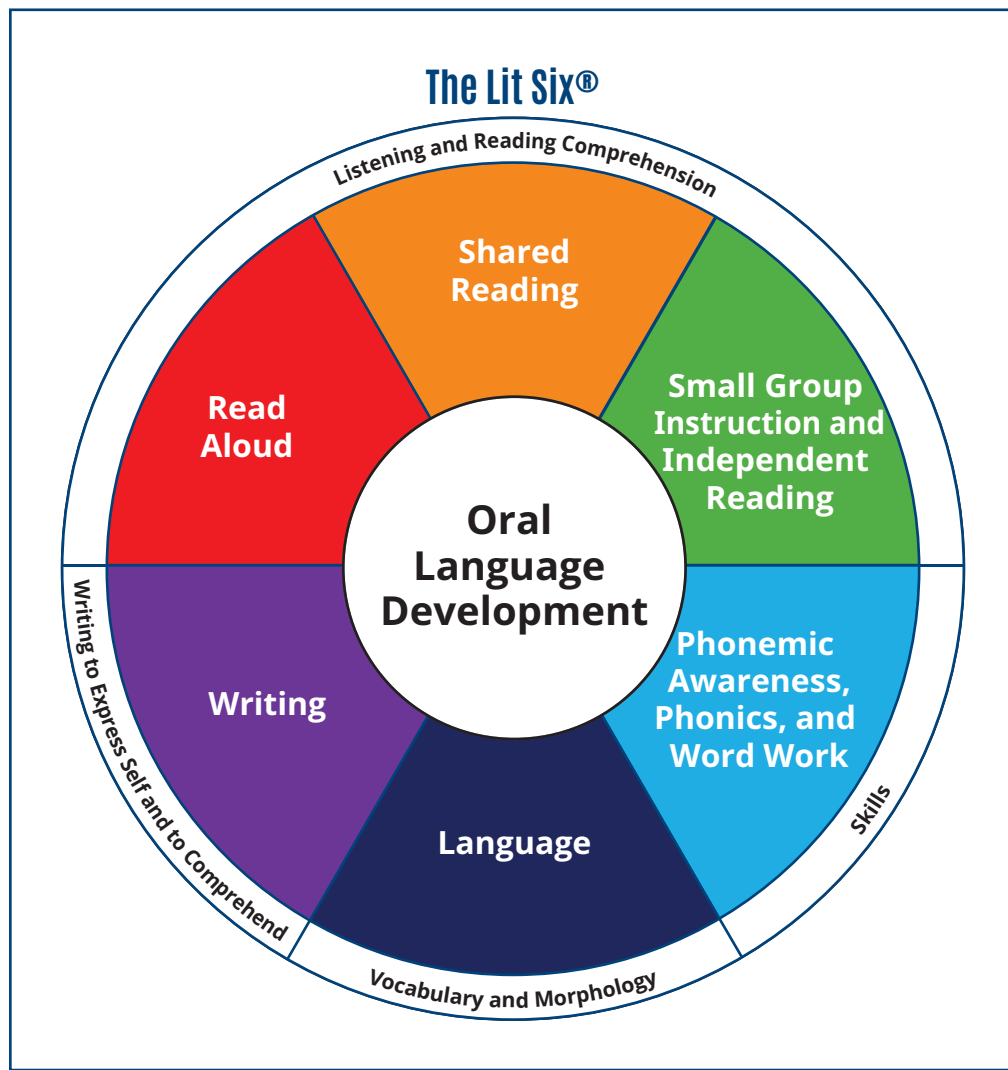
ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FIRST AND ALWAYS

The model was developed on a foundation of strong oral language skills for all students—both those who spoke English as their heritage language and those students acquiring English as an additional language. From birth,

humans gain the ability to read and write by building new systems on our innate capacity to understand and generate speech. Reading researcher Carolyn Strom (2024) notes, "We've been speaking for between 50,000 to 200,000 years and we've only been reading or writing for about 5,000 years." Written language is a cultural invention and requires building a new system in our brains. This system needs to be wired to convert letters on a page (which may simply look like squiggles, lines, and dots to a novice reader) into speech. In other words, Strom notes, "the reading brain is built on top of the speaking brain."

In the classroom, talk fuels comprehension. Purposeful teacher-led and peer-led conversation about engaging texts boosts vocabulary and understanding and knits a sense of a reading community, which gives children a sense of can-do confidence. In the NESET European Commission's 2025 report, Effective Practices for Literacy Teaching, which draws on 600 studies, Harrison and colleagues (2025) assert:

> It is important for every teacher to understand how enormously valuable it is for children who are learning to read to sing songs, hear stories and poems read aloud, and to participate in discussions about what they have heard (Fikrat-Wevers, van Steensel, & Arends, 2021).

> There is evidence to suggest that delaying such an emphasis on language until foundational code-breaking skills have been fully developed can be associated with lower levels of comprehension at a later stage (Cervetti, et al; [*sic*] 2020). (p. 29)

Skills Involved

Oral language development supports learners in two fundamental ways. It supports students to develop knowledge about the world and continuously grows their vocabularies; oral language development leads to language comprehension. But let's get granular and look at how oral language skills set up learners to eventually understand written text.
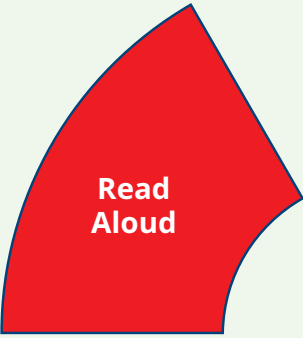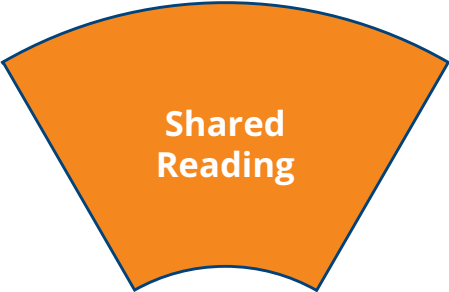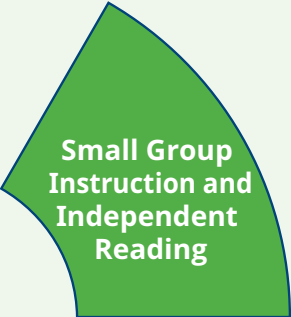
There are specific oral language skills that are important foundations for students to have in place. One skill is well developed verbal working memory (MacDonald & Christensen, 2002). Another language skill is the ability of a student to draw inferences from texts read aloud (Lervåg et al., 2017). This means that students need ample opportunities to talk about what is being read to them and also have conversations about interesting topics and information (Snowling & Hulme, 2021). They need opportunities to hold ideas in their minds as they talk about what was read or shared. They need to draw conclusions *on their own* with the teacher scaffolding conversations so that the students can think deeply about what was read or shared.

In the classroom, talk fuels comprehension.

Students need ample opportunities to talk about what is being read to them and also have conversations about interesting topics and information.

TALKING, READING, AND WRITING THROUGHOUT THE LIT SIX

I'll take us on a tour of more exciting research to show how the model "talks to" other literacy research models in the next two chapters, but first I want to share the important ways that The Lit Six is an *instructional* model, designed for teachers. It focuses on what I've found to be the essential classroom practices and components of effective literacy instruction.

Listening and Reading Comprehension

Read Aloud Read Aloud	Use text intentionally. Read aloud texts that are above students' reading level, so become familiar with complex vocabulary and language structures. Neuroscience also shows read alouds even decreases stress hormones so learners are ready to learn.
Shared Reading Shared Reading	Another intentional use of text. Students read *with* you and with each other rich and engaging grade-level text that offers a plethora of discussion opportunities. The most important part of the shared reading is the thinking and discussion that comes during and after the reading. The teacher guides the conversation so there is explicit modeling and implicit use of strategies for discovering a text's most important idea.
Small Group Instruction and Independent Reading Small Group Instruction and Independent Reading	The reason we teach small groups is to ensure students can read independently. Not only are we working toward independence by providing reading experiences in the group, which are slightly harder than what students can do on their own, we can have students read books and other texts independently during group time. This ensures that the students not in reading groups are engaged in authentic and purposeful work that increases their reading ability.

Skills
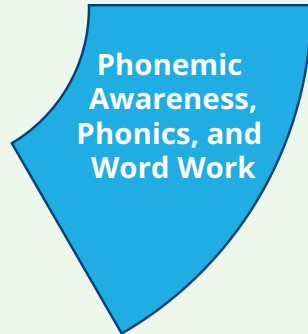
Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Work **Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Work**	Being able to say the words in the text is critically important, whether students are reading out loud or silently. If they can say it, they can begin to figure out what it means. Fluent decoding leaves the working memory open for complex thinking required to comprehend text. • *Phonemic Awareness* instruction is the explicit instruction of phonological skills. This is oral instruction that helps students manipulate sounds in language. • *Phonics* is the explicit instruction of sounds and letters together so that students learn the alphabetic principle and are able to sound out words. • *Word Work* is the explicit instruction of multisyllabic words including syllabication rules.

Vocabulary and Morphology

Language **Language**	Language development is built into each component of The Lit Six, but it is important to *directly* teach language every day. Language work can include vocabulary development and the teaching of grammar and morphology. Use kid-friendly routines for looking at syntax, sentence structure in the books you are reading, and texts you are writing. Use minilessons to explicitly think aloud and model correct use of language.

Writing to Express Self and to Comprehend
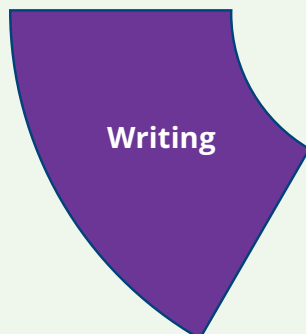
Writing **Writing**	Writing is the concrete way that students can express themselves, share ideas and information, and show their thinking. Students need to learn to write in different genres. They also need to learn to use writing as a tool to comprehend and learn.

Classroom Practices That Support Oral Language Development

Oral language development is the foundation for all work that occurs during reading and writing instruction. You support it through discussion, conversation, and explanation. In The Lit Six model, notice that:

- In the **listening and reading comprehension section**, language is developed through read aloud, shared reading, and small group instruction paired with independent reading.

- In the **skills section**, oral language is activated during phonemic awareness, phonics, and word work. This is the skills work that guides students' ability to decode.

- In the **vocabulary and morphology section**, language, both oral and written (including morphology, grammar, and academic language development), is taught and practiced so students can read and write fluently and understand what they are reading.

TIME MANAGEMENT AND THE LIT SIX

The hardest part of being a teacher is figuring out how to fit everything into an already packed day. The Lit Six model is designed to help you organize your day and fit everything in that has maximum impact for student learning in reading and writing.

After working with teachers in thousands of classrooms, I have seen The Lit Six implemented in a variety of ways, but the most common is to organize The Lit Six in six blocks of time that strategically make up the literacy time of the school day. These six blocks of time include:

- Skills work with phonemic awareness, phonics, and word work

- Comprehension and vocabulary development through read aloud

- Skills and strategy work through shared reading

- Skills and strategy work through targeted, data-driven small group instruction paired with independent reading

- Skills and word knowledge developed through language instruction

- Skills developed through writing

We begin the literacy block with phonemic awareness, phonics, or word work. Next, the shared reading lesson, through which you teach language and reading comprehension while reinforcing the skills instruction. After this whole group instruction, small group instruction is launched.

During small groups, students participate in strategic, data-driven small group instruction reinforcing the skills and strategies that data indicate students need to work on. As part of small group instruction, students read independently, with the teacher providing effective feedback to students as they process text and consider meaning.

Writing is the next part of the literacy block, with 45 minutes dedicated to student writing launched with a minilesson. The writing minilesson reinforces writing strategies aligned to genres and provides language development in content areas so students can express themselves using increasingly sophisticated words and writing. Writing is likely followed by language instruction. Students work on vocabulary, morphology, and grammar during language instruction. The read aloud time of the day is flexible. In most teachers' daily schedules, it follows writing instruction, but it could also proceed writing instruction or may launch the day as students come together to learn. During the read aloud, the teacher focuses on developing student comprehension and critical thinking skills while expanding their vocabularies.

Throughout this time, students engage in purposeful activities. A matrix of activities is shown in Figure 1.2. Overall, The Lit Six block takes 2 hours and 30 minutes to 3 hours.

Figure I.2 ◆ The Lit Six block takes 2 hours and 30 minutes to 3 hours.

The Daily Plan for The Lit Six

Sequence During the Day	Time	Lit Six Component	Outcomes
I	20–30 minutes	Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Work	• Isolate, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds. • Decode regular and irregular words • Sight word knowledge • Fluency • Decode multisyllabic words
2	30–40 minutes	Shared Reading	• Comprehension • Discussion about text • Writing about text • Vocabulary development • Development of background knowledge
Sequence During the Day	**Time**	**Lit Six Component**	**Outcomes**
3	30–60 minutes	Small Group & Independent Reading	• Differentiated instruction based on data • Decoding regular, irregular, single, and multisyllabic words • Fluency • Comprehension • Discussion about text • Writing about text
4	30–45 minutes	Writing	• Independent writing skills and knowledge • Composing text • Spelling • Convention usage • Writing about reading • Writing to share information, ideas, and experiences
5	I5–20 minutes	Language	• Vocabulary development • Grammar • Morphology
6	I0–20 minutes	Read Aloud	• Listening skills • Comprehension • Discussion • Vocabulary development • Development of background knowledge

Skills Taught

All the skills of becoming a proficient reader are taught during The Lit Six block. These include (but are not limited to)

Reading skills

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Morphology
- Concepts of print
- Writing (Composing in genres and using language skills effectively)
- Spelling
- Handwriting

- Reading comprehension
- Listening comprehension
- Syntax, semantic, and language competence
- English language development
- Academic language
- Oral language development
- Fluency

Writing skills

Likewise, writing skills and strategies are taught to ensure students become strong writers. These include

- Generating ideas
- Communication
- Brainstorming
- Planning
- Transcribing
- Handwriting

- Keyboarding
- Revision strategies
- Editing skills and strategies
- Summary writing skills
- Short-answer skills
- Test based writing skills.

The skills are taught in whole group and small group lessons, and the lesson includes student choice and voice so that students are highly engaged in purposeful tasks that maintain student engagement. Note the ways that students are involved instructionally in Figure 1.3.

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Figure I.3 ◆ The Lit Six uses a variety of instructional moves throughout the day.

Instructional Moves During The Lit Six

	Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, & Morphology	Shared Reading	Small Group Instruction & Independent Reading	Writing	Read Aloud	Language
Student Grouping	Whole Group	Whole & Small Group	Small Group	Whole Group and Small Group	Whole Group	Whole and Small Group
Teacher Actions	Direct instruction, supporting, facilitating, encouraging	Facilitating, reading aloud, encouraging choral reading, encouraging discussion, developing language	One-on-one up to one-to-six direct instruction and support during student independent reading, developing language	Direct instruction, suggesting, guiding, coaching facilitating	Facilitating, reading aloud, encouraging discussion, developing language	Facilitating, encouraging discussion, developing language, creating language supports and scaffolds
Student Involvement & Engagement	Choral Response, Individual Work with Literacy Materials (salt trays, letter tiles, etc.), Writing	Choral Reading, Listening, Discussion, Pair-Share, Group Conversation	Independent Reading, Choral Reading, Skills Engagement, Discussion, Writing	Brain-storing, Planning, Writing, Conferring, Peer Editing, Celebrating	Listening, Discussing, Critical Thinking	Listening, Choral Response, Writing, Brainstorming, Discussing

DAILY SCHEDULES

Daily schedules when implementing The Lit Six look different based on the grade level the model is being implemented in. The model has been used successfully from kindergarten through eighth grade. The model provides an organization of what to do, not exactly how to do it (although, in each chapter I give you pointers to get started), so it is easily adaptable to any grade level. Let's take a look at three different classrooms: first grade, fourth grade, and eighth grade.

The Lit Six in First Grade: A Daily Schedule

8:00 – 8:05	Welcome
8:05 – 8:15	Morning Meeting
8:15 – 8:30	Read Aloud
8:30 – 9:00	Phonemic Awareness and Phonics
9:00 – 9:20	Shared Reading
9:20 – 10:05	Small Group Instruction and Literacy Centers
10:05 – 10:20	Recess
10:20 – 10:30	Language
10:30 – 11:05	Writing

Janine's classroom begins each day with Janine meeting her students on the carpet. The students come in and put their belongings away and then join Janine on the floor as she begins their time together by singing a good morning song and taking roll. As the business of the morning wraps up, Janine launches with a check-in, asking the students how they are doing and if anything special happened that they would like to share. By taking time to check in, she is incorporating important social-emotional learning skills and providing a platform for the students to talk aloud. This builds self-awareness, develops empathy and self-caring, and provides an opportunity for language development. She spends about 10 minutes with the daily check-in.

Next, Janine opens up the newest picture book she has gathered from the basket of picture books on the floor next to her. She reads the picture book aloud to the students, pausing at important and interesting places in the book to provide students the opportunity to think about what is happening in the book and share their ideas aloud with a partner or with the whole group. Sometimes Janine prompts students to think more deeply about what the book is saying, prompting for students to do a deep-thinking

Credit: iStock/FatCamera

read aloud (Akhavan, 2023), other times she pauses to check in about what students want to share about what is happening in the book or a tidbit about the characters. She spends about 15 minutes reading the book aloud.

After the read aloud, Janine moves into explicit phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. She leads activities, providing opportunities for students to manipulate sounds in words because this is the skill that her data shows they need more practice with. She also sets up letter cards on the chalk tray and leads the children through a variety of phonics activities based on the scope and sequence of the phonics skills she is using. She is careful to focus on all students having the opportunity to connect letters to the sounds they represent. Her phonics lesson is robust and provides students practice time with sounding out words and breaking words into sounds and blending the sounds back together again. This time takes her about 30 minutes.

She pulls out a big book from a plethora of books she has tucked away behind the easel, prepared for shared reading. She spends time on the front page of the book discussing the book title, author, and genre. She reminds students of how they read a book together with her guiding them. She reads a sentence then rereads the sentence with the children reading along with her. She stops from time to time to sound out a word that has a more difficult sound pattern then moves back to reading the sentences together with the students. She also stops to discuss different concepts like punctuation. As she moves through the book, she also pauses in interesting places to encourage the students to talk about what is happening in the book. She spends about 20 minutes.

After explaining the literacy centers for the day, the students go off to work and engage with one another and Janine spends 45 minutes with the students working with them in small groups. She calls her first group over to the reading table with her and begins a lesson based on the recent data she collected on students' knowledge of letter sounds and their ability to blend words while reading a decodable text. Janine meets with two more small groups before the 45 minutes is over.

Janine gathers the students back on the floor after recess and turns on her interactive board. She displays on the screen a picture from one of the latest shared reading texts and engages children in a conversation about what they see in the picture. Janine is careful to focus on vocabulary that might be a bit more academic as she moves through the book's pictures. She and the students narrate the book together and Janine stops to provide

new vocabulary terms and ideas. She spends about 10 minutes on the language development activity and moves into her writing lesson.

Janine's 15-minute writing minilesson is a highlight of her day. She loves seeing the students engage with planning of their writing and then transcribing their words onto the paper. Some days she focuses on language skills to ensure not only are students able to get their ideas on the paper, but also that the writing is legible and students can use correct punctuation. She tries, though, to ensure that most of her lessons are about composing writing. The minilesson takes 15 minutes, and students spend about 20 minutes writing independently. The amount of instructional time that has elapsed including the morning check-in is 2 hours and 45 minutes.

The Lit Six in Fourth Grade: A Daily Schedule

8:00–8:05	Welcome
8:05–8:35	Shared Reading
8:35–8:55	Word Work & Morphology
8:55–9:40	Small Group Instruction and Independent Reading
9:40–9:50	Language
9:50–10:30	Writing
10:30–10:45	Recess
10:45–11:15	Social Studies With Content Area Reading & Writing
After lunch	15 Minutes for Read Alouds

Matt meets his students at the classroom door in the morning and lets them know how happy he is to see each of them. The students come in and get busy with some morning business work that Matt has laid out for them to do while he takes care of morning business like roll. Quickly, Matt moves into the shared reading time of the day and has students open up an anthology book to a particular page. Before he launches into the students reading together with him, he provides background information on the text they are about to read and has students work with a partner to fill out a graphic organizer that helps them organize some of this information. After their group work, the class reads together, with Matt leading, a section of the text, and then he prompts the students to work with their partner and add additional information to their graphic organizer to continue noting important points in the text. The students work together with Matt through the text and with their partners for

about 20 minutes. With Matt's beginning explanation, this shared reading time takes about 30 minutes.

After the shared reading, Matt moves into a morphology lesson helping students focus on affixes and roots to identify the meaning of unknown words that they read in the text. The students and Matt revisit the text they just read, checking unknown words and focusing on how to break the words up into syllables so that they can say the words on their own, and then taking the word apart and thinking about root words to figure out exact word meaning. The students use their root word chart they have in their binders as the class discusses meaning. To reinforce word meaning at the end of discussion Matt and the group of students consult an online dictionary to double-check what they have determined together. Matt then displays a list of multisyllabic words unrelated to the reading and encourages students to use what they know about syllables to break the words apart to and use their knowledge of affixes and roots to determine meaning. He makes a game of the work, awarding points to groups working together who identify how to say the words first. This time of day takes about 20 minutes, and Matt has combined word work (students breaking words into syllables and sounds to be able to say the words) with morphology, part of the language development he teaches each day.

Credit: iStock/Ridofranz

Matt explains the must-do assignments for the day and reminds students to ensure they have their independent reading materials organized. The students have different independent reading materials based on their ability to decode and comprehend as well as based on their interests. Independent reading is always part of the independent work students do while Matt works with small groups. Matt calls over the first group to meet with him and has the students, who are decoding fluently, turn to the page in the book they are working on. Matt spends a few minutes discussing what it means to ask deeper questions of the text and make inferences. He encourages students to work on deeper thinking about the text while they read. They read silently for a few minutes then stop to discuss their thinking about what they have read. Matt spends about 20 minutes with each group and meets with two groups per day. The small group time of day takes about 45 minutes.

Next Matt moves into a language lesson focusing on new vocabulary from the students' next social studies lesson. Matt melds together his content-area studies with his literacy block so that he can focus on concepts and vocabulary that students need time to discuss and think about before

they work through the social studies or science lesson later in the afternoon. The students work with Matt on the new vocabulary terms, adding to their notebooks. This vocabulary lesson takes about 10 minutes.

Matt regroups everyone for writing. He teaches a writing minilesson on revising for details and provides explicit instruction and modeling on how to add details and why to add details to the middle of an informative writing the students have been working on. Students had researched their topic, planned their writing, and were drafting (transcribing using devices), but Matt had noticed that many of the them were just copying random information into the body of the text and not being thoughtful about what to add or how to word things without copying. Some days the students spend up to 30 minutes writing, but on other days, they spend closer to 20 minutes writing. The time flow differs based on the work they are trying to accomplish for the day.

Matt squeezes in a social studies lesson before it is the lunch break. After lunch, when students come back into the class, Matt spends 10–15 minutes reading aloud to the class. This is a time when he encourages students to interact with him and each other about their thinking about what was read. They don't sit quietly and just listen; the students are active listeners so they can interact about the text. Eliminating the social studies lesson and the lunch break, Matt spent about 2 hours and 45 minutes on the literacy work.

The Lit Six in Eighth Grade: A Daily Schedule

Eighth Grade Science Class: 50-minute period

10:05–10:25	Content Area Shared Reading, Language, and Content Development
10:25–10:35	Language & Word Work
10:35–10:55	Content Area Read Aloud, Collaborative Group Shared Reading, Small Group & Writing

Kristen is a science teacher at a middle school, and she uses The Lit Six to organize her class periods. She does this specifically on the days that students are working on new information and not working on a lab assignment. The class periods at Kristen's schools are 50 minutes.

Kristen starts the class off by launching into information on a new topic the class is studying. Kristen has prepared some slides providing background information. There are a handful of slides and a video embedded in slides that provide students background information on the new

Credit: iStock/Yuliia Kaveshnikova

topic. While working through the slides and the video, Kristen has students working in groups of four to take notes about what is more important to remember. Kristen stops from time to time and gives the groups time to work together. After about 20 minutes, the background information has wrapped up. During this time, she is developing students language and oral language skills and providing them an opportunity for shared reading because there is information on the slides the class reads together and discusses.

Before moving on, Kristen displays a slide with eight new terms that students will need to learn as part of the unit. She deliberately shows students how to break the science terms into syllables so that they can say the words aloud. The class engages in using the root word banks they have to determine meaning. Finally, Kristen provides students ideas and information about the terms, not the definitions, so she can build student knowledge about the topic while introducing vocabulary. This vocabulary and word work takes about 10 minutes.

For the last 20 minutes of class, Kristen passes out an article about the topic of study and provides a shared document template for students to work on. Kristen launches the article by reading the first two paragraphs aloud and has a short discussion of the information. For the remainder of the time, together in groups of four the students read the article and one person takes notes in the groups' shared document. Kristen moves about the room, but ends up spending 10 minutes with one group who was struggling with decoding the scientific terms and some of the academic language in the text. When there were 5 minutes left to the class period, Kristen asks the groups to examine the shared notes document to see if anything else needs to be added. In this 50-minute period, Kristen spent more time with shared reading than we read aloud. She built in vocabulary and word work as well as language and knowledge development. She didn't formally meet with small groups, but informally moved around the classroom meeting with the groups who needed additional support during the group activity.

IN CLOSING

What sets The Lit Six apart is that it rose from teachers in classrooms working hard every day. From all the action research that was conducted and later the academic research that was conducted, teachers learned what works and implemented it. I was just fortunate enough to be there to learn

along the way. So I can bring this model for you to implement and organize your literacy instruction with confidence that it will make a powerful difference.

The Lit Six goes beyond just organizing how many minutes you should be doing each component and what those components need to be. The Lit Six provides a road map that gives you the opportunity to implement research-based practices while using data collected from your assessments to target instruction. You can take information from assessments and develop lessons in each of the components that will support your students with their learning needs.

What Sets The Lit Six Apart

Teacher Actions	Student Actions
Moving from whole to small group instruction	Independent reading and independent writing
Facilitating language development, reading comprehension, and independent reading	Classroom discussion
Facilitating writing about reading as well as genre writing	Choral reading
	Practice of skills
Ensuring students own the cognitive lift	Owning the cognitive lift in decoding text, encoding text, and composing texts
Setting up purposeful student tasks (as related to my best-selling book, *The Big Book of Literacy Tasks*)	Joyful interaction with reading and writing
Explicit, systematic instruction	Critical thinking about books and texts
	Composing ideas during discussion and writing

The Lit Six provides a road map that gives you the opportunity to implement research-based practices while using data collected from your assessments to target instruction.