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Literature response journals : successful implementation in a balanced literacy program

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Literature response journals : successful implementation in a balanced literacy program

Abstract

When balancing their literacy program, classroom teachers take into consideration many components of reading. They know that they must look at each student to see where his or her strengths and weaknesses are. They then plan instruction based on this assessment. One way is to teach how to respond to literature, which is a valuable way to reflect and clarify while reading. It allows the students to work at their own level and become engaged in literature.

The literature response journal can be used in conjunction with any literacy program. It provides a way for the teacher and student to discuss books on a regular basis. It also gives teachers a valuable look at each student's reading and writing. To successfully implement literature response journals, the teacher needs to take on three roles: manager, reader/assessor, and responder. Each role allows the teacher to play a part in balancing his/her literacy program.

**LITERATURE RESPONSE JOURNALS: SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION IN A
BALANCED LITERACY PROGRAM**

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Abstract

When balancing their literacy program, classroom teachers take into consideration many components of reading. They know that they must look at each student to see where his or her strengths and weaknesses are. They then plan instruction based on this assessment. One way is to teach how to respond to literature which is a valuable way to reflect and clarify while reading. It allows the students to work at their own level and become engaged in literature. The literature response journal can be used in conjunction with any literacy program. It provides a way for the teacher and student to discuss books on a regular basis. It also gives teachers a valuable look at each student's reading and writing. To successfully implement literature response journals, the teacher needs to take on three roles: manager, reader/assessor, and responder. Each role allows the teacher to play a part in balancing his/her literacy program.

Almost anyone in education is aware of constantly changing trends. Dependent upon funding and legislation, schools are always looking for ways to improve instruction. Decision-makers (who may or may not be educators) look at test scores and make policy to improve them. The pendulum swings. Reading is skill-based. In order for students to learn to read, it must be taught in small groups based on ability. The pendulum swings again. It is not good for students' self-esteem to be in ability-based groups. Reading should be literature-based. Students should be taught in a way that totally immerses them in good stories. Students will love literature, so they will know how to read. The pendulum swings again. Students do not know phonics. They must know phonics and the basics in order to read. Again, the pendulum swings. Instruction needs to be based on students' needs. It should be driven by assessment results.

In the midst of all of this, there is the classroom teacher who must decide how to sort this all out. This teacher has the daunting responsibility of meeting the needs of all of the students on a daily basis. Even before *literacy* replaced *reading* and *balanced literacy* became a way to teach reading, teachers realized that not all students learn in the same way. Most classroom teachers are constantly challenging themselves to find the right balance in literacy instruction.

What is Balanced Literacy Instruction?

Balance is more than just an approach to teaching literacy. It is having a set of beliefs or a perspective. Having a balanced perspective places equal importance on local knowledge (Fitzgerald, 1999) of reading and global knowledge of reading. *Local knowledge* includes sight-reading and strategies to figure out words. *Global knowledge* includes comprehending, interpreting, and responding. A balanced perspective also recognizes that students learn to read from many different knowledge sources and in many different ways. A balanced perspective will include teaching strategies that meet the needs of a diverse group of learners (Fitzgerald, 1999).

Many programs advocating a balance in literacy instruction have surfaced over recent years. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) advocate a three-block framework to achieve literacy. In their model, each day students in grades three through six, spend time in the writing workshop block, the language/word study block, and the reading workshop block. Within each block, students spend time in a variety of activities. During the writing workshop block, the time is divided between several activities. The teacher often begins the block with a mini lesson, a short lesson presented to the whole class about a specific writing principle (Calkins, 1986). The teacher may include a writer talk, a talk given by the teacher or a student about a favorite writer at the beginning of the block. Then students participate in one or more activities such as independent writing, time spent by the students writing on project of their choice; guided writing, time spent in flexible groups working on skill; investigations, an in depth study that requires research. The block ends with group sharing, time when students are given the opportunity to share their written work with the class. During the language/word study block, time is divided among more skill-based activities such as word sorts, word finds and other activities that reinforce vocabulary, spelling and phonics. Similar to writing workshop, the reading workshop block begins with a book talk, a talk given by the teacher or a student about a favorite book or mini lesson, specific instruction about strategies or skills. On any given day, students may also be a part of a literature study, a heterogeneous group of students who share the same interests and have chosen a book to read together or guided reading group, a homogeneous group of students who work on the same text. Students spend the majority of the reading workshop time reading independently. During this independent reading time, students may choose to respond to their book in a response journal. Reading workshop ends with group sharing.

When deciding how to balance the literacy program so that it meets the needs of all of the students, the classroom teacher uses a variety of strategies and materials. When planning for word study, the teacher may choose to use word sorts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001) which requires the students to categorize words with a common feature or word finds which requires students to look through text and find words with a common feature. When planning for comprehension, the teacher may choose to use a story map (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001) which requires students to map a story's elements while reading, reader's theatre (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001) which requires the students to read and/or act out the text dramatically, literature circles (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001), a group of students who have chosen to read the same text and meet on a regular basis for discussion of the selected text. In many instances, the teacher is required to use a basal approved by the school district and is trying to provide other activities to meet the students' needs. The teacher is constantly looking for effective strategies and activities that focus on students' interests when planning literacy instruction.

One such effective literacy activity is the literature response journal. The response journal is just as it sounds, a journal that allows the student to respond to literature. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) state, "Practical and easy to use, the student response journals build students' awareness of reading's many dimensions" (p. 163). Werderich (2002) found that response journals provide an effective way to accommodate individual differences.

The role literature response journals play in a balanced literacy program is an important one. Theoretically based in Rosenblatt's (1986) interplay between efferent and aesthetic reading experiences, the practical implementation of response journals provides students with unique opportunities to react and interact with text and influences the roles the teacher takes in the process.

Why Respond to Reading with Writing?

When looking at printed material, Rosenblatt (1978) distinguishes between text and poem. The text is the printed signs that serve as symbols. This text may be of any genre. For example, newspaper articles, novels, poems, and encyclopedia articles are all considered text. When text becomes a poem, it indicates that a reader has brought something to the text and is taking something out of it. The text has taken on meaning to the reader and is generating an ongoing response, a transaction.

“Any text can be read either efferently or aesthetically” (Rosenblatt, 1986, p. 124). When a reader reads a text for meaning, it is being read efferently. During efferent reading, the reader focuses on what is to be retained from the text. When a reader reads aesthetically, attention is focused more on feelings. Aesthetic reading draws the reader’s attention to what is being felt and lived through during the reading event. Unlike efferent reading, aesthetic reading does not focus on facts and details. Instead it focuses on emotion and response (Rosenblatt, 1978 & 1986).

Using Rosenblatt’s terminology, it is possible that some text will become a poem to some students and remain text to others. Classroom teachers often wonder what kind of transaction, if any, is taking place between the reader and the text. Literature response journals provide a way to interact with the reader at any reading level about any transaction at any given time. Response journals provide a way for students to reflect on their own reading, construct meaning, question the author and themselves, make predictions, and connect reading and writing. Graves (1989) found that when students write about the book they are reading they become engaged with the teacher, the author, the book’s characters, and most importantly, themselves as readers. Atwell (1987) used dialogue journals (notebooks where she corresponded with students about the books they were reading during reading workshop) and found that students’ responses were deeper than

their talk. When writing, students had more time to consider their thoughts. Classroom teachers need to provide ways to help students construct meaning. Writing responses allows students time to sort out thoughts and critically reflect on the text. It allows students to respond spontaneously in their own writing style without worrying about the conventions or mechanics of writing. In effect, response journals allow students to monitor their own learning as they read, reflect, and write responses (Fountas and Pinnell, 2001; Fuhler, 1994; Hancock, 1992; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989).

How Are Literature Response Journals Used?

The literature response journal is often a spiral notebook that has been designated as a place to write about books (Atwell, 1989; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Fulps & Young, 1991; Werrderich, 2002). The notebook may be divided into sections, not only to record responses but also to keep a log of books read (Atwell, 1989; Fountas and Pinnell, 2001). The journal may also include a section for a list of books the student would like to read and a section for responses that are evoked as a part of being part of a book club or literature circle (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

The journal response literature revealed that the teachers using literature response journals took time to establish a routine that would enable them to interact with students about the books they were reading (Atwell, 1987; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Fulps & Young, 1991). This routine included time to write a response to their book at school (Atwell, 1987; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Fulps & Young, 1991). During their independent reading time, students could take a break from reading to write in their journals. Journals were not assigned as homework. Expectations were set so that the students knew how often to respond in their journals. Often students were expected to write a response once a week but had the option of responding more frequently if they wished. Included in their responses were the date and title of the book.

Responses were written as first drafts. Because of this, students knew the emphasis was on their responses and not on summarizing the story or the mechanics of their writing (Atwell, 1987; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Fulps & Young, 1991).

Guidelines and expectations can be given to students. However, it will always be easier for some than for others. For students who are more familiar with comprehension questions and looking for the right answer, response journals may be a difficult transition at first. When initiating literature response journals, the teacher may need to model written responses after a read aloud. Leading sentences and open-ended questions may be used as prompts to promote higher levels of thinking and divergent responses (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The goal of questioning and prompting in response journals should always be to assist the students' own thinking. The teacher needs to pay careful attention so that the journal maintains the tone of literary conversation as opposed to an interrogation (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

When responding in their journals, students know their teacher will be reading their responses. In fact, the teacher is the primary audience. Students are taught that they are not writing *for* their teacher but that they are writing *to* their teacher. The students know that the teacher will be writing back to them in their journal. A common format used is the letter format (Atwell, 1987). When using the letter format, students address their response to the teacher and close it with their name. This is a concrete way of providing audience and ownership. (Atwell, 1989; Graves, 1989). Whether writing in paragraph format or letter format, the teacher's response is a vital component in the literature response journal (Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1989; Werderich, 2002). The teacher's responses provide a vehicle for teaching in two different ways. First, the students see value in responding to literature because the teacher responds as well. The student views this as a personal conversation and is interested in the teacher's thoughts about the

book (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986). Second, it is personalized as a way of instruction. With thoughtful consideration, the teacher can use the journal to question, prompt, and lead the student to a different level of thinking based on the student's responses and needs. (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Werderich, 2002).

Why Use Literature Response Journals?

“The goal is not to summarize or retell the story in order to prove they've read it but to uncover the meaning of the text and their response to that meaning” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 165). Writing allows students time to see thoughts in print. It gives them time to sort out and articulate their thoughts. It allows them to construct meaning instead of giving predetermined answers to a set of questions (Atwell, 1989; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). Literature response journals are an activity in which every student, regardless of ability, can participate and can experience success (Fulps & Young, 1991). Because of this experienced success, students gain self-confidence as they learn their interpretations are acceptable when there are no wrong answers in writing their responses to the teacher (Pantaleo, 1995).

Why I Decided to Try Literature Response Journals

The beginning of the 2002-2003 school year found me thinking a little differently about my teaching of reading. I had a class of twenty fourth-graders in a rural parochial school. In every class, students' abilities vary, and this upcoming class was no exception. However, the degree of their abilities varied even more than the average class. The varying degree of these abilities caused me to question how to best reach them and meet all of their needs. I planned to use our district-required basal. I had two students who were eligible to receive special education services, but their parents had declined the services. I planned to use our basal's supplemental remedial program with these two students. However, I wanted to work with heterogeneous book

groups based on interest and homogeneous book groups based on ability. I also wanted to challenge those students with higher reading levels to try some more difficult books. I hoped that as we read the basal stories together as a large group and read novels and books together in small groups, they would transfer their skills from these groups to their own independent reading. I hoped this transfer of skills would help them develop a passion for reading that would show in their independent selection and discussion of books. We had independent reading time each day for thirty to forty minutes. Implementing literature response journals seemed like a good way for me to monitor this independent reading. I looked for it to provide a way for me to convey my own love for books and my interest in each student as a reader as we consistently communicated about the books they were reading. In order to meet these students' needs, I needed to use different teaching strategies and differentiate instruction based on ability and interest. However, the literature response journal was one element that was required of every student. Because the focus was on their responses to literature and not the mechanics of writing, each student was able to respond at their own level. I hoped the journals would provide a way for me to better know each of my students as a reader while providing information that would help me plan my instruction.

The Literature Response Journal Journey Begins

It would be great to say that with all of these factors and goals in mind, I knew exactly how I was going to implement literature response journals. I didn't. I had an idea, and I had good resources. I was also active in a teachers' study group in which I could go to for ideas and support. When the first day of school came, I asked the students to tell me about the best book they had ever read. This was not unlike the beginning of other school years, as I usually did have the students tell me about their favorite book. However this year, the students had selected one of

their spiral notebooks to label as their book journals. It was in this notebook or literature response journal that the students wrote about their favorite book. They had been told that this would be a place that they would write about their independent reading books this whole school year and that I would be writing back to them in this same notebook.

When I collected the response journals the first time, I learned many things. I knew which students had chosen a chapter book as their favorite and which students had chosen a picture book. Many of the books such as *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952), *Amber Brown Goes Fourth* (Danziger, 1995), and *Boxcar Children* (Warner, 1942) selected by the students were also familiar texts to me, and I had no trouble responding. I let them know that I also liked those books. I also observed a distinct pattern in my boys' responses. The majority of the boys listed one of Dav Pilkey's *Captain Underpants* series' books as their favorites. There seemed to be a fascination and interest in the titles. With this first entry, I had a sample of the students' writing for assessment purposes (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). I knew who could easily write a half page in ten minutes and who struggled to write two sentences. I knew who considered a chapter book their favorite and who considered a picture book their favorite. I also saw an interest in a series of books among a group of students. This information could already help me plan and personalize instruction.

With this initial entry in hand, I began responding. I responded to each and every entry. I let the students know if I had also read that book, would include it as one of my favorites and why. If I had not read the book, I let the students know I was not familiar with it and asked a couple of probing questions. I tried to convey that if they considered it among their favorites, it would probably be worth my while to read it or at least know more about it. As I handed the journals out the next day, I watched as they read my responses. There was an atmosphere of

interest and engagement as the students read to see what I had to say. Each student, regardless of ability, was genuinely interested in what I had to say about his or her favorite book. We had initiated our first discussion. Our journey had begun.

The Literature Response Journal Journey Continues

In the real world of classroom teaching, it is not realistic to think that any one teacher is going to maintain this initial interest and engagement by requiring the students to respond in their journals every day. I realized this and also knew that I would not be able to respond to each student every day. I began formulating guidelines and methods that I felt would work in my classroom. I found that when using literature response journals, I took on three primary roles: the manager, the reader/assessor, and the responder.

The Manager

As the manager, I established expectations and guidelines for my students. We had an independent reading time each day. If during this time, the students were not participating in a group activity with me, they had a couple of different options. They could be reading, recording any books they finished on their book log which we stapled in the back of their response journals, or they could be writing about the book they were currently reading or had finished reading.

When writing an entry there were certain expectations the students were to meet. They needed to write the title of the book, the author's last name, and the date of each entry. In order to be counted as an entry, it needed to be a half page long. Because we were using spiral notebooks, we used the holes in the left margins as units of measurement. The entries were to span from one hole to the next. I felt that in order to truly reflect on their reading, the response needed to be of this length. If the students chose to write about the same book in a consecutive

entry, they did not have to include the title and author's name again but did need to include the date.

Because I wanted the students to feel comfortable and come to see this as a conversation with me about their books, I spent a lot of time encouraging them to stop reading during their independent reading time and write their reactions to what they were reading. I told them that I would not be checking their entries for mechanical/grammatical errors, but that I was interested in their thinking as they were reading (Atwell, 1987). I did, however, tell them also that this didn't mean they should forget every mechanical convention they ever learned. Although the focus was not on mechanics, their journal was a form of communication and it should convey a meaningful communication which, in turn meant writing clearly enough to be understood. I did not want them to spend time proofreading and editing, but I did want them to use punctuation, capitalization, and usage skills they had.

The students had thirty to forty minutes of independent reading time every day. They needed to write about a book twice a week. Part of this independent reading time could be used to write a response in their journals. Because of this, they knew it could always be done in school and did not need to be taken home. The students always had the option of choosing how to respond to the book they were reading. I often put a couple of prompts on the board each week to get them thinking as they read. For example, *Does the character in the story remind you of anyone you know? Have you read any other books that remind you of the book you are reading?* They also had the option of responding to the prompt.

Reading, reflecting, and responding were my primary goals of the response journals. There were occasions we used them for additional literacy activities. When working on a particular word analysis skill, such as suffixes, or a particular English skill, such as proper nouns,

I would have the students use one of their responses to look in their books for examples of these things. We also used them for book group activities. When the students were part of a book group in which four to six students were reading and discussing the same book, they were to use the journal to respond to that particular book and to use the journal for vocabulary and comprehension activities.

We used two different systems to track the required writing each week. The first system integrated reading, writing, home and school activities. At the beginning of the week each student would get a nine-square grid that was three squares by three squares. In each of the nine squares, there was a task that the student was to accomplish by the following Monday. Examples of the tasks included things such as reading for thirty minutes at home, finding ten common nouns and listing them in the student's response journal, or writing a response in the book journal. Included at the bottom of the paper, was a line for the students to fill in the date the grid was started and the date it was to be completed. The students crossed off each square as they accomplished the task (see Figure 1).

The second system served as a visual reminder. I posted a chart with the students names divided into four rows. By the chart I placed a stack of sticky notes. Each time the students wrote in their response journal for the week, they placed a sticky note by their name. At a glance, I could tell who had written in their journals twice, once, or not at all. Each Monday morning, I cleared off the chart, and we started over.

Reader/Assessor

When reading the journals, the teacher is able to see what the students understand, their level of understanding, and how they are able to communicate that understanding (Pantaleo, 1995). The teacher reads the journals to create a picture of each student as a reader. The teacher

can use information from the journals to meet students' needs and to plan individual, small group, and large group instruction (Werderich, 2002).

Our system was set up so that I would read only five students' journals each day on Monday through Thursday. This allowed me to read each student's journal and respond once a week. The students knew which day of the week their journal would be read. When reading the journals, I kept a list of the students in which I wrote the title of the book they were currently reading and notes about their responses.

As the reader, I learned many things about my students. Using both the journals and the notes I kept, I could tell who enjoyed reading and had an easy time choosing books. I could tell who needed guidance in selecting a book. I could also tell who had difficulty completing one book before beginning another book.

The journals provided a good picture of each student as a reader and a writer. I had a very natural weekly assessment of their reading and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Each entry provided me with a sample of their writing in addition to telling me what book they were reading and something about their comprehension of the text. As promised, I focused more on the messages the students were writing and spent little time on the conventions. However, when a student would demonstrate a need for instruction in an area, such as a student writing a whole page with no punctuation, we would conference about it (Atwell, 1987). When I first began reading the journals, I included an *ok*, *good*, or *excellent* with my response. When it seemed that the students were more interested in this comment than the response I had written about their book, I decided to no longer include it. I wanted their focus to be on my response and our dialogue.

The students and I worked out a self-assessment. The evaluation required them to read through their journal and evaluate how they were doing at including the date and title. It also required them to look at their writing to see if it made sense and included conventions (see Figure 2). The students used the assessment to evaluate their own journals and taped it inside the front cover of their notebook for our first parent-student-teacher conferences in the fall. We continued to use this assessment and also a rubric from *Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6: Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). This rubric allowed the students to rate themselves on a four-point scale on five different qualities of their writing which included text understanding, voice, clarity of expression, conventions, and self-awareness as a reader and writer. We used one of these two assessment tools at the end of each nine-week quarter as way to evaluate how they were doing with their written responses.

Responder

Students learn to expect a written response from the teacher. The students are more likely to invest time and energy into their responses when they know their teacher will write back to them (Fulps & Young, 1991). As the responder, teachers need to generate more questioning and thinking about the text the student has read. The teacher wants to provide opportunities that will take students beyond general teacher manual issues such as plot, genre, and characters. By responding in the form of dialogue, the teacher can think aloud and speculate on the text. By modeling the thought process that takes place during reading, the teacher demonstrates the importance of reflection to gain understanding of the text. The teacher's response is so important that students' attitudes and efforts related to response journals seem to have a direct relationship to the frequency and quality of teachers' responses (Calkins, 1986).

I knew when I started this activity, that I would need to respond to the students' response journals on a regular basis in order for them to maintain interest and see value in the activity. Because I read five journals each night, I also responded to five journals each night. I felt that this was my time limit in order to really read what the students were writing and respond well. Like the students, I always dated my responses. At the beginning, I found that it was easier to respond if the students were writing about a book or a series in which I was familiar. I tried to write my response to prompt more thinking on the student's part. I would often begin with the phrase, *I'm wondering*. I would also ask probing and clarifying questions such as *Why do you think that character chose to do that?* Together, we learned how to respond. They learned that there were no right and wrong answers.

I also continued to look for ways that would require them to think at higher levels and question themselves as they read. Keene and Zimmerman (1997) found that a useful comprehension strategy is to connect text events that have happened in your own life, *text to self connections*, events that are happening in the world, *text to world connections*, or events that have happened in other stories you have read, *text to text connections*. I found this to be a valuable tool when responding to the students. From their responses, I would look for connections they were making on their own. I would use these connections as the foundation for my questions. Three very easy questions were: (1) *Does this remind you of anything that has happened to you?* (2) *Does this remind you of anything you have heard about in the world?* (3) *Does this remind you of events in any other story you have read?* As the year progressed the students often transferred these type of connections to our small group and large group discussions.

I found that as the year progressed, it became easier to respond to the students even if I was not familiar with the book. It did not matter whether they really liked it, liked it a little, or did not like it at all. They had realized that I was not going to try to talk them into liking the book. The response journal took on the role of a genuine discussion about books! Due to the students' active engagement in reading, writing, and active dialogue, our independent reading time became one of my favorite times of day. I knew the activity was worthwhile when one student said, "I've got to write. You're going to want to know about this!" The group of boys who began the year with *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* (Pilkey, 1997) often found an area to sit all together. On one occasion, as they sat talking among themselves, I was just getting ready to tell them it was time to quit talking and start reading. I stopped and listened to a fragment of their conversation. They were genuinely discussing their books. It became their pattern to sit and chat about their books for about five minutes before reading. They never had to be reminded to write in their journals twice a week. I would like to think that my conversation through their journals helped to spark the spontaneous conversation they had with each other! The focus on conversation in writing in their journals transferred to their own interactions. They had initiated their own conversations about reading. Conversations about reading became natural and important in their reading process.

Conclusion

"Learning to read depends on two critical factors: the teacher's thorough understanding of the reading process itself, and his or her determination to understand and respond to each child's needs as a reader" (Keene & Zimmerman, 2001, p. xiv). Response journals provided me with an opportunity to look at each of my students individually as a reader. As a part of a balanced literacy program, they provided valuable information that helped me plan instruction.

They helped me grow in the areas of managing, reading/assessing, and responding. However, the most important component they provided was the opportunity for the students to respond to their reading. This enabled me to respond to their needs as a reader while conveying a passion for reading. The students saw the value I placed on reading and the genuine interest I had in discussing the books they were reading. They learned that there are different ways to bring meaning to text. They learned that questioning and different viewpoints are valuable. I was no longer questioning if any transactions had occurred between reader and text. I had been witness to many valuable transactions. Will I begin the school year again by having the students designate a notebook as their book journal? Yes, I undoubtedly will. When the journey begins again, I hope to see continued growth in my own abilities as manager, reader/assessor, and responder as I the learning process continues for me.

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Three by Three Square Grid

<p>Read for at least 15 minutes at home ... by yourself ... with someone ... or to someone.</p> <p>Minutes: _____</p> <p>Initials: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>	<p>Read for at least 15 minutes at home ... by yourself ... with someone ... or to someone.</p> <p>Minutes: _____</p> <p>Initials: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>	<p>Tell someone about the book you are reading.</p>
<p>Read for at least 15 minutes at home ... by yourself ... with someone ... or to someone.</p> <p>Minutes: _____</p> <p>Initials: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>	<p>Write in your reading response journal.</p> <p>How is the main character similar to and different from you?</p>	<p>Read for at least 15 minutes at home ... by yourself ... with someone ... or to someone.</p> <p>Minutes: _____</p> <p>Initials: _____</p> <p>Date: _____*</p>
<p>Read for at least 15 minutes at home ... by yourself ... with someone ... or to someone.</p> <p>Minutes: _____</p> <p>Initials: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>	<p>Write in your reading response journal.</p>	<p>Read for at least 15 minutes at home ... by yourself ... with someone ... or to someone.</p> <p>Minutes: _____</p> <p>Initials: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>

Extra Reading:

* Week of _____ ... due _____.

Figure 1. Three by three square grid with tasks for literacy activities, including response journals.

Book Journal Evaluation

Name: _____

Date: _____

Number of times written: _____

Rate the following using **Always, Usually, Sometimes, Never**

Date is included: _____

Title is included: _____

When I read my entries, I notice

Complete sentences _____

Capital letters _____

Punctuation _____

Run-on sentences _____

My writing makes sense _____

You can tell about the book I'm reading by what I write _____

Comments:

Figure 2. Self-assessment developed to share at Parent-Student-Teacher conferences.