GUIDEBOOKS 2.0 ELA

READING

Reading is the process by which we make meaning of written words. Being able to decode words automatically and fluently,[1] determining how words work together in sentences to produce meaning, and having robust background knowledge and a wide vocabulary are key factors in determining our proficiency as readers (Shanahan, Fisher & Frey 2012).

The goal of English language arts (ELA) is for all students to read, understand, and express their understanding of complex, grade-level texts. Complex texts are critical for exemplary English language arts instruction. All students must have regular access to texts that are at or above grade level. This does not mean students do not also engage with texts on their reading level during small-group instruction, but whole-group instruction must remain rigorous and complex.

Texts were selected for guidebook units based on **three main criteria**: diversity, authenticity, and complexity.

Diverse Texts: Diverse texts present different perspectives. They encourage students to learn about multiple sides of a single issue or seeing an event or idea from another perspective. Often times, texts with points of view and perspectives that challenge each other are included in the same unit. The inclusion of diverse texts is specifically called out in the Louisiana Student Standards for English Language Arts.

RL.2.2: Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
RI.5.6: Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.
RL.7.9: Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.
RL.9-10.6: Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in works of literature drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Diverse texts are also diverse in format. The guidebook units contain a variety of genres and formats (e.g., videos, art, songs).

Authentic Texts: Texts are authentic when they are used in their original form and used for purposes that are relevant to students' learning to be a knowledgeable and literate adult. Authentic texts are texts written for purposes other than classroom instruction and are intact, rather than adapted or simplified. Authenticity also includes how the texts are used. For instance, in an ELA classroom, an authentic text (such as an article from a science magazine) should be incorporated in a way that builds knowledge. This means students read the text to gain knowledge and use selected parts of it to support their expression of understanding or new ideas (such as in a conversation or written document), just as they would in their real life outside of the classroom.

Complex Texts: **Text complexity** is more than just a number or reading level. Complex texts are instructionally useful because they create opportunities for students to meet the grade-level standards. They have layers of meaning for students to read and analyze and provide students with opportunities to learn about language and structure. Complex texts also give students greater knowledge about the world around them based on the themes, concepts, or topics students are learning.

Throughout the guidebook lessons, students have the opportunity to formulate their own ideas about complex texts and communicate them either in writing or orally to their peers. Grade-level standards provide the expectations students must meet when reading, formulating ideas, and expressing those ideas about complex, grade-level texts.

1 Access the **Reading Fluency Guide** to learn more about supporting students in reading complex texts.

There are two main approaches the ELA Guidebooks 2.0 take to ensure students meet the ELA goal:

1. **Close Reading:** Students work in various groupings to analyze complex, grade-level texts through multiple readings of the same, or portions of the same, text to build skills in reading and understanding.

2. **Volume of Reading:** Students read a wide variety of texts (e.g., different genres and formats, different levels, different lengths) on the same topic or idea to build knowledge and skills in reading. Students should also read a wide variety of texts they select based on their interests and be held individually accountable for understanding what they read.

CLOSE READING[1]	VOLUME OF READING
Fewer pages	More pages
Complex, grade-level text	Text at different levels of complexity
All students read the same text	Student or teacher choice of text
Teaches students to attend to text and words	Rapidly builds knowledge and vocabulary
Heavy support	Light support
Solely instructional	Guided or independent reading
Exposes students to higher-level content	Builds knowledge of words and the world
Gives all students access	Builds love of reading

The following framework shows how these approaches are included over the course of a nine-week guidebook unit.

Close Reading in the Guidebooks

Strong readers make connections when they read. They notice when patterns exist and use that information to predict what a character might do or say or how an author might support a claim. They also notice shifts or contrasts in the text, as those signal a change in direction for a character or events. They think about how the parts of a text interact with each other and put the parts together to come up with the text's meaning or purpose.

Understanding texts at a deep level is difficult, and, for proficient readers, it is also automatic. Often teachers who are skilled at reading don't know the thinking process they use to make meaning of or understand a text, which makes it hard to teach students who aren't proficient readers.

The guidebook lessons break down the steps in the reading process using the reader's circles. The lessons engage students in multiple readings of the same text or portions of the same text throughout a section of a unit. For each reading, students have a different focus or purpose based on the grade-level standards that builds on the previous reading and sets students up to be able to accomplish the next reading. This process builds students' understanding of complex texts and provides them with a thinking process they can transfer to new complex texts they may encounter on their own.

The reader's circles[2] make explicit the thinking process strong readers use to understand complex texts. For example, read the first three stanzas of "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe.

Once upon a **midnight dreary**, while I pondered, **weak and weary**,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of **forgotten lore**—

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,

As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—

Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the **bleak December**;

And each separate **dying ember wrought its ghost** upon the floor.

Eagerly I wished the morrow;—**vainly** I had sought to borrow

From my books **surcease of sorrow—sorrow** for the lost Lenore—

For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—

Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the **silken, sad, uncertain rustling** of each purple curtain

Thrilled me—**filled me with fantastic terrors** never felt before;

So that now, **to still the beating of my heart**, I stood repeating

"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—

Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—

This it is and nothing more."

2 Access the Reader's Circles for Literary Texts, Reader's Circles for Informational Texts, Reader's Circles for Literary Nonfiction

To analyze the meaning or central idea of this poem, a strong reader would think about the connections (e.g., the patterns or contrasts) among the word choice, imagery, setting, and mood. The word choice and imagery in the first three stanzas of "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe help to establish the setting. Strong readers make connections between these two pieces of the poem to draw conclusions about and understand the setting of the poem. The dark and somber setting combined with the connotation of the words and images creates and eerie and foreboding mood. The word choice, imagery, setting, and mood contribute to the development of a central idea that the death of a loved one has led the speaker to feel cursed.

Volume of Reading in the Guidebooks

The background knowledge a reader possesses directly affects how well that person is able to understand a complex text. For example, according to research by Recht and Leslie in 1988, knowledge of the topic of the text (in this case, baseball) has a greater impact on the ability of the reader to understand the text than having a higher reading level. What the researchers found is that students with lower reading ability but more knowledge of baseball performed better on questions about a baseball passage than did students with higher reading ability but less knowledge about baseball. Thus, the general world knowledge students bring to a text impacts their ability to understand it. Knowledge is gained through experiences and text (print and nonprint). Students who read a wide variety of texts about different topics gain information about the world when travel or other experiences are not possible. Knowledge can also be gained by watching informational videos about similar topics being read. For example, the guidebooks include **Let's Set the Context videos** to support this knowledge development for diverse learners.

The size of a reader's vocabulary also directly affects how well that person can read a complex text. While there are multiple ways to learn **vocabulary**, research has shown that most vocabulary is learned through reading. Thus, those who can read well often do more reading, which helps them learn more words, thus making them better at reading over time. Conversely, those who don't read well often do less reading, which means they learn fewer words, thus making them worse at reading over time.[3] Therefore, it is essential that students are engaged in reading lots of texts throughout their K-12 experience, both during class and on their own.

3 http://www.standardsinstitutes.org/sites/default/files/the_matthew_effect_in_elaliteracy.pptx

Ensuring students are engaged in a volume of reading can be accomplished in several ways. For example:

1. Work with the school librarian to promote student reading for pleasure through reading clubs and **associations** and award programs (e.g., **Louisiana Young Readers' Choice** and **Louisiana Teen Readers' Choice**).
2. Schedule time in the school day for students to engage in independent reading (e.g., during club time).
3. Block ELA time (e.g., go from 45 minutes per day to 90 minutes per day) for teachers to have more time to engage students in independent reading.

It is important to note, however, that engaging students in a volume of reading works best when the following conditions are also met:

- Students select books which are of interest to them, as this increases the likelihood they will persist with reading a book that is complex.[4]
- Students read multiple books on the same topic (similar to how the guidebook units are designed), as this increases background knowledge and **vocabulary knowledge**.
- Students are held accountable for their understanding of what they read.

Accountability for independent reading is necessary, but it should also not be cumbersome for students, as one of the goals of engaging students in independent reading is to increase their enjoyment in reading. One way to hold students accountable is to ask them, at a few points in their reading, to talk or write about the text based on a grade-level standard. For an example, view an **independent reading log** from a grade 8 guidebook unit.

Resources

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- Willingham, D. T. (2010). *Why Don't Students Like School.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

4 Websites like **http://www.readkiddoread.com** support students in selecting books based on their interests.