**Malkara Four Blocks Literacy Framework**

**Introductory Statement**

Four Blocks Literacy is a balanced literacy approach developed for mainstream students and adapted for students with specific learning needs. It was developed on the premise that all students can and will engage with print when provided with highly structured opportunities, specific purposes, sufficient time and high expectations. The four ‘blocks’ incorporate many familiar strategies from mainstream education.

**Guided Reading Block**

Sharing a big book, reading it together, developing comprehension.

**Working with Words Block**

Learning about decoding words, word families, onset and rime activities, word walls.

**Writing Block**

Storywriting, journals, writing conferences, authors' chair.

**Self Selected Reading Block**

Silent Reading, D.E.A.R, Stop, Drop and Read, reading conferences

**What makes Four Blocks Literacy different?**

In Four Blocks Literacy emphasis is placed on making print or literacy accessible to all and finding the means of engaging all students in the reading and writing process, regardless of ability. Putting in place the structures, the processes and resources that create success and finally, the belief that everyone CAN ..!

**Four Blocks Literacy at Malkara**

Malkara’s Leadership Team consists of five staff, one of whom is the Executive Teacher Professional Practice (ETPP). This School Leader has specific responsibility for literacy programs across the school.

Every class at Malkara School has a literacy plan based on the Four Blocks Literacy model. The literacy plan is submitted to the Executive Teacher (Literacy) every term to ensure consistency of approach. Each of the four blocks are implemented in every classroom at a level appropriate to the specific need of the students. Some classes may implement an early childhood version of the Four Blocks called ‘Building Blocks’.

Every teacher aims to implement up to two hours of literacy instruction every day. Teachers endeavour to teach literacy in blocks of up to 30 minutes but duration depends on individual classes and students.

**The Four Blocks Way**

Four Blocks is a comprehensive framework for teaching the skills to develop literacy competence. It is based on practical, successful strategies for teaching students of all abilities to read and write. Each block has specific goals and purposes and a time allowance, however they are not taught in isolation - what is learned in one block is applied in the other blocks.

**Guided Reading Block**

The primary purpose of the guided reading block is to assist students understand that reading involves thinking and making meaning from print and/or pictures. In this block, reading comprehension, language comprehension and vocabulary are taught through:

* using the same book for multiple purposes aor addressing one purpose with multiple books
* planning lessons according to the BEFORE, DURING and AFTER framework :-
  + BEFORE - activate students’ background knowledge and set the purpose of lesson
  + DURING – reading and listening for the bulk of 30 minutes
  + AFTER - complete a task directly related to stated purpose of lesson then give and receive feedback.

**Working with Words**

The primary purpose of the working with words block is to teach students the skills needed to read individual words. These skills are developed through:

* learning high frequency words needed for fluent, successful reading with comprehension
* using words they know to figure out words they don’t know
* learning the alphabet, letters and sounds, onset-rime, phonics, spelling, decoding and chunking.

**Writing**

The primary purpose of the writing block is to assist students to write a variety of texts for real purposes. Students who write become better readers, writers, thinkers, communicators.

This is achieved through:

* seeing others write for real purposes
* writing without standards, rules and judgements
* having a working pencil or alternative.

**Self Selected Reading**

The primary purpose of the self-selected reading block is that it provides a basis for generalisation of skill based instruction.

Generalisation is achieved through:

* selecting reading materials they find interesting and enjoyable
* becoming automatic in skill application
* sharing and responding to what they are reading with teacher and peers
* listening to text aloud at or near their listening comprehension level.

**Four Blocks in action at Malkara – one year on**

* Since the introduction of Four Blocks Literacy at Malkara School, at the beginning of 2012, many students have made significant gains in their understanding and use of literacy both for learning and communicating. The following is a list of highlights from the past two years:
* Most students have been matched with their choice of pencil or alternative such as a real pencil, chalk, magnetic letters, an alphabet flipchart, an iPad or a scribe.
* Students *sign in* every day, writing their names without a model or template.
* Letter writing to another class on a weekly basis is a highlight for many students who eagerly await the postal delivery to see who their letter is from and attempt to read it.
* Every Friday at assembly a student receives the Writer of the Week award for special achievement in writing.
* Many students take readers home and are starting to be placed on reading levels at school.
* Word walls or name walls are used in classes with many students now having a sight word vocabulary which they use to help with reading.
* Some students are engaging with books for longer periods or for the first time, showing real interest in turning the pages, pointing to the pictures, and responding to questions about the story.
* Students are using AAC, Aided Language Displays and language to respond to and enjoy books.
* Students are engaging with print. They choose books and writing activities as a free choice activity.
* Classrooms are full of books and are transforming into print rich environments that encourage, literacy, language and communication.
* A Four Blocks Literacy Plan proforma incorporating the Australian Curriculum Standards for Literacy has been developed. This proforma is used by all teachers to plan comprehensive literacy blocks which are differentiated, specific to their students and highly motivating and engaging.