

# Guide Students Through Focused, High-Quality Discussion on the Meaning of Text

## Purpose

This document provides educators with information about a high-leverage, evidence-based practice recommended in the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) practice guide, [Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

**Guiding students through focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text** is an evidence-based practice to help educators increase student achievement in critical foundational skills for early readers. Page 23 of the practice guide states:

The panel recommends that teachers lead their students through focused, high-quality discussions in order to help them develop a deeper understanding of what they read. Such discussions among students or between the students and the teacher go beyond simply asking and answering surface-level questions to a more thoughtful exploration of the text. Through this type of exploration, students learn how to argue for or against points raised in the discussion, resolve ambiguities in the text, and draw conclusions or inferences about the text.

For more information about this practice guide, see the [AOE's Annotated Guide](#), as well as [Resources for Educators](#) on the WWC (including videos and instructional rubrics).

## ESSA Level of Evidence

ESSA levels of evidence are the result of a synthesis of current evidence-based research. Below is the level of evidence for this recommendation:

- **Tier 4 – Has Rationale (Minimal Evidence)**

See the [full practice guide](#) for more information about specific studies. For more information about levels of evidence, see the REL document [ESSA Tiers of Evidence: What You Need to Know](#).

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<sup>1</sup> [What Works Clearinghouse/IES Practice Guides](#) provide recommendations for educators of evidence-based practices to improve student outcomes. WWC/IES Practice Guides were developed by a panel of literacy experts based on reviews of research, practitioner experiences, and expert opinions.

## Contact Information:

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## How to Carry Out the Recommendation

Listed below are ways to [guide students through focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text](#). See the pages of the guide referenced next to each instructional practice to find more specific implementation strategies.

- Structure the discussion to complement the text, the instructional purpose, and the readers' ability and grade level (24-26).
- Develop discussion questions that require students to think deeply about text (26).
- Ask follow-up questions to encourage and facilitate discussion (26-27).
- Have students lead structured small-group discussions (27-28).

## Connections to Literacy Essential Practices

[Literacy Essentials](#) provide evidence- and research-based approaches educators can use to support early literacy. This resource was introduced to Vermont through work done with [Dr. Nell Duke](#) and includes classroom practices teachers can use daily to implement the recommendations in the WWC practice guides. See the page number referenced next to each Essential Practice to find more specific implementation strategies.

### [Literacy Essential Practices for Prekindergarten](#)

- **Essential Practice #2:** Read aloud with reference to print (3)
- **Essential Practice #3:** Interactive read-alouds with a comprehension and vocabulary focus (4)
- **Essential Practice #7:** Extended conversation (6)
- **Essential Practice #9:** Ongoing observation and other forms of assessment of children's language and literacy development that informs their education (7)

### [Literacy Essential Practices for Grades K-3](#)

- **Essential Practice #2:** Read-alouds of age-appropriate books and other materials, print or digital, including culturally relevant texts (3)
- **Essential Practice #3:** Small group and individual instruction, using a variety of grouping strategies, most often with flexible groups formed and instruction targeted to (i.e., differentiated by) children's observed and assessed needs in specific aspects of literacy, including both writing and reading development (and therefore not by perceived general "ability" or "level") (4)
- **Essential Practice #9:** Ongoing observation and other forms of assessment of children's language and literacy development that informs their education (7)