

## WHOLE LANGUAGE BELIEFS



Whole Language is a set of principles and teaching practices that draws upon scientifically based research from many areas including: first and second language development, early literacy, the relationship between language and culture, children's and adolescent literature, digital literacy, and on-going classroom research. Whole language pedagogy embraces goals of democracy and social justice.

**Whole language educators know that language is always first and foremost about the construction of meaning.** Whole language classrooms provide learners with opportunities to question, investigate, discover, agree or disagree, and pursue individual or communal interests. When students are engaged in authentic language use, three things happen simultaneously: they learn language, they learn about language, and they use language to learn.

**Whole language educators believe literacy learning takes place in meaningful contexts.** Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are best learned in an integrated fashion for real purposes rather than as separate subjects. Students learn phonics, grammar, punctuation and other conventions of language as they apply them within authentic experiences.

**Whole language educators create welcoming spaces for all learners.** They celebrate the uniqueness of each individual's linguistic, intellectual, physical, cultural, and racial characteristics. Whole language educators support bilingual and multilingual programs as they help students understand the richness of knowing more than one language.

**Whole language educators believe learning is social activity.** Whole language educators believe learning happens best in a community of learners where students interact and collaborate with each other rather than as individual students seated quietly at separate desks. In a whole language classroom, learners actively question, hypothesize, experiment, seek information, and present their learning across a wide range of disciplines including science, social sciences, math, and the arts.

**Whole language educators know that behind every text is an author with personal values.** They help their students stand back from texts and identify the author's values and underlying messages, as well as the voices that are not present in a text. They support their students' thoughtful use and consideration of all types of media, including digital sources.

**Whole language educators know learning language involves risk taking.** Learners invent rules about language use, try out their rules, and gradually move toward conventional language use. The learner's approximations inform whole language educators about how to help their students continue to grow as language users.

**Whole language educators hold high expectations and respect for all students.** They work to address individual needs and differences, and build curriculum that is rooted in research and national goals as stated by professional teaching organizations and that makes sense at a personal and local level for their students.

**Whole language educators recognize that the role of assessment in the classroom is to inform teaching.** Assessment involves talking with students, listening to them read, examining their writing, and observing their work over a period of time. In this way, whole language educators recognize and build upon their students' strengths. Informed by their assessments and their knowledge of research, theory, and practice, whole language educators are in the best position to make curriculum decisions for the students they teach.

**Whole language educators are knowledgeable about teaching and learning.** They are members of professional organizations, read constantly about the most recent findings relevant to their teaching, and attend professional development events that further support their learning. They endeavor to be informed about their students and their families and the communities from which they come. Evaluation of educators should be based on multiple measures that take into consideration the entirety of their professional abilities and responsibilities, and never on student test scores.