ELA Guidebooks: Diverse Learners

The goal of English language arts (ELA) is for all students to read, understand, and express their understanding of complex, grade-level texts. To ensure that all students, including those who struggle, are able to reach this goal, a teacher must support students throughout the instructional process.

Support is central to the design of ELA Guidebooks. Student-friendly directions create a consistent structure across all grades and lessons, which help students stay on track and work toward a series of unit assessments aligned to end-of-year expectations. Student anticipated responses and example responses set the bar for quality student work. Just in time supports accelerate learning to assist students in fully understanding the ideas and concepts in the lesson activities. These supports help make it possible for all students to meet the lesson goals.

THE GUIDEBOOK APPROACH TO SUPPORT

This document describes the design principles of the ELA Guidebooks units and the included strategies and materials to support all learners, including those diverse learners who learn in a different way and at a different pace than their peers. Based on this definition, all students can be classified as "diverse learners" at some point in the instructional process. Thus, when teaching guidebook lessons, teachers must understand the grade-level standards and their students' current ability to make instructional decisions that will ensure all students read, understand, and express their understanding of complex, grade-level texts.

Guiding Principles for Diverse Learners[1]

1. All students should regularly engage with rich, authentic grade-appropriate complex texts.
2. All students should have full access to grade-level classes and engage in academic discourse and meaningful interactions with others around content.
3. Rather than having different expectations for students based on their abilities, all students should have opportunities to meet the grade-level standards through appropriate scaffolds and supports.
4. Instructional supports should not supplant or compromise rigor or content.
5. Specialized instruction should build on and enhance what occurs during regular instruction.
6. The instructional design and language should not get in students' way of accessing lesson content.
7. Students' knowledge of another language should be seen as an ability and called upon as a way to support students as they develop and express their understanding in a new language.
8. Language instruction should be integrated with reading and writing instruction and focused on understanding and communication.

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[1] From Pimentel, S. (2016, July 13). Keynote Address: Realizing Opportunities for English Language Learners. In *Standards Institute*. Retrieved August 28, 2016, from http://www.standardsinstitutes.org/sites/default/files/realizing_opportunites_for_ells.7.14.16.pptx

THEORY OF ACTION AROUND CORE, SMALL-GROUP, INTENSIVE
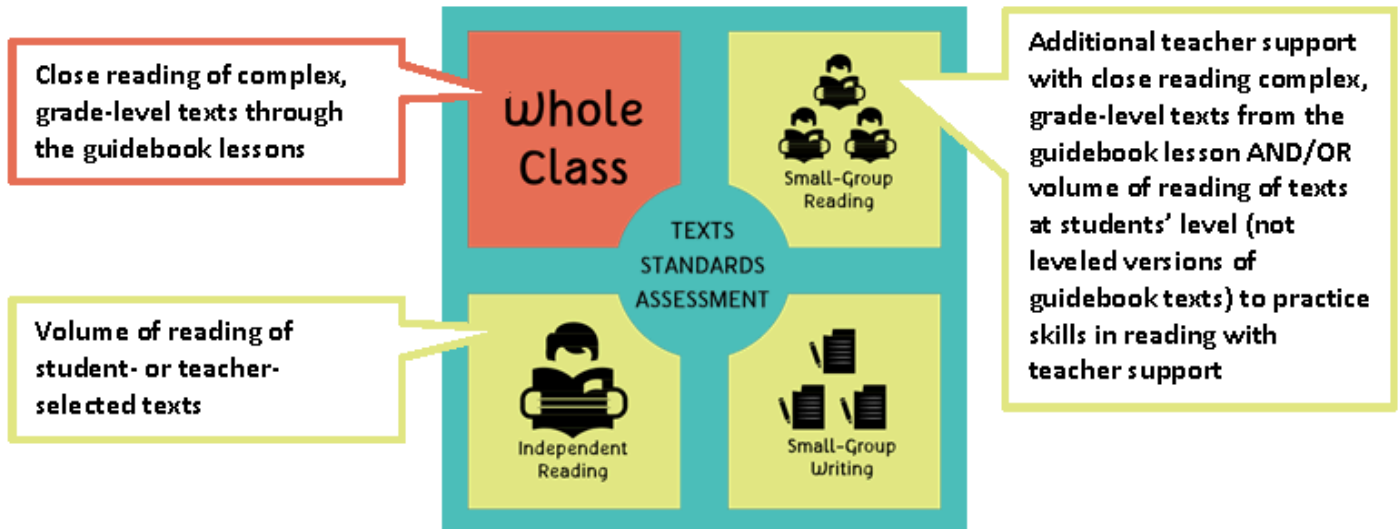
SUPPORTS DURING WHOLE-CLASS, CORE INSTRUCTION
Reading, writing and language, and speaking and listening supports are included in the ELA Guidebooks units.

Reading
Louisiana Student Standards for English Language Arts require all students to read and comprehend increasingly complex texts to build knowledge across the content areas. Diverse learners should be challenged to process complicated language and cultural features accurately while also trying to understand new content.

1. Texts are purposefully selected.
2. The organization of the ELA Guidebooks supports vocabulary development, in that students read a series of related texts using common vocabulary.
3. Let's Set the Context! videos build quick background knowledge on topics and ideas needed to understand the unit texts but not built in the unit. These 3-5 minute videos are available for teachers to assign to an individual or a small group of students to watch in advance of either the unit or reading a specific unit text. This overview will provide you with more information about how to use the Let's Set the Context videos.
4. Teachers are directed to read aloud complex texts on the first readings to model fluent reading and engage students in choral reading and echo reading to build fluency, self-confidence, and motivation.
5. Students engage in multiple readings of complex texts with teacher support for different purposes.
6. Reading lessons are organized to make explicit the thinking process strong readers engage in to determine the meaning or purpose of a text.
7. Students are prompted to discuss the language of complex texts through word work and the language tasks.
8. Teachers are directed to check for understanding throughout each lesson via questioning and the use of academic tools designed as a companion for the lessons.

Writing and Language

Louisiana Student Standards for English Language Arts require all students to create different types of evidence-based, written responses for varied audiences/purposes, analyze information, and present knowledge gained through research. Diverse learners should be challenged to develop, choose, and use language and conventions skillfully to clearly express their ideas and cite specific evidence when writing arguments and informational reports.

1. Writing is used both as a learning tool and as a formal way to express understanding of texts.
2. Units are organized so that the writing process begins with development of understanding to ensure students have something meaningful to write about.
3. Units are divided into sections, sections are divided into lessons, and lessons are divided into core and optional activities; the tasks in each (e.g., discussions, note taking, completing graphic organizers and smaller writing assignments) build toward the Culminating Task in which students express their understanding of complex texts. This structure supports students as they generate and organize their ideas for writing and research.
4. Visuals and graphic organizers included throughout the unit build content knowledge; often, the same graphic organizer is used across the unit.
5. Many writing tasks start with a formal discussion (e.g., Socratic seminar) in which students develop and refine their ideas and supporting evidence orally in collaboration with others before creating a written product.
6. Lessons prompt teachers to share the qualities of strong student work, including analyzing models of strong and weak oral and written responses.
7. Student anticipated responses and completed tools illustrate grade level expectations and organization.
8. Sentence stems and answer frames are included in the student Reference Guides to support students in organizing their thoughts.
9. For grades 3-5, students engage in a variety of writing scaffolds using The Writing Revolution strategies. Through these strategies, students explore sentence level activities and the structures of the English language.
10. For grades 6-12, Language tasks with mentor sentences engage students in exploring sentence-level meaning and the structures of the English language in the context of the unit texts.

Speaking and Listening

Louisiana Student Standards for English Language Arts require all students to articulate their own ideas through formal presentations and conversations and build on others' ideas through informal interactions to demonstrate understanding of texts and ideas. Diverse learners must employ a range of listening comprehension and speech production strategies.

1. Multiple formats of texts are included, such as songs, videos, and other non-print texts, so students practice their listening skills.
2. Various types of discussions (e.g., pairs, small groups, whole class) are included in each unit.
3. Teachers are prompted to purposefully pair students in various groupings (e.g., homogenous and heterogenous) based on the task outcomes and possible supports. When students are learning English as a new language and they are paired in a homogenous pairing, they should be encouraged to collaborate in their home language as they work on completing products in English.
4. Many conversations begin as a pair, move to small group, and then whole class to give students the opportunity to practice before sharing their ideas in front of the whole class.

5.   Conversation stems and teacher talk moves probe student thinking by asking students to restate their ideas and/or say more and prompt students to engage in more thoughtful oral exchanges.

6.   Answer and conversation frames included through the unit help students express their thinking in conversations.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

Despite the myriad of supports built into the ELA Guidebooks units, diverse learners will likely need additional support either as individuals or in small groups throughout each unit to be able to read, understand, and express their understanding of complex, grade-level texts.

The Supports Process

In general, the diagram to the right describes a decision-making process for providing supports for diverse learners. Selecting the best supports (step four) depends on an understanding of the grade-level standards (step one) and students' current ability (steps two and three).

There are two levels of support, small-group instruction and intensive intervention.

Small-group instruction should include additional supports for diverse learners in the regular classroom environment. The following additional supports are provided with the ELA Guidebooks units.

DIVERSE LEARNERS CYCLE

- Identify grade-level standards
- Compare current student performance to the standards
- Identify gaps between current performance and standards
- Establish support plan with set outcomes
- Deliver instruction to individual or a small group of students
- Review student work

- **Additional supports for diverse learners:** Just in time supports are included in the Teacher Notes for each activity throughout the ELA Guidebooks units.
- **Supports Flow Chart**: This document provides links to information, guidance, and supports that are general and help students express their understanding of complex texts.

Intensive intervention should include additional support for diverse learners beyond regular classroom instruction. Teachers might reinforce supports used during small-group instruction and/or pull supports from the **Supports Flow Chart**.

The cycle for providing supports for diverse learners is complicated and dynamic, so while the diagram above provides a process teachers can generally follow, there will always be situations where teachers may need to deviate. As such, students' work should be reviewed often to determine where support is working or not working and where more support is needed.

The following example illustrates how the diverse learners cycle of supports could work for a grade 4 teacher.
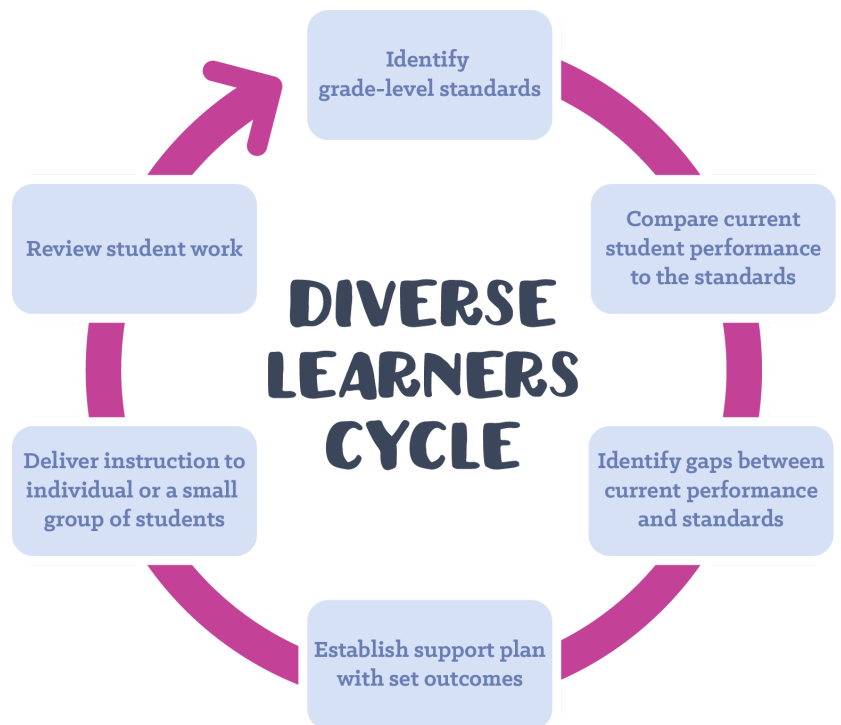
1. **Step One:** The teacher identifies that when grade 4 students write an opinion essay they must create an organization structure in which related ideas are grouped to support their purpose.
2. **Step Two:** While teaching the Grade 4 American Revolution unit, the teacher compares multiple samples of students' work to the exemplar responses to identify which students have met the standard and which students have not.
3. **Step Three:** The teacher identifies which students have not met the writing organization standard and the knowledge and skills those students are missing using the section diagnostic checklists and the section diagnostic data collection tool. For example, the teacher concludes that some students do not understand the concept of a paragraph, others do not understand how to plan using a single-paragraph outline, and others have all the pieces but they are in a random order.
4. **Step Four:** Next, the teacher establishes an instructional plan with set outcomes for each group of students who need more support. For example, for students writing in a random order, the teacher establishes the desired outcome: Students will describe how to organize body paragraphs based on their single paragraph outline. The teacher then previews the upcoming lessons, selects the appropriate optional activities, and a few supports to use with those students to reach the desired outcome, using the additional supports for diverse learners and the supports flow chart as a starting point for selecting the right supports.[2]
5. **Step Five:** While other students are writing independently during regular classroom instruction, the teacher pulls together the students who are writing in a random order and reviews the background template for writing using a single paragraph outline. The teacher prompts students to describe the focus of each body paragraph based on the provided topic sentences and/or cues. Then, during another lesson, the teacher provides students who are writing in a random order with an answer frame, such as the "Painted Essay™." The teacher directs students to use the frame as they write body paragraphs to support a claim.
6. **Step Six:** The teacher reviews those students' newly completed writing to determine how well the supports helped the students meet the grade-level standard. If some of those students still have not met the desired outcome of the support, the teacher continues to provide supports using the same or different supports. If other students have met the grade-level standard, the teacher reduces the supports but continues to check the students' work to ensure they continue to meet the expectations of the grade-level standard.

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[2] The additional supports for diverse learners and the supports flow chart provide a starting place for supporting students. However, neither document is exclusive or inclusive of all possible supports to help students read, understand, and express their understanding of complex, grade-level texts.

Resources

A Framework for Raising Expectations and Instructional Rigor for English Language Learners (Publication). (2014, August). Retrieved May 10, 2017, from Council of Great City Schools website: https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Framework%20for%20Raising%20Expectations.pdf

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Understanding Language Project: http://ell.stanford.edu/