

# 4 STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CCSS IN A BALANCED LITERACY CLASSROOM

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Within the CCSS there is a powerful new lens and shift of awareness to language. This view incorporates language in a new and different manner for the balanced literacy classroom. Language as action along with language and learning as social cognition and discourse are the driving forces for classroom instruction. A rising challenge is the connection of language and language development and the important role it plays in all aspects of literacy and literacy instruction. So much so that we believe **the lens of all literacy instruction must begin with language**. Halliday's (1993) language-based theory of learning captures the idea of making meaning as a semiotic process, i.e., the resource for making meaning is language. From this perspective, his general theory of learning is interpreted as "learning through language." Most importantly, the shift of instruction is now centered on all aspects of language to inform all literacy instruction. Taking the tenets of balanced literacy and refocusing them with the lens of language and the influence this has on instruction can be critical to implementing the CCSS. The following represents the tenet of balanced literacy through the lens of language and a strategy to implement it:

Balanced Literacy	Lens of Language shift	CCSS Instructional Strategy
Read-Alouds	Reflects language of learner, social discourse, language in action, and rigorous conversations	Interactive read-alouds with 50% of informational and complex text, teacher models close reading, children respond using whiteboards
Guided Reading	Guiding language into literacy, using language to guide, scaffold, and inform all literacy instruction	Guide students using language into text-based responses and habits of evidentiary argument through social discourse
Language and Literacy Centers	Generating discussions	Team-based center projects include solving problems with partners while building argument and persuasion
Word Walls to Language Walls	Building vocabulary, social discourse, and deep conversations	Expand word walls to language walls and include ideas, notions, images, drawings

**Interactive Read-Aloud** with informational and complex text: Allow for the children to respond to the text in different ways besides just listening. Having the children respond with whiteboards and markers allows for the teacher to model close reading and have the children predict, find evidence, and other types of responses. Young children can draw or write their responses. Aim for at least two daily read-alouds and pair up a fictional passage with a nonfiction or informational text. Think about aligning them to a classroom thematic unit.

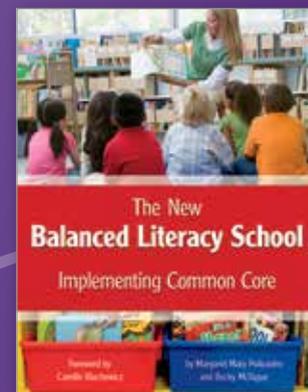
**Guiding Language into Reading:** Rethink the guided practice to include more time devoted to close reading of text whereby the teacher is utilizing the language of the students to build argument and find text-based responses—all within rich conversations and classroom discourse.

**Team-based Language and Literacy Centers:** Switch up the manner in which centers are delivered and have students work to solve problems on teams. Shift the attention of the work to students building arguments and finding evidence within the activity. Include the 21st century research and communication tasks.

**Word Walls to Language Walls:** Expand the classroom discourse to include more than just words. Take class ideas to grow into deep conversations that include images, ideas, and other forms of meaning making. These walls work quite well in art, music and physical education classes as well.

These strategies are switching it up to include language and discourse and can be used across all content areas.

**Margaret Mary Policastro and Becky McTague are the authors of *The New Balanced Literacy School: Implementing Common Core*, 2015, Capstone Professional.**



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