

Reading and Writing
Instruction *for*

FOURTH- & FIFTH-GRADE

Classrooms *in a* PLC at Work[®]

Kathy Tushman Glass

EDITED BY
Mark Onuscheck
Jeanne Spiller



Hawker Brownlow
Education a Solution Tree company

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Reproducible pages are in italics.

About the Series Editors	ix
---------------------------------------	-----------

About the Author	xi
-------------------------------	-----------

INTRODUCTION

Every Teacher Is a Literacy Teacher	1
--	----------

What High-Quality Instruction Looks Like in Grades 4–5	2
--	---

The Value of the PLC Process in Literacy	4
--	---

About This Series	6
-------------------------	---

About This Book	7
-----------------------	---

CHAPTER 1

Establish Clarity About Student Learning Expectations ...	9
--	----------

Pre-Unit Protocol Steps	10
-------------------------------	----

Summary	36
---------------	----

CHAPTER 2

Examine Assessment Options for Literacy	37
--	-----------

Assessment Types and Formats	37
------------------------------------	----

The Journey of Assessments	50
----------------------------------	----

Literacy Assessment Considerations	53
--	----

Summary	57
---------------	----

CHAPTER 3

Create a Learning Progression to Guide Instruction and Assessment	59
--	-----------

A Template for Designing Learning Progressions	60
--	----

Suggested Learning Progression Process	64
--	----

Learning Progression Timelines	83
Summary	90

CHAPTER 4

Develop Collective Understanding of Learning Expectations	93
Rubrics	94
Student Checklists	104
Collaborative Scoring	107
Summary	114

CHAPTER 5

Respond to Student Data to Ensure All Students Learn	117
The Data-Inquiry Process	118
Students Who Need Extension	131
Students Who Need Additional Time and Support	131
Summary	136

CHAPTER 6

Design Lessons Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework	137
Gradual Release of Responsibility	138
An Example of Using Gradual Release of Responsibility— Dialogue Tag Verbs	143
Summary	151

CHAPTER 7

Plan High-Quality Literacy Instruction	153
Literacy Instruction in a PLC	154
Reading Instruction Recommendations	155
Close Reading of Complex Texts	158
Writing Instruction Recommendations	164
Feedback	166
Mentor Texts	171

Spelling Instruction	173
Vocabulary Instruction	174
Summary	191

CHAPTER 8

Select Appropriate Instructional Strategies	193
Annotation	194
Graphic Organizers	202
Concept Attainment	206
Summary	216

CHAPTER 9

Consider Equity in Literacy	217
Access to Instruction	219
Promote High Expectations	221
Offer Culturally Rich Resources	224
Summary	230

Epilogue	231
---------------------------	------------

APPENDIX A

Templates and Tools	233
<i>PREP Template</i>	<i>234</i>
<i>Learning Progression and Assessments Template</i>	<i>237</i>
<i>Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric—Informational Texts</i>	<i>239</i>
<i>Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric—Literature</i>	<i>241</i>

APPENDIX B

Process for Prioritizing Standards	243
Teams Review the Task and Criteria for Determining Priority Standards	244
Individuals Review Standards and Critique Them Against Criteria	244
Individuals Share and the Team Arrives at an Initial List of Priority Standards	245
Teams Consider Vertical Alignment and Expectations of External Exams and Finalize Priority Standards	245

APPENDIX C

Depth of Knowledge Overview	247
--	------------

APPENDIX D

Essential Understandings and Guiding Questions	253
---	------------

Craft Essential Understandings	253
--------------------------------------	-----

Develop Guiding Questions	255
---------------------------------	-----

APPENDIX E

List of Figures and Tables	259
---	------------

References and Resources	263
---------------------------------------	------------

Index	277
--------------------	------------

@Hawker Brownlow Education



Every Teacher Is a Literacy Teacher

The words *literacy* and *learning* possess an inseparable connection. In infancy, we learn to produce our first sounds; as toddlers, we sprawl paint across a page to communicate an idea; in elementary school, we learn the power of comprehension to unveil the essence of an author's words; in middle and high school, we learn to evaluate sources with a keen eye and construct arguments to defend our claims; and as adults, we strive to better our abilities to read widely, write clearly, and communicate articulately. In truth, the multiple facets of literacy surround all of us every day of our lives. Therefore, a literacy level that guarantees students will fully function and engage in society must be the reality for *every* student because, undeniably, illiteracy is not an option for any student. As educators, we recognize this reality and cannot afford to allow students to leave our care without guaranteeing they can read, write, and communicate as they move across grade levels.

The expectations for students in fourth and fifth grade increase in intensity from their earlier years in school. For example, in addition to using details from a text to identify what it states explicitly—a requirement in grade 3—students in upper-elementary grades must also use textual evidence to draw inferences and incorporate quotes to develop their writing. Fourth- and fifth-grade standards also dictate that students must be able not just to assert their opinions with reasons, as they did in third grade, but also support their reasoning with facts and details drawn from sources.

Students at these grade levels also encounter reading challenges that make learning new knowledge difficult. For one, texts they read contain new content with previously unfamiliar topics and concepts. Because the material is novel to them, they lack the prior knowledge to make inferences and connections to grasp this information.

Second, plodding through the content presents some obstacles, such as more complicated sentence constructions and unfamiliar multisyllabic words that students did not experience in lower elementary grades. Furthermore, expectations for tasks increase in difficulty from their early elementary years, when students were asked to retell or describe the main idea of a text or to make connections with the advantage of more robust and explicit prompting. In fourth and fifth grade, students graduate to more sophisticated tasks like independently describing characters and explaining how their actions fuel the plot. Given sound instruction, many students can grapple well with these increased demands; others—especially those who struggled with mastering reading before entering fourth grade—are candidates for additional literacy intervention to make the leap and progress in their learning.

Teachers in grades 4 and 5 must acknowledge and address this pivotal shift in expectations through their instruction. The reality is that many students are ill equipped to meet the demands required of them in these grades. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2019), 35 percent of fourth-grade students in the United States' public and nonpublic schools scored at or above the proficient level for reading in 2019. The organization has not published new results for writing for fourth grade, but in 2002, the number was 28 percent (NAEP, 2002), and in a 2011 report on eighth-grade students, it was just 27 percent, indicating the situation has not improved (NAEP, 2011). Students are in dire need of assistance in these critical areas of literacy; without it, they will continue to struggle with complex text and writing tasks, which will impact their potential for long-term success in and out of school.

Given these factors, it's logical to ask, "What does high-quality instruction look like in grades 4 and 5?" Just as important, how can a professional learning community (PLC) help support this kind of instruction to ensure its mission that all students learn? In the rest of this introduction, we explore both these topics as well as the purpose of the *Every Teacher Is a Literacy Teacher* series, the structure of this book, and how this book can support grades 4–5 teacher teams in ensuring students' success as they prepare for the leap into secondary education.

What High-Quality Instruction Looks Like in Grades 4–5

As we've established, in fourth and fifth grade, the complexity of materials and the amount and types of texts students read increase, and the writing tasks become more involved. Students also must be adept at content-area literacy skills so that

they can comprehend subject-matter texts, such as those used in science and social studies. In this regard, teachers begin to introduce disciplinary literacy into their teaching repertoire. *Disciplinary literacy* is “an approach [that] emphasizes the specialized knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within each of the disciplines” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 7).

Although research shows the woeful prevalence of illiteracy (Hernandez, 2011), teachers can make an extraordinary impact and make literacy accessible for all students by setting high expectations aligned to standards and making instructional moves that assist students to rise to the rigor of grades 4 and 5. Whether teachers inherit students who lag behind their peers in literacy, all students from fourth grade onward benefit from teachers applying effective instructional reading practices that bolster students’ skills and strategies as they work to decipher increasingly complex text across subjects and grades (Goldman, Snow, & Vaughn, 2016).

When providing high-quality literacy instruction, educators should teach reading and writing together and do so with an interdisciplinary mindset. There is an interconnectedness between the two that supports literacy development in students, and it is present not just in English language arts (ELA) but in every academic content area, from how students read and understand a story problem in mathematics to how they write notes about a science lab experiment. In their report *Writing to Read*, Steve Graham and Michael Hebert (2010) affirm the findings of multiple research-backed resources on the interrelated benefits of reading and writing. They maintain that writing has the potential to improve students’ reading in three ways.

1. **Reading and writing are both functional activities:** Students combine these skills to accomplish specific goals, such as learning new ideas from a text and describing that learning (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). For instance, writing about information in a science text should facilitate comprehension and learning, as it provides the reader with a means for recording, connecting, analyzing, personalizing, and manipulating key ideas from the text.
2. **Reading and writing are connected:** Because they draw on common knowledge and cognitive processes (Shanahan, 2006), when students improve their writing skills, they simultaneously improve their reading skills.
3. **Reading and writing are both communication activities:** When writers create text, they gain insights about what they read. This deepens their comprehension (Tierney & Shanahan, 1991).

Although reading and writing are interconnected, the other two strands of literacy—speaking and listening—are important as well. As students engage in discussion, presentation, and performance during literacy instruction, they develop higher levels of understanding. Also intertwined with students' acquisition of literacy skills is their connection to technology. Teachers are wise to recognize the pervasive nature of the technology that they and their students have—quite literally—at their fingertips. As members of a thriving digital world, educators must provide high-quality literacy instruction to support students in utilizing technology. In “Why Personalized Learning Requires Technology and Thinking Humans,” founder and CEO of ThinkCERCA Eileen Murphy Buckley (n.d.) writes:

Let's face it, even the most basic Google search requires productive struggle and persistence. Eventually we will send our students out into the wild, where newspapers of record, college courses, bosses and colleagues, and increasingly, health care providers, bankers, and others will not provide them with accessible texts.

Further, not only do students need to learn how to appropriately find, comprehend, and evaluate digital resources; they must also understand the power and learning that come from their interaction with the information. How are students interpreting information, critically thinking about information, sharing opinions, creating reasons, finding evidence, and deepening their level of understanding? It is the obligation of every teacher to ensure that students function at high literacy levels and learn to appropriately navigate complex digital and printed texts to prepare them for their pursuits in secondary school and beyond.

The Value of the PLC Process in Literacy

As teachers, we must possess a repertoire of instructional strategies to build on the strengths and address the needs of a richly diverse classroom of students who have a range of reading, writing, speaking, and listening capabilities. The reality is that teachers rarely have all the skills, knowledge, and time necessary to meet the wide-ranging demands of literacy on their own. This complex and important process of teaching students literacy becomes more manageable and tangible as educators engage in the process together. Therefore, it truly makes a positive difference for all learners if collaborative teams effectively contribute to teachers making meaningful changes in classroom practices. When we integrate high-quality literacy instruction within the collective efforts representative of a PLC, literacy learning soars to new levels.

Those familiar with PLC culture know that the foundation of a PLC's work is built on three distinct big ideas: (1) a focus on student learning, (2) a collaborative culture and collective responsibility, and (3) a results orientation (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). Four critical questions guide educators as they collaborate to provide quality instruction for all learners (DuFour et al., 2016).

1. What is it we want our students to learn?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students don't learn it?
4. How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

The About This Book section (page 7) explains how the chapters and team action steps in this book align with these critical questions.

Within a PLC, teachers are organized into collaborative teams that “work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable” (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 12). Together, they come to a clear understanding of the essential literacy skills that all students should know and be able to do, and they design assessments that align with the learning outcomes. They collaborate around sound instructional practices, sharing strategies that proved successful, and work as a team to develop differentiated lessons along the way. Further, they openly discuss and analyze student data as a way to make informed instructional decisions to move students' learning forward.

This book provides resources and tools to accomplish these critical tasks so teams can operate effectively and maximize their collective strengths in the service of students. Through these collective efforts, teachers establish a guaranteed and viable curriculum that ensures equal opportunities to learn. Thus, students are guaranteed access to the same content, knowledge, and skills, regardless of their teacher (Marzano, 2003). Put plainly, teachers within a PLC work *together* to ensure that every student, in every classroom, receives what he or she needs to master essential skills and pave the way for a promising future.

With collaboration as one of the three big ideas of a PLC, a concerted effort is no doubt essential. But what happens when you are the sole literacy teacher at your grade level? We often refer to these teachers as *singletons*—the one fourth- or fifth-grade teacher in an elementary school, for example. In these situations, it is important to collaborate with other professionals who can help support and guide you through the work of the PLC process. In many cases, a teacher from the

preceding or following grade level can become a great working partner, as he or she has a wealth of knowledge about the skills students have acquired or will need to acquire for the next school year. Grade-level partners who teach other content areas can also be helpful as you work collaboratively to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum for every student in every classroom across the school. Finally, take advantage of an online, interconnected world and reach out to grade-level teachers in other districts. Use technology to collaborate as you do the work of ensuring a consistent and viable literacy-focused curriculum.

As noted earlier in this section, when teachers collaborate to teach students literacy skills, the learning process becomes more manageable and tangible.

About This Series

This book is part of the *Every Teacher Is a Literacy Teacher* series, which provides guidance on literacy-focused instruction and classroom strategies for grades preK–12. The elementary segment of this series includes separate titles focused on instruction in grades preK–1, grades 2–3, and grades 4–5. While each of these books follows a similar approach and structure, the content and examples these books include address the discrete demands of each grade-level band. All the chapters are dedicated to the steps collaborative teams must take before engaging in instruction to ensure clarity about standards, assessment, learning progressions, mastery expectations, interventions, gradual release of responsibility, use of instructional time, instructional strategies, and diversity and equity. Each chapter also includes specific collaborative team exercises, paving the way for teams to engage in the work that the chapter describes.

The various secondary school books in this series each feature classroom literacy strategies for a subject area in grades 6–12, such as science or ELA. The expert educators writing these secondary-level books approach literacy in varying and innovative ways and examine the role every teacher must play in supporting students' literacy development in all subject areas throughout their grades 6–12 schooling.

Woven throughout each book is the idea that collaboration plays a crucial role in the success of any school dedicated to building effective teams in a PLC culture. When experts collaborate, innovative ideas emerge in ways that support student learning and generate positive results. Further, schools that invest in a PLC culture work in more unified and cohesive ways, prioritizing concerns and working