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Kindergarten through
Second Grade

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The Teachers' Newsletter

from Illinois Classrooms in Action

Grade band lessons, ideas and information
Focus: English/ Language Arts

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Student-Generated Assessment

In the previous issue, I explained some of the finer points for unobtrusive assessment, one of the 3 types of assessment. As a reminder the 3 types of assessments are obtrusive, unobtrusive and student-generated.

Obtrusive assessment is where the assessment interrupts the normal flow of activity. Instruction stops while students take the assessment. Examples of this type are unit tests and formal standardized tests.

Unobtrusive assessment is where the flow of activity is not interrupted. In fact, students may not be aware they are

being assessed. Observation and discussion are methods of unobtrusive assessment. This is often a formative assessment.

Student-generated assessment is the third category of assessment. In student generated assessment students generate ideas about the way they will demonstrate their level of mastery on a given topic. Choice menus are an excellent way to guide students to worthwhile methods to demonstrate their learning. Time should be taken to discuss with the class your expectations and brainstorm possible ideas. When this method of

assessment is used, student motivation and engagement increase. It also allows teachers a chance to get to know their students' interests and strengths. And as a bonus, there is not big pile of repetitive papers to grade!

A Planning Guide is an excellent tool to guide students on this type of assessment.

Below is a sample.

You can find more information on unobtrusive assessment in [A School Leader's Guide to Standards-based Grading](#) by Tammy Heflebower.

Student-Generated Assessment Planning Guide

Name:

Learning Goal or Topic

I want to demonstrate that I am at the ____ level of the proficiency scale for this topic.

I need to understand or be able to (describe the score -level content in their own words):

I will demonstrate my understanding or skill by (describe your student – generated assessment):

(Examples: write an essay, demonstrate a process, explain orally to the teacher, create a multimedia project)

My assessment proves my understanding or skill because:

Narrative Reading and Writing in K-5



“The most difficult thing about writing is writing the first line.”

Amit Kalantri



Statewide, we have spent a considerable amount of time asking students to do more with informational texts but we don't want to leave out the importance of narrative reading and writing, especially in elementary.

Young students should be so adept at narrative text that by the time they reach middle school, they are able to use effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences to craft their own narratives but to also to build towards quality analysis of literary

greats such as Steinbeck and Shakespeare.

K-Second grade students should master the elements of narrative writing such as characters, setting, basic plot and resolution. Third – Fifth should be able to acknowledge tone, figurative language, some layers of meaning as well as structural components such as rising action, climax, and steps to resolution.

Over time, most students should notice visual details of scenes, objects, or

people; depict specific actions (for example, movements, gestures, postures, and expressions); use dialogue to provide insight into the narrator's and characters' personalities and motives; and how an author might manipulate pace to highlight significant events or create suspense.

While not all of these specific skills are meant for K-Third, most of these skills should be a focus for Fourth and Fifth grade teachers guiding students towards mastery in reading.

Modeling Narrative Through Mentor Texts

Students are not expected to place all of their reading skills into their writing but that expectation is required beginning in middle school. Using mentor texts to showcase technique, details and sequences is an easy strategy.

1. Choose mentor texts based on the grade level and how each text could be used in future mini lessons. Therefore, texts and tasks should be aligned. Any text should be in the same genre to which students are expected to write. Texts should be engaging and full of skills to which mini lessons could be crafted.

2. When reading aloud, consider reading the whole text all the way through without stopping. This technique allows students to wonder about the text and create their own questions for discussion. Rereading portions of the text as a part of a minilesson can be done at a later time.

3. Choose only one or two skills to teach during a minilesson such as how to develop a character. Read a portion of the mentor text asking students to analyze the technique an author uses when developing a character.

4. Consider using student developed texts as models. While this is not a new strategy, think about how the skills match to the rubric being used and each skill that is highlighted in each portion of the rubric.

5. Model for students by emulating a specific skill in your own writing. Keep in mind there should be similarities and differences in a portion you emulate from the mentor text.

Click below for grade level mentor text resources:

[K-Second](#) and [Third-Fifth](#).

Reading in the Math Classroom

How often do students (or even adults) say negative things about word problems? To help their students, teachers often reword or interpret word problems or come up with clever strategies to help them decode bits and pieces of word problems (such as “of means multiply” or “more than’ means addition”). Neither of these strategies help students become better problem solvers. Rather, they tend to make students more dependent on the teacher for help or inspire frustrations when the “tricks” they learned fail.

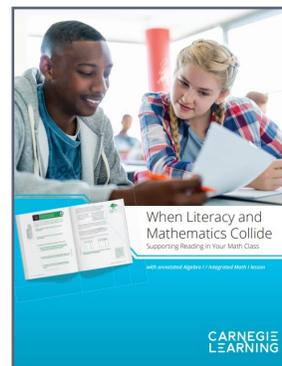
What makes things even more difficult for students is that many words used in everyday language have a different meaning in the math classrooms: prime, even, mean, mode, product, operation, domain, rational, and real just to name a few.

In order to truly help students become word problem experts, they must engage in reading for understanding in the math classroom. Teachers must be intentional about incorporating reading into their math classes and teaching their students sustainable strategies that

will help them read for understanding.

The article cited below provides ten instructional strategies to support reading in elementary mathematics along with examples, literature connections, and graphic organizers.

Golden, M. (2007). 10 Ways to Imbed ELA Skills into the Math Curriculum. *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*, 17, pp.47-60. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1059655.pdf>



“Making sense of problems, constructing viable arguments, and critiquing the reasoning of others, and attending to precision all require students to develop their ability to listen, read, speak, and write in mathematics at a depth that shows mathematical understanding.”

(Galasso, 2019)

What’s Going On in This Graph?

[The Learning Network](#), a teaching resource by The New York Times, has a series called “[What’s Going On in This Graph?](#)” In these activities, students are presented with a graph that had been published as part of an NYT article and are then prompted to answer these three questions: *What do you notice? What do you wonder? What might be going on in this graph?* These offer excellent opportunities to get students thinking, talking, and writing about their mathematical understanding!

Upcoming #ILMathCom Events

[Join us at one of our upcoming free, virtual #ILMathCom events!](#)

Check out www.mathteachersinaction.org/ilmathcom.html to access the complete listing of upcoming events, register for #ILMathCom events, or to watch the recordings of past events.

The April #ILMathCom events will focus on the statistics and probability standards. Julia Brenson, retired teacher from Lyons Township, will be addressing your concerns and frustration with the statistics standards by showcasing the work shared on the [IL Stats website](#). Join us! Tell your friends! Register [here](#).

Middle School Statistics:

Tuesday, April 9, 3:30-4:30 PM CST

High School Statistics:

Thursday, April 25, 3:30-4:30 PM CST

Have an idea for a future #ILMathCom topic? Be sure to let us know!

Science and ELA Integration

“SCIENCE SIMPLY CANNOT ADVANCE IF SCIENTISTS ARE UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE THEIR FINDINGS CLEARLY AND PERSUASIVELY”
-A Framework for K-12 Education

It is easy to see where science and literacy skills overlap in the Science and Engineering Practices of Obtaining Information, Constructing Explanations and Engaging in Arguments. Keep in mind that the intent of the inclusion of these practices in the NGSS is



for students to leverage these literacy practices in the service of “figuring out” phenomenon and solving problems. Simply

reading about scientific concepts does not accomplish this goal.

The NGSS Lesson Screener can be used to ensure that this goal is being met. You can find the lesson screener at <https://www.nextgenscience.org/sites/default/files/NGSSScreeningTool-2.pdf>.

Argumentation Toolkit

Scientific argumentation is a social process in which students build, question and critique claims using evidence about the natural world.

This is a key practice both in the Next Generation Science Standards and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and

Literacy. A resource that provides K-12 teachers with tools and professional development in using the ELA practice of argumentation in the science classroom is The Argumentation Toolkit. The Argumentation Toolkit website includes videos, tools and professional development modules to support teachers in integrating this practice. The resources are developed around 4 elements of

scientific argumentation that students need extra support around: 1) Evidence, 2) Reasoning, 3) Student Interaction, and 4) Competing Claims.

These resources can be found at <http://www.argumentationtoolkit.org/>



#ILSciCom

Join us as classroom teachers from across Illinois share some of the resources they are using to support Phenomena

Driven Instruction. Learn how their students’ learning has changed as they implemented this instructional shift. Come

prepared to ask questions and share resources you have found. **Register Here:** <http://bit.ly/April4ILSciCom>

The What and the How of Social Science

Social Science may be the *what* we teach, but there is also the *how*, and this is where literacy instruction comes in. There are an endless number of engaging, effective strategies to get students to think about, write about, read about, and talk about the content you teach. The ultimate goal of literacy instruction is to build a student's comprehension, writing skills, and overall skills in communication.

Students having conversations in small and large group settings does not happen overnight. It takes time -- and scaffolding -- to create this in your classroom. In order for our students to engage in academic

conversation, or accountable talk, they need plenty of practice with informal conversation in pairs and triads. These conversations can enable students to write about the topic after hearing additional thoughts and time to think about the topic.

Learning is a very social act. One idea is for every 5-8 minutes you talk or read, give students 1-2 minutes to talk to each other. You can walk around and listen, informally assessing and checking for understanding. Make sure you provide purposeful questions and statements that enable good discussion and of course



Conversations: The Gateway to New Learning

As stated in the above article, conversation helps immensely when processing new Social Science content and concepts. After conversations, students may have more fruitful answers to share (be sure to always provide think time when asking questions of students).

Strategies such as the following are quick and simple ways for students to converse about what they are learning:

- **Think-pair-share:** This requires students to (1) think individually about a topic or answer to a question; and (2) share ideas with classmates.
- **Chunk and chew:** Teachers deliver their lessons in small "chunks" giving students time to "chew" the information either individually, with partners, or in small groups. The "chew" portion can be written, drawn or spoken.
- **Eyeball Partners:** When students are seated at tables or in groups, "eyeball partners" are students who are facing in front of each other.
- **Shoulder Partners:** When students are

seated at tables or in groups, "shoulder partners" are students who are seated next to each other. This may also be done when students are seated in rows.

- **Clock Partners:** Using a clock template, have students "make appointments" with four other classmates, one for 12 o'clock, one for 3 o'clock, one for 6 o'clock, and one for 9 o'clock.

These strategies allow for students to process new learning while engaging in meaningful conversation with a classmate. Once the conversations come to an end, expect students to write and/or draw their learnings.



"The best kind of conversation is that which may be called thinking aloud."

William Hazlitt

Teaching and Learning Supports

Kindergarten through 2nd Grade



Check us out on the web:
[Illinois Classrooms in Action](#)

Writing for me is definitely a form of ventilation - a way for me to cope and deal with emotions. I think it is for any writer.

-Crystal Bowersox
 Musician



Connecting SEL Standards to English Language Arts

The Illinois English Language Arts Standards have a set of standards that are the same for all grade levels called the College And Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR). These detail an overall understanding for the development of reading, language, writing, and speaking and listening. Connecting the SEL standards to these CCR standards can allow all educators to support ELA with social emotional learning opportunities.

Incorporating social emotional standards within all classroom activities can be accomplished. Discussions and questioning is a simple way to encourage students to reflect and identify social cues and situations. Talking through what a character is going through in a story or the struggle/successes people are experiencing in current events creates a wonderful way to connect these actions to students' lives. Take time to discuss what the students are reading about the characters' decisions. Possible questions:

- Would the students make the same choices? Why/Why not?
- What would happen if the decision was different?
- How did the characters choices affect others in the story?
- How did the others react in the story?
- Could they have done something different?

When developing vocabulary for study include grade level emotional vocabulary. K-1 might include sad, happy, anger and progress to vulnerable, ecstatic, infuriate by high school. Full example of an emotional word wheel is here:

<https://goo.gl/9GRF8u>

CCR Standards	SEL Standards	SEL Benchmarks
CCR.R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	2B: Recognize Individual And Group Similarities And Differences.	2B.1a: Describe the ways that people are similar and different.
CCR.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	2A: Recognize The Feelings And Perspectives Of Others.	2A.1a: Recognize that others may experience situations differently from oneself. 2A.1b: Use listening skills to identify the feelings and perspectives of others.
CCR.W.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.	1A: Identify And Manage One's Emotions And Behavior.	1A.1a: Recognize and accurately label emotions and how they are linked to behavior.
CCR.W.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.	3B: Apply Decision-Making Skills To Deal Responsibly With Daily Academic And Social Situations.	3B.1a: Identify a range of decisions that students make at school.
CCR.SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	2D: Demonstrate An Ability To Prevent, Manage, And Resolve Interpersonal Conflicts In Constructive Ways.	2D.1b: Identify approaches to resolving conflicts constructively.

Resource Connection



Peekapak is an innovative website that combines social-emotional learning with reading and writing standards. The platform has a free version that allows access to all the books and at least one lesson plan. Additional lessons are available with the pro plan. Engaging characters and story lines address topics each month such as self regulation, respect, gratitude, kindness, teamwork, empathy, optimism, courage, honesty, perseverance, and many more. Activities incorporate writing and speaking and listening skills during collaborative projects. <http://www.peekapak.com/>