

Balanced Literacy[®]

Introduction

Balanced Literacy[®] by Intellitools is a beginning literacy program designed for students at the K – 2 Grade level. Through a sequential series of activities, it integrates guided reading, supported writing and word study or phonics instruction. The program has nine units in total, each being built around animal themes and could be used to supplement students literacy program over the course of an entire year. The program comes with a great deal of support material, including theme-based anchor books and a large Teacher's Activity Guide that contains lesson plans, blackline masters, word cards and program graphics.

Case Study

This program is particularly well suited to students at the emerging stage of literacy development and those who may require more audio-visual support and frequent repetition of letters, sounds and words. Those students who require a significant level of graphic and auditory support to master beginning and ending letters and sounds would also benefit from incorporating Balanced Literacy[®] into their Language Arts programs. The program, like all Intellitools products, is completely accessible for students who are accessing the computer through alternate means like scanning with single switches.

“Sam” is a Grade one student who mastered the alphabet in Kindergarten and is now ready to start reading. He is slightly developmentally delayed and requires more time and repetition to develop concepts and skills. His school based team decided to use Balanced Literacy[®] to supplement Sam's regular Grade one Language Arts curriculum. Before introducing Sam to the program, his team went through the Teacher's Guide on the program CD to create a plan and to print the initial support materials that would be used in class and as home activities. During the first few lessons on the program, Sam worked with a peer who was comfortable on the computer. Each time Sam completed an activity, he was directed to choose an activity he had already completed for extra practice and to motivate him. Initially reluctant, Sam became more interested in the program as time went on and he was able to see some transfer of skills to the regular reading instruction. His team scheduled his use of Balanced Literacy[®] in the “DEAR” time (Drop Everything And Read) after lunch while other students read conventional books with a buddy. About two months into the year, Sam was enlisted to instruct another student who was struggling with learning to read on how to use the program. This significantly raised his profile as a “reader” and motivated him further. As he is progressing through the various levels of the program, he is required less and less repetition of past activities and his team is seeing significant improvement in his overall emerging literacy skills.

Strengths of Balanced Literacy[®]

This sequential Grade K-2 literacy program, built around the themes of “animals”, has several helpful features:

- a. It is a relatively simple program to implement – the user interface is easy to navigate and consistent so students are usually able to use it independently fairly quickly
- b. It is based on solid reading instruction research and pedagogy so the activities are logically organized and build appropriately from activity to activity.
- c. While there is some variation in the activities, there are also activity patterns that make it easy to understand what is expected as the activities change.
- d. The auditory component is very strong – the voices are digitized and pleasant with frequent feedback and the use of music and song.
- e. The graphics are large and colourful and used appropriately to support the text – the graphics are faded as the student moves through the activities.
- f. The program is structured so students can move through the activities sequentially, or teachers can use the program’s Navigation feature to jump to any activity and lesson in the program.
- g. The program allows teachers to create classes and students and adjust the options for each – in this way more “mainstream” students can be using the program as well as students who are accessing the program through other means.
- h. The program supports access through Intellikeys and comes with ready-to-print overlays for this alternate keyboard – the program also supports access through scanning.
- i. Summary or detailed progress reports can be viewed or printed for each activity and lesson the student completes.
- j. The program is well supported with an extensive Teacher’s Guide that comes on the program CD.

Limitations of Balanced Literacy[®]

As with any program, there are some limitations.

- a. You must run the program CD in your computer’s CD-ROM drive and this occasionally slows down the program response time and very occasionally interferes with the auditory support.
- b. The chart that shows the progress level of the student is not interactive despite its appearance.
- c. The program is not immediately intuitive – the “Explore” button does not mean the student can explore ANY activity – only those completed
- d. Some students may find the activities repetitive.

Installing Balanced Literacy[®]

To install the program:

1. Insert the program CD into the computer’s CD drive.

2. The auto-installation wizard should automatically begin running. Follow the prompts on the screen to install the program.
3. If the auto-installation wizard does not automatically start:
 - a. On a **Windows** computer...
 - i. Double-click **My Computer** to see your computer drives.
 - ii. Find the Balanced Literacy® CD, right click on the icon and select “**Open**” to open its contents
 - iii. Double-click the **setup.exe** icon to begin installing the program.
 - iv. Follow the prompts on the screen to complete installation.
 - b. On a **Macintosh** computer...
 - i. Locate the Balanced Literacy® CD on your desktop
 - ii. Double click to open its contents
 - iii. Double click the Installer program to start installation
 - iv. Follow the prompts on the screen to complete installation

Note: To run Balanced Literacy®, you must have the program CD in your computer’s CD-ROM drive.

Note: If you have problems with installation, there are more detailed instructions in the “**Getting Started**” document on the Balanced Literacy® CD. See the next section for locating this document.

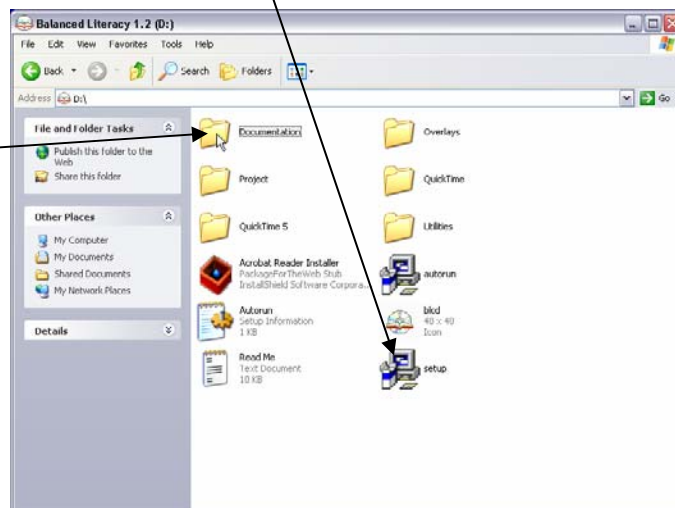
Locating and Printing the Balanced Literacy® Support Materials

Before you begin using the Balanced Literacy® program, you may want to locate and print some or all of the support materials that come with the program. These are located on the program CD.

1. With the program CD in your computer’s CD-ROM drive, double-click (or right click and “open”) the CD icon located in your Windows “**My Computer**” or on your Macintosh desktop.
2. You will see a number of programs and folders on the CD. You may have already installed using the “setup” program.

The “**Documentation**” folder contains the support materials you may be interested in viewing or printing.

3. Double click the folder icon to open it.



4. Once that folder is open, you can see the “**Getting Started**” Document. This is the logically document to view or print if you are new to using Balanced Literacy. By opening the other folders, you will find “**Tutorials**” that will show you how to use the program, a “**Teacher’s Guide**” that outlines the various activities at the different levels, and a “**User Guide**” that is an excellent reference when you want to troubleshoot or locate a specific program feature. It is worth your time to explore these various documents to determine which documents or sections of documents you would like to print for use and reference.
5. Once you have finished with the contents of the program CD, close the CD window and you can launch the program.

Launching Balanced Literacy®

The Balanced Literacy program is installed in the Intellitools Reading folder in the main Intellitools folder on your hard drive.

1. Locate the program by going to your “**Start**” menu and your “**All Programs**” list (Windows) or by opening your “**Applications**” folder and locating the “**Intellitools**” subfolder (Macintosh).
2. When the program starts up, you will see the following “Sign in” screen...



The left hand side of the screen is a list of the classes that have been created. You will probably only see “Sample Class”. The right side of the screen is the “Group” and “Student” list.

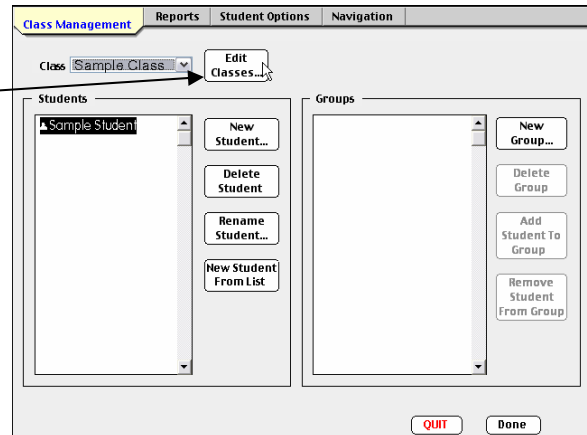
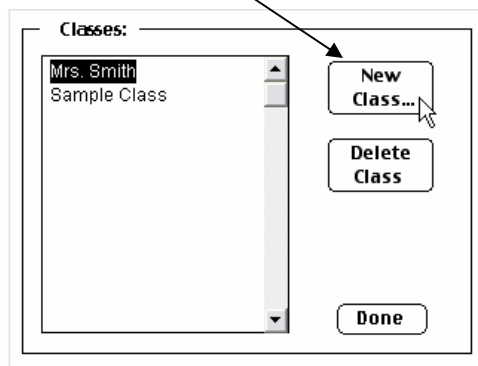
The first thing to do is to add a new student to the student list. Click the “**Teacher Options**” button on the lower left side of the screen.

3. A small window will appear asking you for a password. The default password is “teacher” (case sensitive).



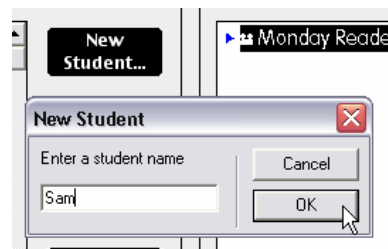
Once you have typed in the password, click “OK”.

4. Begin by creating a new class that will hold your new student. Click the “Edit Classes” button.
5. When the Edit Classes window opens, click “New Class”.



6. Type in your name, click “OK” and then “Done”. Your new class will be added to the Class drop down menu at the top of the Teacher Options window. In the example above, ‘Mrs. Smith’ has been added as a new class.
7. Now, add a new student to that class. Click on the “New Student” button and type in the name of the new student. Click “OK”.

Notice that your new student has been added to the Student List on the left.

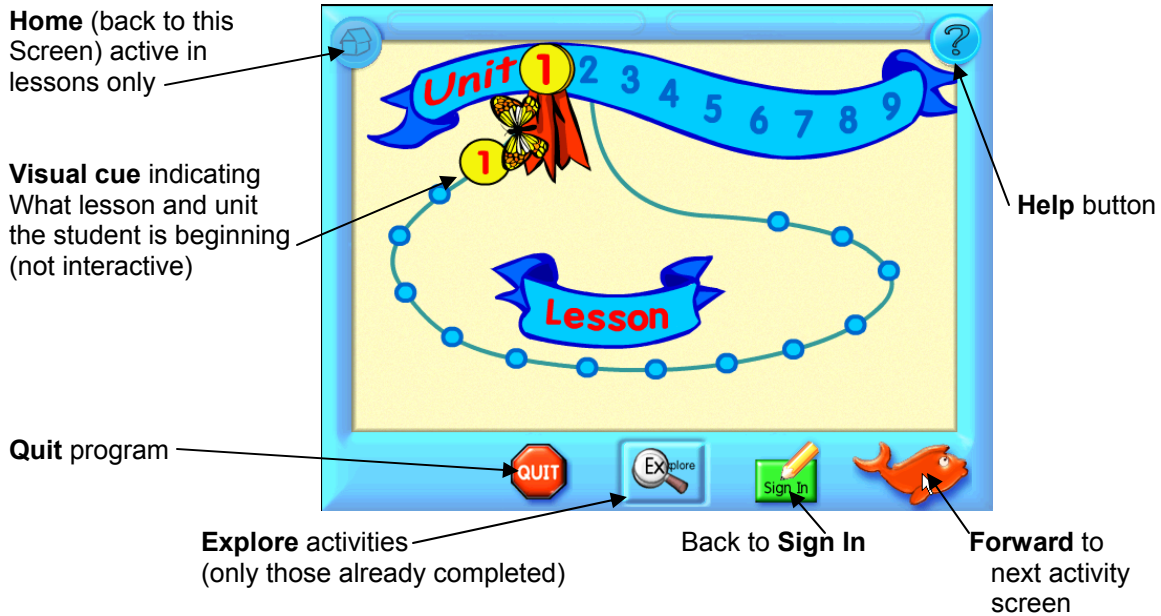


You are now ready to enter the program as your new student. Click “Done” to exit the Teacher Options.

Navigating the Balanced Literacy® Activity Screen

To enter the program as your new student, highlight his or her name in the Student List on the Sign in screen click “Go”.

The main navigation screen contains a visual reminder of where your student is located in the lesson sequence as well as buttons for navigating the program....



1. Click on the **“Forward”** button to move to the first activity in Lesson one.

This activity is the Anchor book for this series of lessons. The animal characters are introduced. Student can “turn” the pages of the book by clicking the forward arrow at the bottom of the screen.

Clicking on the **“Book”** icon takes you back to the beginning of the book.

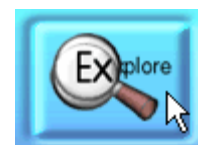


The **“Speak text”** button at the bottom of the screen allows the student to repeat the text.

Once you have moved through the book, clicking on the **“Forward”** (the fish) will take you to the next activity in the lesson.

2. When you have finished the book, click on the **“Home”** button in the top left corner of the screen. This takes you back to the main student page. Since you have finished one activity, you can now click the **“Explore”** button at the bottom to do that activity again.

The Activity Exploration screen opens up and you can see the various activity choice buttons along the bottom. So far you have only completed a **“Book”** activity.



3. Click the **“Books”** button and the name of the book will appear in the green rectangle.

Moving your cursor over the title brings up a thumbnail description at the top.

Clicking on that book takes you to that particular activity.



As you or your student moves through the different activities, they are added to this Explore screen so they can be reviewed at any time. When all the Unit 1 activities are finished, you can click on the Unit arrow to move forward to Unit 2.

If you had time you could go through the entire program to experience all the different activities. However, since this is unlikely, you should refer to the **“Teacher’s Guide Units 1 – 3”** document that comes on your program CD for a description of the activities and suggestions for implementation.

Exploring the Teacher Options

At the beginning of this tutorial, you went to the Teacher Options screen to add a new student. In this section, you will more fully explore the options that are available from the Teacher Options screen.

You can access the **“Teacher Options”** from anywhere in the program by pressing **“Control – t”** (Windows) or **“Command – t”** (Macintosh). This brings up the **“Teacher Options”** screen.

1. Bring up the Teacher Options screen by pressing **“Control – t”**. You will be asked to give the password. Remember the default password is **“teacher”** (case sensitive).
2. Notice there are four tabs at the top of the Teacher Options area:
 - **Class management** – where you go to create classes, groups and add or delete students
 - **Reports** – where you go to view and print student progress reports
 - **Student Options** – where you go to select student specific options for accessing the program, reading the books and reviewing the activities
 - **Navigation** – where you go to navigate and jump to different activities in the various lessons

We’ll look at each of these areas individually.

Class Management

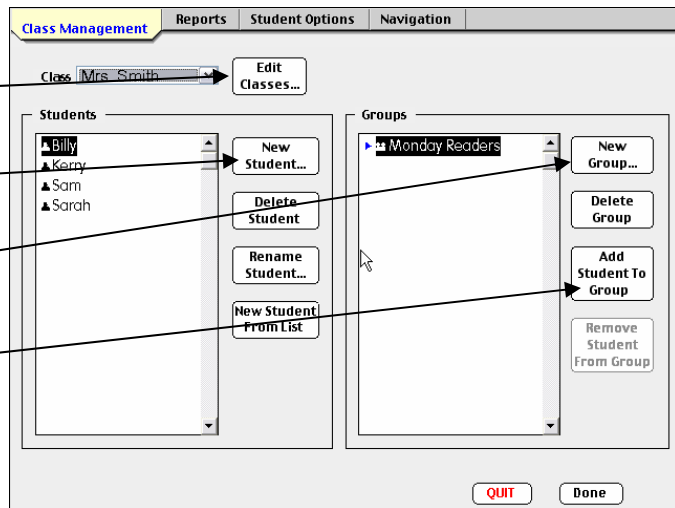
This is the area where you added your new student at the beginning of the tutorial. If you haven't done so already, click on that tab. This is the “**Class Management**” screen...

Here you can add or edit classes

Add, delete, rename or select new students

Create or delete groups within a class

Add or remove students from the groups



Reports

This is the area where you can select, preview and print student progress reports. If you have not done so already, click on that tab. Here is the “**Reports**” screen...

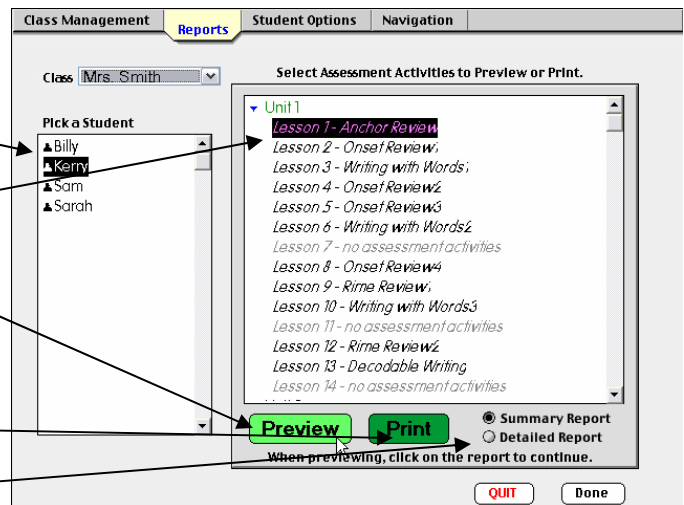
Here you can select a specific student from the student list

Select the assessment activities you want to preview or print (click the blue arrow to open the individual lesson lists)

Preview the assessment report for the selected activity

Print the assessment report for the selected activity

Choose to see or print a summary or detailed report



Student Options

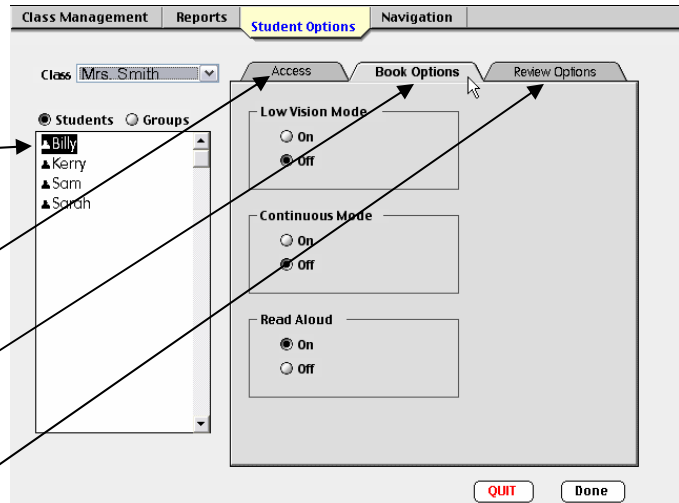
This area of the Teacher Options is where you can set Access, Book and Review options. If you have not done so already, click the “Student Options” tab. The Student Options screen looks like this...

On this screen you can select the student or group from the Student List (this will be the student or group that the options will affect)

Set Access or scanning options if you have a student using alternate access like switches

Adjust the Book reading options for those activities that involve a book

Adjust the Review options for when students review completed activities



Navigation

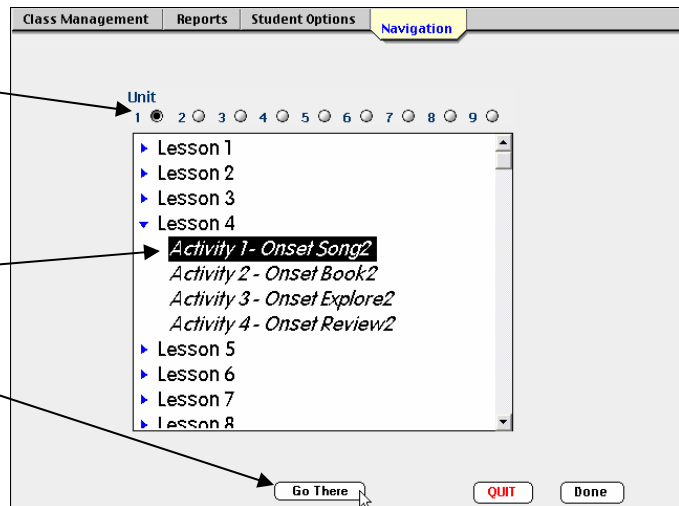
This area of the Teacher Options allows you to navigate to any activity in any lesson in the program. This is very helpful if your students are using the program in a non-sequential manner. If you have not done so already, click on the “Navigation” tab at the top of the screen. The “Navigation” screen looks like this...

On this screen, you can choose from nine units by clicking the radio buttons at the top

You can select a specific activity in a lesson in that unit by clicking the blue arrow next to Lesson and clicking to highlight the Activity

Go to your selection by clicking the “Go There” button at the bottom of the screen

Note: Activity 1 of Lesson 4 in Unit 1 is selected in the example.



From any of the “Teacher Options” screens you can “Quit” the program and click “Done” to return to where you were in the program.

Helpful Keyboard Shortcuts

When you begin using the program, you may find it cumbersome to keep returning to the Sign In screen to access the Teacher Options. This is particularly true if you are navigating to different lessons and activities frequently. There are a few keyboard shortcuts which will really help you use the program more efficiently.

- Control** (or Command) – **t** takes you to the **Teacher Options** screen
- Control** (or Command) – **n** takes you to the **Navigation** screen
- Control** (or Command) – **s** toggles the **audio** on / off
- Control** (or Command) – **p** toggles the Book activities “**Continuous**” on / off
(when ‘off’ the page turning controls disappear)

You can also disable the password request for the current program session. This is helpful if you or your student wants to access the Navigation screen frequently while using the program. The password request will return the next time you start up the program.

- Control – Shift – F1** disables the **Password** request

Hopefully, by this point, you feel confident that you can install and begin to use Balanced Literacy[®] with your students. If you would like more tutorial help, there are “**Tutorials**” that come in the “**Documentation**” folder on the program CD.

Other Resources

For other training resources, including online program demonstrations, visit the Balanced Literacy[®] resource page at www.setbc.org/psap.

Appendix

Summary Chart of Balanced Literacy Activities

Unit	Title	Animals	Sounds	Decodable Words	Sight Words
1	Where are the Pets?	fish bird rabbit cat	f b r c at an	bat cat fat rat can fan ran	am and can come find here I in is me on play the you where
2	Bedtime at the Farm	pig hen mouse goat	p h m g ig ay en	big fig pig rig bay hay pay ray	can't get go it night off out said to went
3	In the Sea	walrus sea lion dolphin jellyfish	w s d j et ock ip	bet get jet pet wet dock rock sock dip hip rip sip dig wig sat	after as be big coming little not see this what will
4	Wild animals	tiger lion chimpanzee zebra	t l ch z ap it ug	cap gap lap map tap bit hit lit pit sit bug dug hug jug mug pug rug tug tap ten lip chat	all animals are at but car day eat for has like some them zoo
5	In the Grass	newt snake frog grasshopper slug	n sn fr gr sl	bin chin fin grin pin tin win bake cake lake make rake snake take bog chop drop hop mop pop sop top nap snap grip slip net gray slug	because did down he her him jump make over saw she there under up we
6	Australian Animals	kangaroo platypus glider dragonfish tree frog	k pl gl dr tr ump ot ank ill	bump dump grump hump jump lump slump cot dot hot pot slot tot bank drank frank plank rank sank tank bill drill grill hill jill pill sill drop glop plop plan play plug trip	because doesn't from how know knows with
7	By the	shark	sh cl st cr	bore chore more	came give have

	Shore	clam starfish crab prawn	pr ore ell ash ide	shore sore snore store tore bell fell dell sell shell well bash cash crash dash mash sash stash trash hide glide pride ride side slide tide wide clck shock shake stank prank stay still stop crop	house how made my new of old then very want your
8	Quail Makes a Snack	quail vulture swallow blackbird flamingo	qu v sw bl fl ail ight ing ack uck	hail pail mail nail quail sail snail trail fight fright light night right sight tight cling king ring sing sling sting swing wing black crack pack rack sack snack stack tack track duck luck muck pluck suck stuck tuck truck quit van vet swell flock	do favorite fun help kick thing want was
9	Dogs Make Good Friends	spaniel Yorkshire terrier briard whippet	sp y br wh ick aw ink ate ame	Brick chick click kick lick sick stick trick Claw draw jaw law paw saw Blink brink drink pink rink sink stink wink Crate date gate late plate state Flame frame game lame name tame Spill spin bring yell yuck whack	care friend good look need people them