

This document provides a summary of Recommendation 4 from the WWC practice guide *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9*. Full reference is on the last page.

CONTENT: **Reading**

GRADE LEVEL(S): **4–9**

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE: **Moderate**

## Recommendation

Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of a stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to complex ideas and information.

Experts recommend including a stretch text into the intervention 2-3 times a week for periods of 6-10 weeks. These texts are typically challenging, just above a student's typical reading level. Exposure to higher-level texts includes more complex vocabulary, sentence structures, and ideas. Prior strategies in Recommendation 3 are suggested for stretch texts as well, but a focus on providing consistent support and positive feedback is key when the content is challenging.

### How to carry out the recommendation

1. Prepare for the lesson by carefully selecting appropriate stretch texts, choosing points to stop for discussion and clarification, and identifying words to teach.

### Instructional strategies from the examples

- Provide motivating texts that are at the top of the student's individual reading level.
- Arrange the texts in gradually increasing difficulty and length to help students gain confidence as they interact with the text.
- Pre-read the texts and identify appropriate stop points to engage in group discussion to help students with comprehension.
- Create a list of difficult words and pre-teach how to understand them in the text before a student begins reading a stretch text.

Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of a stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to...

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### South Carolina standards alignment

**ELA:** 3-5.1.5, 6-8.1.5, 9-12.1.5

**TEACHER:** INST.MS.1, INST.LSP.3, INST.AM.1, INST.AM.2, INST.AM.3, INST.AM.4, INST.AM.5, INST.AM.6, INST.AM.7, INST.AM.8, INST.AM.9, INST.AM.10, INST.AM.11, INST.TH.1, INST.TH.2, ENVI.EX.1, ENVI.EX.2, ENVI.EX.3

Select texts at the upper boundary of students' individual reading levels. Arrange the stretch text to gradually increase in difficulty and length as students gain confidence. Topic areas for stretch texts can draw from students' subject area courses but seek out options beyond the textbook; search for materials that will motivate students. Prior to instructions, read through the text and pre-select stop points to engage in group discussion. Consider stop points where the passage becomes confusing, includes unfamiliar or difficult to decode words, or when the author provides pivotal details. Another pre-instruction suggestion is to create a list of difficult/multisyllabic words, essential words, or proper nouns and discuss with students how to work through or understand each as they read through the text. Example 4.1 shows how to prepare a short passage for this process.

**Example 4.1. Teacher preparing to read a short section from a grade-level text about noted novelist Louise Erdrich**

**Louise Erdrich Wins Pulitzer Prize in Literature**

The Pulitzer Prize is one of the highest awards that writers can receive. In June 2021, the novelist Louise Erdrich won the award for her novel *The Night Watchman*. *The Night Watchman* is based on the life of her grandfather who fought to ensure the Ojibwe tribe could keep their land.

Erdrich writes frequently about life on and near the reservations. Louise's mother was Ojibwe. Although her father was not Ojibwe, both her parents attended a boarding school run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The boarding schools were intended to assimilate Native American children into the "American way of life" and to train them for low paying jobs.

Erdrich won the equally prestigious National Book Award for her novel *LaRose*. Like all her novels, *LaRose* explored the rich traditions of Ojibwe people and the struggle of children being forced to attend boarding schools many miles from their families. The novel explored the cruelty of separating children from their families and their traditions.

Erdrich's books describe horrors but are also full of humor. They include many fascinating people. Some are very wise and caring, some thoughtless, and many in between.

The teacher marks the following sections and words before beginning to read with the group. This is grade-level material for the English language arts class.

**Stop points and discussion starters:**

- Stop after paragraph 1 – What is this paragraph about?
- Stop after paragraph 2 – What was the purpose of the boarding schools for Native Americans?
- Stop after paragraph 3 – What happened in her novel *LaRose* that was disturbing?
- Stop after paragraph 4 – What are some positive aspects of her novels? What do you think the author means when describing people who fall in between being wise and thoughtless at the same time?

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**Example 4.1. Teacher preparing to read a short section from a grade-level text about noted novelist Louise Erdrich (continued)**

**Proper nouns:**

- Pulitzer Prize
- Louise Erdrich
- Ojibwe
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Native American

**Multisyllabic words using previously taught word-reading skills:**

- frequently
- reservation
- attended
- assimilate
- traditions

**Essential words:**

- novel
- reservation
- assimilate
- boarding school

2. After students demonstrate comfort with reading stretch texts with the group, provide students with electronic supports to use when independently reading a stretch text to assist with the pronunciation of difficult words and word meanings.

### **Instructional strategies from the examples**

- Encourage students to use electronic supports to help them with unfamiliar words or topics.
- Model for students how to use these supports and encourage independent practice.

### **South Carolina standards alignment**

**ELA:** 3-5.RL.LCS.10, 6-8.RL.LCS.10, 9-12.RL.LCS.10, 3-5.RI.LCS.9, 6-8.RI.LCS.9, 9-12.RI.LCS.9

**TEACHER:** INST.LSP.2, INST.AM.11, INST.TKS.1, INST.TKS.3

Once students begin to demonstrate comfort with the process of reading through stretch texts, begin incorporating independent and small group-based settings. Encourage students to engage with electronic supports to help work through unfamiliar words and topic areas. Model how to find and use the embedded dictionary and thesaurus in many word processing programs. Demonstrate how to use the read-aloud function for eBooks and encourage students to make use of any provided comprehension questions with the passage.

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## Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>Stretch text is just too frustrating for my students. They tend to give up far too easily.</i>	Remind students of the common but challenging nature of reading a stretch text and provide often and demonstrated support. Start the practice of a stretch text by moving sentence by sentence before building up to longer sections.
<i>Grade-level science and history texts are typically many years above the instructional level for some of my intervention groups.</i>	Try to avoid material taken directly from textbooks for stretch text practice. Choose materials from magazines, newspapers, and books that focus on engaging topics relatable to the student. Consider selecting texts that also include visual elements as these may assist in making meaning from the text.
<i>I get confused between what is considered stretch text or challenging text, and how this all fits into Lexile levels.</i>	Stretch texts should be challenging and present new knowledge in more complex formats for students. This is true regardless of which descriptive terms (challenging or by Lexile level) you choose to use.
<i>My students would prefer reading short stories and novels for their stretch text rather than informational text.</i>	Consider hybrid texts that incorporate a narrative style within an informational text. Short biographical sketches, historical fiction, social sciences, and economics are common topics within hybrid text options.

*Reference:* Vaughn, S., Gersten, R., Dimino, J., Taylor, M. J., Newman-Gonchar, R., Krowka, S., Kieffer, M. J., McKeown, M., Reed, D., Sanchez, M., St. Martin, K., Wexler, J., Morgan, S., Yañez, A., & Jayanthi, M. (2022). *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9* (WWC 2022007). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://whatworks.ed.gov/>.