

LITERACY AT A GLANCE COLLECTION

A collection of resources defining some of the most critical components of literacy, instructional recommendations related to each component and an understanding of how each component aligns with the *Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing*.

The collection currently includes six components:

Phonemic Awareness At a Glance

Phonics At a Glance

Fluency At a Glance

Vocabulary At a Glance

Comprehension At a Glance

Building Knowledge At a Glance



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PHONEMIC AWARENESS

At a Glance

What is phonemic awareness?

Phonemic awareness is the ability to distinguish, produce, remember and manipulate spoken words' individual sounds (phonemes). Research indicates phonemic awareness and knowledge of letters as being the best predictors for how easily students will learn to read during their first two years of school. Phonemic awareness is NOT the same as phonics instruction; however, it leads to better phonetic understanding and mastery of phonics. Strong phonemic awareness supports accurate decoding and spelling of words. Future reading comprehension is also magnified by early phonemic awareness instruction in kindergarten and grade one. Therefore, early identification of phonemic awareness deficits are critical to future reading success. Phonemic awareness instruction in later grades may be necessary for students who are still experiencing gaps in this area.

Recommendations for the Classroom

- Monitor the position of your mouth when saying sounds within words.
- Allow students to look in a mirror, or at a partner, to notice mouth position in sounds.
- Identify the sound at the beginning, middle and end of a word when spoken.
- Segment, or break apart, each sound in a single syllable word. For example: What are the sounds you hear in the word hat? /h/ /a/ /t/
- When given the individual sounds, blend or bring together individual sounds to form a single syllable word. For example: What word do these sounds make? /m/ /a/ /t/ (mat)
- Manipulate sounds within a word to create a new word. For example: Say "cat." Now change the /c/ to /b/. (bat)
- Use oral language games and play to encourage students to listen for individual sounds.
- Avoid adding an extra "uh" sound (known as the schwa) to the end of individual phonemes. Often, the "uh" sound is incorrectly added to the end of the /m/, /n/ and /p/ sounds. Rather than saying /muh/, /nuh/ and /puh/, clip the /uh/ at the end so that dog is pronounced /d/ /o/ /g/ instead of /duh/ /o/ /g/.

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

While phonological awareness standards are found in kindergarten and grade 1, the K-5 academic standards for reading and writing are grounded in a sounds-first approach to reading. Students often begin developing their phonological awareness before entering kindergarten; thus, the standards align with and build upon the early childhood standards, providing a developmentally appropriate progression as students transition to kindergarten. The standards articulate rigorous grade level expectations essential to developing a strong infrastructure of essential early literacy skills, including phonological and phonemic awareness. The ultimate goal is to build a foundation that will equip students with skills and knowledge that is critical to being successful in later years.

Phonemic Awareness At a Glance References



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PHONICS

At a Glance

What is phonics?

Phonics is knowledge of the predictable correspondences between phonemes and graphemes (the letters or letter combinations representing sounds) and correspondences between larger blocks of letters and syllables or meaningful word parts (morphemes). Phonics instruction is a necessary component of learning to read and write. The ability to accurately and automatically decode regularly and irregularly spelled words is best accomplished through sequential, systematic and explicit instruction in letter-sound relationships. Phonics instruction should include multiple opportunities for students to practice explicitly taught skills in decodable text and in isolation, such as reading word lists and oral dictation. Phonics instruction makes a significant impact on students' reading ability when taught in kindergarten and grade 1. More complex phonics skills should continue to be taught through grade 3 and beyond. Strong phonics skills allow students to spend more time thinking about what the words are telling them (their meaning) rather than figuring out what the words on the page say. For a reading curriculum to be comprehensive, it must include phonics instruction.

Recommendations for the Classroom

- Teach phonics explicitly, systematically and sequentially.
- Explicitly teach the grade-appropriate sound-spelling patterns of the 44 phonemes and corresponding graphemes.
- Provide various purposeful writing opportunities (dictation, responding to text, student-generated writing).
- Provide opportunities for blending sounds and segmenting words.
- Provide opportunities to decode words in isolation and in context.
- Assess progress and provide corrective feedback immediately.
- Teach phonics skills until students obtain mastery.
- Consider a variety of student-grouping patterns, including a multi-tiered system of supports to meet the needs of all students: Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3.

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

Alignment to the Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing

Phonics is a part of the K-5 *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Reading and Writing (RW)*. While direct alignment is evident in the Reading Foundational Skills (RF) and Language (L) standards, phonics skills directly support other strands of the KAS for RW. For instance, strong phonics skills lead to fluency, the ability to read with accuracy, speed and prosody (RF.4), which supports comprehension. Acquiring these foundational skills provides access to complex texts. This consequently builds background knowledge and vocabulary, increasing students' abilities to master the standards for Reading Literature (RL), Reading Informational Text (RI) and Composition (C). Further, as students begin composing writing pieces, they must connect their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences with letter formation (RF.3, L.2 and H.1). Phonics instruction develops skills necessary for students to understand and create text.

Phonics At a Glance References



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FLUENCY

At a Glance

What is fluency?

Fluency is the ability to read text with sufficient speed and accuracy to support comprehension. Because of the close relationship between fluency and reading comprehension, students who are disfluent readers may have difficulty getting the meaning of what they read. Therefore, instruction to increase reading fluency of connected text (multiple sentences related to each other rather than isolated word reading; decodable text instead of a word list) is critical to both reading comprehension and future reading success and ease.

Recommendations for the Classroom

- Ensure students read connected text (sentences, paragraphs, literary and informational texts in addition to words in isolation) every day to support reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension.
- Have students repeatedly read texts featuring words that contain learned sound spelling patterns to build automaticity.
- Model expression and phrasing in fluent reading.
- Introduce, explain and model how to read while adhering to punctuation.
- When students encounter words they find difficult to read, avoid giving hints that may encourage guessing. Instead, prompt students to apply explicitly taught word-reading strategies.
- Model and teach students to self-monitor and self-correct errors to ensure what they are reading makes sense.
- Provide opportunities for repeated reading, partner reading, choral reading, echo reading and alternated reading in connected texts with immediate feedback.

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

Alignment to the Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing

Fluency is found in the K-5 *Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing* in the Reading Foundational (RF) Skills strand. Because fluency is not taught in isolation, grade level standards must be met through intentional scaffolding. To meet this expectation, students must read widely and deeply from a broad range of high-quality, complex literary and informational texts and non-print texts. Students must develop the habit of reading closely, and teachers must provide them with guidance and direction using text-dependent questions that will lead to both explicit and inferential understandings all while providing feedback on fluency.

[Fluency At a Glance References](#)



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VOCABULARY

At a Glance

What is vocabulary?

Vocabulary refers to the knowledge of individual word meanings in a text and the concepts conveyed by those words. Vocabulary knowledge is not just a definition but also structure (morphology), use (grammar), meanings (semantics), and links to other words (word/semantic relationships). The extent of a student's vocabulary significantly influences their ability to decode accurately and comprehend what they read. Simply put, the more words a student knows, the easier it becomes to understand written text and content. Research consistently demonstrates that vocabulary knowledge serves as a predictor of reading comprehension and overall academic achievement. Vocabulary instruction is a fundamental component of daily literacy lessons, especially considering students typically enter school with varying levels of vocabulary knowledge.

Recommendations for the Classroom

- Prioritize teaching academic vocabulary through varied activities.
- Dedicate part of literacy instruction to explicit vocabulary instruction.
- Provide students with explicit, student-friendly definitions.
- Follow an evidence-based routine when teaching new vocabulary words.
- Ensure repeated exposure to new words in diverse contexts to allow ample practice.
- Encourage using new vocabulary through discussion, writing and extended reading.
- Pre-teach high-leverage words to enhance retention.
- Model rich vocabulary consistently.
- Read texts aloud with rich vocabulary to stimulate discussion.

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

Alignment to the Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing

Fostering a strong vocabulary is a priority for students. They are expected to utilize academic and domain-specific vocabulary when engaging in reading, writing, speaking and listening (L.4). Leveraging their ever-growing vocabulary becomes essential to construct meaning (L.5). Starting in grade 2, students are tasked with employing this vocabulary to comprehend texts (L.3). A robust vocabulary enables students to more easily apply their decoding skills while deriving meaning from a text (RF.3). Additionally, students utilize their knowledge of words and phrases to comprehend both literary and informational texts (RL.4 and RI.4); this proficiency is crucial for accessing grade-level texts independently (RL.10 and RI.10). Understanding grammar requires a solid grasp of morphology, taught through vocabulary instruction (L.1). Demonstrating a broad vocabulary is integral in writing tasks across the composition strand. Vocabulary is also a common thread through the Interdisciplinary Literacy Practices. A student's vocabulary influences their development of schema and impacts their literacy experiences through both receptive and expressive language arts (ILP2, ILP3, ILP4, ILP8).

Vocabulary At a Glance References



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COMPREHENSION

At a Glance

What is comprehension?

Reading comprehension is understanding and making sense of a text through the use of decoding, background knowledge and verbal reasoning. It is a dynamic process of both extracting and creating meaning through a transaction with the text that requires a range of both language and cognitive processes.

According to the Institute of Education Sciences Practice Guide: Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade (ESSA Levels III & IV), “The current research on reading indicates that the following types of skills and knowledge are critical to building a young student’s capacity to comprehend what he or she reads: word level skills, vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills, broad conceptual knowledge, knowledge and abilities required specifically to comprehend text, thinking and reasoning skills and motivation to understand and work toward academic goals.”

Students must be explicitly taught actions skilled readers intentionally take before, during and after their interaction with a text. Understanding does not result from merely reading the words on the page, but rather meaning must be actively constructed. It is crucial to provide guidance on how to use strategies to enhance comprehension. When students grasp that employing these tools aid in understanding the ideas in a text, it makes reading more meaningful and purposeful.

Strategy instruction enhances (not produces) comprehension by teaching students intentional ways of thinking when reading to help them better understand the information in the text.

Recommendations for the Classroom

- Establish a purpose, eliciting or supplying background knowledge prior to reading a new text.
- Teach students how to simultaneously use reading comprehension strategies that will help them understand and retain what they read, through authentic text interactions around a single topic, not as isolated skills.
- Teach students to use the text’s organizational structure to comprehend, learn and remember content.
- Guide students through focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text, modeling ways to think about the text and topic that can help students when they are reading independently.
- Select texts purposefully to support instructional goals and improve comprehension development.*
- Practice comprehension strategies by gradual release of responsibility in a context in which learning the content of the text (not the strategy) is prioritized rather than through repetition and reinforcement via worksheets and isolated practice. See Building Knowledge At a Glance.
- Establish an engaging and motivating context for teaching reading by clearly conveying the purpose of each lesson, explaining how comprehension strategies increase learning, and helping students recognize their powerful role in becoming successful readers.

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.

**Note of Clarification:*

Leveled and decodable texts do not typically support instructional goals focused on comprehension. While these types of texts provide opportunities to make meaning, they generally are not sources of academic language or knowledge building, which are key components of complex texts used for developing comprehension and analysis. Decodable texts are intended to support students in learning independent word recognition skills and developing fluency, not directly improving comprehension development.

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

The ability to effectively use the required language and cognitive processes needed to be a skilled reader (to comprehend text) are informed by the interaction of the reader, text, task and context. Skilled reading occurs when meaning is made. In simplest terms, it happens when a reader comprehends. This way of thinking considers comprehension a product, or outcome, of reading. However, comprehension is also a process. There is no meaning-making without cognitive processes being at work. The processes and products of comprehension are infused throughout the *Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing*.

The infusion of comprehension as a process and product is most evident in the multidimensionality view of the Reading Literature (RL), Reading Informational (RI) Text, Composition (C) and Language (L) strands. This view identifies layers within each standard. Recognizing these layers allows a clearer look at the part(s) of the standard that engage students in the process of comprehension and the part(s) that expect students to use the process to reach a product (outcome) of comprehension. For instance, in RL.3.3, the ability to describe characters and how they affect the plot of a story is a product (outcome) of comprehension. An example of comprehension as a process is found in RL.3.1. when students ask and answer questions to construct meaning from the text. The process of asking and answering questions is what leads to understanding, and thus comprehension as a process.

Comprehension products should be evidence of deeper understanding of text, typically of complex text. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, analysis, discussion or an explanation of the relationship between information from two or more texts on the same topic. Therefore, reading comprehension instruction should be embedded within lessons that primarily focus on building knowledge and promote the ability to gain knowledge from written material. The RL, RI, L and C strands provide multiple opportunities to learn from text.

Comprehension At a Glance References



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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*.

[Building Knowledge At a Glance References](#)



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