

**[RBIS 1](#) [RBIS 2](#) [RBIS 3](#) [RBIS 4](#)****RLA RBIS 1: Explicit, systematic practice with literacy foundational skills****Warm-Up: Excerpt from Episode 1 of *Sold a Story* (Emily Hanford, 2022, APM Reports)**

Corinne Adams: OK. I'm Corinne Adams. I live in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. I have two kids. Six and two. Boy and a girl.

Her son is the older one. His name is Charlie. When she sent him off to kindergarten in the fall of 2019, Corinne had no concerns. One of the reasons she and her husband had moved to South Kingstown is everyone told them the schools were great. She had no idea how her son's school was teaching reading.

Adams: Who thinks about that? I don't know how to teach a child how to read, so I just assumed that the children I sent to school would come back to me literate. Cause that's what school does, right?

(Music)

At first, everything seemed fine. Charlie would come home with these little books – the same book every day for a week.

Adams: And you'd practice that book and send it back and that's what we did.

There were directions for the parents about how to read these books with their children.

Adams: It was like read the book to the child first. And then, eventually, the child will have practiced it enough that they'll read it and it'll be great, you know. And he would listen to me read it, pay very close attention to what I was saying, repeat that. And if it was a new book – "Mommy, you read it to me first."

Charlie wasn't interested in trying to read books she hadn't already read to him.

Adams: New books, like, freaked him out. He didn't want to do that.

She was a little concerned maybe he was just memorizing the books. They were pretty simple stories with predictable patterns. Sentences like: "I like to play with a train. I like to play with my dog." Charlie was able to read these books – but was he really reading? She wasn't sure. But the school said he was doing great.

Adams: They were telling me he was doing fine. They were telling me he was on level.

When Charlie did well on something in school, the teacher would send home a little note.

Adams: And he would get them all the time for like, "Great reading!" He would get them in his little backpack. And I'd be like, "Oh, you're doing so great!"

And then, March of 2020. The pandemic. (Music ends)

Suddenly, Corinne was in kindergarten too. Watching as Charlie and his classmates were being taught over Zoom.

Adams: So, we sit together, and I participate. You know, I help him make sure he can unmute himself and all that stuff.

Corinne's a stay-at-home mom. She wasn't juggling online school with another job. So she was watching pretty closely. And the reading instruction seemed kind of – odd to her.

Adams: They gave us, like, these strategies to follow.

These were things kids were supposed to do when they came to a word they didn't know. Strategies to figure out the word. They were things like – look at the picture. Look at the first letter of the word. Think of a word that makes sense. Corinne wanted to tell Charlie to sound out the word. But handouts coming from school were telling her that wasn't a good idea, that sounding out words should be a last resort.

Adams: So I was like, OK, well this is a new, different way. And I'm sure they understand what they're doing. Because I do remember sounding out. I do remember that activity.

But Charlie and his classmates were being taught to use these other strategies.

Teacher: (turning page) We're gonna look at our book, *Zelda and Ivy the Runaways*.

This is a video Charlie's teacher had her students watch during Zoom school in first grade. It's not Charlie's teacher in the video. But it's a lesson from the curriculum the school district was using.

Teacher: I'm gonna read a little bit of this story to you. And if I get stuck on a word, I want you to try to help me figure out what that word could be.

The teacher reads the story. The kids can see the words on the screen, they're following along as she reads. And then the teacher comes to a word that she's covered up with a little yellow sticky note.

Teacher: OK, so we're gonna stop right here on this covered word.

Adams: And the teacher says, "What could this word be? Let's look at the picture."

Teacher: We're gonna see if the picture helps us to figure out what that word would be.

The kids can't see the word. It's covered with the sticky note. So there's no way they can sound it out. They're just trying to figure out what the word could be based on what's going on in the story.

Teacher: If we think about what's happening so far in the story – we know Zelda and Ivy's dad made cucumber sandwiches for lunch. And Zelda and Ivy didn't want to eat the sandwiches, so they ran away. And now they think their mom and dad will...?

Will...what? Zelda and Ivy ran away and now they think their mom and dad will...scold them? Find them?

Teacher: Do you think that covered word could be the word “miss?”

Ah. Miss them.

Teacher: Could it be the word “miss”? Because now that they’re gone maybe their parents will *miss* them?

Full audio and transcript at <https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2022/10/20/sold-a-story-e1-the-problem>

### **Sample High-Quality Instructional Materials**

- [Amplify Lectoescritura, Grado 1, Conocimiento 2, Lección 6](#)
- [Amplify Texas Elementary Literacy Program, Grade 1, Unit 2, Lesson 1](#)

### **RLA RBIS 1: Foundational Skills Look-Fors**

#### ***Look-fors in materials:***

- Materials include systemic and sequenced instruction of phonics (sound-symbol correspondence) and foundational skills.
- Daily lessons include explicit (direct) instruction with teacher modeling.
- Materials include practice of foundational skills both in isolation and through decodable texts.
- Materials include teacher guidance on providing linguistic accommodators for various levels of language proficiency [as defined by the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)], which are designed to engage students in using increasingly more academic language.
- Materials include embedded guidance for teachers to support emergent bilingual students in developing academic vocabulary, increasing comprehension, building background knowledge, and making cross-linguistic connections through oral and written discourse.

#### ***Look-fors in classroom observations:***

- The Foundational Skills (FS) being taught are aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for this grade level.
- FS instruction is explicit and systematic, including teacher modeling and student practice.
- Students, including diverse learners, have sufficient opportunities to practice reading, listening, speaking, and writing newly acquired foundational skills.
- All students, including diverse learners, are provided with learning materials and activities that support greater depth of mastery and application of the skills they are still working to develop, ensuring rigorous challenges for all learners.
- Use of home language(s) is supported and encouraged to access new materials, for example: the use of cognate walls, metalinguistic connections, individualized vocabulary journals, bilingual dictionaries, translators, etc., as applicable.

### **Further readings and resources**

- **[Language at the Speed of Sight: How We Read, Why So Many Can't, and What Can Be Done About It](#)** by Mark Seidenberg
- **[Reading in the Brain: The New Science of How We Read](#)** by Stanislas Dehaene
- **[Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties](#)** by David Kilpatrick
- **["Bilingualism, Biliteracy, and Learning to Read: Interactions Among Languages and Writing Systems"](#)** by Ellen Bialystok, Gigi Luk, and Ernest Kwan

## RLA RBIS 2: Regular practice with complex, grade-level text and its academic language.

### **Warm-Up: Excerpt from *Limiting Children to Books They Can Already Read: Why It Reduces Their Opportunity to Learn* by Timothy Shanahan**

More than 70 years ago, Emmett Betts published an influential textbook on the teaching of reading. Betts claimed all readers have three reading levels: independent, instructional, and frustration. According to Betts, the independent level refers to texts that readers can handle on their own without assistance. Instructional-level texts are a bit harder, but not so hard that students can't improve their reading from working with them under the guidance of a good teacher. And, frustration level? These books would be so difficult that learning would be unlikely even with supportive teaching.

Over the past few decades, there have been several direct tests of the instructional level, and these have all ended with one of two outcomes. Instructional-level texts either have provided no learning advantages or have done harm. One example of the latter is another study with second-graders. This study was the first randomized control trial of this practice. Students were tested and, using Betts' criteria, randomly assigned to one of three treatments. One group worked with texts at their instructional levels, one worked with texts two grades above this, and the third worked with books four grades above. Students read in pairs, practicing reading fluency with a partner. At the end of the school year, the students placed in books above their instructional level had made significantly bigger learning gains than those placed in the books supposed to facilitate their learning. This study was later replicated with third-graders. Other studies again found big learning advantages from working with books at the children's grade levels rather than reading levels. Even students with learning disabilities have been found to obtain no benefit from these [instructional-level] text placements.

Betts saw a problem—students being taught from books that many couldn't read—and he proposed a solution, moving students to books that they could. Another solution, one he apparently didn't entertain, was that teachers could adjust their instruction in particular ways to facilitate students' interactions with these hard-to-read books. As a recent study found—this one with high school students—most students who were asked to read grade-level materials were able to learn more than those placed in the easier books.

Basically, what this research reveals is that limiting students to texts they can already read well reduces their opportunity to learn—by limiting their exposure to sophisticated vocabulary, rich content, and complex language. With knowledge of the research on effective reading instruction, skilled teachers *can* facilitate students' productive interactions with harder text.

*Shanahan, Timothy. "Limiting Children to Books They Can Already Read: Why It Reduces Their Opportunity to Learn." American Educator 44, no. 2 (2020).*

Full text at <https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2020/shanahan>

## **Sample High-Quality Instructional Materials**

- [Amplify Lectoescritura, Grado 4: Unidad 4, Lección 8, La situación de Ejército Continental](#)
- [Amplify Texas ELP, Grade 4, Unit 4, Lesson 8: The Continental Army's Plight](#)

## **RLA RBIS 2: Text Complexity**

### ***Look-fors in materials:***

- Core texts used for instruction are written at grade level when evaluated using research-based measures of text complexity.
- Texts are well-crafted and are of publishable quality.
- Materials include traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse texts across multiple content areas.
- Texts include content that is relevant, engaging, and authentically reflects students' backgrounds and experiences.
- Materials include opportunities in each lesson for students to engage in a variety of reading skills with grade-level text (e.g., generating questions at various levels of complexity, making, and confirming predictions, inferencing, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing).
- Materials include opportunities in each lesson to discuss specific aspects of grade-level text (e.g., authors' purpose, structure, language, vocabulary, etc.).
- Materials include teacher guidance and supports to ensure all students can access grade-level text while maintaining rigor with embedded scaffolds (e.g., vocabulary support, questioning, think-aloud, sentence frames).

### ***Look-fors in classroom observations:***

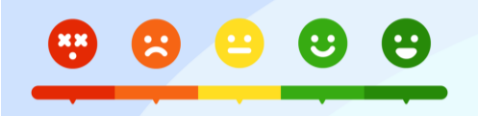
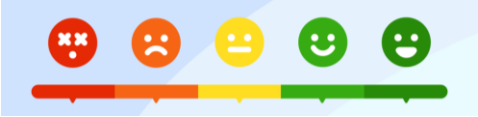
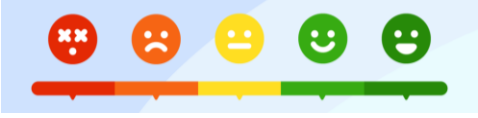
- All students, including diverse learners, spend the majority of the lesson listening to, reading, writing, and/or speaking about text(s).
- Texts are sufficiently complex for this grade level, according to their quantitative, qualitative (meaning, structure, language, and knowledge demand) and reader/task measures.
- Questions and tasks – written and oral – are aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for this grade level and address the specific text(s) at hand by attending to its vocabulary and other features of complexity (i.e. Structure, meaning, and knowledge)
- Questions and tasks – written and oral - address the specific text(s) at hand by attending to its structure, concepts, ideas, events and/or details.
- Questions are sequenced to build meaning and understanding of the text.
- All students, including diverse learners, have access to the same complex text and content objective as peers, with strategic linguistic scaffolding provided only as needed to provide equitable access.

### **Further readings and resources**

- [\*\*Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain\*\*](#) by Zaretta Hammond
- [\*\*Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction\*\*](#) by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, Linda Kucan
- [\*\*Amplify Science of Reading Podcast, Season 5, Episode 8: “Linguistic Structure: English vs. Spanish”\*\*](#) with Dr. Desirée Pallais-Downing
- [\*\*Planning Lessons with Complex Text\*\*](#) by Timothy Shanahan
- [\*\*“Unlocking Acceleration: How Below Grade Level Work Is Holding Students Back In Literacy,”\*\*](#) TNTTP 2022

## RLA RBIS 3: Building knowledge and vocabulary through text in all content areas.

### Warm Up: Sample Text Excerpts

<p><b>Excerpt 1</b></p> <p>Australia failed to fully capitalise on the second-wicket stand of 182 between Smith and Finch, as Michael Clarke’s men were stunted by the off-breaks of Ravichandran Ashwin and a curious collective failure against back-of-a-length bowling.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>How comprehensible do you find Excerpt 1?</p>  <p>What helps or hinders your comprehension?</p>
<p><b>Excerpt 2</b></p> <p>Churniak swings and hits a slow bouncing ball toward the shortstop. Haley comes in, fields it, and throws to first, but too late. Churniak is on first with a single, Johnson stayed on third. The next batter is Whitcomb, the Cougar’s left-fielder. The ball is returned to Claresen. He gets the sign and winds up and throws a slider that Whitcomb hits between Manfred and Roberts for a hit. Dulaney comes in and picks up the ball. Johnson has scored, and Churniak is heading for third. Here comes the throw and Churniak is out. Churniak argues but to no avail.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>How comprehensible do you find Excerpt 2?</p>  <p>What helps or hinders your comprehension?</p>
<p><b>Excerpt 3</b></p> <p>The fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point. Frequently the messages have meaning; that is, they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. These semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem. The significant aspect is that the actual message is one selected from a set of possible messages. The system must be designed to</p>	<p>How comprehensible do you find Excerpt 3?</p>  <p>What helps or hinders your comprehension?</p>

<sup>1</sup> Shemilt, Stephan. "Cricket World Cup 2015: Australia Beat India to Reach Final," *BBC Sport*, March 26, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Recht, Donna, and Lauren Leslie. "Effect of Prior Knowledge on Good and Poor Readers' Memory of Text." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 80, no. 1 (1988): 16-20.

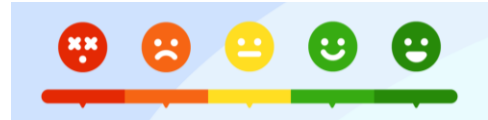


operate for each possible selection, not just the one which will actually be chosen since this is unknown at the time of design.<sup>3</sup>

**Excerpt 4**

Price dispersion is an important indicator of pricing strategy and market efficiency. However, the relationship between price dispersion and sales has not been explored, especially for durable goods such as automobiles. In this study, we use a unique data set from Autohome comprising the actual transaction prices of buyers to assess the extent of price dispersion in the new automobile market. Based on an empirical analysis of over 222,592 price observations for 59 vehicle models collected over a period of 48 months, we find that the percentage difference (PD) and coefficient of variation (CV) of new automobile transaction prices are 43.4% and 9.9%, respectively. In addition, the empirical results show that the price dispersions are lower for non-sedan types, Chinese car brands, and vehicles produced by state-owned companies. We further investigate whether the increase in the price dispersion of a new automobile has a positive impact on automobile sales using a multiple quadratic regression model. The findings show that price dispersion has a positive impact on sales. More interestingly, negative quadratic effects are observed, indicating a concave-down-increasing relationship between price dispersion and sales. This implies that an extreme price dispersion is less helpful than a moderate price dispersion. These findings advance knowledge of consumer buying behavior and seller pricing strategies, with important theoretical contributions and practical implications for automobile companies.<sup>4</sup>

How comprehensible do you find Excerpt 4?



What helps or hinders your comprehension?

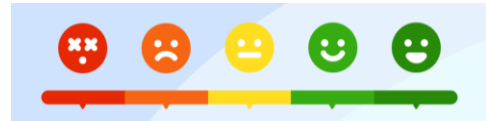
<sup>3</sup> Shannon, Claude. *A Mathematical Theory of Communication*. University of Illinois Press, 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Chiu, Ya-Ling, Jiangze Du, and Jying-Nan Wang. "The Effects of Price Dispersion on Sales in the Automobile Industry: A Dynamic Panel Analysis." *SAGE Open* 12, no. 3 (2022).

**Excerpt 5**

Suspension of face-to-face instruction in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to concerns about consequences for students’ learning. So far, data to study this question have been limited. Here we evaluate the effect of school closures on primary school performance using exceptionally rich data from The Netherlands ( $n \approx 350,000$ ). We use the fact that national examinations took place before and after lockdown and compare progress during this period to the same period in the 3 previous years. The Netherlands underwent only a relatively short lockdown (8 wk) and features an equitable system of school funding and the world’s highest rate of broadband access. Still, our results reveal a learning loss of about 3 percentile points or 0.08 standard deviations. The effect is equivalent to one-fifth of a school year, the same period that schools remained closed. Losses are up to 60% larger among students from less-educated homes, confirming worries about the uneven toll of the pandemic on children and families. Investigating mechanisms, we find that most of the effect reflects the cumulative impact of knowledge learned rather than transitory influences on the day of testing. Results remain robust when balancing on the estimated propensity of treatment and using maximum-entropy weights or with fixed-effects specifications that compare students within the same school and family. The findings imply that students made little or no progress while learning from home and suggest losses even larger in countries with weaker infrastructure or longer school closures.<sup>5</sup>

How comprehensible do you find Excerpt 5?



What helps or hinders your comprehension?

**Sample High-Quality Instructional Materials**

- [Amplify Lectoescritura, Grado 4: Unidad 4, La Revolución estadounidense: construir una nación](#)
- [Amplify Texas ELP, Grade 4, Unit 4, American Revolution: Building a Nation](#)

<sup>5</sup> Engzell, Per, Arun Frey, and Mark Verhagen. “Learning loss due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 17 (2021).

### **RLA RBIS 3: Knowledge Coherence Look-Fors**

#### ***Look-fors in materials:***

- Materials provide a scope and sequence to demonstrate the approach to knowledge-building within and across grade levels.
- Materials provide students with relevant and targeted context or background knowledge to enhance the student's engagement with the text.
- Materials include tasks designed to engage students in purposeful use of key academic vocabulary.
- Units are designed to build knowledge based in the fields of science, history, literature, and the arts.
- Lessons are connected by anchoring texts or text sets designed to intentionally build connected student background knowledge over time.

#### ***Look-fors in classroom observations:***

- Questions and tasks are sequenced to build knowledge and make meaning of the grade-level text.
- Lesson facilitation supports all students in building vocabulary before, during, and/or after engaging in the text.
- Lessons attend to words, phrases, and sentences within the text that matter most to build students' vocabulary and deepen understanding of the text.
- Lesson is focused on complex, grade-level text as a tool for building student knowledge across content areas.
- Lesson topic is part of a coherent series and provides opportunities to connect ideas within and across lessons.

### **Further readings and resources**

- [\*\*The Knowledge Matters Campaign\*\*](#)
- [\*\*"A Solution to Plato's Problem: The Latent Semantic Analysis Theory of Acquisition, Induction, and Representation of Knowledge"\*\*](#) by Thomas Landauer and Susan Dumais
- [\*\*The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Student Bilingualism for Learning\*\*](#) by Ofelia Garcia, Susana Ibarra Johnson, and Kate Seltzer
- [\*\*Amplify Science of Reading Podcast, Season 8, Episode 3: "Knowledge and Vocabulary: Two Sides of the Same Coin", with Gina Cervetti\*\*](#)
- [\*\*The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System--And How to Fix It\*\*](#) by Natalie Wexler

## **RLA RBIS 4: Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text.**

### **Sample High-Quality Instructional Materials**

- [Amplify Lectoescritura, Grado 4: Unidad 4, Lección 8, La situación de Ejército Continental](#)
- [Amplify Texas ELP, Grade 4, Unit 4, Lesson 8: The Continental Army's Plight](#)

### **RLA RBIS 4: Text-Based Responses Look-Fors**

#### ***Look-fors in materials:***

- Materials include text-dependent questions and tasks which require students to use evidence from the text to demonstrate comprehension, justify their thinking and support claims.
- Questions and tasks require students to use text evidence when evaluating the language, key ideas, details, craft, and structure of high-quality texts.
- Questions and tasks require students to support their claims and justify their thinking through a variety of strategies such as comparing sources, paraphrasing, summarizing, and discussing key ideas in evidence from the text.
- Materials include guidance for teachers on the use of structured opportunities to engage students in evidence-based discussions using academic vocabulary and syntax.
- Materials include systematic and explicit (direct) opportunities for students to engage in increasingly complex sentence level writing, revising, and editing.

#### ***Look-fors in classroom observations:***

- Materials include text-dependent questions and tasks which require students to use evidence from the text to demonstrate comprehension, justify their thinking and support claims.
- Questions and tasks require students to use text evidence when evaluating the language, key ideas, details, craft, and structure of high-quality texts.
- Questions and tasks require students to support their claims and justify their thinking through a variety of strategies such as comparing sources, paraphrasing, summarizing, and discussing key ideas in evidence from the text.
- Materials include guidance for teachers on the use of structured opportunities to engage students in evidence-based discussions using academic vocabulary and syntax.
- Materials include systematic and explicit (direct) opportunities for students to engage in increasingly complex sentence level writing, revising, and editing.

### **The RLA RBIS: Working Together at Every Level**

- What further information would you need?
- How would the RBIS influence your course of action?
- What common barriers may impede your course of action?

### **Scenario 1: Classroom**

A student in your sixth-grade RLA class is struggling: they try, but have a difficult time comprehending texts and tasks, which affects their engagement.

Keeping in mind the four RLA RBIS and the research behind them, discuss how you might go about helping this student be more successful in RLA.

### **Scenario 2: School**

You are the principal of a large K-5 elementary school in a linguistically diverse community. It has just been decided that the school will implement dual-language Spanish and English instruction beginning next school year.

Your leadership team is excited about the benefits this will have for the community. However, several members of the team have expressed a need for learning more about best practices regarding language development in bilingual program models, and are asking how they can best support teachers, students and parents through this transition.

### **Scenario 3: District**

You have just taken on the role of curriculum director in a small K-12 district. You, your teachers, and the broader community are all concerned about the district's low and stagnant RLA performance over the past several years.

Keeping in mind the four RLA RBIS and the research behind them, discuss how you might go about strengthening the district's RLA performance.

### **Further readings and resources**

- [\*\*The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking Through Writing in All Subjects and Grades\*\*](#) by Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler, published by Jossey-Bass/Wiley
- [\*\*Teaching for Biliteracy: Strengthening Bridges between Languages\*\*](#) by Karen Beeman and Cheryl Urow
- [\*\*"Text-Based Writing Has Untapped Power,"\*\*](#) Student Achievement Partners
- [\*\*Talk, Read, Talk, Write: A Practical Routine for Learning in All Content Areas \(K-12\)\*\*](#) by Nancy Motley
- [\*\*Knowledge Matters Podcast Ep. 4, "Reading Comprehension Revisited: 'Now they had something to write about'" July 12, 2023\*\*](#)