

ERWC Scaffolds, Accommodations, and Modifications for Readers

By Ginny Crisco, Marcy Merrill, Nelson Graff, Jennifer Beall, Mariam Ogle, and Debra Robinson

Overview

Below are some ideas for how to provide students greater support—and greater challenge—when it comes to reading. Importantly, it is rare that any one person can read a text and understand everything from it the first time. Often, readers need to be exposed to texts multiple times to see the intricacy of the text. And often, students don't need to understand every single word of a text in order to discuss or write about the issues raised in the text. The ERWC Assignment Template embeds activities that can support students in their reading, including accessing prior knowledge, introducing key concepts and vocabulary, providing annotation strategies, supporting reading rhetorically, having students work collaboratively to read and understand a text, and having them think critically about texts. These are all strategies to support students in developing a reading process that will lead to them becoming more advanced readers.

With that said, the ERWC curriculum cannot address every context for readers, and there might be times when teachers need to have additional support or processes to encourage student readers to push to their next level of reading ability. We want to provide students choices in any kind of scaffolding we use, as we don't want students to rely on the scaffolding; we want them to continue to move forward in their abilities as readers. Additionally, consider supporting and collaborating with student readers on how best to challenge/scaffold/accommodate/modify based on what works for them, but also be their "critical friend" to encourage them to try new things and let go of strategies that might hold them back.

Practices of Expert Readers

This list is not exhaustive, but experienced readers:

- Have processes and strategies to pay attention to, learn from, and engage with a reading. For example, expert readers:
 - Can make predictions, summarize, connect with a text (or make connections between texts and other things), navigate text structure, question the text, and/or create a "movie in their mind" as they visualize the content.
 - Know how to annotate and might apply different kinds of annotation strategies depending on what they want to do with the reading or what genre of reading it is.
 - Can write about a text as a way of thinking on paper.
 - Will draw out or map arguments to get a visual view of the content of a reading or passage.

- Will research elements of what a text is saying, or research the author, or publication.
- Will discuss the text with others to lead toward better understanding.
- Will set purposes for reading to support and guide engagement.
- Are aware of when they struggle with understanding a reading and can apply strategies to help them make meaning (e.g., stop at new or difficult vocabulary, attend to a lack of understanding).
- Have strategies to persist in their reading and meaning making, and can draw on resources such as dictionaries or other tools, even when the reading is difficult.
- Can navigate reading different genres.
- Read fluently (i.e., with automaticity, reading rate appropriate for the task, ability to decode, prosodic/oral reading).

General Strategies to Support Student Readers

- Model what strategies and practices you have—including the use of think-alouds—as an experienced reader.
- Support student engagement by
 - Choosing module topics which may be relevant and/or interesting to students, where they have some experience or knowledge, and about which they have something to say.
 - Helping students see the immediate, real-world application for this work. How does this reading represent ongoing conversations about important topics?
 - Give students choices in what they read *and* help them practice strategies to engage with reading difficult texts.
 - Offer different ways for students to connect to the text, even if the content is very different from their prior experiences and knowledge.
- Help students to persist.
 - Remind them that struggling to read is a good thing: it represents the opportunity to grow.
 - Remind them that they can be successful, though it may take multiple readings of the text and different levels of support.

Practices to Accommodate Readers

In addition to supporting our students to become expert readers, there might be times when we need to be sure that students can access a text. Students might need strategies to keep them engaged, or they might need additional ways to process information than what is being given to them. In this section, we discuss accommodation—reducing the impact that reading has on learning without substantially changing the process or the product—as a way to support any reader who needs it. While “accommodation” requirements are often found in legal educational documents such as IEPs, ERWC advocates for offering things that might be seen as accommodations to any student who needs access to a reading.

Some examples of ways to accommodate reading for students include:

- Encouraging students to follow along as a text is read aloud.
- Allowing students to use software such as Read and Write for Google Chrome to have the text read to them.
- Allowing students to translate texts or parts of texts they don't understand using translation software.
- Allowing students to write notes or map a text in the language they feel most comfortable using.
- Providing an outline of the text with major ideas noted so students can take notes or follow along.
- Providing images to support meaning making.
- Providing channels for communication during reading—with the teacher or with other students—so students can ask questions, clarify, connect, or discover – in whatever language is comfortable to them.
- Allowing students to read and / or wrestle with difficult texts together through collaborative work.
- Creating collaborative assessments where students work together to demonstrate comprehension of texts.

Modifications

Modifications—changing the assignments or expectations to meet the student's individual needs for learning—provides access for students to complete the work, *but it does not have to meet the general education standards*. Modifications are generally only reserved for some students who have IEPs. For some students and situations, accommodations will be inadequate to remove the barriers that their reading abilities pose, at which point modifications should be considered. Examine ways assignments can be modified while still attempting to meet elements of the core standards.

This list is not exhaustive, but some suggestions include:

- Summarizing the text for students so that it is shorter, and the main points are clear.
- Focusing students on a key excerpt to decrease the amount of text required for students to read.
- Revising the text—or key passages in the text—into simpler sentences and/or shorter passages.
- Reducing the number of comprehension questions students respond to for assessment while still addressing the outcomes.
- Providing options for students to demonstrate their understanding of a reading in writing, orally, or using multimodality (e.g., images, audio) while still addressing the outcome.
- Providing text sets of different readings focusing on the same topic to promote understanding of the content where there are different levels of reading difficulty.

- Having students bring texts from home (in other languages as well as in English) that address the same topic/content.