

K-3 Essential 1, Bullet 2 Choices in Reading and Writing Sample Video

MAISA Literacy Essentials

<https://youtu.be/aMB8gkOblbk>

Narrator: When teachers provide daily opportunities for children to make choices in their reading and writing, they foster literacy motivation and engagement within and across lessons.

Teacher Tara: There are several opportunities for my students to make choices in what they're reading throughout our school day. Right now, we're currently working on a caring about characters reading unit. Within this unit, the students are able to choose what book club they would like to be a part of, and they're able to work on these books during independent reading time. All the students in my classroom have their own special book bin, and within this book bin, they're able to choose what books they would like to read, and so they'll search in our baskets. And I always have a variety of books in there. I try to make sure that I have a mixture of informational texts, fiction texts, even books about what we're learning in class, such as plants can be in there. So they have a portion of the day where they're able to explore different book baskets and search for books that they're interested in and add those to their book bin so they are able to choose what books they're reading.

Another way the students in my classroom are able to make choices during free choice time: The students get to choose what area in the classroom they would like to go to. For example, one option is our dramatic play area. I always like to switch our dramatic play area up to keep it exciting for the boys and girls in my class. One way I do this is by turning our dramatic play area into a post office. At the post office, the students will have mail bags, a little mail outfit that they can put on, but they also can practice writing letters or postcards to whomever they would like. When kindergartners are given opportunities to make choices like that within their reading, I really think that it sparks a new level of excitement for them. It makes them really take ownership and pride in their reading, and I think that helps to make them look forward to it every day.

Teacher Megan: I have noticed that my students produce high quality work and are intrinsically motivated when they are given a choice in their writing, we'll give them an umbrella topic or a problem that we've noticed, and then it's up to them to decide how they want to approach their writing to make the situation better. For example, we wanted our students to write persuasive pieces about somewhere in Michigan. So, our students picked somewhere that they loved, and they took it upon themselves to persuade other people why they should go there. They explained what the place looked like, what you could do there, what the food was like, what the service was like, all the things that had made their experience really enjoyable and persuaded other people why they should go to that restaurant or that location over something else where they might have a different experience.

I think that choice greatly impacts the quality of the writing. I could tell a student to write a writing prompt about something and they wouldn't necessarily to they're being told to, and that's maybe it's not their interest level, not their knowledge base, but if they are given a larger topic and then have choice within that, they feel like they have control over what they're doing. They take ownership, there's intrinsic motivation, and as a result, highly improved quality of work. So, these are brochures about the city of Waterford, and every student was asked to persuade people why they should come to Waterford. All they were told was to persuade someone to come to the city and they were able to use any natural or human characteristic of the city as a persuasive topic of interest.

I have found when they are given choice in their writing, they go back into their writing to make it better, and it's not teacher directed. They want to produce the best quality work. They know it's going to a real authentic audience, and in turn they take ownership of themselves to make their pieces better.

Students are required every night to read, but above that they are given choices for homework. They could find an educational website and then need to explain why that would be a great website or they need to interview a family member or come up with an idea for something we could do to better our class.

I think that the choice can greatly increase the quality of work in a classroom and just the overall morale of the students. They feel like they have ownership over their lives, over their day, and while they do need to write, they get to choose what they're writing about. And I think that it's really encouraging to know that the research is backing this in a classroom setting.

Narrator: Learn more@literacyessentials.org.