



Post, or distribu e

Engaging, Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction means to teach with intention and clarity in a structured and systematic way. During lessons, students should be highly *engaged* and active. The teacher must be responsive to student needs, adjusting plans as necessary to help students move toward learning targets.

What Research Says About Engaging, Explicit Instruction

The idea of explicit instruction—and research to support it—has been around for decades; researchers and practitioners define and describe it in slightly different (though mostly complementary) ways. For example, Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2017) stipulate eight lesson design components, Rosenshine (1986, 2012) lists ten principles of effective instruction, and Archer and Hughes (2011) identify sixteen elements of explicit instruction, though there are notable overlaps among them all.

The recommendations for explicit instruction offered by Rosenshine (1971, 1986) and others (Kirschner et al., 2006; Paas & Sweller, 2012; Robertson,

2021) draw largely from cognitive science and research on “master teachers” (Amendum, Li, Hall et al., 2009; Rosenshine, 2012). The recommended elements can guide us to plan and deliver instruction that is clear and supportive and that reduces working memory load so new learning can be stored in long-term memory. Figure 2.1 lists essential elements of instruction that inform the lessons in this book (drawn from the research I’ve mentioned) with descriptions of what each one looks like in practice. You’ll see evidence of these elements throughout the lesson vignettes you read and the lesson videos you watch in Chapters 3–11.

Research has shown that explicit instruction is valuable and important for many children and in many contexts, though incidental learning will also happen all the time. To take one example, children grow their vocabularies by more than 3,000 words each year, while a very small percentage of the new words they learn can be attributed to a teacher teaching them the words directly (Adams, 1990). Instead, they learn words from experiences, conversation, during content studies, in the context of their own self-selected reading, and more. Still, research suggests that using explicit instruction to teach *some* words and teaching about morphology to learn *about* words is beneficial, too (Crosson & McKeown, 2016; Goodwin & Ahn, 2013). While the lessons in this book will help you to teach a variety of content and skills explicitly, remember and expect that students will be learning outside of your lessons, too!



Lesson structures give you the flexibility to innovate, the space to respond to students in the moment, and the ability to improvise as needed.



Figure 2.1 Elements of Engaging, Explicit Instruction

While various researchers, practitioners, and theorists identify principles and elements of explicit instruction differently (Hollingsworth and Ybarra, 2017; Rosenshine, 2012; Archer and Hughes, 2011), the following nine undergird what you'll learn about engaging, explicit instruction in this book.

Connect existing knowledge to new knowledge.

Begin lessons by establishing a focus; during this time, orient students to the relevance of the lesson and remind them of what they've learned previously that connects to today's learning. Throughout the lesson, connect new information to what students already know to help them form conceptual networks. Honor students' backgrounds, perspectives, and responses throughout the lesson.

Use a gradual release of responsibility.

When presenting new information, provide clear models and explanations ("I do") and guide student practice with coaching, questioning, and feedback ("we do") before asking students to work independently on similar tasks ("you do"). These three can happen within one lesson and/or across lessons.

Break down concepts into clear steps or strategies.

Our working memory, where we process information, can only handle a bit at once, so present a small amount of new material at a time and break things down into concrete, actionable how-tos or strategies. Then, guide students step-by-step through strategies.

Offer clear demonstrations, models, explanations, and instructions.

Students benefit from seeing an example that meets the expectation (a model), from hearing why the model meets expectations (explanation), and/or from watching someone voice their process as they create that example (demonstration). When you assign tasks for guided or independent practice, the instructions should be clear and should match the demonstration.

Ensure active engagement during all parts of the lesson and regularly check for understanding.

Set students up to be actively involved throughout the lesson (reading chorally with you, responding verbally or with gestures, stopping and jotting, turning and talking, and so on). When students have many opportunities to respond to questions, practice, and reflect on their process, you can check for understanding and monitor progress. Checking for understanding does *not* mean simply asking, “Does everyone understand? Are there any questions?” but rather setting students up to demonstrate what they know and are able to do and assessing them on the spot.

Offer clear feedback in response to what students need.

Get feedback from students during active engagement by considering the following questions: What do they understand/misunderstand? What are they doing automatically? Where does their work fit within the skill progression guiding my evaluation and progress monitoring? What more do they need to demonstrate they’ve met the lesson goal(s)? Then respond, coaching and prompting them toward mastery and providing critical and complimentary feedback. Aim for a high success rate during guided practice *before* asking students to work independently so they don’t make errors that become entrenched.

Provide scaffolds when tasks are difficult.

Provide supports that are absolutely necessary for students to access challenging or novel content and skills and then remove supports as soon as possible. Scaffolds may be verbal, such as thinking aloud and prompting, or you may offer physical scaffolds such as checklists, graphic organizers, or a model of the completed task. To plan for scaffolds, you’ll need to anticipate student errors and make plans for addressing them.

Differentiate to meet students’ needs.

Differentiate within any lesson by anticipating students’ various needs and providing different access points, scaffolds, and feedback. You can also offer students additional practice (e.g., by pre-teaching or reteaching lessons for a small group) and/or lessons on content or strategies to fill in gaps or challenge students beyond whole-class lessons.

Support student collaboration and independent practice.

Students need ample opportunities to practice (both independently and with peers) what they learn during lessons. Practice leads to fluency and automaticity with new skills and information, moving learning from working memory to long-term memory. Monitor students’ practice to ensure they are practicing correctly. Collaborative work also gives students opportunities to get feedback from peers and to explain their process aloud and has been shown to increase engagement.

Lesson Structures for Explicit Teaching

I'm a structure lover, and with so much ground to cover—from reading skills and strategies to vocabulary and content knowledge—and such limited time, I find that structures save the day. When you use a small repertoire of lesson structures with similar methods and moves, your teaching is more efficient and more likely to engage students as they actively work toward goals.

Predictable lesson structures aligned to clear purposes also save valuable planning time and focus your teaching—and students' attention—on content rather than procedures. Once students recognize the structure of a lesson and know your expectations and their role, you can get to the good stuff faster. This means lessening students' cognitive load: Working memory can be stressed when students wonder how the lesson is going to go or what they are supposed to do; familiar routines allow students to home in on the content you're teaching (Cervetti & Wright, 2020; Garnett, 2020; Kirkland & Saunders, 1991; Lovell, 2020; Sweller, 1988). Lesson structures give you the flexibility to innovate, the space to respond to students in the moment, and the ability to improvise as needed.

The lesson structures you'll find in this book are my go-tos for teaching reading across the whole day from English language arts (ELA) to content areas. Each lesson involves a mix of planning (where you'll consider your objectives and anticipate what your students will need) and responsiveness (where you'll pay attention to student's responses to your teaching and adjust accordingly). This responsiveness can sometimes feel like improvisation—not unlike theatrical improvisation, in fact. If you've ever been to an improv show, you were probably amazed at how the actors on the stage took suggestions from the audience and—with no rehearsal—created a narrative with the suggested content that not only made sense but was also funny! The truth is, behind the scenes, these actors are innovating within structures (also known as “improv games”) that they've practiced many times. They are so comfortable with how these games go that they can take just about any new content, fold it in, and make it work.

Similarly, in this book you'll learn the high-leverage moves you can count on to deliver powerful lessons again and again. For example, once you know how to plan a read-aloud lesson and the teaching moves to deliver the lesson and engage and respond to students, you can follow the same predictable structures with any text. The structures stay the same; the content changes. And as with theatrical improv where the actors need to pay attention to the other actors to both act and react, when you're in the midst of teaching, a lot of your moves will depend on how your students react and respond to

what you've planned. You'll be teaching content within a structure but then flexibly adapting, prompting, and offering feedback based on what students say and do during the lesson.

While all the lesson structures align to elements of engaging, explicit instruction you read about (see Figure 2.1), each has unique characteristics and purposes. Of these nine predictable lesson structures, some will help you target one focused strategy, reducing cognitive load and supporting mastery learning (Peng et al., 2023; Schnotz & Kürschner, 2007; Sweller, 1988). Others will help you show readers how to do the necessary work of orchestrating and integrating many strategies (Barron et al., 1998; Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Kim, 2020, 2023). Some structures offer readers a lot of support with new learning, while others provide ongoing guided practice—different amounts of scaffolding are important at different points of learning as you gradually release to independence (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Some are very teacher-directed and require more planning, while others lean heavily on responsiveness, requiring you to think on your feet and base your teaching on what you notice students need. You'll likely use all the structures at different times across the day and across units. In your planning, aim to choose different lesson structures while keeping in mind how what you choose matches your purpose. See Table 2.1 on pages 40-41 for an overview of the lesson structures you'll learn about in Chapters 3–11.



Table 2.1 Lesson Structures, Descriptions, and Purposes

Chapter Number	Lesson Type	What Is It?	Who Is It For? When and Why Would I Choose It?
3	Read-aloud lessons	When you read aloud a text (or excerpt), engage students in thinking about its meaning using questions and invitations to discuss and respond, and scaffold students' understanding by thinking aloud, including defining words as needed	Any time you read aloud to students, you can explicitly model strategies and engage students in the active processing of texts. Read-aloud lessons build comprehension, vocabulary, and knowledge, and they set students up for strong conversation
4	Phonics and spelling lessons	Lessons to help children develop phonemic awareness (the ability to isolate and blend sounds in words), decode words, and spell words	An essential, daily lesson type for beginning readers who are still developing word-reading skills. Use for readers in upper grades as needed
5	Vocabulary lessons	Lessons to help students learn meanings of specific words, meaning-based parts of words (i.e., morphology), and how word meanings connect to other word meanings (i.e., semantic connections)	Teach vocabulary lessons regularly, as all students are always growing their vocabularies; this is especially critical for multilingual learners
6	Focus lessons	Brief, targeted lessons to deliver explicit instruction about an individual strategy	A highly versatile lesson type to teach strategies aligned to any goal or skill in any grouping at any time of day
7	Shared-reading lessons	When you engage children in choral and echo reading of a text-on-display with all eyes on the same physical copy; you'll pause the reading to prompt, redirect, and question readers to support their engagement with the text and their skill development	Best suited for beginning readers, shared-reading lessons support accurate word reading, fluency, and comprehension

Chapter Number	Lesson Type	What Is It?	Who Is It For? When and Why Would I Choose It?
8	Close reading lessons	When you engage students in deep, careful, slow reading, pausing to prompt, redirect, and question readers to support their engagement with the text and their skill development	Close-reading lessons are for more experienced and advanced readers, helping them engage with complex texts and/or do deeper analysis and interpretation
9	Guided inquiry lessons	Lessons to support students to develop a “notice and name” habit of mind, discovering and drawing conclusions from texts, conversations, images, and/or their own work (to set goals) and more	Guided inquiry lessons put students squarely in the driver’s seat of their learning, are highly engaging, and (for some children) better help the learning to stick (Farrell et al., 1999; Kuhlthau et al., 2015; Margunayasa et al., 2019)
10	Reader’s theater lessons	Students read and reread scripts to prepare for a low-stakes performance while you provide strategies and feedback (including vocabulary support) to help them	These highly engaging lessons are helpful for students of all ages who are working to develop reading fluency
11	Conversation lessons	Students discuss texts in pairs, groups, or as a whole class while you provide support and feedback	Conversation lessons make sense (at all grade levels) any time students are discussing, whether in brief turn-and-talks with a partner, or in longer conversations in a group or with the whole class



Making Decisions Within Lesson Structures

Once you've decided on the kind of lesson you need to plan to match your purpose, then within each structure, you have choices about how many objectives students learn and practice (focus versus orchestration), how much you pre-plan and how much you respond in the moment (planning and responsiveness), and how much support you offer students before and while they are practicing (methods for scaffolding). Let's think about each of these choices next.

Focused Practice Versus Orchestration

Sometimes you'll want your instruction to be laser-focused on one new skill or strategy. For example, if your students are learning to summarize informational texts with a problem-solution text structure for the first time, you'll want them to practice with texts that have that organization. You might choose focused practice when the learning is new and you're trying to reduce cognitive load and support mastery with a new skill or strategy. Focus lessons (see Chapter 6) are designed for this kind of practice, and reader's theater lessons offer targeted practice with fluency (see Chapter 10). You could also choose to plan a read-aloud lesson, close-reading lesson, or shared-reading lesson to offer repeated practice with the new skill (see Chapters 3, 8, and 7, respectively).

But when proficient readers read, we don't do only one thing at a time—we don't only decode words with a long-*o* sound or only infer about a character. As the Active View of Reading framework (Figure 1.1) makes clear, we *orchestrate* many skills and strategies to read words fluently and comprehend text, and students also need lessons that teach them how to manage this orchestration as they read. In most cases, your read-aloud lessons, shared-reading lessons, and close-reading lessons will offer this kind of practice, while whole-class conversation lessons (Chapter 11) and many guided inquiry lessons (Chapter 9) will also fall into this category. In phonics and spelling lessons (Chapter 3), it's important students have opportunities to decode and spell words in isolation, but also apply those skills to writing and reading connected text.

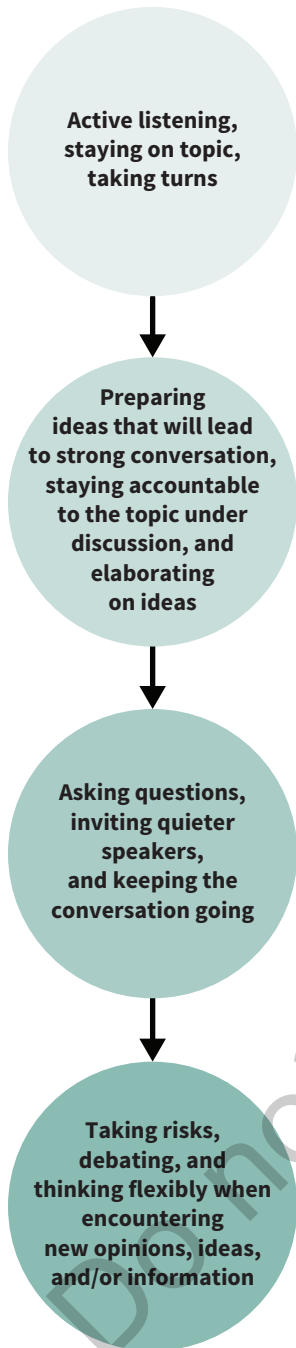
Planning and Responsiveness

The more teacher-directed a lesson is, the more decisions you have to make before you teach the lesson. If it's a lesson where you're going to demonstrate and have students practice how to orchestrate multiple skills and strategies as they read, then you'll have even more planning decisions to make. How many of these decisions you need to write down and how much detail about each one you need to note depends on your experience and how much you feel you *need* to write in order to teach the lesson well. Over time, as the planning decisions for different lesson types become a habit of mind, you should find that you need to include fewer and fewer written details in your plans, though you will continue to think through each of these planning decisions every time you teach a lesson.

I've included resources to help you think about planning throughout the book. In every chapter, you'll find a Planning section where I detail some of the before-teaching decisions you'll make, such as planning which text(s) you'll use, what your think alouds may sound like, and the sorts of prompts and questions you might use to guide practice. In the Picture It section that



Figure 2.2 Conversation Skill Progression



opens each chapter, you'll see callouts that highlight some of the planning decisions the teachers made in these model lessons. In the Lesson in Action sections, you'll see my plan, watch a video of me teaching a lesson, and read my reflections after the lesson. In the online resources and in the appendix, you'll find blank planning templates specific to each lesson structure.

As important as planning is to the success of a lesson, there is only so much you can plan for. You'll predict what you think you need to say and do to meet the objectives of the lesson, but you can't anticipate everything. You'll need to watch your students' level of engagement and attention and decide in the moment to quicken the pace or cut out some of what you had planned to cover. You might ask a question and get very different responses than you expected, so you'll need to call students' attention back, rephrase, and adjust. You might realize that your demonstration didn't quite land the way you thought it would, and you'll need to offer another example or quick demonstration on the fly. You'll listen to students and give them feedback on how they are understanding the lesson and prompts to coach them along. This kind of responsiveness to the students in front of you during guided practice is, in many ways, the most exciting and critical part of each lesson!

Keeping skill progressions in mind (as in Figure 2.2, adapted from Serravallo, 2023b) can help you monitor progress during a lesson and make decisions about what feedback to offer students. For example, when listening to and observing students in conversation, you might realize they are taking turns but not yet building on ideas. You can point to the part of the progression that best describes what they are currently doing, then look ahead to see what you might offer them as a strategy and/or prompts—in this case, preparing and elaborating on ideas.

In every chapter, you'll find a section called Responsive Teaching (see Figure 2.3) with some advice and examples of the kinds of responsiveness you might need in each lesson type. I hope this supports you as you think about and, in some ways, *anticipate* the kinds of if/then scenarios common to each lesson. You'll also see callouts in the Picture It and Lesson in Action sections as I detail the ways the teachers and I had to be flexible, change our plans, or offer prompts and questions to respond to students while teaching.

Responsive Teaching: Conversation Lessons

While you might plan to teach a strategy to set children up to have a good conversation (likely based on something you noticed they needed during their last conversation or because you want to introduce a new routine), once they start talking, you'll choose your teaching based on what you see, listening for both the conversation and comprehension skills students need to support them. It can be helpful to have a progression of skills in mind as you listen to students talk (to help you think about where to take them next). For example, you might first look to see if students are listening actively, staying on topic, and taking turns; then, if they have ideas worth talking about and if they can elaborate on their ideas and those of others; then if they are asking questions; and then if they are ready for more sophisticated conversations such as debates (Serravallo, 2023b; see Table 11.2).

Table 11.2 Example Language Frames, Responses, and Prompts to Teach Responsively During Conversation Lessons

If You Hear or Observe . . .	Then You Might Say . . .
Students are taking turns sharing different ideas, as if they are not yet listening to each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Let's make a decision about what conversation topic to focus on. I'm hearing several options, and we'll want to choose one and try to deepen our thinking.
Students are talking mostly about literal information from the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ I notice you are sharing what you remember from the text. That can be helpful to clarify the literal information. When you feel clear about what you read, please move on to your ideas about what you read. ▶ You're mostly talking about literal information in the text. I'm going to teach you a strategy to help you get ideas about the topic . . .
Students are focused on one topic, deepening their ideas, and offering differing perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Your conversation is rich! When you each come with your own perspectives but really listen to each other, you'll often find you come to new thinking and maybe even have your mind changed! ▶ Can anyone share something new you're thinking, based on the conversation?
Students are sharing their own ideas but aren't yet inviting others to speak.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You all have been really clear on what your ideas are and what you think. I wonder if you have any questions about what one of your friends has said?
Students are speaking with vague language or missing key terms from their reading selection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Let's spend a little time making sure we understand some key vocabulary from this text. Let's identify the words we'll need to use to talk knowledgeably about this topic, and we can do a little rereading to get clear.

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Figure 2.3 Responsive Teaching Example

Look for the Responsive Teaching page in each of the chapters in Part II for advice on what to look for and how you might respond during guided practice.

Methods for Scaffolding

Within each lesson structure, you can choose how much support you'll offer students. Sometimes it will make sense to offer a lot of teacher support up front in the lesson—for example, when the strategy or concept you're teaching is new or when you've learned that your students do better with more in-depth explanations and models for this type of content. At other times, your lesson will be planned more to support guided practice as you gradually release responsibility toward independence (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

In each of the lesson structures, you'll be teaching strategy(ies) skills, or concept(s), and you can choose from a range of methods that offer more or

less up-front support before students begin practicing. Demonstration offers the most support, followed by shared practice and example and explanation, and then guided inquiry, which requires the most student independence. Regardless of which method(s) you use, to make the learning more transferable, always clearly state the steps of the strategy (or main idea of the concept) one last time before students begin practicing. Once you are guiding practice, you'll decide how much support to offer with prompts and feedback.

Demonstration

In a demonstration, you *show* and *tell*. You begin by telling students what you are going to show them and then explicitly state the steps you're going to demonstrate. It will sound something like this: "There are times when a character will act 'out of' character—where they'll surprise us or show a different side to themselves. In moments like this, we should pay attention because they help us understand the complexity of the character. We can reread that scene and think, 'How would I describe the character in this moment?' I'm going to read the next section to you, and I am going to think aloud as I use these steps to think about the character."

Next, you'll think aloud, modeling *each step* of what you want students to do (rather than, for example, reading a long chunk of text, explaining all the thinking you did, and pointing out at the end how it happened). This explicit step-by-step demonstration helps readers to see *how* you were able to create the model you did, not merely the end result or a great example. Another way to demonstrate is to offer a non-example by making a mistake or modeling confusion and then explaining to students how you can use the strategy to clarify your thinking or revise your lesson.

Shared Practice

In shared practice, you and your students practice together. For example, if you are teaching students how to take effective notes to use as a summary of an informational text, you might explain the strategy like this: "Think about your purpose. Why are you reading this text? What information are you hoping to learn? Then, read a short chunk and think, 'What of what I just read aligns to my purpose?' Next, jot a short summary of what you read that matches your purpose. Let's try this together." You would then read a section of the text chorally and ask students, "What aligns to our purpose? What should I write down?"

As students offer suggestions, you can choose to do all the scribing or you can share the pen (or keyboard) and let them help you. If they offer something that isn't a great example of what you're trying to model, help them revise their notes so that what you end up with is a good example for everyone.

Example and Explanation

With an example and explanation, you give your students a vision for what it looks like to have used a skill or strategy successfully or what understanding of a concept looks and sounds like. As a method, offering an example and explanation takes less time and offers a bit less support than a demonstration because you won't be doing the work in front of students, voicing over each step as you go. Instead, you'll present an already-completed example along with an explanation of how it exemplifies the lesson objective. For example, you might share a skill progression with a sample of completed student work that aligns to skill progression language. While you might summarize what the student did to create the example, students won't be watching you work through steps to create it in real time as they would in a demonstration.

Guided Inquiry

While guided inquiry can be its own lesson type (see Chapter 9), you might also use guided inquiry as a method in other types of lessons, such as a focus lesson. When using inquiry, you guide students to notice and name something that can serve as an example for the lesson you're teaching. For example, you might show students an excerpt of dialogue in a narrative and ask them to think about how the dialogue reveals character, or you might show them a sample of a reader's notes and ask them to notice ways the notes capture the main points of an article. Similarly, students can be guided to inquire about specific patterns in language; for example, looking at a long list of words to understand when to use *-tion* versus *-sion* to spell /shun/ at the end of words.

Prompting and Feedback

Guided practice during lessons is critical, and as you read earlier, it's important that as students practice, you monitor and correct any misunderstandings so that their imperfect practice or misconceptions don't

become stored in long-term memory. Also, let students know when they are on the *right* track so practices and knowledge become automatic. Keep in mind that effective feedback has the following characteristics:

- * **Actionable and instructive.** Feedback should offer students a clear how-to next step toward a goal, either prompting them to try something or naming something they are doing that they should continue to do (Hattie, 2009; Sadler, 1989).
- * **Brief.** The less you say, the more time and space students have to do the work. Say only as much as students need to be able to keep practicing, trying, and working through the task. That said, there are times when short prompts aren't enough and you'll need to offer another example, lead students through another round of shared practice, or be wordier with your prompts. When you do find yourself offering a great deal of support in one lesson, you'll probably want to repeat the lesson with decreasing support as a bridge to independence.
- * **Specific and relevant.** Make sure the questions, prompts, and feedback you offer are aligned with the lesson goal(s) (Hammond, 2015; Schunk & Rice, 1991). You can offer success criteria in the form of a student- or teacher-authored example or skill progression descriptors to help keep your feedback focused (Hattie & Clarke, 2018).
- * **Timely.** Whenever possible, prompt *in the moment* so students can be clear about what they did well or so they can course correct before practicing and reinforcing an error (Hammond, 2015; Hattie & Clarke, 2018).
- * **Generalizable.** While feedback needs to be relevant and aligned to the lesson goal(s), try to word it so students can apply it across contexts and in other texts.
- * **Encouraging.** It's important that you communicate your belief that students are capable (Bandura & Cervone, 1983), and deliver feedback in a low-stress, supportive environment where there is a strong relationship between teacher and student (Hammond, 2015; Howard et al., 2020) to positively impact a reader's "self-efficacy, [and] self-regulatory proficiencies" (Hattie, 2009, p. 275).

Whether you're teaching a whole class or small group, different individuals will likely need different levels of support at different times with different lessons or even at different moments within a lesson! You also might

anticipate that students need one level of support and then, during the lesson, you find you need to amp your support up or tamp it down, based on your students' responses. Always remember that the goal is to ensure student mastery of concepts and move them toward more independent work.

In general, prompts that reiterate multiple steps of a strategy offer more support, as will a short demonstration or brief explanation. Prompts that are brief, open-ended, or provide students with positive feedback on what they are already doing will support them in being more independent with what they are learning in the lesson (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Prompts With Varying Levels of Support

Strategy: Stop after every paragraph or short section. Think, "How can I say what I learned in my own words?" Jot a note in the margin. At the end of the article, read back over your margin notes and think, "So, what's this article mostly about?"

Examples of Prompts That Offer More Support

- ▶ Don't write the same thing the author wrote; think about it and try to say it in your own words.
- ▶ Look back across each of your jots. Now think about what they all have in common. What's the article mostly about?
- ▶ Let me give you another example of what I might jot in the margin.

Examples of Prompts That Offer Less Support (As Students Become More Independent)

- ▶ Stop there, jot a note.
- ▶ What's this article mostly about?
- ▶ State the main idea.
- ▶ Where will you stop to jot your ideas?
- ▶ Yes! I notice you're jotting ideas.

Source: Example strategy and prompts from *The Reading Strategies Book 2.0* (Serravallo, 2023b), based on research by Ellis and Graves (1990), Hagaman et al. (2010), Katims and Harris (1997), Lauterbach and Bender (1995), and Schumaker et al. (1984).



Choosing What to Teach: Standards, Curriculum, and Student Needs

The lesson structures in this book are flexible containers in which any reading content can go, whether that content comes from whole-class expectations (such as those for standards and curriculum) or is based on your assessments of small-group or individual needs.

Using Lesson Structures to Adapt a Program or Curriculum

You can use the structures in this book to plan your own lessons from scratch, of course, or you may adapt lessons from a published curriculum or other resources you currently use. After all, rarely can you use a lesson exactly as written because the people who created it don't know your students! To adapt a lesson, you might need to choose a text that's more relevant and responsive to your students, tweak the pacing to fit the time constraints of your schedule, or reduce or increase the number of lesson objectives to be more focused or offer additional opportunities for orchestration. At times, you may choose to use the general information and content from a lesson in your program but plug it into one of the lesson structures you'll read about in this book to streamline your teaching (because a different structure might yield more clarity or engagement for your students) or to modify the level of support you offer. For example,

- * if you notice a text in the curriculum is too complex for students to tackle without support, you might choose a close-reading or shared-reading lesson to guide students through it;
- * you might decide to slow down students' processing of a text and incorporate more discussion, so you plan a conversation lesson with the whole class or in smaller discussion groups after reading the text together;
- * you might notice the lessons in the program are moving too quickly, so you plan to insert some lessons to reteach strategies aligned to the same objective following a focus lesson structure; or
- * you might notice that the lessons are very content-heavy but don't offer students much in the way of transferable strategies to support their understanding and decide to add in a read-aloud lesson to model and guide practice with strategies, using a text from the curriculum.

Similarly, if you're working with standards-aligned curriculum you and your colleagues have developed (instead of an outside program), you probably have your lesson topics and student activities mapped out, but you can use the lesson structures in this book to help you plan how to deliver the content. Having a repertoire of familiar teaching structures allows you to adapt in myriad ways.

Using Lesson Structures to Support Individual Needs

Whether you're following a program or have created your own curriculum in-district, you will always need to respond to the students in front of you, adding in whole-class, small-group, and/or one-on-one lessons to teach key concepts, vocabulary, skills, and knowledge you know your students need. To determine those needs, you can conduct simple formative assessments or study the data from any standardized assessments you give and create a summary document to see your class at a glance (see two examples on pages 102–103).

Just as it's helpful to think about lessons as structures, I find that thinking about assessment in a structured way leads to more powerful planning and instruction. As I assess students' reading skills, I think about what they need in terms of goals—categories or types of reading work they could use support with during ELA and across the day in content areas. Table 2.3 on the next two pages shows a list of reading goals from *The Reading Strategies Book 2.0* (Serravallo, 2023b), correlated to components from the Active View of Reading (Duke & Cartwright, 2021) explored in Chapter 1, and some recommendations for assessments you might use to learn more about your readers in that area.

Assessing your readers, of course, doesn't only happen with capital-A assessments offered at a moment in time; assessment is ongoing. In every lesson, you'll study your students' responses to your teaching, evaluate what they understand and are able to do in light of your goals, respond in real time, and/or make or adjust plans for the next lesson(s).



Table 2.3 Reading Goals and Example Assessments

Reading Goals (Serravallo, 2023b)	Active View of Reading Components (Duke & Cartwright, 2021)	Assessment Examples
Emergent literacy and language development	Bridging process: print concepts Language comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Oral language assessment ▶ Use Sulzby’s (1985, 1991) stages of emergent reading to evaluate a child’s retelling of a story
Engagement and motivation	Active self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Engagement inventory (Serravallo, 2023b) ▶ Interest survey (Serravallo, 2023b)
Reading with accuracy	Word recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Letter/sound identification assessment (CORE Learning, 2018) ▶ CORE phonics screener (CORE Learning, 2018) ▶ Listen to a student read aloud and make notes about how they work to decode unfamiliar words ▶ Spelling inventory (Invernizzi et al., 2017) ▶ Word or sentence dictation
Fluency	Bridging process: fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessment ▶ Listen to a student read aloud and analyze their work using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Fluency Scale or Rasinski’s (2004) Multidimensional Fluency Scale
Comprehension in narrative: understanding plot and setting, character, and themes Comprehension in expository: understanding main topics and ideas, key details, and text features	Language comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whole-book or short-text assessment, ask questions aligned to different goals (Serravallo, 2018) ▶ Ask questions during an assessment conference ▶ Ask students to write about their reading (summarize, annotate, jot ideas, and so on) and evaluate what they’ve written ▶ Listen to students discuss a text and evaluate the quality of their ideas and comments

Reading Goals (Serravallo, 2023b)	Active View of Reading Components (Duke & Cartwright, 2021)	Assessment Examples
Vocabulary and figurative language	Bridging process: vocabulary knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CORE vocabulary screener (CORE Learning, 2018) ▶ Ask students to explain the meaning of words from texts that offer contextual support for those meanings to notice the strategies they use when they come to unfamiliar words
Conversation	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Observe students during whole-class, small-group, and partner conversations
Writing about reading	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Annotations and notes ▶ Extended writing in a notebook, such as summaries or reading responses



Grouping Students for Instruction

You can use the lesson types in this book to teach your whole class and small groups and sometimes when you're working one-on-one with students. You'll likely teach in different groupings across the day, based on your purposes and your students' needs.

Whole-Class Lessons

Often, you'll choose whole-class instruction when what you're teaching aligns to your standards, is part of your whole-class curriculum, and/or is instruction that most students are likely to need.

Whole-class instruction can have many benefits. When you bring all your students together, they can interact, collaborate, and learn from one another, fostering a strong sense of community. Whole-class instruction also enables you to follow a systematic scope and sequence where skills and knowledge progressively build over time and your instruction is aligned to grade-level content and skills (Kuhn, 2020; Lawrence-Brown, 2004). And finally, since all of your students explore the same literary works, historical events, or scientific discoveries during whole-class lessons, the shared references and common knowledge can lead to deeper discussions and connections.

During whole-class lessons, you can and should still consider the range of needs and diverse backgrounds within your class and provide varying points of access, differentiated feedback, prompts, intentional knowledge or language supports, and/or options for demonstrating their learning, critical principles of Universal Design for Learning (Cast, n.d.; Rappolt-Schlichtmann, 2020).

Small-Group Lessons

In most classrooms, children have a diverse range of skills and goals, have different learning needs, and would benefit from different levels of repetition with concepts. Therefore, whole-class instruction alone won't meet everyone's needs and small-group instruction is essential.

Small groups are most effective when they respond to student needs and their composition is flexible and changes regularly (Walpole & McKenna, 2017).

When you group children by need, you can be more targeted with your instruction (Conradi Smith et al., 2022; Tilly, 2008; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010), tailoring instruction to students' unique strengths and weaknesses (Kosanovich et al., 2007).

In small-group instruction, you can pre-teach or reteach concepts you will be teaching to the whole class, increasing instructional density, repetition, and guided practice for those who need it (Elbaum et al., 1999; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Small groups also offer opportunities to provide support or enrichment in areas outside of the scope of your whole-class instruction. Working with fewer children at once means your feedback can be more immediate, targeted, and frequent than in whole-class settings (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). This real-time interaction can enhance student engagement and motivation to participate (Amendum, Li, & Creamer, 2009), fostering a positive learning environment, which is important for all students but especially for those who may struggle (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Studies have found positive impacts of small-group instruction on students with executive functioning needs (Diamond & Lee, 2011; Meltzer & Krishnan, 2007), students reading below grade level and in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention (Burns & Gibbons, 2008; Hatcher et al., 2006), and beginning learners (Wasik, 2008), as well as students who are working on goals related to word-level reading and accuracy (Gersten et al., 2017; Neitzel et al., 2022; Wanzek et al., 2016), fluency (Begeny et al., 2018), and vocabulary and comprehension (Connor et al., 2014; Wanzek et al., 2017). In short, small-group instruction can benefit all students.

Individual Lessons

If you tutor students one-on-one or offer individualized intervention during the school day, many of these lesson structures will work just as well for one-on-one instruction as they do for larger groups. For classroom teachers, you will find that some of these lesson structures work well for individual conferring (i.e., focus lessons, using guided inquiry lessons to set goals, engaging in close reading with a short excerpt of text). However, other lesson types are too time intensive to use with only one student in the general education classroom setting (for example, a read-aloud or phonics and spelling lesson), and still others require that students work together in groups (i.e., conversation lessons, reader's theater lessons).



Selecting Texts for Instruction and Practice

My general advice is that across the day—in ELA and during content studies—you'll want to use a variety of texts in terms of genre, complexity, length, text type, and topic. You'll also want to ensure your texts are inclusive, relevant, identity-affirming, and culturally responsive and sustaining, and support knowledge and vocabulary building. Sometimes you'll select the text; other times, the text will come from your curriculum or program; and still other times, children will choose what they read for practice. Sometimes you'll select a text that students won't be able to read well without your support, and other times, you'll choose a text they can read with accuracy and automaticity so they can practice their reading fluency and/or deepen their comprehension or analytical reading skills.

Your students will be reading texts in your ELA block, of course, but they should also be reading in their content area studies alongside inquiry-based projects, problem-based learning, historical reenactments, field trips, lab experiments, and so on. Research has shown that when hands-on experiences such as these are paired with reading, students' understanding of content, knowledge of vocabulary, and ability to write about what they've learned is substantially higher (for one example, see Goldschmidt & Jung, 2011).

During both ELA and content area studies, students need to read deeply to support knowledge building. Create content-rich, conceptually coherent text sets (see Figure 2.4) that allow children to explore similar vocabulary and topics connected to the same or related concepts (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2015; Duke et al., 2021; McKeown et al., 1992).

You'll also want to support broad reading, allowing students an opportunity to explore topics, authors, and genres that interest and engage them. Students who read widely and have knowledge of a broad range of topics fare better on measures of reading comprehension and subject area tests (Elleman & Oslund, 2019; Whitten et al., 2019). And don't discount narrative texts for knowledge building and strategy instruction! Narrative texts contribute to knowledge in important ways, helping students both to learn factual information—think about encountering a new time or place in historical fiction as the author provides rich descriptive detail—and to learn about people—important to the development of social understanding and skills related to theory of mind (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Heath et al., 2017).

Figure 2.4 An Example of One Teacher-Curated Multimodal, Multi-Genre, Conceptually Coherent Text Set

This teacher-curated text set includes a variety of informational, narrative, and poetic texts; a range of text complexity; and different formats, including books, articles, and videos. Together, they help readers explore various conceptual threads related to Native American activism centered on water protection, the dangers of oil pollution, and specific historical and current events related to these issues. Readers will encounter similar terminology, expand their understanding of the concepts, and interact with texts through a variety of modalities. Some of these texts may be best for lesson structures with greater teacher scaffolding, while in others, the teacher may plan to ask students to read with more independence and discuss in collaborative groups.

