



Communities In Schools of North Carolina is leading the national network in providing the most effective student supports and wraparound interventions and supports directly in schools to support students and teachers. Working collaboratively with 400 schools across North Carolina, Communities In Schools impacts the lives of more than 230,000 youth each year. Driven by research-based practices surrounding the best predictors of student success – attendance, behavior, coursework and parent and family engagement – Communities In Schools is changing the picture of education for students across North Carolina. Learn more about Communities In Schools of North Carolina at www.cisnc.org.



The Nonprofit Evaluation Support Program (NESP) is a collaborative effort between two University of North Carolina Greensboro organizations – The SERVE Center and The Office of Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Services (OAERS). NESP’s mission is to provide program evaluation services and program evaluation capacity building support to nonprofit and community-based organizations while providing authentic learning experiences for future leaders in the field of program evaluation.



The SERVE Center at The University of North Carolina Greensboro is a university-based research, development, dissemination, evaluation, and technical assistance center. For more than 24 years, SERVE Center has worked to improve K-12 education by providing evidence-based resources and customized technical assistance to policymakers and practitioners.



The University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG) is one of the sixteen university campuses of The University of North Carolina. UNCG holds two classifications from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, as a “research university with high research activity” and for “community engagement” in curriculum, outreach, and partnerships.

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Overview

CISNC Introduction

In the 2014-2015 school-year, Communities In Schools of North Carolina (CISNC) introduced a framework that aligns site and student metrics and interventions and supports to four areas that have been shown to have the greatest impact on student success: attendance, behavior, coursework, and parent involvement, or ABC+P. Both combined and individually, attendance, behavior, and coursework are among the best predictors of a student's academic success and on-time graduation. While collecting data around ABC+P is critically important to understanding the school and student, it is even more important to use the data to drive high impact intervention and support delivery to empower each student to reach their full potential. To this end, Communities In Schools of North Carolina has partnered with the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to design curricula specifically for CIS within the ABC+P framework to enhance student outcomes in school and success in life. This document is one of more than 50 modules developed to support local CIS staff and most importantly the students that are served. We encourage you to explore all of the modules available online at www.cisnc.org.

Using Evidenced-Based Strategies

There are a multitude of strategies that claim to address coursework, but there are few that actually do so for all students. We suggest that schools use an evidence-based, decision-making model to ensure that high quality information informs the decisions made.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the U.S. Department of Education defines evidence-based decision making as routinely seeking out the best available information on prior research and recent evaluation findings before adopting programs or practices that will demand extensive material or human resources (including both funding and teacher time) and/or affect significant numbers of students (Whitehurst, 2004).

Evidence-based practice means delivering interventions and supports to students (clients) in ways that integrate the best available evidence from data, research, and evaluation; professional wisdom gained from experience; and contextual knowledge of the particular classroom, school, district, or state that might impact the design or implementation.

This document is written to provide schools with coursework strategies based on the best evidence from prior research and recent evaluations in middle schools. In the context of our review, we propose four strategies designed to help improve coursework:

- Coursework – EOG Prep strategy
- Coursework – Literacy strategies (2)
- Coursework – STEM strategies

This document will focus on one easy to implement literacy strategy for middle schools.

Problem/Rationale

The Common Core State Standards for elementary and secondary education have been implemented to ensure that students are college and career ready for a globally competitive society upon high school graduation. Sadly, more than 40% of students are leaving high school without being college and career ready (Achieve, 2012). As a result, States have set requirements for English language arts as well as literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects (otherwise referred to as reading across the curriculum). Literacy allows learners to employ their knowledge and past experiences, confidence, identity, and motivation to develop their reading skills in relevant ways, while learning about the world around them.

The development of strong literacy skills requires explicit instruction and extensive practice in reading, writing, listening, thinking, and speaking across the curriculum. Nationally, more than 60% of middle and high school students are not demonstrating mastery of these critical skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). In other words, millions of youth in the United States cannot comprehend or evaluate text, reference related points, or support conclusions about the text. Students who are not reading at grade level by third grade are four times less likely to graduate on time from high school compared to those students reading proficiently at third grade (Hernandez, 2011). Without a high school education, students will only be qualified for 10% of available jobs (Achieve, 2012).

Kamil and colleagues (2008) suggest the following effective classroom and intervention practices:

- 1) Provide explicit vocabulary instruction.
- 2) Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction.
- 3) Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.
- 4) Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning.
- 5) Make available intensive and individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by trained specialists.

Furthermore, comprehensive classroom and school-wide literacy strategies should focus on content-learning goals rather than performance goals of scoring; allow students the freedom to choose the texts they read and the assignment they perform with the texts or their partners during instruction; employ social goals or cooperative-learning structures in reading activities; and promote the perception that the teacher understands them and cares about their progress (Guthrie et al., 2006).

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to focus on one easy to implement literacy strategy that can be used in middle schools. Teachers can develop students' literacy through:

- A creative writing activity to develop reading comprehension, integrate subject content and vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills

- Additional strategies to develop literacy
- Tools and resources to share with families

Implementation Plan

Uses

Teachers can use the information provided in this guide to develop literacy skills in middle school students.

Audiences

The primary audience for this lesson is middle school students.

Activities

Listed below are several activities that schools can implement to develop literacy skills in students. The highlighted activity is designed to develop reading comprehension, vocabulary and creative writing skills.

Classroom

- Small group discussions (e.g., literacy circles, reading groups, etc.).
- Silent and read-aloud reading time.
- **Stimulating, hands-on activities related to content material.**
- Enrichment programs for proficient or advanced readers.
- Family engagement activities at-home and in-school (e.g., classroom volunteers).

School-wide

- Use evidenced-based decision making.
 - Guide instruction and allocate instructional resources.
 - Refer to curriculum guide on monitoring data.
- Provide leadership for effective classroom instruction.
 - Literacy plan.
 - Literacy block scheduling.
 - Reading leadership teams.
 - Administrative oversight.
- Provide supplemental materials and technology (e.g., trade books).
- Maintain an up-to-date, technologically advanced school library.
- Use integrated approaches that incorporate reading and language arts instruction into content area instruction such as science or social studies.
- Individualized professional learning opportunities for staff (e.g., reading specialists, instructional staff, librarians, etc.).
- Cooperative learning (e.g., success for one based on success for all).
- Partner with PTA (e.g., volunteers).

- Partner with local college/university, etc. (e.g., tutoring, mentors, professional development, etc.).
- Reading and literacy coaches.
- Interdisciplinary teams.
- Literacy emphasis week/month (September).
- Institute summer reading challenges, Read-a-thons, etc.
- Provide book clubs, incentives, rewards, recognitions to motivate reading.

Family and Community

- Refer to *Family Engagement – Literacy* curriculum.

Materials/Equipment/Space

- Copies of a short chapter from a graphic novel

Note: For presentations, check for access to computer, Smartboard or data projector and screen, relevant power cords, and remote slide advancer.

Time

- 45-50 minutes for five lessons across one-two weeks.

Lesson Plan of Activity

Use the sample lesson with students to develop students' literacy skills. The lesson plan includes:

- An assignment that demonstrates creative writing, comprehension, use of subject content, concepts and vocabulary.
- Hands-on activity to gain an understanding of graphic narrative and how it is driven by themes.
- Sharing of ideas and constructive feedback with peers.
- Opportunities to motivate long-term interest in reading and core subjects as well as promote additional exposure to subject content.

This lesson is suitable for use with content in core subject areas (e.g., language arts, social studies, science, and math).

Review the resources listed in the Resources section.



Sample Lesson – *Graphic Storybook*

Activity	Process Notes
<p>Pre-planning for the <i>Graphic Storybook</i> project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow two weeks for project completion. - Provide guidelines and a rubric for how the project will be graded. - Plan class time for peer feedback and critique. - Require signed parental acknowledgement of project. 	<p><i>Goal of the project is to strengthen students' vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, research and story-telling skills in a creative way.</i></p>
<p>Teach a lesson on a short chapter of a graphic novel with students demonstrating key literacy strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify main characters. - Identify story problems. - Sequence story event. - Solution to story problem. - Message author desires to communicate. <p>Tell students to think of the author's process in finding ideas, composing and expressing meaning with pictures, words and narratives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sketch characters in situations. - List the character's likes/dislikes, personal traits, desires, etc. - Use an everyday situation to explore the concept/topic. - Consider good and bad aspects of the concept. 	<p><i>Popular middle school graphic novels include Diary of A Wimpy Kid series (Jeff Kinney), Big Nate (Lincoln Pierce), Middle School (James Patterson), etc.</i></p> <p><u><i>Additional Reading Strategy (Handel, 1995, p. 533)</i></u> <i>Making predictions</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What do you think will happen next?</i> 2. <i>Why do you think so?</i> <p><i>Asking our own questions</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What questions do you have about this (story, page, event)?</i> 2. <i>What puzzles you? What would you like to find out?</i> <p><i>Relating reading to personal experience</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Does this (story, character, event) remind you of anything in your own life?</i> 2. <i>Does it remind you of anything you have heard about or learned?</i> <p><i>Learning new information</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What do you already know about this topic?</i> 2. <i>Let's read to learn more.</i> 3. <i>What did you learn that was new?</i>
<p>Assign the Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will write a short story involving a concept from the unit being studied. - Require use of unit vocabulary in the narrative. - Encourage students to conduct additional research on concept/topic using a variety of sources. - Students will write AND draw or take digital pictures to create their graphic story. - Assign due date for project outline and first draft: topic, main characters, summary of narrative. 	<p><i>Student options depend on subject. For example, students may write utilizing a genre of literature, about an historical event for social studies or history class, or about science process (e.g., metamorphosis), etc.</i></p> <p><i>Remind students that the process of drawing helps to generate story ideas, add details, and break a writer's block moment.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage students to read the newspaper (comics section) or magazines related to the subject to generate ideas.</i></p> <p><i>Remind students that the first draft will be rough</i></p>

Activity	Process Notes
	<i>and that there will be opportunities to revise it as they go.</i>
Assign peer critique homework #1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hand out copies of students' first draft to be critiqued by their peers (one per student). - Provide an outline incorporating the key literacy strategies to guide student critique of their peer drafts. 	<i>Teacher also reviews drafts and provides written feedback to students.</i>
Allow students to meet in peer groups to verbally share their critical feedback and encouragement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer reviewer submits one copy of written critique to teacher for grading and one to peer to reference during discussion. - Teacher rotates from group to group listening to comments and provides guidance where necessary. - Teacher returns draft and instructs student to incorporate peer-review discussion with teacher written comment into re-write. - Set due date for story draft #2. 	<i>Teacher grades critiques for peer reviewer's application of literacy strategies to a text. Encourage group members to be positive, look for areas of creativity, and provide with encouraging tips.</i> <i>Students will use both the teacher's and peer's comments on their first draft to re-write the story.</i> <i>Teacher receives and makes copies of draft #2. Written feedback is provided to student.</i>
Assign peer critique homework #2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students review draft #2. 	<i>Students submit second critique the following day.</i>
Pair original peer groups and have students share a copy of critique #2 with each other. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer reviewer will again use guideline to look for improvements, incorporation of previous feedback, etc. 	<i>Teacher rotates through groups observing students or takes the time to consult with individual students who need additional coaching based on observations and/or experiences shared in journals.</i> <i>Praise students for their hard work throughout the week. Note positive changes observed in writing, creativity, understanding of unit content, etc.</i>
Final project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set due date for final project submission. 	
Bonus: Compile all the stories into a class booklet and distribute one to each student as a souvenir of their hard work.	

Lesson adapted from:

Handel, R. D. (1995). Family reading at the middle school. *Journal of Reading*, 38(7), 528-540.

Tier 2 Intervention and Support Examples

Intervention strategies for struggling readers include peer mediated instruction to build comprehension, vocabulary and fluency and an accelerated reading intervention program to support teachers.

Example 1: Peer-Mediated Instruction

The study examined the effect of a peer-mediated instructional approach on the teaching of phonological skills and reading comprehension for middle school students with reading disabilities and reading at the 3rd grade level or below. Students were taught using a peer-mediated phonological skill program, Linguistics Skills Training (LST) and a peer-mediated reading comprehension program, Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS).

Calhoon, M.B. (2005). Effects of a peer-mediated phonological skill and reading comprehension program on reading skill acquisition for middle school students with reading disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 38*(5), 424-233.

Example 2: Accelerated Reading Intervention

The READ 180 program is a reading intervention program designed to support teachers in their efforts to improve reading achievement for students reading below grade level. Used on students who repeated 8th grade, READ 180 made significant gains of over three normal curve equivalents in Reading and almost two normal curve equivalents in Language Arts (SAT-9).

Papalewis, R. (2004). Struggling middle school readers: Successful, accelerating intervention. *Reading Improvement, 41*(1), 24-37.

Resources

The following resources are identified as part of the activity. Read through these resources carefully to become familiar with any concepts and instructions as they pertain to the content and activity.

Developing Rubrics

Edutopia. Resources for Using Rubrics in the Middle Grades.

<http://www.edutopia.org/rubrics-middle-school-resources>

Kathy Schrock's Guide to Everything. Assessment and Rubrics.

<http://www.schrockguide.net/assessment-and-rubrics.html>

Buck Institute for Education (BIE). 6-8 Presentation Rubric (CCSS Aligned).

http://bie.org/object/document/6_8_presentation_rubric_ccss_aligned

The following resources will provide additional information and suggestions for enhancing activities related to family engagement and using data for decision-making. Read through the resources carefully to become familiar with the information, any concepts and instructions as they may pertain to the content and the extension of activities, and to determine their level of usefulness within the school setting.

Education Commission of the States

The Partnership for Reading is a collaborative effort by three federal agencies—the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the U.S. Department of Education—to bring the findings of evidence-based reading research to the education community, families and others with an interest in helping all people learn to read well. This site provides information on research, principles about reading instruction suggested by the research, and products for parents, teachers, administrators and policymakers.

<http://www.ecs.org/>

Education World – <http://www.educationworld.com/>

LitTips: 12 Practical Tips to Improve Literacy!

http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr130.shtml

EngageNY

EngageNY.org is dedicated to providing educators across New York State with real-time, professional learning tools and resources to support educators in reaching the State's vision for a college and career ready education for all students.

<https://www.engageny.org/>

Harvard Family Research Project – <http://www.hfrp.org/>

Engaging Families in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Project-Based Learning

<http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/publications-resources/engaging-families-in-science-technology-engineering-and-math-stem-project-based-learning>

Institute of PLAY

Creates learning experiences rooted in the principles of game design which support teachers and other learning leaders in making learning irresistible.

<http://www.instituteofplay.org/resources-for-quest-parents/>

Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., and Torgesen, J. (2008).

Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices: A Practice Guide (NCEE #2008-4027). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved

from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=8>

MDRC – <http://www.mdrc.org/>

Mobilizing Volunteer Tutors to Improve Student Literacy

http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/ReadingPartners_2015_FR.pdf

National Council of Teachers of English

NCTE is devoted to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education.

<http://www.ncte.org/>

National Institute for Literacy

<http://lincs.ed.gov/>

National Network for Partnership Schools @ Johns Hopkins University

NNPS invites schools, districts, states and organizations to join together and use research-based approaches to organize and sustain excellent programs for family and community involvement that will increase student success in school.

<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/>

NC Read to Achieve LiveBinder

<http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=850102>

Public Schools of North Carolina-Department of Public Instruction

NC Standard Course of Study for K-12 English Language Arts

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/languagearts/scos/ncscs-ela.pdf>

ReadWriteThink.org

Offers free reading and language arts activities collected by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/>

Scholastic – <http://www.scholastic.com>

Promotes literacy with books for kids of all ages and reading levels.

Kids & Family Reading Report

<http://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/Scholastic-KidsAndFamilyReadingReport-5thEdition.pdf?v=100>

School Improvement Network

<http://www.schoolimprovement.com/>

SEDL (American Institutes for Research) – <http://www.sedl.org/>

The Center links people with research-based information and resources that they can use to effectively connect schools, families, and communities.

The SEDL National Center for Families and Community Connections with Schools

<http://www.sedl.org/connections/>

The Nation's Report Card

<http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

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Measuring Success

Identifying outcomes and collecting data to measure the success of literacy strategies can help the school track quality of implementation as well as the effectiveness of these strategies. Following are some suggestions that schools may find useful to begin measuring success.

- Evidence-based measures to assess students':
 - General reading comprehension.
 - Subject vocabulary.
 - Subject understanding.
 - Subject writing.
 - Reading motivation.
 - Interest-based reading level.
- Teacher assessment of student's overall improvement.
- Teacher self-reports of program implementation and effectiveness.
- Range of materials used for literacy instruction.
 - Basal textbooks, trade books, magazines, internet sources, etc.
- Amount of time spent on subject/vocabulary instruction.
- Professional development sessions on literacy instruction (e.g., strategy instruction, etc.).

Appendices

A. Glossary

B. References

C. Research Alignment

Appendix A: Glossary

Family engagement – a shared responsibility between families, schools and communities for the educational development of children from birth through adolescence, operating across the various settings where children grow and learn (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010).

Graphic story – or sequential storytelling, blends comics and narrative text to tell a story.

Proficient reading level – “Eighth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should be able to provide relevant information and summarize main ideas and themes. They should be able to make and support inferences about a text, connect parts of a text, and analyze text features. Students performing at this level should also be able to fully substantiate judgments about content and presentation of content” (NC Public Schools, n.d.).

Appendix B: References

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Appendix C: Research Alignment

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
<p>Fang, Z., & Wei, Y. (2010). Improving middle school students' science literacy through reading infusion. <i>The Journal of Educational Research</i>, 103(4), 262-273.</p>	<p>Examines the extent to which the inquiry-based science plus reading (ISR) curriculum differed from the inquiry-based science only (IS) curriculum in influencing students' learning outcomes in science literacy.</p>	<p>243 total students in grade 6 randomly assigned to experimental (ISR) and comparison (IS) group from one middle school.</p>	<p>Results showed that the ISR group significantly outperformed the IS group in the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (GMRT) for vocabulary, $F(1, 223) = 10.03, p < .01, d = .23$; for comprehension, $F(1, 233) = 6.64, p = .01, d = .22$; and for the total score, $F(1, 233) = 9.98, p < .01, d = .22$. Results also showed that the ISR group scored significantly higher than the IS group on the curriculum-referenced science test (CRST), $F(1, 210) = 9.61, p < .01, d = .35$. It was also found that the ISR group outperformed the IS group on the academic year science grade (AYSG), $F(1, 210) = 6.78, p = .01, d = .34$.</p>	<p>The comparison group used the IS curriculum, which is standard and the experimental group used the ISR curriculum which is similar but with two extra components: one reading strategy lesson per week for about 15-20 minutes and instituting a home reading program where students could select quality science trade books to read at home.</p>



Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
Handel, R.D. (1995). Family reading at the middle school. <i>Journal of Reading</i> , 38(7), 528-540.	Comprehensive program including instruction of middle school students in reading strategies using children's books, reading sessions with primary grade children, the participation of other family members, institutionalization of Family Reading as part of the language arts curriculum and collaborative staff development to support and refine the program.	Year 2, 46 students.	Of 46 students, 29 reported using a strategy taught in their workshop for themselves. Most students reported a gratifying experience helping the younger children and stated that they learned as well.	The Family Reading model includes a series of workshops in children's literature and in reading comprehension strategies that are integrated into literature reading. The family-like atmosphere of attentiveness and helpfulness to others is characterized by student interaction during workshops and reading sessions with elementary school children.
Radcliffe, R., Caverly, D., Hand, J., & Franke, D. (2008). Improving reading in a middle school science classroom. <i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i> , 51(5), 398-408.	To examine the effects of introducing the PLAN (predict, locate, add, and note) study-reading strategy into a middle school science classroom.	One teacher who taught two 6 th grade science classrooms and 50 students total; one class as the treatment group and one as the control group.	For comprehension post-test, the difference between the treatment and control groups scores were statistically significant, $t(47) = -4.579$, $p = .000$, with the treatment group's post-test scores ($M=68.9$)	To teach PLAN, the teacher illustrated how to create concept maps on the board, students created concept maps in groups and then individually, and then students individually completed the four

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
			<p>exceeding the control group's post-test (M=52.8). For reading checklist, the difference between the two groups' post-test scores was significant, $t(47) = -2.61$, $p = .012$, with the treatment group's post-test score (M=6.68) exceeding the control group's post-test score (M=5.00). The treatment group also demonstrated a significant gain in scores from their pretest to post-test, $t(39) = -2.270$, $p = .029$, while the control group did not.</p>	<p>steps of the PLAN strategy.</p>
<p>Stevens, R.J. (2006). Integrated middle school literacy instruction. <i>Middle School Journal</i>, 38(1), 13-19.</p>	<p>To assess the TARRGET model as a conceptually based approach to redesign instruction and make it more developmentally appropriate for young adolescents. The model</p>	<p>The STRW program was piloted in three 6th grade classes.</p>	<p>The STRW program resulted in significantly higher achievement, and after 1 year, students in the STRW scored one-third standard deviation higher on the standardized measure of</p>	<p>Teachers participated in trainings to improve the quality of their STRW implementation. First, there was a restructuring of English and reading into one 90 minute</p>



Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
	<p>takes into account cognitive, social and motivational characteristics of learners to look at Tasks, Autonomy, Resources, Recognition, Grouping, Evaluation and Time. The Student Team Reading and Writing (STRW) program was created to design a literacy program responsive to the students.</p>		<p>reading vocabulary, one-quarter standard deviation higher on reading comprehension, and more than one-third standard deviation higher on language expression.</p>	<p>block on literacy so that teachers could teach learning to read, reading to learn and writing to express what one learns in an integrated fashion. The STRW program uses a literature anthology as the basis for reading material and reading instructions and comprehension tasks to help students develop their ability to comprehend what they read and learn.</p>