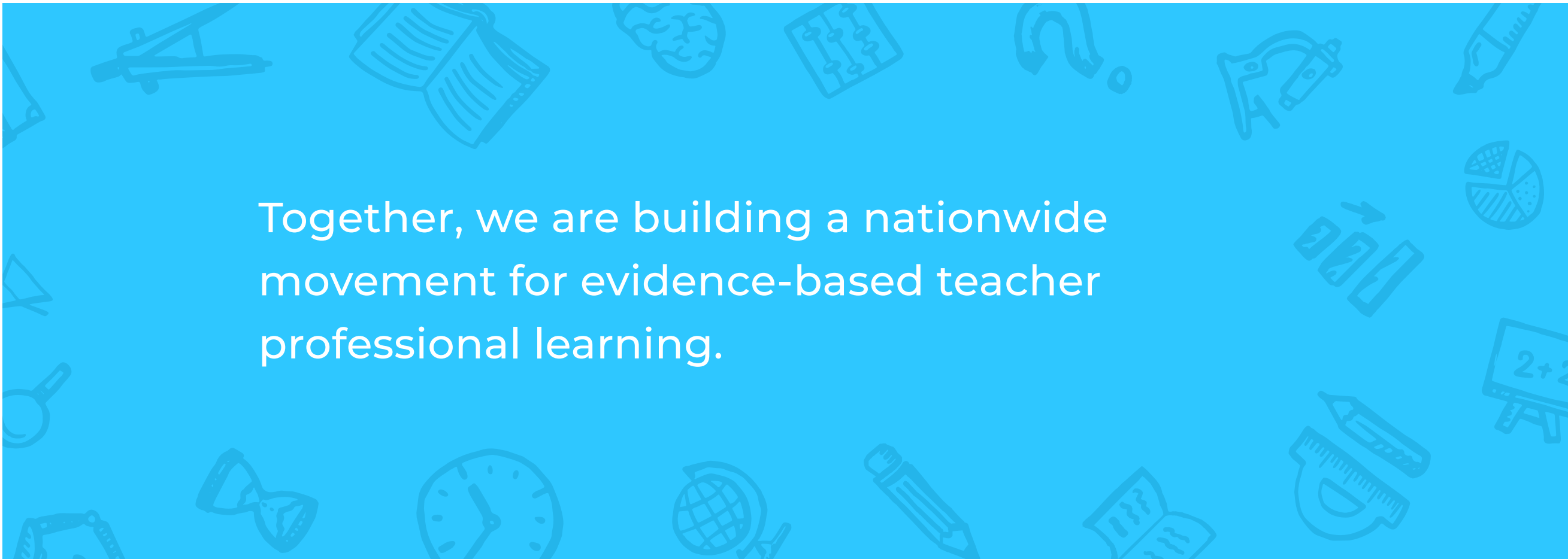




Diverse Learners Planning Guide:

ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATORS
SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS





Together, we are building a nationwide movement for evidence-based teacher professional learning.

WHO WE ARE

Teaching Lab is a nonprofit organization with a mission to fundamentally shift the paradigm of teacher professional learning for educational equity. We envision a world where teachers and students thrive together in communities that enable life-long learning and meaningful lives.

In partnership with teachers, we transform professional learning from the ground up to dramatically improve student outcomes. We also work with school, district, and state leaders to create the instructional systems necessary to support these changes.

Our model is based on the best educational research and years of experience using exceptional instructional materials with teachers. Our team of educators is committed to ensuring all students—especially students traditionally underserved by our school systems—meet the academic expectations necessary to succeed now and in the future. Our partners believe in the power of great teaching to inspire students at all levels to learn and grow.

OUR RESEARCH-BASED MODEL

Research suggests that effective professional learning incorporates three critical components:

HEAD



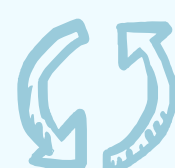
Core academic content embedded in exceptional instructional materials and aligned to research-based practices. Teachers deserve daily access to instructional practices based in research. Deep study of high-quality instructional materials allows teachers to grow their knowledge over time and spread that knowledge to their colleagues. We call this the **“head”** of professional learning.

HEART



Teacher-led communities that build both social capital and buy-in. Teachers deserve to feel motivated and supported by their peers to learn and grow. In teacher-led communities, educators are more likely to buy in to their own development and work collaboratively with their colleagues to improve instruction. We call this the **“heart”** of professional learning.

HABITS



Structured and repeated cycles of learning in the classroom. Teachers deserve to learn from their efforts. Repeated cycles of learning afford teachers the time and space to reflect, incorporate new learning into practice, and verify changes to instruction using analysis of student work. We call this the **“habits”** of professional learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide is the product of hours of conversation and collaboration among many people over the course of the last year. What started as a seed of an idea of how to support the educators supporting diverse learners turned into an outline and then became a beautifully designed 80 page (and counting!) product. We have many people to thank.

We are grateful to Joey Hawkins who served as lead writer for this project. Working from a general outline, she created the content and brought this guide to life through classroom-based scenarios, connections to the Guidebooks curriculum, and effortless prose.

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INTRODUCTION: THE PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

The main purpose of this Guide is to support teachers in effectively teaching diverse learners, especially during small-group instruction and during blocks of additional instructional time. Ideally, the Guide should be used while educators plan and organize instructional time for diverse learners.

Teachers and other educators that support diverse learners, such as intervention specialists, are the primary audience for this Guide. School leaders will also benefit from reading about the systems and structures necessary to support diverse learners in their schools. Finally, district leaders will find this Guide helpful when supporting school leaders to create the instructional systems necessary to ensure all students learn.

The Guide is organized around five high-leverage areas of instruction:

1. Fluency
 2. Vocabulary
 3. Language patterns
 4. Knowledge building; and
 5. Writing
-

As a practical tool, this Guide recommends different ways to structure instructional time to meet the needs of all learners. For each recommended intervention or strategy, templates are provided so that teachers can effectively plan within a minimal and reasonable amount of time. The templates also ensure small-group, targeted instruction is complementary to the work happening during whole-class Guidebooks instruction.

Reminder: the caveat. Supports described here are not meant to supersede other forms of help or intervention when those are indicated by individual student need and/or Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Rather, this guide is meant to provide specific strategies and supports for teachers to use in a small-group or during additional instructional time.



OVERVIEW: SUCCESSFUL GUIDEBOOKS INSTRUCTION FOR ALL

It is the second day of working with the Flowers for Algernon unit in Ms. Gomez’s eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA) class. She claps her hands twice to get the attention of her 26 students, then speaks to them.

“As you know,” she reminds them, “We’re going to be working with some interesting ideas about human intelligence in this unit. By the time we get to the end, we’ll be ready to write about a character named Charlie, and whether some surgery he undergoes improves his life, or makes it worse. First, though, we’ll read a Greek myth that will help us think about the big ideas in the main text.”

Sitting in the third and fourth rows, Deanna and Rodrigo, English learner (EL) students, nod. They know about Prometheus—they read it several times yesterday in their additional instructional block. Deanna and Rodrigo, and their other classmates in the small group that meets every day, know that the myth describes how a Greek god tried to help human beings become more intelligent and capable by bringing them the gift of fire.

Over the past couple of days, they read it repeatedly, until they could read it fluently. They worked with words like “intent” and “idleness” and “tyrant,” so they are now well aware of the difference between Prometheus and the other gods and how those gods felt about lowly human beings. They discussed the meaning of the myth with each other to make sure they could explain it.

Now, Ms. Gomez passes out the text and asks the class to read it. Like their classmates, Deanna and Rodrigo read it, with fluency and understanding. When it comes time to summarize the text, they begin without hesitation. Understanding the text as they do, this is a task Deanna and Rodrigo are well-prepared to do.

WHAT DO DIVERSE LEARNERS NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITH WHOLE-CLASS GUIDEBOOKS INSTRUCTION?

To succeed in life and work, all students need to successfully read and understand complex text, and effectively express their understanding in speaking and writing. Created for all students, The Louisiana Guidebooks were carefully designed to ensure student access, every day, to rigorous instruction.

Equity demands nothing less.

At the same time, schools and teachers recognize that for some students—maybe even many students—more support is needed to fully benefit from whole-class Guidebooks instruction.

WHO ARE DIVERSE LEARNERS?

Diverse learners are students who often learn in a different way and at a different pace than their peers. Diverse learners may need more targeted support to fully access instruction grounded in the Guidebooks curriculum. Based on this definition, all students can be “diverse learners” at some point over the course of the year, a unit, or a lesson.

Some may be English learners. ELs navigate a lot all at once. While learning, they simultaneously develop disciplinary knowledge, English language knowledge, and literacy—a tall order. ELs may have acquired enough English to function in a full-inclusion classroom, but they may have gaps in their background knowledge, especially in vocabulary and syntax.

There are a myriad of other reasons why some students need more targeted support to make good progress in the Guidebooks curriculum. Perhaps they are not fluent readers; perhaps they have limited vocabulary; perhaps they find written composition to be a challenge. The reasons that students might need additional, targeted support are likely many and varied.

Whatever the cause of the need, the answer is not to give diverse learners a different, less challenging curriculum. Research indicates that the most useful, equitable way to help diverse learners is to immerse them—successfully—in challenging and rich curriculum. The answer, then, is to give them regular, additional, and targeted support and scaffolds.

Much of this scaffolding should happen before they participate in whole-class Guidebooks instruction. While some of it may take place along the way, the ultimate goal is for diverse learners to fully access and benefit from the rich Guidebooks curriculum—right alongside their classmates.

A VISION FOR SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Louisiana’s goal of “successful understanding and expression of understanding of complex text for all” means just exactly that—for all. The goal is for every student, including every diverse learner, to fully and thoughtfully participate in class—like Deanna and Rodrigo.

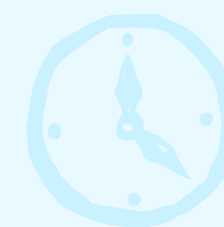
What does it take for that to happen? We know the Guidebooks already include multiple and varied recommendations for teachers to incorporate small-group, focused support, or even additional whole-class support, into the regular lesson. These are important first-line approaches to supporting all students.

At the same time, Louisiana educators acknowledge some students need even more support than what is currently available to successfully access the Guidebooks curriculum. Educators are clear: students need more time to practice and learn and, often, more varied support. The approach to supporting diverse learners outlined in this guide employs the following principles:

THE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS OUTLINED IN THIS HANDBOOK EMPLOYS THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

SUPPORT IS REGULAR AND PREDICTABLE

Additional instructional support should happen during a dedicated period of time each day and, as much as possible, should mirror the whole-class ELA period in length (i.e., 50 - 60 minutes per day, every day). The group size and make-up will vary depending on the school’s particular needs and the students’ needs; it could range from small groups of 3-4 students to up to 10-12 students.



SUPPORT IS HIGH-LEVERAGE

Support concentrates on those instructional areas that research has shown to have the biggest impact. This is why this guide emphasizes five high-leverage instructional areas: fluency, vocabulary, language patterns, knowledge-building through accountable independent reading, and writing. Unsurprisingly, improvement in one area is connected to improvements in another area. For example, vocabulary-building can help a student more quickly become a fluent reader.



SUPPORT IS TARGETED AND SPECIFIC

Support is targeted when it is connected to whole-class instruction, specifically by employing texts from whole-class instruction. For example, if students are reading the myth of Prometheus during whole-class instruction their fluency and vocabulary practice should use that text and reference specific vocabulary words from the same text.



SUPPORT IS ALWAYS TIED TO TEXT/CONCEPT COMPREHENSION.

Again, if students are practicing reading Prometheus fluently, the goal is not fluency for its own sake; the goal is to understand the text and to be able to express that understanding. The opportunity to express understanding should consistently be built into instruction through strategies like quick-writes in response to a text and/or text dependent questions.



SUPPORT CAN BE PLANNED IN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME.

Planning support should not overburden educators. This guide provides teachers and facilitators with planning tips and templates so they can accelerate their planning time and continue the important work of monitoring and adjusting instruction for student understanding.



SUPPORT CAN BE FLEXIBLY IMPLEMENTED

Although support time can and should be planned, teachers should also adjust their plans depending on student needs. This guide offers teachers different options for structuring small group time. For example, there are reasons why a teacher may choose to have students work with a longer chunk of text during the fluency portion of a dedicated support block over spending more time on vocabulary.



THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT

When a school is setting up the systems and structures for regular and additional small-group support time, it's important to know two things:

- Who needs support
- What support they need

Note: This guide mostly focuses on supporting educators after they have identified the students that need support.

Schools are unique and establish a variety of systems and structures for instruction. In some schools, the classroom teacher may support diverse learners during additional instructional time; in other schools, a different teacher, like an intervention specialist, may provide these essential supports. This guide supports any teacher providing additional and targeted support for diverse learners, and, therefore, can be adapted to support schools with a variety of ways of organizing instruction.

All teachers supporting diverse learners need to know:

- Who needs additional supports?
- What kind of supports do they need?
- Why is one support likely to work more than another support?

Formal assessments and informal assessments are both powerful ways to assess student learning and determine which students may need additional supports. The Guidebooks contain both formal assessments and tools to identify “student look-fors.” Educators should use these assessments to make effective judgement calls about both who needs supports and how individual students are progressing.

FORMAL ASSESSMENTS ARE BUILT INTO THE GUIDEBOOKS

Formal assessments are built into every Guidebooks unit, at every grade level. These assessments include:

- Culminating Writing Task
- Extension Task
- Cold Read Task

Table 1 describes the format and information gleaned from each task.

TABLE 1: FORMAL ASSESSMENTS IN THE GUIDEBOOKS

ASSESSMENT TASK	FORMAT	WHAT INFORMATION TASK GIVES
Culminating Writing Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given after reading the anchor text • Students respond to a text-based writing prompt (provided) using the anchor text; numerous opportunities for revision are embedded in the Guidebooks writing process 	<p>Student’s ability to proficiently meet writing standard(s) associated with the task for that grade level, while showing adequate understanding of content; teacher uses writing rubric to assess student performance</p>
Extension Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given after the culminating writing task, described above • Students respond to a writing prompt, requiring new information acquired through research from a variety of sources • Students are required to integrate new information into their current understanding of the topic 	<p>Student’s ability to proficiently meet writing standard(s) associated with the task for that grade level, appropriately synthesizing content from new reading; teacher uses writing rubric to assess student performance</p>
Cold Read Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given at the end of the unit • Students read two new texts related to the unit topic and answer multiple choice reading comprehension questions • Students respond to a writing prompt that requires them to integrate new information into their current understanding of the topic 	<p>Student’s reading comprehension ability; writing ability in terms of writing standard; teacher uses answer key to assess student performance on reading comprehension questions</p>

STUDENT LOOK-FORS IN THE LESSONS ARE RICH SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Guidebooks lessons are designed to provide an in-depth source of information about student needs. Nearly every lesson provides guidance to teachers on what to “look for” in student responses. These student look-fors are a rich source of information for educators. They help educators answer questions like: What does this student response tell us about what the student understands and can do? What does it tell us about what the student cannot yet do, and what support the student might need?

For example, in the 8th grade Flowers for Algernon unit, the first section is a set of three lessons focused on the text, “The Story of Prometheus.” This is a classic Greek myth in which one of the gods, Prometheus, looks out at a wretched, suffering mankind and decides to bring them the gift of fire—because fire will give mankind more knowledge and power over their environment. Table 2 explains how student look-fors are built into the lessons.

TABLE 2: STUDENT LOOK-FORS IN GUIDEBOOKS LESSONS

LESSON #	STUDENT TASK	STUDENT LOOK-FORS	IF STUDENTS ARE UNSUCCESSFUL....
1	<p>Partner discussion on question about the first part of a text, “What happens in this part of the story?”; orally summarize</p> <p>Partner read of the second part of a text; use graphic organizer to summarize</p>	<p>Basic understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humans are miserable • Prometheus feels pity • Jupiter refuses • Prometheus helps anyhow <p>Accurate summary statements on graphic organizer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be fluent enough readers • May lack vocabulary • May lack background knowledge • May be confused by syntax • May not understand vocabulary related to writing a summary (e.g., “conflict”) • May not be fluent reader • May lack vocabulary • Syntax may be unfamiliar

LESSON #	STUDENT TASK	STUDENT LOOK-FORS	IF STUDENTS ARE UNSUCCESSFUL....
2	Copy particular sentence from text, paraphrase for correct meaning, find other sentences with similar meaning, using the word "intent"	Accurate paraphrase; accurate identification of other sentences with similar meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not understand vocabulary, including "intent" • Syntax may be unfamiliar
	Notice how the sentence structure works in the sentence	Use /function of "while"; how syntax of sentence works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syntax may be unfamiliar
	Students reflect on learning, how they came to understand	Student notices how structure of a sentence impacts meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not know how to self-reflect on learning • Syntax may be unfamiliar
3	Work in pairs to identify words that reveal character, or move plot/action	Accurately identify words/phrases that reveal character, or move plot/action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not understand vocabulary • May not know how to analyze character
	Replace word, explain tone of that vocabulary word in a sentence	Student correctly finds synonym; describes tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not know any synonyms • May not understand the concept of "tone"
	Write in reading log to answer question about tone affecting understanding of text	Written response restates question; accurately describes tone as positive; uses textual evidence to support thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not understand tone • May not understand elements of written response (e.g., restate question, use textual evidence)

After just one lesson, the student look fors provide the teacher with some potentially useful information about students' possible needs.

After just one lesson, the student look-fors provide the teacher with incredibly useful information about student needs. After three lessons, as outlined in Table 2, the looks-fors can help the teacher identify patterns in student learning across individuals and across a class of students. Deep knowledge of students' particular needs—as well as the teacher's knowledge of what will be coming up in whole-class Guidebooks instruction—will help teachers organize instruction so that every student is successful.

At the same time, it can be difficult to match student look-fors to student needs and then student needs to particular student supports -- there are so many different things that may be at the root of a learning struggle with a text-based task. But do not fear! This Guide is designed to support educators in developing a practice of matching student needs to supports. Over time, just like students, teachers will get better at using a similar analysis pattern as outlined in the third column of Table 2. The Guidebooks make it easy because student look-fors are included in every Guidebooks lesson.

This Guide is designed to support educators in developing a practice of matching student needs to supports. Over time, just like students, teachers will get better at using a similar analysis pattern as outlined in the third column of Table 2. The Guidebooks make it easy because student look-fors are included in every Guidebooks lesson.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN USING ASSESSMENT DATA

In using assessment data to determine how to support students, teacher judgment and existing school processes should not be overlooked. This guide builds educator capacity to use formal and informal assessment data to effectively plan instruction; however, schools will vary in the way they set up systems for administering assessments and in how they use data to make decisions.

There are some structures, however, that should be the same across schools. For instance, the educators most involved in teaching diverse learners should take time to analyze data to collaboratively plan across their classroom settings. The teachers need to compare notes: how are the students who need support doing in whole-class instruction? Where might they need a bit more help—where, possibly, even a bit less? For this to actually happen, teachers need predictable planning time. Predictable planning time allows for open and transparent communication between the whole-class teacher and the teacher providing additional support. As a result of teachers planning together, receive holistic and aligned support across their instructional experiences.

Mr. Ortega, the additional support teacher featured in this guide, clearly plans closely with whole-class Guidebooks instruction in mind. He knows what is coming up in whole-class instruction, and when it is coming up. This makes it possible for the diverse learners in his class to get the greatest possible benefit from their time with him. In addition, Mr. Ortega frequently checks in with Ms. Gomez, the 8th grade ELA teacher, to establish a feedback loop: he understands how diverse learners are progressing in her class and he uses this knowledge to make instructional adjustments. Ms. Gomez also learns from Mr. Ortega about what she should reinforce during whole-class instruction.

Again, schools should ensure whole-class and support teachers, like Ms. Gomez and Mr. Ortega, have time to meet in order to provide the best supports to diverse learners. Daily may not be realistic—but every two weeks might be manageable. For the administrators reading this guide, carefully consider building in time for whole-class and support teachers to collaboratively review data, study curriculum, and plan instruction together. The students will benefit.



STRUCTURING ADDITIONAL SMALL- GROUP INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Schools have a variety of structures built into their schedules. There is no one system that fits all schools, and it would be difficult to describe all the myriad possibilities. When designing a structure for additional instructional support, educators should, however, ensure the following principles are considered:

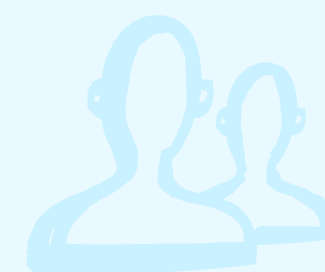
SUPPORT IS REGULAR

In order to ensure diverse learners effectively access Tier 1 instruction, additional support should be regularly scheduled; ideally, every day. For students with unfinished learning, additional instructional support should happen during a dedicated period of time each day and, as much as possible, should mirror the whole-class ELA period in length (i.e., 50 - 60 minutes per day, every day).



SUPPORT IS PREDICTABLE

Students benefit when the additional support session time is predictable. The educator who delivers or facilitates the additional support period may vary from school-to-school but, ideally, the same educator works with the same students consistently throughout the year. In some cases, the educator may be the classroom teacher; in others, it may be an intervention teacher or team of intervention teachers. In any case, students benefit from predictable additional instructional time where they can form strong relationships with adults and expectations for learning are clear.



REGULAR “STOP AND CHECK” TIME IS BUILT INTO THE SUPPORT STRUCTURE.

Student progress should be monitored for improvements so that teachers can effectively plan supports that meet diverse learners' needs. Because of this, it is important that schools schedule regular “stop and check” time (e.g., every three or four weeks) for classroom and the support or intervention teachers to share data, analyze how students are progressing and discuss adjustments to instructional plans. We recommend scheduling “stop and check” time every three to four weeks because, for most students, additional, instructional support is unlikely to be a magic bullet or a quick fix. While it is true that fluency practice is likely to produce some demonstrable gains for students in a relatively short time, as can both vocabulary and syntax work, it is also true that in-depth vocabulary growth, deep understanding of syntax, and general knowledge-building take more time. Both short-term and long-term student progress should be discussed during “stop and check” time.



In Tables 3-5, we offer examples of three basic configurations for structuring an additional instructional block to provide targeted support to diverse learners. Each of these configurations assumes a school has 50 min of additional support time scheduled five days a week.

Our recommendation is that you refer back to this section as you plan instruction: read a section on a high-leverage area and then return to this planning page for tips on how to structure your time. While what is suggested here should not be considered a “Tier 2 program,” structuring additional instructional time in the ways outlined below is an effective way to scaffold student access to Tier 1 instruction.

**TABLE 3: SPLIT ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL BLOCK
DAILY FOCUS ON FLUENCY AND VOCABULARY, WITH FLEX DAY**

STRUCTURE AND FOCUS	STRENGTHS OF STRUCTURE	LIMITATIONS OF STRUCTURE
<p>Days 1-4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (25 minutes) Fluency, followed by brief comprehension activity • (25 minutes) Vocabulary <p>Day 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (50 minutes) Flex Time (e.g., language patterns / mentor sentences, short writes, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily fluency practice is more likely to show gains • Switching activities half-way through maintains students' attention • Puts major emphasis on fluency and vocabulary, which is most appropriate for students who have substantial gaps in reading • Weekly Flex Day allows for practice in short-writes • Weekly Flex Day allows for practice in targeted writing skills or aspects of language and supports students to build writing fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of time on Days 1-4 dedicated to fluency and vocabulary may limit depth of activities • Limited amount of time dedicated to writing, language patterns • Splitting the area of focus on Days 1-4 requires routines and time for transitions • Focusing on both fluency and vocabulary on Days 1-4 requires teachers to prep two activities each day

Student reflection in a learning log for a few minutes at the end of each additional instructional block.

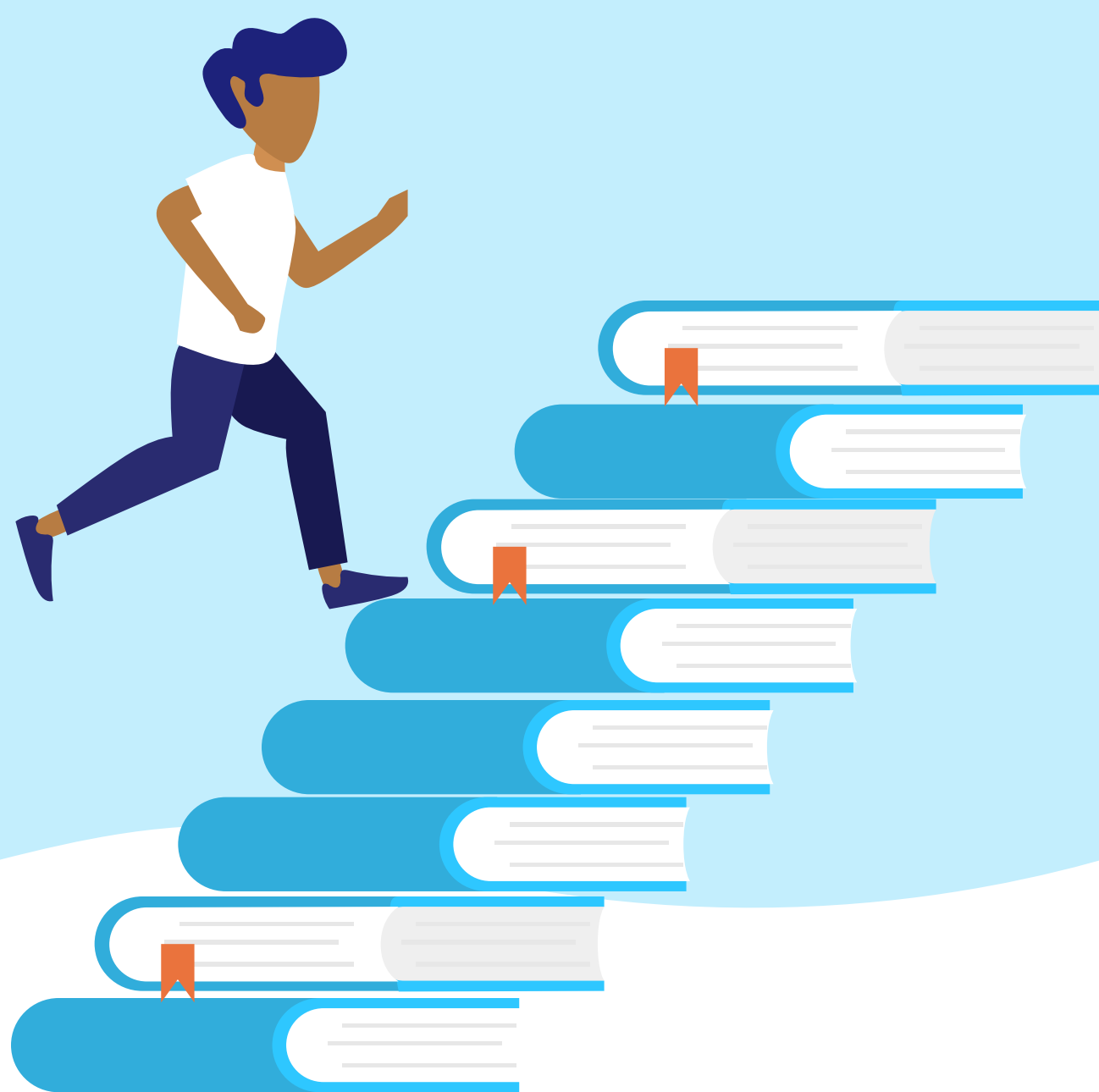
**TABLE 4: FULL ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL BLOCK
ALTERNATING DAYS FOCUS ON FLUENCY AND VOCABULARY, WITH FLEX DAY**

STRUCTURE AND FOCUS	STRENGTHS OF STRUCTURE	LIMITATIONS OF STRUCTURE
Days 1 and 3: • (50 minutes) Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer period allows for fluency practice with longer passages, opportunity for error analysis and additional comprehension work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who are struggling greatly in a particular area may become frustrated by longer periods of practice
Days 2 and 4: • (50 minutes) Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer period allows for more intensive vocabulary work in one session • Weekly Flex Day allows for practice in short writes • Weekly Flex Day allows for practice in targeted writing skills or aspects of language and supports students to build writing fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may lose focus or need to build stamina for longer periods of practice • Conflicts with school scheduling (e.g., assembly, in-service day, etc.) or student absences may have a greater impact on a particular area of focus if entire days are missed
Day 5: • (50 minutes) Flex Time: Teachers can adjust their plans for this time based on the needs of their students. For example, the teacher can extend practice on fluency, provide additional time with complex text, support an aspect of writing through a short write, or engage in a mentor sentence activity		
Student reflection in a learning log for a few minutes at the end of each additional instructional block		

**TABLE 5: SPLIT ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL BLOCK
ALTERNATING PATTERN FOR FOCUS, WITH FLEX DAY**

STRUCTURE AND FOCUS	STRENGTHS OF STRUCTURE	LIMITATIONS OF STRUCTURE
<p>Days 1 and 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (25 minutes) Fluency • (25 minutes) Vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps daily emphasis on fluency, which is fundamentally important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splitting the area of focus on Days 1-4 requires routines and time for transitions
<p>Days 2 and 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (25 minutes) Fluency • (25 minutes) Choice of Language patterns OR Accountable Independent Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows more time with language patterns practice each week • Allows for inclusion of Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) for knowledge-building within the cycle of additional instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on both fluency and vocabulary on Days 1-4 requires teachers to prep two activities each day
<p>Day 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (50 minutes) Flex Time: Teachers can adjust their plans for this time based on the needs of their students. For example, the teacher can extend practice on fluency, provide additional time with complex text, support an aspect of writing through a short write, or engage in a mentor sentence activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Flex Day allows for practice in short writes • Weekly Flex Day allows for practice in targeted writing skills or aspects of language and supports students to build writing fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) as a regular area of focus requires teachers to have texts available at a wide range of reading levels on the unit topic

Student reflection in a learning log for a few minutes at the end of each additional instructional block



INSTRUCTION FOR
HIGH LEVERAGE AREA

Fluency



THE RATE AT WHICH
READING IS OCCURING

READS WORDS
CORRECTLY

WORD RETRIEVAL FROM
LONG TERM MEMORY
HAPPENS WITHOUT
CONSCIOUS AWARENESS
AND CONSUMES LITTLE
MENTAL RESOURCES

SILENTLY AND ORALLY
READING THE TEXT IN A WAY
THAT MIMICS ORAL SPEECH

THE GRAMMATICAL ORDER
OF WORDS IN A SENTENCE
THAT CONTRIBUTE TO
MEANING

When a reader is reading fluently, they are reading right along at an appropriate **pace** – about the pace at which they might speak when they are speaking about something familiar. They name words **accurately**, and do not stumble. The great majority of the words they are reading are words they recognize quickly, almost **automatically**. The fluent reader reads within the punctuation, paying attention to commas and periods and quotation marks. This allows them to emphasize certain words, phrases, or clauses. This expressive aspect of fluency is called **prosody**.

When all of these aspects are present—pace, accuracy, automaticity, and prosody—the fluent reader is able to concentrate on the meaning of the text they are reading.

Another element of reading that can prevent fluent reading is a lack of understanding of syntax (the grammatical order of words in a sentence that contribute to meaning). For instance, students with a strong understanding of syntax will more easily decode the word “excited” in the following sentence: “The excited boy went to the water park” but without an understanding of **syntax**, the word could be a verb, adverb or other part of speech, making it more difficult to read.



FLUENCY INSTRUCTION IN ACTION: A SNAPSHOT

On a Monday afternoon right after lunch, Deanna and Rodrigo, along with half a dozen of their classmates, are just arriving at their additional instructional block. From here, they will go to their 8th grade ELA class, where they will be participating in the second week of the Flowers for Algernon unit that the class began last week.

Their teacher, Mr. Ortega, greets them with a smile. “Hope you had a good lunch so you have lots of energy,” he says. “We’re starting with a new text today, so you’ve got your work cut out for you!”

Deanna and Rodrigo both make sure they each have a sharpened pencil, then sit down at their desks. They know the drill with a new text—read it once, read it again, read it again!

“What about Charlie Gordon?” asks Rodrigo. “Aren’t we going to read more about him? We only just barely started that story at the end of last week.”

“Oh, no worries, we’ll be getting back to Charlie Gordon in the next few days,” Mr. Ortega assures him, as he passes out a new article. “What was so interesting to you about Charlie, anyway?”

“I felt so sorry for him,” Deanna says. “He wants to be smart, so much—and he’s not - but he wants to be.”

WARM RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS

NECESSITY OF REPEATED READING

“Umm-hmm, “ responds Mr. Ortega. “That makes a couple of texts now that we’ve read that have to do with intelligence and learning... first, we read the myth Prometheus, then we started with the short story “Flowers for Algernon”...hey, take a guess, what do you think today’s might be about?”

“Something else to do with intelligence, maybe?” ventured Deanna.

“Well, let’s see,” said Mr. Ortega. “Class, I’m going to read the first chunk of this text aloud. As you can see, it’s entitled ‘What is an Inkblot? Some Say, Not Much.’ As I read, I want you to read it silently in your head, just like we’ve done before. Make sure you don’t ever take your eyes off that text—you know how much this first read helps!”

CLARITY OF DIRECTIONS

Deanna and Rodrigo nod. They do indeed know how much this first read will help.

ORDER AND TYPE OF SUPPORT: TEACHER MODELING FLUENT READING FIRST

Mr. Ortega begins reading. He reads fluently, with strong expression, pausing a bit at commas, stopping at periods, and using his voice to emphasize key words. As Mr. Ortega reads, the class reads along silently. Occasionally, Rodrigo makes a tiny mark with his pencil by a word; once in a while Deanna underlines a bit of text. By and large, though, they are reading “in their heads”.

RELATIONSHIP TO COMPREHENSION: DETERMINING THE GIST

When they’ve finished, Mr. Ortega does a quick check-in with the class about the gist of the first chunk of text. Mr. Ortega clarifies a key word or two in the home language of his EL students. (Although he does not speak all of the home languages of his students, he has identified these keywords ahead of time and looked them up). In a quick minute or two, they establish that the text is about an ink-blot test that has to do with intelligence, and there is a lot of disagreement in the world about this test.

ORDER AND TYPE OF SUPPORT: CHORAL READING FOLLOWING MODELING

Mr. Ortega knows that for his students, reading aloud has often been a painful experience, and he is determined that it be a helpful experience for them. What he does next reflects that.

ORDER AND TYPE OF SUPPORT: CHORAL READING FOLLOWING MODELING

“Okay,” says Mr. Ortega cheerfully. “So, as you know, we’re ready for the second read of this chunk of text. I want you to read the first three paragraphs aloud with me—kind of like we’re in a singing group—reading right along together. After that, we’ll work in partners to re-read the rest of this first chunk. Everybody got that?”

BUY-IN FROM STUDENTS

Deanna and Rodrigo and the rest of the group nod. They remember that this fluency practice activity worked wonders when it came to reading the Prometheus text in class, and the first few pages of “Flowers for Algernon”—so it’s surely worth a good try here.

WHY DOES FLUENCY MATTER SO MUCH?

Fluency matters mostly because it has such a huge connection to comprehension. To be clear, fluent oral reading as a goal may not by itself be so important, especially as students get older—but comprehension most assuredly is. Comprehension is, after all, the reason we read!

According to the 2002 NAEP study on oral reading, about 40% of fourth graders nationally were dysfluent, and virtually all of them scored at basic or below on reading comprehension (Daane, Campbell, Grigg, Goodman & Oranie, 2005). That means that for many students (and sometimes adults), “not getting” what they read happens not because they are somehow cognitively unable to understand, but because they cannot easily recognize the words in the text or the syntax of the sentences. Sometimes, it’s both.



WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN FOR THE DYSFLUENT READER

Daniel Willingham, a noted cognitive scientist, describes it this way. The brain, Willingham (2009) explains, has an amazing ability to learn and to remember. We have two parts of memory: long-term memory, where we store our knowledge of facts, concepts, and how-tos (like how to play baseball, or the causes of World War One), and working memory, where we try to figure things out (like how to navigate the new airport parking garage, or how to read Arabic). Working memory is, states Willingham, “The site of thinking,” (p. 109).

Interestingly, our long-term memory is almost limitless. Our working memory, on the other hand, is decidedly limited. Willingham states, “The lack of space in working memory is a fundamental bottleneck of human cognition” (2009).

“The lack of space in working memory is a fundamental bottleneck of human cognition.”

Daniel Willingham, 2009



WE ALL HAVE EXPERIENCED LIMITATIONS TO OUR WORKING MEMORY.

Imagine you are setting out for a drive in your car. You have heard about a new sports equipment store that is opening a half hour or so away from where you live, and you want to get there to check out the incredible deals they seem to be offering.

The problem is that to get to the store you have to take the freeway and get off at an unfamiliar exit. Not only that: once you get off at the right exit, you need to make sure to take several turns to get to the new mall where the sports equipment store is located.

Still, the deals seem great, so you set out. There is a lot of traffic, and some construction, so you make sure to turn off your car radio so you can concentrate on where you're going.

You manage to take the right exit, but do miss the first turn to the new mall, so you have to turn around in somebody's driveway. (This is frustrating!) Eventually, though, you get to the new sports equipment store – whew!

At the store, the first person you run into is your neighbor. “Wasn't that an interesting drive over here?” she smiles. “And weren't those beautiful flower gardens we passed right after we got off the exit? I had no idea this was such a pretty area!”

You look at her blankly. Flower gardens? Pretty area? You had all you could do to make the correct turns.

What we see here is the limitation of working memory. The new task—in this case, driving to the sports equipment store—takes up all the space and bandwidth of your working memory. You have, literally, nothing left over with which to smell the flowers!

A dysfluent reader experiences a similar problem. They have to work so hard just to figure out the words they are trying to read, and to figure out the rhythm and syntax of the sentences, that they have no “brain space” left over—no working memory—to pay attention to the meaning of the text.

The remarkably good news here is that practice helps. With enough practice, a task that fills up our working memory can become automatic and be shifted to long-term memory.

With enough practice, a task that fills up our working memory can become automatic and be shifted to long-term memory.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR STRUGGLING READERS

The implications of working memory limitations for struggling readers are enormous. When readers spend so much of their (remember, very limited!) working memory on decoding words and figuring out the sentence structure, they quickly “use up” the space they have in their brains.

If we give students the opportunity to practice, however—and if that practice allows them to say the words in the text easily, accurately, and automatically, and tie those words together with well-expressed syntax—in other words, become fluent readers—then we have helped students free up their working memory for other tasks. Increased access to working memory allows students to take a huge step on their way to understanding the text; which is, of course, what reading really is.

This is because fluency is not enough for solid comprehension. Readers do not only have to read the words automatically and accurately, they also have to understand the meaning of the words. And they not only have to speak the sentences with well-expressed syntax, they have to understand how that syntax and sentence structure translate to thought and meaning. Fluency allows students to focus on the other skills necessary for successful reading comprehension.

Fluency, therefore, acts as a sort of “bottom line” for student comprehension of complex text.

FLUENCY PRACTICE IS HIGH LEVERAGE

Remarkably, targeted fluency practice seems to produce gains for students relatively quickly—even for older students. One study done in 2011 with struggling sixth-grade readers showed gains in overall fluency after just sixteen minutes a day of repeated choral reading, over a period of six weeks (Paige, 2011).

“The good news is that fluency is an element of reading that can be improved relatively quickly with some attention and practice. We can work on building fluency during existing lessons, with few additional resources. The heaviest lift lies in planning to make time for a routine in which fluency instruction and practice is intentional and frequent.”

UnboundEd, ELA Guide: Building Fluency, 2017



OPTIONS FOR HELPING STUDENTS WITH FLUENCY

At the heart of fluency instruction is something very basic: **practice**. Common sense as well as scientific evidence remind us that practice improves learning. A youngster beginning to walk practices hundreds of times before she gets up and walks to the dog’s water dish. A beginning driver practices parallel parking dozens of times before she positions the car into a parking space without hitting the curb (or the adjacent car!). An aspiring basketball player spends hours at the playground trying foul shots before he can be confident he will likely make one when it counts in a game.

Daniel Willingham, the cognitive scientist who writes about working memory, ties the value of practice to the limitations of working memory. Basically, he says, practice allows one to move many aspects of a task to automatic (2009). Through practice, the toddler puts “on automatic” how to both stand upright and move. Through practice, the beginning driver gets an automatic feel for when and to what degree to turn the wheel so her parking is successful. Through practice, the basketball player develops an automatic knowledge of how much pressure to put on the ball and how much to arch his shot.

Not all practice is created equal. A learner can practice a new skill a hundred times, but without feedback, especially on what they did correctly or incorrectly, they may not improve. This is why the role of the teacher is so important. Repeated reading should be accompanied by targeted feedback from the instructor. This is what researchers call **purposeful** or **deliberate practice**. Notably, purposeful practice has well-defined goals, is focused and involves feedback (Ericsson & Pool, 2016). When supporting all learners and especially learners who need more practice, it is essential to set well-defined goals for their learning, focus on a specific task or skill to improve, and then receive direct feedback from an expert teacher, specifically on what needs to improve. You will see this reflected in the guidance below.

Repeated reading should be accompanied by targeted feedback from the instructor. This is what researchers call purposeful or deliberate practice.

It follows, then, that at the heart of fluency work is the basic concept of purposeful practice. Each of the fluency instructional moves that the Guidebooks (and this guide) recommend leans heavily on practice in the most basic form of repeated reading.

Remember Deanna and Rodrigo, the two eighth-grade students we met at the beginning of this section? They had already experienced this idea of practice—“read it once, read it again, read it again.” Importantly, they had already experienced the success that comes with repeated reading and improved fluency.

There are several useful fluency strategies that the Guidebooks recommend. All of them involve an emphasis on repeated reading and teacher feedback as a form of practice. Before we look at the specific fluency strategies, let's think about the elements of practice that are common to all of them.

USE OF COMPLEX, GRADE-LEVEL TEXT

This maximizes clear connections to the full-class Guidebooks instruction.

This is the most efficient way to build fluency and success in the classroom

May seem unusual to use grade-level complex text for fluency practice, but it is helpful



TEACHER MODELING OF FLUENT READING

Student "first read" is engaged (they are actually reading), but also successful

It is motivating for struggling readers to experience initial success. It is important not to have the passage be too long



STUDENTS IMMEDIATELY READING THE SAME PASSAGE ALOUD (ALONE OR WITH A PARTNER)

Students have just heard passage read fluently (while reading silently); immediate practice likely to be helpful

The student reading needs to be immediate, not the next day, for this approach to be beneficial. Again, it is important for students to experience genuine success along the way



REPEATED READING ALOUD OF PASSAGES

Repeated reading of the same passage over time increases reading fluency.

Reading aloud (not silently) allows learning to happen through both seeing and listening, with listening being particularly significant.

Students are likely to notice the rapid improvement in their fluency with this passage.

Some students will need more repetitions of the same passage than others.



TEACHER FEEDBACK ON STUDENT READING

When possible, teachers provide in the moment feedback and error analysis on student reading

For practice to be purposeful and deliberate, feedback from an expert reader (often the teacher) is crucial in ensuring an improvement in skill



CONNECTION TO COMPREHENSION

Comprehension is the goal of fluent reading—that connection also needs practice!

Connection to comprehension can take several forms.





FLUENCY STRATEGIES TO USE IN AN ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL BLOCK OR SMALL GROUP SETTING

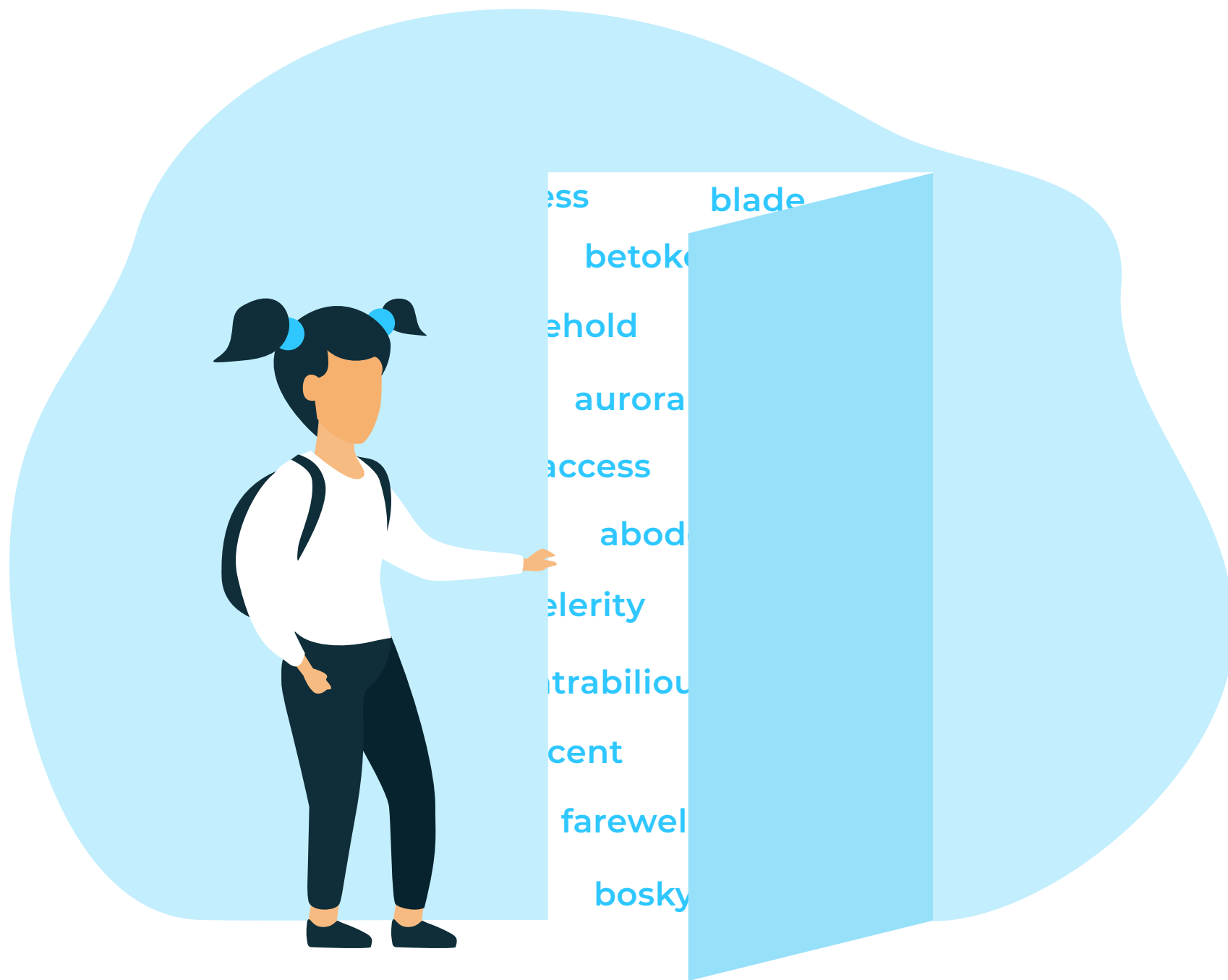
Table 6 describes the fluency strategies named in the Guidebooks. Teachers can find out more specific information about each of them by referencing the Supports Flow Chart.

TABLE 6: HIGH LEVERAGE FLUENCY STRATEGIES

STRATEGY	WHAT IT INVOLVES
Echo reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher reads aloud a short passage (sentence, up to a short paragraph) • Students read the same text aloud after the teacher • Teacher provides feedback related to students' accuracy, automaticity, and prosody
Choral reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher reads aloud passage (suggested 150-300 words) fluently while students read in their heads • Teacher and students read full passage together aloud • Teacher provides feedback related to students' accuracy, automaticity, and prosody • Over repeated readings, teacher stops reading more and more of passage, releasing to students
Readers Theater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher reads aloud fluently, then students practice, taking turns with the parts, like reading a play • Useful for text that involves multiple speakers, suitable for presentation (some sections of chapters of books, plays)
Repeated reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-reading a passage as part of a text-based discussion OR practicing the same passage repeatedly throughout the week • After each re-read, teacher provides feedback related to students accuracy, automaticity, and prosody <p>Note: repeated reading is actually an element of all fluency strategies</p>
Paired / partner reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students read in pairs, taking turns after sentences or paragraphs • Can be done after "first teacher read" or with new text, depending on class and student need • Can use "whisper reading" to make more manageable



Every fluency strategy used must be followed by some form of comprehension work.



INSTRUCTION FOR
HIGH LEVERAGE AREA

Vocabulary



WHY IS A STRONG VOCABULARY SO IMPORTANT FOR READING COMPREHENSION?

We already know that fluency is a sine qua non of reading comprehension (i.e., without fluency, comprehension is close to impossible). However, fluency is not enough. Another key component of comprehension is understanding the words and phrases that make up the text.

Research on the significance of vocabulary is clear and compelling.

To understand a text, a student has to understand the great majority of the words in the text. And since understanding words are related to overall knowledge acquisition, learning words and building knowledge—and thereby understanding a text—are all linked.



VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IN ACTION: A SNAPSHOT

On a Monday afternoon right after lunch, Deanna and Rodrigo, along with half a dozen of their classmates, are about halfway through their targeted and additional instructional block. From here they will go to their 8th grade ELA class, where they will be participating in the second week of the Flowers for Algernon unit that the class began last week.

“Great job with reading this new text, kids,” says their teacher Mr. Ortega. “As you all said, it’s pretty clear that there is a lot of disagreement about this inkblot test.”

The students nod—from reading the first eighteen paragraphs a couple of times, they all have the same foundational understanding of the text.

“So, before you read this section of the text again, in your upcoming English class class,” Mr. Ortega tells them, “we need to do some work with a few really important words in this text.”

Rodrigo looks skeptical. He has gotten the gist of the text, but he knows the text is full of hard words. Some of them he has a vague idea of—some he has never heard. Are they really going to work with all those words? That would take forever!

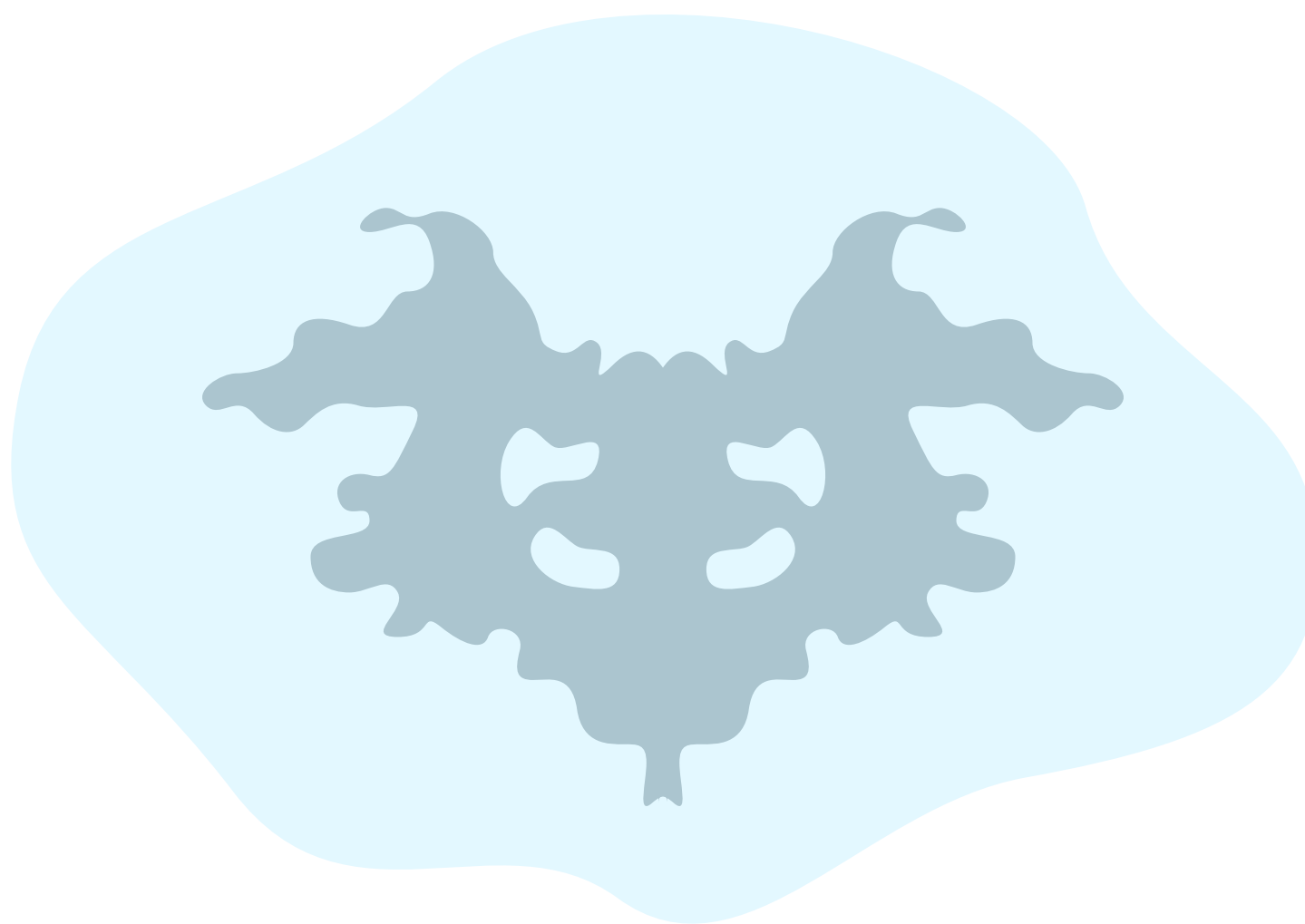
Mr. Ortega seems to read Rodrigo’s mind, and he laughs. “Don’t worry, “ he assures the class, “we’re only going to concentrate on a few key words. I’m going to give you just a quick heads up for most of them. Let’s take a look at that article again. I’m going to read it aloud once more while you read in your heads. Does that sound boring?”

Deanna nods. It does sound a little boring—after all, they can read those paragraphs pretty fluently by now.

“So, here’s why it’ll be interesting,” Mr. Ortega says. “This time, as I read aloud, I’m going to ‘drop in’ some word meanings for some of the trickier vocabulary words in here. As I do that, make a tiny mark with your pencil right over the word I’m defining as I read. By the time we’ve read this again, you’ll have quite a collection of dots on your text!”

He begins reading the second paragraph.

PURPOSEFUL
PRACTICE



**DIRECT INSTRUCTION
THROUGH 'DROP IN'
WORDS**

“Devised, or made, 80 years ago by a young Swiss psychiatrist, the Rorschach or inkblot test has entered the language as a synonym for anything ambiguous enough, or not clear enough, to invite multiple interpretations. And beyond its pop culture status, it has retained, or kept, a central role in personality assessment or figuring out someone’s personality, administered or given several hundred thousand times a year, by conservative or low estimates, to both children and adults.”

Mr. Ortega stops. “Hmm.....” he muses. “So what do we know about this inkblot test now?”

Deanna raises her hand. “It’s called the Rorschach test and it seems like what it shows about people isn’t...well, it isn’t always clear. The text uses the word ‘ambiguous’ or something like that...I think I’ve seen that word before, but I never knew what it meant.”

“But they still give that test, a lot,” adds Rodrigo. “The text says they give it several hundred thousand times a year, and that’s a low number.”

“Great,” agrees Mr. Ortega. “Let’s go on and I’ll drop in a few more words for you like that. Then we’ll go on to zero in on a really important word for this text—the word ‘controversial.’”

Mr. Ortega spends a few more minutes ‘dropping in’ words for his students. Many of them are EL students and all are struggling readers, so he knows this level of word work is important for them. He knows that even though classroom instruction may also “drop in” vocabulary, his students with diverse learning needs will benefit from an extra dose.

INTENTIONAL PLANNING
OF ADDITIONAL
SUPPORTS

FOCUS ON HIGH
LEVERAGE TIER TWO
WORDS

Besides the “drop-in words,” Mr. Ortega also knows that some deeper attention is needed for a few words. In his planning for this class, he looked ahead into the Guidebooks lesson and unit and noticed that coming up very soon, in the next day or two, students would need to deal closely and specifically with the word “controversial.” Since this is an important academic (or Tier Two) word that students will use many times in their academic life (besides in this particular text), he knows it is worth taking additional instructional time to learn this word.

Even more important, Mr. Ortega knows that not only is the word “controversial” coming up soon in full-class instruction, understanding the concept will be central to the lesson. Of course, he wants his students to be ready to fully and successfully participate in the class for that lesson.

So Mr. Ortega spends the rest of the support class introducing and working with the word “controversial.” He knows that his students’ gist understanding has already set them up for learning this important word, because it showed up in the reading. He also knows this work will need to continue into the next support class, so he will have enough time to take his students back to the paragraph where the word first shows up.

What will that work look like? Mr. Ortega decides to use the Guidebooks’ Vocabulary Protocol. This time, he chooses a direct instruction approach called the Frayer Model, a form of semantic mapping.

Mr. Ortega will have students re-read a bit, then do some partner work using context clues to try to figure out what controversial means. He may even give them a few contexts from something familiar. Then he will guide students to come up with an agreed-on definition, in words they understand. After that, Mr. Ortega will make some time to work with images so students build a deep understanding from a visual, and he will help them generate specific, concrete examples of “controversial” in their own lives. For his EL students, he will help them make a connection to a similar concept in their home language. Finally, Mr. Ortega will help students generate some non-examples, even antonyms of controversial in short, concrete sentences.

USE OF SPECIFIC
DIRECTION INSTRUCTION
SUPPORT: FRAYER MODEL

By the time students finish this word work, he knows they will be well prepared for the full class Guidebooks lesson.



WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING FOR READERS WITH LIMITED VOCABULARIES

David Liben, the noted educator who synthesized the research for the national literacy standards, reminds us that we have known for a very long time (nearly one hundred years!) that vocabulary is a key component of reading comprehension. Liben, referring to Whipple (1925) says that, “Growth in reading power means continuous growth in word knowledge. Vocabulary is critically important in oral reading instruction. ... A reader who encounters a strange word in print can decode the word to speech,” (D. Liben, personal communication, 2019). Since Louisiana has set the critically important goal of making sure all students can read, understand, and express understanding of complex text, it makes sense that supporting diverse learners with vocabulary is a key element of support.

“Vocabulary is critically important in oral reading instruction. ... A reader who encounters a strange word in print can decode the word to speech”

D. Liben, personal communication, 2019



WE ALL MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED WORKING WITH A STUDENT TRYING TO READ WHEN THEY DIDN'T RECOGNIZE OR UNDERSTAND A LOT OF THE WORDS.

Imagine you are a middle school student who been asked to research any topic about a culture that you find interesting. Your teacher points you to a stack of books and encourages you to skim through them to find something you like.

A bit unsure how to begin, you pick up a book and open the text up to the fourth page. But as you plug through the text, you find a lot of unfamiliar words.

For you, here is what that “reading experience” looks like:

“In one of the most xxxxxx places in the world, the xxxxxx, xxxxxx have xxxxxx over a xxxxxx years. They are the xxxxxx. For the xxxxxx, the xxxxxx is a place xxxxxx xxxxxx. Depending on how far xxxxxx they live, the xxxxxx find everything from xxxxxx and xxxxxx to xxxxxx. The xxxxxx have xxxxxx themselves to the xxxxxx xxxxxx they xxxxxx. At one time they were xxxxxx to be xxxxxx xxxxxx people in the world. This is xxxxxx the case; the xxxxxx has changed xxxxxx over the past xxxxxx. The arrival of xxxxxx and xxxxxx resulted in big changes to the xxxxxx and way of life. Today, xxxxxx are xxxxxx their xxxxxx and they are learning to xxxxxx themselves in a xxxxxx.”

“What do you think?” asks your teacher encouragingly. “Are you interested in the Inuit?”

The Inuit? Where did it say that, you wonder? Who are they?

“Let’s read it together,” suggests the teacher, and she reads (while you follow),

“In one of the most remote places in the world, the Canadian Arctic, a people have survived over a thousand years. They are the Inuit. For the Inuit, the Arctic is a place teeming with life. Depending on how far north they live, the Inuit find everything from caribou herds and polar bears to beluga whales. The Inuit have adapted themselves to the various regions they inhabit. At one time they were considered to be among the healthiest people in the world. This is no longer the case; the Inuit lifestyle has changed dramatically over the past decades. The arrival of southerners and modern technology resulted in big changes to the Inuit diet and way of life.

Today, the Inuit are rediscovering their rich heritage and they are learning to govern themselves in a modern world.”

That certainly helped, you think. Hearing those words made at least some of them recognizable. And there are some interesting words in there – like “teeming,” which must be the same as “full of” since the rest of the sentence has all those animals.

“Okay,” you say, “I’ll give the Inuit book a try.”

What we are seeing here is the result of a limited vocabulary! Even if you could decode the words (which would be a time-consuming process), there are so many that you don't recognize or understand that you are at a loss as to what the text is saying. With a severely limited vocabulary, even a gist understanding of a text is difficult.

With a severely limited vocabulary, even a gist understanding of a text is difficult.



EFFECTIVE WAYS TO INCREASE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY

USE TEXTS THAT ARE DEEPLY AND CLOSELY TOPICALLY CONNECTED.

A key feature that contributes to vocabulary growth is the design of the curriculum around a set of connected texts on substantive topics: the more closely the curriculum is tied to knowledge-building rooted in study of a substantive topic, the more likely it is that students will remember and come to “own” the new vocabulary words.. This is one of the reasons the Guidebooks are designed as they are—when students work with a topic like “the nature of human intelligence” in *Flowers for Algernon*, they are far more likely to grasp the meaning and nuance of a word like “controversial” than if they were working with words from a list or standalone vocabulary workbook.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE INDIRECT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION WITHIN THIS CONTENT-BASED CURRICULUM.

Most vocabulary acquisition comes indirectly, first from spoken language and read alouds, then later from reading rich text. Importantly, as David Liben points out, students continue to benefit from read alouds of rich text for many years. He says, “In K-2 read aloud is the ideal way to grow vocabulary, though read aloud of texts more complex than what students can read themselves is effective [for vocabulary growth] until the 8th grade when, for proficient readers, reading comprehension catches up to listening comprehension,” (D. Liben, personal communication, 2019). The Guidebooks units use rich, complex text around a particular substantive topic. Reading, re-reading, discussing, charting vocabulary, and writing about these texts helps students acquire the vocabulary that make them up, since most vocabulary growth comes indirectly from that reading.

How does reading a series of texts on the same topic speed up vocabulary learning? The way we store words in our brains is an ever-shifting nexus. As we learn new words, we connect them to words that have already been learned. When we read the word “joyful,” we tag it to “joy” and “happy”; we may also tag it to “upset” and “sad.” Knowing that “joyful” is the opposite of “sad,” or that “joyful” and “joy” mean similar things but are in different forms, helps us to know more about the meaning of those words. As we read more words in different contexts, our nexus of words grows in size and the connections among words grows stronger, allowing us to know the meaning of more words from reading than we can be taught directly (Adams, 2009).

Let’s unpack this idea. Adams is saying that indirect vocabulary instruction from rich text has a wonderful “double whammy” effect for students. Not only do students acquire nuanced meaning of the words actually in the text—they also build a context and a sense for related words. These related words may not be in this particular text, but may be words students will encounter in other new texts, in this unit and in new units. (What a bonus!)

USE DIRECT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION WHERE IT IS NEEDED

The indirect approach to vocabulary instruction described above has already been built into the Guidebooks units. However, for most students, there are some key words and terms in these complex texts, where direct vocabulary instruction is also needed.

The Guidebooks curriculum used for whole-class instruction already includes some opportunities for direct vocabulary instruction. Unsurprisingly, students needing additional support to fully participate in whole-class learning will benefit from more direct vocabulary instruction. In the next section, we discuss what characterizes direct vocabulary support and how to best implement it.

DIRECT VOCABULARY SUPPORT IS INTENTIONAL

Direct vocabulary support means engaging in direct instruction with students to ensure they understand specific vocabulary words. When providing direct vocabulary instruction, teachers provide explicit instruction of and practice with vocabulary words in context (before, during, and after reading) and engage students in word study (analyzing root words and affixes, etc).

Remember, the Guidebooks units have been “designed from the end.” This means that texts and tasks are included for good and well-thought-through reasons: they lead students to the essential understanding—the “big idea” about content—that the unit has set out to teach.

This sometimes means a “can’t wait” need for direct vocabulary instruction.

Simply put, there are some words in any given text or topic that are so key to meaning-making, right then, that teachers need to give direct instruction on those words, such as defining the words for students.

In addition, we know that there is some key academic vocabulary that is high-leverage for students in multiple reading contexts—words in the text that will also appear in many other texts going forward. Words like “however” and “complicated” and “controversy” fall into this category—not only are they necessary for this particular text—they also will show up in many other complex texts and contexts. Because of that, teachers should engage in direct vocabulary instruction to ensure students can efficiently read texts now and in the future.

TIERS ONE, TWO, AND THREE WORDS

Fifteen years ago, researchers Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002) introduced the concept of thinking of vocabulary through the lens of three “tiers” of words.

TIER LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	NEED FOR DIRECT INSTRUCTION
Tier One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words of everyday speech (e.g., horse, car, mother, etc.) • Largely acquired by the end of primary years (may be different for EL students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EL students may need direct instruction—others less so

Tier One words, they wrote, are the words of every day speech. For native English-speaking children, these vocabulary words are acquired relatively dependably by the end of the primary grades (though at different rates and sometimes to different degrees, depending on how much spoken and read-aloud language the children experience in their early years). EL students, by contrast, may need intentional vocabulary work even with some Tier One words, depending on their degree of facility with English.

TIER LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	NEED FOR DIRECT INSTRUCTION
Tier Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words of academic language, largely encountered NOT in everyday speech but in text (e.g., relative, vary, misfortune, dignified, etc.) • Often acquired indirectly from frequent encounter in increasingly complex text • High-leverage; show up repeatedly in many types of complex text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students at a lower reading level often need direct instruction • Even students who read well but have not worked with complex text may need direct instruction

Tier Two words are what might be thought of as the heart of academic language. These are words which are much less likely to appear in everyday speech than Tier One words; instead, they are found mostly in text, both informational and literary. Words like “relative,” and “vary” would fall into this category—so would words like “misfortune” and “dignified.” Tier Two words are words which do not show up much in ordinary speech, but which show up in many texts, in many subjects, in many contexts. They are high-leverage words for making meaning when reading many types of complex text. Often, these are acquired indirectly, over time, by encountering them over and over again in a variety of contexts; sometimes, especially for diverse learners, they require direct instruction in order to learn.

TIER LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	NEED FOR DIRECT INSTRUCTION
Tier Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words particular to a specific subject or domain • Encountered in domain-specific text, like biology or history textbooks and articles • Less likely to be encountered outside of the subject area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often defined in the text or in a glossary • Will probably require direct instruction

Tier Three words are more specific to a particular subject, or domain, than Tier Two words. These are words that are specific to an area of study, or even a subset of an area of study. When a student is reading a biology text, she may encounter words like “aorta” or “cardiovascular.” When a student is reading about government, he may encounter words like “legislative” or “judiciary.” Often, these words are so specific that they are defined for the reader within the text or in a glossary of some sort. Tier Three words are less likely than Tier Two words to be high-leverage and appear over many types of text.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING THE THREE TIERS OF VOCABULARY

The Guidebooks do not emphasize certain vocabulary words over other words based on their “Tier.” Instead, they emphasize certain words that are necessary for students to know in order to comprehend the text they are reading. Because the texts themselves are complex and substantive, and because each Guidebooks unit is designed to build deep knowledge and understanding of a topic, this will largely mean that Guidebooks texts include Tier Two words. Sometimes (depending on the topic or text), Guidebooks texts may include some Tier Three words.



When planning, teachers should consider the text, its vocabulary, and their particular students, and ensure that lessons allow all students to successfully comprehend a text. Understanding how to support Tier One, Two, and Three vocabulary building can help teachers make these important instructional planning decisions.

DIRECT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IN THE GUIDEBOOKS

The Guidebooks curriculum describes the framework for direct vocabulary instruction by grouping two sets of words and phrases:

Words and phrases to teach

Words and phrases to define

WORDS AND PHRASES TO TEACH



These are words and phrases that:

- are likely to appear in future text
- are important to this particular text
- are an unusual synonym for a common word
- have a wide variety of meanings depending on context
- likely to be more abstract

Take significant time to teach

These are taught using the Vocabulary Protocol in the Guidebooks lessons.

WORDS AND PHRASES TO DEFINE

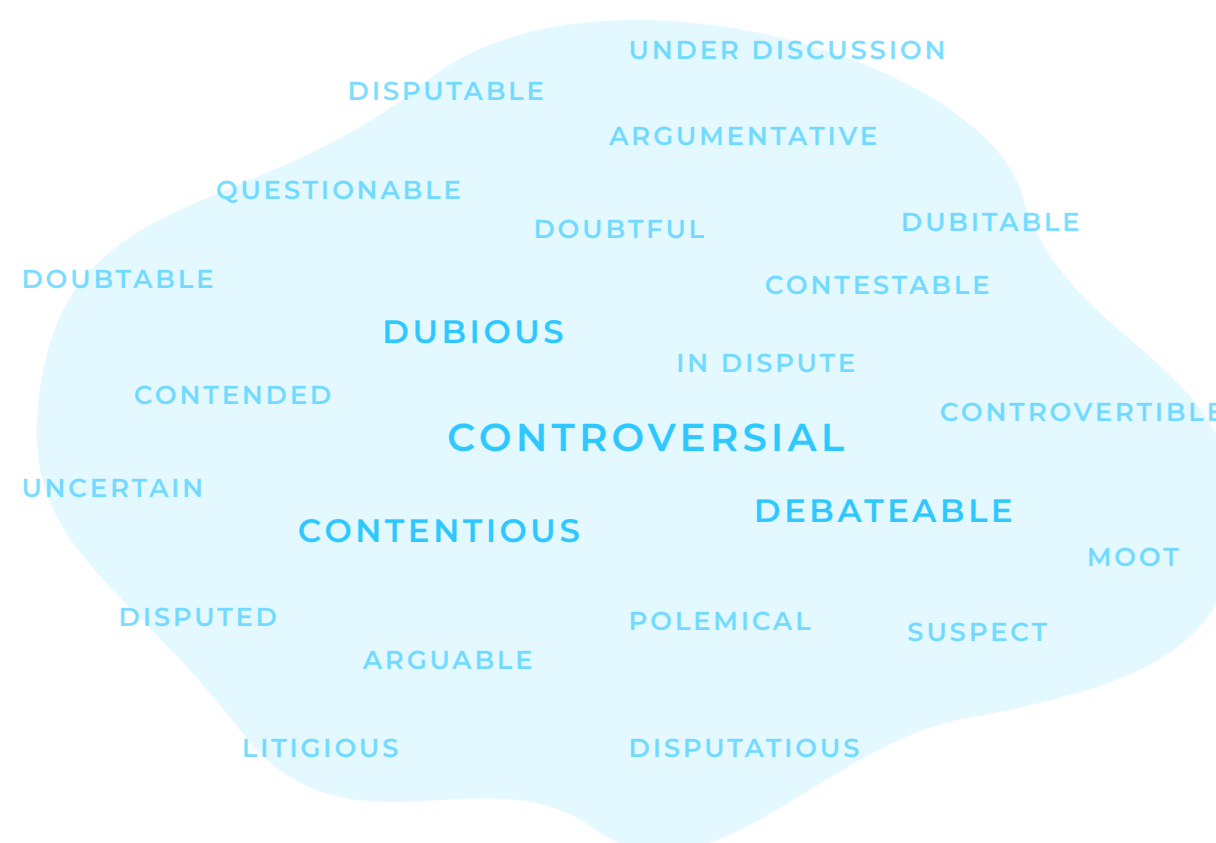


These are words and phrases that:

- are likely to be concrete
- have a commonly known synonym
- can be easily explained in a few words

They take less time to teach

These are taught using 'dropped in' definitions while reading.



Let's think about what these forms of instruction looked like in Mr. Ortega's additional instructional block. As he was reading aloud from "What's in An Inkblot?", he was "dropping in" synonyms for words he knew students would need help with (see Biemiller, Words Worth Teaching, 2010). This took no more than a second for each word, so it was efficient. He "dropped in" the words within the context of the text, so that students would be more likely to make meaning of the word. It was a quick way of paying attention to his students' need for direct instruction without slowing down the reading or taking up a lot of instructional time.

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At the same time, Mr. Ortega knew that certain words were going to need more than "drop in" time. When he was planning, he had looked ahead in the Guidebooks unit and seen that his students were going to be asked to understand the controversy involved in this text. Clearly, "controversial" was a word that merited more time. It was fundamental for making meaning of the text, and it was a (Tier Two!) word that students would encounter again and again in other texts. Mr. Ortega, therefore, decided to use a version of the Guidebooks' Vocabulary Protocol, the Frayer Model (see "semantic mapping" below).

The basic steps and principles of the Guidebooks' Vocabulary Protocol are outlined below.

PRESENTATION

Present the word to students in the context in which it appears

Context can act as a form of indirect scaffolding



DEFINITION

Guide students to use context clues, word parts (i.e., prefixes, root words, suffixes), or word relationships (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, etc.) to develop a student-friendly definition

This uses a variety of types of assists, depending on the word (and the students)

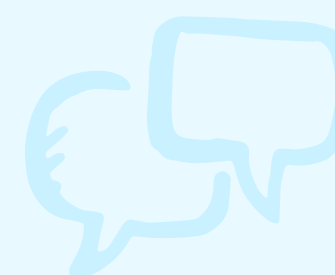
The definition is student-friendly, in students' own terms, so they are more likely to understand/learn it



EXPLANATION

Ask students to explain the word or phrase orally or in writing with words and/or pictures (could also spell the word orally)

This gives students the opportunity to go in greater depth in understanding the word. Both pictures and oral processing (as well as writing) are useful for this



CONNECTIONS

Help students make connections to words, concepts, word families that they already know

For EL students, this might include connection to home language and/or cognates



APPLICATION

Direct students to use the word or phrase in new contexts such as answering questions that require use of the word, engaging in wordplay, or acting out the meaning

This furthers the student's ability to "own" the new word or phrase



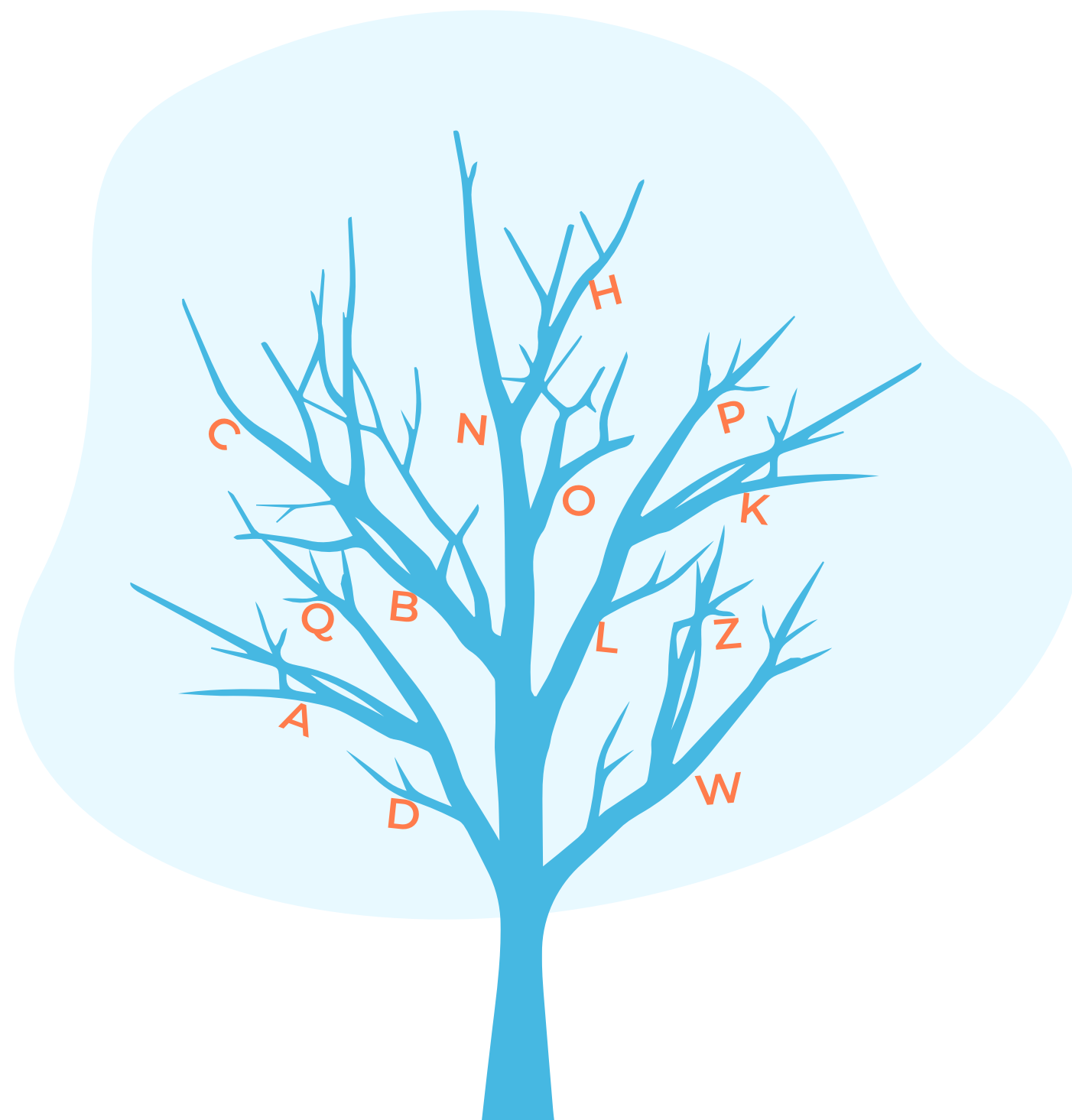


DIRECT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

Mr. Ortega, as we saw, decided to use a tool called the Frayer Model for his work with the word “controversial.” This is one of a variety of specific tools for using the direct instruction Vocabulary Protocol. Others are outlined in Table 7 below.

TABLE 7: DIRECT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

VOCABULARY STRATEGY	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY AND WHEN IT IS HELPFUL
Semantic mapping	Many variations of graphic tools that capture word, context in text, definition, images, word family, sometimes synonyms and antonyms	Useful when word is high-leverage for particular text
Mentor sentences	Sentence selected from text in the unit, focus on vocabulary and use of syntax to build meaning (see “language patterns” for fuller description)	Useful when not just vocabulary words but whole sentence (or type of sentence) presents a challenge
Juicy sentences	Sentence selected from text in the unit, focus on vocabulary and use of syntax to build meaning (see “Language Patterns” section for full description); originally developed by Lily Wong Fillmore	Useful when not just vocabulary words but whole sentence (or type of sentence) presents a challenge



INSTRUCTION FOR
HIGH LEVERAGE AREA

Language Patterns

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LANGUAGE PATTERNS OR “LANGUAGE SENSE”?

One obstacle to students making meaning from text is what we might call a lack of “language sense.” At the sentence level, some students have difficulty making sense of what they are reading—particularly when the text is complex (and sometimes even when it isn’t). As texts that they are being asked to read and comprehend become more and more complex, students often find that the way sentences are constructed often becomes more and more complex. For many students, this is unfamiliar, and it can sometimes feel like working in a foreign language.



INSTRUCTION IN UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE PATTERNS IN ACTION: A SNAPSHOT

On a Friday afternoon right after lunch, Deanna and Rodrigo, along with half a dozen of their classmates, are about halfway through their additional instructional block. From here they will go to their eighth-grade ELA class, where they will be engaging in the Flowers for Algernon unit that the class has been working with for several days.

“So, class,” says Mr. Ortega, “we’ve been doing a bit of reading about Charlie Gordon in Flowers for Algernon. So let’s review a bit—how would you say Charlie feels about how smart he is?”

“Well, he’s not smart,” offers Rodrigo. “He just doesn’t seem to get stuff about life.”

“He can’t really spell,” adds Deanna. “And he says he wants to be smart. I mean, he really does want to be smart.”

“Yes, that’s a key understanding about Charlie,” agrees Mr. Ortega. “In fact, he wants to be smart so much that he wants to try some ways of getting to be smart.”

The students nod.

“So, today,” says Mr. Ortega, “we’re going to use what we know about Charlie to do some focused work with one sentence—just one single sentence—about what it looks like to explain that understanding.”

What is the point of that? Deanna thinks. Why would you spend a lot of time on just one sentence?

Mr. Ortega notices the frown on Deanna’s face. “This might not seem like the best way to use our time,” he says, “but bear with me on this. This one single sentence is called a mentor sentence. A mentor sentence is like a good example. It might not have new information in it—in fact, you already know this information—but what it does have is a pattern of thinking and writing that is very useful to know about.

We’re going to spend some time working with it, so that when we come across other sentences like this—and we will!—we know how to make sense of it.”

Rodrigo nods. He is an EL student and has far too often found himself in a situation where the sentences he is trying to read are mystifyingly hard to figure out. Maybe this will be useful.

“Okay, here is the sentence,” Mr. Ortega announces, and he projects it under the document camera.

Because Charlie wants to be smart, he willingly participates in an experimental surgery.

This sentence means...

“Now, what I’d like you to do,” explains Mr. Ortega, “is copy the sentence about Charlie, and the sentence stem underneath it, and then complete that sentence underneath it.”

“I don’t get it,” Rodrigo says. “What are we supposed to do?”

“Well,” responds Mr. Ortega, “if someone asked you to explain in your own words what this sentence is telling us about Charlie, what would you say?”

Rodrigo rereads the sentence and thinks for a moment. “I guess I’d say that Charlie goes along with a new kind of surgery.”

“Good,” says Mr. Ortega. “And what does the sentence tell us about why Charlie does that?”

“He hopes he’ll get smarter,” answers Rodrigo.

“Great work!” says Mr. Ortega. “Now put those two ideas into one sentence, like the writer did.”

PURPOSE OF SENTENCE LEVEL WORK: BUILDING AN UNDERSTANDING OF ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

HIGH LEVERAGE FOR EL STUDENTS

TEACHER GUIDANCE AND SCAFFOLDS THROUGH PROCESS

“Do you mean something like ‘Charlie goes along with the new surgery because he hopes he’ll get smarter?’” ventures Rodrigo.

“High five! You got it!” cheers Mr. Ortega.

LENGTH OF TIME:
10-15 MINUTES FOR
EACH STEP

Mr. Ortega guided his students in the additional instructional block through the first step of unpacking and understanding academic language by using a mentor sentence from the text. It took about 10-15 minutes.

MULTIPLE STEPS TO
UNPACK LANGUAGE
AND STRUCTURE

The next step, which will take another 10 -15 minutes, will prompt students to think about what they notice about how the sentence is put together. Mr. Ortega will guide students to notice such aspects as how many parts there are, that those parts are called clauses, that a comma separates the clauses, that one clause could be a sentence all by itself (but not the other one). As they work, they will articulate how each of these features of the sentence helps to establish meaning.

After five of these 10-15 minute sessions, the students will have gained a deeper understanding of this sentence and how it works, experimented with a new sentence with a similar construction, and written a similar sentence of their own in response to a question about this content. They will be on their way to owning and using academic language.



WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT THE CRITICAL NATURE OF LANGUAGE SENSE

As we know, Louisiana’s literacy goal is to ensure that all students leave high school fully prepared to read and understand complex text, and to effectively express themselves in speaking and writing. If they are to be prepared to navigate the world of higher education, the military, the workplace, civic participation, we can do nothing less.

In addition to needs related to fluency and vocabulary, some of our diverse learners need additional support developing their language sense. For some students, the language demands of rich, complex text are significant. Lily Wong Fillmore, an expert on the role of language patterns in literacy, puts it this way.

In ways that appear to be little understood, even by literacy experts, the language used in complex texts of the type students should be reading in school is different in numerous ways from the language of ordinary talk. Differences in vocabulary, the easiest to see, make up only a part of it. Linguists and language analysts who have studied the language of academic texts have identified grammatical structures and devices for framing ideas, indicating relationships, and structuring arguments, that create substantial differences between spoken and written language.

(Fillmore, 2011)



WE ALL MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED A TIME WHEN WE WERE CHALLENGED BY UNFAMILIAR PATTERNS.

Imagine you have just arrived in town to visit your grandmother. The city is new to you, and much bigger than anyplace you have been before, but you're excited to see your grandmother. You know the first thing she will say – "My goodness, I can't believe how grown up you've gotten!"

It's true – and you're eager to show her just how grown up you are. So when she asks if you'd like to go with her to the grocery store a few miles away, you say quickly, "No problem, Gran – I'll drive there myself and you can stay and rest"

She is a bit hesitant, but you have had your driver's license for three months now – of course you can manage this! So you set out.

Things are fine as long as you are in the neighborhood. The streets look just like they do at home - a stop sign every few blocks, streets that intersect each other with the street names on signs at the corner.

It's new, but so familiar you think you might even turn on the car radio and relax your attention for a bit.

Then suddenly – a highway! Big green signs telling drivers which way to head north, which way to head south, where to watch out for a detour, what the new bypass for the ongoing construction does..... how alarming! How can the same road go two different directions? What is a bypass? And if you have to take detour, how does it connect back to the road you need to get to the grocery store?

You break out in a sweat. I'm a good driver, you tell yourself. Why do I feel like I'm on a whole new planet?

What we are seeing here is the challenge of a new pattern. As long as the young driver is navigating familiar patterns—even though the neighborhood itself is new—he is comfortable. He knows pretty much what to expect, because he has internalized those patterns from his previous experience. However, a significantly new pattern presents a real and disorienting problem. The young driver still “knows how to drive”, in a way—but in a larger sense, he does not know how to get where he needs to go. The unfamiliar pattern is holding him back (and making him pretty anxious about it!).



STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SENSE

Lily Wong Fillmore has done some remarkable work with what she calls “juicy sentences.” This is a method where a teacher works intensively with a single sentence at a time.

The teacher chooses a sentence that is rooted in the text students are working with. The sentence has challenging content that is important to the overall understanding of the text, and is “grammatically interesting” (think, a pattern that is new to the student).

For 15-20 minutes a day, students and teachers closely discuss a single sentence—in the process, students build overall text meaning and become familiar with new language patterns. Unlocking language patterns with students, makes them, “Behave as if they have been let in on a big secret,” (Fillmore, 2011). They have been empowered to understand the texts they are reading, and learned some new sentence patterns they can transfer to reading new texts.

Unlocking language patterns with
students, makes them, “Behave as if they
have been let in on a big secret,”

Fillmore, 2011

SINGLE SENTENCE APPROACH IN THE GUIDEBOOKS

The Guidebooks have created a protocol for the single sentence approach to helping students develop language sense called the Mentor Sentence protocol. Mentor sentences are sentences whose construction, including both vocabulary and syntax, are key examples of the sorts of academic language sentences that can often present an obstacle to students in terms of text comprehension (and certainly in terms of writing).

Like Fillmore's "juicy sentence," the Guidebooks' Mentor Sentence protocol always uses text that students are actually studying in whole-class instruction. After the teacher chooses a sentence whose construction she anticipates (or has seen) causing a challenge for students, she works with the sentence in the series of steps outlined in Table 8 below. Typically, the work involves short lessons, perhaps 10-15 minutes each.



TABLE 8: STEPS IN THE GUIDEBOOKS' MENTOR SENTENCE PROTOCOL

	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY IT IS HELPFUL
What does the sentence mean?	Students paraphrase sentence into their own words, speaking and writing as needed	Pushes students to “translate” the sentence; allows teacher to see any misunderstanding, provide guidance as needed
What do I notice about the sentence?	Students describe component parts of the sentence, including punctuation, word order, phrases, who is doing what, etc.	Helps students deconstruct, zero in on the way the sentence is built; allows teacher to provide guiding and cuing questions as needed
What do I know this sentence means, specifically?	Students look more closely at the sentence parts, how they provide meaning, in response to cues: who, did what, when, where, why, how	Helps students recognize the basic meaning pattern underlying this (and every) sentence (though not every sentence will answer all these questions)
What is the structure of this sentence?	Students are guided to describe how the parts of the sentence structure create meaning; compare to a new sentence with similar structure	Helps students begin to internalize a sentence pattern, which will help them make meaning when they encounter sentences like this when they read a new text
Can I write a quality sentence?	In response to a teacher-posed question based in the text, students write a new (accurate) sentence using the pattern they have just been working with	Students have now internalized the pattern well enough to be able to use it for their own purposes—helps with further reading comprehension as well as writing

The mentor sentence approach is one way of using the text students are reading to develop both better comprehension of that particular text, and a transferable understanding of academic language to bring to other texts.



INSTRUCTION FOR
HIGH LEVERAGE AREA

Accountable Independent Reading

WHAT IS ACCOUNTABLE INDEPENDENT READING?

Traditional independent reading has been around for a long time. This is when students spend time reading on their own with little support from an instructor. According to the National Reading Panel, however, we have no evidence that traditional independent reading produces gains in comprehension or fluency. (It may be helpful, but there is no evidence for that.)

Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) is different. It is an instructional strategy that gives students the opportunity to acquire and absorb more knowledge of a topic by reading about it independently, using texts at a level that works for them.

Gradually, AIR also helps students gain a greater degree of fluency with reading, a higher level of vocabulary knowledge, and a stronger sense of language patterns.

In AIR, students read texts that they select from a set topically-related to the unit. The text itself is at or just a bit above a student's reading level. As they read, students should keep track of their thinking in some sort of response journal. Depending on how the teacher structures the AIR time, the students should have an occasional conversation with the teacher, or perhaps with other students.



ACCOUNTABLE INDEPENDENT READING IN ACTION: A SNAPSHOT

On a Friday afternoon right after lunch, Deanna and Rodrigo, along with half a dozen of their classmates, are about halfway through their additional instructional block. From here they will go to their 8th grade ELA class, where they will be participating in the Flowers for Algernon unit the class has been working on for several days.

Right now, the class is so quiet that one could hear the proverbial pin drop. Every student is immersed in a different text, reading silently. Some are sitting at their desks; two are sitting on a couch in the back of the classroom, and several students are sitting on cushions on the floor.

In addition to a book, each student has a dog-eared notebook nearby, and a pencil. Occasionally, one of the students closes her book and jots down something in the notebook, then picks up her book and resumes reading. That tiny sound of pencil scratching across paper is the only sound in the room.

TEXTS CONNECTED BY TOPIC

Mr. Ortega glances at the titles of the books. Each is associated in some way with the overarching topic of the unit. He knows the texts well, having put together this set of texts for his class, and is pleased to see that students seem to have chosen their texts well....nobody is flipping pages, everyone seems involved, everyone is jotting down response in their journals.

STUDENT CHOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Well, almost everyone. A new student, DeMarco, seems to be disengaged. He's quiet, but his eyes keep leaving the text, *Of Mice and Men*, and staring out the window.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CONVERSATIONS

Mr. Ortega has a system of "book conversations" that he has set up, where he chats very quietly with a few individual students every day about their independent reading. He decides to choose DeMarco as his first chat for the day.

"How's that book working for you, DeMarco?" he asks. "Was it a good choice?"

"It's okay," says DeMarco. "I thought I'd like it.....it sounded kind of interesting from your book talk...but I just hate reading."

"It can be tough, all right," agrees Mr. Ortega. "As you know, practice helps—but it's important to have a book that works. Here, let me try reading this paragraph with you."



TEACHER RESPONSIVE
TO INDIVIDUAL
STUDENT NEEDS

Together, they read a passage. As he listens to DeMarco, Mr. Ortega notices DeMarco stumbling over and skipping multiple words, not paying attention to punctuation, and reading at a laborious rate. As such, he determines that this book is too much of a reach for DeMarco to read independently.

“Tell you what,” says Mr. Ortega, “let’s get you set up with a different book. Lots of kids like *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen—it’s a book about a kid who has to use his wits to survive on his own after a plane crash. Take a look.”

DeMarco nods and picks up the book, turning it over a few times to glance at the covers.

TEACHER GUIDANCE
WHEN APPROPRIATE

“Let me read the first couple of paragraphs with you,” offers Mr. Ortega, “and then you can read to me, and you can see what you think.”

DeMarco looks skeptical, but agrees. They spend a few minutes on the text, and Mr. Ortega listens carefully when it’s DeMarco’s turn.

“Well, it looks to me like this one just might work for you, DeMarco,” he says when DeMarco is finished. “What do you think?”

DeMarco nods and gets up. “Okay,” he says. “I’ll give that a try.”



WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCOUNTABLE INDEPENDENT READING

Common sense—and research—tells us that reading gets better from more reading. For one thing, most vocabulary is acquired indirectly from reading. For students who are often experiencing frustration with reading, for whatever reason, reading on their own is less likely to happen. For these students, a negative feedback cycle can be established. Reading is hard, so they end up reading less, and, thus, access less vocabulary. Because they are reading less, they also get less exposure to academic syntax, or language sense. Because they are reading less, they are less likely to develop an automatic sight word bank that contributes to fluency. The gap between struggling readers and other readers widens. For all these reasons, AIR, focused on any topic, can be helpful for struggling readers.

However, an additional reason may be less obvious, but very important—independent reading can and does help students build specific, topical knowledge. When the books that students will read independently are topical—related to an overall unified topic, like text set that Mr. Ortega’s students are working with—it is all the more helpful. The accountable independent reading will help students build a domain of knowledge and understanding that will help them be successful with the Guidebooks curriculum.

In 1988, researchers Recht and Leslie did a study with junior high school students. Cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham describes the study.

Half were good readers, and half were poor readers, according to standard reading tests. The researchers asked the students to read a story that described half an inning of a baseball game. As they read, the students were periodically stopped and asked to show that they understood what was happening in the story by using a model of a baseball field and players.

The interesting thing about this study was that some of the students knew a lot about baseball and some knew just a little...The dramatic finding was that students’ knowledge of baseball determined how much they understood of the story. Whether they were “good readers” or “bad readers” didn’t matter nearly as much as what they knew.

Willingham, 2009

The implications of that study are significant: the power of what you already know is mighty! The entire Guidebooks curriculum is built on this premise – having both specific and general content knowledge is a huge piece of being able to understand complex text.

When we add to that approach an opportunity for students to build knowledge with texts that they can manage independently, on their own, we are making some “value-added” knowledge possible for our students.

The entire Guidebooks curriculum is built on this premise – having both specific and general content knowledge is a huge piece of being able to understand complex text.



WE ALL MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED THE IMPACT OF LIMITED KNOWLEDGE ON READING A CHALLENGING TEXT:

Imagine you are getting ready to bake a cake for your dad's birthday. You are trying to make him happy (and maybe to impress him as well), so you want to try something spectacular – a twelve-layer cake called a Dobos torte.

“Yikes, are you kidding?” demands your sister. “That looks impossible!”

That's true – this recipe is a stretch. But you have done a lot of baking, so you decide to try.

You look at the first step. It tells you, “Have ready two 10-inch cardboard circles. Generously grease a 9-inch spring form pan.” Well, it makes sense to start that way, with assembling the materials – you know from experience how hard it is to stop in the middle of cooking to find the stuff you'll need.

Cardboard circles? You know that the cake will have twelve layers, and you also know (from baking previous cakes) that layers will need support...so that would account for the cardboard circles.

Spring form pan? The recipe does not tell you what that is, but you have seen your grandmother making cakes that involve a round pan with a removable rim... that must be what a spring form pan is.

“This recipe will be a piece of cake,” you think to yourself.

What we are seeing here is the power of topic knowledge. The would-be baker is reading a new recipe, and needs to be able to understand it to successfully produce the Dobos torte. Fortunately, she is on familiar ground. The structure of the recipe is familiar (assembling materials) and so is the reason (to make the baking experience go more smoothly). “Spring form pan” is not something she reads about all the time, but she is able to figure it out from what she already knows about baking. In other words, the baker brings enough “baking knowledge” to this task that it looks like her success will be assured.

What we are seeing here is the power of topic knowledge...the baker brings enough “baking knowledge” to this task that it looks like her success will be assured.



KEY FEATURES OF ACCOUNTABLE INDEPENDENT READING

There are many ways to set up Accountable Independent Reading programs. To be most useful to students' reading growth, Table 9 describes some essential features that teachers should build into their plans for instruction:

TABLE 9: KEY FEATURES OF ACCOUNTABLE INDEPENDENT READING

FEATURE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY IT IS HELPFUL
Set of texts organized by topic related to Guidebooks topic	Texts are all related in terms of topic, when possible (i.e. when students are working with the American Revolution unit in Grade 4, texts are selected to contribute to a specific knowledge base about the topic)	When students read topic-based text, they are more likely to acquire vocabulary, and to build knowledge that will help them in reading the unit's complex text
Texts reflect range of reading levels	Students are reading all different texts, depending on their independent reading level	Independent reading is not instructional—students need to be working with text that they can manage on their own
Student choice of text	Students have some degree of choice (within the text set the teacher has assembled) about which texts they choose to read	Student autonomy matters—students have a range of reasons why one book may be more appealing than another
Accountability	Students keep some sort of tracking of what they are reading (i.e., log, journal, etc.), and it is regularly checked in some way	Being accountable keeps students on track, which is important in an independent program
Built-in time for social/oral interaction about book	Students periodically have a conversation about what they are reading (with other students, teacher, etc.)	Keeps reading engaging; helps students orally process their understanding and knowledge-building

Note on “built-in time for social/oral interaction about the book”:
One of the most important features of AIR includes students conversation because oral processing matters. It allows students to put into their own words questions and their developing understanding of the text. For all students, and particularly for students who may be challenged by oral language, this interaction gives a significant boost to comprehension.

Setting up this time for social interaction could take a variety of forms. Students record their thoughts and reflections in journals or book logs, which they can share periodically with the class. They could belong to informal book clubs, or the teacher could set up various forms of discussion groups. Any structure which gives students a way to orally process the knowledge they are gaining from their independent reading is helpful.

Any structure which gives students a way to orally process the knowledge they are gaining from their independent reading is helpful.



INSTRUCTION FOR
HIGH LEVERAGE AREA

Writing



WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR STUDENTS TO COMPOSE SUCCESSFUL CONTENT- BASED WRITING?

Writing is a powerful tool to put in the hands of students. When students write successfully about content, two important goals are achieved: they construct a solid understanding of the content itself, and they begin to internalize some important features (overall structure, single sentences) related to the craft of writing that they can transfer more independently to writing tasks in the future.

But it's hard! Writing may well be the hardest thing we ask students to do. Unlike reading, where there is always a text to go back and re-read, writing is generative. The writer has only her own ideas and sense of structure to go back to when she is composing. And as Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler (2017) remind us, written language, especially after about fourth grade, is typically different from—and harder than—spoken language (p. 9).



WRITING INSTRUCTION USING MODELS IN ACTION: A SNAPSHOT

On a Friday afternoon right after lunch, Deanna and Rodrigo, along with half a dozen of their classmates, are just beginning their additional instructional block. From here they will go to their 8th grade ELA class, where they have been engaging, for weeks now, in the Flowers for Algernon unit. In a few days, the class will begin work on the culminating writing task for the unit—so the students in the additional instructional block are getting a jump on that work by beginning today.

“So, class,” says Mr. Ortega. “We have been working for a while now with this unit exploring a lot of angles on the question of human intelligence. As you know, it’s pretty complicated!”

The students nod. Having worked rigorously with a long article and several literary texts—including a lot of time thinking about Charlie Gordon in the anchor text Flowers for Algernon, - they agree that human intelligence and how it plays out for people is a lot more complicated than they might have thought several weeks ago.

“In a few days,” Mr. Ortega continues, “you’ll be writing a full essay that addresses that question head-on: ‘Consider how Charlie has changed from the beginning of Flowers for Algernon. How does the surgery improve or worsen his quality of life?’”

Rodrigo groans. Essay writing is so hard!

Deanna squirms a bit in her seat. She has enjoyed this whole unit so far—and the essay question is something they have been discussing and thinking about. But writing a full essay???

Mr. Ortega smiles. “Hey, don’t worry,” he says. “You already know a lot about intelligence, and you sure know a lot about Charlie. What you might be wondering about is how to get all that into an essay, right?”

Everybody nods.

“Well, that’s exactly what I’m going to show you today,” Mr. Ortega assures the class. “We’re going to work with a model. Tell me—has anyone here had to learn something new in a sport?”

“I had to learn how to serve in volleyball,” Deanna offers.



“Great example. How did you learn it?” asks Mr. Ortega.

Deanna thinks back. “My coach showed me how. She showed me just how far apart to put my feet, and how to hold the volleyball about arm’s length before I tried to hit it.”

“Hmm....” says Mr. Ortega. “Sounds like your coach was pretty specific. Did it work?”

“It helped a lot right away,” answers Deanna, “but I have to say, I wasn’t perfect at it. I had to keep coming back to what my coach showed me....I had to keep reminding myself. Now I’m actually a lot better....”

“Well, think of me as your coach today,” says Mr. Ortega. “We’re going to spend our class period with a model on the fine sport of essay writing!”

He passes out a worksheet of an essay. Rodrigo looks at it closely. Sure enough, it looks like an essay. It has four paragraphs—and the two in the middle look long, with some quotation marks, so they must be quoting from the text.

WORKING WITH A MODEL BEFORE A TASK, AS A FORM OF INSTRUCTION

WORKING WITH A MODEL BEFORE A TASK, AS A FORM OF INSTRUCTION

As he skims it, Rodrigo can see that the essay appears to be about a question like theirs, something that could have more than one answer—though it’s not about Charlie Gordon, it seems to be about whether or not students should be required to play a sport.

Well, okay, thinks Rodrigo—that’s a good essay. And it looks like whoever wrote it knows something about the topic and question at hand, since the essay has all that quoted evidence.

Mr. Ortega spends the rest of the class working with the model essay. Just like he would with any new text, he first reads it aloud while the students read in their heads. They talk about the gist of the model essay, and what its main point is—in this case, that students should not be required to play sports. Then students read the essay again, silently. Next, the class works with Mr. Ortega to underline precisely where the essay writer makes the main point (which Mr. Ortega reminds them is called the “claim” or sometimes the “thesis statement”).

UTILIZING A FAMILIAR PROCESS TO READ THE MODEL: READ ALOUD, RE-READ, DISCUSS GIST

REPEATEDLY RETURNING TO THE MODEL

GUIDED ANNOTATION OF STRUCTURE, FUNCTION, AND CONTENT

After that (and after another re-read, this time with partners, a paragraph at a time), he guides the class through identifying how each paragraph helps to make the main point, or claim—after all, that’s what a good essay needs to do (REPEATEDLY RETURNING TO THE MODEL). As a class, they discuss, and label, the thinking in each paragraph. What is the writer actually saying here? What makes that evidence useful? How does the writer explain his thinking? What is that sentence construction that begins “on the other hand” all about?

DIRECT INSTRUCTION: COUNTERCLAIM

Interestingly, the writer of this model essay has also pointed out that some people could reasonably answer the question about sports differently. This, Mr. Ortega tells the class, is called a “counterclaim.” He reminds them that they worked with counterclaims in their 8th Grade ELA class instruction—now they are seeing how the writer has included it because he recognizes the question doesn’t have only one right answer (much like their own question about Charlie Gordon). The model essay writer is respectfully acknowledging a differing view—though the writer still thinks that his own claim is the stronger one.

By the time students have finished this work with the model essay, Mr. Ortega knows they will be better prepared to begin working on the culminating writing task about whether Charlie’s surgery has improved his life or not in their 8th Grade ELA class.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR STUDENTS TO COMPOSE SUCCESSFUL CONTENT-BASED WRITING?

Even teachers often feel a sense of trepidation—and sometimes full-on panic—when they are asked to write an essay. Writing well involves so many factors: adequate and accurate knowledge of the subject, the best words to use to convey that knowledge, clear and effective sentence structure, the structural elements of an academic essay (not to mention how to spell the words, or how to use a semicolon, etc.). If command of all of these features of effective writing is not well-established in long-term memory, the load on working memory can be huge!



WE ALL MIGHT RECOGNIZE HOW DAUNTING IT IS TO UNDERTAKE A NEW TASK:

Imagine you are getting ready to buy your nephew a graduation present. This is a big family event, and you want to make sure you get something your nephew will love. However, he and his family live in another state, and you haven't seen him in a while, not for a couple of years, in fact – so what kinds of stuff is your nephew interested in? What would he love?

You call your neighbor for some ideas. She's not home, but she calls you back and leaves a short message. "Buy him a FitBit," she says. "It's an electronic sports thing. All kids that age love them. They have them at that mall."

You set off in the car to buy the FitBit. The problem is, you have no idea what a FitBit is. "An electronic sports thing" isn't much to go on. How much will a FitBit cost? Should you go to an electronics store, or a sporting goods store? You only have a couple of hours of shopping time, so you need to get going, or you won't have the FitBit (whatever it is) in time for the graduation party.

"Well, I think the mall is down the highway," you say to yourself. "I guess I'll try heading in that direction. Of course, I don't really know how many exits away it is... or which stores there sell FitBits (whatever it is). Darn! I wish I'd asked my neighbor to come along. She knows what FitBits are, and she knows how to get there!"

So, you keep driving. Whether or not you get the FitBit is an open question!

What we see here is the daunting nature of trying to accomplish a new task for which one is ill-equipped. First, knowledge is a problem. In this case, the well-intentioned present purchaser cares about her nephew, but has two big knowledge gaps—she doesn't know him very well, and she has only a very vague sense of what a FitBit is. Second, even if she did have that important knowledge, she has no idea how to actually get to the store. Her solution is to start driving, hoping that she will end up someplace helpful. A better solution, she sees clearly, would be having her knowledgeable neighbor with her—who has a model to get to a store that would sell a FitBit.

Many student writers experience a similar problem. With the best of intentions, student writers often set out to write with inadequate knowledge about what they are meant to be writing about. In addition, they have only a vague sense of the roadmap necessary to proceed with the task—they need support on both the structure and the process to “get to” the finished essay!

With the best of intentions, student writers often set out to write with inadequate knowledge about what they are meant to be writing about.

WRITING SUPPORTS BUILT IN TO THE GUIDEBOOKS

The Guidebooks approach to writing reflects an overall content-based design, a writing process built into instruction, and several types of support strategies, accessible through the Supports Flow Chart.

CONTENT-BASED DESIGN

The Guidebooks units are designed so that all students gain deep knowledge and understanding, from text, about what they will be writing. For lesson after lesson, students read, discuss, and produce short pieces of writing about ideas in the text that will both indirectly and directly prepare them for completing the final culminating writing task.

WRITING PROCESS: EXEMPLARS & RUBRICS

After students have written a first draft of the writing task—in the case of this unit, whether Charlie’s surgery improves or worsens his quality of life—students spend several lessons intensively examining some student-written essays about this very question. They use a rubric to analyze the student writing, looking closely at every aspect of these exemplar essays. All of the “writing process” work is designed to help students revise their own essays.

SUPPORTS FLOW CHART

The Writing Guide within the Supports Flow Chart includes helpful tools and strategies such as sentence starters, evidence charts, transition lists, and shared writing.



ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

Though the Guidebooks provide the built-in supports described above, teachers may want to employ additional support strategies when working with diverse learners. Some of the most effective supports for writing include the following techniques and strategies, listed in Table 10. Further details about each of these additional supports can be found directly below the table in the corresponding sections.

TABLE 10: ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR WRITING

SUPPORT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY IT IS HELPFUL
Models Before Writing	<p>Using different but familiar or connected content, a model is an example of the type and structure of writing and thinking that students will be required to do.</p> <p>There are two types of models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic models • Custom models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps students understand the structure of an excellent essay • Helps students develop a mental model of what effective writing looks like • Helps students form a deeper understanding of what clear, accurate, and connected thinking looks like
The Painted Essay	<p>A color-coded template to plan for and organize expository writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps students make sense of logical thought in writing • Gives students a clear, visual model of what informational writing looks like • Allows students to use and internalize a template for organizing and writing
Tools for Gathering Evidence	<p>A graphic organizer to organize evidence gathered from reading and building knowledge in a manner that will be useful to translate to writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives students a visual way to organize an abundance of evidence and information • Supports students in determining the best pieces of evidence to use in writing
Short Writes	<p>Shorter in length than full essays, but still requiring students to answer a question accurately in a sentence, supply some evidence from the text to support that answer, and briefly conclude</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides students with more opportunities to practice writing similar in content and structure to full length essays
Language Links	<p>Developed in conjunction with The Writing Revolution, these are short lessons that focus on the sentence level in writing, available for every unit of the Guidebooks in grades 6-8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports deep comprehension of content because sentences chosen are tied to specific lessons and content of the Guidebooks unit • Helps students develop an understanding of the syntax and grammar used in effective writing • Supports students to write with more clarity and fluency

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT #1: MODELS BEFORE WRITING

Models are examples of the type and structure of writing and thinking that students will be required to do. They use different but familiar or connected content to the actual writing students are required to do.

Teachers find models to be remarkably valuable for writing instruction, at any grade level and for any type of writing. For students who need additional support, working with a model before writing their own piece is one of the most useful things they can do to produce writing that is clear and effective.

Why do models make so much difference? One reason why models work is because they help students understand the structure of an excellent essay. A model is a form of “show me.” It helps students develop a mental model of what effective writing looks like. Many students, especially students who are relatively new to essay writing (or at least to successful essay writing!) have only a hazy mental model in their heads for what a successful essay looks like.

The other reason why models are effective is because they help students form a deeper understanding of what clear, accurate, and connected thinking looks like. A model groups known ideas in a logical and coherent way. One idea leads sensibly to the next, both within and between paragraphs. For students, experiencing a model piece of writing makes them much more likely to be able to do that sort of thinking with their own content.

One reason why models work is because they help students understand the structure of an excellent essay. A model is a form of “show me.” It helps students develop a mental model of what effective writing looks like.

For example, when Mr. Ortega was working with Deanna, Rodrigo and other classmates in their additional instruction block, he used a model about different but familiar content. With that new (but familiar) content, the model was very similar to the essay he knew they would need to write about Charlie Gordon. The model was an argument essay—like the Charlie Gordon essay. It was four paragraphs, about 500 words long—like the Charlie Gordon essay. It was built around a claim, used evidence, explained the evidence, incorporated a counterclaim to support its own claim—all like the Charlie Gordon essay. Using their own well-understood content, students would now have a mental model to help them construct their culminating writing task about Charlie Gordon.

There are two types of models:

GENERIC MODELS

Typical content-based writing that reflect the expectations of the writing standard for each writing type (Narrative, Informative, or Argumentative)

CUSTOM MODELS

Writing that more closely resembles the content, structure, and language of the type of writing students will be required to complete

GENERIC MODELS

Aligned with the writing type, generic models give students a clear sense of a standards-based structure for that grade level. All models provide an appropriate academic tone, both in word choice and syntax. They also use conventions appropriately (i.e., spelling, punctuation, grammar). See examples aligned with each writing type below.

Expository model (either informative or argumentative writing): the model should demonstrate the overall basic essay structure--an introduction with a thesis statement, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. An expository model gives students a clear sense of what developing the thesis looks like: using evidence to support the thesis (quoted and/or paraphrased) and about how much evidence is enough (which will vary depending on grade level).

Narrative model: the model should demonstrate what the structure contains--an introduction to character and setting, clear challenge/conflict that the character is dealing with (this is the focus of a narrative), and resolution. A narrative model gives students a sense of how to develop the character's challenge (precise word choice, sensory details, dialogue—which will vary depending on grade level).

The Guidebooks do not include generic models, but they can be found in other places. A good source is the set of student writing called *In Common*, found on the Achieve The Core website.

CUSTOM MODELS

Even though a generic model is useful, there are times when a teacher may want to create her own custom model as Mr. Ortega did. The reasons for this might include:

- **A need for students to work with content in the model that is closer to the content they will be working with when they write their own piece (though, of course, it cannot be identical content!)**
- **A need for the specific structure to be clearer (e.g., how to use particular transitions between and within paragraphs, or how to use a certain type of introduction)**
- **A need for more specific language related to content than the generic model can provide**
- **A need for more targeted vocabulary compared to the generic model (particularly for EL students)**

A custom model is most useful for students who have had little exposure to (and little or no successful experience with) the kind of writing they will be asked to do for the Guidebooks task.

In a way, a model like this is a form of direct instruction. For students who have little knowledge or understanding of the type of thinking they are going to be asked to do in whole-class instruction, they have nothing to “transfer” from their long-term memory to this new task—which is precisely where direct instruction is most helpful.

If the teacher decides they would like to create a more customized essay model, the model should include the following features, as described in Table 11:

TABLE 11: FEATURES OF A CUSTOM MODEL

FEATURE OF MODEL	WHY IT IS HELPFUL
Content is similar to what students will write and does not require new learning	Allow students to work with similar (not identical) thinking to what they will work with when they write. This could mean content from the same text (with different focus), or similar text
Overall structure is very similar to what students will need to write	Makes it possible for students to closely imitate the model in terms of the overall structure
Depth of development, overall length is very similar to what students will need to write	Makes it possible for students to imitate the model in terms of depth of development (in introduction, evidence, conclusion)
Internal structure of paragraphs is very similar to what students will write	Makes it possible for students to closely imitate the model in terms of each paragraph (i.e., what the topic sentence looks like, how the evidence is introduced, what the reasoning/ analysis/elaboration looks like for this type of content thinking—again, depending on grade level)
Transitions between and among paragraphs are very similar to what students will write	Transition words and phrases function like cues for students. When they are very similar (or even identical) to what students will need, they “cue” the students about how to think about the next chunk of writing
Syntax of key individual sentences is very similar to what students will write	Seeing clear and accurate syntax that is very similar to what they will write is important for diverse learners, particularly EL students
Language/syntax/vocabulary can be slightly above students’ language level, but only slightly	Since the model is acting as a form of direct instruction, customizing the language level for students can be a useful way of raising their language level
New craft features can be introduced	Sometimes a teacher wants to give students specific craft tools that may not appear in a more generic model including techniques (e.g., introducing with a quote or a narrative lead), use of parentheses, or specific syntax techniques.

WHAT ARE THE INSTRUCTIONAL STEPS THAT TEACHERS SHOULD USE WHEN USING A MODEL ESSAY?

Like other forms of work in a support class setting, a model is most effective when students work with it before they begin work on a first draft during whole-class instruction. It does take time—almost certainly a full class period, and probably more.

In addition, it will probably be helpful for students in an additional instructional block to work with the model again during the first draft and revision writing processes.

Teachers will need to plan in advance to ensure that the additional instructional block is aligned with the whole class instructional content, as Mr. Ortega did with his students.

See Table 12 below for an example of how a teacher would use a model essay to teach students about effective essay structure.

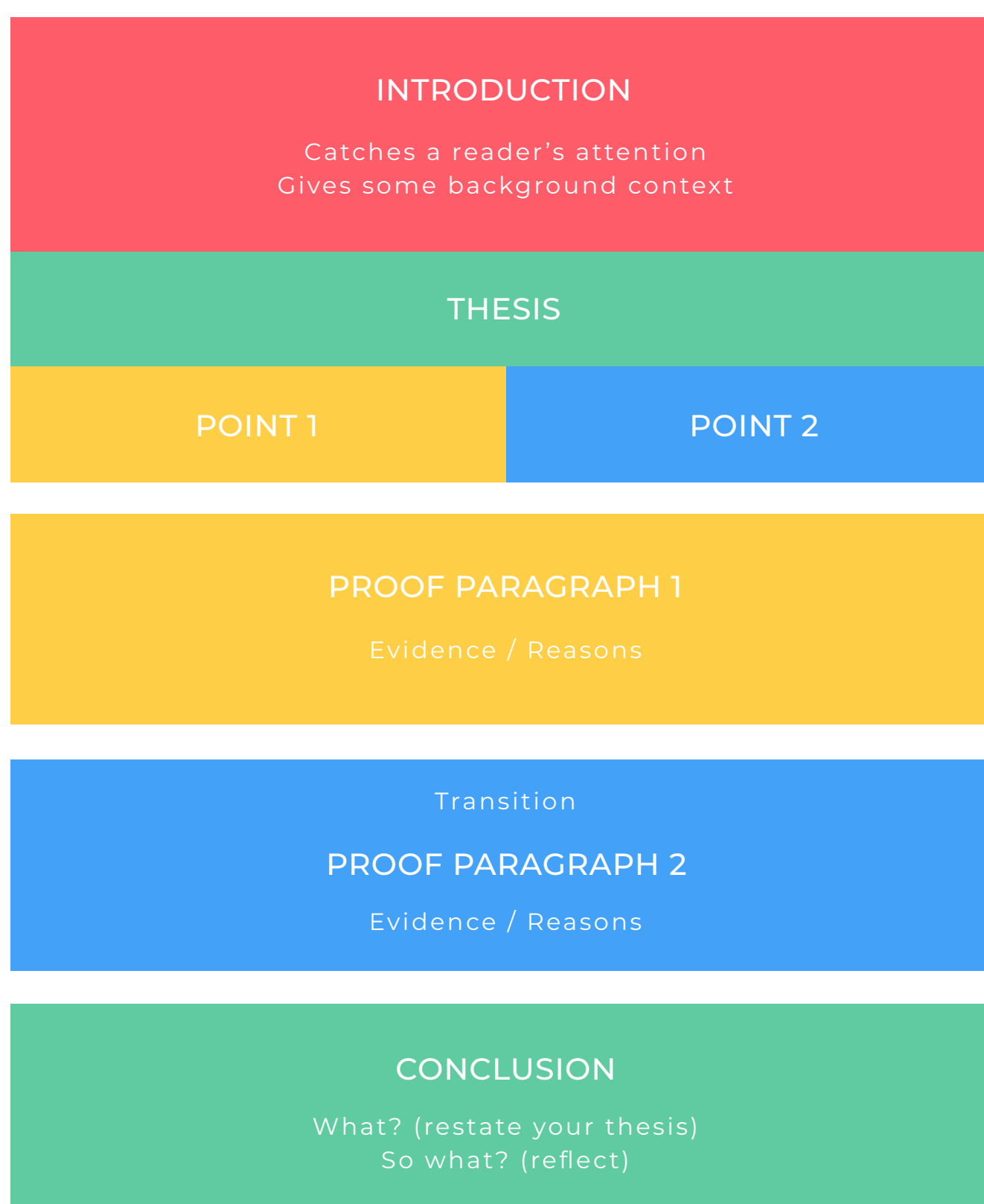
TABLE 12: INSTRUCTIONAL STEPS FOR USING A MODEL

STEP (Approximate Times)	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY IT IS HELPFUL
First read (5-7 min)	Teacher reads text (model) aloud, students read silently	Gives students a “gist” sense of the essay and its structure
Second read (10 min)	Students read full essay independently, find main point as they read	Finding main point helps develop understanding that essay is built around a single claim/thesis
Third read, by chunk (15 min)	Guided by teacher, students work in partners to reread chunk (starting with introduction), discuss what job it does and what ideas, information it contains	Names structural elements, always in terms of overall job they do in the essay related to the claim/thesis
Fourth read, internal construction (15-20 min)	Guided by teacher, students work in partners to deconstruct each paragraph Note use of quoted and paraphrased evidence	Finer level of analysis of essay, both in terms of structure and how thinking is logically developed

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT #2: THE PAINTED ESSAY™

The Painted Essay is a tool that was developed by Diana Leddy of the Vermont Writing Collaborative. As a fourth-grade teacher, she realized that her students needed a schematic that would help them develop a mental model for clear and high-quality expository writing. The Painted Essay helps students make sense of logical thought in writing because it gives them a clear visual model of what informational writing looks like. Using a clear, patterned structure tied to certain colors, the Painted Essay allows students to use and internalize a template for thinking and, subsequently, writing.

The four colors—red, green, yellow, and blue—are used to demonstrate the ‘job’ of each section.



The Painted Essay is a useful and flexible approach to supporting students of all ages from third grade through high school to organize their writing in a way that makes sense—both to them as writers and to their readers. (For more detail on The Painted Essay, see www.vermontwritingcollaborative.org)

**ADDITIONAL
SUPPORT #3:
HELPING GATHER
EVIDENCE**

All the Guidebooks units place emphasis on students gathering evidence, often along the way throughout a unit, before they write an essay. Sometimes, teachers find that students have more evidence than they know what to do with. While this can be a challenge for all students, it is a particular challenge for diverse learners, who may feel overwhelmed.

In that case, additional instructional blocks can be a time when the teacher helps students create what the Vermont Writing Collaborative calls a “bridge to writing.” This means using a tool, usually a simple graphic organizer, to help students guide their own steps from a sea of evidence to a focused set of ideas that will appear in their essay.

For example, suppose a fourth grader studying the American Revolution unit is writing an essay to respond to the prompt, “How are the events of Paul Revere’s ride portrayed similarly and differently in the three texts?” She has a carefully filled out evidence chart, pages of evidence gathered with her class over several weeks. What is she to do now? How does she actually use that evidence to write?

Her teacher might give her a graphic organizer like the one below, and then guide her in filling it out. (Notice that this one uses the colors of The Painted Essay as an organizational aide)

<p>THE EVENTS OF PAUL REVERE’S RIDE ARE PORTRAYED SIMILARLY AND DIFFERENTLY IN THE THREE TEXTS.</p>	
<p>Here are ways the texts are similar</p>	<p>Here are ways the texts are different</p>

-
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For older grades, or more complex questions, the “bridge to writing” could be easily adapted to the particular writing task.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT #4: SUPPORT WITH SHORT-WRITES

The Guidebooks provide frequent opportunities for students to complete “short-writes”—pieces that are much shorter than full-length essays. These may be responses to specific questions, opportunities to summarize, etc. They are not part of the formal assessment system of the Guidebooks, or part of the writing process (i.e., they seldom go through a draft or revision process), but they can be an important way to help students improve their writing overall.

These short-writes are like “tiny essays;” they require students to answer a question accurately in a sentence, supply some evidence from the text to support that answer, and briefly conclude. These “tiny essays” also provide diverse learners with more opportunities to practice their writing.

Often, the Guidebooks themselves provide strong support for these short-writes by supplying organizational frames appropriate for the lesson. For example, in Lesson One of *Flowers for Algernon* in eighth grade, students are asked to write a summary of the Prometheus myth. The frame is broken down into categories—somebody, wanted, but, so, then—clearly very useful framing for writing a summary. The learner who needs support could benefit from oral rehearsal of turning this frame into an effective summary, with perhaps, guidance through the use of shared or guided writing to move the writing along.

Since short-writes happen frequently in the Guidebooks lessons, and can look different depending on the type of thinking the student is being asked to do, it can be helpful for the support teacher to work with students on internalizing the thinking process they need to go through each time. It is recommended to use the Short-Write Checklist, outlined in Table 13, with students:

One reason why models work is because they help students understand the structure of an excellent essay. A model is a form of “show me.” It helps students develop a mental model of what effective writing looks like.

TABLE 13: SHORT-WRITE CHECKLIST

PRIOR TO WRITING, I SHOULD ASK MYSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

Do I understand what the question is saying?

- Can I paraphrase the question in my own words?
- Are there multiple parts to the question? If so, what are they?

What kind of thinking do I need to do to respond to the question?

- Is the evidence for this right in the text? What evidence should I use?
- Do I need to show my own ideas about the evidence?

WHILE WRITING, I SHOULD MAKE SURE TO:

- Respond directly to the question with a focus statement
- Use part of the 'question stem' in my focus statement, if possible
- Use a complete sentence for my focus statement
- Use the text and reread if I need more evidence
- Use evidence from the text that connects to the question to which I am responding
- Include a concluding sentence that closes out my writing

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT #5: LANGUAGE LINKS

Language Links are short lessons that focus on the sentence level in writing. Developed with the assistance of The Writing Revolution, there are Language Links for every unit of the Guidebooks, grades 6-8 that can be accessed by downloading the zipped files from the LDOE website (www.louisianabelieves.com) in the section titled “K-12 ELA Planning Resources.”

The premise of this instruction is that focusing on the sentence level of writing helps students by laying the foundation necessary to write with clarity and fluency. It supports deep comprehension of content because sentences chosen for study are all tied to specific lessons and specific content in the Guidebooks units. When students work closely with these individual sentences, they are doing focused cognitive work with content understanding. Additionally, work at the sentence level of writing supports transferable understanding of how language syntax works, including applied grammar. In the Language Links, students work in highly scaffolded ways with constructs that they will encounter again in reading, and will benefit from being able to use in writing.

The Language Links leverage the following seven sentence-level strategies from the Hochman Method:

- Recognizing and repairing fragments
- Scrambled sentences
- Sentence types
- Coordinating and subordinating conjunctions
- Appositives
- Sentence combining
- Sentence expansion

Each of the seven strategies can be embedded into any content area, and doing so allows students to engage in spaced and purposeful practice, using a consistent set of writing skills and a structured approach for critical thinking and knowledge building.

The first two strategies are foundational: recognizing and repairing fragments and scrambled sentences. They teach students what a sentence is and reinforce sentence boundaries. Once students can unscramble a sentence and identify and correct fragments, the remaining strategies promote sentence variety and complexity.

The first step in creating sentence variety is teaching students **how to use the distinct sentence types**, strategy 3. Clearly, the ability to write each of the four sentence types (declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, command) on a single topic, enhances students' ability to vary their writing and establish an appropriate style. The sentence types strategy is the first of three strategies for writing topic and concluding sentences on outlines and in paragraphs.

When students learn **how to use conjunctions and appositives** in their writing, they increase the linguistic complexity of their writing. Teachers can present sentence stems that begin with subordinating conjunctions and ask students to complete the sentence. This task helps students practice complex sentence structures in a scaffolded, controlled manner, while simultaneously assessing students' content knowledge. **Conjunctions and appositives** are the other two strategies for writing topic and concluding sentences.

Sentence combining, strategy 6, is a powerful way to teach grammar and usage. It allows students to “play” with the English language as they come up with different ways to combine short, kernel sentences. Finally, **sentence expansion**, is a highly scaffolded strategy that supports summarization and note-taking of key details. The teacher provides students with a bare bones kernel sentence and asks them to find details in a text or image using the 5 Ws + H to expand the kernel sentence. The structure of this strategy supports all students to write robust and well-crafted sentences.

When integrated regularly into classroom instruction (e.g., oral practice, checks for understanding, do nows, exit tickets, text-dependent questions, quizzes, etc.) these seven strategies provide a toolkit of language structures that allow all students to become confident, proud, and proficient writers.



IN SUMMARY

Diverse learners are, first and foremost, learners. While they may learn in different ways and at different paces than their peers, they have a right to the same knowledge-rich curriculum and rigorous instruction as their classmates. Students can successfully access grade-level content when they are supported in these five high-leverage areas of instruction:

1. **Fluency**
2. **Vocabulary**
3. **Language patterns**
4. **Knowledge building; and**
5. **Writing**

Too often, diverse learners are excluded from opportunities to learn the literacy content necessary for their success within school and beyond. It is our hope that this guide provides educators, like Mr. Ortega, with the knowledge and confidence to support students like Deanna and Rodrigo with the regular, additional, and targeted support and practice they deserve.

Building our students' skills in these areas will better prepare them to fully access and benefit from the challenging and rich Guidebooks curriculum right alongside their classmates. Carefully planning and implementing instruction across whole-class and additional support time can make up for unfinished learning and support students to achieve their dreams when they leave our classrooms. Literacy is liberation.





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OVERVIEW

This planning template is meant to guide you through the process of planning for and implementing small-group instruction for Diverse Learners. It is important to note that the logistics of both planning and implementation will vary depending on the expectations set by your school leader. You should use this template as a guide for identifying upcoming lessons for which Diverse Learners will need support, identifying opportunities to collect data to inform that support, and collaboratively planning to determine and implement that support.

LESSON PLANNING TEMPLATE

STEP	WHAT HAPPENS?	WITH WHO?	WHEN?
 <p>LOGISTICS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine when small-group instruction can take place, how often it will occur, who will teach it, and where it will happen. • Identify upcoming lessons that will take place the following week. 	<p>Classroom teacher + any supporting co-teachers</p>	<p>Suggested timing: At least 1x per week in preparation for the following week</p>
 <p>LESSON PLANNING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review 2-3 upcoming lessons and identify 2-3 tasks per lesson to focus on for support and observation • Analyze the exemplars and rubrics (if available) associated with each high-leverage task/student look-for to determine the skills/knowledge students will be expected to know and do • Identify potential barriers students may face when engaging in each task 	<p>Classroom teacher + any supporting co-teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x week with content-team • 1x week independently 	<p>Suggested timing: At least 2x per week in preparation for the following week (anytime Wed-Fri so you can see how the week’s lessons go).</p>
 <p>COLLECTING DATA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine when small-group instruction can take place, how often it will occur, who will teach it, and where it will happen. • Identify upcoming lessons that will take place the following week. 	<p>Classroom teacher + any supporting co-teachers</p>	<p>Suggested timing: At least 1x per week in preparation for the following week</p>
 <p>SMALL GROUP PLANNING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your observation data and the Diverse Learners Planning Guide to determine focus area(s), specific strategies and student groups • Consider any additional next steps that will aid in supporting the implementation of the small group plan 	<p>Classroom teacher + any supporting co-teachers</p>	<p>Suggested timing: 1-2x per week in preparation for the following week (anytime after data collection so you use the data you collected that week to plan).</p>

Small Group Instruction Logistics:

COLLABORATION GUIDE FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS SUPPORT
**COMPLETE THIS SECTION
BEFORE LESSON PLANNING.**

Grade:	Guidebooks Unit:	Upcoming Lessons:
Time period/dates for small group instruction:		Next collaborative meeting (support and classroom teacher):

**COMPLETE THIS SECTION
AFTER LESSON PLANNING.**

Classroom teacher:	Support/Intervention teacher:
Responsibilities/Next Steps:	Responsibilities/Next Steps:

Notes: (observations, comments, materials/resources needed, lingering questions, support needed)

Small Group Instruction Content: Complete for the lessons you'll teach this week.

POTENTIAL FOCUS AREAS: FLUENCY, VOCABULARY, LANGUAGE PATTERNS, ACCOUNTABLE INDEPENDENT READING, WRITING				
LESSON #	STUDENT TASK CHOOSE 3 OR LESS	STUDENT LOOK FORS	POTENTIAL BARRIERS	OBSERVATIONS
1				
2				

3				

Planning for Small Group Instruction

FOCUS AREA (WHAT)	RATIONALE (WHY)	SMALL GROUP LOGISTICS (WHO, WHEN)	TEXT/SECTION (WHAT)	STRATEGY/ACTIVITY + CFU (HOW)	COMMENTS/NOTES

COMPLETE THIS SECTION
AFTER LESSON PLANNING.

Classroom teacher:

Support/Intervention teacher:

Responsibilities/Next Steps:

Responsibilities/Next Steps:

Notes: (observations, comments, materials/resources needed, lingering questions, support needed)

PLANNING FOR SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES: ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES



CURRENT STATE: ASSETS

Effective systems,
structures, or practices
in place



HOW DO WE GET THERE: OPPORTUNITIES

What will help you accomplish your
vision? What systems or structures from
the DL Planning Guide might help?



IDEAL STATE: VISION

Five years from now (write in
the present tense): Looks like,
sounds like, feels like

COMPONENT

DATA
COLLECTION

HOW WE DO IT:

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

SMALL GROUP
INSTRUCTION

HOW WE DO IT:

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

COLLABORATIVE
PLANNING

HOW WE DO IT:

TEACHER OUTCOMES:

TEACHER
SUPPORT:
PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING &
COACHING
DIVERSE
LEARNERS
GB CURRICULUM

HOW WE DO IT:

TEACHER OUTCOMES: