



Effective Strategies for Teaching and Learning Independence in Literacy

The Daily 5 Literacy Structure

Dr. Jill Buchan, Assistant Professor of Education | July, 2016





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Executive Summary

Research shows that given extended periods of time to practice, combined with focused, intentional instruction, students can and will increase reading achievement. To do this, a highly engaging structure that teaches independence, builds stamina, provides student choice, and devotes time to reading and writing must be in place. After years of applying best practice and reviewing this research, Gail Boushey and Joan Moser determined that only authentic tasks would lead to the progress they desired for their students.

As a result, Boushey and Moser developed the **Daily 5**, a structure created to eliminate busywork, develop student independence, increase student engagement, and accelerate learning. The structure was strategically designed to include the common expectations of the literacy block; Read to Self, Work on Writing, Read to Someone, Word Work, and Listen to Reading are the five tasks that make up the **Daily 5** structure. The five tasks provide students with the opportunity to practice authentic literacy skills at the learner's developmental level.

The five tasks in the **Daily 5** are introduced separately through the **10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence**. The gradual-release process includes student modeling, practice and reflection, and ongoing discussion about expectations until the behaviors become a habit. This automaticity is then achieved through the repetition and practice of the **10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence**.

Boushey and Moser's **Daily 5** structure stands out from the traditional literacy block in a number of ways. First, it creates a highly structured and effective learning environment through the explicit teaching of the **10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence**. It also creates a highly engaging learning environment through brain-compatible instruction and the element of student choice. Finally, it increases reading volume by providing extended periods of time for reading. The combination of these elements allows students to develop independence, stamina, and increased reading proficiency.



About this Document

This document provides recommendations and other considerations for educators striving to create a learning environment that teaches students to be engaged in independent, meaningful reading practice. Areas of focus are the following:

- 1 | Understanding the basics of the 10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence, stamina, and student choice.
- 2 | The research that supports each component and how it contributes to teaching and learning independence in literacy.
- 3 | The effect of Daily 5 implementation and what it means for literacy competence.
- 4 | Implementation of the Daily 5 structure to increase learning independence in literacy.



Effective Strategies for Teaching and Learning Independence in Literacy

Gradual Release of Responsibility

RESEARCH

One method teachers use to deliver explicit, individualized instruction is the gradual-release-of-responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). This model emphasizes the importance of learning through interactions and includes the beliefs of several theorists, including Piaget (1952), Vygotsky (1962), Bandura (1977), and Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976). Using this mode of instruction, teachers gradually release the responsibility for a task to students through four components: demonstration, shared demonstration, guided practice, and independent practice (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

The gradual release of responsibility includes a demonstration or a focus lesson in which the teacher clearly communicates the expectations and the purpose to the students. Additionally, teachers and students work together to solidify thinking and understanding. Students practice the new skills while the teacher provides support. The ultimate goal of gradual release is for the students to apply the information independently. During independent practice, the students are given the opportunity to use their knowledge to perform new tasks. The combination of these four elements transfers the responsibility from the teacher to the students (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

Fisher and Frey (2010) explain that “as part of the gradual release of responsibility framework, the teacher scaffolds learning to facilitate student understanding” (p. 84). By incorporating the principles of the gradual-release-of-responsibility strategy, teachers move away from the role of “telling” and dispensing information. Instead, they adopt the role of facilitator or guide, allowing the students to become self-directed learners. Fisher and Frey (2010) reinforce this belief as they explain, “Mastery is not an expectation; the teacher is there to provide scaffolds to support and guide learners, then get out of the way to observe what they do with the scaffolds” (p. 85). This observation highlights the importance of trusting students as they practice and demonstrate autonomy. To teach students to become independent learners, strategies need to be presented, modeled, and practiced (Boushey & Moser, 2014; Harvey & Goudis, 2000).

EFFECT OF DAILY 5 IMPLEMENTATION

As a result of studying research and years of applying best practice, Gail Boushey and Joan Moser understood that only authentic tasks would lead to the progress they desired for their students. Together they worked to develop the Daily 5, a structure that eliminates busywork, develops student independence, increases engagement, and accelerates growth. The Daily 5 consists of the following tasks:

- Read to self
- Work on writing
- Read to someone
- Word work
- Listen to reading

These five tasks provide authentic literacy practice, and when they are placed in a structure promoting independence, learning potential is maximized. To foster this climate of independence, Boushey and Moser developed the 10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence.

Each Daily 5 task is introduced separately, using the gradual-release-of-responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Together with the 10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence, tasks are modeled, practiced, reflected on, and revised until the behaviors become a habit. Knowing the expectations, possessing the skills to meet them, being trusted to carry them out, and taking responsibility for doing so are the heart of student independence.

THE 10 STEPS TO TEACHING AND LEARNING INDEPENDENCE	
STEP 1	Identify what is to be taught
STEP 2	Setting a purpose—create a sense of urgency
STEP 3	Record desired behaviors on I-chart
STEP 4	Model most-desirable behaviors
STEP 5	Model least-desirable behaviors, then most-desirable (<i>with the same student</i>)
STEP 6	Place students around the room
STEP 7	Practice and build stamina
STEP 8	Stay out of the way—confer about behavior
STEP 9	Use a quiet signal to bring students back to the group
STEP 10	Conduct a group check-in—ask, “How did it go?”

Step 1: Identify what is to be taught

When structuring a highly effective learning environment, educators must identify what is to be taught (Step 1). Teachers are to be purposeful when they identify what will be taught and how the instruction will be delivered. This might sound like, “Today we are going to learn . . .” This establishes direction for teachers, and when a purpose and goal are clearly articulated, it decreases student anxiety about expectations (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Step 2: Set a purpose—create a sense of urgency

To keep students engaged, they must have an understanding of the purpose and urgency (Step 2) of the assigned activity. Many educational experts, including Dean, Hubbell, and Pitler (2012) and Marzano (2004), stress the importance of relating the learning objectives to things that are personally relevant to students. Students need to understand whether they are reading for enjoyment, to obtain information, or to answer specific questions (Stuck, n.d.). Understanding the purpose creates urgency during task completion.

Step 3: Record desired behaviors on I-chart

In addition to well-planned, purposeful lessons, teachers must increase students’ on-task behavior. According to Emmer, Sanford, Evertson, Sanford, Clements, and Martin (1981), even though rules and procedures used by effective classroom managers vary, it would be extremely difficult to manage a classroom effectively without rules and procedures. Newcomer and Lewis (2004) stress the importance of clearly teaching expectations to students. When desired behaviors are recorded on an I-chart (Step 3), students are better able to reference and understand expectations. The expected behaviors should be explicitly and positively stated, displayed visually, and modeled for students in the classroom (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

Step 4: Model most-desirable behaviors

“Having another person demonstrate desired behaviors has been used successfully to accelerate these behaviors in students of all ages” (Kerr & Nelson, 2010, p. 81). Through the use of modeling the most-desired behaviors (Step 4), peers will learn the expectations through observation and imitation. In Daily 5, the correct model is followed by the question “If [name] does these things, will he become a better reader?” This helps to tie the sense of urgency in with purpose.

Step 5: Model least-desirable behaviors, then most-desirable (with the same student)

After the correct modeling, a student is selected to model incorrectly. Then students are asked, “If [name] does these things, will he become a better reader?” Clearly, the answer is no. It is important that after the least-desired behaviors are modeled, the same student then models the most-desired behaviors on the I-chart (Step 5). Then the question is repeated, eliciting an affirmative answer. Correct and incorrect modeling increases student awareness (Garcia Cortez & Malian, 2013). Viewing an incorrect model followed by a correct model helps retrain muscle memory, eliminates uncertainties about accepted behavior, and reaffirms the sense of urgency and purpose.

Step 6: Place students around the room

After expectations are communicated and modeled, students are placed in various positions around the room to practice (Step 6). During the launching phase, the teacher places the students so they get an idea of where they work best. Then, students are taught how to choose a work place where they can be successful and, following the gradual-release model, given the opportunity to self-select work locations. This process teaches students about expectations and how to choose a comfortable work place where they will have the strongest stamina and independence.

Step 7: Practice and build stamina

After student placement, students practice independently and build their stamina. It is during this time that all students should be independently engaged, following the behaviors listed on the I-chart. They are allowed to practice for as long as success continues. To build a foundation for reading, teachers provide ample opportunities for students to engage in sustained reading. Students become better readers through the act of reading (Gambrell, 2011). Providing opportunities to practice and build stamina (Step 7) will naturally increase a child’s proficiency and motivation to read (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1993).

Step 8: Stay out of the way—confer about behavior

Through the use of modeling, guidance, and collaborative learning, teachers equip students with an understanding of the expectations. Once these are clear, teachers must stay out of the way (Step 8) and allow students to engage in independent tasks and stamina building. Staying out of the way allows students to build independence that is not anchored to teacher attention. During that time the teacher identifies students who break stamina first and confers with those individuals to set behavior goals. “We must transfer responsibility for learning to our students gradually—and offer support at every step” (Fisher & Fry, 2008, p. 32).

Step 9: Use a quiet signal to bring students back to the group

At the first sign of behaviors that indicate student stamina is beginning to wane, teachers use a quiet signal to bring students back to the gathering place (Step 9). They must be taught the process of discontinuing independent practice and transitioning to the next activity (Jones & Jones, 2013). To save the teacher’s voice for instruction and maintain a calm tone in the classroom, a quiet chime or sound is used to signal transitions.

Step 10: Conduct a group check-in—ask, “How did it go?”

Once students have practiced and returned to the gathering space, they check in to determine success (Step 10). John Dewey said, “We don’t learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience” (Clements, n.d, p. 1). During check-in, students reflect, comparing their behaviors with those on the I-chart. After assessing their own efforts and accomplishments, students set a goal for the next practice round (Rief, 1990; Wolf, 1989).

Brain Research

RESEARCH

The ability to do things without having to consciously think about the task is known as automaticity. Automaticity can be achieved through simple repetition and practice. Students who engage in ongoing repetition of tasks are able to more effectively establish automatic response patterns. Ultimately, when students achieve automaticity, they are able to use the saved brainpower to do more, resulting in the ability to further build on their automatic skills (Hartman & Nelson, 2015).

In addition to research on automaticity, a wealth of information linking brain research to classroom instruction exists. Students must engage in the learning process to retain information. A simple “sit and get” is not enough to move a student from novice to practitioner. “With extensive practice one learns to integrate subunits of the overall task into one complex act. The nature of skill attainment is not simply that the subunits become automated but rather lies in the smooth coordination of all components of the task by a centrally organized motor program” (Regan, 1981, p. 181). Teachers need to be aware that simply exposing a student to information is not a guarantee that it will reach the personal/emotional threshold of the learner’s personal importance (Wesson, 2012). According to Wesson (n.d), “When children receive a lot of stimulation, enrichment, an opportunity to learn, and reinforcement, the brain builds additional neurocircuits, which leads to a rich and functional brain” (p. 1). As a result of the rich teaching environment, students are able to learn and then master new skills more quickly. Therefore, when a student’s brain learns and then masters new skills, it requires less energy to complete additional tasks (Wesson, 2005).

Researchers also indicate that there are several learning techniques educators can use to enhance memory formation. Elaborating, verbalizing, writing and drawing, and sharing learned information during and at the end of a learning session can positively affect retention of information (Van Dam, 2013). Furthermore, establishing a common gathering place provides an opportunity for students to shift their focus and engage in short bursts of instruction. The gathering space also provides a location for teacher modeling. Finally, a common gathering space establishes a tone for respectful learning, trust, cooperation, problem solving, and a sense of community in the classroom (Kriete & Bechtel, 2002).

EFFECT OF DAILY 5 IMPLEMENTATION

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Choice

RESEARCH

In the area of literacy, “One of the easiest ways to build some choice into the students’ school day is to incorporate independent reading time in which they can read whatever they choose” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 16). According to Miller (2012), another positive effect of student choice is increased effort, task performance, learning, and understanding of the material.

Allowing student choice has long been a part of education. William Glasser introduced Choice Theory in his 1998 book, *Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom*. Allowing student choice increases student motivation. Offering students choices in what they read better supports their reading (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). According to Grossman (n.d.), one way to maximize students’ reading potential is to allow student choice. Additionally, student choice gives the students a feeling of control, builds their self-esteem, increases their cognitive and moral development, and allows for individual responsibility.

Patall, Cooper, and Wynn (2010) highlight how “useful providing choice can be to establishing a classroom environment and a teaching style that supports students’ interest and enjoyment for school tasks” (p. 912). Combining student choice with

differentiated instruction can result in an increase in student engagement and learning. Student choice within the classroom is extremely important and appealing to students' need for control. By providing choice to students, power struggles are easily avoided (Erwin, 2004).

McBride (2006) offers the following on providing students choice: "When we offer choices we improve the chances of hooking them into an assignment." Choice enhances motivation and performance outcome. Patall, Cooper, and Wynn (2010) say, "People will be more intrinsically motivated to persist at a task to the extent that the activity involves their personal choice and/or provides opportunities to make choices" (p. 897).

EFFECT OF DAILY 5 IMPLEMENTATION

Boushey and Moser believe that children are more engaged, motivated, and successful when they have choice. The ability to choose empowers them and helps to create self-motivated learners (Boushey & Moser, 2014). The Daily 5 literacy structure incorporates choice in many ways. After building stamina, students choose which Daily 5 task they will engage in during the practice round. In addition, students choose where to sit, what to read, what to write, which Word Work activity to use, who their partner will be for Read to Someone, and what to listen to during Listen to Reading. When we allow students to choose a literacy task that is research based and assists in developing readers and writers, we are telling them that we trust them and support their learning.

Extended Practice

RESEARCH

"Long overlooked, reading volume is actually central to the development of reading proficiencies, especially in the development of fluent reading proficiency" (Allington, 2014, p. 13). Improving reading fluency is achieved through increasing the volume of reading or time engaged in voracious reading. Many studies have been conducted to determine the effect of reading volume on reading achievement. After conducting their own research, Topping, Samuels, and Paul (2007) added that students must engage in high-quality reading practice:

The current study suggested that simple information-processing models of reading practice were inadequate. Volume of practice is only one relevant variable, and not all practice is the same. Pure quality of independent reading practice and classroom placement were as important as quantity of reading practice. Theoretical models need to take account of three variables not one, and distinguish between affordances and the extent to which they are actively utilized. (p. 262)

Volume of reading not only affects reading fluency, but also plays a critical role in comprehension. McGill-Franzen, Allington, Mastropieri, and Scruggs (as cited in Allington, 2009) highlight the role high-success reading plays in providing readers with the opportunity to combine separate reading skills and strategies to develop these proficiencies. When students spend lots of time reading, they accelerate reading growth.

Additionally, Torgesen and Hudson (2006) explain that the difference between older struggling readers and proficient readers is the time they spend engaged in reading practice and the number of words they can recognize automatically. After analysis of numerous research studies examining the relationship between the volume of reading and reading achievement, it is evident that students need to increase their reading volume to increase their achievement (Brenner & Hiebert, 2010). Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) also completed extensive studies of independent reading. During their research, they investigated the relationship between time engaged in reading and reading achievement. The results of the study indicated that the best predictor of vocabulary development and reading achievement was the amount of time students spent reading independently. Additionally, their research indicated that vocabulary is acquired mainly through independent reading. Thus, students who spend more time engaged in reading increase their reading achievement and their vocabulary by thousands of words per year.

EFFECT OF DAILY 5 IMPLEMENTATION

Becoming a skilled reader requires extended periods of time with self-selected, independent-level books. It is during this time that readers practice the strategies and skills they are developing. This time is built into the Daily 5 structure, which uses the 10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence to form behaviors and gradually build stamina. In Daily 5, students are required to Read to Self each day, because this habit is what will make a critical difference in their reading achievement.



Daily 5 Teaching and Learning Pedagogy

RESEARCH SAYS	DAILY 5 DELIVERS
Creating and implementing an effective learning structure provides students with better learning opportunities (Frey, Fisher, & Nelson, 2013).	Daily 5 provides a structure that includes <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ student independence,▪ student choice,▪ increased student stamina, and time for differentiated▪ instruction to meet individual student needs.
Differentiation allows for maximum effectiveness and development of each individual (Betts, 1946).	Students are provided choices during the literacy block. Those choices are <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Read to self,▪ Work on writing,▪ Read to someone,▪ Listen to reading, and▪ Word work.
A process for teaching and learning must be clearly identified and communicated to communicate expectations and provide clarity for the students (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).	Through the 10 Steps to Independence teachers identify what is to be taught, communicate the expectations, allow for guided practice, review desired behavior, help students build stamina, and facilitate a check-in after independent work.
Reading volume is essential to the development of reading proficiencies (Allington, 2014).	In Daily 5, students Read to Self daily, which makes a critical difference in their reading achievement.
Students should have access to texts that align with their reading level (Allington, 2005).	Teachers assist students in learning how to select good-fit books using the I-PICK method.
Allowing students choice in their reading better supports students' reading (Morgan & Wagner, 2013; Miller, 2012).	Students are provided with the opportunity to select the material they use during the literacy block, as well as the tasks they engage in and the order in which they engage in them.



Conclusion

The Daily 5 is a framework for structuring literacy time so students develop lifelong habits of reading, writing, and working independently. Students select from five authentic reading and writing choices, working independently toward personalized goals. Having students working independently allows the teacher to meet individual needs through whole-group and small-group instruction, as well as one-on-one conferring. Students choose from

- Read to self
- Work on writing
- Read to someone
- Word work
- Listen to reading

This structure aligns with the belief that highly effective classrooms are student driven. It also provides students with choices that enhance engagement. A Daily 5 environment delivers opportunities for students to embrace and engage in authentic reading and writing.

In the Daily 5 structure, teachers must provide their students with a variety of choices. Providing student choice is one contributing factor to students reaching their fullest literacy potential. Through the 10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence and the Daily 5, students learn to work independently. The structure of the Daily 5 supports students in reaching their potential as they progress toward individualized goals. When students are engaged in independent work, teachers have the opportunity to facilitate small-group instruction and one-on-one conferring based on student needs. One of the most important outcomes is developing and enhancing students' love of reading.

The Daily 5 structure provides many benefits for teachers and schools. The structure allows students to develop independence, stamina, and increased reading proficiencies. As a result, teachers are able to devote more time to instruction and spend less time on classroom management and behavior redirection. Finally, the Daily 5 structure can be implemented seamlessly in conjunction with adopted curriculums and education mandates.



Resources for Daily 5 Practice

Book Study

The book study provides teachers, coaches, and administrators with a guide for reading and discussing *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*. It offers opportunities for structured learning and personal reflection. These activities frame a dialogue that enables schools to jump-start their discussions.

www.thedailycafe.com/articles/The-Daily-5-Book-Study

Continuous Online Support

The Daily CAFE membership website helps educators enhance their general teaching and gain expertise with the Daily 5 through a variety of materials: videos, articles, classroom lessons, student assessments, tips, downloads, and research-based practices. The website also includes resources for implementing the Literacy CAFE (*The CAFE Book: Engaging All Students in Daily Literacy Assessment & Instruction*) and Math Daily 3, as well as effective classroom design. Resources are added to the website weekly. www.thedailycafe.com

Live Workshops

Gail Boushey and other teacher-practitioners from her company, The 2 Sisters, deliver in-person workshops across the United States and Canada. Educators who desire to jump-start, enhance, or refine their knowledge base of Daily 5 will discover relevant content given in a how-to format that includes classroom video demonstrations. As active researchers and reflective practitioners, The 2 Sisters team provides participants with the latest industry research and takeaways from their classroom experiences. www.thedailycafe.com/workshops

Online Seminars

The Daily 5 seminar provides guided independent study and opportunities for online interactions between participants and with the instructor. Participants receive access to webinars and related study materials, including videos. This virtual professional development opportunity is an excellent companion to *The Daily 5* book for beginning practitioners. For experienced educators, the seminar offers updates and guidance for refining Daily 5 practice. www.thedailycafe.com/workshops/10000

Online Graduate Courses

Upper Iowa University (UIU) combines Daily 5 and CAFE (literacy system) in one graduate-level course (EDU555) through partnership with The 2 Sisters organization.

All content and coursework with UIU is approved by Gail Boushey and The 2 Sisters organization. This three-credit, online graduate course emphasizes research-based literacy practices in grades K–8. www.uiu.edu/the2sisters

Observations

Peer observations are a valuable tool for introducing and demonstrating the power of the Daily 5 in action. When combined with formal training, these observations allow educators to maintain engagement through witnessed practice of new learning.



About Gail Boushey and Joan Moser

Sisters Gail Boushey and Joan Moser are teachers with extensive backgrounds that include the development of the teaching methods detailed in their books, *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*, and *The CAFE Book: Engaging All Students in Daily Literacy Assessment & Instruction*.

Boushey has a master's degree in special education and has taught preschool, first through sixth grades, and special education. She has also worked as a literacy coach. Moser holds a master's degree in reading and is a Certified Reading Resource Specialist who has taught all grades from kindergarten through grade six, special education, and reading.

Boushey and Moser have held educational leadership positions in Washington State and been adjunct professors at Seattle University and Seattle Pacific University. Boushey continues to be a frequent keynote speaker as well as presenter at conferences throughout the United States, Canada, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Bahrain.

About The 2 Sisters



Boushey and Moser established The 2 Sisters Company in their quest to accelerate student learning and support for teachers worldwide. The 2 Sisters team continues to create professional development resources, including live workshops, online seminars, and their membership websites, The Daily CAFE and The CCPensieve. The Daily CAFE website contains a knowledge base that supports their practice and methods through multimedia demonstrations, classroom materials, videos, articles, and tips learned from their extensive classroom practice. The CCPensieve is an online conferring notebook developed to securely store recorded student information and facilitate analysis and real-time collaboration among colleagues.

CONTACT US

ADDRESS | 14201 SE Petrovitsky Rd A-3, Renton, WA 98058

EMAIL | info@thedailycafe.com

PHONE | 886.925.4223 **FAX** | 253.276.0073

WEB | www.thedailycafe.com | www.ccpensieve.com

TWITTER | [@thedailycafe](https://twitter.com/thedailycafe)

This White Paper was authored by Dr. Jill Buchan. She is an assistant professor of education at Upper Iowa University in Des Moines, Iowa. Buchan earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from UIU with endorsements in reading, multi-categorical special education, and athletic coaching; a master's degree from Drake University with an emphasis in instructional strategist 2 BD/LD; and a PhD in special education administration from Capella University.

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