

Implementing the Grades 3-5 Additional Language and Literacy (ALL) Block

EL Education is fiercely focused on equity for all children. All children deserve schools that foster their unique abilities, give them the real opportunity to achieve high academic standards, and help them take their full place in a society for which they are well prepared when they leave school. Equity is the foundation on which the entire curriculum rests.

The 3-5 Language Arts Curriculum (Second Edition) consists of two hours per day of instruction: the module lessons and the Additional Language and Literacy (ALL) Block. Certain aspects of the literacy work in the module lessons often require that students get more practice in order to achieve mastery. This is why the ALL Block exists.

This document helps teachers understand the why, as well as the concrete what and how, of the Grades 3-5 ALL Block. Specifically:

- How does the structure of the ALL Block fit with the structure of the module lessons?
- What are the five components of the ALL Block?
- How does each component reinforce the work from the module lessons?
- How do the ALL Block rotations work?
- What does a day in the ALL Block look like for teacher and students?
- What are some frequently asked questions about the ALL Block?

How does the structure of the 3-5 ALL Block connect to the structure of the module lessons?

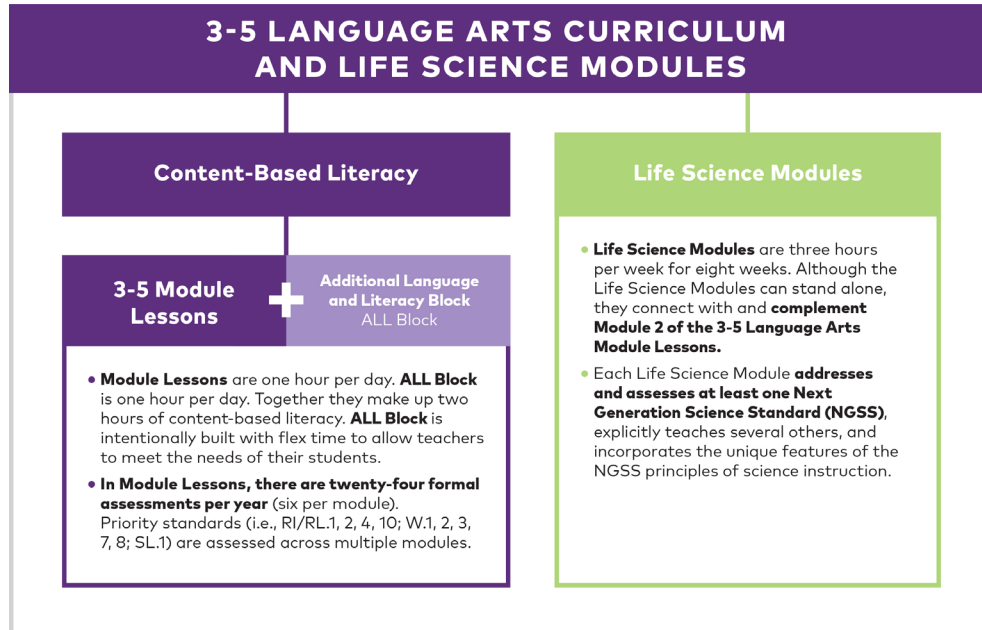
The ALL Block is one hour long and is complementary to the module lessons. These two hours of content-based literacy instruction work together to accelerate the achievement of all students.

The ALL Block has three units, parallel to the three units of the module.

Although a module is eight weeks, there are only six weeks of ALL Block lessons. Each ALL Block unit is a two-week rotation. This supports flexible pacing: Based on the needs of their specific students, teachers can extend or add ALL Block lessons.

Grades 3-5 Module Lessons and Additional Language and Literacy Block (2 hours daily)

Module Lessons and ALL Block Hand-in-Hand



What are the five components of the 3-5 ALL Block and how does each promote proficiency and growth?

The Additional Language and Literacy (ALL) Block responds to upper elementary students' need for greater independence and mastery as learners. The ALL Block exists to give students more practice in order to achieve mastery. During this hour students have additional time to work with texts, ideas, and skills that are initially introduced in the module lessons. They also have time set aside every day in the ALL Block to read, something that all too often gets lost in the shuffle of a busy school schedule.

In order to better understand the why behind the design of this hour of instruction, the table that follows describes each component of the ALL Block and describes how it promotes proficiency and growth.

The Five Components of the Grades 3-5 ALL Block and How Each Promotes Proficiency and Growth

Component	How it Promotes Proficiency and Growth
<p>ACCOUNTABLE INDEPENDENT READING/ VOLUME OF READING Content-related reading at students' independent reading levels; free choice reading</p>	<p>In recent years, it has become clearer that one of the reasons strong readers are strong readers is that they read a lot. Research confirms what common sense might tell us: The more one reads, the more one knows—about the topic, about vocabulary, about syntax, even about related topics. With this firmly in mind, <i>volume of reading</i> has been intentionally built into our curriculum.</p> <p>Through research reading, students build background knowledge and vocabulary—both domain-specific and academic. Free choice reading builds knowledge and vocabulary too but not as quickly as does reading on the module topic. Therefore, free choice reading is primarily to build students' motivation and love of reading. The ALL Block gives students additional time for both of these kinds of reading.</p>
<p>ADDITIONAL WORK WITH COMPLEX TEXT Rereading complex text from the module with a specific focus—for example, making inferences</p>	<p>The new college- and career-ready standards remind us how important it is for <i>all students</i> to be able to successfully read (and understand) complex text throughout the grades. We take seriously the fact that if we are going to truly prepare students for college and career, we need to make sure they can successfully navigate complex text. Deep knowledge, rich syntax, and strong vocabulary all come from frequent and successful immersion in complex text (Shanahan, 2002; Hiebert, 2012; Gomez, 2008; Liben, 2010, et al.). The ALL Block gives students additional time to work with the complex texts from the module lessons.</p> <p>Furthermore, a growing body of research suggests that instruction with increasingly complex texts within the study of a single topic (such as the American Revolution) can lead to significant gains in reading rate, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension (Adams, 2009; Morgan, 2009; O'Connor, 2010; Williams, 2009). Essentially, as students learn more about a topic, they can read more difficult texts on that topic—and, if given support, improve their foundational reading and comprehension skills. In fact, they can even read more complex text on new topics.</p>
<p>READING AND SPEAKING FLUENCY/GUM Practice with oral reading, speaking with expression, and grammar rules)</p>	<p>If students are going to read and write successfully and proficiently, they will need to read fluently (silently and orally), and speak and write competently in Standard English. Practice with these literacy skills has been put together into one section of the ALL Block for two reasons: 1) convenience in scheduling, and 2) because understanding the standard conventions of written English helps students read more fluently.</p> <p>Reading and Speaking Fluency: When a student is reading fluently, he is reading smoothly, naming the words correctly and automatically, using appropriate phrasing and attending to the punctuation. When one listens to a fluent reader, one is able to pay attention to the meaning of the passage. More important, the student who is reading fluently is able to pay attention to the meaning of the passage. He does not have to stop and take apart words to decode them—they have become sight words, and he can read with automaticity.</p> <p>GUM (Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics): When students write, the writing must make sense to other people. Thus, it is important that students learn the standard conventions of written English, including usage, mechanics, and capitalization and punctuation. Research tells us that the most useful way to teach these conventions is through the use of good models, as well as through the use of targeted mini lessons in the editing stages of writing.</p>

The Five Components of the Grades 3-5 ALL Block and How Each Promotes Proficiency and Growth (continued)

<p>WRITING PRACTICE Writing fluency practice; quick-writes; additional practice with specific skills</p>	<p>Students need to write for different purposes—broadly, they need to write to learn for themselves, and they need to write to construct and communicate meaning for other people. Within this broad construct of “writing practice,” students need to become fluent with writing, and they need specific skills of writing structure and craft.</p> <p>Writing fluency: Fluent writers are not stopped by any of the physical or cognitive aspects of writing. They are comfortable with the pencil and/or the keyboard and they are not hindered by questions of where to begin or how to connect ideas in writing. Fluent writers also have writing stamina—they are comfortable with a grade-appropriate task and can sustain it for an appropriate amount of time.</p> <p>Writing to learn: Students need many opportunities to write brief summaries of what they think they know, reflect on the significance of an idea with which they’ve been working, or respond to a thought-provoking question. When students use writing in these ways, they are literally learning and discovering from the act of writing itself, and all students need these opportunities frequently.</p> <p>Writing to communicate: Ultimately, we teach students to write so that they can communicate their thinking to others—clearly, accurately, and effectively. In addition to the huge, fundamental importance of knowledge and understanding in writing, our curriculum emphasizes the importance of teaching students clear structure and craft as tools to make their knowledge and understanding clear to others.</p>
<p>WORD STUDY, VOCABULARY Structural analysis of specific words; vocabulary work from module content</p>	<p>Word Study: In the primary grades, students have an entire block (the K-2 Reading Foundations Skills Block) devoted to foundational reading skills such as decoding, spelling, and fluency. In grades 3-5, “word study” is still important but is approached differently. Research tells us that readers in intermediate grades benefit from a more contextualized approach to teaching phonics and word recognition (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2003; Bloodgood & Pacifici, 2004). Students at these grades still need phonics instruction about how words are built, including syllabication patterns and more complex spelling patterns, but they also need an increased focus on the morphology of words (i.e., affixes and roots) as it relates to word meaning. Therefore, the ALL Block gives students opportunities to practice with all of these aspects of word study in a variety of activities, including vocabulary games, vocabulary squares, and Frayer Models.</p> <p>Vocabulary: Recent research also emphasizes the need for and benefit of a large vocabulary in terms of one’s ability to read rich and complex text. When vocabulary is deficient, the achievement gap looms large—vocabulary is highly related to student achievement in every way. For these reasons, explicit vocabulary instruction is a key feature of our grades 3-5 curriculum. Besides this explicit vocabulary instruction, students get a great deal of implicit instruction in general academic and domain-specific vocabulary through exposure to many complex (and less complex) informational texts, and some literary texts as well. In the ALL Block students have additional time to practice module-related word analysis through word study games and activities.</p>

Each day in the 3-5 ALL Block, students rotate through three of the five components, as follows:

- Accountable Independent Reading (20 minutes)
- Independent activity (using a task card to guide their work) (20 minutes)
- Teacher-guided activity (20 minutes)

The activities are differentiated based on student need and include a specific strand for English language learners (ELLs).

The Structure of the Grades 3-5 ALL Block

As noted previously, certain aspects of the literacy work in the module lessons require that students get more practice in order to achieve mastery. This happens in the ALL Block. These two hours of instruction are complementary, working together to accelerate the achievement of all students. The ALL Block is organized in units, just like the

The Relationship between the Module Lessons and the ALL Block

Accountable Independent Reading / Volume of Reading in the Module Lessons	Accountable Independent Reading / Volume of Reading in the ALL Block
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 minutes daily accountable independent reading for homework at a range of levels; students respond to a prompt in their reading journal • Students are held accountable for their reading through discussion with their peers and teacher checks of their reading journals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional time for independent reading at range of levels, building more content and domain-specific knowledge • Some free choice reading (every other week), to build on students' motivation and interests
Complex text in the Module Lessons	Complex text in the ALL Block
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and reread complex text about the module's content • Frequent supported close reading • Figure out words from context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reread same complex texts from module lessons • Deepen comprehension of text and content
Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM in the Module Lessons	Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM in the ALL Block
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I show empathy. This means I try to understand how others feel. • I behave with integrity. This means I do the right thing even when it is hard. • I show respect. This means I treat myself, others, and the environment with care. • I show compassion. This means I notice when people are sad or upset and reach out to help them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and Speaking Fluency: Practice reading aloud texts from module lessons; set goals and monitor progress • GUM: Further practice (e.g., students practice revising sentences based on the grammar rules they have learned in module lessons)
Writing in the Module Lessons	Writing Practice in the ALL Block
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent opportunities to “write to learn” (e.g., short writes, reflections, assessment questions, exit tickets) • Writing structures: expository and narrative • Specific instruction on elements and craft of writing (e.g., focus statements, conclusions, linking words, organization of ideas, character development, narrative techniques) • Writing process: building content knowledge; planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued practice to develop fluency; short writes • Continued scaffolding of elements of writing (e.g., for “explaining evidence,” thoughtful conclusions)
Word Study/Vocabulary in the Module Lessons	Word Study/Vocabulary in the ALL Block
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with words emerging from complex texts related to content and words of general academic value that cut across many domains with an emphasis on morphology, syllabication, spelling • Use of vocabulary protocols, routines, and tools to figure out meaning of new words; use of new words in writing—both domain-specific and general academic vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice with word analysis of additional words from text • Work with two academic words per week; practice using the words in context • Work with additional domain-specific words found in research reading and independent reading • Word study games and activities

How do the 3-5 ALL Block rotations work?

Over the course of a two-week ALL Block unit, students rotate through all five components in a mix of heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings in consistent and predictable ways.

During the first two units of Module 1, students are introduced to each component gradually through whole group instruction, small group teacher-guided instruction, and independent work. They don't start working with all five components in a consistent two-week cycle, which will last for the remainder of the year, until Unit 3 of Module 1.

Each day in the ALL Block, students rotate through three components:

- Accountable Independent Reading (20 minutes)
- Independent activity (in heterogeneous groups, with a task card to guide their work; e.g., Reading Fluency and GUM) (20 minutes)
- Teacher-guided activity (in homogeneous groups, including a separate strand for ELLs; e.g., Additional Work with Complex Text) (20 minutes)

The teacher-guided activities are differentiated based on student need.

■ = **Below-grade level**

● = **On-grade level**

◆ = **Above-grade level**

▲ = **English language learners**

Note: These are NOT four static levels. Rather, at the start of each week, the teacher plans student levels for the teacher-guided activities based on student needs.

For example, for the Additional Work with Complex Text teacher-guided activities this week, Ms. Henderson may determine Nathan requires the below-grade level (■) instruction, due to the demands of the texts and to provide the additional support she noticed Nathan needed (based on his ongoing assessment in module lessons). But she may determine that, for Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM, Nathan would benefit from the above-grade level (u) instruction, since he has shown a clear understanding of modal auxiliaries (the GUM rule students will focus on this week).

The charts that follow lay out the two-week cycle of the 3-5 ALL Block. As you can see, during each two-week cycle, students will have two sessions of teacher-led instruction and two independent sessions in each of the ALL Block components (except for Accountable Independent Reading, which happens every day). They will also have two flex days during the two-week cycle. The day of the week you assign as a flex day will depend on your schedule and the needs of your students. The sample calendar in each unit also provides suggestions for when to take flex days. In the charts that follow, it is listed as the final day of the week; however, it could also be the first day of the week so students can finish a significant piece of work from the previous week, for example, or in the middle of the week so students can practice a specific skill they will be assessed on in a module assessment on the final day.

Week 1

	Rotation (20 min) Teacher-Guided Homogeneous Grouping	Rotation (20 min) Independent Heterogeneous Grouping	Rotation (20 min) Independent Heterogeneous Grouping
Day 1	Reading Fluency and GUM	Additional Work with Complex Text	Accountable Independent Reading
Day 2	Additional Work with Complex Text	Reading Fluency and GUM	Accountable Independent Reading
Day 3	Reading Fluency and GUM	Additional Work with Complex Text	Accountable Independent Reading
Day 4	Additional Work with Complex Text	Reading Fluency and GUM	Accountable Independent Reading
Flex Day	Flex Day: Use according to student need. For example: Whole group instruction practicing the GUM rule students have been practicing in GUM this week, or to address an unanticipated confusion about a text.		

Week 2

	Rotation (20 min) Teacher-Guided Homogeneous Grouping	Rotation (20 min) Independent Heterogeneous Grouping	Rotation (20 min) Independent Heterogeneous Grouping
Day 1	Writing Fluency	Word Study and Vocabulary	Accountable Independent Reading
Day 2	Word Study and Vocabulary	Writing Fluency	Accountable Independent Reading
Day 3	Writing Fluency	Word Study and Vocabulary	Accountable Independent Reading
Day 4	Word Study and Vocabulary	Writing Fluency	Accountable Independent Reading
Flex Day	Flex Day: Use according to student need. For example: Finish the writing students have been working on in Writing Practice this week, or give more time for students to revise their final performance task.		

There is one teacher guide per component, per week. Symbols embedded in the instructions on the teacher guides indicate differentiation for four levels: below, on, and above grade level, and ELLs. Differentiated student materials, marked with the same symbols, are provided for when students are working with the teacher.

There is one Student Task Card per component, per week. When working independently, all students work on the same task card, regardless of level, in order to support one another, and to encourage academic discourse. Independent task cards have a “More Challenge” section for students who either finish quickly or need additional rigor.

What might a day in the Grades 3-5 ALL Block look like?

The scenario below describes a typical day for fourth-grade teacher Ms. Henderson and one of her students, Sergei.

On Monday, Ms. Henderson leveled her students based on their strengths, challenges, and needs for the two teacher-guided components of this week's ALL Block: Additional Work with Complex Text and Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM. To determine student levels, throughout Unit 1 Ms. Henderson observed students reading aloud and discussing the answers to close reading questions during module lessons, and she also reviewed specific student work products after lessons.

In this week's Additional Work with Complex Text component, students will be navigating and reading their animal expert group webpages. Sergei is an English language learner (ELL) who reads accurately, but who struggles with comprehension and is easily overwhelmed by a lot of text. Ms. Henderson knows he will benefit from the specifically designed ELL instruction that focuses on comprehending the meaning of just a few key sentences about his expert group animal, so she determines that the ELL instruction for Additional Work with Complex Text (▲) will be the most useful for him.

In this week's Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM component, students will be analyzing how modal auxiliaries such as can, could, may, might, shall, and will change the meaning of sentences. Although Sergei is an ELL, Ms. Henderson knows from observing his work and discussion of this skill in the module lessons that he has a very clear understanding of this content, and that he will not be challenged by the instruction for ELLs. She thinks the instruction for students working below-grade level (■) will be a better fit.

Ms. Henderson creates a list for her own reference showing which level each student will be working on for each of the two components this week. Below, we show a sampling of this list. (Note: Students do not need to know which level they have been assigned; when calling the groups, Ms. Henderson can refer to her list and call students by name.)

Student Name	Additional Work with Complex Text	Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM
Sergei	ELL	Below
Nathan	On	Above
Alma	On	On
Sara	ELL	Below
David	On	On
Juan	Below	ELL

Ms. Henderson now has mapped out the needs of her learners into four levels, but there are only three 20-minute blocks of time in each ALL Block hour for teacher-guided instruction. Grouping recommendations for each component are suggested in the Unit Overview.

In this week's Additional Work with Complex Text component, Ms. Henderson sees the recommendation is:

- Group 1: ▲ (ELLs)
- Group 2: ■ (below grade level)
- Group 3: ●◆ (on and above grade level)

Having looked at the instruction before leveling students, Ms. Henderson realizes that ELLs are working in a group on their own because they will participate in a Language Dive that other students might not benefit from.

In this week’s Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM component, Ms. Henderson sees the recommendation is:

- Group 1: ■ (below grade level)
- Group 2: ● (on grade level)
- Group 3: ▲◆ (above grade level and ELLs)

Ms. Henderson realizes that the grouping of students working above grade level with ELLs will provide ELLs with the opportunity to hear native speakers use modal auxiliaries, and will give above grade level students increased responsibility as they practice peer support and coaching.

Tuesday morning, students worked on Module 2, Unit 2, Lesson 2. In this module lesson, students are preparing to research a particular animal with a unique defense mechanism in expert groups in order to write an informational piece about their animal. They have closely read a complex text as a whole group and have been practicing using modal auxiliaries.

According to the sample calendar for this unit, the corresponding ALL Block work for this module lesson is Unit 2, Day 2. So now, after lunch, students are beginning their additional hour of literacy time with Unit 2, Day 2 of the ALL Block.

Ms. Henderson knows that Week 1, Day 2 always includes teacher-guided Additional Work with Complex Text (homogeneous groups). While she leads three 20-minute sessions of differentiated Additional Work with Complex Text instruction, students read independently, or work independently on the Day 2 section of the Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM task card for this week.

At the start of the ALL Block hour, she calls out the names of the students in Group 1: ELLs (▲), including Sergei, who makes his way over to her.

The other students have two choices about how to spend these first 20 minutes: either Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM or Independent Reading. Each student makes a choice, then heads over to the appropriate table/area for that component. They see the materials Ms. Henderson has organized for them, and they dig in.

In Ms. Henderson’s teacher-led additional work with complex text group for ELLs, students participate in a Language Dive about one particular sentence about the armadillo—specifically on how the words when and however are used. They think of sentences about their expert group animals that include the words when and however and say them aloud to an “elbow partner.” They then share them with the group, and Ms. Henderson repeats them back and writes them on the chart paper. While Sergei knows students in other groups will read more than just one sentence, he is pleased he now has a deep understanding of the sentence and will be able to apply it to read other sentences with similar structures.

After 20 minutes, Ms. Henderson gives the signal and calls the names of students in group 2 (below grade level) to go to work with her. The ELLs choose a component to work on independently. Sergei chooses to work on Reading and Fluency/GUM first, and in that area of the room he picks up a task card. He knows he is expected to complete the Day 2 portion of the task card in the given time. After a reminder from Ms. Henderson, the students at the Reading and Fluency/GUM table all focus their attention on the ALL Independent Group Work protocol posted on the wall to allocate a facilitator and timekeeper, and begin.

After 20 minutes, Ms. Henderson calls the names of students in group 3 (on and above grade level) to go to work with her. She invites the other students to move to their final component. For Sergei, this will be Accountable Independent Reading. He retrieves his research reading book, independent reading journal, and vocabulary log and heads over to the independent reading area. He knows these task cards well because he has used them many times before, so he and the rest of the group working on this component are able to get straight to work.

Frequently asked questions about the 3-5 ALL Block:

Do I teach all five of the components each week?

No. Students work on three components each week. Independent reading happens both weeks and is not instructed (students follow a task card). Each week, students receive instruction on two of the other four components.

Why does independent reading happen every day in the ALL Block?

Research confirms that the more one reads, the more one knows—about the topic, about vocabulary, about syntax, even about related topics. With this firmly in mind, volume of reading is a daily feature of the Additional Language and Literacy Block. During Week 1 of each unit, students read topic-related texts in order to build knowledge and vocabulary on the topic. During Week 2 of a unit, students read free choice texts in order to encourage a love of reading.

Are there formal assessments in the ALL Block?

No; however, there are opportunities for informal assessment through checklists that teachers can use for progress monitoring. See Module 1 Appendices (specifically the Grades 3-5 Informal Checklists).

Should my ELLs be in the same homogeneous group for the entire hour?

No. Students are grouped homogeneously for teacher-guided instruction to receive targeted instruction when their needs are specific and precise. However, students are grouped heterogeneously during their independent work on task cards so that they have the support of peer coaches and the opportunity to speak with and learn from others.

There are only three 20-minute components, but four student levels. Why?

In order to understand this, it may help to reread the narrative about Sergei earlier in this document. There are three components because that is what is strategic and logistically feasible for a one-hour block. There are four levels because students have specific needs. To understand how to determine student levels, consider your students' specific needs. For example, for Additional Work with Complex Text, you may wish to group students working below grade level (■) with your ELLs (▲) because both types of learners will benefit from working together on a Language Dive.

How do I determine which of the four levels individual students best fit into currently (for each component)?

At the beginning of each week, the teacher determines which of the four levels each student should work at for the components that week. Data to determine this can be based on:

- Observational assessment of students in module lessons and also in previous units of the ALL Block—for example, hearing students reading aloud and listening as they discuss answers when reading texts closely. Informal assessment checklists are provided for teachers in the Module 1 Appendices to support this process.
- Reviewing completed student work products from both module lessons and the ALL Block components (for example, graphic organizers, note-catchers, QuickWrites, and exit tickets.)
- From the results of mid- and end of unit assessments.

Determining students' current levels is most challenging in Module 1, because teachers may not have had the opportunity to gather data about student achievement at this point in the year. When working with students who

participated in the module lessons and 3-5 ALL Block in the previous grade, data gathered from tracking progress over the course of the previous year should be available to inform leveling decisions in Module 1. If data from the previous year is unavailable, in Units 1 and 2 of Module 1 the placement of students does not need to be precise, because the focus of the first two units of the ALL Block is on students becoming used to the structure and the components, and learning to self-manage as they work independently in heterogeneous groups while the teacher works with a homogeneous group. By Unit 3, sufficient data should have been collected from the Units 1 and 2 module lessons, assessments, and the ALL Block as outlined in the following example:

Example: Determining Students' Levels for 3M1 Unit 3

In Week 1 of the ALL Block for Grade 3, Module 1, Unit 3, students are reading excerpts of text aloud for Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM. To level students, informal assessment of students reading aloud can be conducted during the Unit 2 module lessons, specifically in Lessons 4, 5, 7, 8, and 12 when students are reading aloud expert group texts. Teaching Notes in those lessons recommend using the Reading Fluency Checklist in the Module 1 Appendices to informally assess student reading fluency. The four levels on this rubric (1-4) can help teachers level students. For example, those students scoring mostly in column 4 will be leveled above grade level for Reading and Speaking Fluency/GUM in Unit 3 of the ALL Block.

In Additional Work with Complex Text, students are reading and analyzing a model essay, specifically identifying main ideas and supporting details. Informal assessment of students answering questions in close reads in Lessons 2 and 5 of Unit 2, and reviewing students' close reading note-catchers completed during these lessons, can be used to inform how to place students for this component. Results of the Mid-Unit 2 Assessment can also be used to determine the level at which students are currently working. For example, students who incorrectly answered all questions assessing RI.3.2 will most likely be in placed in the below grade level.

Determining student levels is for the purpose of grouping students for teacher-guided activities and is not shared with the students. Grouping is flexible, so, for example, students may be on-grade level for Reading and Speaking Fluency in Unit 1, but show significant enough progress by Unit 3 to be leveled above grade level for this component. This progress may have been observed in module lessons, work products completed during the module lessons, formal mid- and end of unit assessments, or in previous units of the ALL Block.

What do students do when not with the teacher? How can they complete meaningful high-quality work without support?

Students work independently in heterogeneous groups (including ELLs) following a protocol that guides them through the completion of a task card. Heterogeneous grouping enables students to use their strengths to support one another. In Module 1, students learn the routines for the ALL Block and how to work independently, including learning how to be an effective peer coach. This helps build student independence while leaving the teacher free to focus on the small group instruction.

What is the difference between the ALL Block Group Work protocol and the Student Task Cards? Do students follow both?

The ALL Block Group Work protocol is used in all components when students are working independently. It is a more general protocol, guiding students through the process of reading and completing any task card. By contrast, task cards are for a specific component on a specific activity.

When working independently, how do students get help when they need it?

Students are encouraged to ask their peers for help. If, after reading the task card and asking peers, students still are unsure or have questions that peers are unable to answer, they have a signal card (which teachers prepare in

advance): red on one side and green on the other. Students can flip it over to show red to indicate they need teacher support or green to show they are able to work independently.

If I am using the Grades 3-5 module lessons and the Additional Language and Literacy Block, do I still need my other standalone programs (for example, spelling, grammar, or word work)?

No. The module lessons have been designed to teach and assess all of the literacy standards. And the ALL Block then gives students the differentiated practice and support required to demonstrate mastery on those skills. And because the module lessons and ALL Block are based on the same content topic, learning is made stronger and more coherent for students, and more manageable for teachers, than if using a patchwork of standalone programs.

What should I do to support students in my class who still have significant struggles with phonics and decoding?

Based on the standards, by third grade, students are expected to have mastered the phonics and decoding skills described in the K–2 Foundational Reading standards. But realistically, not all students will have done so. The ALL Block is not designed for remediation, although skillful teachers certainly can differentiate for these students during this time. We highly recommend that students who are significantly behind on reading foundations receive targeted intervention and support, based on resources provided in EL Education’s K-2 Reading Foundations Skills Block.

What about guided reading?

Educators use the term “guided reading” to mean many things. So first, it is important that we have a shared understanding of what we mean by this phrase. EL Education does not include a formal guided reading component during which students would be working in small, homogeneous groups with leveled texts. Instead, all students work with grade-level complex text (during the module lessons), and all students work with texts they can access independently (both texts on the module topic and texts of students’ choice). Students have fluency practice during module lessons and receive additional support working with complex text during the ALL Block. If your school or district has more than two hours per day for literacy instruction, you could include guided reading above and beyond the EL Education curriculum. But the EL Education comprehensive curriculum, as it stands, does not require guided reading as well.

Why is the ALL Block for a given module only six weeks long, when the module lessons are eight weeks?

In the module lessons, the length of a unit can vary from two to three weeks. In order to maintain a routine structure that both teachers and students can become comfortable and familiar with to promote a self-managed classroom, the ALL Block is always a standard length of time, two weeks, with the same routine repeated for each unit. The additional time can be used as flex days to support the specific needs of students (for example, rereading a complex text that students have struggled with, or practicing a grammar rule that students are having difficulty putting into practice). See the sample calendar for each unit.

What if my school does not provide two hours of literacy instruction?

For Grades 3-5, EL Education’s core literacy curriculum is designed as 120 minutes of daily instruction: 60 minutes for the module lessons and 60 minutes for the ALL Block. It is essential that the ALL Block receive a full hour, to ensure students have the opportunity for differentiated practice and support to meet the demands of the rigorous new standards.