

Preparing to Teach a Module: Guidance for Coaches and Teacher Leaders

Welcome to EL Education Grades 3-8 ELA Curriculum. Before teaching the modules, we encourage you to have detailed conversations with teachers and school-based teams. Through a process of structured analysis, outlined in this document, teachers will gain a better understanding of the learning progression of each module, the content knowledge that students build, and key components of the scaffolding toward standards. This analysis also will ensure that teachers understand the modules deeply before making adaptations.

The modules were designed based on the “backward design” curriculum approach. We recommend that you get a sense of the big picture before you dig into the lesson-level details. We have organized this document in a “zoom-like” structure, beginning with suggestions for how to analyze the year-long overview documents, then zooming in to the module, unit, and lesson levels.

Orienting to the Year: Curriculum Maps and Overview Documents

Two Months Before Teaching the Modules	Orient your team to the year-long curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convene your Curriculum Council, or other instructional decision making group, ideally in a two-hour professional development session.• Dig into the grade-level Curriculum Maps. They help your teams understand existing modules at each grade level (including A and B options), how each module builds on the preceding module, and when and how often each standard is assessed.• Notice the strong content connections.• Understand the “focus” of each module, such as “close reading” or “research,” so that teachers can make decisions about where to prioritize time.• Think about the school-wide systems and structures for independent reading and additional literacy instruction that need to be in place for the modules to be implemented most effectively.
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Please note that we have discontinued the first edition of our Grades 3-5 ELA curriculum. However, this document is still relevant to support the implementation of the Grades 6-8 ELA curriculum published in 2012.

To learn more about the EL Education K-5 Language Arts Curriculum, including the 3-5 Language Arts (Second Edition), please visit our website Curriculum.ELeducation.org/Tools.

<p>Description of Curriculum Maps</p>	<p>Curriculum Maps include the following information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Module focus</u> (e.g., “close reading” or “research”) is consistent across grades 3–5 and 6–8. 2. <u>Module title</u> names the content that students learn about as they build their literacy skills. 3. <u>Module description</u> is a three- or four-sentence blurb that conveys the “arc” or learning progression of the module. 4. <u>Performance task</u> is a culminating writing project, including the standards addressed. 5. <u>Assessments</u> include the title of the assessment, the assessment format, and standards assessed. 6. <u>Standards assessed</u> indicates (with check marks) all standard formally assessed (other standards may be taught and reinforced). 7. <u>Text(s)</u> signals central text(s) schools or districts order, and other texts included in the module lessons.
<p>Analyze the Curriculum Maps</p>	<p>As you analyze the Curriculum Maps, consider how the modules connect to your building and/or district priorities. For example, if your district or school has curriculum maps in place for coverage of science and social studies content, how can modules and standards covered in each module fit into that agreed-upon scope and sequence?</p> <p>On Commoncoresuccess.education.org, find the “resources” tab that contains stand-alone documents that give the “big picture.”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preface to the Modules: Introduction to EL Education Grades 3-8 ELA Curriculum. 2. Appendix: Resources and Protocols: Descriptions of the instructional routines used across all modules. 3. Foundational Reading and Language Standards Resources Package for Grades 3–5. To support reading beyond the modules, Grades 3–5. Includes Overview, Word Study Recommendations, Additional Work with Complex Texts, Fluency Resource, Show the Rule™ Overview, Independent Reading. 4. Common Core Interventions for Adolescent Readers. To support reading beyond the modules, grades 6-8. Includes Overview, Word Study and Vocabulary, Additional Work with Related Texts, Fluency Resource, Syntax and Mechanics, Independent Reading, and Sample Schedule. 5. Assessment Design in EL Education Grades 3-8 ELA Curriculum 6. Writing Instruction in EL Education Grades 3-8 ELA Curriculum 7. Teaching Research Skills in EL Education Grades 3-8 ELA Curriculum 8. Helping Students Read Closely in EL Education Grades 3-8 ELA Curriculum 9. A Guide to Supporting English Language Learners in EL Education Grades 3-8 ELA Curriculum 10. Scaffolding Student Needs – <i>Coming Soon</i>

Analyze the Curriculum Maps (continued)	<p>If your school or district is using only select modules, be clear about which ones and why. For example, if your students are already strong close readers, you might use only select units from Module 1. Or, because opinion writing features prominently on state assessments, you might prioritize Module 3 [Grades 3–5] or Module 2 [Grades 6–8] before those tests occur.</p>
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Orienting to a Module

One Month Before Teaching the Modules	<p>Orient your team to the module-level documents and components.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a planning meeting that involves all collaborators on a given classroom’s instruction (general education teachers, special education co-teachers, reading specialists, teachers of ELLs, etc.) to understand the “arc” or “story” of students’ learning: both the design and flow of the content and assessments and how all of students’ work builds toward the performance task. • Have the team take notes using a framework that EL Education calls the “4 T’s”: What is the <i>topic</i> of this module? What is the <i>text</i>? What are the learning <i>targets</i> (the standards, in student-friendly language) that students will be working to master? And what is the <i>task</i> (the performance task and the six other assessments)?
Description of Module Components	<p>Three module-level documents describe the vision of the module – the “big picture” of what students will learn during the eight weeks of instruction:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Module Overview 2. Assessment Overview 3. Performance Task <p>Each module also includes the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommended Texts lists (one per module for grades 6–8, one per unit for grades 3–5): texts with a range of Lexile® measures on the module topic, used for independent reading to build students’ knowledge on the topic of the module. 2. Unit Overviews (three per module): similar in format to the module-level overview 3. Lessons, including supporting materials (34–40 lessons/module)
Analyze the Module Level Documents	<p>Here is a recommended path and questions to help your team analyze the modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Overview: Read the <u>summary paragraph</u> closely. It describes students’ learning across the three units of the module. What is this module mostly about?

**Analyze the
Module Level
Documents
(continued)**

- **Module Overview:** Read the short paragraph that describes the performance task. How will students be asked to synthesize and show their learning at the end of the module?
- **Performance Task:** Read about the criteria for this task. What format is used? What standards are addressed? What supports are given? What are options to modify or extend the learning or put your own stamp on it as a teacher?
- **Module Overview:** Locate the chart with the English Language Arts outcomes, which lists the standards addressed. Study the actual language of the standards. What does the Common Core expect the students to know and be able to do during this module? What might that look like or sound like in action? Be sure to consider available language progressions for English Language Learners.
- **Module Overview:** Read the list of texts. What is/are the central text(s)? What else do students read?
- **Module Overview:** Skim the Week-at-a-Glance chart, which gives a sense of what students will do and learn each week.
 - Notice the length of each unit. Where will the students spend the majority of their time?
 - When and how often are each of the standards taught and assessed?
 - What will the students be asked to know and do in each assessment?
 - How would you explain how the three units connect (in terms of both knowledge and skills)?
- **Assessment Overview:** Read the description and standards for each mid- and end of unit assessment. What literacy skills are students focused on?

NOTE: We urge teachers to know the central text thoroughly before teaching it. Read the central text(s) yourself. If possible, discuss it with colleagues.

- What is this text about? What did you learn about this topic/issue/content?
- What is intriguing, surprising, puzzling about the information in this text?
- What is hard or confusing about the information in this text?
- As an adult reader, what did you notice and/or appreciate about this author's craft?
- What do you think will engage students about this text? Where might they struggle?

Analyze the Module Level Documents (continued)	<p>Consider any specific scaffolds that need to be planned at the module level.¹ See A Guide to Supporting English Language Learners and Scaffolding Student Needs. For example, how might you use the Recommended Texts lists to build students’ background knowledge? What additional supports might specific students need to succeed with the performance task?</p>
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Orienting to a Unit

Two Weeks Before Teaching the Unit	<p>Orient your team to the Unit Overview document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a planning meeting that involves all collaborators on a given classroom’s instruction (general education teachers, special education co-teachers, reading specialists, teachers of ELLs, etc.). • Discuss how supporting structures such as Resource Room and Intervention classes can prepare students for classroom instruction. • Read each Unit Overview document closely to see the “big picture” of the unit. As you read, keep in mind how each unit fits into the larger three-unit structure of the module. How do units build on one another? Focus on the Unit-at-a-Glance chart.
Description of Unit Overviews	<p>The Unit Overviews (three per module) give a deeper and more focused look into what the students will be learning and doing throughout the module. Unit Overviews follow the same format as the Module Overview: summary, guiding questions, assessment descriptions, standards, central texts, and Unit-at-a-Glance chart.</p> <p>The <u>Unit-at-a-Glance chart</u> is an especially important component of the Unit Overview. Teachers repeatedly reference this chart to understand the arc of the unit, how lessons build toward assessments, scaffolding (including key anchor charts), protocols used across the unit, as well as when each shorter text is introduced and how much time is recommended to spend on each.</p> <p>At the end of each Unit Overview, a section on <u>Preparation and Materials</u>, as well as optional <u>Extensions</u> to go deeper with the content of the module, offers various creative and engaging activities.</p>

¹ The suggestions in the Meeting Students’ Needs columns often are lesson-specific. They are based on the more general recommendations found in two separate guidance documents: **Scaffolding Students’ Needs** (to come) and **A Guide to Supporting English Language Learners**, which can be found in the resources tab at commoncoresuccess.education.org.

Analyze Unit Overviews and Assessments

Anyone teaching a module needs to analyze all three units. If your team uses a “Jigsaw” structure to divide and conquer the analysis of the three units, be sure to revisit each unit thoroughly on your own before teaching. If your time is limited, prioritize analyzing how the units work together to create the arc of the entire module. Then chunk the unit into two halves and focus on how the lessons in each half scaffold toward the assessments: What is expected of students and how do the lessons get them there?

Read all three Unit Overviews, considering the arc of the module:

- What are the skills (standards-based long-term learning targets) that students are learning?
- What are the outcomes (products and understandings)?
- In addition to the central text(s), what do students read?
- How do all these—the literacy, the content, and the texts—connect to one another?

We suggest this process for rereading each Unit Overview:

- Read the summary paragraph to understand the “story” of the unit.
- Analyze the Unit-at-a-Glance chart. Note lesson Titles and Long-term and Supporting Learning Targets. What specific thinking will students need to do? How do lessons scaffold to the mid-unit and end-of-unit assessments?
- Use the Unit-at-a-Glance chart to locate which lessons hold the mid-unit and end of unit assessments.
- Go to these actual **lessons** that hold the mid-unit and end-of unit assessments. In each lesson, scroll down to the Supporting Materials to find the assessment itself. Take the assessment yourself, as a learner, to identify what the students are going to need to be able to do. What literacy skills or knowledge did this assessment require?
- Chunk the unit in two halves: lessons leading up to the mid-unit assessment and lessons leading up to the end of unit assessment. How would you describe the logic or sequence of each half unit?

Consider any specific scaffolds that need to be planned at the unit level. (See **Scaffolding Student Needs** and **A Guide to Supporting English Language Learners**.)

Preparing to Teach a Lesson

<p>One Week Before Teaching a Lesson</p>	<p>Orient your team to the lesson format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a planning meeting that involves all collaborators on a given classroom’s instruction (general education teachers, special education co-teachers, reading specialists, teachers of ELLs, etc.) • Emphasize ways to match module lessons to learners’ needs while maintaining each lesson’s rigor and alignment to the Common Core and the shifts. • Familiarize yourself with the lesson format and the purpose of each box on the lesson template. Analyze and prepare lessons in half-unit chunks (leading up to each assessment), so you can still see the forest for the trees. Determine what supporting target is the “heart” of each lesson. What seems most important to emphasize or foreground in instruction, given the assessment that students are building toward?
<p>Description of the Lessons</p>	<p>There are 34–40 lessons per module. Lessons provide detailed descriptions of what to teach and suggestions on how to teach it in engaging, rigorous ways. The lessons are not scripts, but offer specific suggestions for learning activities, protocols, questions to ask, and student responses to listen for. All lessons include supporting materials, which are key to the learning and scaffolding toward assessments.</p> <p>Teachers should expect to flex lessons in order to meet students’ needs, but make sure to maintain focus on the learning targets that a given lesson addresses. Skills taught in lessons spiral over time, so there is no need to linger on a given lesson until all students achieve “mastery.” Students practice similar skills often across a unit.</p> <p>All lessons have three sections: Opening, Work Time, and Closing and Assessment.</p> <p>Each lesson includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Title</u>: succinctly name the literacy skills students will work on and content they will learn about • <u>Long-Term Learning Targets</u>: The CCSS that are the focus of the lesson • <u>Supporting Learning Targets</u>: the intended learning for this particular lesson • <u>Ongoing Assessment</u>: one or more tasks that give teachers formative assessment data regarding students’ mastery of the key learning. • <u>Agenda</u>: a snapshot of the day’s activities • <u>Teaching Notes</u>: These signal how this lesson links to the lessons before and after it, illuminate the intent of the lesson (e.g., what standard is the thrust of the lesson or if a new standard is being introduced), give tips about important things to keep in mind (e.g., “Don’t give this away to students” or “Don’t worry if students are confused here; they return to this again), and guide teachers on what to prepare in advance.

<p>Description of the Lessons (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Lesson Vocabulary</u>: words explicitly addressed. Note the division signaled by the semicolon. Words before the semicolon are academic vocabulary taught during the course of instruction (explicit instruction, unpacking targets, etc.); words after the semicolon are any vocabulary (academic and domain specific) from the text itself. • <u>Materials</u>: a concise list of all requisite materials. • <u>Meeting Students’ Needs column</u>: suggestions for differentiation and additional scaffolding (for students who are struggling, ELLs, and students needing challenge extensions²). • <u>Supporting Materials</u>: the actual materials needed to run the lesson (includes graphic organizers, handouts, short texts, close reading guides, examples for teacher reference, etc.) <p>Many lessons refer to Protocols or Checking for Understanding techniques that can be found in the Appendix.</p>
<p>Analyze Lessons and Supporting Materials</p>	<p>When analyzing the lessons, keep your students’ needs in mind. Some lessons may need adaptation. Be sure any adjustments you make align to the lessons’ learning targets, and that your students are the ones doing most of the reading, writing, thinking, and talking.</p> <p>When analyzing any lesson, <i>have the actual text from that lesson in your hand</i>: most activities link back to the text.</p> <p>Analyze and process the lesson enough to make it your own. Many teachers find it helpful to create a shortened cheat sheet agenda, annotate, PowerPoint, or SMART Board files. Breathe life into the lesson with your spirit, voice, expertise, and adjustments. Do not read the lesson verbatim with students.</p> <p>As noted in the “Orienting to a Unit” section above, read and analyze the actual assessments first:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is assessed? • How is it assessed? • What do the students need to know and be able to do? • What text(s) will the students read? How will they be expected to navigate the text? • What graphic organizers or note-catchers are used? Look for these in the lessons leading up to the assessment. • What is the format or design of the assessment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What types of questions are included? – What type(s) of writing is required?

² The suggestions in the Meeting Students’ Needs columns often are lesson-specific. They are based on more general recommendations found in **Scaffolding Students’ Needs** and **A Guide to Supporting English Language Learners** (see resources at commoncoresuccess.ededucation.org).

Analyze Lessons and Supporting Materials (continued)

We suggest two options for analyzing the lessons:

A. ORDER OF PRIORITY:

(Skim lesson, then chunk and reread closely based on what will help you best understand the “logic”)

1. Always start by thinking about your students. What do they know? What do they need?
2. Do a “first read” of the lesson all the way through to get the gist of what is being taught and how.
3. Analyze the lesson Title, Long-term and Supporting Learning Targets: What is the purpose of this lesson?
4. Reread the Teaching Notes, which help you understand the thinking of the curriculum designers.
5. Skip to the end of the lesson and examine the Supporting Materials.
6. Focus on the Ongoing Assessment box. How will the students show their mastery of the targets?
7. Skim the Lesson Vocabulary and Materials List. These will be revisited as you analyze the body of the lesson.
8. Reread the lesson:
 - Continually circle back to the Vocabulary and Materials List to see where it all fits.
 - Where does vocabulary work happen in the lesson?
 - What words may be most challenging for students?
 - In order to help ELLs understand key concepts, what scaffolds might be needed (e.g. visuals, glossaries, etc.)?
 - Are there words in the text that were not identified in the lesson vocabulary that need to be added, since students might find those words to be barriers to deep comprehension of the text?
 - Where and how is each material introduced/used? (Note that the first use is signaled with bold.)
 - What preparation must be done to have all materials ready?
 - Can you substitute materials and still hold the lesson’s integrity (e.g., sticky notes vs. highlighters)?
9. Complete the tasks that the students are asked to do, as a way to understand the thinking required of students. Use the graphic organizers and/or note-catchers from the lesson to go through the lesson as if you were a student, keeping in mind the metacognition of the lesson.
10. Read each section of the lesson to see how it builds to the intended outcome. Adjust with purpose in mind. This is where you can make the lesson your own (e.g., change the protocol).
 - Does the flow of the lesson make sense to you? Focus on the thinking and learning, not just the “doing” of the graphic organizers, handouts, etc.
 - Ask yourself, “Are we spending the bulk of the learning time on the key student thinking that drives toward the most important learning target(s)?”
 - What adaptations might you need to better meet the needs of your specific students?
 - Focus on the “setting up” for the task, which will ensure that most students can do the task itself without you having to reteach or intervene.

Analyze Lessons and Supporting Materials (continued)

- Prioritize the supporting learning targets. What is the “heart” of the lesson? Where is this lesson driving?
- Consider the lesson structure: Do students “grapple” first, or do you model? Why?
- What protocols or anchor charts are used? These often link to other lessons, so beware of adapting too much.
- What types of writing are expected?

11. Step back and think again about your students. What do they know? What do they need?

B. CHRONOLOGICAL:

(Skim, then chunk and reread from start to finish)

1. Always start by thinking about your students. What do they know? What do they need?
2. Do a “first read” of the lesson all the way through to get the gist of what is being taught and how.
3. Analyze the lesson Title, Long-term and Supporting Learning Targets: What is the purpose of this lesson?
4. Reread the lesson, stopping after each agenda step (including the Meeting Students’ Needs column). Keep in mind:
 - Does the flow of the lesson make sense to you?
 - What adaptations might you need to better meet the needs of your specific students?
5. Reread the Teaching Notes.
6. Reread the Long-term and Supporting Learning Targets, and notice how they align with the Ongoing Assessment or the mid-/end of unit assessment that this lesson builds toward.
7. Focus on Lesson Vocabulary and vocabulary instruction. See Option A above for questions to think about.
8. Review the actual supporting materials. See Option A above for questions to think about.
9. Reread the lesson itself. Read the Opening, Work Time, and Closing and Assessment to see how each step in the agenda builds to the intended outcome.
 - How does the lesson flow?
 - Does it make sense to you?
 - Does it connect to the learning targets?
 - How does this lesson tie to upcoming assessments? (Stay grounded in where the students are going.)
 - What types of things are the students asked to do in order to show their learning?
 - As a learner yourself, complete any tasks that the students are asked to do.
 - Note that at strategic points in the module, exemplars are provided for teacher reference.
 - Doing the tasks yourself will clarify the process that the students will need to go through—the thinking of a reader (metacognition). Keep in mind, “What am I doing as I read?” so that this can be part of any discussions and/or the debrief.

<p>Analyze Lessons and Supporting Materials (continued)</p>	<p>10. Examine the <u>Supporting Materials</u> (listed in the Materials box and provided at the end of each lesson).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What supporting materials are provided? - Understand how graphic organizers and note-catchers serve as scaffolding toward assessments. If you need to differentiate, be sure any new graphic organizer stays true to the targets and provides only the support that students truly need. <p>11. Step back and think again about your students. What do they know? What do they need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider and plan additional scaffolding. - What schema do they already have on the skill being assessed? - What do they not know? (For example, older students may already know that time and place describe the “setting.” There is no need to spend a lot of time on that even if it’s written in the lesson. Instead, spend time teaching that “culture” also describes the setting.) - What are the suggested grouping structures, and how will those serve your students? <p>If, after teaching a lesson, you determine that your students need more practice or reinforcement before an assessment, consider additional scaffolds you might need to put in place to meet students’ needs, remembering that students will be circling back to standards across a series of lessons.</p>
<p>One or Two Days Before Teaching a Lesson</p>	<p>At the bare minimum, do the following in preparation for daily instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim the lesson <u>Title</u>, <u>Long-term</u> and <u>Supporting Learning Targets</u>, and <u>Agenda</u>: What is the purpose of this lesson, and how do students achieve this purpose? • Locate the <u>Supporting Materials</u>, understand how they are used, and prepare materials as needed. • Reread the <u>Teaching Notes</u>: What do you need to be particularly mindful of in this lesson? • Skim the lesson, focusing on the asterisk (*) that indicates strategic questions for teachers to ask. • Consider your students. What do they know? What do they need?

Understanding the Backward Design Brings the Modules to Life

This document was designed to empower you and your colleagues to understand the “deep logic” of the modules so that you can make each module come alive for students. Careful analysis and preparation is the key to success. For teachers who are familiar with designing their own curriculum, it takes thought and study to “step into the brains” of the curriculum designers who crafted the modules. For teachers who may not ever have designed a curriculum using the backward planning model (i.e., planning with the end in mind, and then thinking through the scaffolding required to get students to that end goal), analyzing the module resources by “zooming in”—from the yearlong view, to the module level, to the unit level, and finally to the lesson level—is invaluable. Understanding the backward design logic will make it easier to feel the “story” of what students are learning and the structure of how the module scaffolds students toward mastery of the standards. Then, you can step into the design and make it your own.