

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

At a Glance

What is building knowledge?

Every student comes to school with their own set of knowledge. This knowledge is referred to as background knowledge or schema, and each is unique to a student's individual experiences. While educators cannot influence the knowledge students acquire outside of school, they can and should intentionally build students' knowledge while in the classroom. Engaging students in interdisciplinary content-rich text sets on shared topics provides opportunities to build knowledge.

The use of knowledge-building high-quality instructional resources promotes equity for all students; they provide access to complex, grade-level texts and are organized into units of study focused on learning a topic for an extended period of time. This structure allows all students to receive the same, adequate information needed to make sense of text, opening doors for deeper comprehension and analysis. Building knowledge in this way prepares students to utilize receptive and expressive language arts to better understand themselves, others and the world around them (ILP 4). Opportunities to talk and write about text creates a platform for students to synthesize their background knowledge with new learning, building their knowledge even more.

Recommendations for the Classroom

- Ensure texts exhibit exceptional craft and provide meaningful information in service of building domains of knowledge and vocabulary for all students.
- Intentionally use texts that lead to higher-level questioning to allow students to integrate knowledge, ideas and diverse perspectives.
- Implement lessons using diverse texts that build on previous knowledge, moving from simple to more complex concepts.
- Offer clear and descriptive feedback throughout instruction to help students build knowledge in meaningful ways as they engage with various texts.
- Explicitly use writing as a tool to build, retrieve, transfer and explain knowledge.

Evidence of these instructional practices should be present in High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs). When gaps are identified in HQIRs, supplement practices to ensure all recommendations are carried out.

Alignment to the *Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing*

The *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Reading and Writing* includes expectations at each grade level that lead to building student knowledge. The Reading Literature (RL), Reading Informational Text (RI) and Composition (C) strands include building knowledge as both a process and an outcome. For example, building knowledge is the outcome of RL.9 and RI.9 because students build knowledge or compare the approaches of two or more authors by analyzing how the texts address similar themes or topics. In RI.3, the focus is on using interdisciplinary content to build (outcome) and apply (process) knowledge in meaningful ways. The progression of RI.7 combines knowledge and skill as students “integrate and evaluate content... of text found in diverse media and formats.”

In the composition standards, elementary students develop opinions (C.1) in response to topics in preparation for composing arguments when they reach grade 6 and beyond. They also compose explanatory or informational (C.2) pieces about topics. In either case, written expression requires students to have knowledge about the topic. The standards are intentionally designed with this in mind, providing opportunities to strategically bundle one or more of the knowledge-building reading standards with a composition standard. Building knowledge shows up in the composition research standard (C.5) as well as the collecting information standard (C.6).

Interdisciplinary Literacy Practices 2, 3, 4 and 8 also highlight the need for student learning experiences that build knowledge and allow for the application of interdisciplinary and discipline-specific skills, strategies and critical thinking. Knowing the intent of the standards is to create independent, lifelong learners who think deeply and critically about texts, it is of no surprise that building knowledge is infused throughout the *KAS for Reading and Writing*.

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