The Daily 5 and CAFE were born out of our research and observations of instructional mentors; our intense desire to be able to deliver highly intentional, focused instruction to small groups and individuals while the rest of the class was engaged in truly authentic reading and writing; and our understanding that a “one size fits all” approach wasn’t working.

What we ended up with after much trial and error is the Daily 5, which is essentially a structure for organizing the literacy block. Many of you will recognize that it is simply a workshop approach with two or three cycles imbedded. What sets the Daily 5 apart from other approaches is what students are doing, and what we are doing, during the literacy block.

Nothing about this structure should be viewed as confining; instead Daily 5 and CAFE are totally flexible, as it is the teacher in the classroom who makes decisions about how they are implemented. Rather than have the entire structure be mandated, teachers should feel free to use the system in a way that will best meet the needs of their students.

Students do the following:

- Engage in the act of reading and writing for extended periods of time
- Receive focused instruction on building and maintaining stamina and independence
- Receive differentiated instruction to meet their individual needs

Teachers do the following:

- Deliver two or three whole-group lessons
- Teach two or three small groups daily
- Confer with 6–12 individual students daily

CAFE composes the content within the structure. The assessment, data analysis, and instructional piece

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Big Ideas Behind Daily 5 and CAFE

make high academic achievement truly possible for all.

Principles of the Daily 5
Structure
The structure of the Daily 5 is simple. The whole group meets for a short burst of instruction (7–10 minutes), after which students choose and move into one of the Daily 5 tasks. Because students are motivated, engaged, and highly independent with their Daily 5 choice, the teacher in turn uses the entire block of time to assess, lead a small-group lesson (two or three students), or conduct individual conferences.

The length of each round of Daily 5 is dictated by the stamina and independence of the students. Once student stamina breaks down, the round is over. Daily 5 rounds are repeated up to four more times, with students changing their Daily 5 choice each round. The number of rounds of Daily 5 each day depends on the time constraints of the scheduled literacy block and student engagement. Keeping in mind the difference in age and stamina of students, we often see our primary students settling in to three rounds of Daily 5 and intermediate students into two rounds each day.

Daily 5 Tasks
We are literacy evangelists, and our most fervent belief is that the best way to become a better reader or writer is to practice for extended periods of time each day. Therefore, as we designed the Daily 5, we were committed to making sure the tasks were authentic and would lead to measurable growth, as well as help boys and girls become lifelong lovers of literacy. The Daily 5 tasks (Boushey & Moser, 2006) are as follows:

- Read to self—The best way to become a better reader is to practice each day with good-fit books that are selected by each student.
- Work on writing—As with reading, the best way to become a better writer is to write each day, preferably about self-selected topics and genres the writer is interested in or passionate about.
- Partner reading—Reading with someone provides opportunities to practice strategies, improve fluency, check for understanding, and hear one’s own voice while sharing in the learning community.
- Word work—Expanded vocabulary leads to greater fluency in reading and therefore increasing comprehension. Becoming more proficient as a speller leads to writing fluency and the ability to get ideas down on paper.
- Listen to reading—Hearing fluent and expressive reading of good literature expands vocabulary, helps build stamina, and will make for a better reader.

10 Steps to Teaching Independence
One of the keys to success in our classrooms is to teach students how to be independent. The high level of independence allows us to continue teaching without interruption because the students are reading (or writing) the whole time. Students develop a sense of urgency (Boushey & Moser, 2006) regarding their own practice, as well as value the individualized attention they receive toward reaching their goals, so the rounds take on a certain sacred quality.

The secret to independence is in how it is taught, modeled, and practiced. Using the following 10 steps, we help students become independent in everything from walking in the halls responsibly to checking in and ordering lunch, as well as engaging in the Daily 5 tasks. Following are the 10 Steps to Teaching and Learning Independence (Boushey & Moser, 2006):

1. Identify what is to be taught.
2. Set the purpose, creating a sense of urgency.
3. Brainstorm desired behaviors using an I-chart (an I-chart is simply a modified T-chart... the “I” being another reminder that we are focused on independence).
4. Model most desirable behaviors.
5. Model least desirable behaviors, then repeat most desirable behaviors.

“Students develop a sense of urgency regarding their own practice.”
6. Place students around the room (students experience a variety of seating styles and places in the launching phase to discover comfort levels and stamina potential so they will be able to make excellent choices when the responsibility of where to sit is released to them).

7. Everyone practice and build stamina (practice continues until someone breaks stamina).

8. Stay out of the way (to instill true independence, we do not engage or monitor behavior initially, but surreptitiously keep an eye out for when stamina breaks).

9. Signal quietly (wind chime, small bell, etc.) for students to gather back as a group.

10. Group check-in and self-evaluation—Refer to I-chart and ask, “How did you do?” Our students hold their hands next to their hearts, and thinking about their own success, hold a thumb up or sideways, or use the standards based self-assessment of holding up 1, 2, 3, or 4 fingers (1 = below standard, 2 = approaching standard, 3 = meeting standard and 4 = exceeding standard) to display how they did with each of the recorded “must have” behaviors. Successes are celebrated, and anything that was below standard becomes the student’s personal goal for the next round.

“Must Have” Behaviors
The I-chart houses our “must have” behaviors for each of the Daily 5. We start with the first two behaviors and add the subsequent behaviors each day to ensure smooth, independent, productive rounds. The “must have” behaviors for “read to self” are read the whole time; stay in one spot; read quietly; get started right away; build reading stamina; and build bathroom stamina. “Must have” behaviors for other Daily 5 tasks are almost identical.

Good-Fit Books
Because we want our students to be highly successful and truly enjoy reading, they need to spend the majority of their time in self-selected books they can read with 99–100% accuracy (Gambrell, Marinak, Brooker, & McCrea-Andrews, 2006). These good-fit books enable students to practice strategies while reading accurately, fluently, and with a high comprehension level.

Because we are passionate about independence, we do not confine students to assigned reading levels, but teach students to use an acronym known as the I PICK method (Boushey & Moser, 2006) to enable them to make excellent choices. The I PICK method is simple and effective:

1. I look at a book (front and back cover, flip through inside, read a portion)
2. Purpose (Why would I read this? To learn about ______... To be entertained...)
3. Interest (Am I truly interested?)
4. Comprehend (Do I understand what I am reading?)
5. Know almost all the words (Out of 100 words, I should not miss more than one or two)

If the book matches these criteria, it is considered a good fit. One thing we’ve discovered about good-fit books: They are truly the secret to outstanding stamina while reading.

Barometer Children
Another reason Daily 5 has been so successful for us is that high expectations remain steadfast, regardless of a child’s age or ability. However, anyone who has been teaching very long will recognize that high expectations alone are not enough. The majority of our children will rise to the expectations beautifully. Sometimes a student will have a difficult time meeting the expectations. The reasons for the difficulty vary greatly. Regardless of the reason, we troubleshoot to ensure the success of everyone in the room, even our more at-risk children whom we affectionately refer to as “barometer children,” meaning those who dictate the weather in the room (Boushey & Moser, 2006).

Before moving into interventions with our barometer children, we always take a reflective look at ourselves and...
ask a few questions: Did I teach all 10 Steps to Independence? Did I stay out of the way? Did I consistently use kind words and a respectful tone of voice? If the answer to these reflective questions is yes, we move to the next step, which is using group dynamics.

This is how using group dynamics works. Upon gathering after a round of Daily 5 during which one of our barometer students broke stamina first again, we might say something like, “Minnie, I noticed that you were having a hard time staying in one place and reading the whole time.” This is said in a tone of voice that conveys concern and compassion, not judgment.

The class, who may have been feeling frustration or wonder at Minnie’s lack of stamina, will be relieved that the issue is being addressed:

Minnie, what I usually find is that a little bit of practice really helps. We want every student in our room to grow as much as they can, so we give them what they need. Right now, you need a little practice so you can be successful staying in one spot and reading the whole time. So I’m going to have you stay in for the first part of recess so you can get the practice you need.

We cannot stress enough the importance of tone here. There is no communicated frustration or exasperation. This is critical in building a supportive, respectful community of learners.

Because Minnie is a student who desperately needs to run and talk at recess, we do not keep her the whole time. It isn’t a “time out” or punishment, but simply a brief time to practice the behaviors correctly, helping her muscles begin to learn the right way, and to instill that what she is doing is so important that she, too, is expected to succeed.

If the off-task behavior was attention seeking, it is usually completely curtailed with this simple intervention.

If there is something organic happening with the child, making it difficult to practice correctly even when others are out at recess, then we move to our final strategies to help barometer children succeed.

The final stages of support for our barometer students involve the use of tools to help children build stamina. A square yard of fabric, a carpet, or other tool to help define space can help a child stay in one spot. An inexpensive sand timer can serve as a visual cue to stay with a task, as well as mark a brief but definite brain break time within the round. We provide something small and quiet like pattern blocks or an alternative reading material to be used during the brain break. This gives the child’s brain a break, while helping establish the habit of staying in one place.

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The menu serves as a reference for students, so they can elicit reading processes and strategies during each reading experience.

The CAFE Evolution
Today’s menu has evolved since our first version, created in 2002. Because of our work in Washington State, we used our own state standards on the original document. It soon caught on as a valuable tool for teachers throughout the United States and Canada, as well as International Schools abroad, so we made adjustments to include a broader set of expectations.

Recently, the Council for Chief State School Officers, along with the
National Governors Association, started to look at the need for rigorous educational standards in the United States. The results were Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. (National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) The CAFE Menu is aligned with each grade’s Common Core Standards and can be found on our website at www.thedailycafe.com (Boushey & Moser, 2012).

**CAFE Is a System**

CAFE also serves as a system that helps teachers assess, understand, synthesize, and transfer data for instruction into their conferring notebook.

Assessment is key, but assessments are only of value when they lead to understanding and action. Therefore, we follow these same basic steps (Boushey & Moser, 2009) every time we assess our students:

1. Assess an individual student using a diagnostic assessment tool.
2. Upon looking at data collected, determine student strengths and greatest area of need. Decide on the one or two strategies we believe will help move the child forward in the next few weeks. These become the plan of action.
3. Discuss findings with the student immediately. Celebrate and share strengths and communicate areas of need that, if improved, will lead to growth.
4. Set a goal with the student and identify strategies to practice.
5. Have the student declare a goal on the classroom CAFE menu as the teacher records the goal in the conferring notebook. (To declare the goal, the student places his or her name under the CAFE heading or headings that pertain to the personalized goal.)
6. Fill out individual conferring sheet, recording the student’s strengths, goal, and strategies decided upon.
7. Add student name to a strategy group form. Students who do not fall tidily into a group receive personalized instruction in a one-on-one conference.
8. Get ready for instruction.

**Examples of Goals and Strategies**

If we notice that a child leaves off the ends of words, we might have them declare Accuracy as a goal. Possible strategies to help them would be Cross Checking or Chunking Letters Together. If we notice a child reads accurately and fluently, but can’t remember what was read, we have them declare Comprehension as a goal. Strategies that might help them reach the goal would be Check for Understanding and possibly Retell or Summarize. If a child can comprehend literally, but can’t read between the lines, we’ll have them declare Comprehension as a goal, while focusing on the strategies of Infer and Support With Evidence to help them achieve it.

**CAFE Is a Guide**

Once CAFE assessments are completed, they are used to guide individual, small-group, and whole-class instruction. Each time we meet with a child, whether in a small-group instructional situation or in a one-on-one conference, we refer to the conferring sheet and the small-group form. We record the teaching and learning during the meeting session and then determine whether the student needs to continue with the strategy. Once a child has demonstrated proficiency with the strategy at least four or five times, we can layer on another strategy or goal. We refer to these steps of instruction as Coaching Toward a Target (Boushey & Moser, 2009).

In practice it looks like this: After the whole-group lesson, students check in and proceed with their first Daily 5 choice, and we begin our work with a small group of students who are placed together because of similar goals and strategies or we move straight into individual conferences. If we begin with a small group, we are either coaching...
“Because we group based on needs, not reading level, the groups are truly flexible and always shifting.”

regarding a strategy and goal, or students are receiving instruction based on a common need. This instruction, like most all of our instruction, is brief and focused. We record teaching and learning on the small-group form as well as the individual conferring sheet in our conferring notebook (Boushey & Moser 2009).

Because we group based on needs, not reading level, the groups are truly flexible and always shifting. Children learn to expect that groups will not meet on a set schedule, but might meet frequently to practice a skill together, or only once, to hone in on a specific need. After about 7–10 minutes with a small group, these students are released to continue practicing, and we move to one-on-one conferring for the remainder of the Daily 5 round.

To select our individual conferences, we refer to the calendar in the front of our conferring notebook to see whom we need to meet with. The calendar and Keeping Track sheet (Boushey & Moser, 2009) help us monitor the frequency of our instruction time so everyone’s needs can be met and no one falls through the cracks. Once we’ve determined whom we will meet with, we take about 30 seconds to review their conferring sheet, reminding ourselves of their goal, strengths, and strategy focus.

Then, because students are expected to stay in one place the whole time (Boushey & Moser, 2006), we quietly sidle up next to them. We observe quietly for a moment and then ask them to read while we listen in. We zero in on whether they are applying the skill/strategy taught or reinforced last time we met and record it on the conferring sheet. After sharing what we noticed, we teach or reinforce the skill or strategy that we feel is just right for them. If it’s a new skill or strategy, we ask them to try it out before the conference is over.

We often have the students repeat their goal, because we’ve found that when the students can articulate the goal and strategy, they are more consistent about understanding and practicing it independently. Because these conferences are frequent, brief, and focused on their immediate needs, we find students making strong progress in becoming more proficient readers.

Curricular Coherence

Many of our struggling students were receiving extra support via title funds, special education services, English learner support, tutoring, and so forth, but we didn’t always see the growth we wanted when our most at-risk students left us for fragmented portions of the day. In his article, “Research and the Three Tier Model,” Allington (2006) expressed concern over the typical reading intervention model currently in place, in which our most at-risk learners are being passed from one reading curricula to another with little curricular coherence.

Johnston, Allington, and Afflerbach (1985) discussed the importance of curricular coherence in an article titled “The Congruence of Classroom and Remedial Reading Instruction.” Allington (2006) revisited this premise and stated:

[...]any intervention had to build primarily around students’ instructional needs. For instance, if students struggled because they did not use effective comprehension strategies, then expanding comprehension strategy instruction in the intervention lessons would seem a good idea. If students struggled because they did not self-monitor, then that would become one focus of the intervention lessons. Designing effective intervention requires that a student’s specific instructional needs be identified. (p. 20)

These researchers agree that when intervention teachers and classroom teachers taught similar skills and strategies based on student need, the
achievement levels increased and the achievement gap between struggling readers was reduced.

Taking this research to heart, we have been working toward curricular coherence. We assess and confer with our own students, identifying their individual strengths, goals, and strategy work, and record it on the conferring form (as mentioned previously). This form is shared with each intervention teacher. Whoever works with that child will work on the same goals and strategies. How they go about teaching the goals and strategies may vary, but the goals, skills, and strategies are the same.

At the end of each week, the form is placed in our school mailbox or on our desk. We review the progress documented by the intervention teacher and decide to keep going with the goal and strategy or modify it. Then we write the goal and strategy on a new form and place it into the intervention teacher’s box or notebook. New goals or strategies are recorded in our own conferring notebook as well.

Curricular coherence, when interventions and classroom instruction are working together on behalf of our students, has tremendous potential to make a real difference in our student’s literate lives, and the use of the CAFE system makes this curricular coherence not only manageable, but also a reality.

We are currently working on an electronic version of our conferring notebook that will allow the work between the classroom teacher and support staff to be seamless on behalf of our students.

**Parent Pipeline**

In keeping with the idea of curricular coherence, we want our students to continue their strategy work when they read for enjoyment at home. It can be a bit of a shift for parents to understand that reading at home is valuable homework, especially to those who would prefer we send packets of worksheets home. To help alleviate their discomfort, we send home a document entitled Parent Pipeline (Boushey & Moser, 2012). It is a one-page explanation of the skill or strategy their child is working on at school and details how they can help their child with the strategy at home.

For instance, if the child is working on the Comprehension Strategy of Check for Understanding, parents are asked to stop periodically when reading to their child or listening to their child read and say, “Let’s see if we remember what we just read. Think about who the story was about and what happened.” They are encouraged to ask questions like, “What just happened? What was your brain thinking about when you were reading that part?” The Parent Pipelines are another way to achieve coherence that will accelerate progress and growth.

In conclusion, Daily 5 and CAFE has provided a way for us to work smarter, not harder. Because of the ease with which we are able to differentiate and the ability for students to spend extended amounts of time reading, it is not unusual for our students to make two years’ growth in a 9-month period of time. That is worth celebrating!

**REFERENCES**


