



LITERACY LOOK-FORS

WALKTHROUGH GUIDE

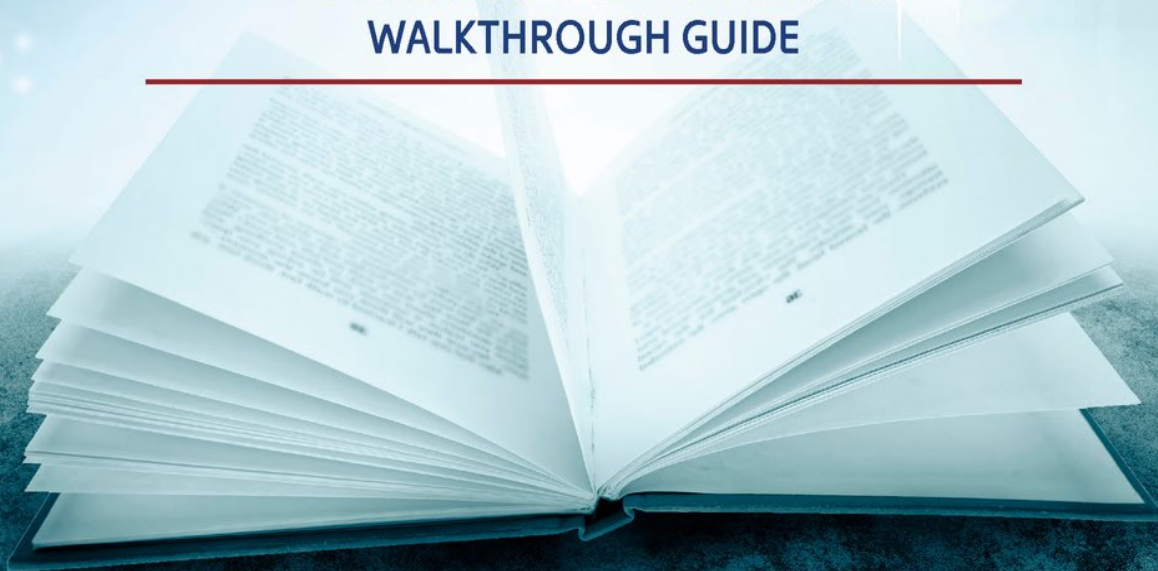




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INTRODUCTION

The Science of Reading Literacy Look-Fors Walkthrough Guide is a practical tool designed to assist administrators, literacy coaches, and teachers in establishing a common understanding of evidence-based literacy practices. The creation of this guide grew from a partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education, CAPSS, and Literacy How with the recognition that districts were searching for a “look-for” document that would distill the science of reading into a user-friendly format.

Although not exhaustive, this guide includes essential “look-fors” designed to support teams of educators as they collaborate to develop effective literacy practices across classrooms. The Science of Reading Literacy Look-Fors Walkthrough Guide addresses seven crucial areas of evidence-based literacy instruction based on the science of reading:

- [Features of Effective Instruction](#)
- [Oral Language](#)
- [Phonemic Awareness](#)
- [Phonics](#)
- [Fluency](#)
- [Vocabulary](#)
- [Comprehension](#)

The guide is a comprehensive tool designed to equip teams of educators with a common language and understanding as they work together to develop effective literacy practices in classrooms, within and across grade levels. Teams should not expect to see every area addressed in every lesson, nor expect to observe every “look-for” listed here in each lesson.

Important note: This guide is intended to do just that, guide teams in a thoughtful, evidence-based process leading to enhanced teaching and learning across classrooms, schools, and the district. This guide is non-evaluative and should not be used in lieu of an individual teacher evaluation tool, nor used to evaluate literacy programs.

FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

What are teachers doing?

- Explicitly unpacking learning goals and making connections to prior learning at the start of a lesson.
- Facilitating student-led discussions and encouraging students to respond to and build on each other's ideas.
- Asking open ended questions and prompting students to 'put into words what they have learned' (i.e., What makes you say that? Why? Tell me how...).
- Using data to adapt instruction.
- Using a variety of reliable strategies to monitor student understanding and modify instruction in-the-moment.
- Providing students with scaffolding, support, and differentiated materials.

What are students doing?

- Engaging in standards-aligned learning activities that require critical thinking and place the primary cognitive demands on the student.
- Unpacking learning goals and making connections to prior learning at the start of a lesson.
- Engaging in academic discussions and responding to and building on ideas expressed by peers.
- Putting into words what they have learned' (e.g., The reason I think frogs are similar to salamanders is because they both breathe through their skin...).
- Engaging comfortably with materials appropriate for their individual needs and levels of readiness.

Debrief Questions

- What was the goal/learning objective for today's lesson? How was this goal informed by our literacy plan goals and objectives?
- What percentage of students met today's learning goal/objective? How do you know? What will you do to support students who did not fully meet today's learning goal/objective?
- What student work samples and/or student learning data from yesterday, last week, and/or last unit helped you to design today's lesson?
- What data about student learning informed the parts of the lesson and the approaches you used to check for understanding during today's lesson?
- What student learning data helped to inform the instructional scaffolding and/or differentiated materials you provided to students in today's lesson?
- How did you design student groupings for today's lesson? Describe the process used to design student groupings for today's lesson.
- How did you scaffold questions for discussion in order to support students in developing critical thinking skills? Describe your process for scaffolding questions for discussion in order to support students in developing critical thinking skills.
- In future lessons, how will you scaffold instruction to move students toward independent application of strategies and independence in reading?

ORAL LANGUAGE

What are teachers doing?

- Asking open ended questions/prompts to engage students in 'putting into words what they have learned' (i.e., What makes you say that? Why? Tell me how...).
- Modeling conversational conventions, appropriate tone and rate, and the full development of ideas using complete sentences.
- Integrating partner work and discussion throughout a lesson (e.g., presenting a purposeful, slightly open-ended prompt or question for turn and talk, think-pair-share).
- Using wait and think time to allow students to process questions and formulate responses.
- Providing sentence frames, question prompts and word banks to support participation.
- Modeling the use of academic language (e.g., Formal Frames, Accountable Talk) at the word/phrase, sentence, and discourse levels; using academic terms to replace simple terms, (e.g., "produce" instead of "make" or "inquire" instead of "ask").
- Implementing scaffolded instruction to meet the needs of all students.

What are students doing?

- Sharing with the group, and with partners, using the vocabulary and language that reflects their learning.
- Using familiar oral language routines (e.g., students make eye contact, maintain an appropriate tone, take turns, and return on call-back signal).
- Engaging in back-and-forth discussions with the teacher (in a conference) or with peers (in small- or whole-group settings) that focus on something they wrote or read.
- Talking about texts they are preparing to read/write or in the process of reading/writing.
- Using sentence frames, question prompts and word banks in their responses.
- Using academic language, accountable talk, etc., at the word/phrase, sentence, and discourse levels.
- Using evidence from texts to support their thinking.

Debrief Questions

- What guided the development of your student questions or prompts for this lesson? How did you consider scaffolding students' thinking in the design?
- What evidence do you have that your students are improving in their oral language skills, including their ability to engage in partner talk, and using familiar oral language routines? How is their ability to express ideas and to listen with understanding improving?
- How did you decide on which types of academic language you would model during today's lesson?
- What kinds of student learning data informed the design of the support materials (e.g., graphic organizers, sentence frames, questions prompts, word banks)?
- In this lesson, how did you instructionally support students whose cultural customs do not mirror the prevailing culture (e.g., averted eye contact as an indication of respect)?
- How will you continue to support multilingual learners?
- In this lesson, how did you instructionally support students with exceptionalities or exceptional learning differences?

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

What are teachers doing?

- Modeling the correct pronunciation of phonemes for students.
- Explicitly teaching an awareness of phonemes by drawing attention to what the mouth is doing when phonemes are spoken.
- Explicitly teaching phonemes using a variety of multisensory activities (e.g., using blocks; mouth pictures; gestures; mirror mouth; choral responses with signals; manipulative chips; picture/sound sort; blend or segment sounds; vowel sound gestures, phoneme segmentation using body).
- Using visuals, pictures, and everyday objects to help students link the sounds in words to meaning.

What are students doing?

- Working to actively segment the phonemes in words.
- Working to make appropriate mouth shapes when pronouncing phonemes.
- Engaging in phonemic awareness activities (e.g., using blocks; mouth pictures; gestures; mirror mouth; choral responses with signals; manipulative chips; picture/sound sort; blend or segment sounds).
- Engaging in speech to print phoneme-grapheme mapping routine, e.g., say the word aloud; count/isolate the sounds (phonemes); say the first sound; write the first sound; repeat for remaining sounds (phonemes); write the whole word; read the whole word fast.
- Actively segmenting the phonemes in words, blending phonemes to say words, and possibly manipulating phonemes at advanced levels (e.g., adding, substituting, deleting).
- Writing words while actively segmenting the phonemes in the words as they spell (e.g., Sound Spelling, free writing, using sound markers).

Debrief Questions

- How do you use student writing as an informal assessment of phonemic awareness and plan responsive instruction to address phoneme errors?
- What learning goals/objectives guided your choice of activities and approaches for this lesson?
- How might the activities and approaches you used help you to gather student learning data?
- In what way(s) has your instructional scaffolding impacted student learning?
- Have you had to adjust your scaffolding? What has guided your instructional decision making in this process?
- What have you done to differentiate your instruction/materials to instructionally support students who are multilingual learners?
- In this lesson, how did you instructionally support students with exceptionalities or exceptional learning differences?
- How are you embedding phonemic awareness instruction and practice during the various instructional periods throughout the day?
- How do you decide what to focus on in whole group lessons, small group lessons, and individualized instruction?
- What are the different ways you are tracking the progress of students in their phonemic awareness development?
- What are you learning about how different approaches to teaching phonemic awareness (using movement, visuals, etc.) help different learners? How is this changing your practice?

PHONICS

What are teachers doing?

- Leading a cumulative review including how new learning is used in reading and writing.
- Teaching explicitly about segmenting and blending.
- Directing students' attention to the structure of a word with the emphasis on phonic decoding.
- Teaching about irregular high-frequency by drawing attention to both regular and irregular sounds once sound-spellings have been taught.
- Talking about letter names and features during reading activities (e.g., stick letters/round letters; upper- and lower-case, sky-writing 'T', write a letter in isolation).
- Providing direct instruction with basic letter-sound correspondences followed by increasingly more complex patterns such as syllable types, morphemes, and etymological influences (i.e., word origins).
- Providing direct instruction in more advanced phonics skills (e.g., hard and soft sounds for the letters 'c' and 'g', second sounds of c/g, digraphs, variant vowels).
- Teaching students explicitly about syllables, syllable types, and how to use syllable division to read new words.

What are students doing?

- Practicing segmenting and blending in both decoding and encoding.
- Practicing phonic decoding with attention to the structure of a word.
- Practicing high-frequency irregular words, both speaking them out loud and writing them.
- Decoding words independently and asking for teacher support when needed.
- Using target words in writing and in class discussion.
- Reading texts that use target words in context in meaningful sentences.

Debrief Questions

- How much time do you spend on daily phonics instruction? How do you provide opportunities for students to apply their newly learned skills during these lessons to other parts of their day?
- Has your explicit teaching of segmenting and blending resulted in student learning growth? How was this growth measured?
- What role does your implementation of scaffolded instruction play in student growth, especially as new learning becomes increasingly complex?
- In this lesson, what factors informed the frequency and type of support you gave to students as they worked to decode words independently?
- How do you decide what to focus on in whole group phonics lessons? How do you differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students?
- How have you addressed the needs of students struggling to decode/encode independently?
- What evidence do you collect to determine if students are applying phonics instruction during reading and writing lessons?
- What are you learning about how explicit and systematic phonics instruction helps different learners? What are you learning about how to help students apply their phonics skills during reading and writing? How is this changing your practice?

FLUENCY

What are teachers doing?

- Modeling blending letter and phoneme sounds during read-alouds.
- Modeling and thinking-aloud about how to associate letter names with their corresponding letter sounds.
- Delivering phonics lessons that frequently blend in high-frequency words.
- Using additive/successive blending to support emergent readers.
- Providing students with immediate and direct feedback.
- Explicitly teaching sound spelling correspondences (e.g., Build and Blend, Sound Letter Maps, Sound or Pattern Sorts) and/or syllable types (e.g. Syllable Inspector) and syllable division strategies (e.g., Syllable Sort).
- Explicitly teaching irregular word forms.
- Connecting morphemes to grammar, both spoken and written.
- Using structural analysis to determine word meaning (i.e., root/base, prefix, suffix).
- Modeling fluent reading with prosody through read-alouds, listening to poetry, etc.
- Working with a small group on phrase/sentence fluency in text.
- Listening for indicators of dysfluency (e.g., choppy reading, inefficiency in word recognition, mispronunciations/substitutions, incorrect phrasing, and inattention to punctuation) as students read.

What are students doing?

- Practicing blending and reading words.
- Practicing letter names and associated sounds.
- Practicing reading high frequency words during phonics lessons.
- Practicing with additive/successive blending.
- Reading aloud as a whole class, in small groups, and/or with a partner.
- Reading and writing high frequency irregular words and being held accountable for accuracy.
- Practicing reading and writing words in context and spelling words with a new morpheme.
- Practicing building words with a new morpheme (e.g., morphology boards, word matrices, morphology sorts, criss-cross activity).
- Writing about current content using words with the target morpheme.
- Practicing reading aloud fluently with prosody by repeated reading of rhymes, familiar short text, student's own writing, etc.
- Practicing oral reading using deliberately selected decodable texts.
- Practicing reading and rereading words, passages, or other texts with accuracy and appropriate rate, and expression. Practicing reading text passages with fluency to a partner.

Debrief Questions

- Which instructional strategies have impacted student recognition of high-frequency words?
- How does your data gathered during the informal assessment process reflect learning growth in students' ability to use structural analysis to determine word meaning?
- How are you holding students accountable for accuracy when reading and writing irregular high-frequency words?
- Which activities/instructional strategies in this lesson best support students as they endeavor to read fluently, and with prosody?
- How have you instructionally supported multilingual learners to read fluently, and with prosody?
- In this lesson, how have you supported multilingual learners?
- When you think about what your students are doing in this lesson, how would you identify the developmental stage of fluency (e.g., sub-word phonetic skills, word level fluency, phrase/sentence fluency, text passage fluency) they are practicing?
- Reading fluency requires accuracy, automaticity, rate, and prosody. How has students' mastery of these skills impacted their reading comprehension?

VOCABULARY

What are teachers doing?

- Explicitly teaching new vocabulary words using high-impact instructional approaches.
- Teaching vocabulary in context as students encounter the words in instructional texts during lessons.
- Providing multiple opportunities across the lesson for students to practice using new vocabulary in writing and in conversation.
- Selecting texts for read-alouds with rich vocabulary.
- Using text sets during instruction to build content vocabulary and background knowledge.
- Using visual aids to support students in making meaning of new vocabulary words.
- Facilitating engaging amplification activities to help new vocabulary become sticky.

What are students doing?

- Working in pairs or groups to unpack images and sample sentences that imply the meaning of new vocabulary words.
- Using concept maps (e.g., Frayer model) to make meaning of new vocabulary.
- Creating student-friendly definitions for new vocabulary, and sharing and comparing their definitions with peers.
- Engaging in games, card sorts, and matching activities to practice new vocabulary.
- Drawing pictures to illustrate the meaning of new words.
- Using new vocabulary in authentic situations such as written responses and class discussion.

Debrief Questions

- How did you choose the vocabulary word/words for direct instruction in this lesson?
- What high-impact instructional approaches for vocabulary instruction have you found most effective? Are the instructional approaches different for different students?
- How do the words you selected support students' understanding of key ideas, concepts, and content in the current unit and lessons?
- How did pacing factor into the approaches you chose for teaching vocabulary in this lesson?
- How often do you include direct instruction in vocabulary in an average week?
- How do you plan to review the words from today in subsequent lessons to ensure students continue to use them in authentic contexts?
- How do you plan to gather data on students' ability to understand these words during reading, and in their writing? understanding and ability to use these new words in their reading and writing? How do you monitor student progress in the area of vocabulary development?
- How are you scaffolding instruction for struggling students as they learn new vocabulary words? What are you learning about how teaching vocabulary helps different learners? How is this changing your practice?

COMPREHENSION

What are teachers doing?

- Using complex texts that include various complexities: knowledge demands, meaning, language, and structure.
- Frequently prompting students to access their prior knowledge to make connections to a new topic, concept, or vocabulary word.
- Asking text-dependent questions in a first reading of a text that build general understanding, modeling thinking and incorporating metacognitive strategies where needed.
- Frequently teaching lessons that explicitly focus on conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (sentence structure) in reading and writing.
- Frequently modeling metacognitive strategies to make sense of the text.
- Focusing on important words during instruction where students can determine meaning through context, including figurative language.
- Explicitly teaching verbal reasoning (e.g., predicting, inferencing, questioning, etc.).
- Discussing genres and their distinguishing characteristics.
- Explicitly teaching text structures to support deeper understanding of texts.

What are students doing?

- Activating prior knowledge (e.g., using a KWL chart, discussing a connected personal experience, completing an anticipation guide).
- Practicing making inferences using their own prior knowledge and information from a text.
- Reading-aloud and thinking-aloud with a partner and discussing and clarifying their understanding of the text.
- Reading independently and using sticky notes or a graphic organizer to capture their thinking as they read (thinking-aloud on paper).
- Using text structures to help them understand the organization of text.
- Rereading texts with fix-up strategies.
- Providing specific details to support a general statement: ex: The boy worked hard by delivering newspapers every day after school; not: The boy worked hard.
- Writing about what they are reading; discussing what they are reading with a peer or the teacher.
- Setting and discussing their purpose for reading.
- Questioning the author (e.g., what did the author mean by.../why did the author have the character ...).
- Actively engaging in comprehension skill lessons, responding when prompted, showing more independence with practice after each lesson.

Debrief Questions

- How did student learning data inform the comprehension skill(s) you focused on in this lesson?
- How did you plan to tap into students' prior knowledge in this lesson?
- How did you consider both academic vocabulary and important concepts in the design of this activity?
- How did you develop the scope and sequence for direct instruction in conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (sentence structure)? How does today's lesson fit into that scope and sequence?
- How did you plan your think-aloud moments for the text in today's lesson?
- What evidence did you see that students used the skills you taught in today's lesson, or prior skills taught in other lessons, to understand the texts they read? What are the different ways you are tracking the progress of students in reading comprehension?
- How are you supporting students who are struggling with comprehension skills?
- What evidence do you have that students are using verbal reasoning as they read?
- What evidence do you have that students are actively monitoring their own reading?
- How do you differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students?
- What are you learning about how teaching comprehension skills helps different learners? How is this changing your practice?

POST WALKTHROUGH DEBRIEF

Procedures

- Team members meet to discuss data gathered.
- Review responses to determine trends across the impacted group(s).
- Discuss results and determine commendations, recommendations and next steps.
- Communicate information with impacted group(s) in such a way as to provide opportunity to collaborate about recommendations and next steps.
- Determine a plan to address recommendations and next steps with impacted groups.
- Review formal data report and present high-level data overview to staff.

Communications

- What are literacy walkthroughs and why do we do them?
- What was the focus of this walkthrough? What are we trying to learn about literacy instruction at our school right now?
- What are the 2 – 3 areas for shine (highlighting glows) and what data did we collect that supports this?
- What did we learn about literacy instruction that invites further inquiry or could be a focus for growth as a school community? What data did we collect that supports this?
- How can we engage all staff voices in identifying ways in which to support evidence-based literacy teaching and learning at our school?
- What next steps do we need to take to develop a process to take action to further support the development of literacy instruction at our school?

Debrief Questions

- What evidence did I observe today of effective instruction?
- What evidence did I observe today related to seven crucial areas of evidence-based literacy instruction (oral language; phonemic awareness; phonics; fluency; vocabulary; comprehension)?
- What evidence did I see that shows that data is being used to make instructional decisions to support student literacy learning?
- What evidence did I see that students who need more support/practice receive small group instruction and/or more practice opportunities?
- What patterns/trends/themes emerged across the classrooms today (based on my evidence and notes)?
- What might I name as a trending area of strength (oral language; phonemic awareness; phonics; fluency; vocabulary; comprehension) and what evidence did I gather that helped me determine this?
- What might I name as a trending high-priority area for focus or growth (oral language; phonemic awareness; phonics; fluency; vocabulary; comprehension) and what evidence did I gather that helped me determine this?
- What patterns/trends/themes emerged across the classrooms today (based on evidence and notes shared by everyone)?
- What has emerged as an area of strength (oral language; phonemic awareness; phonics; fluency; vocabulary; comprehension) and what evidence do we collectively have to support this?
- What has emerged as a high-priority area for focus or growth (oral language; phonemic awareness; phonics; fluency; vocabulary; comprehension) and what evidence do we collectively have to support this?
- How will we use what we learned from this walkthrough?

APPENDIX

Scarborough's Rope

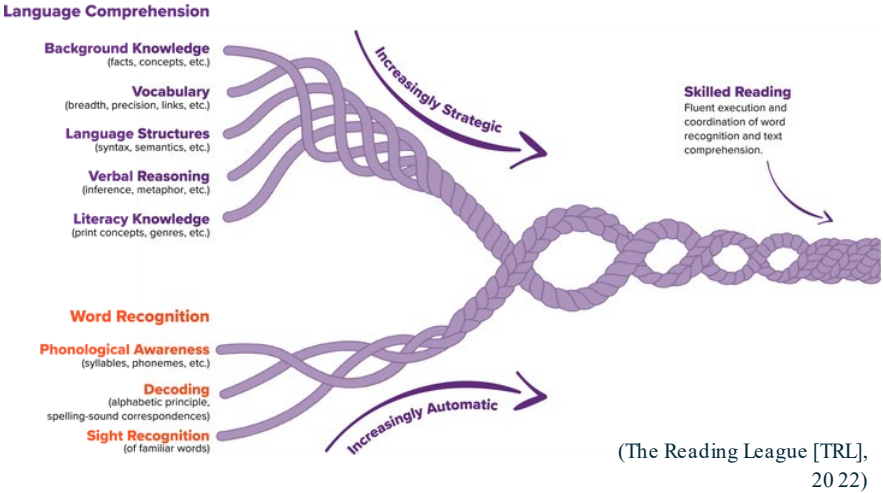
Scarborough's Rope provides us with a more in-depth understanding of the components that contribute to an individual's ability to read and comprehend text. It provides a visual to help us better understand the seven skills involved in reading comprehension: three under Word Recognition (Phonological Awareness, Decoding, and Sight Recognition) and five under Language Comprehension (Vocabulary, Background Knowledge, Language Structures, Verbal Reasoning, and Literacy Knowledge). Below are descriptions for each strand of the reading rope.

Word Recognition (The Lower Strands)

- **Phonological Awareness:** This refers to the skill sets that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language – parts such as words, syllables, onsets, and rimes. Phonemic awareness influences students' abilities to understand and use knowledge of sound structures for listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- **Decoding (Phonics):** This is the ability to apply knowledge of letter recognition, phoneme to grapheme connections, word pronunciation, and word recognition. Decoding enables access to word meaning.
- **Sight Recognition:** This refers to a person's sight word memory, and can also be referred to as our orthographic lexicon, which includes all the words we can read accurately and effortlessly. Sight word recognition is foundational to fluent reading.

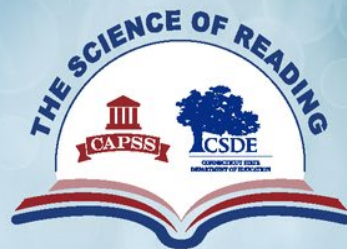
Language Comprehension (The Upper Strands)

- **Vocabulary:** An extensive and rich vocabulary enables readers to make sense of what they are reading.
- **Background Knowledge:** This is the information we already know and already have and bring to our learning experiences. Background knowledge is an essential component in learning because it helps us make sense of new ideas and experiences. Readers rely on background knowledge to attend to and make sense of what they are reading. Having knowledge about a variety of subjects, topics, and ideas makes it more likely that a reader will be able to make sense of what they are reading.
- **Language Structures:** This refers to both syntax, sentence structures, and semantics, how we make meaning of morphemes, words, phrases, and sentences.
- **Verbal Reasoning:** This refers to our ability to make inferences from what we read, which also includes our ability to make evidence-based predictions and draw conclusions, as well as our ability to make meaning out of figurative language like metaphors.
- **Literacy Knowledge:** This refers to our understanding of print concepts, for example distinguishing the difference between letters and words, directionality (reading left-to-right and top-to-bottom), why there are spaces between written words, how to read a variety of print formats (e.g., how to interpret numbers and symbols on a graph or chart, and make meaning through language), and knowledge of various genres of literature and their defining characteristics.



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