

CONSIDERATIONS FOR READING INSTRUCTION ACROSS THE CONTENT AREAS A Back-to-School Resource for Educators

Learning to read and reading to learn should be happening simultaneously and continuously. No matter the content area, reading instruction is vital to students' understanding and response to informational text. The coronavirus pandemic has brought about new challenges for instruction as learning in many school districts has transitioned from in-person instruction to distance learning models. A variety of factors exist that educators should consider in an effort to support literacy instruction across content areas.

- Equity** Students bring diverse levels of background knowledge and literacy skills to the classroom. Disproportionately, students from under-resourced communities as well as Indigenous, Black, Brown, and other Students of Color lack access to support for equitable reading instruction. Without timely interventions, these students seldom catch up with their peers and are four times as likely to [drop out of high school](#).¹ To improve their competence and engagement in reading, we must move beyond isolated reading skill instruction to help them access academic content through explicit instruction and build upon students' rich literate and cultural backgrounds to increase subject area engagement.
- Access** The [homework gap](#)²—the inability of students to do schoolwork at home due to lack of Internet connectivity—affects [27 percent of students across the nation](#),³ disproportionately affecting Indigenous, Black, Brown and other Students of Color; students from low-income backgrounds; and those living in rural communities. This gap is amplified as many districts transition to full-time or part-time distance learning models. Educators must consider the diverse circumstances of their students and provide multiple means of instructional delivery to accommodate all students equitably.
- Student Privacy** Educators should consider student privacy and security when planning online activities. They should use caution if they are considering learning resources and applications that are not supported by the district; unsupported applications may not comply with [federal](#)⁴ and/or state student data privacy laws.

CONSIDERATIONS TO SUPPORT DISCIPLINARY LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Opportunities to strengthen reading and comprehension skills occur across all content areas and the K–12 grade span. Consider students' diverse cultural, linguistic, and life experiences as opportunities to make meaningful connections with and among students. No matter the content area, educators can tap into the intrinsic motivation of students by providing a wide range of developmentally appropriate reading materials that tap students' diverse cultures, interests, perspectives, and abilities. To support literacy across content areas, educators may consider how to incorporate some of the following literacy supports in their remote learning plans:

- Identify and pre-teach key [background knowledge and vocabulary](#)⁵ prior to making reading assignments;
- Identify key [text features](#),⁶ discuss their purpose, and model how to use them;
- Plan and conduct [think-alouds](#)⁷ to model strategies appropriate for the assigned reading;

- Set clear [goals](#)⁸ and a [purpose](#)⁹ for reading and offer students meaningful ways to respond and make sense of what they are reading;
- Supplement the text with content area journals, newspapers, trade books, graphic novels, informational videos, documentaries, and movies that incorporate a broad range of perspectives to enhance [comprehension](#)¹⁰;
- Model comprehension strategies and fix-up strategies, such as rereading routines that include retelling and close reading; and
- Engage students in repeated oral readings, [readers theater](#),¹¹ and interactive peer-to-peer readings to improve [fluency](#).¹²

RESOURCES

¹ Center for Public Education. (March 2015). "Learning to Read, Reading to Learn: Why Third-Grade Is a Pivotal Year for Mastering Literacy." Retrieved from nsba.org/-/media/NSBA/File/cpe-learning-to-read-reading-to-learn-white-paper-2015.pdf?la=en&hash=8E0E470C3E263C66E4491EC035224DC9018C6D5F.

² NEA Today. (May 2020). "Coronavirus Brings 'Homework Gap' to the Forefront." Retrieved from neatoday.org/2020/05/04/coronavirus-brings-homework-gap-to-the-forefront/.

³ Pew Research Center. (October 2018). "Nearly One-in-Five Teens Can't Always Finish Their Homework Because of the Digital Divide." Retrieved from pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/26/nearly-one-in-five-teens-cant-always-finish-their-homework-because-of-the-digital-divide/.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education. (March 2020). "FERPA and Virtual Learning During COVID-19." (March 2020). U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/ferpa-and-virtual-learning-during-covid-19.

⁵ readwritethink. "Strategy Guide: Preparing Students for Success with Reading in the Content Areas." Retrieved from readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/preparing-students-success-with-30516.html.

⁶ Hanson, S., and Padua, J. (2011). "Effective Instructional Strategies Series: Text Features." Retrieved from files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED585193.pdf.

⁷ Adlit.org. "Classroom Strategies: Think Alouds." Retrieved from adlit.org/strategies/22735/.

⁸ readwritethink. "Strategy Guide: Supporting Student Comprehension in Content Area Reading." Retrieved from readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/supporting-student-comprehension-content-30517.html.

⁹ Reading Rockets. (April 2016). "Should I Set Reading Purposes for My Students?" Retrieved from readingrockets.org/blogs/shanahan-literacy/should-i-set-reading-purposes-my-students.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education. (August 2008). "Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices." Retrieved from ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/adlit_pg_082608.pdf.

¹¹ readwritethink. "Strategy Guide: Readers Theatre." Retrieved from readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/readers-theatre-a-30703.html.

¹² National Institute for Literacy. (2007). "What Content-Area Teachers Should Know About Adolescent Literacy." Retrieved from lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/adolescent_literacy07.pdf.