

English Language Arts Strategies

Providing Reading Interventions for Students

Grades 4th–9th

RECOMMENDATION 1

Build students' decoding skills so they can read complex multisyllabic words.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Provide purposeful fluency-building activities to help students read effortlessly.

RECOMMENDATION 3a

Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text.

RECOMMENDATION 3b

Consistently provide students with opportunities to ask and answer questions to better understand the text they read.

RECOMMENDATION 3c

Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text.

RECOMMENDATION 3d

Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of a stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to complex ideas and information.

This document provides a summary of recommendations from the WWC Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9 Practice Guide (Vaughn et al., 2022).

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
English Language Arts	 Strong	4 th 5 th 6 th 7 th 8 th 9 th

RECOMMENDATION 1

Build students' decoding skills so they can read complex multisyllabic words.

This recommendation aims to prepare students with the skills needed to break apart and accurately sound out multisyllabic words. Steps 1 and 2 in this recommendation provide the knowledge students need to accurately sound out words. Step 3 involves spelling practice to solidify students' understanding of the vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations that make words. Step 4 ensures that students have adequate opportunities to practice reading words not only in isolation, but also in sentences and passages to build increasingly automatic word recognition skills. Together these steps will help students accurately read multisyllabic words.

Strategies

1. Identify the level of students' word-reading skills and teach vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations, as necessary.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Assess student word reading skills prior to any intervention.
- Use a word-list reading measure or have the student read a list of regular and irregular words.
- Use the information to create intervention groups.

It is important to gauge students' word-reading abilities to determine where to begin instruction. Ideally, students' word-reading skills would be assessed prior to the intervention, and information from the assessment would be used to place students with similar needs in intervention groups. Use students' performance on a word-list reading measure to get a sense of the word-reading skills of the students in each intervention group. If students' scores on a word-list reading measure are not available, ask students to read a list of regular and irregular words.

Many intervention programs provide lists to help teachers gauge students' reading abilities and determine where they should start in the program. An oral reading fluency measure will provide more information about how words with the same kinds of vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations are read in the context of sentences and paragraphs. Use the performance of the students in the group to determine which intervention groups need additional work in common vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations, and which do not.

Common Vowel Sounds and Vowel Combinations

Vowel Combination	Vowel Sound
long vowel sound	vowel sound, as in <i>me, labor, polar</i>
short vowel sound	vowel sound, as in <i>cap, digger</i>
vowel-consonant-e	“e” makes the vowel sound long, as in <i>cake, mistake</i>
vowel combinations oa, ea, ee, ai	long vowel sounds, as in <i>boat, remain, teachable</i>
vowel diphthongs oi, oy, ou, ew	vowel sounds, as in <i>toy, destroy, newsworthy</i>
r-controlled vowels	vowel sound, as in <i>car, fur, personable</i>
consonant-le	consonant sound, as in <i>battle, belittle</i>

2. Teach students a routine they can use to decode multisyllabic words.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Choose a single routine to break words into parts and blend them together.
- Explicitly teach the routine by demonstrating and guiding students through the steps multiple times before applying the routine on their own.
- Briefly explain the meaning and use of unfamiliar words.

Rather than teaching a wide array of rules, choose a routine that provides simple steps for breaking words into parts and blending those parts together to sound out the word. The routine can be used flexibly across different multisyllabic words.

Explicitly teach students the routine to use when they encounter unfamiliar multisyllabic words. Briefly demonstrate how the word-reading routine can be helpful in sounding out words. Guide students through the steps of the routine and discuss how they would apply them to an unfamiliar word. To help students remember that the words they are reading have meaning, briefly explain the meaning or use of the word in a sentence, such as “If you misinform someone, you give them the wrong information.” Guide students through applying the routine to several words before asking students to practice applying the routine on their own.

Teacher Demonstrating How to Identify Prefixes, Suffixes, and Vowel Combinations to Decode a Multisyllabic Word

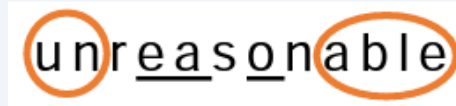
The teacher refers to the following steps that are posted in the classroom:

1. Look for prefixes and suffixes. Circle prefixes and suffixes in the word.
2. Underline the remaining single vowels and vowel or vowel-consonant combinations.
3. Loop under each word part as you say it.
4. Say the whole word by blending the parts together, making it into a word you recognize.

Teacher: Today, we are going to learn a routine for breaking longer words into parts so we can easily sound them out. In this routine, there are four steps. In the first step, we circle the prefixes and suffixes in the word. The first word is *unreasonable*. I am going to circle *un-* because it is a prefix and *-able* because it is a suffix. Remember *un-* means *not* and *-able* means *capable of being*.



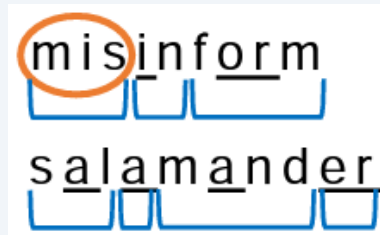
Teacher: In Step 2, I am going to underline the vowel sounds that are left. I am going to underline *ea* and *o*. I am doing this because each syllable has a vowel sound.



Teacher: In Step 3, I am going to use my pencil to loop under each word part as I say it: *un rea son able*. Now, in Step 4, I am going to blend the parts together: *unreasonable*. *Unreasonable* means not capable of reason or explanation.



The teacher follows the same procedure for two more examples, *misinform* and *salamander*. In the word *misinform*, the single vowel, *i*, and the *r*-controlled combination, *or*, are underlined. The teacher reminds students that *mis-* means wrong and that the word *inform* means to tell someone. *Misinform* means to tell someone something wrong. In the word *salamander*, the three single vowels, *a*, and the *r*-controlled combination, *-er* are underlined. Note that *-er* is not a suffix in the word *salamander*. “Salamand” is not a word on its own. Therefore, *-er* in *salamander* is not circled. The teacher explains that a salamander is an amphibian that looks like a lizard.



Note. Adapted from page 7 of *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9* (Vaughn et al., 2022).

Prefixes and Suffixes

Prefixes		Suffixes	
un-	pre-	-s, -es	-ity, -ty
re-	inter-	-ed	-ment
in-, im-, il-, ir-	fore-	-ing	-ic
dis-	de-	-ly	-ous, -eous, -ious
en-, em-	trans-	-er, -or	-en
non-	super-	-ion, -tion,	-er
in-, im-	semi-	-ation, -ition	-ive, -ative, -tive
over-	anti-	-able, -ible	-ful
mis-	mid-	-al, -ial	-less
sub-	under-	-y	-est
		-ness	

Note. Adapted from page 8 of Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9 (Vaughn et al., 2022).

Teacher Working with Students to Apply a Routine to Identify Syllables and Sound Out Unfamiliar Words

The teacher posts the steps of the routine on the board before providing an explanation:

1. Underline single vowels and vowel or vowel-consonant combinations.
2. Count the number of vowel sounds to determine how many syllables are in the word.
3. Break the word into parts, with every syllable having a vowel sound in it.
4. Blend each part together to form a word you recognize.

Teacher: Today, we are going to learn a routine for breaking words into parts and sounding them out. In this routine, there are four steps. In the first step, we underline single vowels and vowel combinations. Remember, a lot of the time, two vowels together sound as one. The first word is *unreasonable*. I am going to underline the *u*, the *ea*, the *o*, the *a*, and the *e*.

unreasonable

Teacher: Now, we will count the number of vowel sounds to determine how many syllables are in the word *unreasonable*. Count them with me.

Teacher and student: 1... 2... 3... 4... 5.

Teacher: So, how many syllables are in this word?

Student: Five!

Teacher: Yes, we have five vowels or vowel combinations, so we have five syllables. In Step 3, I am going to use a slash mark to break the word into parts so that every syllable has a vowel sound in it. For the word *unreasonable*, we broke the word into these parts: *un/rea/son/a/ble*.

un/rea/son/a/ble

Teacher: Now, let's blend the parts together.

Together the group reads *un reas on a ble* and then blends the sounds to read *unreasonable*. The teacher tells students the word *unreasonable* means not capable of reason or explanation.

The teacher works with the students in applying the same routine for two more words, *misinform* and *salamander*.

mis/in/form
sal/a/mand/er

Note. Adapted from page 9 of *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9* (Vaughn et al., 2022).

3. Embed spelling instruction in the lesson.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Practice spelling monosyllabic and multisyllabic words.
- Ask students to read the word aloud and spell it.
- Encourage students to think about the parts of the word and how many parts there are before writing it.
- Give additional examples to spell using the same vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations.

Spelling words will help reinforce the vowel and consonant letter-sounds and combinations students are learning. Include practice in spelling monosyllabic and multisyllabic words. This activity is called encoding practice. Begin by asking students to read the word aloud and spell it. Encourage students to think about the different parts of the word and how many parts or syllables are in the word before they write it. Give students additional words to spell that include the same vowel and consonant letter-sounds and combinations.

4. Engage students in a wide array of activities that allow them to practice reading multisyllabic words accurately and with increasing automaticity.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Post the steps of the routine so that students can refer to it.
- Provide multiple opportunities to practice the routine.
- Read word lists as a group using the routine as needed.
- Practice by having students read multisyllabic words in sentences and longer texts, using the routine as needed.
- Discuss the meaning of the word, including the meaning of prefixes and suffixes, after students have used the routine to read it.

Provide multiple opportunities for students to apply the routine to build automaticity: the ability to recognize words instantly and effortlessly. Before starting, ensure that abbreviated versions of the steps of the routine (e.g., Step 1: Look for prefixes; Step 2: Look for suffixes; Step 3: Find single vowels, etc.) are readily available by posting them on the board or providing each student with a prompt card. Reminders of the steps will help students remember the routine.

Initiate practice by reading word lists out loud as a group. Include words with the vowel and consonant letter-sounds or combinations in that day's lesson, as well as previously taught sounds. Also include high-frequency words in the word lists. Continued practice with the words on the word list will help students begin to read them fluently.

Students will need multiple exposures to the words they are learning to read. Practice should include more than word lists. Equally important is having students read multisyllabic words in sentences and brief paragraphs. Ask students to read the words in sentences repeatedly to build automaticity. If sentences are not readily available, write sentences that include multisyllabic words the students are learning. Also have students read the words in longer texts. Choose age-appropriate texts used in upper-elementary and middle school grades that include the words or sounds students are working on. Ask students to read the passage and stop to apply the word-reading routine to unfamiliar words.

Knowing the meanings of words can also help students read words in the future. If the students are unsure of the word's meaning, briefly discuss the meaning after students have used the routine to read the word. Use this opportunity to also explain the meaning of prefixes and suffixes briefly.

Practice Activities that can Build Students' Automaticity with Multisyllabic Word Reading

1. As a warm-up, provide practice in vowel combinations in the multisyllabic words that students are going to encounter in a word list or section of text for the session.
2. Read a list of high-frequency prefixes and suffixes aloud as a group (in unison or by taking turns).
3. Ask students to underline prefixes and suffixes in each word in a word list, and then read the prefixes and suffixes aloud as a group (in unison or by taking turns).
4. Ask students to write words by adding a prefix and/or a suffix to a base word.
5. Ask students to read a list of words once with their partner, noting any words students have difficulty reading. Then ask them to try to read more words correctly when they read the list to their partner a second time.
6. Read a list of words (up to 20 words) aloud as a group (in unison or by taking turns).
7. Time students as they read a list of words. Ask them to read the list again to meet or beat their previous time.
8. Dictate words for students to spell that contain the targeted prefixes and suffixes or sounds in the lesson.
9. Read sentences containing multisyllabic words aloud as a group (in unison or by taking turns) or with the teacher reading first and then the students reading next.
10. Ask students to read the passage containing the words they are learning at least twice.

Potential Roadblocks



My students report having difficulty reading multisyllabic words in their core subject-area classes.

Suggested Approach. The panel recommends including words from core subject-area classes during intervention time. If the week's American history topic is the aftermath of the Civil War, then words like reconstruction and suffrage would be critical. Words like gravity and momentum would be excellent words for a unit on gravity in science. A teacher or the team leader for social studies or science departments may be able to provide a list of words. It is also possible to locate lists of important words in the students' textbooks.



A few of my students can read multisyllabic words pretty effortlessly but perform poorly on reading tests because of weak vocabulary and difficulties in comprehension.

Suggested Approach. These students need additional work on language and vocabulary development. Therefore, teachers should minimize decoding and fluency instruction and maximize comprehension instruction. When possible, group these students in an intervention that focuses on oral language and reading comprehension. Activities should include experiences that increase world knowledge and word knowledge and provide ample opportunities to engage students in meaningful discussion about the text they are reading.

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
English Language Arts	 Strong	4 th 5 th 6 th 7 th 8 th 9 th

RECOMMENDATION 2

Provide purposeful fluency-building activities to help students read effortlessly.

Fluent reading can be developed using a variety of activities. Timed readings are often used to build fluent reading or as a measure of students' progress toward becoming fluent readers. Timed readings, however, should be used with caution. Timed readings can be overused and can be a detriment to student engagement and motivation, especially when used solely to increase reading speed. Fluency-building activities can also focus on other important elements of fluent reading, such as reading effortlessly, also referred to as reading with automaticity, and reading with expression or prosody. Other fluency-building activities can provide extensive practice while also engaging students and building their confidence in reading.

Strategies

1. Provide a purpose for each repeated reading.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Have students reread passages 3–4 times, each time for a different purpose.
- Have students scan passages for words that are difficult to read or understand. Guide students in reading words and understanding them.
- Ask questions that provide a purpose for reading and provide feedback on student responses.

It is important to gauge students' word-reading abilities to determine where to begin instruction. Ideally, students' word-reading skills would be assessed prior to the intervention, and information from the assessment would be used to place students with similar needs in intervention groups. Use students' performance on a word-list reading measure to get a sense of the word-reading skills of the students in each intervention group. If students' scores on a word-list reading measure are not available, ask students to read a list of regular and irregular words.

Many intervention programs provide lists to help teachers gauge students' reading abilities and determine where they should start in the program. An oral reading fluency measure will provide more information about how words with the same kinds of vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations are read in the context of sentences and paragraphs.

Use the performance of the students in the group to determine which intervention groups need additional work in common vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations, and which do not.

Rather than merely asking students to reread the same passage orally several times to increase their speed, provide students with a purpose for each reading of the same passage. Although the primary goal is to build effortless reading, rereading a piece of text with a purpose will often lead to increased understanding.

Have students reread the same passage a total of 3–4 times, each time with a different purpose. Purposes for rereading can focus students' attention on reading at an appropriate pace and with expression, answering questions, identifying words they do not know, or reflecting on what students learned from the text or why they think the group is reading the passage.

Before students read the passage, ask them to quickly scan the passage to find words that are difficult to read or understand. Guide students as they attempt to read the unknown words in isolation and provide brief meanings of words they do not understand before they read the passage.

After each reading, ask students questions to establish a purpose and briefly discuss student responses to the questions. This will hold students accountable for rereading the passage. Provide feedback that affirms what they did right and clarifies any misconceptions students shared or anything they need to correct.

Questions that Provide Students with a Purpose for Reading a Passage

Examples of questions for which answers are evident:

- What happened in the passage you just read?
- What did you learn about ____?
- What were the first two things that happened in this section?

Interventionist Asking a Small Group of Students to Read a Paragraph on Issues Related to Poverty and Feeding a Family

Teacher: Scan the paragraph and underline any words you can't read or don't understand.

The teacher briefly reviews any words in the passage that the students identified, as well as any that the teacher deemed difficult, including proper nouns. The teacher pronounces each word, asks students to repeat the pronunciation, and provides a short, clear definition or explanation.

Teacher: Now I want you to read this passage silently and explain what the passage is about to your partner.

The students read the passage and turn to their reading partner to explain what the passage is about.

Teacher: For this reading, the purpose will be to answer questions about the text that are listed on the board. I would like the first reader to read the paragraph aloud. If you are the second reader, read along silently and help your partner when they get stuck on a word by saying the word and asking them to repeat the word before they continue reading the rest of the paragraph. When the first reader is done, answer questions 1 and 2. Then it is time for the second reader to read the passage while first reader assists. After the second reader is done, answer questions 3 and 4.

The following questions are on the board:

1. *Who is going to the market in this story?*
2. *How did the main character get to the market?*
3. *How long did it take to get there?*
4. *How was the main character able to feed their family?*

The teacher and students briefly discuss the students' answers to the questions after questions 1 and 2 and after questions 3 and 4. The teacher asks students to read the sentences that helped them answer the questions, then clarifies any misconceptions.

2. Focus some instructional time on reading with prosody.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Demonstrate the importance of reading with prosody by reading a passage without attention to punctuation.
- Provide activities that allow the student to practice reading with prosody.
- Show students where to pause when reading a sentence.
- Record students reading and have them listen to earlier attempts to demonstrate growth.

Prosody refers to reading with expression, appropriate pitch and tempo, and pauses at the right places. Pauses, tempo, and emphasis placed on different words can help readers understand what they are reading. Draw students' attention to what prosody entails by dramatizing why prosody is important.

Read a short paragraph aloud twice. The first time, read it quickly without expression and without stopping at punctuation marks. Then read the passage again, this time at a conversational pace and with prosody. After reading, discuss which rendition of the passage was easier to understand. Teach students to pause at commas, stop at periods, raise or lower their voice when encountering a question mark, and show emotion when encountering an exclamation point.

Include activities that offer students opportunities to practice reading with prosody. For example, students can listen to an audio recording of a TV announcer reading fluently and with prosody, and then practice reading like a TV announcer. Another prosody activity would be the teacher first reading a sentence or two with prosody and then asking students to read the same sentences with the same prosody. Students can also read with prosody in unison with the teacher before trying to read the passage independently.

It can be helpful to show students where to pause when they are reading. Present a passage on the board and mark where the sentences and phrases end with slashes. For example, this sentence includes slashes where students should pause briefly while reading: *A colorfully dressed dancer / in South Korea / reflects certain customs / that are important to her.*

Read the passage aloud as a group. Provide students with the same brief passage with slashes and allow them to practice in pairs or individually by audio-recording their reading to listen to later. If students are audio-recording themselves reading, they can compare recent to previous recordings to hear their progress. Circulate around as students practice reading the text and provide feedback when necessary. Remember to provide feedback on what students have done well and how they could improve, for example, their expression or tempo. After practicing with the slashed copy, give students an unmarked version of the passage to read.

Potential Roadblocks



Partner work doesn't seem productive. When I pair students for fluency-building activities, the student who is struggling does not know when the better reader makes a mistake.

Suggested Approach. Working on rereading with partners can be particularly motivating for adolescents, who are much more oriented toward their peers than toward adults. Pairing students for fluency work should be done with student skill level in mind. To create appropriate partners, rank order the students from most able to least able reader and split the ranked list in half. Pair the first student in the first half with the first student in the second half. For example, if there are eight students in the group, pair student 1 with student 5: student 2 with student 6, etc. If there are an odd number of students, the teacher or a volunteer can be paired with a student.

Although none of these students will be strong readers, a student who reads one year below grade level will be able to detect many of the decoding errors of a student reading several years below. Similarly, the lower-performing student will benefit from hearing a model of the passage read relatively fluently that they can try to recreate when it is their turn to read. Both students will read silently and orally with a purpose and will benefit from the partner time, even if neither is able to detect every decoding error.

Teach students how to read with a partner to help students work productively with their partner. This can include identifying the roles and responsibilities of the first and second reader and modeling and practicing procedures for correcting errors. Once students begin to work in pairs, monitor and assist them throughout the activity. Scan the pairs to make sure students are actively participating. Focus on one group for a few minutes to assist them with any difficulties they may be having. Praise students for what they are doing well and help students who are not recognizing errors and correcting their partners. Move on to other groups as time permits.



Students don't like timed readings, and they often focus on reading so fast they don't understand what they're reading.

Suggested Approach. Students may have previously encountered many frustrating experiences with timed repeated readings with only one "purpose": speed. Experiences reading only for the purpose of increasing speed may have made some students averse to any type of repeated reading or timed reading. Students like to be told why they are doing something.

Remind students that they now will only read with a purpose and that rereading the passage is not meant to make them faster readers. The goal is to help them read with ease and gain confidence in their reading and understanding of the text. Tell them to read just like they talk—not too quickly and not too slowly—rather than saying, “Read as fast as you can.”

Explain that when they read too fast, they will have trouble understanding what they are reading. Remind students that they are now reading with a purpose. Remember to use timed readings sparingly as an instructional activity. When timed readings are done sparingly and mixed with other fluency activities that require students to reread for a different purpose, students may enjoy seeing the progress they make in understanding the text and in their rate and accuracy.



When I give my students a purpose for rereading, they spend so much time trying to find the answer that they don’t have time to read the passage again.

Suggested Approach. The goal is for students to read the passage multiple times, with a clear purpose for each rereading. Therefore, during fluency-building activities, the students should not spend a lot of time digging into the passage to determine the answer to a complex question. Start with questions that can be answered with information evident in the text. As students demonstrate confidence with those questions, consider asking more difficult questions that require students to draw conclusions.



Sometimes students avoid finding words they do not know because they feel embarrassed or have concerns that the teacher will ask them to do more work.

Suggested Approach. In these cases, teachers can address these concerns through remarks such as: “There are at least two words that I think are very difficult. See if you have the same two words as me.” Another option is to motivate students by having them work in pairs to choose difficult words. This may make them feel more comfortable and ease their concerns about appearing less able to respond to the task.



It is hard to find materials that include the words or patterns the students are learning, relate to subject-area topics, are age-appropriate, and increase in difficulty.

Suggested Approach. Often published programs contain word lists and passages for fluency instruction. If a published program is not available, choose words and passages from a variety of sources, including subject-area textbooks, novels, newspapers, or electronic resources, that emphasize the sound patterns, words, or content of the lesson. Schedule time during grade-level or department meetings to collect and develop materials to address the skills you are teaching. Over time you will have materials that span a wide range of topics and vary in difficulty.

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
English Language Arts	 Strong	4 th 5 th 6 th 7 th 8 th 9 th

RECOMMENDATION 3a

Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text.

This part of Recommendation 3 focuses on developing both knowledge of the topics discussed in texts (referred to here as world knowledge) and knowledge of word meanings (referred to here as word knowledge). World and word knowledge have reciprocal relationships with reading: world and word knowledge can help students understand what they are reading, and reading with understanding will improve students' knowledge of word meanings and of the world. Teaching new words and their meanings can support students in learning new concepts and ways of thinking that help students make sense of sophisticated content.

Strategies

1. Develop world knowledge that is relevant for making sense of the passage.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Provide a brief introduction to the content prior to reading.
- Provide a purpose for the topic introduction, and ask students to share what they learned about the topic.
- Ask students questions about the topic.

Provide a brief 3–5-minute introduction on the topic before reading to help students develop knowledge that might help them understand what they are reading. This can be done by asking students to read an easier, brief passage before presenting the higher-level text on the same topic.

Another way to prepare students for reading about a topic is to present a short 2–4-minute video clip, podcast, or brief informational lecture with illustrations. For each resource, provide a purpose, such as asking students to look for two things they learned about the topic from the video or podcast that they will share with the group or with a partner when the video or podcast ends. The teacher can summarize the most important ideas that were shared and clarify misunderstandings.

Another way to develop world knowledge before reading is to ask students questions about the topic. Not only will this provide students with an opportunity to think about what they have read or learned about before, but it can also potentially pique their interest in the topic.

To ensure that students remain on topic, ask them whether their answers help them to understand the topic better. With practice, students will get better at determining whether the information they share is helpful or is distracting them from focusing on the topic of the text. Tell students when they have correctly evaluated the usefulness of the information they shared and provide suggestions when they misunderstand the information they shared or the topic.

2. Teach the meaning of a few words that are essential for understanding the passage.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Identify essential words that students may have difficulty with and briefly teach their meaning before reading.
- Stop while reading to teach the meaning of other essential words.
- Continually work with new words and their meanings

Identify words that are critical and conceptually central for understanding the passage but are likely to be difficult for students. These are words that appear early or sense of the text frequently in the passage, and might include bolded words. Write these words somewhere for all students to see, such as on a whiteboard. Briefly teach the meaning of a couple of essential words before the lesson and quickly provide the meaning of other essential words during reading.

Select one or two of the essential words to teach before reading the passage. Since the goal of understanding the meaning of these words is to help students access the information in the text, provide a brief, simple definition that relates to the content of the passage before reading. Provide an example, non-example, and/or visual representation of the word to help students understand the meaning.

During reading, stop intermittently to briefly provide the meaning of additional essential words that are critical for understanding the passage. Provide a simple definition of the word or rephrase the sentence with a known synonym for the word. For example, a teacher could quickly clarify the word *effortless* by replacing the word with the synonym *easy* when reading the sentence a second time. The goal is to provide the meaning of the word quickly and ensure that the unfamiliar word does not disrupt comprehension.

Giving students information about a word is important to initiate word learning. However, students will need to work with the words and their meanings to remember them. Once or twice a week, provide additional opportunities for students to work with the words and their meanings after reading. For example, ask students to provide examples of the words, discuss non-examples of the words, or use the words to answer questions about the text or topic either orally or in writing. Include previously taught words to reinforce their meanings. Have students write the words and definitions in a log. These logs can help students keep track of their learning and review words they previously learned.

If students are reading independently or in pairs, ask students to look up and make eye contact when they get to the sentence with the essential word you would like to discuss. Ask students if they know the meaning of the word. If they do not, provide a quick definition in the context of the sentence or rephrase the sentence with words they know. The goal is to provide the meaning without disrupting reading too much.

Teacher Briefly Providing the Meaning of a Few Words that will Help a Group of Students Understand the Meaning of the Passage

After preparing students to read about the American Revolution, the teacher proceeded with building students' word knowledge.

The American Revolutionary War was a time when the colonists had a conflict and fought Great Britain. The colonies got their freedom and became an independent country called the United States of America. One of the reasons that the colonists had a conflict with Great Britain is that they felt they were not represented in the British government. The British government was making new laws and making the colonists pay more taxes, but the colonies had no say in them. The colonists said, "No taxation without representation." They wanted to have some say in the British government if they had to pay excessive taxes and live by British law. The war did not happen right away. First, there were protests and arguments. Then there were some small fights between the colonists and the local British army. Things just got worse and worse over the years until the colonies and Great Britain were at war.

The teacher chose the word *conflict* to teach before reading because it is conceptually central and appears early in the text. Prior to reading, the teacher says, "*Conflict* means a disagreement or argument. The American Revolution happened because the Americans and the British had a disagreement about who should run the government." The teacher reinforces the meaning of *conflict* during reading by explaining the meaning in the context of the information in the text.

In addition, while reading this paragraph, the teacher quickly provides the meaning of the two underlined words based on the context of the passage: *excessive* and *local*. The teacher reads the sentence again, replacing the word *excessive* with *too much*: "They wanted to have some say in the British government if they were going to pay too much in taxes and have to live by British law. *Excessive* means *too much*." The teacher reads the sentence by rephrasing the part of the sentence with the word *local*: "Then there were some small fights between the colonists and the British troops that were stationed nearby. *Local* means the area near or around where you are."

Teacher: We are going to talk about a word you learned today. You will work with a partner. Be ready to share your discussion with the group. The first word is *conflict*. A *conflict* is a serious disagreement or argument about something important. Talk with your partner about a conflict that two groups of people had in American history and how the conflict was resolved.

Next, the teacher asks students to talk to a partner about the words *excessive* and *local*.

3. Teach students how to derive meanings of unknown words using context.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Teach and explicitly model how to find clues to a word's meaning in the sentences around the word.
- Demonstrate a three-step process for determining the meaning of unknown words: (1) mark the word, (2) reread the sentence and look for clues, and (3) reread the sentences before and after.
- Guide students through the three steps and ask them to share what they learned. Provide feedback and support as needed.

In some circumstances, the sentences surrounding an unknown word can help students determine its meaning. Teach and explicitly model how to find clues in the surrounding sentences to help students determine the meanings of words they do not understand.

Demonstrate three steps for determining the meaning of unknown words using surrounding sentences. First, mark the word the students do not understand. Second, have the students reread the sentence with the unknown word and look for clues in that sentence to figure out the word's meaning. Third, if the sentence with the unknown word does not provide enough information, have students reread the sentences before or after and look for clues to figure out the word's meaning.

Be sure to tell students that sometimes they will read the sentence or the sentences around the word and still have difficulty figuring out the meaning of the word. If the surrounding sentences do not provide enough information to determine the meaning, students can ask for help or look up the word.

Guide students by prompting them through the steps and having them explain the reason for their responses. Tell students when they have answered and reasoned correctly. When the answer is incorrect, provide support through prompts and clues to get them closer to the correct meaning.

Teacher Modeling How to Use the Surrounding Sentences to Figure Out the Meaning of the Word *Obstacle*

In 1922, Howard Carter and his crew found King Tut's tomb. Many archaeologists searched for the tomb, but Carter and his team were the first to find it. They came across many obstacles while trying to find the tomb. One was that the daily temperature reached as high as 120 degrees. Another was that the tomb is in the desert, where nothing grows, and there is nothing to protect people from the extremely hot sun. To make things worse, there was a lot of sand and rock around the tomb that were difficult to remove because the summer sun made them very hot to touch.

Teacher: I do not understand what the word *obstacle* means in this paragraph. So, I am going to try to use the surrounding sentences to try to figure out what it means. Let's look at the steps that are on the bulletin board.

1. *Underline the unknown word.*
2. *Reread the sentence with the unknown word and look for clues in that sentence to figure out the word's meaning.*
3. *Reread sentences surrounding the sentence with the unknown wording and look for clues to figure out the word's meaning.*

Teacher: First, I'll underline the word. Then I will reread the sentence with the word *obstacle* in it and look for clues to what it means. "They came across many obstacles while trying to find the tomb." That sentence just tells us that they came across obstacles but does not tell us what an obstacle is.

Now, I'll go to Step 3 and reread the sentences near the word to look for clues about the meaning: "Many archaeologists searched for the tomb, but Carter and his team were the first to find it." That doesn't give me any clues. "They came across many obstacles while trying to find the tomb. One was that the daily temperature reached as high as 120 degrees."

Ah, here the author tells us that one obstacle was very high temperatures. Being that hot would stop or slow down their work. In the next sentences, the author gives us two other obstacles: no shade from the sun, and rocks and sand that were hard to move because they were too hot to touch. With all this information, I think *obstacle* means anything that makes it difficult for you to do something because the examples the author gave us were things that made it difficult to explore King Tut's tomb.

Teacher Guiding Students in Using Context to Figure Out the Meaning of the Word *Remote*

Seabirds or marine birds spend most of the time at sea. They also live on remote islands in the ocean. There are no humans or animals on the island or nearby. The island is so far away that it is a place where the birds can rest, build their nests, and incubate their eggs. This is one reason why seabirds have survived for 60 million years.

The teacher asks students to share the words they did not know and underlined with a partner. The teacher then chooses one pair to share the words with the group. The students did not understand the word *remote*. The teacher guides the students using context to understand the meaning of the word.

Teacher: We don't know what the word *remote* means. What do we do first?

Emerson: Underline the word and reread the sentence with the unknown word to figure out the word's meaning.

Teacher: Read the sentence for us, Emerson.

Emerson: "They also live on remote islands in the ocean."

Teacher: Is the author helping you to understand what *remote* means?

Emerson: No.

Teacher: What is the author telling us?

Emerson: The author is just saying that they live on remote islands.

Teacher: Does the author give you any clues about what *remote* means?

Emerson: No.

Teacher: Okay, what do we do next, Riley?

Riley: Reread sentences surrounding the unknown word, looking for clues to figure out the word's meaning.

Teacher: Great. Will you read them for us?

Riley: "They also live on remote islands in the ocean. There are no humans or animals on the island or nearby. The island is so far away that it is a place where the birds can rest, build their nests, and incubate their eggs."

Teacher: There is a lot of information in those sentences. Is there anything the author says that will help us learn the meaning of *remote*?

Riley: Well... I think *remote* means *safe*.

Teacher: *Remote* does have something to do with *safe*, but it doesn't mean *safe*. You know, often there is a lot of different information in the passages, and I bet you thought it was *safe* because of the clues that talked about the birds resting and incubating their eggs. That would make you think that the island is safe. Let's look at the sentences after. Can anyone figure out how those sentences might help to figure out the word's meaning? This sentence says there are no humans or animals on the island or nearby and the island is so far away, that it is a place where the birds can rest, build their nests, and incubate their eggs. These are good clues. Does this give you an idea of what *remote* means?

Riley: That no one is around?

Teacher: That's excellent, Riley. Sometimes it is difficult to get a word's meaning from context because of all the different information the author has provided. But here, *remote* means far away from everything. Excellent! Did you ever hear the phrase, "in the middle of nowhere?" If we say a place is "in the middle of nowhere" it means it is in a remote location because it is far away from everything! Now you can figure out how to learn the meaning of words by reading and thinking through a text.

4. Teach prefixes and suffixes to help students derive meanings of words.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Teach the meaning of prefixes and suffixes.
- Start with commonly used prefixes and suffixes and move on to less frequently used ones.
- Teach students to isolate the base word, prefix, and suffix and determine each meaning separately.
- Practice determining the meaning through prefix and suffix.

Knowing the meaning of prefixes and suffixes will help students understand the meaning of multisyllabic words. Teach the meanings of prefixes and suffixes, especially those that students will encounter in the text.

If the intervention curriculum does not have a sequence for teaching prefixes and suffixes, start by teaching commonly used prefixes (e.g., un-, re-, dis-) and suffixes (e.g., -s, -es, -ed).

If students know the common prefixes and suffixes, move on to less frequently used prefixes (e.g., trans-, under-, anti-) and suffixes (-ial, -eous, -ence) or on to ones that are more difficult.

Teach students to isolate the base word, prefix, and/or suffix and determine the meaning of each separately. Show students how putting the meanings of each of the parts together can help them determine the meaning of a word. Include practice on determining the meaning of words with a base word and prefix or suffix.

Frequently Occurring Prefixes

Rank	Prefix	Meaning
1	un-	not
2	re-	again
3	in-, im-, il-, ir-	not
4	dis-	not
5	en-, em-	to make or put into
6	non-	not
7	in-, im-	not
8	over-	too much
9	mis-	wrong
10	sub-	below
11	pre-	before
12	inter-	between
13	fore-	toward
14	de-	down
15	trans-	across, changed
16	super-	above, beyond
7	in-, im-	not
8	over-	too much
9	mis-	wrong
10	sub-	below
11	pre-	before
12	inter-	between
13	fore-	toward
14	de-	down
15	trans-	across, changed
16	super-	above, beyond
17	semi-	half
18	anti-	against
19	mid-	middle
20	under-	not enough

Frequently Occurring Suffixes

Rank	Suffix	Meaning
1	-s, -es	plural
2	-ed	past tense
3	-ing	act of
4	-ly	having the qualities of
5	-er, -or	person who
6	-ion, -tion, -ation, -ition	state, quality of being
7	-able, -ible	capable of being
8	-al, -ial	related to
9	-y	characterized by
10	-ness	state of being
11	-ity, -ty	quality of
12	-ment	condition of
13	-ic	of/related to
14	-ous, -eous, -ious	full of
15	-en	made of
16	-er	comparative
17	-ive, -ative, -tive	having the nature of
18	-ful	full of
19	-less	without
20	-est	superlative

Other Prefixes and Suffixes that are Frequently Used in Academic Words

Prefixes	Suffixes
con-	-ate
ad-	-ize
ex-	-ism
e-	-ent
pro-	-ary
ob-	-ist
a-	-ure
per-	-ant
ab-	-logy

5. Teach the meaning of Latin and Greek roots.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Explicitly teach the meaning of Latin and Greek roots.
- Share examples of words that have a particular root and explain how the meaning of the root is part of the meaning of the word.
- Develop a word map for each root and add new words as they come up in reading.

Latin and Greek roots appear frequently in words in math, science, and social studies textbooks (e.g., micro: microbiology, microscope, microbe; equi/equa: equivalent, equation, equal, equator, equalizer). Lists of Latin and Greek words can be found on <https://yourdictionary.com> and <https://wikipedia.org>.

Spend some time explicitly teaching the meaning of the roots, how these roots contribute to the meaning of a word, and how words with the same root are related. Start by providing a definition of a root. For example, *ambi-* means both or both sides.

Share two or three examples of words that have the root and explain how the meaning of the root is part of the meaning of the entire word. For example, *ambi-* is part of the words *ambidextrous*, *ambiguous*, and *ambivalent*. The meaning of all three words includes both sides of something.

Ambidextrous means having the ability to use both hands; *ambiguous* means open to both sides or more than one side, choice, or meaning; and *ambivalent* means having both feelings, mixed feelings, or contradictory ideas. Knowing the meaning of the root *ambi-* helps clarify the meaning of these words.

Work with students to develop a word map for each root. Word maps provide a graphic display of a group of words that are meaningfully related. Have students add words to the word map, as they come across them during their lessons. Integrate these words into other activities, such as writing and spelling, to provide continued exposure to the words.

Teacher Helping Students Understand the Meaning of Words with the Root *Bio-* Using a Word Map

Teacher writes *bio-* on the board.

Teacher: *Bio-* means life.

Teacher writes *biology* on the board and underlines *bio*.

Teacher: I know that *bio-* means life, and so this word has to do with life. We learned before that *-ology* means *study of*, so *biology* is the study of living things, like plants, animals, and humans.

Teacher writes *biography* on the board.

Teacher: Now let's look at another word, *biography*.

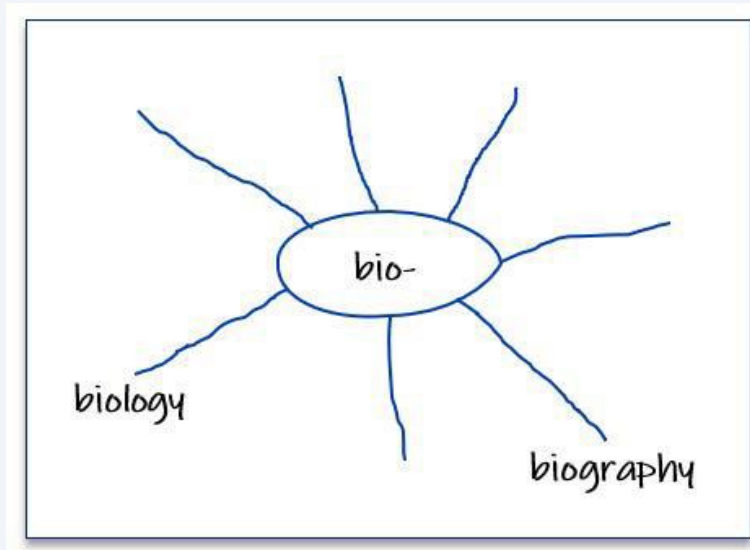
Teacher underlines *bio-* in *biography*.

Teacher: *Biography*. What do you think this is about now that we know the meaning of the root *bio-*?

Stanley: It has something to do with life.

Teacher: Yes, we know that this word has something to do with life because it includes the root *bio-*. The second part *-graphy* is related to writing. *Biography* means writing about someone's life. The common root in both these words is *bio-*. Both words have to do with life. One word—*biology*—is the study of living things, and the other—*biography*—is about writing about someone's life.

Teacher draws the word map.



Teacher: When we come across more words that include the root *bio-*, we can add them to this word map.

Students copy the word map in their log. In subsequent lessons the teacher asks students to add more words to the word map. They add the words *biofeedback*, *biographical*, and *biodegradable*. Each time a word is added the teacher asks the students to separate the word into parts. The teacher talks about the other part of the word and its meaning. The students put the two parts together to determine the meaning and then use the word in a sentence.

Potential Roadblocks



I do not know what my students know about a topic, so I don't know how to plan for teaching them world knowledge.

Suggested Approach. Poll students briefly to see what they know about a topic before teaching world knowledge related to the passage. If students know little about the topic, use a brief video clip or podcast closely related to the specific objective of the lesson to build world knowledge and pique students' interest.



There are so many words my students do not know. Working on word knowledge could take up the entire lesson.

Suggested Approach. There are too many words to teach in depth. Students will also be learning words and their meanings in their subject-area classes. Focus on words that are essential to understanding the passage and those that students will encounter frequently in their readings. If not knowing the meaning of a particular word becomes a barrier to understanding the meaning of the text for some students, quickly provide the meaning of the word and continue reading. For example, "Here in this sentence, *massive* means very large and heavy. Jose was having a hard time carrying his massive backpack."

Also, it can be helpful to show students how to use dictionaries and thesauruses, including web-based ones, and functions within Word and in common internet browsers. These tools allow students to quickly locate the meanings of words or their synonyms. However, the definitions that appear can be difficult for students to understand. Students may need help figuring out how the definition applies to the text. Thesauruses may help students understand the meanings of words by providing words that make more sense to them.



My students cannot find a word's meaning using the sentences surrounding the word because they don't know so many words in the passage.

Suggested Approach. Students may not be able to use the surrounding sentences to determine the meaning of words when the reading level of the text is too high. Choose texts for which students will know more words when asking them to practice using surrounding sentences to determine the meaning of words.

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
English Language Arts	 Strong	4 th 5 th 6 th 7 th 8 th 9 th

RECOMMENDATION 3b

Consistently provide students with opportunities to ask and answer questions to better understand the text they read.

This part of Recommendation 3 includes practices for teaching students how to answer different types of questions and how to develop and answer their own questions about a text. Ultimately, the goal of this recommendation is for students to ask and answer questions to draw inferences and engage in meaningful discussions about a text.

Strategies

1. Explicitly teach students how to find and justify answers to different types of questions.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Utilize specific questioning strategies (e.g., “Right There,” “Think and Search,” “Author in Me”) to help students answer questions by justifying their answers from the text.
- Draw connections between student’s own background knowledge to derive meaning from the text.

Focus instruction on common questions that may be asked about a text. Encourage students to answer and justify their answers to these questions by connecting the text to their own world knowledge or deriving meaning from the context within the passage. The table below outlines three common question types. Work with students to answer each type of question individually and provide justification for their answers from the text. The first example shows how to model the use of a Right There question in a passage of text. As students demonstrate understanding, include more difficult questions centered on the text, such as “Think and Search” and “Author and Me.” The examples for “Think and Search” and “Author and Me” demonstrate how to move beyond “Right There” level questions into more complex analyses of the passages.

Types of Questions

Question Type	Description
Right There Question	The information needed to answer the question is considered “right there” because often the words in the question and the words used to answer the question are in the same sentence. This type of question can also be referred to as a text-dependent question.
Think and Search Question	The information needed to answer the question is different parts of the text so the student needs to “think and search” to figure out the answer. This type of question can also be referred to as a text-dependent question.
Author and Me Question	To answer the question, the student must connect information in the text with information they learned or read previously. This type of question can also be referred to as an inferential question.

Teacher Modeling How to Answer a ‘Right There’ Question

The teacher and students are reading about President Johnson’s War on Poverty. Before reading, the teacher explains that poverty refers to the experience of being poor or lacking enough resources to provide the necessities of life—food, clean water, shelter, and healthcare. Some people have a decent job, but still cannot afford quality housing, food, and healthcare. The teacher stops after the first paragraph to model how to answer a Right There question.

President Johnson was a young man during the Great Depression when many people did not have enough money for food or a place to live. During that time, he saw how the United States government could create jobs for many people to do important things like build dams and bridges and make enough money to live. When he became president in 1964, he developed his own ideas about how to help people who were poor. He called his ideas about how to provide more access to quality food and healthcare and access to training for better-paying jobs “a war on poverty.” He believed that government programs like education, social services, and food stamps would help many people find jobs and have enough to eat. Though imperfect, his War on Poverty reduced poverty a good deal and dramatically reduced the number of families who went to bed hungry.

Teacher writes on the board: *What did President Johnson call his ideas about how to help people who are experiencing poverty?*

Teacher: I am going to show you how to find the answer to this Right There question. To answer this Right There question, the words used to make up the question and the words used to answer the question are in the same sentence in the text. I see that the words used to make up the question like ideas and how to help people experiencing poverty are in one sentence.

The teacher directs students to the part of the text that contains the answer and reads the sentence aloud.

Teacher: “He called his ideas about how to provide more access to quality food and healthcare and access to training for better paying jobs a war on poverty.” The answer to this Right There question is: He called his ideas “a war on poverty.”

Teacher Modeling How to Answer a “Think and Search” Question

The teacher and students continue reading about President Johnson’s War on Poverty. The teacher stops after the second paragraph to model how to answer a Think and Search question.

President Johnson worked with Congress to pass laws to create programs to help people who were poor. Many of these programs are still here today. A major program was Head Start. Head Start was a preschool program for students who were poor to prepare them for school. The Head Start grant office also paid people to make educational television shows such as Sesame Street, The Electric Company, and Reading Rainbow. Anyone with a television could watch these shows. The food stamps program helped those who made little money to buy food. It is still here, but now called SNAP. Other programs were also started and provided jobs and job training. The Job Corps program prepared people to be auto mechanics, cooks, nurses, and emergency medical technicians.

Teacher writes on board: *What are three programs that were made available to reduce poverty?*

Teacher: Sometimes when a question asks about naming multiple things, you might have to look in different places in the text for the answer. In other words, you are not likely going to find the answer in one sentence, like a Right There question. This is a Think and Search question. To answer a Think and Search question, you have to put together information from different parts of the text. In the first sentence, the author states that President Johnson worked with Congress to pass laws that would make many programs to help people who were poor. The third sentence says that one program was the Head Start program. The question says to name three programs, but I have not come across another one yet. So, I will keep searching for more. As I read further, I see that television shows such as Sesame Street and The Electric Company were made, but not to reduce poverty. So, I am going to skim past these to find another program. As I read, I see other programs like food stamps and Job Corps programs. So, I found one program, Head Start, in the third sentence. Then I had to skim through further in the passage to find the other programs such as the food stamps and Job Corps programs.

Teacher Modeling How to Answer an “Author and Me” Question

Teacher writes on the board: *How did the Job Corps help people who were in poverty?*

Teacher: This is an Author and Me question. The answer to the question is not in the text we just read. I will have to think about the information the author gives and what I already know to answer the question. The author’s information provides clues to help me answer the question. This question says: *How did the Job Corps help people who were experiencing poverty?* Hmm...I am not sure if the answer to this question is in the text or if I need to determine the answer in another way based on information I already know. Well, I don’t remember the text saying how the Job Corps helps people. I am going to skim the text again and make sure. The author said that the Job Corps prepared people to be auto mechanics and nurses. But how does that actually help people? This might help them get a job, which can probably help people who are experiencing poverty.

The teacher reads a sentence that gives these clues.

Teacher: I am going to think about what we read about poverty last week and what I already know. We learned that people who are in poverty have very little money. I also know that my friend’s family owns an auto repair shop and that my dad is a nurse, and both earn pretty good money. So, the information or clues the author gave me said that the Job Corps program prepared people to do auto repair and nursing.

These are jobs that provide more money. So, I'm thinking that if you learn a skill of some kind like nursing or auto repair, then you should probably be able to earn enough money so you would no longer have to live in poverty. In a story we read last week, we learned that you must learn how to repair cars before you can get a job fixing them, or you have to learn how to take care of people who are sick or are injured to help them get better. So, I think that the Job Corps helped people by teaching them the skills they needed so that they could get jobs and make money so they can probably have a better life.

2. Provide ample opportunities for students to collaboratively answer questions.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Utilize specific questioning strategies (e.g., Right There, Think and Search, and Author in Me) and ensure students can answer questions using these three strategies.
- Model how to select pieces of relevant information from the text to answer the questions and determine what information is less important.
- Work with both simple and complex questions and use the Author and Me protocol.
- Provide scaffolding, such as prompt cards to support students in discovering the answers to the guiding questions.

Using the three levels of questions mentioned above, have students demonstrate they can answer each type. Make sure to include both basic and complex questions within each lesson. Guide students to the appropriate sections of the text where answers can be found but avoid directly providing the answer or the exact place in the text. Work with the whole class to identify portions of the text that provide answers to the questions and write out this information for the class.

Support students in selecting the pieces of relevant information and identifying those sections of the text that are less important. The example below demonstrates how to guide students through an Author and Me level question. Consider creating prompt cards to share with students to support the process of discovering answers to the guiding questions. The resource below shows an example of a prompt card.

Teacher Guiding Students in Answering Author and Me Questions

Teacher and students read the following passage:

I live on Whidbey Island in the state of Washington. Every Sunday, my family and I visit my grandmother. The five of us pile into our car and drive to the waterfront, where there are many boats in the water. We drive onto a ferry and the ferry takes us across the beautiful blue water of the Puget Sound. We always have a good time when we visit our grandmother. This time was different. Nothing could have prepared us for what we were about to see and what was about to happen.

Teacher: Let's read the first three sentences again. Tell me in your own words what is happening.

The students respond that a family of five is going for a car ride to their grandmother's house, which is near the water.

Teacher: Read the next three sentences. What does the author mean by “This time was different?”

The teacher asks students to reread the last three sentences and identify clues in the text.

The students respond by saying that at the start of the day, things seemed to be going well and the family was taking their usual trip across the water to grandma’s house. Then, the author said that they usually have a good time when they visit their grandmother but this time it was different.

Teacher: Do you think different is in a good way?

Fran: No.

Teacher: Could it be in a good way?

Stace: No.

Teacher: How do you know that?

Students connect two ideas in the text that say “we always have a good time,” and “this time was different” to make the implication that something bad was about to happen. Students read the rest of the paragraph.

Teacher: Think back to your own experiences of other things you may have read when someone says, “Nothing could have prepared us for what we were about to see and what was about to happen.” What does that usually suggest?

Students respond with something surprising or different.

Teacher: What does the author mean by “Nothing could have prepared us for what we were about to see and what was about to happen?” Remember when we answer Author and Me questions, we need to connect something in the text with something we read or previously learned. What we know should help us make a decision about what the author meant. Do you think the author meant something good or something not so good is about to happen?

Students respond with whether they think it is something good or not good.

Prompt Card for Answering Author and Me Questions Teachers Pose

1. Read the paragraph.
2. Make connections between the text and something you have learned or read about or experienced.
3. Decide what you think the author meant.
4. Justify your answer by identifying information in the text that supports what you are thinking.

3. Teach students to ask questions about the text while reading.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Create a list of common questions that can be used with a variety of reading texts. Guide students to create their own list.
- Have students share their questions and answers with peers in a small group or pair.

Creating questions for a text can lead to a deeper understanding of the meaning within the text. Establishing a list of common questions to be answered while reading can encourage independence and confidence in the reading process. As students demonstrate skill on these basic, pre-made questions, have them develop their own set of guiding questions. Consider creating prompt cards with common questions and space for them to create their own. As comfort with this process grows, encourage students to share and discuss questions and answers in small groups and pairs. The example below includes common question stems.

Question Stems for Students to Use When Asking Questions About the Text

- Who is (are) ____?
- What happens (happened) when ____?
- What is (was) ____?
- Why did (does) ____?
- How do (does) ____?
- How do ____ and ____ compare?
- What can you say about ____?
- What would happen if ____?

Potential Roadblocks



My students are having difficulty formulating justifications for their answers.

Suggested Approach. Students will need support as they practice justifying their answers. Model with the text how to pose and answer relevant questions and extract the phrase or phrases that support their response.



When the questions use words that don't exactly match the text, my students are stumped.

Suggested Approach. Briefly demonstrate how words can mean the same even when the words themselves differ. Clarify confusing or unclear uses of pronouns.



My students still can't answer Author and Me questions even after I have modeled how to do it.

Suggested Approach. Focus on the appropriate instructional level for the text; students will struggle when their world knowledge is not developed enough to understand the context in the text. Begin with simpler texts and use a mixture of peer work and independent practice before incorporating more complex subject areas.



My students sometimes make seemingly irrelevant connections to their world knowledge.

Suggested Approach. Encourage students to evaluate their connections and compare them to what they already know on a topic. Lead the discussion to discover why some information is relevant and ask leading questions to help students evaluate the importance of the information to the meaning of the text.



My students are really struggling with generating questions as they read.

Suggested Approach. Begin with a focus on Right There questions before moving to more complex evaluations of the text. Provide a prompt card with common question stems. Have a student read the passage out loud first and generate questions orally before engaging independently.

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
English Language Arts	 Strong	4 th 5 th 6 th 7 th 8 th 9 th

RECOMMENDATION 3c

Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text.

Cognitive science has confirmed that much of what we remember is not specific details but instead the overall “gist” of an event or idea. When reading a text, it is not often the exact wording we hope students will remember and incorporate into their own knowledge base. Our goal is for students to extract the “main idea” and to learn how to separate what is important in a passage from parts that are not.

Strategies

1. Model how to use a routine to generate gist statements.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Provide a step-by-step process for finding the “gist” in a passage. Model this process for students.
- Collect gist statements created by students as a result of using the step-by-step process.

Routinize the process of finding the “gist” in a passage by breaking it into smaller, manageable steps. The *Routine for generating a gist statement* resource below shows an example routine to support student discovery of the gist. Many routines begin with a search for the subject of passage— “Who or what is this section about?” Encourage students to look for clues such as frequently repeated words and within the titles, headers, or diagrams/pictures.

The *Marking the text* resource below explains the process of marking the text when searching for important information in the passage. Model the use of the routine across multiple text types. Consider keeping track of gist statements as students work through the text.

Routine for Generating a Gist Statement

- Identify and mark the most important person (referred to as the Who), place, or thing (referred to as the What) in a section of text.
- Mark and then list the important information about the most important person, place, or thing.
- Synthesize or piece together the important information to formulate a gist statement.
- Write the gist statement in your own words.
- Check that the gist statement includes all the important information on a short, complete sentence that makes sense.

Marking the Text

In this practice guide, the panel recommends marking words or phrases that students do not understand or cannot read. The panel also recommends marking important information in the text, so it is easy to find and refer back to. Marking can be done by circling, underlining, highlighting, or any other method a teacher prefers. Choose any method for marking. Ensure that one method is used for difficult words or phrases and a different one is used for important information. Use the same methods consistently for marking the text.

At first, teachers can mark the text for students to see. Students can mark their text as the class works together. Over time, the responsibility of marking the text can shift to students, so they can learn to mark text when they are reading independently.

2. Teach students how to use text structures to generate gist statements.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Explicitly teach text structure: cause and effect, problem and solution, and compare and contrast. Model how to determine the use of the structure across multiple paragraphs in a text.
- Teach students to use one perspective of text structure to help them write their gist statement.

The organization of text can provide helpful clues toward creating the gist of a passage. Text structures such as cause and effect, problem and solution, and compare and contrast are listed in resource below. Explicitly introduce each text structure one at a time and model how to determine which structure is in use across multiple paragraphs within a passage. Support students in seeing the commonalities among the structures as well. For example, cause and effect can be confused with problem and solution. Suggest students pick one perspective on the text structure to stick with and use as the basis for their gist statement. When no text structure is evident, support students in using the routine outlined in the example on the following page.

Types of Text Structures and the Related Questions that Help Identify the Gist

Problem/solution text structures are used to describe a problem and how it was solved.

Question: What is the problem? What is the solution?

Cause/effect text structures are used to explain how one thing or event led to or caused another thing or event to happen.

Question: What happened? What happened as a result?

Compare/contrast text structures are used to explain how topics are alike or different.

Question: How are the topics the same? How are they different?

Teacher Modeling How to Use a Text's Structure to Generate a Gist Statement for a Group of Students

Before reading, the teacher briefly explains where Wuhan, China is located on a map and the meaning of the words virus and global pandemic. The teacher stops once while reading to rephrase a sentence, replacing the word vaccine with "medicine that protects you from getting too sick."

COVID-19: A Dangerous Virus

In December 2019, a virus identified as COVID-19 began to spread from the Wuhan province in China. By March 2020, COVID-19 had caused a global pandemic, which means the virus had spread to all parts of the world. The COVID-19 virus is dangerous because it attacks the cells in the lungs, and it is easy to catch. By February 2021, half a million people in the United States had died from the virus.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, health care professionals strongly advised us to change the way we live. They asked that people wear face masks and stay at least six feet away from other people in public places. They also recommended that people stay home to control the number of people who would get sick from the virus. Instead of going to their local school, students across the United States went to school online. Several drug companies quickly developed vaccines that could be used to protect people from the COVID-19 virus. With effective vaccines, the number of people catching the COVID-19 virus will get lower and lower, and people will be able to live more normally.

After reading the short section of text aloud, the teacher gives the students the following explanation.

Teacher: I think this section of text has a problem-solution text structure. The problem is the virus and all the sickness and death it is causing.

The teacher circles the word *virus*.

Teacher: I know the virus is a problem because it says here that it has spread to all parts of the world, that it is easy to catch, that it attacks the lungs, and that many people have died from the virus. The COVID-19 virus was in almost every sentence. Next, I ask myself, what is the solution? In this case, there were many solutions. People changed the way they lived by wearing masks, staying home, and attending school online.

The teacher highlights the three solutions.

Teacher: The development of the vaccine to prevent people from getting the virus is also a solution. I know that because it says here that the vaccines will make it so that fewer people get sick from the virus.

The teacher reminds students that figuring out the type of text structure can help them to write a gist statement. The teacher reminds students that the problem is who or what the passage is about, and the solution is the most important information about the person, place, or thing. Next, the teacher shows students how to develop the gist using the text structure.

The teacher writes *The problem is the COVID-19 virus, and one solution is the vaccine* on the board.

Most important information:

1. *The COVID-19 virus was very dangerous, and many people died.*
2. *Health professionals said we should wear masks and stay away from other people to stop people from spreading the COVID-19 virus.*
3. *Drug companies developed COVID-19 vaccines to help protect people.*

The teacher formulates the following gist statements and writes them on the board.

Possible gists:

1. *We changed our lives to stop spreading the COVID-19 virus, but vaccines will help us live more normally.*
2. *The COVID-19 virus made people sick, but vaccines will keep people safe.*

Teacher: Now I need to reread my gist statement to see if it makes sense. Did I identify the who or what this section is about? Yes, the “what” or the problem is the COVID-19 virus. Did I identify the most important information about the COVID-19, which is the solution? Yes. The most important information about the COVID-19 virus is that vaccines were developed, which is the solution. The solution is the vaccines, which will bring us back to normal. Did I write this in my own words and not copy them directly from the text? Yes. I don't see sentences exactly like mine.

3. Work collaboratively with students to generate gist statements.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Collaborate with students to write their own gist statement.
- Have students explain their thinking for how they wrote the gist statement.
Reduce the level of support as students become more proficient in writing gist statements on their own.

After providing modeled examples of generating a gist statement, collaborate with students and prompt them through the routine. Encourage students to explain their decisions as they progress through the routine and to connect their thinking to the relevant portions of the text. As the gist statement develops, keep track of it on the board and have students record it in their logs. As students become more proficient with the process, gradually reduce the level of prompting and support. The resource below demonstrates how to work with a group of students to identify the gist of a section of text.

Teacher and Students Collaboratively Generating a Gist Statement

Before reading, the teacher briefly develops students' knowledge of genetics and DNA by showing a short video clip. The teacher explains the meaning of genes and traits in the context of the passage. The students share traits they have in common with their parents or siblings.

Genes play an important role in determining how you look and other traits you have that have been passed to you from your parents. Your genes include instructions that tell your cells to create certain traits or characteristics, such as whether you have curly or straight hair or how you smile. These instructions are called deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). Each of your biological parents passes on half of their genes. That means that half the instructions in your body come from your biological mother and half from your biological father. Each gene has a special job, and the instructions or DNA tell your genes what to do. Because you share some of the same instructions in your genes as your parents, the instructions in your body will tell your genes to create some traits that are like your parents' traits, and you can end up looking like your parents. Your brothers and sisters who have the same biological parents may also have some traits like your parents.

The small group of students read the text together. The teacher stops the reading briefly to clarify the meaning of *biological*. The teacher reviews the steps of the routine for generating gist statements.

Teacher: Let's generate a gist statement together. What is the first step?

Students: We need to figure out who or what this is about.

Teacher: Right. Who or what do you think this passage is about?

Jordan: Families looking alike!

Sammy: I think it is about genes.

Teacher: So, it looks like we have two different thoughts about who or what this passage is about. Let's talk about this. Why do you think it is families looking alike, Jordan?

Jordan: I think so because it says families look alike because they share the same genes.

Sammy: But it's talking about genes too. We read that genes make our traits.

Teacher: Let's read what it says. The first sentence says, "Genes play an important role in determining how you look and other traits you have that have been passed to you from your parents."

The teacher highlights the sentence with these two ideas.

Teacher: What does it seem like this sentence is about?

Lupe: Genes.

Teacher: Let's continue with the next sentence: "Your genes include instructions that tell your cells to create certain traits or characteristics such as whether you have curly or straight hair or how you smile." What are they talking about here?

Jordan: Traits.

Teacher: We have to decide what it is mainly about.

Sammy: It says that genes are how traits are passed on, and everything we read talks about traits. So, I agree, it is about genes.

The teacher circles all the places genes and traits appear.

Teacher: It mainly talks about genes, but sometimes it is hard to figure out what the passage is about. But for now, do you all agree that this passage is about genes or how traits are passed on? Turn and talk to your partner and decide if you agree or disagree.

Students talk to their partner briefly and then the teacher asks them to raise their hands if they agreed. All the students raise their hands.

Teacher: So, this section mentioned that half of our parent's DNA is passed on to us. If you are talking about things that are passed on that are characteristics, what do you suppose they are talking about here?

Jordan: They might be talking about a child having the same hair as their dad.

Teacher: Yes, they talked about genes and DNA, so they could be talking about characteristics you see. How can we put that all together?

No response.

Teacher: Children inherit many things. What can we call them?

Aria: Traits.

Teacher: Let's put that all together. The main "what" is...?

Aria: Genes?

Teacher: What do they do? Let's list the most important information about them.

The teacher elicits responses from students, highlights the important information in the text, and writes it on the board.

1. *Traits are passed on.*
2. *Our genes have instructions called DNA, which tell our body to develop certain traits or characteristics.*
3. *Half of each parent's DNA is passed to their child.*

After this, the teacher lists all of the important information. The teacher then synthesizes the information to tell what this paragraph is about.

Teacher: What is all of this important information telling us?

Jordan: Genes and traits we get from our parents.

The teacher tells students to work with a partner to generate gist statements. The teacher reminds students to check that their gist statement includes the most important information and is a short complete sentence that makes sense. Afterward, students share the following gists:

1. *Genes play a part in how children get traits from their parents.*
2. *Genes include instructions for traits passed on from parents to children.*
3. *Genes include DNA that makes traits that are passed down in families.*

Potential Roadblocks



My students are having a really hard time generating gist statements. What can I do?

Suggested Approach. Break the process into smaller steps focusing first on the ‘who’ and ‘what’ of the text. Ask students to work in pairs and consider creating a few possible examples of gist statements for text and having students identify which would be the best match to the text.



Students get tired of doing gist statements day after day.

Suggested Approach. Use the creation of gist statements as just one of the many tools that encourage comprehension. Vary the instructional activity regularly to avoid fatigue on gist generation.



I am not sure what text to use with students when teaching them how to generate the gist.

Suggested Approach. Gist statements can be generated from all types of text. Have students use their subject-area textbooks or required readings as the text and seek out text that includes relatable material.



Sometimes, I think my students have finally learned how to generate gist statements. But then, a few days later, we get to a new piece of reading material, and it all falls apart. Will they ever learn how to do it?

Suggested Approach. As text becomes more difficult and complex, generating a gist statement can become more difficult. For more challenging texts, focus on increasing your use of prompts, referencing the routine, and including additional encouragement or positive feedback on their progress.



I seem to spend too much time talking at my students when we work on gist statements.

Suggested Approach. As students begin to demonstrate greater proficiency with generating gist statements, gradually pull back your use of prompts and scaffolding. Encourage students to continue providing justification for their gist statements from the text and ask follow-up questions when students appear stuck.

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
English Language Arts	 Strong	4 th 5 th 6 th 7 th 8 th 9 th

RECOMMENDATION 3d

Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read.

Students may not know when they do not understand what they are reading. For some students, reading has always felt like a task to complete, but not a task that helped them learn about a topic. However, in grades 4–9, students need to gain information from what they read. Students need to learn to be aware of their own comprehension and determine whether a section of text is making sense to them. One of the first steps in building awareness is being able to say, “I don’t understand this.” When students monitor for understanding as they read, they can recognize whether the text is making sense to them. There are several actions students can take when they figure out that they are not understanding the text. These actions can help students make sense of the text. This part of Recommendation 3 focuses on teaching students to determine if they are understanding the text, to ask themselves questions to check their understanding, and to take actions to make sense of the text. The recommendation also teaches students to reflect on their learning.

Strategies

1. Help students determine when they do not understand the text.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Have students practice determining if a text makes sense using isolated sentences or nonsense sentences.
- Have students mark words or parts of the sentence that do not make sense.
- Discuss the parts of the sentences that are not making sense and provide feedback on student thinking.
- After practice with isolated sentences, move on to longer pieces of text with multiple sentences.

To help students become more comfortable with acknowledging when portions of a text do not make sense to them, have students practice with isolated sentences. This activity includes some nonsensical sentences to help students get in the habit of asking themselves, “Does this make sense to me?” The teacher asks students to read a sentence and determine if it makes sense.

If the sentence does not make sense, the teacher tells students to mark (e.g., underline or highlight) the word they cannot read or do not understand or the portions of the sentence that do not make sense. Discuss the statements students were not able to understand and which parts caused the problem. Help students think through what they can do when they do not understand a word or phrase.

After students have practiced identifying whether or not what they read makes sense at the sentence level, move on to longer pieces of text with multiple sentences.

Example Student Sheet: Does it Make Sense?

Number	Statement	Does it make sense?	
1	The Olympic games began almost 3,000 years ago on the sun.	Yes	No
2	When the first Europeans arrived in North America, native Americans played grapes like football.	Yes	No
3	At the library you can find books on any sport you are interested in.	Yes	No
4	Many people watch sports on TV for their exercise.	Yes	No
5	A student athlete goes to school and practices every day.	Yes	No
6	If you can do a cartwheel, a handstand, or the splits, then you can do gymnastics.	Yes	No
7	Basketball and skateboarding are two fairly new sports that began in the United States.	Yes	No
8	Many schools have a gym for students of exercise.	Yes	No

2. Teach students to ask themselves questions as they read to check their understanding and figure out what the text is about.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Teach students to stop and ask themselves what the section is about to determine if it makes sense.
- Model reading a passage and asking whether it makes sense.
- Read text as a group and ask the group periodically what the passage is about and whether it makes sense.
- Record student reading and have them listen to earlier attempts to demonstrate growth.
- Have students share with other students the questions they are asking themselves.

Teach students to stop periodically and ask themselves what the section of text is about or what the gist statement is for the section of text. When they think about what the section is about, they can figure out whether what they are reading is making sense. If they do not understand, they can reread the section slowly and carefully, if necessary. They can also figure out which words are stumping them or try to think about what they know about the topic.

Model how you would read a passage and ask yourself questions aloud as you read. This will help students hear how asking questions and thinking about the words in the text can help them make sense of the text.

Read the text as a group and stop periodically to ask the group to think about whether they are understanding the text and what they can do to address their misunderstandings. Ask students the questions they should ask themselves and support them in answering the questions. Use prompts and questions to help students move toward independence in asking themselves questions. When necessary, prompt students by pointing out specific sentences that might be confusing.

As students become more comfortable asking themselves questions, have them work in pairs or small groups to read the next paragraph and share how they asked themselves questions during the reading. Have students talk about the questions they asked and whether those questions prompted them to do something to address their understanding.

Possible Questions Students Can Ask Themselves as They Read

First, I ask myself: What was that section of text about? What is happening in this section?

Then I ask myself:

1. If I am not sure what this section is about, I ask: Are there any words I cannot read or do not understand? Are there any phrases or sentences that do not make sense? Should I reread that section carefully?
2. If a word or phrase doesn't make sense, I ask: How am I going to figure out what that word or phrase means?
3. If I am not sure what this section is about but it reminds me of something, I ask: What else do I know about this topic?
4. If I think I know what this section is about, I ask: What are the main points?

Teacher Demonstrating How to Ask Questions to Monitor Comprehension

The teacher and students are reading a biography of Mary Winston Jackson.

Teacher: To keep track of what I am reading, I am going to ask myself questions. After this first paragraph, I ask, "What was this section of text about?" I read that Mary Winston Jackson loved science and that she volunteered by helping youngsters in a science club at a local community center. They built wind tunnels and conducted experiments. I think I understand this part of the passage.

The teacher goes on to read more and realizes that the students might struggle with the next paragraph, so models how to figure out what the section of text is about.

Teacher: I am going to ask myself, “What was this section of text about?” I know it is about a woman, a scientist. But I can’t figure out what she did. I am not sure. I realize now that I do not understand this section. I ask myself, “Do I need to reread this section? Should I reread the section slowly?” Yeah, I need to reread this section slowly. Maybe that will help me.

The teacher rereads the sentences aloud slowly.

Teacher: Oh...I see, here the text talks about how she helped young people.

The teacher goes on to explain that students can monitor for understanding as they read by asking themselves questions. If they do not understand something, they can reread the text or seek more information from a peer, teacher, or online resource.

3. Provide opportunities for students to reflect on what they have learned.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Ask students to write down what they learned from the reading, what they are confused about, and what steps they might take to help them understand better.
- Use sentence starters to support students.
- Use comprehension questions and ask students to mark any answers that they are not confident in.

Before the end of the intervention session, ask students to write down what they learned in the day’s lesson, what they are still confused about, and what they might have done to help themselves understand better. This will help them to remember new information and think about what could help them in the future.

Sentence starters can help students write about what they learned. Have students choose 2–3 sentence starters to complete at the end of class.

Alternatively, ask students to answer some comprehension questions instead. Ask students to mark any answers in which they are not confident. This will help students practice identifying when they do not understand what they read.

Possible Sentence Starters to Complete After Reading

1. Today I learned...
2. I was surprised by...
3. The most useful thing I will take from this lesson is...
4. One thing I am not sure about is...
5. The main thing I want to find out more about is...
6. After this session, I feel...

Potential Roadblocks



My students are reticent to share what they did not understand.

Suggested Approach. Helping students feel comfortable sharing when they are not understanding what they are reading may take time. Some students may not feel comfortable at first. They may want to hide their confusion, or they may not be accustomed to identifying when they are stuck. Repeatedly and gently, encourage students to share when they need help and remind them that you are there to help.



I keep stopping every two minutes to make sure they are understanding what they read. This does not seem to be working well.

Suggested Approach. It can be hard to follow along with the text if you are stopping too often. If this technique is not working well, interrupt their reading after longer sections of text. Ask students to continue to mark (e.g., underline or highlight) any problem areas in the text as they read and share what they marked at stop points further along in the text.



Students like to preview the text to determine how difficult it is, but this doesn't seem like a good use of their time.

Suggested Approach. Previewing text can prepare students for reading and can help them monitor their understanding. Students can check the title, subheadings, and figures to get a sense of what they will be reading and to quickly check in with themselves to see if the passage's topic is something they know about or if it is a topic that is unfamiliar to them. Teach students to think about whether the text will be difficult for them and how much they will read before checking their understanding.



My students mark too many words that they cannot read. How do I help them?

Suggested Approach. If students underline profusely, check the difficulty level of the text. It could be that the text the students are reading is not at an appropriate level. If the text is at the students' instructional level, ask students to pick a few words or phrases that made it hard for them to understand the passage and focus on those. Consider modeling for students how you got stuck and choose a few words or phrases to mark for further exploration or discussion. If this remains a chronic problem, reconsider the reading material being used. It may be too difficult.

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
English Language Arts	 Strong	4 th 5 th 6 th 7 th 8 th 9 th

RECOMMENDATION 4

Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of a stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to complex ideas and information.

Experts recommend including a stretch text into the intervention 2–3 times a week for periods of 6–10 weeks. These texts are typically challenging, just above a student’s typical reading level. Exposure to higher-level texts includes more complex vocabulary, sentence structures, and ideas. Prior strategies in Recommendation 3 are suggested for stretch texts as well, but a focus on providing consistent support and positive feedback is key when the content is challenging.

Strategies

1. Prepare for the lesson by carefully selecting appropriate stretch texts, choosing points to stop for discussion and clarification, and identifying words to teach.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Provide motivating texts that are at the top of the student’s individual reading level.
- Arrange the texts in gradually increasing difficulty and length to help students gain confidence as they interact with the text.
- Pre-read the texts and identify appropriate stop points to engage in group discussion to help students with comprehension.
- Create a list of difficult words and pre-teach how to understand them in the text before a student begins reading a stretch text.

Select texts at the upper boundary of students’ individual reading levels. Arrange the stretch text to gradually increase in difficulty and length as students gain confidence. Topic areas for stretch texts can draw from students’ subject area courses but seek out options beyond the textbook; search for materials that will motivate students. Prior to instructions, read through the text and pre-select stop points to engage in group discussion. Consider stop points where the passage becomes confusing, includes unfamiliar or difficult to decode words, or when the author provides pivotal details.

Another pre-instruction suggestion is to create a list of difficult/multisyllabic words, essential words, or proper nouns and discuss with students how to work through or understand each as they read through the text. The example below shows how to prepare a short passage for this process.

Teacher Preparing to Read a Short Section from a Grade-Level Text about Noted Novelist Louise Erdrich

Louise Erdrich Wins Pulitzer Prize in Literature

The Pulitzer Prize is one of the highest awards that writers can receive. In June 2021, the novelist Louise Erdrich won the award for her novel *The Night Watchman*. *The Night Watchman* is based on the life of her grandfather who fought to ensure the Ojibwe tribe could keep their land.

Erdrich writes frequently about life on and near the reservations. Louise's mother was Ojibwe. Although her father was not Ojibwe, both her parents attended a boarding school run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The boarding schools were intended to assimilate Native American children into the "American way of life" and to train them for low paying jobs.

Erdrich won the equally prestigious National Book Award for her novel *LaRose*. Like all her novels, *LaRose* explored the rich traditions of Ojibwe people and the struggle of children being forced to attend boarding schools many miles from their families. The novel explored the cruelty of separating children from their families and their traditions.

Erdrich's books describe horrors but are also full of humor. They include many fascinating people. Some are very wise and caring, some thoughtless, and many in between.

The teacher marks the following sections and words before beginning to read with the group. This is grade-level material for the English language arts class.

Stop points and discussion starters:

- Stop after paragraph 1 – What is this paragraph about?
- Stop after paragraph 2 – What was the purpose of the boarding schools for Native Americans?
- Stop after paragraph 3 – What happened in her novel *LaRose* that was disturbing?
- Stop after paragraph 4 – What are some positive aspects of her novels? What do you think the author means when describing people who fall in between being wise and thoughtless at the same time?

Proper nouns:

- Pulitzer Prize
- Louise Erdrich
- Ojibwe
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Native American

Multisyllabic words using previously taught word-reading skills:

- frequently
- reservation
- attended
- assimilate
- traditions

Essential words:

- novel
- reservation
- assimilate
- boarding school

2. After students demonstrate comfort with reading stretch texts with the group, provide students with electronic supports to use when independently reading a stretch text to assist with the pronunciation of difficult words and word meanings.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Encourage students to use electronic supports to help them with unfamiliar words or topics.
- Model for students how to use these supports and encourage independent practice.

Once students begin to demonstrate comfort with the process of reading through stretch texts, begin incorporating independent and small group-based settings. Encourage students to engage with electronic supports to help work through unfamiliar words and topic areas. Model how to find and use the embedded dictionary and thesaurus in many word processing programs. Demonstrate how to use the read-aloud function for eBooks and encourage students to make use of any provided comprehension questions with the passage.

Potential Roadblocks



Stretch text is just too frustrating for my students. They tend to give up far too easily.

Suggested Approach. Remind students of the common but challenging nature of reading a stretch text and provide often and demonstrated support. Start the practice of a stretch text by moving sentence by sentence before building up to longer sections.



Grade-level science and history texts are typically many years above the instructional level for some of my intervention groups.

Suggested Approach. Try to avoid material taken directly from textbooks for stretch text practice. Choose materials from magazines, newspapers, and books that focus on engaging topics relatable to the student. Consider selecting texts that also include visual elements as these may assist in making meaning from the text.



I get confused between what is considered stretch text or challenging text, and how this all fits into Lexile levels.

Suggested Approach. Stretch texts should be challenging and present new knowledge in more complex formats for students. This is true regardless of which descriptive terms (challenging or by Lexile level) you choose to use.



My students would prefer reading short stories and novels for their stretch text rather than informational text.

Suggested Approach. Consider hybrid texts that incorporate a narrative style within an informational text. Short biographical sketches, historical fiction, social sciences, and economics are common topics within hybrid text options.

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