

Evidence-Based Facilitator Guide: Improving Intermediate Literacy

Recommendation 3: Extended Discussion of Text Meaning and Interpretation

September 2020

IMPROVING INTERMEDIATE LITERACY
Professional Development Facilitator's Guide

Recommendation 3: Extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation

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Materials checklist and notes

Item	Consumable Y or N	Quantity	Notes:
Computer			
Projector			
Clicker			
PowerPoint presentation on flash drive or computer			
Handouts			
Chart paper and pens			
Sticky notes			
Agenda			
Sign-in forms			
Evaluation form			
Articles to be read			
Miscellaneous			

State Department of Education/Background

About the guide

Designed to help instructional leaders deliver effective training to teachers, this guide provides nine evidence-based strategies for supporting literacy in grades 4–8. It includes practical application ideas and examples, as well as resources for immediate implementation. This guide is based on *Improving Adolescent Literacy*, a practice guide from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). More information is available at www.ies.ed.gov.

This guide, as well as the accompanying presentation materials, were compiled by the Region 17 Comprehensive Center at Education Northwest for the Idaho State Department of Education.

How to use the guide

This guide is designed to complement the training provided to an instructional leader (e.g., coach, teacher, administrator) who supports teachers in using evidence-based strategies to improve outcomes for students in grades 4–8. The instructional leader will be trained to facilitate and lead learning in a school and/or district. This guide includes a suggested script for each slide in the accompanying PowerPoint presentation. The facilitator can also use the supplemental handouts. For additional information on word recognition, phonological awareness, decoding, sight words recognition, language structure, and more, see <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-childrenslit> and <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/literacypractice>.

*Note: The presentation slides that correspond to this guide are based on the **third** of four IES recommendations; there are four presentations total, and the first 19 slides are the same in each one. Thus, if you are delivering more than one of these presentations to the same audience during the same professional learning event, after describing the session outcomes (see Slide 1), you can skip ahead to Slide 20 after your first presentation. and begin with the section. This guide is focused on Recommendation 3: “**Extended Discussion of Text Meaning and Interpretation.**”*

The design of this guide provides flexibility to facilitators to respond to school or district needs in a targeted manner. Each evidence-based practice can be provided as a brief training session over the course of a school year. These recommendations can be grouped into common threads and provided as a full- or half-day professional development session. The practices and subsequent activities are not content-specific; they can help improve literacy across content areas in grades 4–8.

What participants need to bring

Participants should bring their core instructional materials, teacher manuals, textbooks, and/or grade-level standards. Throughout the professional learning session, they will be asked to reference and make connections to the instructional tools (i.e., core instructional materials) they are using.

Presenter's facilitation script

Outcomes (post on chart paper)

- Understand how extended discussion improves comprehension.
- Observe (by watching a video) how a teacher facilitates discussions and then discuss instructional strategies for facilitation.
- Describe two or more formats that will facilitate extended discussions.
- Practice a discussion protocol and apply it to current core instructional materials.

Engagement structures

- Structured partners (pairs at table)
- Table groups
- Pairs-to-square (two partner pairs come together to create a group of four)
- Conversation placemat (from Discussion module—will be used as the engagement and discussion structure in this module)
- Talking chips
- Additional engagement strategies (e.g., quick writes, weighty words, inside-outside circle, cold call, whip around)

Slide 1: Welcome

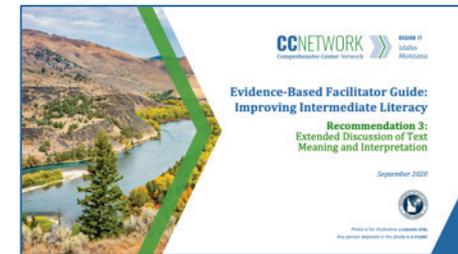
(Introduce yourself and invite colleagues and participants to introduce themselves. Establish structured partners and have partners identify whether they will be a “1” or a “2” during partner work.)

Today’s presentation was developed in partnership with the Idaho State Department of Education and the Region 17 Comprehensive Center at Education Northwest, a nonprofit organization.

The goal of this professional development is to share evidence-based recommendations for improving intermediate literacy. It is designed to provide research and practical ideas for meeting the needs of all students, including struggling readers across content areas. We have two outcomes for today (*point to chart paper*). By the end of this training, you will be able to:

- Understand how extended discussion improves comprehension
- Observe (by watching a video) how a teacher facilitates discussions and then discuss instructional strategies for facilitation
- Describe two or more formats that will facilitate extended discussions
- Practice a discussion protocol and apply it to current core instructional materials

Our shared goal is to provide support for Idaho educators; together, we must equip students in grades 4–8 with the literacy skills they need to succeed.



Slide 2: An important insight

Take a minute to read and reflect on this quote.

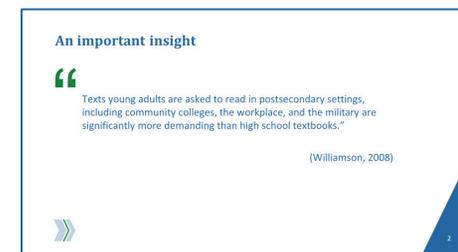
(Allow time for reflection)

What does this make you think about?

(Allow participants to share their thoughts)

What implications does this have for you and your students?

(Ask participants to share their thoughts)



Every day and in every classroom in Idaho, teachers and students are using texts to communicate through speaking, listening, writing, and reading. We are preparing our students for a world of informational texts. This presentation has been prepared for ALL of you here today.

The one common factor across content areas is the ability to read critically. Whether you teach math, science, social studies, English, or technology, we ALL teach literacy.

Slide 3: The literacy challenge is real

The literacy challenge is real for students, teachers, and families. In 2019, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), was administered at schools across the nation. The 2019 report card shows that, in most states, fourth- and eighth-grade students have stalled or declined in reading proficiency over the last decade. Two-thirds of students did not score proficient in reading on the most recent test. A third of the nation's fourth-graders tested "below basic." (Baumhardt, 2019).



In Idaho, 34 percent of fourth graders and 37 percent of eighth graders scored at or above proficient in reading. Both of these scores were above the national average. Further, across the board, Idaho is in the top 15 in the national rankings. However, the eighth-grade reading score decreased by four points in 2019—a statistically significant drop.

Students considered proficient or advanced by NAEP standards possess the literacy skills necessary for academic success. National statistics show that many students leave middle school unable to read adequately and are, therefore, unprepared to learn from textbooks at the high school level and beyond.

According to the stages of reading development (Chall, 1983), in grades 4 and above, students move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” During this stage, students read increasingly more demanding academic texts that contain challenging words and complex concepts beyond their oral vocabularies and knowledge base. In the critical transition period from “learning to read” to “reading to learn,” we often see a drop-off in reading scores, particularly among students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

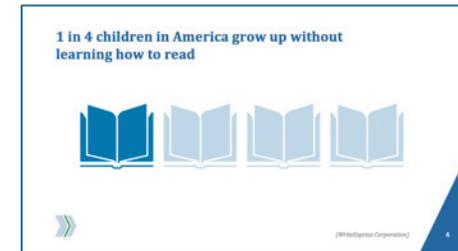
Research shows that students who are poor readers at the end of grade 1 almost never acquire average-level reading skills by the end of elementary school (Francis et al., 1996; Shaywitz et al., 1999; Torgesen & Burgess, 1998.) When children fail at early reading and writing, they begin to dislike reading. When struggling readers do not receive effective intervention, they read less—and learn less from reading—than students who are proficient readers. This delayed development of reading skills affects students’ exposure to texts. As a consequence, they do not gain vocabulary, background knowledge, and information

about how reading material is structured. In short, the word-rich get richer, and the word-poor get poorer. (Bend Learning Center, n.d.)

Slide 4: 1 in 4 children in America grow up without learning how to read

Educators who work with students in grades 4–8 know that, unfortunately, not all children learn to read by the time they leave elementary school.

In fact, 1 in 4 children in the United States grows up without learning how to read. How does this affect content area learning? What does it do for their future? Statistically, two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of grade 4 end up in jail or on welfare (WriteExpress Corporation, n.d.).



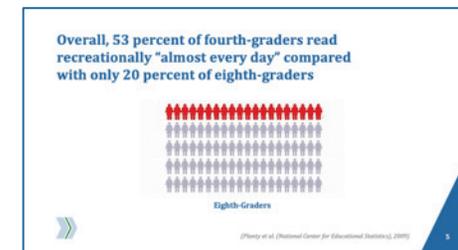
Slide 5: Overall, 53 percent of fourth-graders read recreationally “almost every day” compared with only 20 percent of eighth-graders

(Read slide aloud)

What is happening from elementary school to junior high? How are you supporting the students who have failed year after year to read at grade level? How might this affect motivation? *(Structured partner share)*

Here are some schools’ ideas:

- Librarians who know students’ reading level and suggest appropriate books
- Intervention classes targeted to students’ core deficits in reading—not simply blanket intervention programs that may or may not address specific student needs
- Reading clubs in which students sign up for books to read
- Grade-level audiobooks for students who need additional support
- Strong Tier 1 instruction that meets the needs of all students, not just those who read at grade level



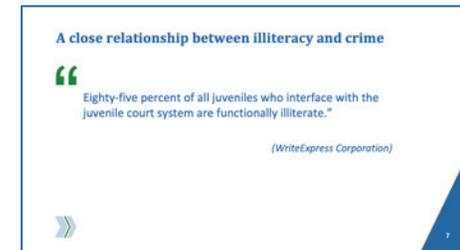
Slide 6: Students who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times likelier to drop out of school

Although students who fall behind rarely catch up without intensive intervention, research has demonstrated that secondary students can make significant gains with proper instruction. Research also suggests that with adequate time for instruction and data-based instructional practices, struggling middle school readers can improve their reading skills.



Slide 7: A close relationship between illiteracy and crime

Did you know there is a close connection between illiteracy (reading on or below the fourth-grade level) and crime? *(Read quote on slide)*



Slide 8: Teaching reading: If not me, then who?

Let's read this quote in unison. Ready? "Learning to read..."

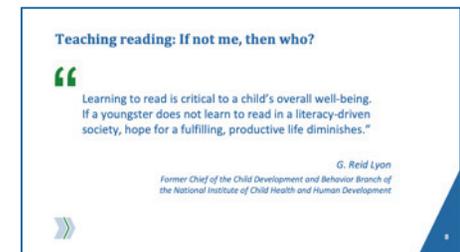
Do you agree or disagree with this quote? *(Thumbs -up or thumbs-down)*

Why? *(Discuss)*

(Before advancing to the next slide, have participants quickly synthesize the information from slides 3–8 with the activity below)

Write the following question on a sticky note: Why focus on improving literacy **instruction** in ALL content areas? Get out your conversation place mat and turn to your structured partner.

Our key question is written on your sticky note. This is what is in the circle of the place mat. We are going to use "Conversation Skills for Supporting Ideas with Examples," located on the top right side of the place mat.



1. Partner 1 will pose the question from the sticky note but reword it using one of the question prompts in the “Supporting Ideas with Examples, Prompting” section. For example, if I were partner 1, I could say, “Can you give me an example from the information introduced thus far as to why we need to focus on improving literacy instruction in ALL content areas?”
2. Partner 2 will respond using one of the sentence starters from the responding section of the place mat, citing a fact from slides 3–8.
3. Switch roles.

Slide 9: Why focus on improving literacy instruction?

When we think about improving literacy instruction, nothing will replace an effective teacher. *(Tell participants to write “20x” on a sticky note)*

The teacher is the most important factor in student learning, as good instruction is 15-20 times more powerful than any other variable in predicting student progress and growth (U.S. Congress House Committee on Education and Labor, 2008).

However, there is more variance from classroom to classroom than there is from school to school or district to district.

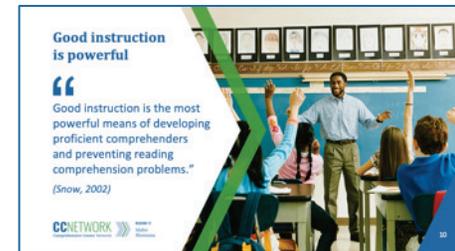


Slide 10: Good instruction is powerful

(Read the quote aloud)

As we previously discussed, the ability to read critically is the one common factor across all content areas. Whether you teach math, science, social studies, or technology, we ALL must provide good literacy instruction to ensure students have the skills and strategies necessary to be successful in school and beyond.

Today, our goal is to provide some tools for improving literacy instruction in grades 4–8. You were asked to bring some teaching materials so that you can apply these new tools during today’s session.



Slide 11: Idaho Content Standards

Recognizing the value of consistent, real-world learning goals to ensure all students are graduating from high school prepared for college, career, and life, our state adopted the Idaho Content Standards in 2011.

(Pull up the standards on the website and show where the literacy standards are and where their content standards are)

Although labeled on the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) website as “English Language Arts/Literacy,” these standards provide a framework for literacy across content areas. Today’s information on improving intermediate literacy fits into Idaho’s English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy Standards (Reading: Literature; Reading: Informational Text; and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects). Standards and curriculum work together to guide teachers in understanding what students should know and be able to do.

Idaho has adopted these ELA/literacy standards, as well as content standards for various disciplines, such as history, science, health, and the arts. The content standards for a specific content area or discipline provide guidance on **what** content teachers should teach. In contrast, the ELA/literacy standards in history, social studies, science, and technical subjects provide guidance on **how** teachers can use reading, writing, listening, and speaking to help students access and learn the content. Content teachers are not expected to be reading teachers—but they are responsible for using their content area expertise to help students meet the challenges of reading, writing, speaking, and listening in their respective fields.

The SDE website provides a link to the standards by grade level, and that link is listed in the references.



Slide 12: Idaho’s four key shifts in English language arts (ELA)/literacy standards

The standards incorporate four key shifts in ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects:

1. Students will build knowledge and academic language through a balance of content-rich, complex nonfiction and literary texts.

Students must be immersed in information about the world around them if they are to develop the strong general knowledge and vocabulary they need to become successful readers and be prepared for college, career, and life. Informational texts play an



important part in building students' content knowledge. Further, it is vital for students to have extensive opportunities to build knowledge through texts so they can learn independently. (Corestandards.org, n.d.)

The ELA/literacy standards call for a staircase of increasing complexity so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards also outline a progressive development of reading comprehension so that as students advance in grade level, they are able to gain more from what they read.

Closely related to text complexity and inextricably connected to reading comprehension is a focus on academic vocabulary—words that appear in a variety of content areas (such as “ignite” and “commit”). The standards call for students to grow their vocabularies through a mix of conversation, instruction, and reading.

2. Students will participate in reading/writing/speaking that is grounded in evidence from a variety of texts across the curriculum.

The Idaho Core standards emphasize the use of evidence from texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information. Rather than asking students questions they can answer solely from their prior knowledge and experience, the standards call for students to answer questions that depend on their having read texts with care.

The reading standards focus on students' ability to read carefully and grasp information, arguments, ideas, and details based on evidence in the text. Students should be able to answer a range of *text-dependent* questions.

3. Students will use digital resources strategically to conduct research and create and present materials in oral and written form.

Conducting research is an inquiry-based process that involves identifying a question, gathering information, analyzing and evaluating evidence, drawing conclusions, and sharing the knowledge gained. The ability to conduct research is a critical skill that students need in order to be ready for college and careers. To support struggling students who may face difficulties in carrying out this process, teachers can use technological tools to personalize instruction.

New technologies have broadened and expanded the role that speaking and listening play in acquiring and sharing knowledge—and tightened their link to other forms of communication. Digital texts confront students with the potential for continuously updated content and dynamically changing combinations of words, graphics, images, hyperlinks, and embedded video and audio (NGA & CCSSO, 2010).

4. Students will collaborate effectively for a variety of purposes while also building independent literacy skills (Idaho SDE, 2018).

The standards for speaking and listening center on the idea that college- and career-ready students must be able to work collaboratively and present information to audiences in various formats. Just like the reading and writing standards, these anchor standards are the result of skills developed from kindergarten through grade 12.

To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations—as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner. Being productive members of these conversations requires that students contribute accurate, relevant information; respond to and develop what others have said; compare and contrast; and analyze and synthesize ideas in various domains (NGA & CCSSO, 2010). This also involves students being able to present for various purposes and in front of audiences, using media and representations of data to make their presentations more effective.

Slide 13: Grades 6-12 literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects (examples)

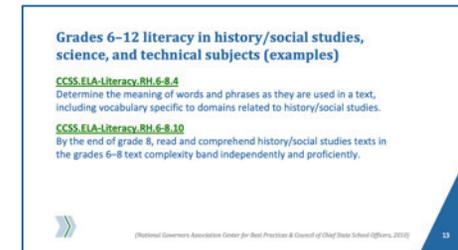
Here are two example standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects for grades 4–8.

(Reiterate that the standards for grades 6–12 are divided into two sections: one for ELA and the other for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects—and that this division reflects the unique, time-honored place of ELA teachers in developing students’ literacy skills while recognizing that other teachers must also play a role.)

In the standards, informational texts play a critical role in both reading and writing instruction. Starting in kindergarten, there is a 50/50 split between informational and literary texts, which gradually shifts to 70/30 by high school (NGA & CCSSO, 2010). The 70/30 split does NOT mean ELA teachers should spend only 30 percent of their instructional time with literary texts. Rather, the 70/30 recommendation is across the school day and includes the informational texts students are reading in content area classes. ELA teachers are encouraged to add more informational texts surrounding the literary texts, but their focus should remain primarily on literary texts.

Students encounter the majority of informational texts in content area classes. Students must learn through domain-specific texts in their science and social studies classes; rather than teachers referring to the text, they must use the text in ways that require students to learn content from what they read.

Thus, all teachers—not just ELA teachers—play a role in ensuring students meet the standards.



Slide 14: Vertically aligned standards (examples)

The SDE website also provides another great resource: [Idaho Content Standards: English Language Arts/Literacy Vertical Alignments](#).

Vertically aligned standards (example)

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE
KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
Standard 2

CC.8-12.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

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Slide 15: Grades 4 – 8

Here is an example of vertically aligned standards for grades 4–8.

What do you notice about word progression at each grade level? (*Discuss and share*)

How might you use the vertically aligned standards document when planning lessons? (*Wait time and sharing*)

Remember: These standards broadly reflect the research on improving adolescent literacy.

Now, let's dive into today's session on how **opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation** improve intermediate literacy!

Grades 4 – 8

RI.2	Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
RI.2	Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.
RI.2	Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinion or judgments.
RI.2	Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
RI.2	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

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Slide 16: Skilled readers

One of our goals as teachers is to develop skilled readers so that students are fully prepared for the rigor of college or a career.

What are some essential components of being a successful/skilled reader?

Think about someone you would consider a skilled reader and describe how they think and what they can do.

(Have participants turn and talk with a partner. Then ask them to share their thoughts as you generate a mind map to display background schema)

Skilled readers
What are some essential components
of being a skilled reader?

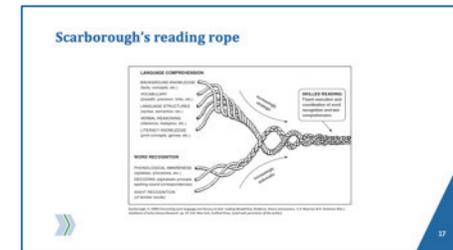
CC NETWORK

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Slide 17: Scarborough's reading rope

Let's consider two essential components represented in Scarborough's Reading Rope (2002): language comprehension and word recognition.

In the illustration, the twisting ropes represent the underlying skills and elements that come together to form two necessary braids, which represent the two essential components of skilled reading. For either of the two essential components to develop successfully, children need to be taught the elements necessary for automatic word recognition (i.e., phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition of frequent/familiar words) and strategic language comprehension (i.e., background knowledge, vocabulary, verbal reasoning, literacy knowledge). Word recognition is developed through intentional, systematic, and explicit instruction in the structure of the English language, such as phonics. Language comprehension is developed in various ways through exposure to ideas, conversation, teacher "read-alouds," student-to-student dialogue, and more.

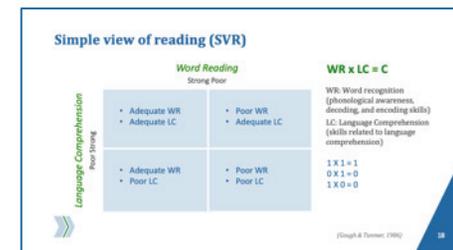


In other words, to unlock comprehension of text, two keys are required: being able to read the words on the page, and understanding what the words and language mean within the texts that children are reading (Davis, 2006).

Slide 18: Simple view of reading (SVR)

The simple view of reading (SVR) (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) characterizes skillful reading comprehension as the combination of the two separate—but equally important—components depicted in Scarborough's Rope: word recognition and language comprehension.

Gough and Tunmer present SVR in a mathematical algorithm: $WR \times LC = C$. WR refers to word-level reading, and LC refers to the ability to understand spoken (oral) language. It is a simple multiplication problem—if one element is low, it affects the final outcome. Just as Scarborough's Rope illustrates, if any of these pieces are missing, it affects the end result: comprehension. How can this help us get more targeted with our instruction and intervention?



According to SVR, there are four basic profiles of readers.

Look at Box 1. These readers may have adequate word recognition and language comprehension. We hope all our readers are at least adequate in the two components. And wouldn't it be great if they were really good in both components?

Look at Box 2. These readers may have poor word recognition and adequate language comprehension, which results in poor reading comprehension. In other words, when the text is read to them, these learners can make adequate inferences and answer the kinds of questions that demonstrate an understanding of the text.

Look at Box 3. These readers may have adequate word recognition and poor language comprehension, which results in poor reading comprehension. Some English learner students fall into this category, especially if their first language shares an alphabetic sound system, such as Spanish. Native English speakers who fall into this category are sometimes referred to as “word callers.” They can read every word but cannot understand the text. Another more technical term is hyperlexic. This is similar to when you learn to read another language (such as Italian) and can pronounce the words, but you can’t track the meaning due to poor vocabulary knowledge or not understanding the grammar and syntax.

Look at Box 4. These readers may have poor word recognition and poor language comprehension, which results in poor reading comprehension. If a student has poor word recognition, you will need to assess language comprehension using read-alouds (or something similar) to determine if they also struggle with language comprehension.

Our task is to find out why a reader is having difficulties. We want to find each reader’s strengths and capitalize on them. We also want to find each reader’s weaknesses and intervene accordingly.

Again, Box 1 is the goal because we know children who have success with reading comprehension are skilled in both word recognition and language comprehension.

This is a big concept. Let’s take a moment to synthesize the information learned on this slide. Take out your conversation place mat. This time, we will use the box labeled “Synthesize Conversation Points” located on the bottom center of the place mat.

1. Partner 1 will ask a question listed in the prompting section. For example, if I were Partner 1, I could say, “What key ideas can we take away?”
2. Partner 2 will respond using one of the sentence starters from the responding section of the place mat, citing information from slides 3–8.
3. Switch roles.

When thinking about Scarborough’s Rope, SVR, and the effects of illiteracy, it becomes clear that all teachers are teachers of literacy skills. Do you agree? Disagree? What things come to mind when you hear this? *(Pause and allow teachers to share with table groups)*

Slide 19: A collection of the best available evidence

This guide is based on *Improving Adolescent Literacy* (Kamil et al., 2008), a practice guide from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

Facilitator's Note:

“The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) publishes practice guides to share evidence and expert guidance on addressing education-related challenges not readily solved with a single program, policy, or practice. Each practice guide’s panel of experts develops recommendations for a coherent approach to a multifaceted problem. Each

recommendation is explicitly connected to supporting evidence. Using common standards, the supporting evidence is rated to reflect how well the research demonstrates the effectiveness of the recommended practices. Strong evidence means positive findings are demonstrated in multiple well-designed, well-executed studies, leaving little or no doubt that the positive effects are caused by the recommended practice. Moderate evidence means well-designed studies show positive impacts, but there are questions about whether the findings can be generalized beyond the study samples or whether the studies definitively show evidence that the practice is effective. Minimal evidence means that there is not definitive evidence that the recommended practice is effective in improving the outcome of interest, although there may be data to suggest a correlation between the practice and the outcome of interest” (Baker et al., 2014, p. 72).



Slide 20: Five recommendations for improving literacy

IES recommends five evidence-based practices for improving literacy.

When a practice is recognized as evidence-based:

- It is shown to have a positive effect on student outcomes.
- The research design allows you to infer that the practice led to student improvement.
- Multiple high-quality studies have been conducted.

Read the five recommendations. (*Wait time*)

Why do you think IES identified these five things? (*Wait time and allow for sharing*)

Notice **today's focus** is in bold. This session is focused on taking a closer look Today's session is focused on Recommendation 3: "**Extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.**"



Our goal is to provide some tools for improving student literacy in grades 4–8, specifically through *opportunities for extended discussion in literacy learning* for all content areas.

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

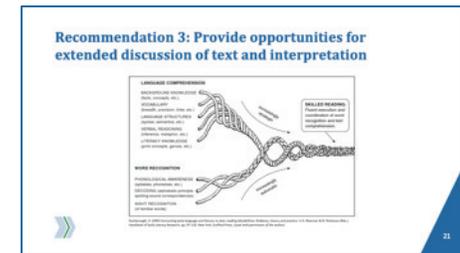
- **Understand how extended discussion improves comprehension**
- **Observe (by watching a video) how a teacher facilitates discussions and then discuss instructional strategies for facilitation**
- **Describe two or more formats that will facilitate extended discussions**
- **Practice a discussion protocol and apply it to current core instructional materials**

More information on the five recommendations is available at www.ies.ed.gov.

Slide 21: Recommendation 3: Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text and interpretation

Before we jump into this topic, let's discuss how **extended discussion of text and interpretation** fits into the larger picture of becoming a skilled reader by connecting today's focus back to **Scarborough's Rope**, which draws on the research-supported representation of how reading comprehension develops. Remember, the rope characterizes skillful reading comprehension as a combination of two separate but equally important components: word recognition skills and language comprehension ability.

Discussion mostly supports the Language Comprehension portion of "the rope." Productive and accountable student conversations expands vocabulary and builds skills that transfer into literacy skills. "...[T]he more complex aspects of oral language, including syntax or grammar, complex measures of vocabulary (such as those in which children actually define or explain word meanings), and listening comprehension were clearly related to later reading comprehension..." (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2017).



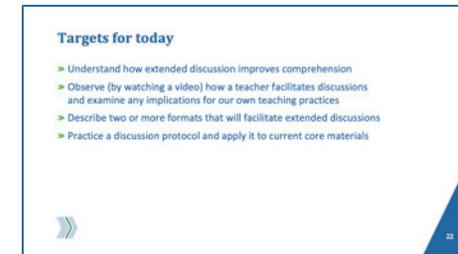
Structured Partner Activity

Take turns sharing your understanding of Scarborough's Rope, along with anything you're wondering or have questions about.

Slide 22: Targets for today

After our session today, you will be able to:

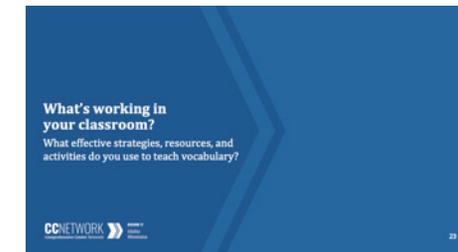
- Understand how extended discussion improves comprehension
- Observe (by watching a video) how a teacher facilitates discussions and then discuss instructional strategies for facilitation
- Describe two or more formats that will facilitate extended discussions
- Practice a discussion protocol and apply it to current core instructional materials



Slide 23: What's working in your classroom?

What strategies, resources, and activities do you use in your classroom for **extended discussions of text meaning and interpretation? Why?**

(Instruct participants to talk at their tables or with a partner. Have participants share their ideas with the group as you generate a list on chart paper.)



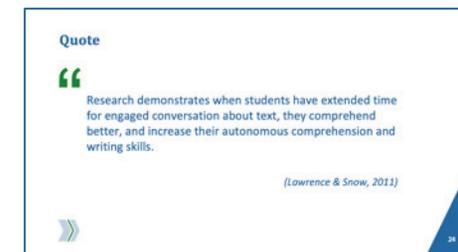
Slide 24: Quote

Thank you for sharing what's working in your classroom.

Let's read this quote together. "Research demonstrates ..."

Why is it important to provide discussion opportunities across all content areas?

Discuss with a partner. *(Wait time and ask for volunteers to share their ideas.)*



Slide 25: Effective discussions

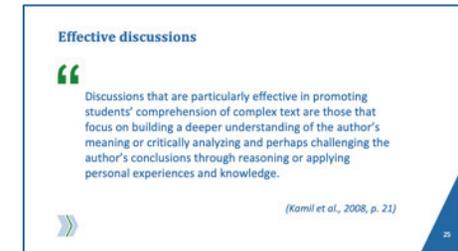
Take a minute to read this quotation. (*Provide wait time.*)

This high-quality discourse can occur before, during, or after the reading of text.

Research also demonstrates that when students have extended time for engaged conversation about text, they comprehend better and increase their autonomous comprehension and writing skills (Lawrence, Capotosto, Branum-Martin, White, & Snow, 2012).

Think about the students in your classroom. How have you seen discussion promote comprehension? (*Use structured partners.*)

Please keep your students in mind today as we discuss ways to improve literacy instruction for *all* of your learners.



Slide 26: Why discuss?

Arriving at a deep understanding of important concepts often involves interactions between a student and a teacher and among peers. It is these collaborations that motivate students to think critically about a topic or issue, which affords them opportunities to share their thinking. As students work through texts they are reading, their knowledge and understanding are enriched through focused conversations with others before, during, and after reading and writing.

Talking Chips Activity

(*Have participants write down ideas for each bullet on the slide. Provide wait time for each topic in the list and then have participants share out with their table group using talking chips. Write participants' responses on chart paper. Monitor and share out any additional answers as needed. Use the lists below, in italics, to add information.*)

Here are five key benefits of providing extended discussions in all content areas:



1. Content learning: What are some specific aspects of content learning that often happen through discussions?
(Provide wait time, share out, and record answers on chart paper. Use the lists below to add information.)

Through discussion:

- *Students build content understandings*
- *Students cultivate connections*
- *Students co-construct understandings*
- *Teachers and students assess learning*

2. Language and literacy: What are some specific aspects of language and literacy that often happen through discussions?
(Provide wait time, share out, and record answers on chart paper. Use the lists below to add information.)

Through discussion, students:

- *Build academic language*
- *Build vocabulary*
- *Build literacy skills and comprehension*
- *Build oral language and communication skills*

3. Thinking skills: What are some specific aspects of thinking skills that often happen through discussions?
(Provide wait time, share out, and record answers on chart paper. Use the lists below to add information.)

Through discussion, students:

- *Build thinking skills*
- *Foster creativity*
- *Promote different perspectives and empathy*
- *Foster skills for negotiating meaning and focusing*

4. Psychological aspects: What are some specific psychological aspects that often happen through discussions?
(Provide wait time, share out, and record answers on chart paper. Use the lists below to add information.)

Through discussion, students:

- *Develop inner dialogue and self-talk*
- *Build engagement and motivation*
- *Build confidence and academic identity*
- *Foster self-discovery*
- *Build student voice and empowerment*

5. Socio-cultural aspects: What are some specific socio-cultural aspects that often happen through extended discussions?
(Provide wait time, share out, and record answers on chart paper. Use the lists below to add information.)

Through discussion, students:

- *Build relationships*
- *Build collaborative academic ambience*
- *Make lessons more culturally relevant*
- *Foster equity*

Looking at the chart we created together, how might you talk with a parent or colleague about the importance of extended discussions in your specific content area? Turn and talk with a partner.

(Listen in as partners share. Share out in the whole group.)

Slide 27: How?

Asking students to share their ideas in a collaborative discussion group is an important aspect of learning. However, these groups must be structured in such a way that the discussions are meaningful, on topic, and respectful of ideas presented. This requires an ongoing review of guidelines for discussion, an intentional plan for grouping students, and a specific purpose to frame the discussion.

How can we most effectively provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation in the classroom?



According to the IES guide:

Carefully prepare for discussions: Develop a purpose for discussion so that students have a clear focus. Also, identify in advance the issues or content that might be difficult or misunderstood. Today you will receive tools to help you prepare for discussions.

Ask follow-up questions that help provide continuity and extend the discussion. Effective discussion questions are “authentic” — they ask a real question open to multiple points of view, such as:

- Did the way that John treated Alex in this story seem fair to you?
- What is the author trying to say here?
- How does that information connect with what the author wrote before?

Provide a task or a discussion format that students can follow when they discuss texts together in small groups.

Develop and practice the use of a specific “discussion protocol.” Develop specific discussion formats and scaffolds to engage students. Teachers must model and teach specific skills for students to engage in high-quality conversations.

Slide 28: Develop a purpose

A purpose or target brings clarity, motivation, and a reason to participate. **Handout 1: “Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels”** is a handy tool that you can use to prepare a purpose for discussion. (*Distribute Handout 1.*)

For example, you might say to students, “In our discussion today, we will learn to articulate a new perspective.” This sets a purpose. I can now use my DOK wheel to prepare questions such as, “How do you think Tom Robinson’s trial changed Scout’s life?” Question stems could include *use, classify, show, or construct*.

Here are some other examples of a discussion purpose:

- Solve a problem: Develop and propose a solution to the dropout problem with U.S. students. Question stems could include *design, propose, create, devise, formulate*.
- Make a case or debate: What do you believe to be the most important priority of the Cuban government? Question stems could include *justify, assess, recommend, decide, prioritize*.



Structured Partner Activity

How might you use the DOK wheel with a lesson to state a purpose for literacy learning in your core curriculum? Turn to your core instructional materials and find examples of level 1, 2, 3, and 4 questions from the DOK wheel.

Slide 29: Co-design protocols and expectations with students

What specific difficulties do your students encounter with classroom discussions? How do you address these difficulties? *(Use structured partners.)*

Co-designing protocols and expectations can help address discussion challenges because expectations become clear with this exercise. Together is always better when establishing protocols and expectations with students. Ownership, buy-in, motivation, and meaning are just a few benefits for collaboration and decision making together.

Here are a few examples of discussion protocols for teachers:

- Ask questions that require explanations of positions and reasoning.
- Model reasoning processes by thinking aloud.
- Propose counterarguments or positions.
- Recognize good reasoning.
- Summarize the flow and main ideas of a discussion as it draws to a close.

Here are some examples of student protocols:

- Talking, such as saying “in my opinion” and “according to the text”
- Listening by nodding, making positive eye contact, not interrupting, and not having side conversations
- Using SLANT, which stands for **s**it up, **l**ean in, **a**sk questions, **n**od in agreement, **t**rack the speaker with your eye
- Using sentence stems and sentence frames as a scaffold for discussion

(To show this protocol, consider sharing this video if you have time: <https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/teaching-ells-to-participate-in-discussions-ousd>)



Video Activity

(Here are some other videos you may want to show:

<https://vimeo.com/6771095>

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/participation-protocol-ousd>

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/teaching-higher-order-thinking-skills>

Set a purpose for each video you show. Pose guiding questions such as those on slide 31, or have participants write down things they learn that they want to try or how what they see on the video validates what they do in the classroom.)

Here are three example rules you may set up:

- Listen actively.
- Contribute actively.
- Use the text and recently learned vocabulary to support your answer.

Slide 30: Setting up protocols: Creating a culture of collaboration

What are some things you do to create a safe and supportive environment that is conducive to class discussion? (Use *structured partners* or *cold calling*.)

It's really important to create a safe environment for discussions. As you watch this video, notice the classroom climate. How would you describe it? Also, notice and take notes on (1) how Mr. Berryman **prepared** students for group collaboration; (2) how he **monitored and supported** the progress of students in each group; (3) how **students listened to and responded** to each other; and (4) **student comments** on the value of group work.

(Show participants slide 31 with the questions before viewing the video.)

[https://www.learner.org/series/reading-writing-in-the-disciplines/disciplinary-literacy-big-ideas/creating-a-culture-of-collaboration/.](https://www.learner.org/series/reading-writing-in-the-disciplines/disciplinary-literacy-big-ideas/creating-a-culture-of-collaboration/))



Slide 31: Video reflection

Talking Chips Activity

(Have participants reflect at their tables using the questions on the slide.)

- How would you describe the classroom climate? What did you notice about how Mr. Berryman prepared students for collaboration?
- How was the purpose and focus of the discussion communicated?
- What was the role of the teacher during student collaboration? How did he monitor and support student learning?
- How did students listen and respond to each other? How did this support learning?
- What did you find especially effective in this video that you might implement in your classroom? Why?

Video reflection

- ▶ How would you describe the classroom climate? What did you notice about how Mr. Berryman prepared students for collaboration?
- ▶ How was the purpose and focus of the discussion communicated?
- ▶ What was the role of the teacher during student collaboration? How did he monitor and support student learning?
- ▶ How did students listen and respond to each other? How did this support their learning?
- ▶ What did you find especially effective in this video that you might implement in your classroom?



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Slide 32: Feedback on learning: Deconstructing word problems in math

Now let's watch a video on deconstructing word problems. As you watch, notice and take notes on (1) the purpose and focus of groups; (2) what the teacher was doing and why; and (3) how the collaboration was supporting student learning.

<https://www.learner.org/series/reading-writing-in-the-disciplines/disciplinary-literacy-big-ideas/deconstructing-word-problems/>

Feedback on learning: Deconstructing word problems in math



32

Slide 33: Feedback on learning during student collaboration

(Have participants reflect at their tables using the questions on the slide.)

- How did the purpose and focus of groups in each video differ?
- What was the role of the teacher in each video during student collaboration?
- How did students use collaborative discussions to deepen their understanding of the lesson concepts?
- What did you find new or interesting in these videos that you might implement in your classroom?

Feedback on learning during student collaboration

- ▶ How did the purpose and focus of groups in each video differ?
- ▶ What was the role of the teacher in each video during student collaboration?
- ▶ How did students use collaborative discussions to deepen their understanding of the lesson concepts?
- ▶ What did you find new or interesting in these videos that you might implement in your classroom?



33

Slide 34: Dialoguing with students “in the moment”

Dialoguing with students “in the moment” can be challenging. Remember, we want to make our students do the thinking not just produce a correct answer to our question. Listen to this example of effective dialogue—I’ll role-play the teacher (A), and who would like to be the student (B)? (*Give the “student” the script.*)

A: Why did the author write this?

B: To tell us about the Boston Massacre. But what I don’t get was why it was called a massacre if only seven people were killed.

A: Can you elaborate?

B: Well, the people weren’t so famous, and a massacre usually means lots of people die. Maybe the people reporting it wanted to make it sound really bad.

Maybe they wanted to get people all mad in order to rebel, like, to start the revolution.

A: At that time, not everyone wanted to rebel.

B: Oh, well, a lot of times in the newspapers — I don’t think they had radio or TV back then — would make up stuff ...

A: You mean exaggerate?

B: Yeah, they would exaggerate things or focus on things or not print things to influence people. So calling it a massacre made the English look really evil, right?

A: Maybe. How about today? How can we apply these ideas to today?

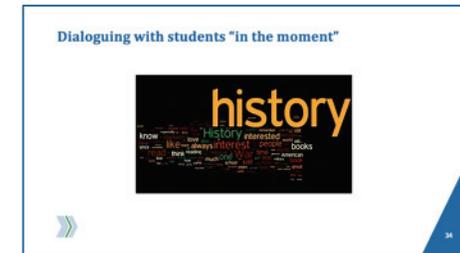
B: Like, in commercials they only talk about good parts. And reporting on the war in Iraq might be biased, depending on the source.

A: But why?

B: Maybe to influence voters to vote to get troops out.

A: So we need to remember that words can be biased?

What did you notice about the teacher’s questions? How did the teacher’s questions promote thinking and learning? (*Provide wait time and then allow for responses.*)



Structured Partner Activity

Thinking about the specific content area you teach, how might your students use this bookmark in your classroom? Go into your core instructional materials and find two or three examples of where students could use the powerful questions bookmark or powerful questions in dialogue. Be prepared to share with your partner. *(Give time for partners to share.)*

These are great ideas; thank you for sharing. Now, let's learn how we can prepare and use questioning based on our lesson purpose.

Slide 37: Academic conversations

Academic conversations are back-and-forth dialogues in which students focus on a topic and explore it by building, challenging, and negotiating relevant ideas. Unfortunately, academic conversations are rare in many classrooms. Talk is often dominated by the teacher and a few students, or it doesn't advance beyond short responses to the teacher's questions.

Do you agree that extended discussions are rare? *(Look for audience response of nods.)*

Talk with a partner about why academic conversations are rare.

(Listen in and then have partners share out to the whole group.)

Even certain teaching approaches and curriculum programs neglect to train students on how to maintain a focused, respectful, and thoughtful conversation.

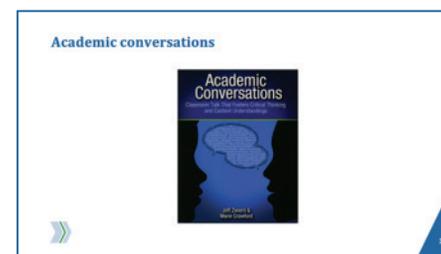
To address these challenges, authors Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford have identified five core communication skills to help students hold productive academic conversations across content areas.

These skills include elaborating and clarifying, supporting ideas with evidence, building on and/or challenging ideas, paraphrasing, and synthesizing. The Academic Conversation Placemat will help guide us through these five areas of communication.

*(Pass out **Handout 4: "Academic Conversation Placemat with Prompts"** and discuss each section of the placemat shown on the next five slides.)*

The Academic Conversation Placemat from *Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understandings* (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011) provides formats, protocols, and questions for different discussion purposes.

We must remember to "teach" these structures using a gradual release of responsibility.



Slide 38: Elaborate and clarify

The first structure on the placemat is Elaborate and Clarify. Take a minute to scan the information. What does the title and graphic tell you? Where would this format fit best in your curriculum? How might you use it in your classroom?

(Have participants talk with a partner and take notes, and then have them share out as you display ideas on a poster.)

The graphic for Slide 38 is titled "Elaborate and clarify". It features a central diagram of a box with three arrows pointing outwards. To the right of the diagram is a table with three columns: "Conversation Skills", "Prompting", and "Responding".

Conversation Skills	Prompting	Responding	
Elaborate and Clarify	Can you elaborate on...? What do you mean by...? Can you tell us more about...? What makes you think that...? Can you clarify the part about...? Can you be more specific?	about it means that... In that sense... Indeed that... The analogy for this might be... It's important because... It's similar to... I think... I agree... I wonder... I'm not sure... Can you repeat that for me? Can you elaborate about that part...	Key question, main idea, theme, topic

Slide 39: Support ideas with examples

A key element in focused conversations is the identification of specific ideas in texts or other resources that support thinking. In other words, students must be ready to “make a case” for the ideas they share with peers in a group discussion.

Take a minute to scan the information next to Support Ideas with Examples *(Point to the slide and provide wait time.)* What does the title and graphic tell you? Where would this format fit best in your curriculum? How might you use it in your classroom? *(Have participants talk with a partner and take notes, and then have them share out as you add ideas to the poster.)*

The graphic for Slide 39 is titled "Support ideas with examples". It features a central diagram of a box with three arrows pointing outwards. To the right of the diagram is a table with three columns: "Conversation Skills", "Prompting", and "Responding".

Conversation Skills	Prompting	Responding
Support Ideas with Examples (From Web text, other texts, the world, and life)	Can you give an example from the text? Can you share an example from your text? What are some examples from other texts? What is a real-world example? What is an example from your text? Are there any other examples? What is the evidence for that...? Like what? What do you see that? How do you justify that? What does that text that? Text? or? What would this mean that? What is that a good example?	For example... In the text I said that... One can discuss that... An example from my life is... For instance... According to... An illustration of this could be... On one occasion... In the situation... To demonstrate... In fact... Indeed... I think... Here you see... I think... I agree... I wonder... I'm not sure... Can you repeat that for me? Can you elaborate about that part...

Slide 40: Paraphrase

Where would the Paraphrase format fit best in your curriculum? How might you use it in your classroom?

(Have participants talk with a partner and take notes, and then have them share out as you add ideas to the poster.)

The graphic for Slide 40 is titled "Paraphrase". It features a central diagram of a box with three arrows pointing outwards. To the right of the diagram is a table with three columns: "Conversation Skills", "Prompting", and "Responding".

Conversation Skills	Prompting	Responding
Paraphrase	I've had some that can check... I can't remember all that I said... When you are talking about what I said to the topic I mentioned... What do we know so far? What is your take on what I said... I don't know. Did that make sense? What are you hearing?	No, you are saying that... Let me see if I understand you... Am I right in hearing you say that...? In a nutshell, you are saying that... In other words... What am hearing is... Essentially you think that... It sounds like you are saying that...

Slide 41: Build on and/or challenge a partner's idea

Take a minute to scan the information next to Build on and/or Challenge a Partner's Idea. *(Provide wait time.)* What does the title and graphic tell you? Where would this format fit best in your curriculum? How might you use it in your classroom?

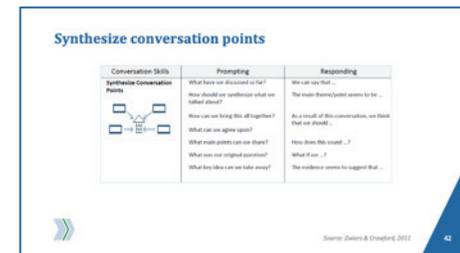
(Have participants talk with a partner and take notes, and then have them share out as you add ideas to the poster.)



Slide 42: Synthesize conversation points

Take a minute to scan the information next to Synthesize Conversation Points. *(Provide wait time.)* What does the title and graphic tell you? Where would this format fit best in your curriculum? How might you use it in your classroom?

(Have participants talk with a partner and take notes, and then have them share out as you add ideas to the poster.)



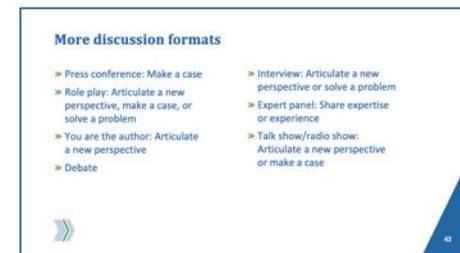
Slide 43: More discussion formats

There are many formats and protocols to choose from, but we must remember to “teach” these structures using a gradual release of responsibility.

Structured Partner Activity

Choose a format from the list that would fit well with one of your lessons. Then, find examples in your core instructional materials where the format could be used. *(Provide time and monitor and support as needed.)*

Now, write on a sticky note these words for gradual release:



Handouts

1. “Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels”
2. “Academic Conversation Samples”
3. “Powerful Questions Bookmark”
- 3a. “Asking Questions and Engaging in Dialogue”
4. “Academic Conversation Placemat with Prompts”

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