

May 2018

Implementing Unit Starters to Improve Student Literacy

Teacher Leaders: Taking Action in Early Foundations and Literacy



Department of
Education



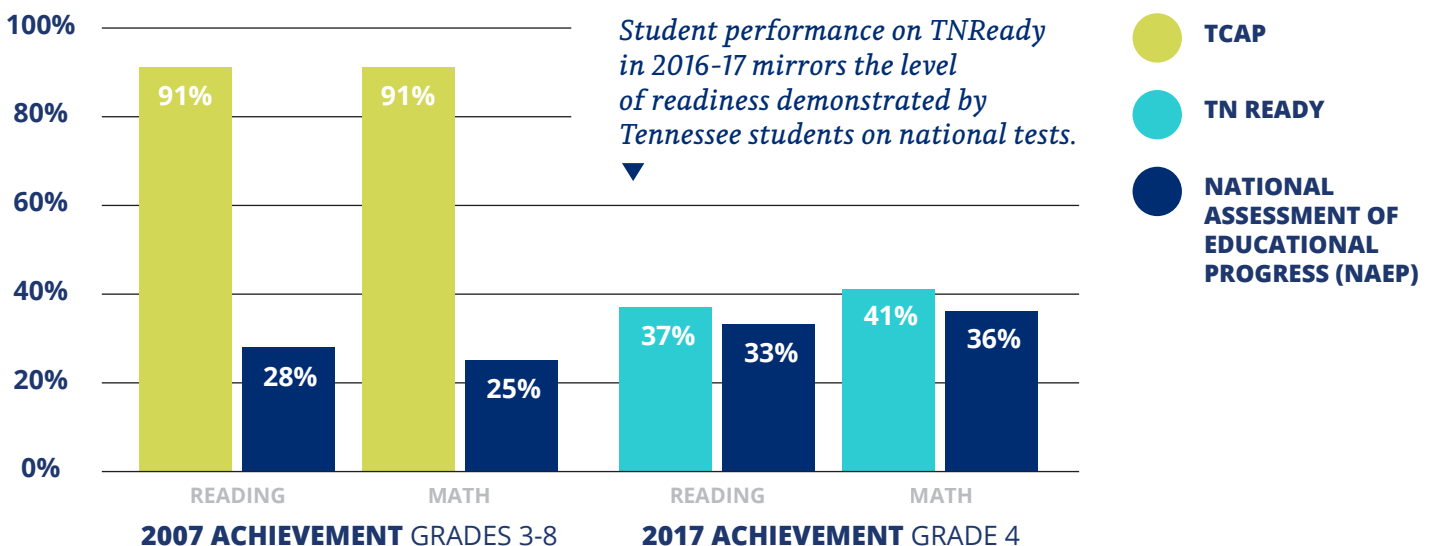
Introduction

The research is clear: Reading proficiently prepares students for lifelong success. Research shows the importance of students reading proficiently by third grade.¹

Unfortunately, Tennessee students have fallen behind their peers across the nation in reading. We have, however, successfully closed the “honesty gap” between what we see on our state test and what the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) indicates. In 2017, for the first time, our NAEP results and TNReady results showed the same results for Tennessee students. While our TNReady scores are a more accurate measure of how our students are performing, over the past several years, our results in reading have remained stagnant and, in some cases, have declined. In 2017, TNReady results indicate 37 percent of

fourth grade students had mastered or were on track to master English language arts. We saw similar results on NAEP, where only one-third of fourth graders were reading on grade level in 2017. These data ultimately show that the majority of Tennessee students are not as prepared as they need to be for the next school year and are not yet on track with the knowledge and skills to embark on their chosen path in life. Addressing this challenge requires a focused, collective effort among state, district, school and classroom leaders. The good news is that, since 2011, Tennessee is one of the fastest improving states in the country. We are making progress.

FIGURE 1
STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN STANDARDIZED TESTS



¹ Hernandez, D. J. (2011). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. Annie E. Casey Foundation.
Feister, L. (2010). Early warning! Why reading by the end of third grade matters. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In Tennessee, supporting high-quality literacy instruction is a central priority. In 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education launched *Tennessee Succeeds*, a five-year strategic plan. A cornerstone of *Tennessee Succeeds* is the **Read to be Ready** campaign, a statewide initiative (launched in 2016 by Governor and First Lady Haslam and Commissioner McQueen) that is designed to move at least 75 percent of Tennessee third graders to reading proficiency by 2025. The Read to be Ready campaign is grounded in the following five philosophies:

Early literacy matters: Early language and literacy development must begin at birth because of its direct impact on later success in reading and in life.

But it's never too late: With quality resources and support, even those who are not reading on grade level by third grade can catch up.

Reading is more than sounding out words: In addition to the application of foundational skills, reading involves thinking deeply about a text's meaning and how it builds knowledge of the world around us.

Teacher knowledge and practice are critical: Educators must have a deep understanding of the art and science of literacy instruction to develop lifelong learners.

It takes a community: We each hold a piece of the puzzle, and we must do our part to improve literacy in Tennessee.

In May 2017, the department released *Teaching Literacy in Tennessee (TLiT)*. This document outlines the types of opportunities necessary for students to become proficient readers, writers, and thinkers and includes a literacy unit design framework (below) that describes how teachers can create these opportunities. The description includes building

rich learning opportunities around meaningful concepts within the English language arts block where students listen to, read, speak, and write about sets of texts that are worthy of students' time and attention.

The department is committed to providing continued support to teachers and leaders in implementing its vision for literacy through the *Teaching Literacy in Tennessee K-3 Unit Starters*. The unit starters support planning for literacy units and are intended to serve as tangible examples for educators as they design complete units and compare the alignment of lessons to the vision for teaching literacy in Tennessee.

The *Vision for Third Grade Reading Proficiency in Tennessee* answers the question of what we want to see as outcomes from our students. The *Teaching Literacy in Tennessee* guide lays the foundation for the how to reach that vision, and the unit starters provide the practical, tangible examples of the how to teach literacy and ensure all students reach their potential.

Tennessee's *Vision for Third Grade Reading Proficiency* states that students will:

- Accurately, fluently, and independently read a wide range of complex texts
- Strategically employ comprehension strategies to analyze key ideas and information
- Construct interpretations and arguments through speaking and writing
- Develop vocabulary
- Build knowledge about the world

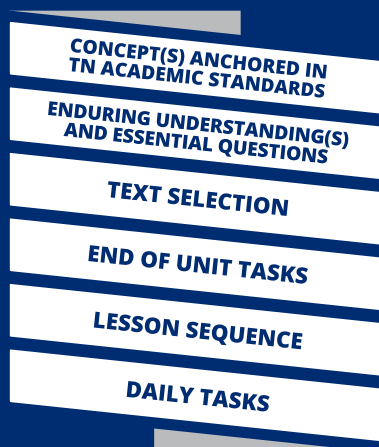
FIGURE 2

FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING LITERACY IN TENNESSEE

Designing units is not a completely linear process. Teachers should continually think about the integration of standards and student needs as they plan units.

INTEGRATION OF STANDARDS →

The Tennessee Academic Standards should be integrated throughout the unit design. Teachers should select concepts based on knowledge requirements contained in the grade level content standards. Then, teachers should select specific ELA standards once texts and tasks are chosen to support students' reading comprehension and completion of daily and end of unit tasks.



← STUDENT NEEDS

Students should always be at the heart of instructional decision making. Teachers should consider what standards, instructional strategies, and supports are needed to ensure that all students meet grade-level requirements.

Research conducted across Tennessee and reported in the [First Steps reading report \(2018\)](#) includes **observation data from 162 classrooms** across the state. Fall 2017 classroom observations suggest that teachers are implementing the new standards and incorporating crucial strategies, such as interactive read aloud and shared reading. However, while students are successfully completing classroom tasks, the tasks rarely reflect the demands of the standards. Findings point to three priority areas for instructional improvement in the coming year:

- 1 **Higher-quality and appropriately complex texts selected to build conceptual knowledge**
- 2 **Question sequences and tasks that build critical thinking skills and meet the demands of the standards**
- 3 **Systematic and explicit foundational skills instruction with opportunities to practice through authentic reading and writing experiences**

Through implementation of the unit starters, teachers are able to address these three key areas within their classrooms and expect more from their students during these units.

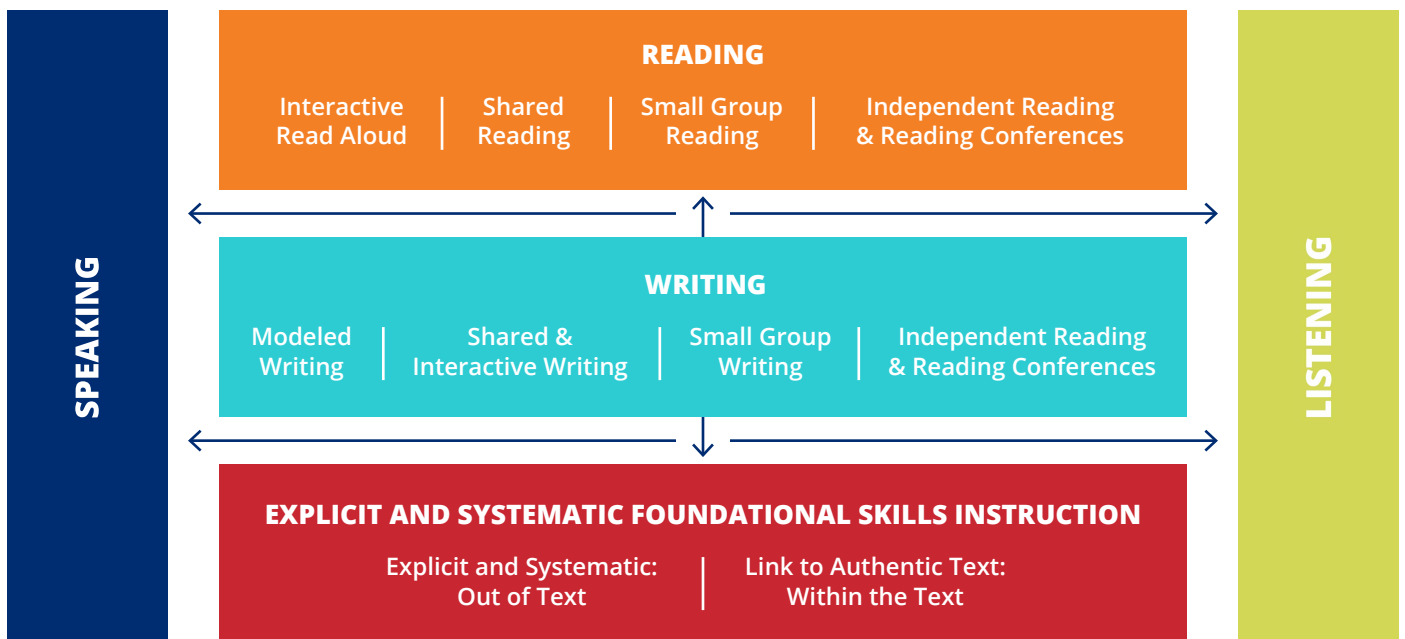
Despite the challenging work ahead to develop proficient readers, Tennessee’s future is bright. Through the Read to be Ready initiative and our collective focus on literacy, literacy instruction in Tennessee classrooms is improving. But we have more work to do to ensure our students

are prepared with a strong foundation in reading. While addressing this challenge calls for leadership at all levels, teacher leadership is critical to our collective success, because classrooms are where the vital work of teaching literacy happens every day.

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee K-3 Unit Starters are a valuable resource for educators to implement in their classrooms to move us toward our goal of at least 75 percent of Tennessee students reading on grade level by 2025. The unit starter’s unique, research-based design is unlike anything that has been previously provided to teachers. The unit starters embody the spirit of integration and the concept of the literacy block defined in *Teaching Literacy in Tennessee*. The literacy block supports students in all of the Tennessee Academic standards strands: foundational skills, speaking and listening, reading, and writing. The connection between the content areas of science and social studies and the strands of English Language Arts (ELA) standards is what makes this such a powerful resource. If teachers are able to implement the unit starters with fidelity, then students will improve their knowledge and skills in all of these areas.

As the unit starters have been available for the 2017-18 school year, teachers across the state have employed them in their classrooms. In this teacher leader action brief, a team of teacher leaders from Weakley County in northwest Tennessee describes the successes, the challenges, and the lessons learned in implementing the unit starters in their second grade classrooms at Martin Primary School.

FIGURE 3
ELEMENTS OF THE LITERACY BLOCK



What is a Unit Starter?

A unit starter is an innovative and comprehensive way to provide integrated literacy instruction using concepts from content areas—such as science and social studies—to build both skills and knowledge through a variety of texts. Units include many components such as text sets, shared reading lessons, daily tasks, and embedded, implicit, and explicit vocabulary. They provide a way of saturating student learning with high-level text exposure to rigorous content as well as a way to develop skilled writers.*

“My favorite part about the unit starter was how it helped me learn a lot about science. This unit was great!”

— Canyon, Student

Unit starters embed the Tennessee Academic Standards and are used by teachers as a resource to get students thinking within, about, and beyond the text. Proficient readers do not isolate individual strategies in service of comprehension; rather, proficient readers and writers use multiple comprehension strategies to aid in understanding text. Instead of planning for teaching standards in isolation, teachers begin with the end in mind—the **end-of-unit task**. Teachers then plan

backwards to craft the lessons toward the end-of-unit task, which is provided in the unit. Each lesson has a focus toward building **conceptual understanding**. This focus helps teachers provide intentional instruction that builds knowledge and encourages students to demonstrate that understanding through the daily and end-of-unit tasks. It also equips students with the knowledge needed to appropriately respond to these tasks. Through this embedded approach, teachers are able to teach and model proficient reading by incorporating the appropriate learning simultaneously. Units allow for a progression of standards instruction through the learning of new concepts. **By teaching standards in an embedded approach that includes content-area concepts, we are able to build students’ knowledge while also improving their skills-based competencies.**

CONTRIBUTING TEACHER LEADERS

*Martin Primary School
Weakley County, TN*

Mrs. Rachel Bearden
Second grade

Ms. Rachel Cooper
Second grade

Mrs. Beth Davidson
Second grade

See page 13 for teacher profiles.

* **Highlighted text** indicates a term defined in greater detail in the glossary on page 12.

One of the biggest strengths of these units is the vocabulary. Students have several opportunities for paired discussion and group assignments that serve to provide for the transfer of vocabulary through speaking and writing. Overall, the unit starters provide the framework for comprehensive and rigorous literacy instruction.

The unit starter is not a script or pacing guide. It is not a writing curriculum nor a complete thematic unit. This resource is not intended to be a guide for foundational skills and small group instruction, because systematic instruction rooted in individual student needs is what is most powerful. The unit starters include the key components for building out a unit that raises expectations and allows for differentiation by teachers.

Benefits for Students



Exposing students to a variety of text types with rigorous scientific content **builds stamina**.



Introducing students to new terms and allowing time for transfer through repeated exposure, **turn and talks**, and writing opportunities helps students **improve their vocabulary**.



The design of the unit allows **all learners to engage** with complex concepts. When **interactive read-alouds** are incorporated, all students can actively participate in discussions, including those who struggle with reading independently. Unit starters introduce new concepts that provide exciting content for the full range of learners. The content provides scaffolding for those approaching grade level and extension possibilities for above grade-level learners.



Through daily conversations, turn and talks, and daily writing prompts, students are expected to **verbalize their thoughts**, which in turn helps them with writing.



Building background knowledge in science or social studies during the literacy block fosters **student curiosity and interest**.



Unit starters **allow students to demonstrate improvement** in both skills-based and knowledge-based competencies. They become stronger readers, more skilled writers, and better-informed scientists.



Students have the opportunity to **practice writing during daily tasks**, which in turn creates stronger writers.

“MY FAVORITE PART ABOUT THE UNIT WAS THE WRITING AND ALL OF THE TURN AND TALKS WE HAD.”

— Maggie, Student

Benefits for Teachers



Through teaching the English language arts standards and **providing opportunities to integrate science and social studies standards**, teachers are able to teach with meaningful and intentional connectedness. Teachers are able to support both knowledge building and skills practice by exposing students to above-grade level text, utilizing on-grade level text during shared reading, and using turn and talks, group work, and in-depth thinking with opportunities to respond.



Using the unit starters, teachers are able to **address all criteria for evaluation rubrics**. Being evaluated while using the unit starter lesson proved to be much easier than planning a traditional, single-standard lesson, as implementing the units naturally incorporates all the components of the evaluation rubric.



The carefully planned layout of the unit **guides instruction**. The questions have been strategically placed and scaffolded to ensure success with writing prompts and daily tasks.



The design of the unit starters allows teachers to **express themselves as individuals**. Teachers still have the autonomy to make it their own while using the components of the unit.



The unit starters encourage teachers to be **reflective practitioners**. On a daily basis, the instructional team discussed how teacher presentation varied due to individual implementation. We were able to gain ideas from each other based on our strengths. Seeing successes kept us enthusiastic and motivated.



After implementation, teachers can clearly see what **knowledge the students have gained**. Knowledge evolves through the structure of the unit: read, expose, teach, guide, discuss, question, confirm, and validate new learning. Students have opportunities to share their own ideas with peers through turn and talks. Designing and completing anchor charts, practicing new learning, and engaging through writing provides students with the practice they need. This gives a clear picture of where each student is within the learning trajectory. Analyzing and reflecting on student work allows teachers to guide, challenge, and move students forward.

“THE UNIT STARTERS THAT HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED AT MARTIN PRIMARY SCHOOL, WHEN TAUGHT WITH FIDELITY, LEND THEMSELVES TO SCORES IN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE RUBRIC ON THE TENNESSEE EDUCATOR ACCELERATION MODEL (TEAM). OBSERVATION SCORES OF LESSONS FROM THE UNIT STARTERS HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY ABOVE EXPECTATIONS. THE EXCITEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE THAT THE STUDENTS ARE SHOWING IS ABSOLUTELY AMAZING. UNIT STARTERS ARE VERY REWARDING TO TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS ALIKE.”

— Lea Ann Crowe, *Assistant Principal*

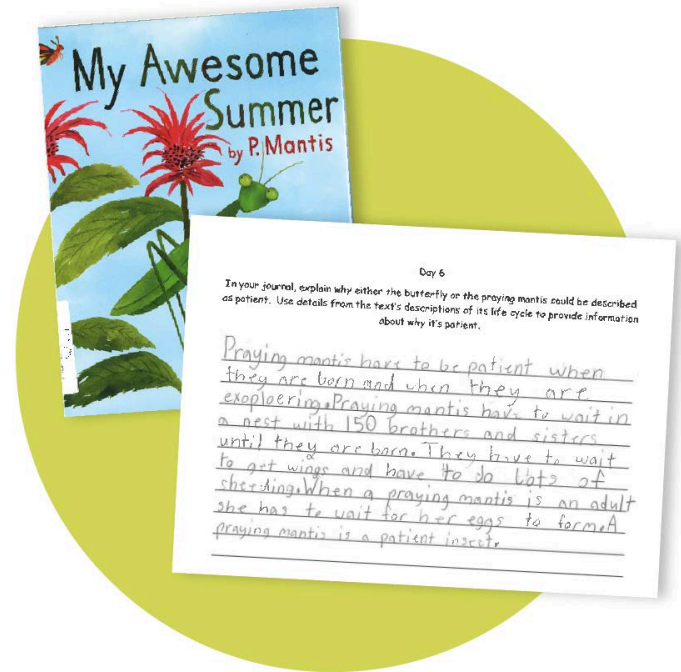
Teachers Are Embracing Unit Starters

As educators, we are all too familiar with the challenges that exist within the classroom; one of those issues is that approximately two-thirds of Tennessee students are not reading at a third grade level on our state assessment. Another serious issue for teachers is lack of time. The unit starter was able to address both of these concerns for our team.

The unit starter is an extremely thorough document filled with the rigor required by our Tennessee Academic Standards. However, when teachers embrace this unit, it becomes an even more powerful tool in the classroom. Although it is not a scripted lesson to be read word for word, it does provide structure and scaffolding. It is designed to help students reach their end goal by applying their acquired knowledge, enabling them to complete the end-of-unit task. Each day in the unit, students will delve into an array of content, gain exposure to many real-world concepts, and complete rigorous writing tasks. Students will think deeply about the content of the text, discuss their thoughts with their peers, and express themselves aloud in class.

Throughout the unit, students' imaginations will be ignited daily by rich text and thought-provoking questions. They will be curious about the new concepts being taught, and their hunger for more knowledge will continue to grow. This approach to teaching literacy allows teachers to address reading standards while simultaneously building schema around science concepts. Because the lessons are standards-driven, students get many opportunities to practice working toward mastery. The lessons will challenge every child, no matter their reading level, because the concepts are new to everyone. By implementing the unit as it is designed, teachers and students alike will grow in knowledge and skill. Teachers will gain the ability to develop content-rich, rigorous lesson plans with all the necessary pieces to aid in student success. Students will be exposed to new, fascinating information that will pique their curiosity and challenge them to become better readers and writers.

Teachers who implement unit starters and other units like them will have students who are hungry for information and eager for stimulating tasks every day. Embracing this unit with its integrated content is critical. If the teacher is engaged in and excited by the content, the students will follow suit.



“The unit starters have affected our instruction in a very positive way. More complex texts are being chosen. Teachers are taking a more facilitative role in the classroom. Students are thinking more deeply about texts they are reading and speaking and writing more about what they have read. Students are developing a rich vocabulary while also learning more about the world around them. Unit starters have changed not only what students learn, but how teachers teach. The shift in mindset has been amazing.”

— Emily Perry, Instructional Coach

Lessons Learned

1 Unit Starters Support Collaboration

The unit has taught us many things about our own classroom instruction. First and foremost, it taught us that teacher collaboration is the key to developing and implementing strong, well-balanced lessons. It also required us to become true reflective practitioners by engaging in daily reflective conversations that improved our instruction. Taking the time each day to talk through the lesson with a team proved to be an incredibly valuable experience. Through these conversations, we gained insights and new ideas that otherwise would have been disregarded or unnoticed when working in isolation. Due to the amount of planning and preparation that goes into the unit starters, we made the conscious effort to plan as a team and reflect on each lesson so as to better understand what went well and why. There were days when something worked well in one of our classrooms but fell flat in a different classroom. That is why the practices of reflection, knowing your own students, and appropriate differentiation are so powerful.

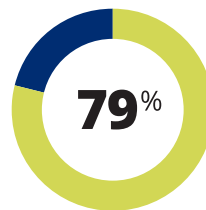
2 Unit Starters Utilize Backwards Design

The unit also taught us that teaching with the backwards planning design is a complete mindset shift from how we had planned previously. We were amazed at how well backwards planning allowed us to hone in on the daily focus, which ultimately led to the end-of-unit task. The backwards design empowered us to truly know what we expected out of our students each and every day and gave us a tangible way to measure student success. Keeping the end goal in mind gave us a continuous purpose to work toward rather than merely covering skills in isolation. In the beginning, we were skeptical as to whether our students would meet the high expectations set by these tasks. Our initial concerns included students' lack of listening stamina, interest in topics, and writing development. We were also concerned because we had just recently joined the Read to be Ready coaching network and weren't sure how much support we might have. However, our concerns dissipated entirely after we began implementing the unit, because we had a wealth of coaching support with our district coach and state reading coach consultant.

3 Unit Starters are Rigorous

The unit starters are incredible because they give true meaning to the phrase "rigorous classroom instruction." Prior to the unit, when asked if we were teaching to

the highest level possible, we gave a resounding, "Yes!" **However, after implementing the unit, we realized how our previous expectations were not high enough and could not compare to the results of the unit.** Our teaching has changed in many ways because we are constantly thinking about how we can make more connections and tie in more learning. It taught us how to gather and incorporate other resources, such as educational technology, paired texts, and hands-on activities. The embedded approach to teaching with this unit is astounding because we each felt that we had never taught so much in such a short amount of time. When asked about addressing rigor within the standards, many teachers would likely list time as a concern. There does not seem to be enough time in the day, or in the year, to cover all the material, so it was exciting to see this unit address that need that so many of us toil over. With high expectations and team collaboration we were able to implement with fidelity and our students definitely benefited. When asked about the unit, students admitted it was "hard," but they unanimously agreed, "Let's do another one!" Our students are eager for complex books, hands-on activities, and deeper connections.



"The unit starter was hard, but I enjoyed it."

We created a survey asking our students how they felt about the unit starter. Fifty-six second grade students were surveyed.

4 Unit Starters Foster Enthusiasm

We learned that teacher excitement and enthusiasm related to the content are essential for the most successful implementation. The more energy and passion the teacher exhibits, the more invested the students will be. While students, especially young students, are inherently curious about many of the scientific concepts, exposure to text so rigorous and lengthy requires developing stamina.

Second Graders Discussing Erosion:

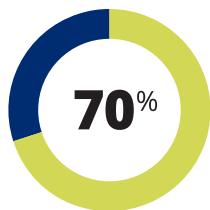
"My favorite part about the unit starter was erosion. It can carry one thing to another. It can break down a rock and make it smooth. The most interesting thing I learned in the unit was how earthquakes can be big or they can be small."

— Sam, Student

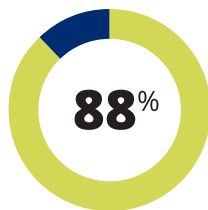
“The most interesting thing I learned in the unit was about erosion because I didn’t know that water could be that strong and break a rock.”

— Te’kia, Student

A key component of building this stamina is teacher engagement and excitement. As educators we know that each day we are stepping onto the stage and assuming the role of learning facilitator. We demonstrate how to approach rigorous texts and concepts. If we can make erosion seem like a mystery that they can unlock in one lesson, then they are eager to get to work and solve the case. Presentation and scaffolding are very important components of implementing the unit starter with fidelity.



“I would like to do another unit.”



“Learning about Science is fun.”

Topics enjoyed most by students:

- 1 Volcanoes
- 2 Earthquakes

5 Unit Starters Positively Impact Students

The unit starter taught us that our students should be challenged and that they can meet surprisingly high expectations. **We saw firsthand that when we raise our expectations, students truly can rise to the occasion.** The outcomes not only surprised and amazed us, but the students were also astounded to see what they were capable of doing. We even found that parents were surprised and inspired by what their students were accomplishing.

For example, one of our student’s parents posted an eight-minute video of her child on social media after we learned how a volcano is formed. In the video, the student explained in detail – hand motions and all – the different ways the plates can move to cause different types of volcanoes. The parent was amazed by how much knowledge he retained through the lessons.

The units do an amazing job of piquing students’ interests. They tap into innate desires to learn about science and benefits their content knowledge for science lessons. It was incredibly rewarding to see their enthusiasm, passion, and motivation. It was awe-inspiring to have them ask for more.

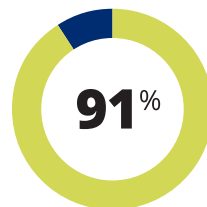
We saw students searching our classroom libraries and resources for related text. Essentially, eight-year-olds were creating text sets. We often talk about the importance of

connecting science and social studies content to the literacy block, but the unit starter actually does that. It allowed us to see how powerful building content knowledge can be, not only for retention but also for interest and engagement.

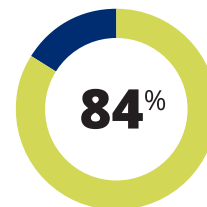
Another strength we saw in the unit starter was that exposing students to a concept through texts for multiple days helped us drive toward enduring understandings throughout the unit.

We have also taught the second unit starter that was released in spring 2018. After teaching another unit starter, it has been interesting to see students conceptualizing information from both units. In the second unit, students have been exposed to relationships. We have studied life cycles of the butterfly, praying mantis, dragonfly, sea turtle, and mammal. When discussing which stage of the sea turtle’s life cycle is most dangerous, a student shared, “The most dangerous stage is when the mother sea turtle is returning to the same beach where she hatched. This is the most dangerous because she could die from the lava. If the volcano was dormant when she was born, it could have become active while she was out at sea. The volcano could erupt while she is returning to the beach and kill her.” It was an amazing connection and reiterated how students will continue to rise to meet the expectations that we set.

The majority of students reported that the unit starter helped them become better readers.



“The unit starter helped me learn more about science.”



“The unit starter helped me become a better writer.”

75%

of students retained information about the four layers of earth three months after the unit had ended.

“My favorite part about the unit starter was all of it because they are all still in my head and I think about them.”

— Keyoriah, Student

Reflection

The design of the unit starters is exactly what educators have been asking for. They provide the missing piece of the teaching puzzle by giving an example and high-quality resources that integrate standards.

In implementing the unit starters, we saw our students grow in numerous ways. We watched struggling writers blossom into thriving authors. We saw one shy student become engaged and enthusiastic about volcanoes. Never have we taught such a vast amount of content in such a brief amount of time. We found that unit starters evoke knowledge, thought,

and connections – and elicit curiosity. Through the questions provided in the unit, we saw timid students engage in rich conversations and become confident about their new learning.

To put it simply, the unit starters just make learning exciting. For teachers, and for students.

“THE MOST INTERESTING THING ABOUT THE UNIT WAS LEARNING ABOUT HOW VOLCANOES ARE HELPFUL TO THE EARTH. — Riley, Student

Glossary of Terms

Conceptual Understanding

Understanding of ideas and the ability to transfer knowledge into new situations and apply it to new contexts.

Daily Tasks

Daily tasks provide different methods for students to demonstrate their growing knowledge and progress toward meeting grade level expectations.

Embedded Vocabulary Instruction

Words related to embedded vocabulary instruction are not taught through direct instruction. Instead, teachers provide a quick, student-friendly definition. The flow of the story is not interrupted. Words targeted for embedded instruction would be those that help with comprehension but may not be essential to the text.

End-of-Unit Tasks

End-of-unit tasks require students to apply and demonstrate knowledge and skills at the end of units (summative assessments).

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Explicit vocabulary instruction occurs before or after the text reading. Teachers identify and work with target words that are critical for comprehension or are powerful academic vocabulary.

Implicit Vocabulary Instruction

During implicit vocabulary instruction, there is not an attempt to teach word meanings. Instead, teachers

weave this language into discussion or through drawing attention to context clues, illustrations, or the use of more common synonyms. The flow of the story is not interrupted for these words.

Interactive Read Aloud

Interactive read aloud is an instructional strategy in which students actively listen and respond to above grade level complex text.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is an interactive experience in which students join in the reading of an on grade level complex text with teacher guidance and support.

Text Set

A text set is a collection of related texts organized around a concept or concepts and enduring understandings. Text sets are related texts from different genres and media, such as books, charts, maps, informational pamphlets, poetry, videos, etc.

Turn and Talk

Turn and talk is one way to structure student conversations that allows students first to lead and develop their own conversations about text, and then to share their thinking with the class as a whole. When students are provided the space and time with their peers to collect and verbalize their thoughts about the text, they are provided with a low-risk setting in which to develop their thinking. Once this routine is established, teachers can lead a deeper discussion with the whole class and make students' learning visible through writing.

Contributing Teacher Leaders

Martin Primary School, Second Grade | *Weakley County, Tennessee*



Rachel Bearden

Mrs. Bearden has a bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of Tennessee at Martin and a master's degree in administration and supervision from Bethel University. She has spent 10 years in the classroom, with five years of experience in third grade at Martin Elementary School and five years in second grade at Martin Primary School. Mrs. Bearden was named the 2012 Cooperating Teacher of the Year at the University of Tennessee at Martin. She is currently Teacher of the Year at Martin Primary School and Weakley County School District's Elementary Teacher of the Year. She is passionate about creating rich learning environments with high standards and expectations.



Rachel Cooper

Ms. Cooper has taught second grade in Weakley County for nine years. She has a bachelor's degree in early education from the University of Tennessee at Martin. Ms. Cooper is passionate about learning, implementing new teaching techniques, and using strategies that help all of her students feel successful in the classroom. She is dedicated to motivating her students to share her love for education and encourages them to become lifelong learners.



Beth Davidson

Mrs. Davidson has been in the education field for 15 years. She spent two years teaching kindergarten in Jackson, Tennessee. From there, she was an assistant professor of elementary education at Lambuth University. For the last eight years, she has taught second grade at Martin Primary School. Three of the last eight years, Mrs. Davidson was the inclusion teacher for second grade. She has a B.S. in interdisciplinary studies/elementary education from Lambuth University and a Master of Education and a reading specialist certification from Union University. Mrs. Davidson was named Teacher of the Year for Martin Primary School in 2015. Most important, she is dedicated not only to pushing her students to excel but also to creating a classroom that is comprised of a community of learners.