

# Connecting the Common Core State Standards to Best Practice



## Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

The Standards	Reading Fundamentals
<p><b>Key Ideas and Details:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly</li> <li>- Make logical inferences from text</li> <li>- Cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking</li> <li>- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development</li> <li>- Summarize key supporting details and ideas</li> <li>- Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
<p><b>Craft and Structure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text</li> <li>- Analyze the structure of texts</li> <li>- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text</li> </ul> <p><b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats</li> <li>- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text</li> <li>- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
<p><b>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently</li> <li>- Read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts</li> <li>- Through extensive reading of stories, dramas, poems, and myths from diverse cultures and different time periods, gain literary and cultural knowledge as well as familiarity with various text structures and elements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>

## Common Core Instructional Shifts

The Shifts	Reading Fundamentals
<p><b>Balancing Informational and Literary Texts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts.</li> <li>- At least 50% of what students read is informational.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
<p><b>Text-Based Answers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students have rich and rigorous conversations that are dependent on a common text.</li> <li>- Classroom experiences stay deeply connected to the text.</li> <li>- Students develop habits for making evidentiary arguments both in conversation and in writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staircase of Complexity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each grade level requires a step of growth.</li> <li>- The curriculum centers on close and careful readings of grade-appropriate text.</li> <li>- Teachers provide appropriate and necessary scaffolds and supports for students reading below their grade levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
<p><b>Academic Vocabulary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students constantly build the vocabulary they need to access grade-level complex texts.</li> <li>- The curriculum strategically focuses on the comprehension of pivotal words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>

## The Publisher's Criteria and New Research on Text Complexity

The Criteria & Research	Reading Fundamentals
Anchor texts align with the complexity requirements outlined in the standards.	✓
Materials provide students at every grade level the opportunity to read appropriately complex text.	✓
Materials include short, self-contained texts that elicit close reading and rereading.	✓
Materials aim to increase independent reading of texts that appeal to students' interests while developing their knowledge base.	✓
Materials include independent or guided reading collections that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include texts at students' own reading levels and texts with complexity levels that challenge and motivate students;</li> <li>- Vary in length and density; and</li> <li>- Include informational and literary nonfiction as well as fiction.</li> </ul>	✓
The quality of the text selections is high. They are worth reading closely.	✓
Specific text types named in the standards are included, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairy tales, folktales, and myths;</li> <li>- Works representing diverse cultures;</li> <li>- Poetry;</li> <li>- Plays and dramas; and</li> <li>- Primary sources.</li> </ul>	✓
Questions and tasks cultivate students' abilities to ask and answer text-dependent questions.	✓
Materials provide opportunities for students to build knowledge through close reading of specific texts, including read-alouds.	✓
Questions and tasks attend to analyzing the arguments and information at the heart of informational text.	✓
Reading strategies support comprehension of specific texts and focus on building knowledge and insight.	✓
Materials are designed for whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction.	✓
Materials focus on academic vocabulary that is prevalent in complex texts.	✓
Materials provide systematic opportunities for students to read complex text with fluency.	✓
Materials help teachers plan substantive academic discussions.	✓
Materials offer assessment opportunities that genuinely measure progress.	✓

## PARCC Model Content Frameworks for English Language Arts and Literacy

The Frameworks	Reading Fundamentals
The Model Content Frameworks highlight the importance of focusing on close, sustained analysis of complex text.	✓
Comparison and synthesis of ideas across multiple texts allows students to thoroughly demonstrate reading comprehension as defined by the entirety of the reading standards.	✓
The Model Content Frameworks suggest that educators select grade-level-appropriate short texts of sufficient complexity for close, analytic reading as well as extended text.	✓
Independent reading should include texts at a student's independent reading level and texts with complexity levels that are challenging and motivating.	✓

## READING FUNDAMENTALS: Connecting the Common Core to Best Practice

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The reading strategies that are taught support comprehension of specific texts and focus on building knowledge and insight.  
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Reading Fundamentals Units of Study systematically integrate reading comprehension skill and strategy instruction with the study of genre and/or content area subject matter.

The following research-based reading comprehension strategies are taught with increasing degrees of sophistication in every Reading Fundamentals Unit of Study across grades K–8:

**Text and Genre Features/Structure:** Good readers are better able to recognize and retain important information and appreciate and understand text when they are familiar with text structure and genre features (e.g., story elements, characters, plot, setting, problem/solution, cause/effect, temporal sequence, illustrations, Table of Contents, headings, bold print, Index, captions, etc.).

**Using Schema:** Good readers make connections and retrieve and activate prior knowledge to connect to what is known and deepen understanding of the texts they read.

**Questioning:** Good readers ask and answer questions as they interact with texts and construct meaning.

**Visualizing:** Good readers use their background knowledge and the writer’s words to create mental images as they read, to enhance understanding, and to bring the text to life.

**Making Inferences:** Good readers use prior knowledge and textual information to draw conclusions, make predictions, and form interpretations.

**Determining Importance:** Good readers identify key ideas, themes, or topics and distinguish between important and unimportant information.

**Synthesizing:** Good readers synthesize or combine important textual information with existing knowledge to summarize what was read and form new ideas or opinions.

**Monitoring and Repairing Comprehension:** Good readers are aware of their understanding of text while reading and have a repertoire of fix-up strategies when meaning breaks down.

**Finding Word Meaning (Vocabulary):** Good readers use context clues to find the meaning of unfamiliar

words. Good readers possess a broad range of domain- and academic-specific vocabulary, fostering deeper understanding of topics and subjects.

**Reading Foundational Skills: Print Concepts and Features (K–1):** Good readers recognize that spoken words are represented by written language; they understand that words move from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.

The application of the aforementioned skills and strategies are initially modeled by the teacher in a whole-class setting via 8–10 Interactive Read-Aloud lessons with specific mentor texts. Each Reading Fundamentals Unit of Study includes 5–6 mentor texts and 3 or more short shared texts for modeling and demonstration purposes.

Following each whole-class Interactive Read-Aloud lesson, students routinely practice the comprehension skills and strategies introduced with specific texts at their own reading levels.

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Materials are designed for whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction.  
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Reading Fundamentals Units of Study link standards across several instructional contexts, which allows multiple opportunities to practice the strategies and skills taught.

Reading Fundamentals units exist inside a balanced literacy framework that capitalizes on the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. Within this framework there are opportunities to read to students in a whole-group setting while modeling key skills and strategies (Interactive Read-Aloud), to read with students either in a whole group or small group (Shared Reading), to support and guide students at their instructional levels (Small-Group Work and/or Guided Reading), and to have students read books or texts at their independent reading levels (Independent Reading).

During whole-group instruction, teachers read aloud the mentor texts while thinking aloud and modeling how readers interact and engage with complex text in order to make meaning and build knowledge about various topics and themes. These Interactive Read-Aloud lessons integrate reading skill and strategy instruction with the study of genre and/or content area subject matter and serve to build schema for the next phases of learning.

After the 8–10 Interactive Read-Aloud lessons, there are 8–12 Mini-Lessons. During the whole-class Mini-Lessons, students revisit and examine the specific strategies previously introduced during the Interactive Read-Alouds. In the Mini-Lessons, teachers return to the mentor texts and/or use shared texts to focus on a single skill and

engage and guide students as they practice this skill together. This modeling and guided practice enables students to begin to independently apply the strategies.

After the Interactive Read-Aloud lessons and Mini-Lessons, students transition to independent reading, and teachers meet with individuals, partnerships, and/or small groups of students to provide additional guidance and reinforcement of the focus strategies. The “Independent Reading and Guided Practice” section of each Reading Fundamentals lesson describes instructional connections to independent reading and small-group work and/or guided reading. These connections focus on how to support students in knowing when and how to use the various strategies as they read a variety of texts on their own.

Reading Fundamentals offers carefully selected classroom Leveled Libraries for independent reading as well as book collections and Book Rooms for Guided Reading that align to the whole-class instruction with regards to genres and text types, content area topic and subject matter, conceptual understandings, authors, cultures, and themes. The grade-specific book collections include texts both at students’ own reading levels and texts with complexity levels that challenge and motivate students.

During Interactive Read-Aloud lessons, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading, students will have multiple opportunities to read and experience a variety of genres and text types while also being exposed to, through our content literacy units, both primary and secondary sources for the purpose of enhancing content knowledge and attaining a deeper understanding of discipline-specific information.

.....  
*Materials provide opportunities for students to build knowledge through close readings of specific texts, including read-alouds.*  
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Reading Fundamentals Units of Study continually provide meaningful opportunities for students to interact with authentic texts, including opportunities through read-alouds.

Each Reading Fundamentals Unit of Study includes 5–6 mentor texts and 3 or more short shared texts. These texts not only enhance literary development but also, through close readings, allow students to build content and genre-specific knowledge and conceptual understandings. These texts are often linked by topic or theme so students gain a deeper understanding of the content or subject matter.

All Reading Fundamentals Units of Study begin with an Interactive Read-Aloud phase (8–10 lessons). Lessons include explicit sample language that guides teachers to read aloud the mentor texts while thinking aloud and

modeling how readers interact with text in order to make meaning.

The Interactive Read-Aloud lessons model the process of close reading as teachers observe, highlight, and/or question the facts and details about the text. The lessons may focus on a particular passage or the text as a whole. Students will notice (for example) structural features, challenging vocabulary, literary elements, or striking facts.

Close reading also involves reflecting on what was read and observed, as well as thinking about what it all means. After the read-aloud, students engage in collaborative conversations where they interpret what they have noticed and discuss what they have learned.

In addition to the Interactive Read-Aloud lessons, each Reading Fundamentals Unit of Study also includes 8–12 Mini-Lessons wherein teachers return to the mentor texts for additional re-readings and further modeling of close readings where students think critically about the texts. Following each whole-class Interactive Read-Aloud lesson and Mini-Lesson, students routinely practice the skills and strategies introduced with specific close readings of texts at their reading levels.

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*Students will read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from the text.*  
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Both the lessons and follow-up extensions in Reading Fundamentals direct students to engage with and examine facts and details about the text while also noticing features, language, and meaning. Throughout the read-aloud, shared reading, small-group or guided reading, and independent reading, emphasis is placed on having students slow down and be deliberate with their attention to text. Lessons also address the value of rereading for clarification or gaining deeper meaning. The use of skimming and scanning is modeled for students, along with other strategies (such as highlighting or underlining key words and phrases) that can be used for the purpose of making inferences based on textual evidence. Other lessons address generating interactions between schema and text.

The use of text-dependent questions is a common thread throughout the lessons and provides opportunities for students to not only use their own personal knowledge but to dig deeper into the text to draw inferences from the evidence they gain from this close reading. Students are constantly being encouraged to think and search, and it is through this recursive practice that students develop study skills and reading skills that will support them across all content areas.

.....  
*Students will have rich and rigorous conversations about a common text, and classroom experiences stay deeply connected to the text.*  
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High-level questions and discussions with high-quality texts are key components of Reading Fundamentals. Built into each lesson are opportunities for students to engage in conversations about content, strategy use, personal reflections, and conceptual understandings. Through exploring essential questions, enduring understandings, and key ideas, students will connect their own personal knowledge to the content they are interacting with while also building upon this knowledge through conversation and discussion.

Explicit teaching and modeling of sharing and building on the thinking of others extends the opportunities for students to grow their thinking and expand their academic discussions as a community of readers, writers, and thinkers.

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**Students will cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.**  
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Reading Fundamentals guides students to read closely while also showing them how to look back at text, reread, point to lines, and underline important information as they make meaning. The lessons also provide opportunities for students to practice synthesizing evidence from different locations in a text and drawing a conclusion.

Students are guided throughout the lessons to think about questions like “Where did the text tell me that?” and “How do I use evidence to explain my thoughts and reactions?”

Many of the activities in the lessons will take students back to the text, and they will be taught the differences among literal (exact words contained in the text or story), inferential (putting two or more ideas from the text together), and critical questions (questions answered from the author’s point of view via the text).

In the early primary grades, the lessons consider what support these young readers need as they become detectives who are learning to make stronger connections between their ideas and texts.

Throughout the lessons, students will have many opportunities to read and discuss a variety of texts and to write routinely about specific facts and details drawn from the text. Students will learn how to record pertinent information from a variety of sources as they deepen their content understandings. Students will learn how to take notes and sort, categorize, and summarize information for later reflection and analysis.

.....  
**Students will determine central ideas or themes of a text, analyze their development, and summarize key supporting details and ideas.**  
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The lessons in the Reading Fundamentals units allow

students to learn and apply reading skills and strategies that enable them to identify central ideas and themes while learning new information about the topics they are reading about.

More specifically, the skills of “Determining Importance” —whereby readers identify key ideas, themes, or topics and distinguish between important and unimportant information—and “Synthesizing”—whereby readers synthesize or combine important textual information with existing knowledge to summarize what was read and form new ideas or opinions—are taught in every Reading Fundamentals Unit of Study.

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**Students will analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.**  
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The goal of many of the lessons in Reading Fundamentals is for students to think critically, making connections between events or ideas and analyzing cause and effect relationships between and among key ideas in a text. By considering these relationships, students are provided with an opportunity to compare and contrast the similarities and differences among various kinds of content and themes. Both Interactive Read-Aloud lessons and Mini-Lessons allow students to critically analyze the commonalities of content while also noticing the vast differences that may be presented.

Graphic organizers are also incorporated into the lessons so that students can visually distinguish among and study the different individuals, events, themes, and ideas.

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**Students will analyze the structure of texts.**  
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For consistency and clarity, the K–8 Reading Fundamentals Units of Study use common language and terms when naming and defining text structures (e.g., description, chronological, compare and contrast, problem and solution, and cause and effect).

Research supports the idea that knowledge of text structure is an important factor in fostering comprehension. Students with knowledge of text structure can expect texts to unfold in certain ways and can readily retrieve information. By having a consistent thread of text structures running through all of the units, Reading Fundamentals provides students with a foundation for structural expectations, which in turn assists them as both readers and writers.

.....  
**The comparison and synthesis of ideas across multiple texts allows students to thoroughly demonstrate reading comprehension. Students will analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics.**  
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Reading Fundamentals Units of Study allow students to analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic while noting important similarities and differences in the

point of view they represent.

There are lessons in each unit that address similar topics or themes using a variety of genres (e.g., using poetry and a nonfiction text to study the topics of family and communities) while also guiding students to synthesize, analyze, evaluate, compare, and contrast the similarities, differences, and connections through speaking and writing.

Through extensive reading of literature and informational texts from diverse cultures and different time periods, students will gain literary and cultural knowledge as well as familiarity with various text structures and elements.

The selection of mentor texts that accompany each grade level unit of study reflects a range of literature that will take students across genres, cultures, time periods, structures, and features. Strong consideration was placed on balancing the variety of texts within one unit and across a typical grade-level school year.

The mentor texts are written by respected authors from diverse backgrounds and time periods. Students will gain literary and cultural knowledge through rich language and research, as well as extend their genre knowledge through ongoing attention to genre features and text structures.

In addition to the mentor texts (5–6) and short shared texts (3 or more) included with each unit, Reading Fundamentals also offers grade-specific Independent Leveled Libraries and school Book Rooms (e.g., grades K–5) that consist of an extensive variety of literary and informational texts from diverse cultures and time periods, both at students’ reading levels and at complexity levels that challenge and motivate students.

Students will read a true balance of informational and literary texts.

- Students will read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts.

The mentor and shared texts included in the Reading Fundamentals Units of Study, as well as the selection of texts included in the Reading Fundamentals Leveled Libraries and Book Room collections, expose students to a multitude of standards-based text types and genres, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, historical fiction, personal narrative, fairy tales, folktales, plays, dramas, realistic fiction, expository text, literary nonfiction, biography, narrative procedure, and technical texts. They also expose students to increasingly challenging texts that meet the new text complexity requirements outlined in the CCSS.

The balance between informational and literary text mirrors the shifts that the CCSS recommend, exposing

students from elementary grades to upper middle school grades to a greater amount of informational text across the content areas.

Materials include independent and guided reading collections that:

- Include texts at students’ own reading levels and texts with complexity levels that challenge and motivate students;
- Include quality texts worth reading and re-reading;
- Include the specific genres and text types named in the Common Core State Standards, such as fairy tales, folktales, myths, poetry, and literary nonfiction; and
- Include works from diverse cultures and authors.

Reading Fundamentals offers carefully selected Leveled Libraries, book collections, and Book Rooms that can be used for independent and/or guided reading, book clubs, literature circles, and/or other small-group work. The grade-specific book collections include texts both at students’ own reading levels and texts with complexity levels that challenge and motivate students. The text selections include quality texts from diverse cultures and across genres and text types.

Following each Interactive Read-Aloud lesson and Mini-Lesson, independent and/or guided reading suggestions or extensions are included with the intended goal of helping students gain an increased understanding of how and when to use various strategies as they read a variety of texts on their own.

The Leveled Libraries and Book Rooms are aligned to the whole-class instruction in regards to genres and text types, content area topic and subject matter, conceptual understandings, authors, and diversity of cultures and themes.

Materials aid teachers in providing appropriate and necessary scaffolds and supports for students reading below their grade levels.

Adjusting instruction for the benefit of students who are reading below their grade levels is an integral component of Reading Fundamentals. Attention to readers who may need less complex text is addressed through suggestions for using graphic organizers, oral rehearsal, and retelling practices.

For students in the early primary grades (K–1), the lessons also suggest multisensory activities and concepts of print reinforcement in order to support the development of emergent readers.

Similarly, independent Leveled Libraries and Book Rooms not only align to the upper range of the new text complexity levels outlined in the Common Core State Standards but also include a selection of titles below

recommended levels to provide the necessary supports for students reading below their grade levels.

Materials focus on academic vocabulary prevalent in complex texts, and the curriculum strategically focuses on the comprehension of pivotal words.

Another essential element of research connected to literacy instruction is the selection of words for study. Linking vocabulary to comprehension is a strong component of all of the lessons. Throughout Reading Fundamentals Units of Study, students have multiple opportunities to use and respond to the words they learn through collaborative discussions, reading, being read to, and responding to what is read.

In addition, there is explicit instruction on strategies readers use to determine or clarify meanings of unfamiliar words. For example, readers use context clues to determine the meaning of unknown words, and they also look for morphology or word structure cues, such as meaningful word parts (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, and root words) to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. As a result, students will be able to employ a repertoire of strategies to define and apply challenging academic and domain-specific (Tier 2 and Tier 3) vocabulary while reading, discussing, and writing.

Academic (Tier 2) vocabulary and domain-specific (Tier 3) vocabulary terms are listed at the beginning of each Reading Fundamentals Unit of Study. These terms were derived from the unit texts, instructional directions, and discussions outlined in the lessons and were based upon their importance, utility, and instructional potential to enhance conceptual understandings.

Materials include short, self-contained texts that elicit close reading and re-reading.

Each Reading Fundamentals Unit of Study includes a selection of 3 or more short shared texts. Short shared texts mirror the genre and/or content area subject matter under study and expose students to a wide variety of text structures and authentic forms of expression, such as feature articles, letters, essays, and speeches.

Reading Fundamentals lessons model the processes of close reading and re-reading as teachers observe, highlight, and/or question the facts and details about the text. The lessons may focus on a particular passage or the text as a whole, noticing (for example) structural features, challenging vocabulary, literary elements, or striking facts. Close readings also involve reflecting on what was read and observed and thinking about what it all means.

Short shared texts are provided in both print and digital forms, allowing for access via interactive whiteboards and other comparable digital technologies.

Materials provide systematic opportunities for students to read complex text with fluency.

The lessons and instructional suggestions in Reading Fundamentals guide teachers to move students purposefully through increasingly complex text to build skill and stamina.

Fluency instruction is taught and modeled not as an end in and of itself but, rather, in the context of students' attempts to make meaning of a particular text. True fluency is not addressed in our lessons as merely lining up one sentence after another and reading them aloud quickly; instead, fluency is about maintaining understanding across a text and analyzing and understanding sentence structure and meaning. Repeated readings of the same text with questions that require students to read closely for details and key ideas also provide students with additional practice regarding fluency.

Following the whole-class Interactive Read-Aloud lessons and Mini-Lessons, students routinely practice the skills and strategies introduced with texts at their reading levels. The selection of titles included in the independent Leveled Libraries and Book Rooms represents a wide range of reading levels. The titles align to text complexity levels and ranges outlined in the Common Core State Standards, thereby affording students repeated opportunities to read texts with fluency, whether reading at their levels or reading more complex texts.

Materials offer assessment opportunities that genuinely measure progress.

Over the course of each Reading Fundamentals Unit of Study as well as at the conclusion of each unit, teachers will find multiple means for assessing students. These formative assessments (informal and ongoing, including written and oral responses, inquiry, turn-and-talk, and conferences) and summative assessments (for grades 2–8) allow for data collection that will inform future teaching and differentiation and provide important information about students as thinkers, readers, writers, and researchers. The units include:

- Specific conference questions;
- Suggestions for formative (informal) assessments;
- Suggestions for Response to Reading extensions;
- A kid-watching tool provided for notating student progress (a user-friendly tool that helps teachers monitor students' acquisition of essential skills and strategies and effectively plan additional support and interventions to meet the differentiated learning needs of students); and
- A Student Performance Checklist (an assessment tool that lists the skills, strategies, and standards taught so teachers can record if and when students have met the desired outcomes of each unit).

At the end of each unit, students in grades 2–8 will complete a Summative Assessment. This assessment is not intended to be comprehensive but to provide an additional lens regarding some of the major strategies and skills that students have developed.

Some of the questions are written in formats requiring students to not only choose the best answer but to also justify their response by choosing or highlighting in the text itself the evidence that supports their thinking.

Students will also be asked to complete a constructed response item in which they demonstrate their ability to produce a short written response to a prompt, providing evidence to justify their interpretations of information from the text. This task will be scored by using a 2-point scoring rubric.

These types of questions and the scoring rubric are consistent with current approaches to assessing students' understanding of the skills associated with the Common Core State Standards. They are designed to emphasize not only students' answers but also their thought processes and ability to communicate their understanding in writing.