

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING STUDENTS' VOLUME OF READING

<p>OVERVIEW</p>	<p>In the Common Core, students are challenged to read complex texts to build content knowledge, literacy skills, and academic vocabulary. Each NYS Grades 3–8 ELA module includes one or more “central” texts—complex texts that students work with in class and for homework, with support from the teacher and peers. It is important that all students have access to, and support with, reading text at the appropriate level of complexity for their grade level.</p> <p>However, students also need a “volume of reading,” to enlarge their world, increase their vocabulary and foster fluency (including texts and books beyond school and classroom assignments). The more you read, the better you read. The better you read, the more you comprehend. The more you comprehend, the higher the achievement. This volume of reading helps students build important world knowledge and acquire additional vocabulary, both of which are critical for reading comprehension.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What Influences Expeditionary Learning’s Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Common Core vision of what it means to be college and career ready as readers • The research base on reading instruction • Recognition that reading is a skill that demands ongoing practice to develop proficiency • Understanding the importance of offering students a variety of texts and purposes for reading
<p>VOLUME OF READING</p>	<p>Students need to read both complex text and a lot of text. According to Adams (2009), “To grow, our students must read lots, and more specifically they must read lots of ‘complex’ texts—texts that offer them new language, new knowledge, and new modes of thought” (p.182, cited in CCSS Appendix A). If students are to be college and career ready, which requires the ability to read complex texts, they must be saturated with language and given opportunities to practice challenging reading. According to Allen (2009), “Reading is like every other human activity in that the amount of practice really matters, especially the amount of reading done while reading proficiency is being developed” (p. 60). Unfortunately, many students do not experience successful reading practice and and lose their their enthusiasm for reading. This in turn decreases their motivation to read and their opportunity to become increasingly proficient readers. Ensuring that students are given ample opportunities to read a variety of materials in a variety of ways increases their motivation because teachers can tap into students’ interests and give students enough practice for reading proficiency to develop.</p> <p>To give students the amount of reading practice necessary, we should provide reading opportunities that are varied in purpose and type of text. Reading development does not occur in a linear fashion, and students’ reading proficiency occurs at different rates (Common Core Learning Standards, n.d.). Students need opportunities to be challenged while reading, as well as opportunities to read texts that provide for easy fluent reading (CCLS, n.d.). These experiences can occur within a given topic of study (e.g., third grade Module 2A about frogs’ adaptation or seventh grade Module 1 about the Second Sudanese Civil War). They also may occur during independent reading when students choose books based on personal interest. The ELA modules’ recommended reading lists offer students a variety of options to choose from.</p> <p>In addition to the module recommendations, your local librarian is ready and able to recommend captivating titles for reluctant readers which are aligned to their interests. Research shows that students will read more when they have “choice” in the selection.</p>

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING STUDENTS' VOLUME OF READING

READING FOR RESEARCH

According to the New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards (n.d.), “To be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new” (p. 2). Research skills not only are required to be successful in a technological society, but also are an excellent opportunity to engage students in reading a variety of resources. Research on a topic also develops students’ knowledge about words, which increases reading proficiency. “Every concept—simple or complex, concrete or abstract—is learned in terms of its similarities, differences, and relationships with other concepts with which we are familiar” (Adams, 2011, p. 3). Students complete several short research projects throughout the modules.

When students are engaged in “research reading,” they typically are reading many texts about the same or related subjects. This volume of reading builds students’ knowledge about a specific topic. In addition, original research reading gives students an opportunity to pursue their interests and learn in-depth information, which builds background knowledge, word knowledge, and confidence in reading. Library media specialists play a critical role in helping students to complete both assigned research projects and independent research related to students’ personal interests. Librarians are well equipped with the knowledge to recommend books, authentic texts, and teach research skills essential for college and career readiness.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING STUDENTS' VOLUME OF READING

READING FOR PLEASURE

According to Clark & Rumbold (2006), “Reading for pleasure refers to reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to reading that, having begun at someone else’s request, we continue because we are interested in it” (p. 6). The Common Core has brought about a great deal of focus to the cognitive aspects of reading: word recognition and comprehension of complex texts. Students often need innate incentive or “aroused curiosity” to read on their own. Teachers and librarians often know how to “hook” a reader on a book.

Reading for pleasure is not the same as reading complex text that is required reading. Both types of reading help foster the “volume of reading” so clearly called for in the Common Core Learning Standards. Reading for pleasure is crucial to promote student engagement and achievement, lifelong readers, and allows for developing readers to learn about their own reading likes and dislikes as they construct their reading identities. Independent reading is an opportunity for students to enlarge their world and find relevance. The authors of the Common Core note that students “need the satisfaction of easy, fluent reading for which the standards allow” (Appendix A, n.d.). This of course must include additional texts on the topic of study, which are offered in the ELA modules’ recommended reading lists. The authors of the Common Core also clearly affirm and recognize the merits of allowing students to choose books on topics of their personal interest, noting that those books are likely to bridge a vast range of complexity.

Allowing students to choose texts for independent reading helps them discover what they want to read, as well as to uncover new knowledge and connect with their world. Teachers and library media specialists can play a vital role in fostering a rich reading life for all students.

Teachers often are concerned about holding students accountable for independent reading. There are endless ways to track independent reading requirements, but the most successful ways include placing the responsibility on the student. Creating a plan for launching independent reading that includes clear class routines, goal setting, and systems for accountability and student ownership creates a culture of reading in the classroom and the school that will promote students’ literacy development. For specific recommendations, see companion documents *Launching Independent Reading in Grades 6–8: Sample Plan* and *Launching Independent Reading in Grades 3–5: Sample Plan*. These plans are designed to enhance and extend the strong programs many teachers and schools already have in place.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING STUDENTS' VOLUME OF READING

MILLENNIAL READERS

- Research on the millennial generation indicates that our students are both technologically savvy and self-savvy. They often define the merits of activities based upon a quick cost-benefit analysis. That is the essence of the *relevance* promoted by the Common Core. Traditionally, when students are assigned independent reading projects, they are asked low-level questions that can be located through a simple search online. We need to offer students both rigor and relevance. When rigor is packaged with relevance, it increases student motivation. This can be accomplished through the questions students are asked about their independent reading text. Imagine that students have been asked to choose and independently read a biography. Below are some examples of questions that could be used to engage the millennial adolescent reader, and to increase the rigor of a task such as a biography report:
- What is the everlasting footprint that your person left behind? Use evidence from the text to support your reasoning.
- Would your person be a good person to nominate to a hall of fame? Use evidence from the text to support your response.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Each Expeditionary Learning English language arts module includes a list of recommended texts in a broad complexity range for each unit. These books can be used for independent research on a given topic, or students may choose them to read for pleasure during independent reading time at school and at home. They may also be used for small group instruction. Because these book choices have already been identified as aligned to the topic, they are a good starting place for helping students to select books and increase their volume of reading.

OTHER RESOURCES

Your library is an amazing and often underutilized asset to promote a volume of reading. There are a number of reading programs across the country that encourage classrooms to build “libraries” for convenient student reading choices. These classroom libraries play a positive role in developing lifelong readers. Yet they sometimes have limited choices for students. To support the individuality of each student, encourage students to access the thousands of titles and choices that can be found in the local and school libraries. School librarians are also often an underutilized asset to promote a volume of reading for students. Contact your school librarian for support in this area, as he or she is often eager to help.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING STUDENTS' VOLUME OF READING

REFERENCES

1. Adams, M. J. (2010–2011). Advancing our students' language and literacy the challenge of complex texts. *American Educator, Winter*, 1-11.
2. Allington, R. L. (2009). *What really matters in response to intervention: Research-based designs*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
3. Clark, K., & Rumbold, K. (2006). *Reading for pleasure: A research overview* [Scholarly project]. Retrieved from Reading for pleasure: A research overview
4. *Common core state standards for English language arts & literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects: Appendix A: Research supporting key elements of the standards glossary of key terms* [Scholarly project]. (n.d.). In *Common Core State Standards Initiative*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf