



LAUNCHING

Grades K–8

The beginning of the school year is an exciting time! Students enter their classrooms with a heightened sense of curiosity and wonder. First impressions go a long way for young learners, and it is important for them to experience a comfortable and engaging invitation into their literacy-rich environment. Brightly decorated bulletin boards, shiny desks and tables, and beautifully organized books await your students. The start of each new school year provides opportunities for you and your students to create a community of learners who respect, listen to, share, and respond to the thoughts and ideas of others. This is especially important when considering your community of readers.

“A community of readers is a group of people who share the common goal of reading and discussing literature and becoming literate human beings. This community is built upon mutual respect and a willingness to listen to and consider the merits of each member’s ideas and interpretations” (Frank Serafini, *Around the Reading Workshop in 180 Days*).

As teachers of reading, we know that it is very important to provide students with multiple opportunities to experience literature. Through listening to read-alouds, reading independently, and reading in small groups, students begin to open their eyes to the possibilities found in reading.

The Reading Fundamentals Launching Units of Study for grades K–8 provide models for many reading behaviors, rituals, and routines. Active listening, thinking, engagement, and participation are fundamental expectations for reading workshop. Establishing a community that fosters these behaviors is vital and will help your students develop and grow. Through the targeted lessons in these units, your students’ focused thinking and accountable talk will begin to evolve and develop. As students gain more experience, they bring their background knowledge to the workshop and begin to participate in meaningful conversations connected to the books they are sharing.

Throughout the workshop, students will have many choices to make: choosing books for independent reading; deciding how actively they will think about and respond to them; deciding how attentively they will engage in listening during the Mini-Lessons; determining their level of participation in partnership or small-group work; determining how much effort and positive energy they will put forth; deciding on the risks they will take as readers and learners; and deciding which connections they can make with their community of readers. Students will recognize that it is through the workshop that they are able to learn, share, give it a try, and make mistakes. It is also a place where students work collaboratively, take care of materials, and respect each other.

FICTION GENRE STUDY

Grades K–6

Readers of all ages are drawn to fiction, and it may very well be the genre students are most likely to choose as they search through a library or bookstore. Fiction stories are typically the stories your students will be most familiar with. These are the stories they remember hearing when they were younger—the stories told and retold from generation to generation and from one culture to another. Each story takes readers on a journey, an adventure, and/or an experience with memorable characters and events. The world is full of stories, and through these stories readers learn about themselves and others.

Fiction encompasses many different types of stories—fantastical, magical, traditional, historical, mythological, and realistic. There is something for everyone. Fiction transports the reader to an imaginary place and time, into a world that may feel familiar or foreign. Fiction writers are storytellers who aim to entertain, provide enjoyment, demonstrate a moral, reveal human nature, kindle the imagination, or explain aspects of life, culture, and nature. When one reads fiction, anything is possible as skillful writers capture the reader's imagination. It can't get better than that!

Part of the magic in any unit of study is exposing students to possibilities within a genre. By reading and studying different types of fiction (fantasy, traditional, and realistic), students will develop an understanding of various forms, features, and purposes of fiction. Their reading of fiction texts will be enhanced by an understanding of the narrative structure, story elements, and themes associated with each particular type of fiction writing. Students will also learn and apply specific reading skills and strategies that will enable them to visualize magical lands, infer characters' feelings and traits, identify the author's message, and actively engage with the texts they read.

NONFICTION GENRE STUDY

Grades K–8

Nonfiction is a rich, varied genre that offers a plethora of topics to entice any reader! Students will spend a great deal of time in school (and in their lives outside of school) reading nonfiction, from newspaper articles to textbooks, recipes to biographies, and travel brochures to informational web pages. Reading nonfiction is empowering. So often students feel like experts about the topic or subject they have read about. Nonfiction reading sparks students' curiosity and opens their eyes to new worlds and different points of view. Nonfiction has so much to offer readers and is an essential genre to study.

Part of the magic in any unit of study is exposing students to possibilities within the genre. Nonfiction writers stir the imagination and write in vivid, engaging styles. By reading and studying three types of nonfiction (reference, biography, and literary), students will develop an understanding of various forms, features, and purposes of nonfiction. The reading of nonfiction texts will be enhanced by an understanding of the structure, layout, and text features associated with each particular type of nonfiction writing. Common conventions and features enable writers to make their ideas and information clear and accessible to readers. Students will enjoy the aesthetic features of nonfiction texts while appreciating the clear and accurate information and presentation of facts.

Nonfiction reading often leads to inquiry. Students have a natural curiosity and “wonder” about many things. Nonfiction texts encourage students to closely observe and learn about all that is around them. Students will develop passions for locating information, finding answers to questions and wonderings, and deepening their understanding about the nonfiction topics they are reading and learning about. The grades K–8 Nonfiction units will help students learn and apply specific reading skills and strategies that will enable them to discover facts, identify big ideas, and learn new information about the topics they are reading about. This genre study will also provide them with specific tools to address the challenges of reading nonfiction as well as ways to work through difficult text—essential skills for any reader.

POETRY GENRE STUDY

Grades K–6

The poet Julia Cunningham says, “Poetry is, to me, a place to be. Walk with your words into these secret, mysterious, and magic places where poems lead you.” Poetry is a rich genre that awakens readers’ senses to the extraordinary things in their everyday world. Through precise and lyrical language, poems express thoughts and feelings, create images and moods, and cause us to reflect on what we see and experience. Poetry can broaden or intensify our understanding of the world. What greater joy is there than uncovering something new about yourself or the world through your reading? Poetry does that!

Part of the magic in any unit of study is exposing students to possibilities within the genre. By reading a variety of poems (e.g., free verse, rhyming, haiku) with various topics or themes (e.g., friendship, family, nature, school), students will be invited into the world of poetry. The varying lengths of poems, from a few lines to many stanzas, make it an accessible genre for all readers. The short nature of poetry also makes it a genre that invites rereading and deeper reading. Poems are the perfect vehicle for close reading, interpretation, and analysis.

The grades K–6 Poetry units will help students learn and apply specific reading skills and strategies that unlock the meaning of poems and build their understanding of poetry as a genre. This genre study will also address the challenges of reading poetry, as well as ways to work through difficult text—essential skills for any reader.