

The Six T's of Effective Elementary Literacy Instruction

In a ten year study of exemplary elementary instruction, Richard Allington (2002) identified six characteristics:

TIME:

Effective teachers have students do more guided reading, more independent reading, and more non-fiction reading. Children are reading and writing for nearly half the day. Worksheets are used sparingly during instructional time.

TEXTS:

Effective teachers have children reading texts that they can read with a high level of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Children are not necessarily in the same book. Students need huge quantities of successful reading in various genres to become independent, proficient readers.

TEACHING:

Effective teachers' instruction is explicit, intensive, and systematic. Teachers use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model to guide students through the curricular objectives (I do, you watch; I do, you help; You do, I help; You do, I watch). Expert teachers foster strategies that transfer from structured practice to independent use.

TALK:

Discussion is an integral part of the learning. It is more conversational rather than interrogational. The discussion is purposeful and personalized. Thoughtful classroom talk focuses on making children's thinking visible and building understanding. There is a two-way conversation among students where students piggy-back and extend each others conversations.

TASKS:

Exemplary teachers demonstrate effective use of longer assignments, tasks that integrate several content areas, and substantive work with more complexity. Students in such classes are provided with some choice when working on tasks. Workbooks and worksheets are used sparingly.

TESTING:

Student work is regularly evaluated based on effort and improvement. Rubrics shift responsibility for improvement to the students. Most effective teachers use almost no test preparation materials feeling that good instruction is what makes the difference.