TN Department of Education

Module 1: Read to be Ready

[TAB PAGE]

Course of Study

Read to be Ready

Selecting High-Quality and Appropriately-Complex Texts for Read Alouds

Planning Repeated Interactive Read Aloud Lessons

Creating Text Sets that Build Knowledge and Vocabulary

Designing Your Literacy Block

Module 1: Read to be Ready

Objectives

- Review the key messages and goals of the Read to be Ready campaign and reflect on Tennessee's current literacy landscape
- Preview the purpose and objectives of this training and how they connect to and extend past learning

Link to Tennessee Academic Standards

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

TEAM Alignment

- Standards and Objectives
- Questioning
- Teacher Content Knowledge

The Read to Be Ready Campaign

On Feb. 17, 2016, Tennessee Education Commissioner Dr. Candice McQueen, Governor Bill Haslam, and First Lady Crissy Haslam launched the Read to be Ready Campaign. **The Read to be Ready Campaign unites stakeholders across Tennessee in the pursuit of one common, critical goal – by 2025, 75% of Tennessee third graders will read on grade level**. The campaign is driven by five key beliefs:

Early Literacy Matters	A strong start to reading directly impacts a child's long-term learning and life success. A good start in language and literacy development is a strong predictor of successful literacy achievement in the early grades, reports of fewer literacy difficulties as students move through their academic career, and preparation for lifelong learning. Early literacy activities shared with family members and caregivers are associated with students' sustained interest and engagement in reading and writing. When children enter school, teachers help students take their early experiences with language to the next level. Realizing the potential of all students to be successful literate learners is at the heart of productive early literacy instruction. A particularly powerful approach is coupling this expectation for student learning with instruction that provides explicit comprehension of texts at varying difficulty levels, meaningful conversations around text ideas, and knowledge and vocabulary building activities.
But, It's Never Too Late	With quality resources and support, even those students who are not reading on grade level can catch up. Instruction that is research-based and provided by expert educators can reduce students' reading difficulties and sustain successful reading progress across grades. Additionally, high-quality reading instruction can lead to equitable outcomes for historically underserved populations. Such instruction is differentiated, intensive, and individualized according to students' reading strengths and needs.

Reading is More than "Sounding Out" Words	Reading is thinking deeply about a text's meaning and how it builds knowledge of the world around us. Why would we read if not to learn about authors' ideas and enter new worlds that engage our imaginations, invite our questions, and advance our knowledge? While many students require explicit instruction in word learning skills, they also require explicit comprehension instruction and must develop skills and strategies for deriving meaning, analyzing the logic of argumentation, and generating conclusions and interpretations. If taught well, word learning and comprehension skills and strategies support each other to develop vocabulary, extend language, and enhance knowledge development.
Teachers are Critical	Educators must have a deep understanding of the art and science of literacy instruction in order to develop lifelong readers. Expert teachers know their students' capabilities and needs, and they routinely implement student-centered formative assessments to monitor progress. They provide carefully guided and mentored literacy instruction that engages students in authentic and purposeful reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. They approach literacy instruction comprehensively, integrating English language arts throughout the curriculum, supporting students' connections across academic subjects, and building knowledge that is broad-based and useful for solving real-life problems.
It Takes a Community	Because our students do not just learn while they are in the classroom, everyone plays a key role in helping them grow into successful, lifelong learners, readers, and leaders. Parents, educators, businesses, and community members all hold a piece of the puzzle that, if completed, will make Tennessee a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Discussion

Of the five Read to be Ready beliefs, which stands out most to you? Why?

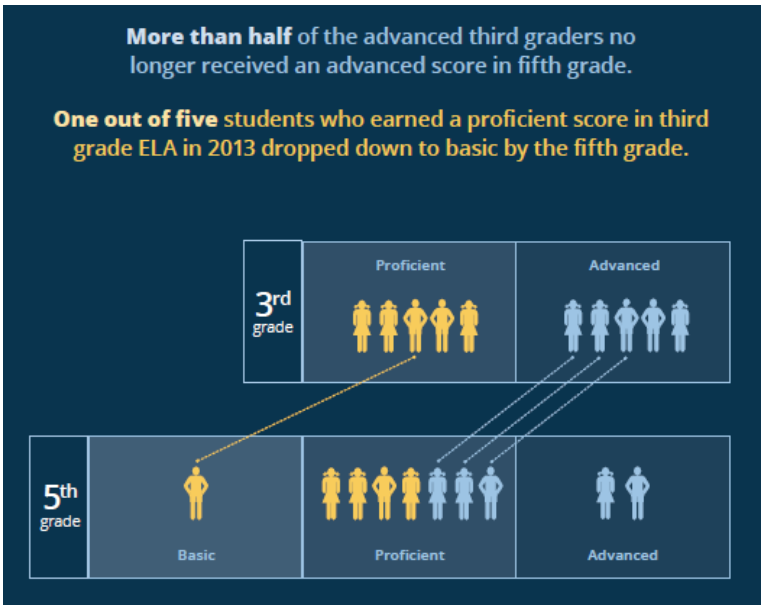
Learn more about the Ready to be Ready Campaign at www.tn.gov/readtobeready

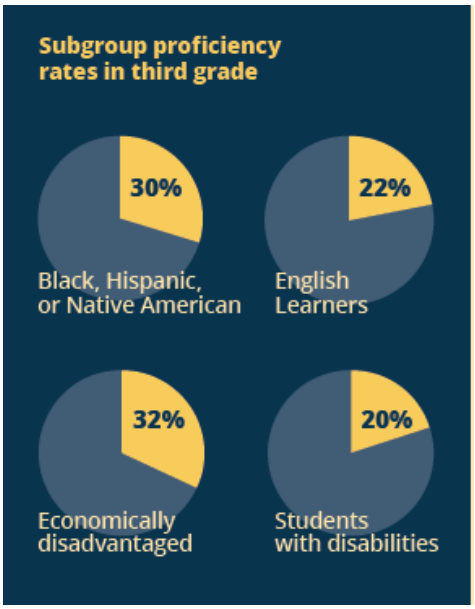
Why Read to be Ready?

Tennessee has made tremendous gains in student academic performance over the past several years – except in reading. Despite educators' best efforts, reading skills in elementary school learners have failed to improve, and in some cases have even declined.

Overall, **fewer than half of our third and fourth graders are reading on grade level** based on state tests, and more rigorous national assessments suggest that only one-third of our fourth graders are proficient. **Achievement gaps are also striking**: only one-third of economically disadvantaged students and just one in every five of our students with disabilities achieve proficiency by the end of third grade. English learners are not advancing as quickly as their native-speaking peers. On top of that, too often students who start behind stay behind: state data tells us that only three percent of students who test at Below Basic in third grade earn a score of Proficient by grade five.

Over the long term, national research shows that **children who are not reading proficiently by third grade are four times less likely to graduate** from high school by age 19. Dropping out of high school severely damages earning and job market appeal, and it impacts chances of leading a healthy and productive life, in addition to increasing odds of incarceration, poverty, and single parenting.

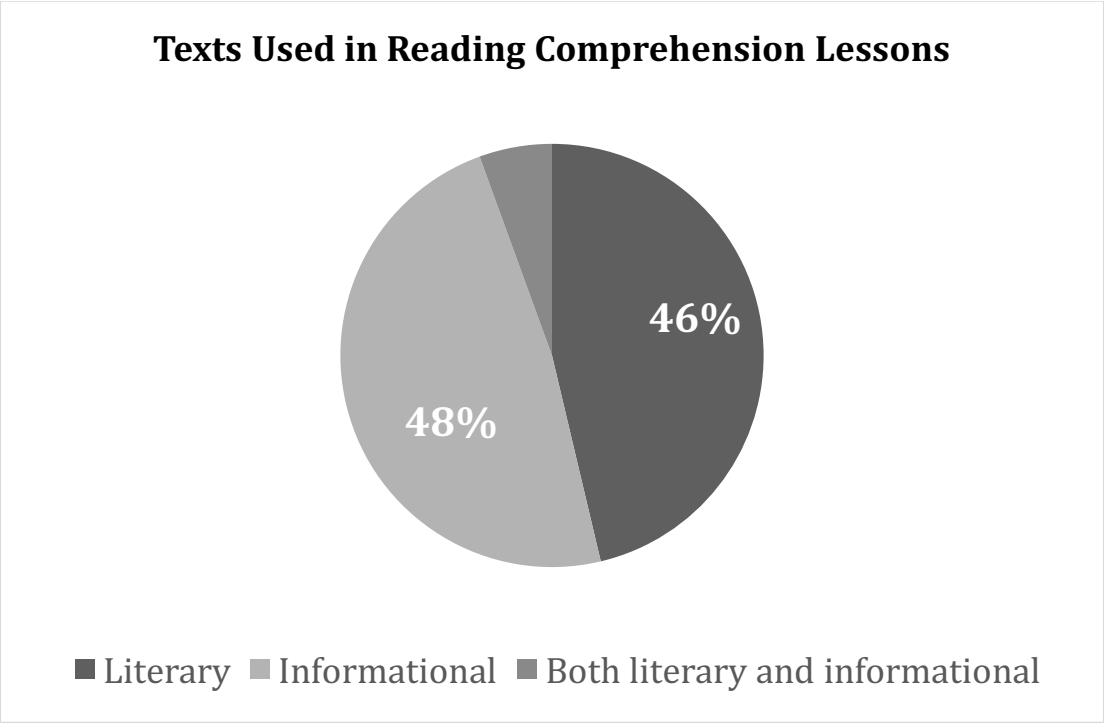


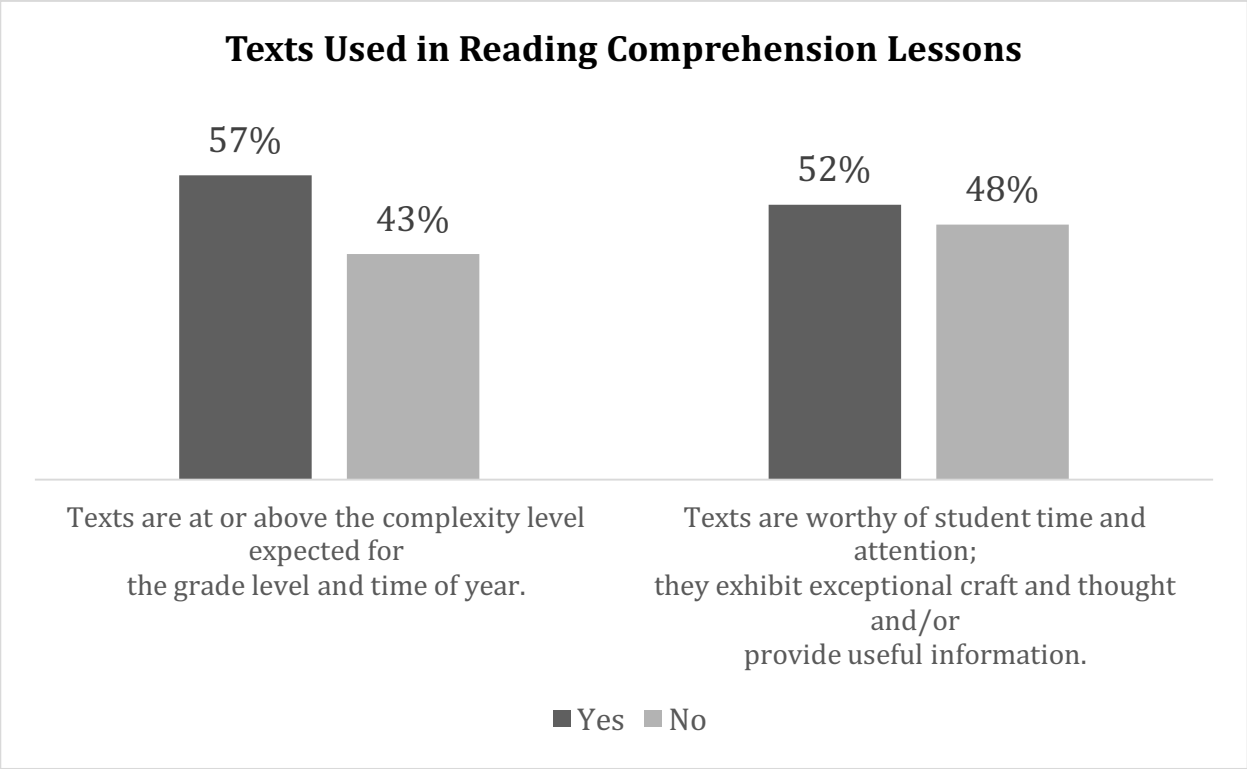


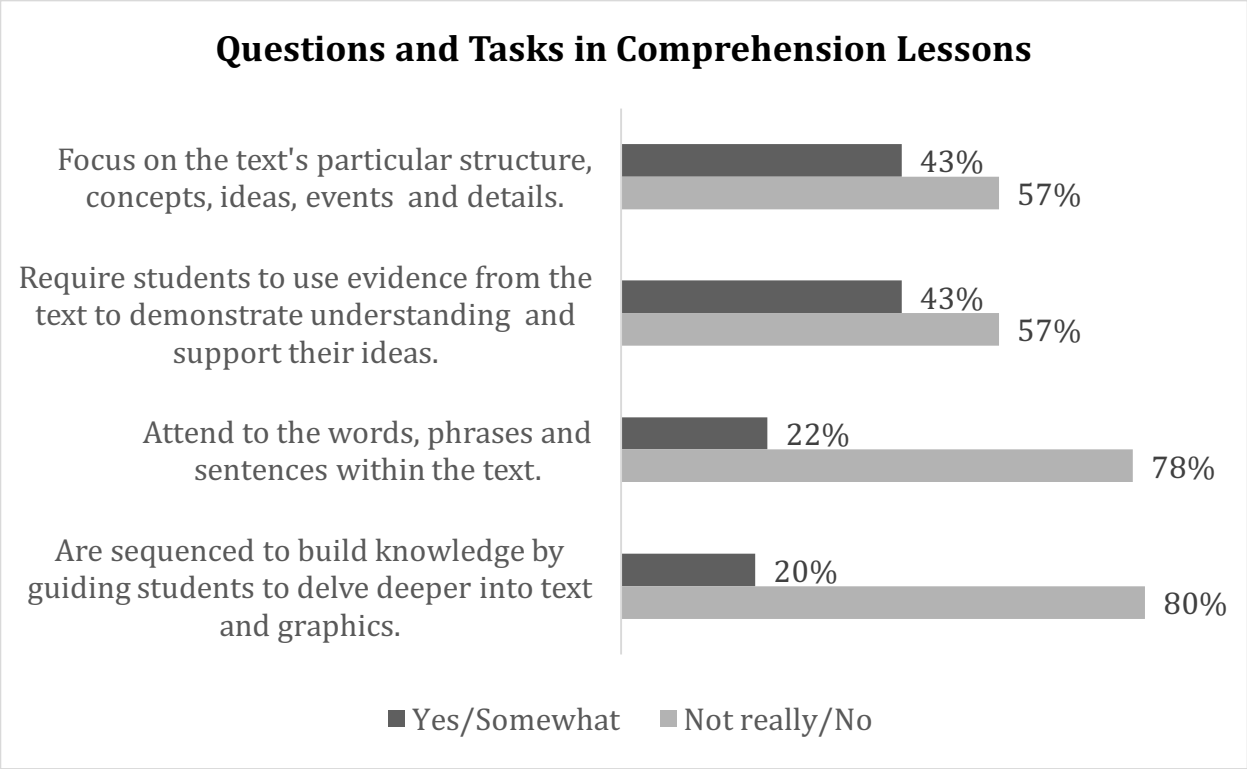
Why Read to be Ready? – Tennessee's Literacy Landscape

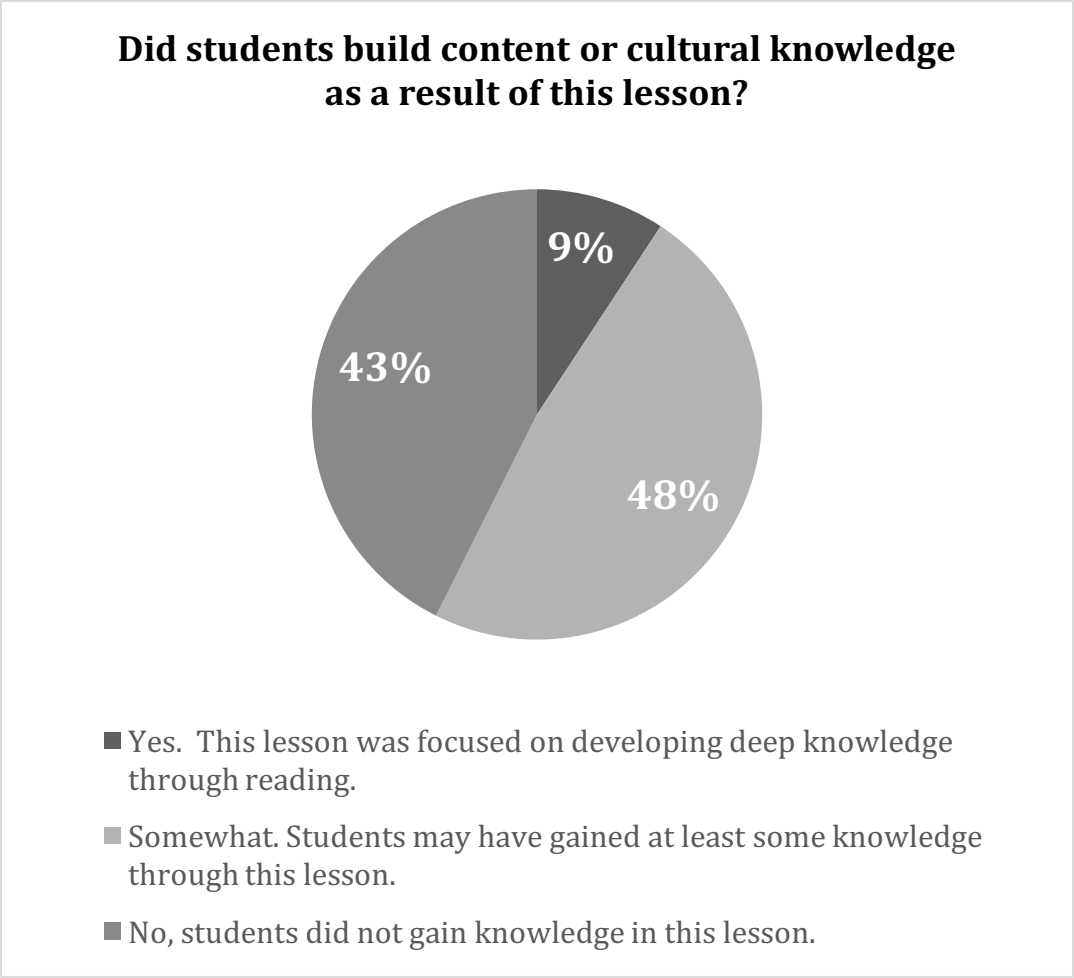
The Tennessee Department of Education partnered with an external research group to conduct a literacy landscape study. The research group observed 112 elementary classrooms across ten different districts that represent the geographic, demographic, and achievement diversity of our state. Below are some findings from their study. As you look through the findings, please record your thoughts and questions.

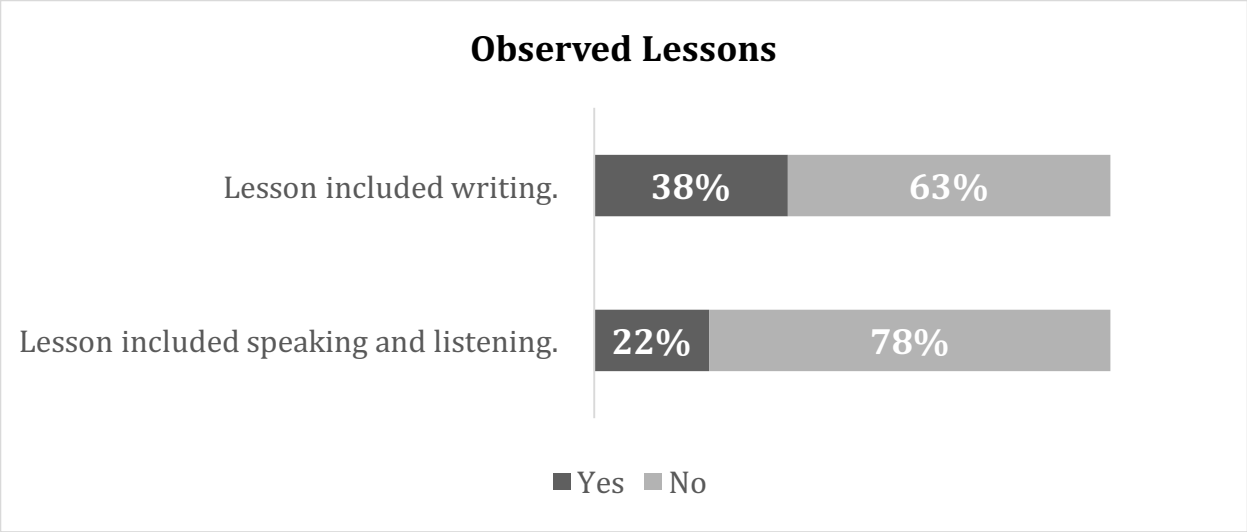
Note: The Tennessee Department of Education is proud of the growth we've seen in classrooms. We know it takes time to learn and implement new standards, and it also takes time to make changes to our classroom practice. We want to be transparent about the growth we're seeing in classrooms, and we're excited to partner with you as we all continue to learn more about what it takes to fully implement our state's academic standards.

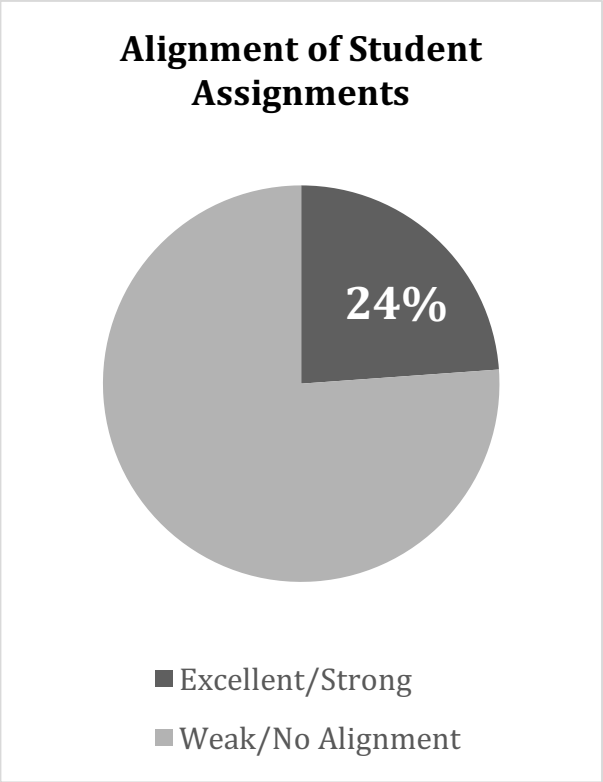



Texts Used in Reading Comprehension Lessons
57%
43%
52%
48%
Texts are at or above the complexity level expected for the grade level and time of year.
Texts are worthy of student time and attention; they exhibit exceptional craft and thought and/or provide useful information.
Yes
No


Questions and Tasks in Comprehension Lessons
Focus on the text's particular structure, concepts, ideas, events and details.
43%
57%
Require students to use evidence from the text to demonstrate understanding and support their ideas.
43%
57%
Attend to the words, phrases and sentences within the text.
22%
78%
Are sequenced to build knowledge by guiding students to delve deeper into text and graphics.
20%
80%
Yes/Somewhat
Not really/No


Did students build content or cultural knowledge as a result of this lesson?
9%
43%
48%
Yes. This lesson was focused on developing deep knowledge through reading.
Somewhat. Students may have gained at least some knowledge through this lesson.
No, students did not gain knowledge in this lesson.


Observed Lessons
Lesson included writing.
38%
63%
Lesson included speaking and listening.
22%
78%
Yes
No

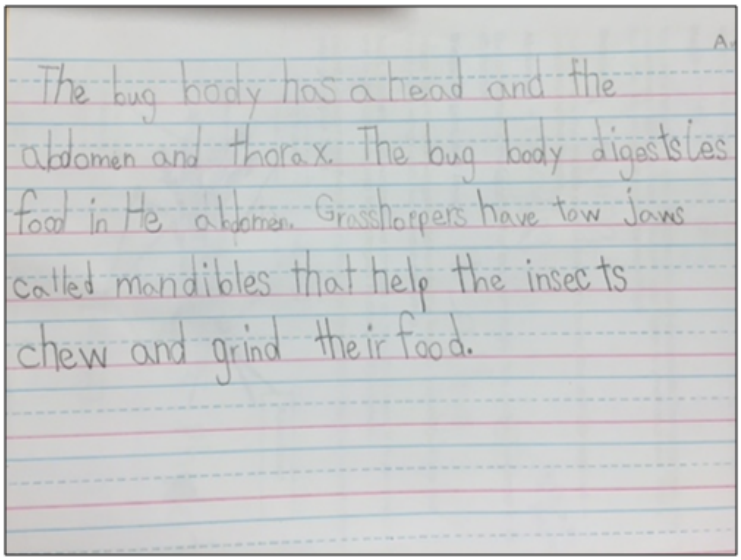


Excellent: The assignment demands are clearly consistent with all aspects of the identified standard(s).

Strong: The assignment is consistent with the most critical aspects of the identified standard(s).

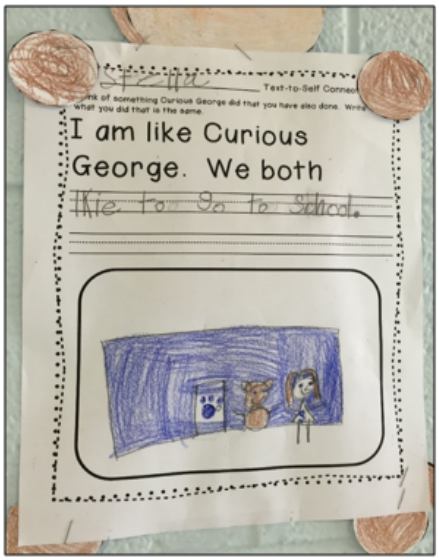
Weak: The most critical aspects addressed in the identified standard(s) are NOT addressed in the assignment.

No Alignment: The assignment demands do not match the identified standard(s).



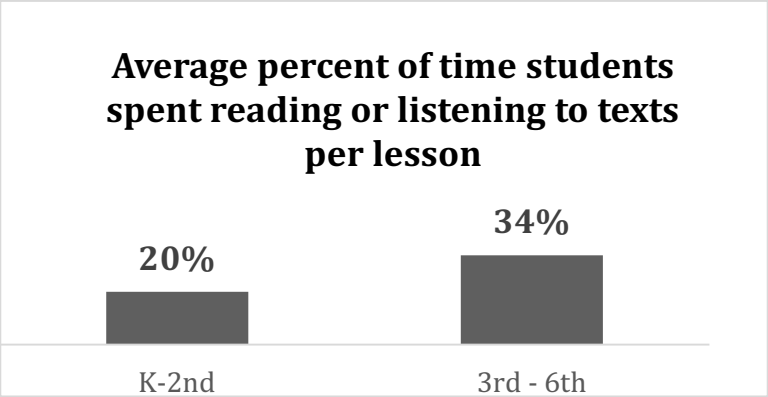
1st Grade, Excellent Alignment

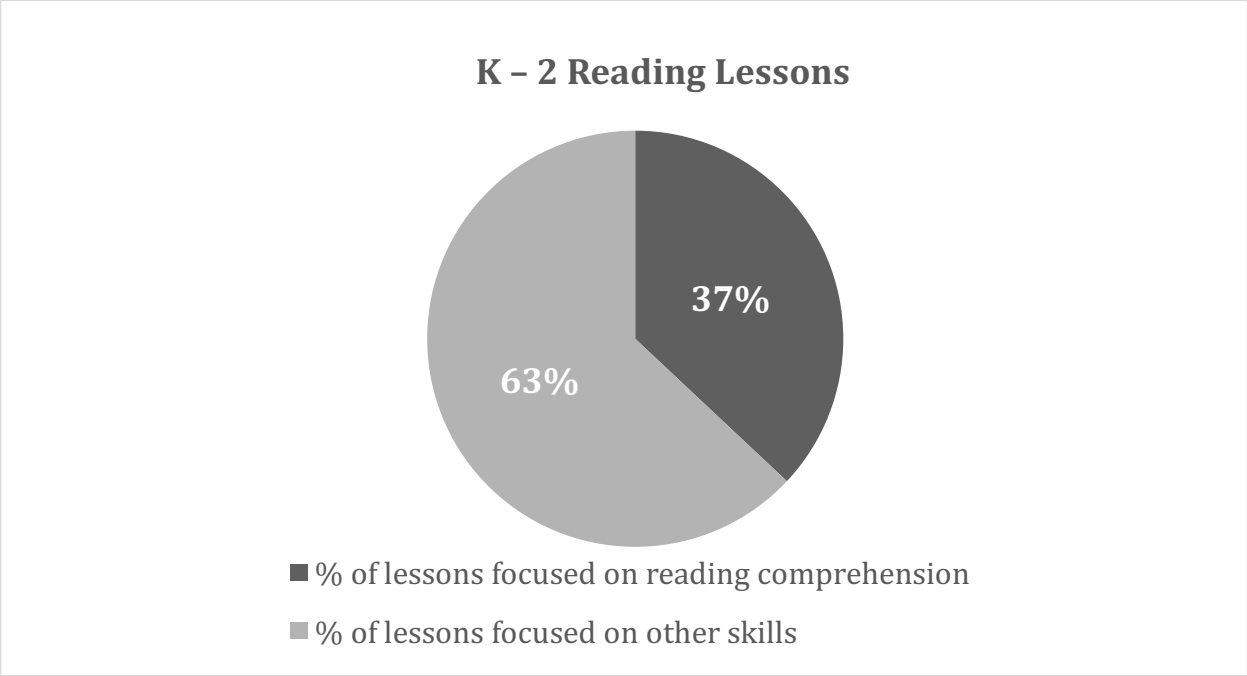
1.W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.



1st Grade, Weak Alignment

1.RL.3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.





Discussion

- What is your reaction to this data?
- Does it match what you see in your school and district?
- Where can we celebrate? Where do we need to improve the most?

ISSUE BRIEF #2, March 2016

www.KnowledgeMattersCampaign.org

Knowledge Matters

Restoring Wonder and Excitement to the Classroom

Building Knowledge

How Washoe's Core Task Project Revealed the Key to the Common Core and Reading Comprehension

By Torrey Palmer

Top Three Takeaways

1. Some strategies that boost reading scores in the short term are counterproductive long term.

2. Younger grades should be privy to content curriculum if literacy is expected to prosper in later grades.

3. A responsive learning environment for teachers coupled with content-rich curriculum is necessary to improving literacy and vocabulary.

Torrey Palmer is a project director with TNTP; she supports districts in analyzing, selecting, and implementing curricular resources aligned to college- and career-ready standards. Previously, Palmer was a teacher and teacher leader with Washoe County School District in Reno, Nevada, where she co-created the Core Task Project, a nationally recognized model of professional development to support teachers in understanding and applying the Common Core standards for literacy.

As a second- and third-grade teacher in the early 2000s, and a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher in the latter part of the decade, I developed as an educator under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Like thousands of others during this era, I taught in a large, diverse district where we worked relentlessly to boost graduation rates and close achievement gaps, often on a shoestring budget.* My former district, Washoe County, Nevada, serves 64,000 students. Across 63 elementary schools, 39 percent of the students are Hispanic and 45 percent are white, with the rest being a diverse array. Sixteen percent are English learners and 48 percent receive free or reduced-price lunch. My colleagues and I were committed to ensuring an excellent education for each and every one of them—and we were especially focused on developing proficient readers.

Early on in my 10 years in the classroom, my literacy instruction focused on skills and strategies as learning outcomes. I expected my students to learn certain skills each week, and I built my lessons accordingly. Dictated by my school's basal series, this approach was further reinforced by my district's weekly pacing of target standards. My colleagues and I introduced a skill or standard on Monday, taught the standard throughout the week (often in leveled reading groups), and then gathered data from a common assessment on Friday. The following week we would introduce a new standard while attempting to remediate students who did not perform well the prior week. Not surprisingly, students in the remedial group were largely the same week after week. Common planning time was spent identifying activities or lessons that would enhance the week's focus skill or standard. As expectations for NCLB's "adequate yearly progress" ramped up, we ensured students had sufficient opportunities to practice with assessment question "stems" released by the state.

Though my colleagues and I were meeting regularly and there were many hours of professional learning offered, we never paused to discuss the unintended consequences of our efforts to double down on adequate yearly progress. Teaching reading is complex work. In our well-meaning push to accelerate our students' progress on discrete standards and skills, we were walking further and further away from research-based best practices for improving literacy.

In many ways, this was a product of the context in which we were working. In the NCLB era, standards-based teaching and learning prioritized this focus

* Nevada is ranked 43rd in per-pupil funding.

In our push to accelerate our students' progress on discrete skills, we were walking away from best practices for improving literacy.

on discrete skills, isolating standards, and monitoring for mastery to yield the desired increases on the state and local benchmark assessments. To some degree, this approach worked in Washoe: We made slight gains on state assessments. But those gains were test specific; we'd found ways to obtain small boosts in scores through sustained and targeted test preparation. Our students were not really advancing as critical readers, writers, and thinkers.

In the younger, "untested" grades, teachers were beholden to a basal textbook that, despite offering strong programming in foundational skills, featured low-level texts and emphasized pushing state assessment stems into the primary grades as a means of gaining an additional advantage. This approach failed to provide students sufficient opportunities to master complex language, engage with rich content, or develop academic knowledge and vocabulary.

> I ensured my students left second grade able to read. However, I generally did not follow their progress after they left me in June of each year. I didn't often think about how they read in fourth and fifth grades, or how their later achievement was related to my work with them in second grade. *–Debbie Reynolds, second grade teacher*

Shifting Toward the Common Core

When Nevada adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010, I was teaching fifth grade. I was apprehensive about the standards, largely because they felt like one more initiative that we would have to implement with too little time and not enough support. Washoe's district leaders encouraged school administrators and teachers to approach the new standards in the same way we'd worked with the previous Nevada State Standards. Crosswalk documents, released district-wide, offered explicit guidance on where standards had moved under the Common Core, or highlighted subtle changes in language. We spent a huge amount of time analyzing these documents, but the district message was to continue with business as usual: We would focus on one standard at a time to teach reading comprehension.

> In our district we had been doing what was called "Skill of the Week," where teachers focused on a single standard or reading skill for that week, assessing for mastery on Friday. *–Aaron Grossman, then a teacher-leader in the district department of Curriculum & Instruction, now a fourth-grade teacher*

I was surprised to discover that the standards did not focus on mastery of isolated skills.

It was within this context that I left the classroom, troubled by the deluge of policy mandates that interfered with (rather than aided) effective classroom practice. Frustrated but committed, in 2011 I became a district coach and, eventually, part of the department of Curriculum & Instruction, where my colleagues and I were tasked with rolling out the Common Core State Standards.

Given my experience as a teacher during the early implementation of the Common Core, I was surprised to discover—once I got closer to the standards themselves—that the standards did not focus on mastery of isolated skills. The supporting research for the standards, and the explanations accompanying the standards, called for an integrated approach to literacy instruction, one that prioritizes quality text, use of evidence, and building knowledge. These priorities

With our basal texts, leveled readers, and assessment stems, we were hardly building any knowledge or vocabulary at all.

What students are reading about, hearing about, and discussing is just as important as which skills they are mastering.

are articulated explicitly in the guidance on instructional shifts as well as in the introduction and appendices of the standards themselves.

What would these new priorities mean in practice? Under the Common Core standards, it is still essential that in the early grades students learn *how* to read (in other words, that they gain the foundational skills that Washoe was already teaching), *and also* acquire a solid foundation of broad content knowledge and vocabulary for later comprehension. With our basal texts, leveled readers, and assessment stems, we were hardly building any knowledge or vocabulary at all. Building content knowledge is an essential element of the Common Core, but in districts across the US it's all too often misunderstood or written off—as it was when my colleagues and I were encouraged to continue focusing only on skill development in our literacy lessons.

Part of the challenge in shifting the paradigm for literacy instruction is that most of us are already assuming that students gain knowledge in school—that they "learn stuff." Pre-NCLB, many students experienced primarily thematic units in school—lessons that integrated literature, science, history texts, and more, all related to a common theme; however, a challenge with this approach was that there were not common expectations for what students would learn. NCLB sought, critically, to promote equity and introduce some accountability for districts to ensure that students were meeting standards. In the process of implementation, however, many districts—like mine—lost their focus on academic content in the push to build skills. If we were to take the best from the past 25 years, it would be setting clear expectations for student performance *and* helping students meet those expectations with a content-rich curriculum.

The trend in elementary schools has been to emphasize skills and strategies rather than knowledge acquisition. The topics in the texts don't matter, this idea holds, as long as students have the opportunity to practice the required skills. The research supporting the Common Core standards sought to rectify this—to show that what students are reading about, hearing about, and discussing is just as important as which skills they are mastering. The knowledge students glean in the primary grades serves as a critical foundation for comprehending what they read later on, and indeed, for building the very literacy skills they need to understand any content they're given.

The great reading researcher Jeanne C. Chall introduced the concept of the "fourth-grade slump," or the deceleration of students' literacy achievement in later elementary grades and onward. The slump is the result of limited vocabulary and lack of exposure to broad content knowledge. It's particularly common among at-risk students in comparison to their more privileged peers, with at-risk children typically having fewer opportunities to learn academic words and concepts at home and at school.

While a content-rich curriculum seems to be an obvious solution, educators would need a collective understanding of why such a curriculum matters and the desired changes we all need to make to get there. In Washoe, this was new territory for all of us.

A Focus on Building Knowledge

Discussion

- What resonates with you when you read this article?

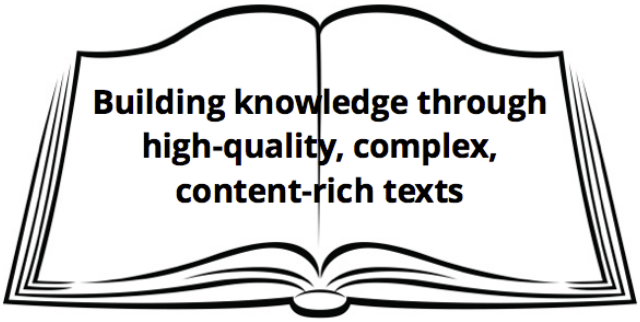
- How does this article connect with the literacy landscape study results we just discussed?

"Students with prior knowledge or experience with particular topics can more readily make connections between what they are reading and what they know. The more students know about a topic, the stronger their framework for reading (and listening) comprehension. A knowledge-building literacy curriculum just makes sense for kids, but as we've seen, shifting from the randomly sequenced stories in the basal reader to such a curriculum would be an enormous change for many teachers and schools. The first barrier to making this shift is simply embracing the premise that knowledge, vocabulary, and literacy development start long before children begin learning to read, and that reading well depends on building broad knowledge. Actually finding high-quality materials and enhancing instruction is another huge barrier, one that requires a long-term commitment to intensive professional development and support."

- Knowledge Matters: Restoring Wonder and Excitement in the Classroom
Retrieved from www.KnowledgeMattersCampaign.org

Key Ideas for this Training

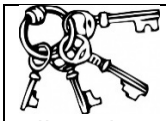
This summer's Regional Educator Summit is an exciting opportunity to learn more about what high-quality literacy instruction looks like and how to make practical changes within our classrooms that improve student learning. The content of this training is aligned to our state's academic standards and is motivated by the results we found in the literacy landscape study. Additionally, the training is organized around one key theme:



Throughout this training you'll also find a series of Key Ideas. These Key Ideas align to the training objectives and represent the most important concepts of this course.

Key Idea #1

All students need regular practice with high-quality, appropriately-complex texts that build knowledge and vocabulary. In the early grades, the primary method for engaging students with these kinds of texts is through read alouds.



Key Idea #2

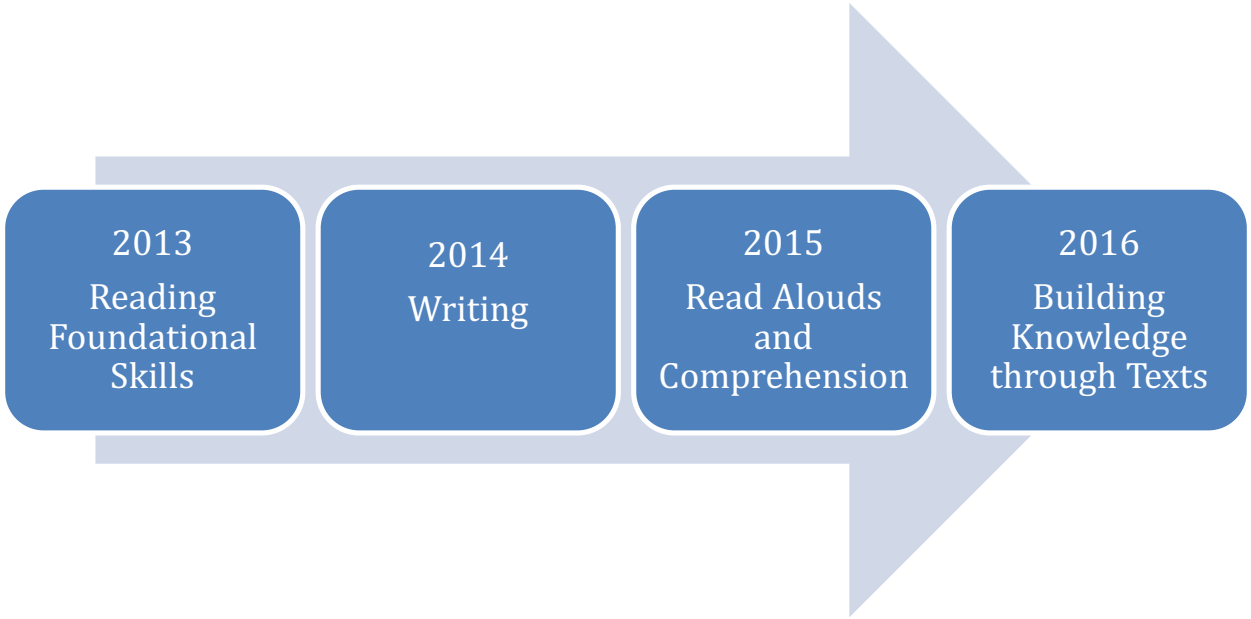
All students need regular practice with rigorous and standards-aligned instructional tasks that require listening, speaking, and writing. Instructional tasks should push students to think deeply about a text and to make connections across texts and to the broader world.

Key Idea #3

The primary focus of reading comprehension instruction is for students to gain a deep understanding of texts, their content and structure, and their vocabulary, with the end goal of building knowledge about the world.

Connections to Past Trainings

The Tennessee Department of Education has offered training to teachers in early grades literacy since the summer of 2013.



How is this Summer's Training Different from Last Year's?

This summer's training content builds on what we learned last summer. Some topics will be explored more extensively, while some new and related topics will be introduced.

Topics for Review and Extension	New Topics
Measures of text complexity (quantitative, qualitative, reader and task)	Traits that make texts high quality and content rich
What should be included in a read aloud lesson plan (e.g. building background knowledge, vocabulary)	Creating a read aloud lesson plan
Repeated reading and close reading	Creating text sets, sometimes called thematic literacy units, that build students' knowledge and vocabulary of a focused topic
Culminating tasks	Examining teaching schedules and exploring ways to integrate read alouds and text sets into your current classroom practice

Training Agenda

Day 1	
Time	**Topic**
7:30-8	Sign in
8-9	Opening and Module 1: Read to be Ready
9-11:15	Module 2: Selecting High-Quality and Appropriately-Complex Texts for Read Aloud
11:15-12:30	Lunch
12:30-4	Finish Module 2 Module 3: Planning Repeated Interactive Read Aloud Lessons

Day 2	
Time	**Topic**
8-11:15	Module 4: Creating Text Sets that Build Knowledge and Vocabulary
11:15-12:30	Lunch
12:30-3:45	Module 5: Fitting it All Together – Designing Your Reading Block
3:45-4	Closing

Reflection

Selecting High-Quality and Appropriately-Complex Texts for Read Aloud

Planning Repeated Interactive Read Aloud Lessons

Creating Text Sets that Build Knowledge and Vocabulary

Fitting it All Together – Designing Your Literacy Block

- Which topic or ideas are you most excited to explore?

- What knowledge do you already have about these topics that you can share?

- What questions do you have about these topics? Of the questions you have, which is the most important for you to get answered at this training?