

# Common Core Interventions for Adolescent Readers

## Suggested Strategies for Grades 6-8: Overview



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*Please note that we have discontinued the first edition of our Grades 3-5 ELA curriculum. However, this document is still relevant to support the implementation of the Grades 6-8 ELA curriculum published in 2012.*

*To learn more about the EL Education K-5 Language Arts Curriculum, including the 3-5 Language Arts (Second Edition), please visit our website [Curriculum.ELeducation.org/Tools](https://Curriculum.ELeducation.org/Tools).*



**Overview of Intervention Suggestions**

EL Education’s Common Core–aligned ELA modules for grades 6-8 were designed to help teachers build students’ capacity to read, think, talk, and write about complex texts. The 6-8 ELA modules fully address all the strands of the Common Core state standards: the reading standards for both literary and informational texts, the writing standards, the speaking and listening standards, and the language standards.

However, the 45-minute module lessons alone may not provide enough time for all students to comprehensively practice the skills required to achieve mastery of the ELA standards in the module assessments. To ensure that students receive adequate support and practice, as well as sufficient time to meet the volume of reading required by the CCSS, this Interventions resources package provides suggestions and examples of literacy work to support, reinforce, and provide additional practice of the skills learned in the ELA modules.

This resource package is designed to help school leaders, instructional coaches, general education teachers, special education, and intervention teachers think and plan together about strategic ways to best use additional support time beyond the typical ELA block. The suggestions here could certainly be applied to all learners, but are targeted particularly for students who aren’t meeting grade level standards during a standard class period.

The activities and examples in this package are optional and supplemental to be used during additional time in the school day (for example, during an intervention period or resource support). These activities are not intended to replace ELA module instruction or to fully address the Common Core. This package contains suggestions that teachers can adapt to meet the specific needs of their students needing additional support. Teachers should use their judgment and knowledge of the abilities of their particular students to focus this additional ELA practice and instruction where it is required, and to adapt the activities and examples accordingly.

Ideally, intervention instruction that occurs alongside the modules is complementary to the reading, writing, speaking, and listening that students engage in during the 45-minute module lessons. Research suggests that students not meeting grade level expectations benefit from additional time spent on literacy skills instruction with differentiated support so they can continue to acquire and practice the skills necessary in becoming proficient and independent readers, writers, speakers, and listeners. There are various ways to organize this time so teachers can pull small groups and provide additional whole-class instruction on discrete skills, as deemed necessary by formative assessments.

This package includes:

- Overview
- Word Study and Vocabulary
- Additional Work with Related Texts
- Fluency
- Syntax and Mechanics
- Independent Reading
- Sample Schedule

#### Word Study

Research suggests that as much as possible, word recognition instruction should take place in the context of the texts that students are reading, as this supports them in decoding and inferring the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. These word analysis skills are key in acquiring core academic vocabulary and ultimately in understanding complex texts that students encounter (Blevins & Lynch, 2001; Hiebert, 2012; Juel & Deffes, 2004).

The 45-minute module lessons provide contextualized instruction of analysis, specifically during lessons that involve close reading. However, to ensure that students requiring intervention supports have the foundational skills necessary to build toward college and career readiness, it may be useful for some of them to have additional support and practice with these skills outside of the module lessons. This instruction may be presented to the whole class but could also take place in small, differentiated groups where students can practice word analysis in the context of the complex texts they are reading in the modules, other independent-level texts, and during word study games and activities. The resources contained in this package provide examples, guidance, and materials to help teachers envision options for organizing the instruction of word analysis in grades 6-8.

See the following components of this resources package:

- Word Study and Vocabulary
- Additional Work with Related Texts
- Independent Reading: The Importance of a Volume of Reading and Sample Plans

#### Fluency

Reading fluency is the ability to read accurately, automatically, and with proper phrasing and intonation so that a reader is able to make meaning of a text, whether it is read silently or orally (Kuhn, 2010). Recent research shows that the role of fluency is even more important to reading comprehension than once thought (Rasinski, 2004). When students read with automaticity, the ability to recognize and read words without conscious thought, they are able to devote all of their energy to comprehending the meaning as opposed to decoding the words. In addition, students must master the ability to read with proper phrasing and intonation, or prosody (Rasinski, 2006). This means that fluent readers read the words without effort and also attend to syntax, or the structure of sentences and their punctuation when reading. In order to read and comprehend complex texts, students not only have to decode and make meaning of difficult vocabulary, but they must also be able to read more complicated sentence structures. Although being fluent readers alone will not guarantee comprehension, it is another vitally important skill students need to become proficient and independent readers of complex texts.

Good fluency instruction includes read-alouds that model fluent and expressive reading, regular and repeated silent and oral reading of texts in the grade-level band of complexity and at students' independent reading levels, and opportunities for self-assessment as well as teacher and peer feedback (Rasinski, 2006).

See the following components of this resource package:

- Fluency Resource
- Independent Reading: The Importance of a Volume of Reading and Sample Plans

### **Syntax/Mechanics**

Research shows that conventions and grammar are best taught within the context of authentic reading and writing tasks (Weaver & Bush, 2008). Students benefit from proactive instruction that uses models of informational texts and literature to teach explicit conventions and grammatical rules that can then be applied in their writing (Weaver, McNally, & Moerman, 2001). Teachers can plan these lessons based on the specific grade-level demands of the CCSS and on the analysis of student work that's required in the modules.

Students also benefit from instruction later in the writing process that includes targeted mini lessons that support students in revising their work (e.g., the teacher notices common errors and provides targeted teaching or re-teaching). As students prepare to publish their work, one option is for teachers to support students in peer editing for these rules in order to reinforce this learning. In this way, students can see the value and practical application of rules of convention and grammar within the context of mentor texts, their own work, and their peers' work.

The language standards are addressed during the writing process in the modules; however, the resources contained in this package provide examples, guidance, and materials to draw on in order to provide further practice of the conventions of standard English and knowledge of language standards in grades 6-8 introduced in the modules.

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#### Research Base

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# Word Study and Vocabulary



**Word Study: What Is It, and Why Do It?**

**Word Study and Vocabulary**

The language standards for grades 6–8 require students to spell grade-appropriate words correctly (L.2), determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and multiple-meaning words (L.4) and to acquire and use grade-appropriate academic and domain-specific words (L.6). In the module lessons, these standards are taught in the context of authentic reading and writing experiences.

Additional vocabulary and word study is beneficial to many readers, but it is particularly helpful to challenged readers and English language learners. Below are some criteria that you might consider for additional vocabulary and word study work that can occur alongside the module lessons in grades 6–8.

**Suggested Criteria for Vocabulary and Word Study**

- Incorporate word inventories that can be used to assess students’ knowledge of spelling patterns and high-frequency words for grouping and differentiation of instruction
- Allow for flexible grouping of students for differentiation of instruction
- Have word lists for sorting, games, and activities
- Provide studies of common Greek and Latin roots, as well as prefixes and suffixes and how they affect the meanings of words
- Give students opportunities to work with words through a variety of learning styles and modalities
- Allow students to apply newly learned word knowledge and analysis skills to their reading and writing
- Include ongoing formative assessments to support students in building increasingly sophisticated word analysis skills

**Examples of instruction that meets the standards in the modules:**

The following module lessons provide examples of vocabulary and word study instruction that enable students to learn the necessary skills to achieve mastery of the CCSS standards. These examples can be adapted or used as a starting point for instruction in additional literacy time:

Standards	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
<b>L.2 Conventions of Standard English</b> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	Module 3A, Unit 2, Lesson 14	Module 1, Unit 3, Lesson 5	Module 3B, Unit 2, Lesson 20

Word Study: What Is It, and Why Do It?

Standards	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
<p><b>L.4 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</b> Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p>	Module 3B, Unit 1, all lessons	Module 2B, Unit 2, all lessons	Module 4, Unit 1, all lessons
<p><b>L.6 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</b> Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases.</p>	Module 4, Unit 3, Lesson 3 Module 4, Unit 3, Lesson 7	Module 1, Unit 2, Lessons 12-14 Module 2B, Unit 3, Lesson 1-3 Module 4A, Unit 3, Lessons 1, 2, 4, and 8 Module 4B, Unit 3, Lessons 1, 2, 4, and 8	

Suggested Criteria for Word Study

Word study programs meet the following criteria:

- Incorporate word inventories that can be used to assess students’ knowledge of spelling patterns and high-frequency words for grouping and differentiation of instruction
- Allow for flexible grouping of students for differentiation of instruction
- Have word lists for sorting, games, and activities that are based on the stages of spelling development (emergent, letter name, within word, syllables and affixes, and derivational relations)
- Provide studies of common Greek and Latin roots, as well as prefixes and suffixes and how they affect the meanings of words
- Include activities that allow students to determine spelling patterns and learn syllabication
- Give students opportunities to work with words through a variety of learning styles and modalities
- Allow students to apply newly learned word knowledge and analysis skills to their reading and writing
- Include ongoing formative assessments to support students in building increasingly sophisticated word analysis skills and progress through the stages of spelling development

**Word Study: What Is It, and Why Do It?****References**

- Bear, D., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., and Jonston, F. (2000). *Words their way: word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
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# Additional Work with Related Texts



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The Common Core state standards call for a consistent emphasis on increasingly complex texts *for all students* throughout the grades. Instruction with complex text is important for fostering robust reading skills, acquiring academic vocabulary, building content knowledge, and eventually, preparing students for college and career (Shanahan, 2002. Hiebert, 2012. Gomez, 2008. Liben, 2010, et al.). Furthermore, a growing body of research suggests that instruction with increasingly complex texts within the study of a single topic can lead to greater gains in reading rate, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension (Adams, 2009. Morgan, 2009. O’Connor, 2010. Williams, 2009.). Adolescent readers also can benefit from reading less complex texts related to a module topic. As students learn more about a topic they can read more difficult texts on that topic, and if given support, improve their foundational reading and comprehension skills as well. Such “additional related texts” supplement, but must not replace work with grade level complex text, which remains critical. For students needing more support, the approach should be a “both/and,” not an “either/or.”

Key strategies for teaching students to navigate complex texts successfully (such as close reading, rereading, and defining words from context) are embedded in nearly every lesson in the modules. Still, all students—particularly those who have difficulty reading—can benefit from additional work with related texts that may or may not always be complex. Ideally, **this additional work should focus on texts relevant to the topic of study**, providing extra practice and support, while broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding of the topic. The purpose of this resource is to offer general suggestions to consider for planning both guided small group work and differentiated center work with related texts.

The activities in this resource are organized to give students practice in navigating four key aspects of text complexity: *meaning, structure, knowledge, and language*.

- Suggestions in the **Meaning** section focus on skills such as understanding layers of meaning, identifying the overall purpose of the writing, locating main ideas and supporting details, and summarizing.
- Suggestions in the **Structure** activities can help students to explore text features, organization, sentence structure, or genre in order to better understand a text.
- Suggestions in the **Knowledge** section help students to build a knowledge base using research and other texts.
- Suggestions in the **Language** section include vocabulary and sentence structure activities.

When focused on a specific text, which in intervention settings should be as complex as the readers can manage with some teacher support, activities in any of these four areas can help students to better understand that text and to develop strategies for approaching complexity in new texts. The activities likely are familiar to many teachers. They are not intended to introduce new pedagogy; rather, they are meant to spark ideas about how teachers can apply what we already know about teaching reading.

This resource includes guidelines for creating and organizing text-specific activities, ideas for tailoring tasks to meet students’ needs, and a sample five-day schedule. The ideas included in this resource can be used to plan center activities for additional literacy time that occurs alongside the module lessons and also provides guidance for planning whole group instruction in areas where it is determined that the whole class needs additional support.

The Additional Work with Related Texts resource includes the following sections:

- **Getting Started:** Choosing a focus, creating activities, and differentiating
- **Focusing on Meaning:** Activities to help students understand the meaning of texts
- **Focusing on Structure:** Activities to help students understand structure of texts
- **Focusing on Knowledge:** Activities to help students build a knowledge base around the topic of a text that they are reading
- **Focusing on Language:** Activities to help students understand the language (vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure) of texts
- **Related Text Center—Sample Schedule and Example:** Sample schedule specifically for the “Additional Work with Related Text Center” (within additional literacy time such as intervention time)
- **References:** Citations for those who would like to do further study

### **Choosing a Text**

The purpose of the activities in this resource is to give students additional work and practice with texts that are related to those that are being used in the modules. Ideally, this work is going back to the module texts or using texts from the Recommended Text Lists that are included with each module. This time should guide students to better understand meaning, structure, or language of a text or to acquire additional knowledge and context.

Any text chosen to be read in additional literacy time or an intervention setting should be relevant to the topic in order to continue to provide purpose for the reading and to continue to build knowledge on the subject. When choosing a relevant complex text to read in additional literacy time, it is important to consider what students are struggling with in the complex texts they are reading in the module lessons and to choose a text that provides opportunities to practice those specific skills. For example:

- Are text features confusing them (structure)?
- Is there a gap in their experiences that makes it hard to understand a key concept (knowledge)?
- Or is there an unusual amount of new academic vocabulary to learn (language)?

For example if students are struggling with the text features of a text in the module lessons, it would be advisable to choose a relevant text with similar text features and focus the instruction in additional literacy time on helping students to become more familiar with those features.

Text complexity rubrics and other materials designed to help teachers understand what makes a text complex can help pinpoint where students may need support. See rubrics for evaluating features of text complexity at the following link: <http://www.achievethecore.org/page/656/finding-ccss-grade-levels-for-texts-scass-rubrics>. In many cases, it will make sense to plan activities in meaning, structure, language, *and* knowledge. Very often, exploring all four areas can be helpful in boosting overall understanding and developing strategies for reading complex texts. Learning to analyze complex text in this way also is valuable professional development.

### **Creating Activities and Differentiating**

The ideas in each section can be used to plan activities for an “Additional Work with Related Text Center”, to provide extra support in a “pull-out” or “push-in” session for a student or a group of students, or even as full-class instruction in an area where most students need remediation or reinforcement. Teachers can further differentiate by:

- Creating different activities (with different areas of emphasis) for individuals or groups of students
- Varying the level of adult guidance provided using specialists, paraprofessionals, or volunteers
- Modifying versions of the same activity to reflect student needs (i.e., adjusting the amount of text, limiting the number of new words, adding sentence stems or “hints,” etc.)
- Chunking tasks into smaller parts or allowing more time for some students or groups



### Focusing on Meaning

Often, students will need support in drawing meaning from complex text. Truly understanding a story or article may involve exploring layers of meaning, identifying the overall purpose of the writing, locating main ideas and supporting details, or summarizing. All students will need to learn and practice these key skills with teacher guidance.

“Meaning” activities may focus on an entire text or specific parts of a text, and may target basic understanding or more nuanced understanding of a fiction or nonfiction text.

For students who struggle with a complex text used in a module lesson, the most useful support may be basic work on literal comprehension before a text is formally introduced in class, or even simply listening to the text being read on an audio recording while following along. For others, work in this area might lead to a more nuanced understanding of a theme or concept.

**Activities to help students understand the meaning of related complex texts may include the following:**

1. **Pre-reading or Rereading:** Students may read part or all of the text silently, whisper read independently or with a partner (the student reads a piece repeated times, in a whisper-level voice), or read aloud into a recording device (use the recordings of fluent readers to create a listening center next year). Repeated reading is a simple and powerful way to increase comprehension.
2. **Reading Along:** Students can read along with a prerecorded version of the text. Try recruiting parents or other students to create a library of texts used in the modules for your classroom. Audio versions of some books can be found at local libraries or ordered through interlibrary loan.
3. **Comprehension Question Sheets:** Teachers can create sets of comprehension questions tailored to build or extend understanding of a text. Questions may target literal comprehension (for students who need extra time to develop a basic understanding) or higher-level comprehension (for students who need enrichment). They may prompt students to take a deeper look at the whole text or a particular part of the text.
4. **Cloze Procedure:** The cloze procedure is a technique in which the teacher reproduces a passage, strategically deleting words and leaving blank spaces for students to fill in. Reading carefully, students insert words that make sense in context to complete and construct meaning from the text. Cloze exercises can focus students when rereading and can be used to develop or assess basic comprehension. More information on constructing this type of activity can be found by searching using the key words “cloze” and “reading” on the Internet.
5. **Graphic Organizers:** Students can complete graphic organizers that scaffold basic understanding. Examples include organizers that prompt students to identify the main characters, setting, problem and solution in a story, or the main idea and details in an informational piece or a single paragraph.
6. **Summaries:** Students can produce written summaries of texts or sections of a text. For students who need additional support, these can be scaffolded using templates or sentence stems, or by having students work together in pairs or small groups.

## Focusing on Structure

Understanding text structures can help students build meaning when reading both literature and informational texts. Structure includes things like text features, organization, sentence structure, and the understanding of genre. The following are suggestions for activities to help students better understand the structure of the text they are working with. These can be done alone or with a group, and are easily adaptable to an interactive whiteboard if such technology is available.

**Activities to help students understand the structure of complex texts may include the following:**

1. **Text Puzzles:** Enlarge and cut apart the text or part of the text and ask students to reassemble the parts so that the text is well organized and makes sense. After they have finished, students can check their work using a copy of the original text. A variety of puzzles can be made—students can be asked to reassemble a set of paragraphs, sentences within a paragraph, sections of a text, or even complex sentences.
2. **Connections:** To help students develop an awareness of the purpose of text features, prepare a copy of the text in which you have removed selected text features. These could include captions, subheads, or illustrations. Using a glue stick, students replace the missing features—for example, correctly matching a caption with an illustration or a subhead with the correct section of information. Students can be asked to place paragraphs under the correct subhead or paste transition sentences between paragraphs.
3. **Color Code:** Have students use color to show the relationship between parts of a text. This activity can be fairly concrete (Find the word “camouflage” defined in word box at the bottom of the page. Now find the word “camouflage” in the text. Color them both blue. What does “camouflage” mean in this sentence?) or more abstract (This paragraph talks about a problem and solution. Color the problem red and the solution blue.).

**Focusing on Knowledge**

The Common Core state standards encourage us to integrate text into our work in the content areas in order to build a knowledge base. Where possible, students should create this knowledge base from the text itself, but sometimes additional information is needed. In these cases, the focus should be on teaching students to find the needed information themselves. It is crucial that any content or concepts needed to understand the text be available to all students, not just to those who have been fortunate enough to have rich life experiences.

**Activities to help students build a knowledge base around the topic of a text that they are reading may include the following:**

1. **Use Audio or Visual Resources:** Students can listen to recordings, watch short videos, learn educational songs, or analyze sets of images to deepen their understanding of a concept or topic. It is important that these resources augment, and not replace, content knowledge built by reading the complex text itself.
2. **Research:** Students can be given very short, simple research to do (individually or in groups) related to the text. Research questions should be designed around ideas that are not well covered in the text itself but are important to comprehension. For example, if the text is written in a way that assumes students know the dangers of being lost on a snowy mountaintop, and you live in an area where it never snows, you may want to have students research the hazards of snowy weather. Research like this can be done by individuals or groups using the Internet, the library, or other sources and shared with the class.

## Focusing on Language

It is important to give students many opportunities to work with specific vocabulary, sentence structures, figurative language, idioms, and other complexities of language in text. Draw language from the text, and choose words, phrases, and sentences that are important to understanding the text. When planning, be sure to reference the specific language standards for your grade level, since the standards themselves provide very clear guidance about the discrete skills students must master.

**Many published resources exist to help students to work with the language (vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure) of texts. Here are some ideas:**

1. **Create a Glossary:** Choose three to five academic- or domain-specific words from the text, and have students write the definition for a glossary. This can be scaffolded by having students work in groups, matching the difficulty of the words to the needs of the students, or focusing on words already introduced in class that still need reinforcement.
2. **Scavenger Hunt:** Students underline specific words in the text and copy the sentence in which the word appears. Then they generate original sentences using each featured word. This activity could be expanded to include locating the same words in new texts, or “hunting” for different uses of the same word.
3. **Silly Stories:** Students work as a group to create a “silly story” that uses all the words on a given list. Words must be used correctly in the piece.
4. **Word Boxes:** Students gather words from the text to fit into given categories. These may vary widely based on the purpose of the activity. Example categories include “Words Used to Describe Character Traits” and “Stages of the Water Cycle.”

### **Related Text Center—Sample Schedule and Example**

This example Text Center schedule zooms in on one part of additional literacy time. The purpose is to help teachers visualize what might happen in an “Additional Work with Related Text” Center. However, these complex texts center activities can fit well into many other schedules; planning, grouping, and organization will vary across classrooms.

In the sample schedule below, the teacher provides direct instruction at the Related Text Center once a week. For the remaining days of the week students continue working in the center on the various aspects of text (meaning, language, structure, or knowledge) individually, with a partner, or with a small group. This lets the teacher deliver instruction at other centers. Note that depending on the needs of the class, additional direct instruction with complex texts may take place more than once a week.

Students should be assigned to specific tasks at the Related Text Center based on formative assessment that takes place during the module lessons. Students may work in a small group, partnered pairs, or individually. Grouping should be flexible and allow students to work with a variety of peers. Grouping stronger and struggling readers together for partner work can be mutually beneficial (Vaughn et al., 2001).

### Related Text Center—Sample Schedule and Example

While students are engaged in reading in the “Related Text Center,” they should spend time doing one or more of the following: revisit the central text(s) from the module, revisit other shorter complex text from the module, or be introduced to a new (and likely easier) text from the Recommended Text List. The Recommended Text List accompanying each module has texts at a variety of Lexile levels that help build students’ vocabulary and content knowledge regarding the same topic as the module. This practice allows students to receive targeted instruction on the text to build understanding without introducing a text on an unrelated topic. Students who are already struggling to meet grade level expectations would benefit from this additional instructional time.

The example provided below is for use alongside Grade 8, Module 4, Unit 1, as students read about concentrated animal feeding operations (or CAFOs) in the central text of the module, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* by Michael Pollan. In additional literacy time, students either reread a small section of the central text or a text from the Recommended Text List that is related to the content of the module.

**Day 1—Focus on Meaning**

- Teacher read aloud.
- Second, read the text aloud with a partner.
- Next, find the gist: Work with a partner to find the gist (what is it mostly about) of each paragraph. Annotate the gist of each paragraph on the text (or on sticky notes).

**Day 2—Focus on Language**

- Mini lesson on commas (L.8.2). Find examples in passage.

**Day 3—Focus on Structure**

- Analyze the structure of the first paragraph of the text and the role of the final sentence of the paragraph in developing a key concept (RI.8.5).

**Day 4—Focus on Knowledge (Rotating Center)**

- Watch a video about the potential impact of CAFO’s on the environment to take notes on how the video suggests CAFO’s impact on the environment (Students should watch the video multiple time - once to just watch, then twice more to take notes).

**Day 5—Focus on Language: Vocabulary (Rotating Stations)**

- Station 1: Figure out the meaning of the pink highlighted words in the text from the context. Record in a glossary.
- Station 2: Find the definition of the blue highlighted words in a dictionary. Record in a glossary.
- Station 3: Figure out the meaning of words from the Greek and Latin prefixes/suffixes. Record in a glossary.

**References**

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# Creating a Routine for Fluency Instruction

Overview



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Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Historically, there has been a strong focus on building fluent reading skills in the primary grades, with a tendency to shift the majority of our instructional focus to comprehension in the intermediate grades. But despite our best efforts, some upper elementary and secondary students aren't making adequate progress toward fluency goals. What can we do to help *all learners* acquire the skills they need to become highly capable and competent readers?

Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding the words, they can focus their attention on what the text means, can make connections among the ideas in the text, and draw from background knowledge (Rasinski, 2004).

When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly to help them gain meaning from what they read. They recognize words and comprehend at the same time. Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking.

By contrast, readers who have not yet developed fluency read slowly, word by word. They must focus their attention on figuring out the words, leaving them little attention for understanding the text. Their oral reading is choppy and plodding. Direct instruction related to fluency is especially important for readers who are struggling. Readers who have not yet attained fluency are not likely to make effective and efficient use of silent independent reading time. For these students, independent reading time takes time away from needed reading instruction and support (National Institute for Literacy, 2001). It is important, therefore, for struggling readers to spend significant time working on their fluency.

Fluency is not a stage of development at which readers can read all words quickly and easily. Fluency changes depending on certain variables: what readers are reading, their familiarity with the words, and the amount of their practice when reading text. Even very skilled readers may read in a slow, labored manner when reading texts with many unfamiliar words or topics.

The role of fluency must be emphasized beyond primary grade classrooms to support older students' ability to engage with and comprehend increasingly complex levels of text. This resource is designed to provide educators with ideas for developing routines that promote the acquisition of essential fluent reading skills.

**The Fluency Resource includes these sections:**

- **Getting Started:** creating a safe environment for practice, introducing fluency criteria and self-assessment, and helping students set a fluency goal
- **Planning a Fluency Routine: The MAPP Approach:** how modeling, assistance, practice, and performance help build students' fluency
- **Fluency Center Sample Schedule:** sample schedule specifically for the Fluency Center
- **Fluency Passages/Fluency Practice:** links to general passages for fluency practice
- **Additional Reading:** a research-based article with further information regarding fluency
- **References:** citations for those who would like to do further study

### Creating a Safe Environment for Fluency Practice

(Adapted with permission from David Liben, Student Achievement Partners)

If a student is not a fluent reader, he or she is unlikely to think, “I have a fluency problem.” Instead the student is likely to think, “I can’t read” or “I am stupid.” This likely is not true. Fluency has been shown time and time again to be unrelated to intelligence. However, just telling students who have struggled with reading that they can improve their fluency with practice probably won’t convince them of this. The following activity, designed to demonstrate the effects of practicing fluent reading skills, is best facilitated with an individual student. However, it can also be done in small groups if students are comfortable with one another and the group is led by an adult whom they trust.

1. Make copies of a grade-appropriate, short, paragraph and distribute it.
2. Ask the student to read the passage aloud. If working in a small group, try doing this chorally, so each student becomes aware that the passage is difficult to read fluently, but individual voices are not “in the spotlight.”
3. Have students follow along silently while you read the passage aloud at least two times.
4. Read the passage chorally at least two more times.
5. Follow this with buddy reading, echo reading, or any similar technique (see the “Practice” section for more ideas).
6. Finally, have the student read the passage aloud again. At this point the reading is likely to be much better.
7. With the student, evaluate, then reflect on what happened: “Did you get smarter in 20 minutes?” Help the student realize that reading fluently has nothing to do with how smart you are; it has everything to do with practice, like layups, fixing cars, or playing an instrument. Point out that, with sufficient practice, he or she can become a more fluent reader.

### Introducing Criteria and Self-Assessment

**Purpose:** Because students in the secondary grades tend to be more independent than primary grade students, teachers may consider supporting them to self-assess and set goals for their fluency skills. The purpose for introducing and modeling specific fluency criteria is to help students understand the criteria they must work toward to become fluent readers.

As with any self-assessment practice, the recommendations below will work best within a classroom culture in which students feel safe and supported. Note that students’ ongoing self-assessments should be kept private between the student and teacher. This ensures that students are working on setting and celebrating their individual accomplishments, rather than comparing their abilities to those of their peers.

Below is a suggested way to introduce and model specific criteria described on the Fluency Self-Assessment.

**In advance:**

- \* Place students in triads or groups of four.
- \* Choose an adolescent-relevant poem or song lyrics to use during the following activity. Create and display a new Fluent Readers Do These Things anchor chart.
- \* Review the Fluency Self-Assessment rubric (see following page of this document).

**Launch the lesson:**

- Tell students they are going to spend time getting familiar with the word *fluency*. Ask:
  - \* “What do you think the word *fluency* means?”
- Students may say: “Being able to read really fast; sounding normal when you read and not too slow.”
- If students are unfamiliar with the word, tell them it means being able to read without sounding out every word and reading smoothly in the way that the author meant for it to sound.
- Distribute the Fluency Self-Assessment rubric (two pages further) to each student.
- Read each criterion aloud: accuracy, rate and flow, phrasing and punctuation, expression and volume.
- Then go row by row, starting with the “On Target” descriptors for accuracy, then reading the descriptors for “Almost There,” “Working on It,” and “Need More Support.” Clarify the meaning of any unfamiliar terms and/or clear up any misconceptions.
- Pause after each descriptor level to ask students to notice and discuss the similarities and differences between each level. Ask students to share out (responses will vary, but listen for students to use specific language from the self-assessment).
- Repeat the above steps for each of the remaining criteria and level descriptors.
- Tell students you will read aloud a piece of text three different ways. Challenge them to try to decide which of the three readings they would call fluent, based on the criteria described on the Fluency Self-Assessment rubric.
- Read the piece the first time really quickly, so quickly that you can hardly be understood. Make mistakes, but just ignore them and plow right through to the end. Do not attend to punctuation, do not pronounce things clearly, and do not give yourself or your listener time to think about what’s on the page.
- Ask students if that seemed “fluent” to them and listen for the reasons why they say “yes” or “no.” Many students will tell you “yes” because it was really fast. Students often hold the misconception that reading quickly is the goal, even if they can’t understand what’s being read. They often believe reading quickly is the most impressive skill a reader can strive for.





### Getting Started





- Ask students if they have any idea what the passage you just read is about. (Most students will likely respond “no” because they did not have time to absorb the information when the text was read so quickly.) Focus their attention on the rate and flow criteria on the self-assessment, specifically the “On Target” descriptor, “I read at a rate that is appropriate for the piece” (i.e., “I read a complex text at a slower, more understandable rate; I read a less complex text using a conversational rate.”).
- Ask them to listen to the next version and decide if they think it is fluent. This time, read the passage very slowly, word by word, sounding out every fifth word or so. Again, pay no attention to punctuation. Make errors and ignore them. Ask students to tell you what they thought of the fluency of that reading.
- Most will answer with a resounding “No! That was not fluent.” But push them to try to name the reasons why based on the criteria (listen for them to reference rate and flow that is “appropriate for the piece” and/or accuracy). Also listen for students to name anything about punctuation or the robotic nature of the voice.
- Ask students once again if they understood anything about the passage. Students will likely answer “no” this time, as well. Ask them to explain and listen for them to mention the errors, slow rate, and/or lack of adherence to phrasing, punctuation, or expression as a hindrance to their comprehension of the piece.
- Read the passage a third time. This time, read it at an “appropriate rate.” Wear your intention to help students understand the “On Target” criteria for fluency on your sleeve, with every move you make. Make a mistake or two, but show how fluent readers would self-correct. Match your facial expression and body language to the piece. Change your rate, volume pitch, and tone to reflect an understanding of the author’s intended message.
- Next, ask students to tell you if they thought that was fluent reading. If they still aren’t sure, ask them to refer to and discuss in groups the “On Target” fluency criteria on the self-assessment to help them make a decision.
- After several minutes, ask students to share their thoughts with the class. Listen for them to recognize that based on the criteria, the way the piece was read aloud the third time is an example of fluent reading. Ask them to refer specifically to the descriptors for each criterion to name the things you did that made the passage easy to listen to and understand.
- As students share out, make a list of their ideas on the new **Fluent Readers Do These Things anchor chart**. Listen for:
  - Read almost all words correctly.
  - Read at a smooth pace without taking breaks that leave the listener hanging.
  - Pause at commas and fully stop at periods.
  - Read questions like questions and exclamations with excitement.
  - Change voice and volume depending on meaning.
  - Change the tone to match the message (sad, serious, funny, joyful, surprised).
  - Match the story with your face and body.
  - Correct mistakes.

**Getting Started**

- If students stall out in their observations, read the text again. Ask them to listen and watch for specific things they didn't notice during the previously modeled fluent read.
- Encourage them to watch what your body and face do as you read.
- After reading fluently a second time, ask:
  - \* "Did you notice what fluent readers do when they make a mistake?"
- Listen for students to share ideas similar to: "When you made a mistake, you didn't need anyone to tell you that you messed up. You could hear when something sounded off and went back to correct yourself." If students are not able to recognize that self-correction is a fluent reading skill, point it out to them.
- Next, give students differentiated reading passages (see the Fluency Passages links at the end of this document).

**Fluency Self-Assessment Rubric**

	<b>On Target</b> 	<b>Getting There</b> 	<b>Working on It</b> 	<b>Need Support</b> 
<b>Accuracy</b>	_I read all/almost all the words correctly. (99–100 percent accuracy)	_I read most of the words correctly. (95–98 percent accuracy)	_There were several words I had trouble pronouncing. (90–94 percent accuracy)	_I had trouble pronouncing many of the words. (less than 90 percent accuracy)
<b>Rate &amp; Flow</b>	_I read at a rate that is appropriate for the piece.  _My reading flows smoothly, without many breaks.  _I independently correct myself when I encounter difficult words and phrases.	_Sometimes I read a little too fast, and sometimes I read a little too slowly.  _My reading flows somewhat smoothly, with occasional breaks.  _As I read, there were a few words and phrases I needed help with.	_I read slowly.  _As I read, I took many breaks.  _As I read, there were many words and phrases I needed help with.	_I read slowly and had a lot of difficulty with the passage.  _I had to take a lot of breaks to sound out words and/or repeat many of the words and phrases before I got them right.

	<b>On Target</b> 	<b>Getting There</b> 	<b>Working on It</b> 	<b>Need Support</b> 
<b>Phrasing and Punctuation</b>	<p>_I read groups of related words and phrases together.</p> <p>_I noticed and read all of the punctuation (e.g., paused after a comma; stopped after a period; questions sounded like questions; read exclamations in an excited voice)</p>	<p>_Occasionally, I ran sentences together; and/or broke off in the middle of a sentence, reading only 2-3 words at a time.</p> <p>_I noticed and read almost all of the punctuation.</p>	<p>_I read only 2-3 words at a time.</p> <p>_I noticed and read some of the punctuation.</p> <p>_I rarely changed my tone to express meaning.</p>	<p>_I read only 1-2 words at a time.</p> <p>_I noticed and read only a few or none of the punctuation.</p>
<b>Expression and Volume</b>	<p>_My tone expressed the author’s meaning (e.g., surprise, grief, anger, joy, etc.).</p> <p>_My facial expressions and body language matched the expression in my voice.</p> <p>_The volume of my voice changed naturally, as if I were talking to a friend.</p>	<p>_Sometimes I changed my tone to express the author’s meaning.</p> <p>_Sometimes my facial expressions and body language matched the expression in my voice.</p> <p>_Sometimes my voice sounded flat, not like I was talking to a friend.</p>	<p>_I rarely changed my tone to express the author’s meaning.</p> <p>_I rarely used facial expressions or body language that matched the expression in my voice.</p> <p>_Often, I read quietly; my reading did not sound natural, like when I talk to a friend.</p>	<p>_I did not change my tone to express the author’s meaning.</p> <p>_I did not use facial expressions or body language as I read.</p> <p>_Most or all of the time, I read quietly; my reading did not sound natural, like when I talk to a friend.</p>

### Helping Students Set a Fluency Goal

Once students develop a sense of what fluent reading sounds and looks like (fluency criteria), they can begin to evaluate their own strengths and establish goals. This goal setting process may vary from grade to grade and student to student. For example, some students may use the Fluency Self-Assessment Rubric to set their own goals to build fluent reading skills. Other students may need more support with teachers using the Fluency Self-Assessment Rubric to help students set these goals. Overall, it is important to meet with students regularly to help them identify their strengths, determine areas for improvement, establish reasonable goals, and help them track, refine, and add to their goals for improving their fluency.

These guidelines can help you support students with goal setting for improving their fluency:

- First, help students identify an area of relative strength on the Fluency Self-Assessment rubric. Then have them describe their strength in the “Describe a FLUENCY STRENGTH” box at the bottom of their self-assessments.
- Then help students identify one criterion from the Fluency Self-Assessment rubric that they want to improve on. For that specific criterion, ask students to circle and write today’s date in the box that corresponds to their current level (likely “Need Support” or “Working on It”).
- Ask students to focus on the bottom of their self-assessments and write the name of the criteria they want to improve on the line next to “Specific” in the “Describe a FLUENCY GOAL” box.
- Next, ask students to look one level above where they circled and draw a star there (e.g., if a student circled “Need Support,” she would draw a star next to “Working on It”).
- Then ask them to record their goal on the line next to “Measurable” (e.g., “move from ‘Need Support’ to ‘Working on It’”).
- Ask students to think about: “Is this goal achievable? If so, how?”
- Ask a few students to share out. On the line next to “Achievable,” ask students to paraphrase how they will achieve their goals (e.g., “interesting text; assistance/practice”). Then ask them to think about: “Is this goal relevant? Why?”
- Invite a few students to share out. On the line next to “Relevant,” ask students to paraphrase why their goal is relevant (e.g., “understand what I’m reading better”). Finally, ask students to think about: “How much time each day do you think you need to reach your goal? How many days total do you think you need?”
- Ask a few students to share their thoughts aloud. On the line next to “Time-bound,” ask students to paraphrase the time for their goal (e.g., “15 minutes/day for 5 days”).
  - With students setting goals around “Accuracy,” initiate a math lesson/“teachable moment” by showing them how to determine accuracy scores based on 100 words (50, 20, 10), or they can be based on odd numbers such as 123, 97, etc., for a more advanced option.
  - Students compute accuracy at the beginning of the week with a fun poem or other piece of interesting and, if possible, thematically related text.
- Throughout the week, provide modeling, assistance, and sufficient opportunity to practice with the same text. Give students a choice about whether to perform or record the piece to share at the end of the week.



- Help them track and then compute errors at the end of the week. Students should show increased accuracy.
- Encourage them to continuously refine and add to the boxes “Describe a FLUENCY STRENGTH” and “Describe a FLUENCY GOAL” at the bottom of their Fluency Self- Assessments.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe a FLUENCY STRENGTH	Describe a FLUENCY GOAL
	<p><b><i>Remember to be SMART about your goal ...</i></b></p> <p><i>Specific:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Measurable:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Achievable:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Relevant:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Time-bound:</i> _____</p>

**Planning a Fluency Routine: The MAPP Approach<sup>1</sup>****Overview**

The MAPP approach to fluency instruction includes the following components: Modeling- teacher and peer modeling of fluent to help students understand what reading with fluency looks and sounds like; Assistance- students reading along with more fluent readers or recordings of fluent readers; Practice- students get to practice reading selected passages aloud to help build their fluency skills; Performance- students read practiced passages aloud to an audience (teacher, peers, or others). These components form an instructional cycle that provides students with the necessary modeling, support, practice, and motivation they need to build their fluency skills (Rasinski, 2006).

When establishing routines for the MAPP approach, note that students must feel that they are in a safe learning environment that encourages them to learn from mistakes and celebrate their accomplishments as they practice their reading fluency. Please see “Creating a Safe Environment for Practice” (in the Getting Started section, above) for ways to ensure students understand that fluency can be developed with practice and that their initial struggles with fluent reading are in no way indicative of their intellect.

<sup>1</sup> The MAPP Approach is based on the work of Timothy Rasinski. This approach is described by Rasinski in the following article: “Reading Fluency for Adolescents: Should We Care?” AdLit in Perspective, September 2006.

**Planning a Fluency Routine: The MAPP Approach**

**Modeling**

*Modeling* means building in time every day to read aloud to students and model the criteria that are described on the Fluency Self-Assessment rubric to help students gain a deeper understanding of what fluent reading is and support their progress toward the attainment of critical reading skills.

During one of the early modules in the year, teachers should consider how they would like to “kick off” fluency, by introducing and modeling criteria for fluency (see “Introducing Fluency Criteria and Self-Assessment” in the Getting Started section above). Use a fun and thematically related poem or lyrical piece. During this introduction, emphasize with students that the ability to read fluently is not a matter of intelligence. Rather, all students can become fluent readers when provided with opportunities to hear fluent reading, get assistance from adults and peers, and work independently or in groups to practice developing accuracy, appropriate phrasing, and expression. It is also important to help students understand that a reader’s fluency can fluctuate: Readers may be very fluent when reading texts they love, and even a typically fluent reader may struggle when reading text that is difficult or on a topic with which they are not familiar.

Once the criteria for fluency has been modeled (preferably more than once and with a variety of texts), students can begin to use the Fluency Self-Assessment rubric as a tool to help them recognize their strengths and set individual goals for areas of relative weakness. See the sample lesson, above, that shows one way to introduce fluency criteria to students. Be sure they understand the criteria clearly and feel safe enough to honestly and accurately self-assess their strengths and gaps. Do not just distribute the Fluency Self-Assessment rubric without explaining and modeling each of the four fluency descriptors: *accuracy, rate and flow, phrasing and punctuation, and expression and volume*. This likely would be ineffective and could have a negative impact on students’ self-esteem.

## Planning a Fluency Routine: The MAPP Approach

### Assistance

*Assistance* is when a student reads along with a more fluent reader or recording to help pace and monitor his or her own fluency. Once students understand the fluent reading criteria (based on teacher modeling), they can begin to use *assistance* to achieve their fluency goals. Reading at the same time as another individual lets them see, hear, and speak the text all at once; through this multiple sensory experience, they will make a more solid cognitive connection to the text.

This type of assistance can be offered in various ways:

1. Pair students with another individual to read the same passage aloud simultaneously. Student partners can be the teacher, a parent, an older student, or a peer (also see *Fluency Work: Partnered Reading* by Meredith and David Liben (of Student Achievement Partners) in the Additional Reading section of this resource).
2. “Evaluate and Emulate”:
  - A student first listens to another fluent reader’s audio recording of a piece of text.
  - Then, the student uses the Fluency-Self Assessment to evaluate the reader.
  - The student chooses one area from the self-assessment that she/he thought the speaker did exceptionally well (*accuracy, rate and flow, phrasing and punctuation, or expression and volume*) and wants to emulate, or read in the same way the speaker from the audio recording did.
  - The student then reads *simultaneously* with the audio recording to repeatedly practice emulating the speaker.
  - The student may then choose to perform the piece for the class or record (audio/video) the practiced piece for feedback and self-evaluation of his or her emulation goal (see the “Performance” section for more details).

Note that audio versions of popular books often can be found at local libraries or ordered through interlibrary loan. Several Internet sites also offer free, prerecorded versions of stories read aloud. One such site is Storyline Online (<http://www.storylineonline.net/>). You can locate other sites by using search terms such as “stories read aloud” or by using the specific title of a piece and “read aloud” (e.g., “*To Kill A Mockingbird* read aloud,” and so forth).

## Planning a Fluency Routine: The MAPP Approach

### Practice

Practice means giving students ample opportunity to read passages with the fluency criteria (*accuracy, rate and flow, phrasing and punctuation, and expression and volume*) in mind. Because repetition is part and parcel of practice, it is important to choose texts that students will enjoy reading multiple times and that give students an opportunity to perform (see the “Performance” section for more details.)

There are many engaging options that give students opportunities to practice mastery of fluent reading skills both independently and with peers. Below are suggestions for both individual and partner/group work (some activities fit into both categories):

**Independent Options** (note that almost all of these options also can and should occasionally be done in pairs):

1. **Whisper Reading**
  - A student reads the same piece of text multiple times in a whisper-level voice.
  - This activity can be done in pairs by coupling more fluent and less fluent readers to provide feedback.
  - Focus can vary (accuracy, expressions, etc.)
2. **Poetry for Multiple Voices**
  - All poetry is written with a special attention to language and word choice and is thus great for practice with fluency.
  - A student reads portions of the poem in different “voices” with a focus on appropriate *expression and volume*.
3. **Tongue Twisters and Alliteration**
  - A student reads the same piece repeatedly, noting and correcting areas of difficulty with a focus on *accuracy* and/or *rate and flow*.
4. **Hyperbole and Quotations**
  - To maintain student engagement, select statements and quotes related to topics of student interest or study.
5. **First-Person Accounts (e.g., interviews, journals, letters, speeches, etc.)**
  - To maintain student engagement, select statements and quotes related to topics of student interest or study.
  - Focus can vary, but these types of resources lend themselves particularly well to practicing *phrasing and punctuation* and/or *expression and volume*.

**Planning a Fluency Routine: The MAPP Approach**

**Partner and Small Group Options**

1. Choral Read (students take turns reading different chunks or paragraphs of the text; focus can vary)
2. Partner reading
  - A student reads the same selection repeatedly with a focus on *phrasing and punctuation* and/or *expression and volume*.
  - Pair stronger students with weaker students, having the stronger student read first and the weaker student read the text again, using the stronger student’s modeling as a guide.
  - The stronger student can coach the weaker student.
  - This can also be done with two students of the same ability level regarding fluency, providing that the teacher first models the reading aloud so the students can emulate it.
3. Poetry for Multiple Voices (choose poems that represent a variety of cultural perspectives; poetry for multiple voices can be found at libraries and on the Internet; two or more students read different portions of the poem in different “voices” with a focus on appropriate *expression and volume*)
4. “Race for Spelling Patterns”
  - This fast-paced activity helps students recognize spelling patterns with phonograms.
  - This activity supports students’ reading with accuracy.
5. Punctuation Pictures
  - Students are given a statement or question that uses punctuation differently, e.g., “Let’s eat, Grandpa” versus “Let’s eat Grandpa.”
  - Then students read each sentence aloud with attention to accurate phrasing based on the punctuation to help them determine and discuss with a partner what each sentence actually means and try to create a “mind picture” of each meaning.
  - As a possible extension, students can sketch the meaning of each punctuation picture.
6. Readers Theater scripts
  - Choose scripts that represent a variety of cultural perspectives and, if possible, thematically related to the content of the module (a variety of Readers Theater scripts can be found on the Internet, or students may develop their own scripts).
  - Two or more students work together to practice repeatedly reading various roles/parts of the script with a focus on *accuracy, rate and flow, phrasing and punctuation, and/or expression and volume*.
  - Students may choose to perform the piece or audio/video record the performance (see the “Performance” section for details).

**Planning a Fluency Routine: The MAPP Approach**

**Performance**

*Performance* involves the opportunity to perform practiced pieces aloud in front of an audience. This gives students authentic purpose and motivation to practice their fluent reading skills. Performances can take place in a variety of ways, either whole group, small group, with a partner, or independently. The most suitable passages for performance have a strong “voice” and offer students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to apply what they know about how to read with accuracy, rate and flow, phrasing and punctuation, and expression and volume.

**Some examples of the types of pieces students may consider performing:**

- Letters
- Journal entries
- Readers Theater
- Poetry/song lyrics
- Speeches/monologues

**Performance options can be differentiated by giving students choices:**

1. What type of piece will be performed? (content and length)
2. Who will be the audience? (large or small group, partner)
3. How much time is needed to practice before the performance? (Set a schedule/days/amount of time per day.)
4. Will the performance be live or audio/video recorded?
5. Will students read directly from a script/paper or memorize the piece?

## Fluency Center—Sample Schedule and Example

This example Fluency Center schedule zooms in on one part of a planned intervention period. The purpose is to help teachers visualize what might happen in a Fluency Center. However, these Fluency Center activities can fit well into many other schedules; planning, grouping, and organization will vary across classrooms. This schedule can be modified for differentiation to meet individual student needs.

**Day 1 – Teacher-Led Small Groups<sup>2</sup>**

- Read-aloud/modeling
- Set a SMART goal for the week on Fluency Self-Assessment; meet one-on-one, five minutes, with teacher to discuss *strength* and *goal* (refine/add to as needed).
- Students choose a fluency practice text, then choose to work independently or with peers.

**Day 2 – Peer Modeling and Assistance**

- Modeling/assistance
- Students practice with assistance.

**Day 3 – Practice**

- Assistance/practice
- Provide assistance as needed; allow students time to practice.
- *Informally assess* students’ fluency goals by “listening in” on practice sessions; offer specific positive praise and guidance as needed.

**Day 4 – Practice and Feedback**

- Practice/refinement
- Give brief specific feedback (30 seconds/student) to students based on informal fluency assessment from Day 1.
- Let students keep practicing; “listen in” to make *informal assessments* of students’ progress toward fluency goals; offer specific positive feedback and support.
- Display a *Performance sign-up sheet* for students to add their names to if they want to give a “live” or “recorded” performance of their piece the next day.

**Day 5 – Performance**

- Performance: Give students who signed up to perform a chance to practice (5 minutes or less), then perform or share a video/audio recording of their piece.
- *Formally assess* students’ fluency during performances.

<sup>2</sup> Note that based on the sample schedule in the Overview, Day 1 of this cycle would begin on Wednesdays.



**Fluency Center—Sample Schedule and Example**

Examples of fluency practices embedded in the modules:

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6M2B, Unit 2, Lesson 2 - students whisper read a monologue in pairs (work time A)</li> <li>• 6M2B, Unit 2, Lesson 4 - students read the monologue aloud to each other (work time A)</li> <li>• 6M2B, Unit 2, Lesson 6 - students read the monologue in a group (work time A)</li> <li>• 6M2B, Unit 3, Lesson 10 - students perform their adversity narrative for the class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7M1.3L6 - students read aloud their poems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8M2B.U1L8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17</li> <li>• 8M2B.U2L1, 2, 3, 5, 8</li> <li>• In all of these lessons students do a drama circle in which students are chosen to read a role in <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>.</li> </ul>

**Additional Passages, Poetry and Fluency Resources:**

Fluency Packet for Grades 6-8

<http://achievethecore.org/page/887/fluency-packet-for-the-6-8-grade-band-detail-pg>

**Fluency Work: Partnered Reading**  
**by Meredith and David Liben, Student Achievement Partners**

The goal of partnered reading is to increase fluency in older students who are experiencing trouble with decoding and reading aloud. Until fluency is achieved, these students will focus their reading energy solely on decoding and will not be able to pay attention to the meaning of the text. Therefore, they are invariably far behind in their reading comprehension skills as well.

In our experience, these students are reluctant readers, and will seldom volunteer to read aloud in classroom settings. Usually their more fluent peers and their teachers are reluctant to have them read aloud. Consequently, these students never get the chance to practice enough to improve fluency and reading speed. They are caught in a “Catch-22.” Partnered reading is a way to break that cycle, to support these students so that they can read fluently at an age-appropriate speed. Then they can shift their focus to reading for understanding.

Partnered reading is simple, quick, effective, and easy to implement. Students are paired who can work together sympathetically and who read at similar levels. We frequently try to cross grades and genders in making our pairs, and avoid pairing children who know each other well. The adult in charge can be drawn from any number of sources: parent or community volunteer, school aides and paraprofessionals, student teachers, or interns and high school students. No special setting is needed: Among other places, we always do fluency work in isolated parts of the hall so that adult presence is extended and passers-by maintain appropriate noise levels. Our fluency work doubles as hall monitoring.

Pairs come out of the classroom for a total of fifteen minutes daily for their fluency work. The adult coach maintains a file of passages for the pair that are at their approximate “frustration level”<sup>3</sup>. These can be accumulated and gathered into a fluency resource. We use a mix of writing: poems, non-fiction, interesting newspaper articles, commercial passages, and famous speeches. The student pairs only work on a paragraph or two a day, so gathering material is not very difficult. The coach has three copies of the day’s passage prepared, so that the readers and the coach all have their own copies.

One student reads first. He works intensively on decoding and reading accurately, word by word, punctuation included. The coach’s role is to support the reading, give cues and strategies, force attention to punctuation and overlooked syntax, but never to supply answers or let the student off the hot seat. The reader has to get every word and grammar point right, even if he only makes it through one or two sentences. The other student follows his partner’s work in a highly focused way. This is monitored by the coach’s insistence that both students have a finger or a pencil pointed at the word being read constantly. The resting reader is not at full concentration or tension, but he is getting the full benefit of the work his partner is doing and the cues the coach is providing so long as he is following faithfully.

<sup>3</sup> Frustration level is defined as the reading point where a student has more than 10% miscues and falterings.

After the first reader has labored through a chunk of text for three or four minutes, generally a paragraph or two, the coach stops him. He then goes back to the beginning of the passage to read it fluently, starting over if he miscues. It is crucial for each reader to have, each and every day, a fluent reading experience before he stops. This is far more important than how much he reads. A single sentence read with fluency and expression is better than half a page read with mispronunciations and lack of expression. The resting partner moves his finger to follow the fluent reading, and the coach must continue to monitor the attention.

The partners switch roles, so that the first reader can rest (but still follow) while his partner does the hard work with the next section of the text. The coach continues to demand persistence on word attack, careful attention to punctuation and perfection on the final, fluent re-reading. In general, the fifteen minutes is most fruitful if both readers get two chances to be the oral reader, and two chances to read silently while following along.

There are several aspects of the fluency work that need to be monitored and adjusted by the adult coach. The passages may be too frustrating or too easy, so that the material itself may have to be adjusted. Some pairs may waste too much time in switching roles, so that it is more practical only to switch back and forth once. The pairs may not be even or compatible, and may need to be re-arranged.

We believe this fifteen minutes daily of fluency work is more important to a student's academic success than any other activity he might miss while out of any class. After all, until the student reads with grade appropriate fluency, reading content area books is not a real option. However, there may be times when efforts should be made to coordinate the time of the fluency work with another "pullout" program, like a resource room visit, so that disruptions to the academic classes are kept to a minimum. It is also better not to have the partnered reading at a time when one of the students might be missing a favorite activity like gym or recess. It is our experience that students appreciate the benefit of the fluency work and engage in it willingly. This should not be jeopardized by asking them to miss their favorite part of the day.

Partnered reading is a highly effective way to intervene with older students who have fluency problems. These fluency problems will affect comprehension negatively, as the student is spending all his mental energy on sounding out words, and none on understanding the meaning of the text. Coaches and students alike will see the results of their work quickly, and will continue to see improvements week by week as long as the system is followed consistently. Partnered reading is one of the most efficient and easy to implement of all remediation interventions for older students.

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# Syntax and Mechanics

## Syntax and Mechanics



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## COMMON CORE INTERVENTIONS FOR ADOLESCENT READERS

### Syntax and Mechanics

The Common Core Standards emphasize syntax and mechanics for students in the CCSS Language Standards. Refer to the following chart for examples of explicit mini-lessons in the modules regarding syntax and mechanics. Use the mini-lessons embedded in the modules as a model when building time into your intervention and/or support periods to create additional explicit mini-lessons to support students in syntax and mechanics learning. As you plan mini-lessons be mindful that this is an additional opportunity to engage students in an opportunity to be exposed to rich literature and literary non-fiction.

Standards	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
<b>L.1 Conventions of Standard English</b> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	Module 1, Unit 2, Lesson 19	Module 3, Unit 3, Lesson 1	Module 3A, Unit 3, Lesson 1 Module 3A, Unit 3, Lesson 2 Module 3B, Unit 3, Lesson 1
<b>L.2 Conventions of Standard English</b> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	Module 3A, Unit 2, Lesson 14	Module 1, Unit 3, Lesson 5	Module 3B, Unit 2, Lesson 20
<b>L.3 Knowledge of Language</b> Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.	Module 2B, Unit 3, Lesson 7 Module 3A, Unit 3, Lesson 11 Module 3B, Unit 3, Lesson 12		Module 3A, Unit 2, Lesson 11 Module 3B, Unit 2, Lesson 6 Module 3B, Unit 2, Lesson 9
<b>L.4 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</b> Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.	Module 3B, Unit 1, all lessons	Module 2B, Unit 2, all lessons	Module 4, Unit 1, all lessons
<b>L.5 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</b> Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.	Module 2A, Unit 1, Lessons 2-5 Module 3B, Unit 2, all lessons	Module 3, Unit 1, Lesson 13 Module 3, Unit 2, Lesson 9	Module 2A, Unit 1, Lesson 14

**COMMON CORE INTERVENTIONS FOR ADOLESCENT READERS**  
**Syntax and Mechanics**

Standards	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
<p><b>L.6 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</b>                      Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain- specific words and phrases.</p>	<p>Module 4, Unit 3, Lesson 3                      Module 4, Unit 3, Lesson 7</p>	<p>Module 1, Unit 2, Lessons 12-14                      Module 2B, Unit 3, Lesson 1-3                      Module 4A, Unit 3, Lessons 1, 2, 4, and 8                      Module 4B, Unit 3, Lessons 1, 2, 4, and 8</p>	

### Show the Rule™<sup>1</sup>

Consider using or adapting the **Show the Rule™** strategy to meet the need for additional instruction regarding the CCSS Language Standards: Show the Rule™ was developed to address the CCSS Language Standards while engaging students in rich literature. Students immediately practice and apply what they have learned through creative writing. The goal of Show the Rule™ is to support students in immediately transferring their knowledge into their own writing. This is not only more engaging, but also provides a more reliable assessment than taking a weekly test, because it provides direct evidence of the students' ability to write about what they have learned. This approach aligns with well-established research that shows that grammar is best taught in the context of students' authentic reading and writing experiences<sup>2</sup>.

### Summary:

- Introduce a specific rule/language standard through a literary or informational text.
- Students actively listen or look (on overhead or interactive white board) for the rule as it is used in the text.
- As a whole group, students begin to define and form their own examples of the rule.
- Students pick out a picture from a magazine, cut it out and glue it into their Show the Rule™ journal. They use this picture to inspire ideas for their own creative writing.
- With the new rule in mind, they write a creative piece using the rule of the week as often as they can throughout the writing piece. This reinforces the newly acquired knowledge and demonstrates the depth of understanding.
- Students highlight the ways in which they applied the rule in their own writing, either by using a highlighter or by underlining examples.
- Students continue to work on this writing piece all week and self-score using a rubric. This is turned in at the end of the week for the teacher to assess. Students do not
- formally go back to edit or revise; this is first-draft writing.

Show the Rule™<sup>1</sup> was developed to address the CCSS Language Standards while engaging students in rich literature. Students immediately practice and apply what they have learned through creative writing rather than by completing worksheets. The goal of Show the Rule™ is to support students in immediately transferring their knowledge into their own writing. This is not only more engaging, but also provides a more reliable assessment than taking a weekly test, because it provides direct evidence of the students' ability to write about what they have learned. This approach aligns with well-established research that shows that grammar is best taught in the context of students' authentic reading and writing experiences.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Used by permission, Eloise Ginty, Vermont Writing Collaborative. For more information and resources, go to [www.vermontwritingcollaborative.org](http://www.vermontwritingcollaborative.org)

<sup>2</sup> For more information on this research base, see Foundational Reading and Language Skills Resources Package for Grades 3–5: Overview.



# Independent Reading: The Importance of a Volume of Reading and Sample Plans



#### Overview

In the Common Core era, students are challenged to read complex texts to build content knowledge, literacy skills, and academic vocabulary. Each of EL Education’s Grades 3–8 ELA modules includes one or more “central” texts—complex texts that students work with in class and for homework, with support from the teacher and peers. It is important that all students have access to, and support with, reading text at the appropriate level of complexity for their grade level.

However, students also need a “volume of reading,” which means just what it sounds like it means: any ways to get students reading a lot of text (including text beyond the texts central to a module and in addition to texts that students read during school hours or with support). This volume of reading helps students build important world knowledge and acquire additional vocabulary, both of which are critical for reading comprehension.

#### What Influences EL Education’s Approach

- The Common Core vision of what it means to be college and career ready as readers
- The research base on reading instruction
- Recognition that reading is a skill that demands ongoing practice to develop proficiency
- Understanding the importance of offering students a variety of texts and purposes for reading

#### Volume of Reading

Students need to read both complex text and a lot of text. According to Adams (2009), “To grow, our students must read lots, and more specifically they must read lots of ‘complex’ texts—texts that offer them new language, new knowledge, and new modes of thought” (p.182, cited in CCSS Appendix A). If students are to be college and career ready, which requires the ability to read complex texts, they must be saturated with language and given opportunities to practice challenging reading. According to Allen (2009), “Reading is like every other human activity in that the amount of practice really matters, especially the amount of reading done while reading proficiency is being developed” (p. 60). Unfortunately, for many students who do not experience successful reading practice, they lose their enthusiasm for reading, which in turn leads to decreased motivation to practice and ultimately develop reading proficiency. Ensuring that students are given ample opportunities to read a variety of materials in a variety of ways increases their motivation because teachers can tap into students’ interests and give students enough practice for reading proficiency to develop.

To give students the amount of reading practice necessary, we should provide reading opportunities that are varied in purpose and type of text. Reading development does not occur in a linear fashion, and students’ reading proficiency occurs at different rates (Common Core State Standards, n.d.). Students need opportunities to be challenged while reading, as well as opportunities to read texts that provide for easy fluent reading (CCSS, n.d.). These experiences can occur within a given topic of study (e.g., 7<sup>th</sup> grade Module 1 about the Second Sudanese Civil War). They also may occur during independent reading when students choose books based on personal interest. The ELA modules’ recommended reading lists offer students a variety of options to choose from.

#### Research Reading

According to the Common Core State Standards (n.d.), “To be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new” (p. 2). Research skills not only are required to be successful in a technological society, but also are an excellent opportunity to engage students in reading a variety of resources. Research on a topic also develops students’ knowledge about words, which increases reading proficiency. “Every concept—simple or complex, concrete or abstract—is learned in terms of its similarities, differences, and relationships with other concepts with which we are familiar” (Adams, 2011, p. 3). Students complete several short research projects throughout the modules.

When students are engaged in “research reading,” they typically are reading many texts about the same or related subjects. This volume of reading builds students’ knowledge about a specific topic. In addition, original research reading gives students an opportunity to pursue their interests and learn in-depth information, which builds background knowledge, word knowledge, and confidence in reading. Library media specialists play a critical role in helping students to complete both assigned research projects and independent research related to students’ personal interests.

#### Reading for Pleasure

According to Clark & Rumbold (2006), “Reading for pleasure refers to reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to reading that, having begun at someone else’s request, we continue because we are interested in it” (p. 6). The Common Core has brought about a great deal of focus to the cognitive aspects of reading: word recognition and comprehension of complex texts. It is important for us to keep in mind, however, that even if students can read, it does not mean they will choose to do so.

Reading for pleasure is not the same as reading complex text that is required reading. Both types of reading play a pivotal role in students’ literacy lives and help foster the “volume of reading” so clearly called for in the Common Core State Standards. Reading for pleasure is crucial to promote student engagement and achievement. It is a key strategy for building lifelong readers and allows for developing readers to learn about their own reading likes and dislikes as they construct their reading identities.

Independent reading is an opportunity for students to enlarge their world and find relevance. The authors of the Common Core note that students “need the satisfaction of easy, fluent reading for which the standards allow” (Appendix A, n.d.). This of course must include additional texts on the topic of study, which are offered in the ELA modules’ recommended reading lists. The authors of the Common Core also clearly affirm and recognize the merits of allowing students to choose books on topics of their personal interest, noting that those books are likely to bridge a vast range of complexity.

Allowing students to choose texts for independent reading helps them discover what they want to read, as well as to uncover new knowledge and connect with their world. Teachers and library media specialists can play a vital role in fostering a rich reading life for all students.

Teachers often are concerned about holding students accountable for independent reading. There are endless ways to track independent reading requirements, but the most successful ways include placing the responsibility on the student. Creating a plan for launching independent reading that includes clear class routines, goal setting, and systems for accountability and student ownership creates a culture of reading in the classroom and the school that will promote students' literacy development. For specific recommendations, see companion document *Launching Independent Reading in Grades 6–8: Sample Plan*. These plans are designed to enhance and extend the strong programs many teachers and schools already have in place.

#### Millennial Readers

Research on the millennial generation indicates that our students are both technologically savvy and self-savvy. They often define the merits of activities based upon a quick cost-benefit analysis. That is the essence of the *relevance* promoted by the Common Core. Traditionally, when students are assigned independent reading projects, they are asked low-level questions that can be located through a simple search online. We need to offer students both rigor and relevance. When rigor is packaged with relevance, it increases student motivation. This can be accomplished through the questions students are asked about their independent reading text. Imagine that students have been asked to choose and independently read a biography. Below are some examples of questions that could be used to engage the millennial adolescent reader, and to increase the rigor of a task such as a biography report:

- What is the everlasting footprint that your person left behind? Use evidence from the text to support your reasoning.
- Would your person be a good person to nominate to a hall of fame? Use evidence from the text to support your response.

#### Recommended Texts

Each EL Education English language arts module includes a list of recommended texts in a broad complexity range for each unit. These books can be used for independent research on a given topic, or students may choose them to read for pleasure during independent reading time at school and at home. They may also be used for small group instruction. Because these book choices have already been identified as aligned to the topic, they are a good starting place for helping students to select books and increase their volume of reading.

#### Other Resources

Your library is an amazing and often underutilized asset to promote a volume of reading. There are a number of reading programs across the country that encourage classrooms to build “libraries” for convenient student reading choices. These classroom libraries play a positive role in developing lifelong readers. Yet they sometimes have limited choices for students. To support the individuality of each student, encourage students to access the thousands of titles and choices that can be found in the local and school libraries. School librarians and media specialists are also often an underutilized asset to promote a volume of reading for students. Contact your school librarian for support in this area, as he or she is often eager to help.

**Launching Independent Reading in Grades 6–8: Sample Plan**

The purpose of this document is to serve as a resource to middle school English Language Arts teachers in launching and sustaining a strong independent reading program. Many teachers already have robust plans in place: Please view this document as a resource to enhance or extend your existing work.

Creating a plan for supporting your students in independent reading is context-specific and varies greatly based on a school’s schedule and staffing model. If your current routines are working, it probably makes sense to stick with them, though you may find some interesting ideas in these documents. If you do use the plans here, there are a number of choices to be made about what structures and routines will work best for you and your students.

**Guiding principles:**

- Students need to learn the skill of selecting books that interest them and are at an appropriate independent reading level. (This skill aligns with literature standard RL.11, but is equally important when students are selecting and evaluating informational text.) Teachers need to teach the skill of selecting and evaluating texts, and then check in to see how students are doing.
- Students need accountability for their reading, both on a weekly basis and when they finish a book. This accountability comes from reading logs as well as from conversations with teachers and peers about what they are reading.
- Social interactions energize independent reading. This is the principle behind book clubs for adults, and it is equally true—if not more so—for young adolescent readers. If possible, have students select independent reading books in pairs or trios, so that they can talk about their book with another student. Also, if students begin to buzz about a particular book or series, look for that, build on it, nurture it—this will do more than anything else to get kids actually reading.
- Launching a successful independent reading program takes class time—to teach it, to check in, to motivate students, and for students to actually read. Struggling readers, in particular, need time at school to read. And many students of all reading abilities may not have a quiet space at home for reading, or support from adults beyond the school community. For these lessons to be successful, find additional time in the school day (homeroom, DARE time) for students to read independently.

**Logistical considerations:**

- **Launching Independent Reading:** The launch of independent reading will vary by school and teacher. The plan below describes a series of lessons to launch independent reading. This plan could be implemented as a stand-alone week of English Language Arts class or could be interspersed (a day at a time) into the curriculum. The curriculum “Module Overview” and “Unit Overview” documents signal to teachers the point in the module/unit by which the launch process needs to be complete. Teachers should pace and time the launch based on what works best for their students and school schedule.

NOTE: Use or adapt the **Goldilocks handout** (in supporting materials at the end of this document), which describes one useful way to help students learn to self-select books at an appropriate level of challenge for their interests and reading ability. Consider whether you want to extend students’ choice to include a wider range of reading materials than just “books”: magazines, newspapers, manuals, etc.

- **Maintaining Independent Reading:** In the lessons in the modules, time is allocated to maintain the routines once the program has been launched. Specifically, students check in weekly about their reading and experience some form of accountability in each unit.

- **Communicating with Parents about Independent Reading:** Consider how you will communicate with parents about independent reading, as their support will be important. Although it can be difficult to have students get a reading record signed every night, consider sending home completed reading logs (after four check-ins—so every two to four weeks) for parent signatures, and consider how to routinely follow up with parents whose students are not completing the assigned independent reading.

NOTE: Use or adapt the **Sample Letter about Accountable Independent Reading** (in supporting materials at the end of this document) to send home with students.

- **Student Goal-Setting and Accountability:** You will need to decide what sorts of goals you want students to set for their reading and how often (weekly or twice weekly) you will check in with students about their reading. The launch sequence described below includes twice-weekly check-ins on progress as the independent reading routines are getting established. Based on the needs of your students, you could continue that pattern or scale back to weekly check-ins. (Some teachers wish to have students record their reading every day; you could supplement the materials below with such a record.)

NOTE: Use or adapt the **Reading Log** (in supporting materials at the end of this document), which has a goal-setting chart, plot/topic, and Reviewer’s Notes).

- **Publishing Book Reviews for Authentic Audiences:** Students benefit from having an authentic audience (beyond their teacher) with whom to share their learning and opinions about the books they read. Peers are a great audience: Having students share reviews with one another has the additional benefit of adding to the “buzz” about books their classmates might like. Consider the various options for “publishing” reviews, and select the one that works for their situation (e.g., simple reviews on index cards to post on a bulletin board, a class book blog, goodreads.com, or student-prepared book talks). Having students write or deliver oral reviews of their books has the added benefit of addressing standards related to written argument (W.1) or public speaking (SL.4).

NOTE: Use or adapt the **Reader’s Review** (in supporting materials at the end of this document).

- **Conferring during Independent Reading:** Conferring one-on-one with students about what they are reading serves both instructional and accountability purposes: A conversation with you about reading will create more accountability for a student about her reading than a log she turns in. Conferring is a rich teaching practice and allows you to build strong relationships with your students as readers and as people. The heart of conferring is simply to ask students, “How’s it going?” “What are you learning?” and “What are you figuring out as a reader?”

While students are reading silently in class, circulate to observe and confer. Notice patterns in the types of books students are choosing, and in how well they are sustaining engagement with their chosen book. Confer with students to ensure that they are reading books that are on an appropriate reading level and to support them in making meaning of those books. Conferring can include the following:

- Asking a student to read a paragraph or two out loud, noting any miscues (if there are a lot, the book might be too hard for independent reading)
- Asking a student to talk about what is happening in that excerpt, stating simply: “Tell me more!”
- Helping students use “fix-up” strategies when they get confused (e.g., rereading, visualizing, using context clues to determine unknown vocabulary)
- Asking students what they like/don’t like about a book and why (push them to cite evidence!)
- Suggesting titles that the student might find interesting and appropriate

Launching Independent Reading

<p><b>Lesson</b>  <i>Note: There should be several class days between some of these lessons</i></p>	<p><b>Agenda</b></p>	<p><b>Materials</b></p>
<p>1: Introducing Independent Reading (25 minutes)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set purpose: Reading just-right books builds reading skills; learning to choose books that you like will enrich your life.</li> <li>2. Goldilocks lesson (see supporting materials): How to choose a just-right book.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Teacher explains.</li> <li>– Teacher gives each student two short excerpts with which to practice the Goldilocks routine.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>Goldilocks handout</p> <p>Two short text excerpts (one easy, one hard)</p>
<p>2: Choosing “Just Right” Books: The Goldilocks Principle (45 minutes)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Book frenzy: Display lots of books for students to look at, ideally including some of the titles from the recommended reading lists for the modules; consider brief teacher book talks of those titles related to the module.</li> <li>2. Students have time to browse the books. Make this fun!</li> <li>3. Each student selects a few titles and “test drives” them using the <b>Goldilocks handout</b>.</li> <li>4. Students make selections (encourage partner selections, but each student needs his/her own copy of the text) and start reading silently. Teacher confers, focusing on students who at first glance appear to have books at inappropriate levels.</li> </ol>	<p>Books</p> <p>Goldilocks handout</p>

<b>Lesson</b> <i>Note: There should be several class days between some of these lessons</i>	<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Materials</b>
3: Setting Goals and Learning to Use Reading Logs (45 minutes)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Goal-setting lesson               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Students read for 10 minutes and see how many pages they have read. Note that students read at different paces, which is fine. The goal is not speed but comprehension.</li> <li>– Teacher sets time expectation for reading per week (around 2 hours minimum, assuming little other ELA homework).</li> <li>– Teacher models how to complete the goal-setting section of the <b>Reading Log</b>. Students then complete their own goal-setting, with the time expectations in mind. (Eventually, goal will be set weekly or twice weekly; for now, have students set a goal you will check in a few days).</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Teacher shows example and non-example reading log: the plot tracker and review notes parts. Ask students:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Which is stronger? How can you tell?</li> <li>* What should you do on this log? What should you not do?</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. 3. Students read silently. While students read, teacher continues to confer to make sure all students are reading books at the appropriate level.</li> <li>4. Send <b>Letter about Accountable Independent Reading</b> (in English and Spanish) home for signature from an adult.</li> </ol> <p>Homework: Students read individually and complete the reading log.</p>	Reading log  Exemplar and non-exemplar reading log entries  Letter about Accountable Independent Reading (in English and Spanish)
	A FEW DAYS OF CLASS GO BY	



<p><b>Lesson</b>  <i>Note: There should be several class days between some of these lessons</i></p>	<p><b>Agenda</b></p>	<p><b>Materials</b></p>
<p>4: Checking in on Reading Logs and Book Selections; Launching Partner Conversations (45 minutes)</p>	<p>3. Check in with students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Did you meet your reading goal? If so, how did you do it? If not, why not?</li> <li>– Set next goal. (Again, ultimately this will just happen weekly. But at the start, set goals for just two or three days at a time.)</li> <li>– Do something to celebrate/build class culture: Reading all-stars? Play a song?</li> </ul> <p>4. Check reading logs: Teacher displays model reading logs (from Lesson 3) and list of criteria students generated. Students assess their own reading log entry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What should I keep the same?</li> <li>– What should I change next time? Why?</li> </ul> <p>5. Mini lesson: Can you abandon a book?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Teacher models when and why it makes sense to abandon a book.</li> <li>– Teacher gets a list of students who want to talk about changing books; plan to confer with these students.</li> </ul> <p>6. Partner conversation about book</p> <p>Model this first (invite a student volunteer to model with you in front of the class).</p> <p>Pair students who are reading the same book (ideal). Or pair students by some other criteria; the goal is just to get students talking with one another about what they are reading. Options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Each student finds a paragraph he/she likes and reads it out loud and explains it.</li> <li>– Students share one point from their “Reviewer’s Notes” part of the reading log to share.</li> <li>– After the first round, teacher notices and names positive pair conversations.</li> <li>– Whole class debrief: Who learned something from their partner? Who heard about an interesting book today?</li> </ul>	<p>Reading Log</p> <p>Exemplar Reading Log entry and list of criteria (from Lesson 3)</p> <p>Questions/guide posted for partner conversation</p>

<b>Lesson</b> <i>Note: There should be several class days between some of these lessons</i>	<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Materials</b>
	A FEW MORE DAYS GO BY	
5: Weekly Check-in (20–25 minutes)	<p>Weekly check-in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Did you meet your reading goal? If so, how did you do it? If not, why not?</li> <li>– Set next goal (at this point, move to a regular schedule—so set a twice weekly or weekly goal).</li> <li>– Partner conversation.</li> </ul> <p>Looking ahead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Teacher briefly shares <b>Model Reader’s Review</b> so students can keep that in mind as they read.</li> </ul> <p>Feedback: Teacher collects reading logs to give feedback. (Plan to return students’ logs the next day and set aside a few minutes for students to process feedback.)</p>	Teacher-developed model reader’s review (in the form your class will use to “publish” it: index cards, blog, goodreads, or notes for book talks)
6: Feedback on Reading Logs (20–25 minutes)	<p>Teacher returns logs and gives students time to process feedback.</p> <p>Silent reading time: Teacher confers with any students whose logs indicate concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Need help with aspects of the reading log?</li> <li>* Need help choosing a more appropriate book?</li> <li>* Need help structuring in sufficient reading time?</li> </ul>	
	END OF LAUNCH	

**Maintaining Independent Reading Routines**

Note: Within the ELA Curriculum modules, time to maintain the routine is built into specific lessons.

Note: Within the ELA Curriculum modules, students are NOT expected to be reading a book on their own while they are also reading the central/extended whole class text for a given module. Often independent reading is launched about halfway through a module, when students are done with this central text.

**Weekly or twice weekly: Check in on reading**

1. Check in on goals/set new goals
2. Partner conversation
3. Possible addition:
  - Meet in small groups to do informal book talks (I am reading ... which is about ... I would/would not recommend it because ...)

**Choosing Books Using the Goldilocks Rule<sup>1</sup>**

**In order to become a better reader, you need to spend lots of time independently reading books that are NOT TOO EASY and NOT TOO HARD ...just like Goldilocks.**

1. The Five Finger Rule- Are there many words you don't know?
  - Read the first two pages. Every time you come to a word that you don't know, put one finger up.
  - If you get to five fingers before the end of the first page, STOP! This book is TOO HARD to read on your own. Choose another book and start this step again.
  
2. The Page 2 Check- Can you explain what happened to someone else?
  - Read the first two pages. At the end of the second page, stop and ask yourself: Can I explain what happened so far? Does what I read make sense to me?
  - If the answer is no, STOP! This book is TOO HARD to read on your own. Choose another book and start again with step one.
  
3. The Page 5 Check- Does the book make you think?
  - Read the first five pages. At the end of the fifth page, stop and ask yourself: "Is this book making me think?" Did you reread or make a connection to help you understand what you read?
  - If not... STOP! This book is TOO EASY. You should choose a more challenging book to help you become a better reader.

<sup>1</sup> Modified for elementary from a version developed by Jody Peltason while she was teaching at Cesar Chavez Public High School in Washington, D.C. Used with permission.

**The 5 Finger Rule:**

1. How many words that you didn't know were on the first 2 pages? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The Page 2 Check: Explain what happened in the story so far:

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3. The Page 5 Check: Circle YES or NO
  - Are you pausing to think as you read? YES or NO
  - Did you stop to reread? YES or NO
  - Did you make a connection to something else you have read or learned to help you understand the text? YES or NO

**So, is this a good book for you?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ No, because it's too hard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ No, because it's too easy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, because it's just right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ No, because it's just right—but I'm not interested!

**Sample Letter about Accountable Independent Reading<sup>2</sup>**

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Our school values reading. Because we value reading, we require our students to read independently texts that they choose. We monitor student reading progress, make recommendations about new things students might like to try, and give students an opportunity to interact and to develop reading skills through independent reading. We both support and hold students accountable for this reading.

Accountable Independent Reading has five purposes:

1. To engage and motivate students in learning things they care about
2. To promote students' love of reading
3. To build students' vocabulary: reading a lot exposes students to new words and ideas
4. To build students' knowledge about the world (through both fiction and informational text)
5. To build students' reading "stamina": their ability to read harder texts for longer periods of time

We encourage students to choose texts and topics that interest them. They also should choose books that are at a comfortable or challenging reading level.

Adults have a wide range of beliefs and values about what is appropriate for students to read. The books available for reading in the school often come from recommendations and library lists of good books. Some books also relate directly to the content students are studying together in class. Individual teachers choose books that they are comfortable sharing. We reserve the right to set parameters for our classrooms.

We leave the decision of choosing what is appropriate for you and your child to you. We encourage you to be aware of what your child chooses to read. Some parents or guardians may choose to read a text before they let their child read it. This can help you monitor what your child is reading, and it can be a great opportunity for discussion! You may also contact librarians for summaries and reviews or search online to learn more about a book your child is interested in. If your child is reading a text that does not fit with your family values for reading, certainly that text can be changed.

We have set up a system in which students set goals for their reading, keep a reading log (about the text and their own opinions about the book), and write reviews of the texts they are reading. Ask your student to share these documents with you. Be sure you know your child's reading goals so you can support him/her on staying on track, celebrating successes, and problem-solving as needed (including knowing when to abandon a book and choose one that is a better fit).

Juvenile Literature Resources and Scholastic websites have great links to book lists, advice for encouraging reluctant readers, parent guides to popular novels, and other resources for parents.

We hope independent reading will be enjoyable for your student and lead to a lifetime of reading.

Sincerely,

<sup>2</sup> Based on the work of Freya Mercer and English teachers in Central Square School District, Central Square NY.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date:**

**MY READING GOALS**

Date of next reading check-in	Goal: Write the book title and pages to be read.  *Example: <i>The Hunger Games</i> pages 37-54	Did I meet my goal? Why or why not?



## COMMON CORE INTERVENTIONS FOR ADOLESCENT READERS

### Independent Reading:

#### The Importance of a Volume of Reading and Sample Plans

**Plot/Topic Tracker and Reviewer’s Notes**

Please complete one entry for each reading check-in. An entry is likely to be about multiple chapters of your book. For Reviewer’s Notes: Pick one of the following to respond to:

- The most interesting/funniest/scariest scene was ... because ...
- A connection between this part of the book and what we are studying at school is ... which helps me understand that ...
- This part of the book reminds me of (other text, movie) because ... which helps me understand that ...
- A character I like/don’t like is ... because ...
- Something I learned about the world by reading this book is ... which seems important because ...

<b>Title and pages this entry refers to</b>	<b>Plot/Topic Tracker</b> <i>Briefly explain</i> <i>What happened in the book (fiction)</i> <i>What topic (informational text)</i>	<b>Reviewer’s Notes</b> <i>Share what you are thinking using one of the notes from above.</i>

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\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date:**

Title of book/magazine etc. \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Use the prompts below to write a review of the text you have been reading independently. You can write it on this form or on a separate sheet of notebook paper. Remember that you are writing for other students, to help them decide whether or not to read this text.

1. Share the title, author, and a summary of the text. (If the text was fiction, include information about setting, plot, character, and theme. But don't give away the end of the book. If the text was informational text, include information about the topic, main idea, and key details.)

I read \_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_

This text was about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Reader's Review

1. Share what you noticed about how the text was written (For both fiction and informational text, describe how the text is organized, and things you noticed about the author's word choice, use of language, or writing style.)

What I noticed about how the text was written was:

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2. Share what reading this text made you think about/wonder (Choose one or two entries from the Reviewer's Notes section of your Reading Log to explain here.)

This text made me think about/wonder:

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3. Rate this text and explain your rating. Below circle the number of stars in how you would give this text with 1 being

the lowest rating and 5 being the highest rating. Explain your rating using details from the text.

I would give this book 1/2/3/4 stars because:

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**Reader's Review:**  
Comparing Two Texts

**Directions:**

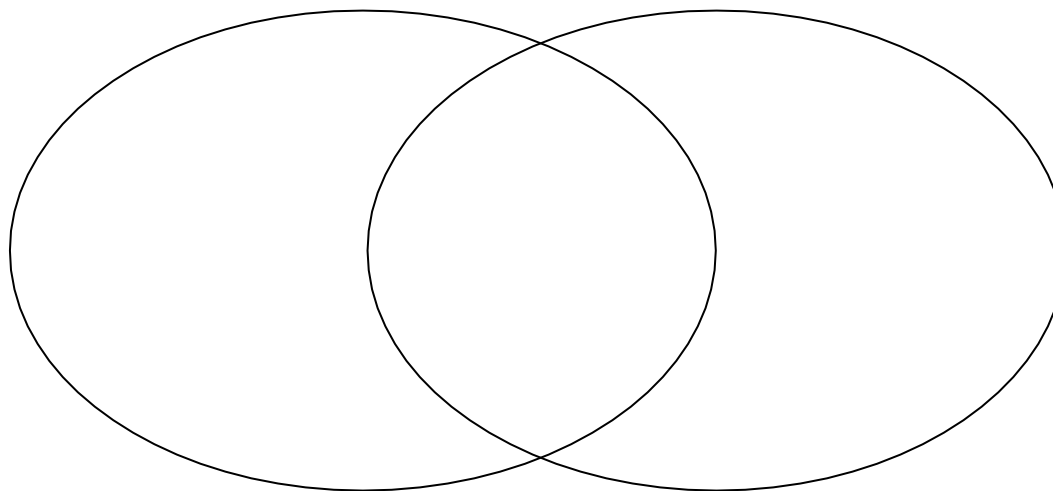
1. Identify what you will compare about the texts.
2. Record the titles and authors of the two texts you are comparing.
3. Name similarities in the middle of the diagram and differences on either side.
4. Write a paragraph explaining what similarities and differences are in your comparison.

This is a comparison of \_\_\_\_\_ from the texts named below:

\_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_

**First Text** (Title and Author)

**Second Text** (Title and Author)



What I noticed when comparing these texts:



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**References**

Adams, M. J. (2010–2011). Advancing our students' language and literacy the challenge of complex texts. *American Educator*, Winter, 1-11.

Allington, R. L. (2009). *What really matters in response to intervention: Research-based designs*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Clark, K., & Rumbold, K. (2006). *Reading for pleasure: A research overview* [Scholarly project]. Retrieved from Reading for pleasure: A research overview

*Common core state standards for English language arts & literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects: Appendix A: Research supporting key elements of the standards glossary of key terms* [Scholarly project]. (n.d.). In *Common Core State Standards Initiative*. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/ela-literacy>

**Sample Schedules**

This schedule represents **one possible way** to organize an intervention support period or other additional literacy time for students in grades 6-8. This is a two-week alternating schedule featuring both small-guided groups and independent center work that focuses on the skills and standards that students will likely need reinforced if they are not meeting grade level expectations in literacy. The schedule below represents week A in this two-week cycle.

**Note:** The schedule itself simply shows how time is allocated to address various skills. For the skill named in each box, refer to the corresponding resource that is a part of this full package (e.g., the Fluency Resource).

	<p><b>Additional Literacy Block</b>  <b>WEEK A</b>                      45–60 minutes per day;                      three differentiated groups rotate through each center outlined below.</p>				
<b>Approx. time</b>	<b>Mon</b> Full Class	<b>Tues</b> Centers—small rotating groups	<b>Wed</b> Centers—small rotating groups	<b>Thurs</b> Centers—small rotating groups	<b>Fri</b> Full class
<b>15- or 20-min. block</b>	<p><b>Syntax and Mechanics</b></p> <p>Full-class teacher-led introduction</p>	<p><b>Fluency Resource-Modeling and Assistance</b> (rotating center; teacher-led)</p>	<p><b>Additional work with Related Texts</b> (rotating center; teacher-led)</p>	<p><b>Additional Work with Related Texts</b> (rotating center; teacher-led)</p>	<p><b>Fluency Resource-Practice and Assistance</b> (partner work; informal assessment by teacher)</p>
<b>15- or 20-min. block</b>	<p><b>Additional work with Related Texts</b></p>	<p><b>Additional work with Related Texts</b> (rotating center)</p>	<p><b>Syntax and Mechanics</b> (rotating center)</p>	<p><b>Independent Reading</b> (rotating center)</p>	<p><b>Additional work with Related Texts</b> (small group/pairs; informal assessment by teacher)</p>
<b>15- or 20-min. block</b>	<p><b>Independent Reading</b> (individual conferences with teacher)</p>	<p><b>Syntax and Mechanics</b> (rotating center)</p>	<p><b>Fluency Resource-Assistance</b> (partner work; rotating center)</p>	<p><b>Syntax and Mechanics</b> (rotating center)</p>	<p><b>Syntax and Mechanics</b> (pair share; assessment)</p>

**Sample Schedules**

	<p><b>Additional Literacy Block</b>  <b>WEEK A</b>                  45–60 minutes per day;                  three differentiated                  groups rotate through                  each                  center outlined below.</p>				
<b>Approx. time</b>	<b>Mon</b> Centers—small rotating groups	<b>Tues</b> Centers—small rotating groups	<b>Wed</b> Centers—small rotating groups	<b>Thurs</b> Centers—small rotating groups	<b>Fri</b> Full class
<b>15- or 20-min. block</b>	<b>Word Study and Vocabulary</b> (rotating center; teacher-led)	<b>Additional Work with Related Texts</b> (rotating center; teacher-led)	<b>Fluency Resource-Modeling and Assistance</b> (rotating center; teacher-led)	<b>Additional Work with Related Texts</b> (rotating center; teacher-led)	<b>Fluency Resource-Performance</b> (teacher-facilitated)
<b>15- or 20-min. block</b>	<b>Additional Work with Related Texts</b> (rotating center)	<b>Independent Reading</b> (rotating center)	<b>Word Study and Vocabulary</b> (rotating center)	<b>Independent Reading</b> (rotating center)	<b>Word Study and Vocabulary-Assessment</b> (small groups—teacher-led)
<b>15- or 20-min. block</b>	<b>Fluency Resource-Practice</b> (rotating center)	<b>Word Study and Vocabulary</b> (rotating center)	<b>Additional Work with Related Texts</b> (rotating center)	<b>Word Study and Vocabulary</b> (rotating center)	<b>Independent Reading</b> (remainder of class— while teacher pulls groups for Word Study assessment)