RESOURCES

NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE PARENTS

Strategies and Tools for Teachers and Leaders, K–12

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Contents

Example of Creating a Demographic Profile for Specialized Schools

Charter school	Magnet	Regional Gifted Center	Private
• Independent public school • Funded with taxpayer money • Free from many of the laws and regulations that govern traditional public schools • Run by for-profit companies • Emphasizes particular fields of study (e.g., the arts or technology) • Many located in urban settings • State- and non-state-certified staff	• Offers a wide range of distinctive programs, including programs that that emphasizes academic subjects such as math, science, aerospace technology, language immersion, or humanities • *Open classroom • Individualized instruction • Gifted-talented programs • Career/vocational education • Montessori enriched curriculum • Low-income, special needs, and limited English proficiency are underrepresented • Majority of schools are situated in minority-dominant districts • White-dominant districts reenroll more minority students	• Public • Student population: 　» Non-White: 45% 　» White: 54.9% 　» Hispanic: 21.5% 　» African American: 17% 　» Asian/Pacific Islander: 5% 　» Number of students: 86,792 (74.7%) • Student enrollment: 49.3 million (90.6%) • Average school enrollment: 568 students • Teachers: 3.2 million • Student–teacher ratio: 15:4 • Graduation rate (high school seniors): 81.2% • 4-year college enrollment rate: 39.5%	• Student population: 　» Non-White: 25.5% 　» White: 74.5% 　» Hispanic: 9.6% 　» African American: 9.8% 　» Asian/Pacific Islander: 5.4% 　» American Indian/Alaskan Native: 0.6% • Number of students: 29,429 (25.3%) • Student enrollment: 571 million (9.4%) • Average school enrollment: 150 • Teachers: 456,000 • Student–teacher ratio: 11:1 • Graduation rate (high school seniors): 93.8% • 4-year college enrollment rate: 66.5%

Sample Speech to Community Leaders and Other Groups

The following sample speech comes from *Parents as Partners in Reading: A Family Literacy Training Program* (Edwards, 1990, pp. 63–65).

Welcome and thank you for joining us (this evening/afternoon) at (name of school, library, or community center). I am extremely pleased that you took time from your busy schedules to attend our session on the *Parents as Partners in Reading* family literacy training program.

My purpose is twofold. First, I want to emphasize the importance of involving parents in their children's education. Second, I want to solicit your support in involving parents in a program that will train them in how to read books effectively to their children.

Parents need to be reminded that they are their children's first and most important teachers of reading. Long before children enter school, they are being taught directly and indirectly by their parents. Therefore, it is important that parents take this role seriously and prepare their children in the best way possible. Because readers are made and not born, parents must begin preparing their children to become good readers even before their children begin preschool.

Good reading skills are the foundation of educational development. Studies have proven what we all suspect: Children whose parents spend time reading to them do better in school than those children whose parents do not. A love of reading and a respect for books is handed down from parents to children. Strong reading skills are the building blocks for larger vocabularies and the basis for clear and logical thinking processes. All educational success will follow from a love of reading and good reading skills. Cynthia Brown (1987) has noted that "learning to read is a political act. In a literate society being able to read is a necessary step toward making decisions."

To carry our children into the 21st century, we must give them the necessary skills. Their successes will be closely tied to strengths as readers. Because of this, the single most precious gift that we as parents can give to our children is the gift of reading.

Here are several quotes that help emphasize the importance of reading in a child's life in general and in their education more specifically.

"The family is the basic institution through which children learn who they are, where they fit into society, and what kinds of futures they are likely to experience." —Edgar Epps

"It is not class position that determines a family's ability to support their children's learning, rather it is the quality of life within the home that makes the difference." —Reginald Clark

"Parents' good intentions for their children are not enough. Parents must put their intentions into practice." —*Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985)

"With parenting, there are no trial runs. We have but one chance to be good parents, and that is now." —Anonymous

"Parents must make room in their hearts and then in their house and then in their schedule for their children. No poor parent is too poor to do that, and no middle-class parent is too busy." —Jesse Jackson

Some of you have probably heard parents say, "I don't have time to help my child. I have too many other things to do." Yet, if these same parents were asked what they valued most in their lives, many would undoubtedly say "My children." Unfortunately, accepting responsibility for a child's reading skills is too often passed on to someone else.

Parents often hear teachers say, "Read to your child." The assumption here is that all parents are equally equipped to participate effectively in book-reading interaction with their children. I argue that not all parents have a clear understanding of the skills needed for this interaction. Quite simply, this is because reading is not a literacy event in every home, and books are not available in every home.

The following reminders, however, will help make literacy a day-to-day event in the home:

1. Read to your child.
2. Be a good literacy model.
3. Provide books, magazines, and newspapers for your child to read.
4. Create a reading atmosphere at home.
5. Talk and listen to your child.
6. Exemplify a positive attitude toward reading and praise your child for reading.
7. Provide experiences for your child that will stimulate interest in reading (trips to the library, museum, and zoo).
8. Read environmental signs: create reading opportunities.
9. Make paper and pencils available.
10. Be aware of your child's interests.
11. Point out similarities and differences of everyday objects.

Although book reading is not the only way to achieve literacy (singing and storytelling also promote literacy), it is the most school-preferred literacy activity. As early as 1908 Huey proposed that the answer to the literacy question is found in the home, with parents reading with and to their children. Truly, book reading is the cornerstone of becoming literate. Barbara Huell (quoted in Coleman, 1977) has written that "together we must struggle to create and sustain an environment where our children can learn [to develop as readers and writers], meet the challenge, and express the joy of being [literate]" (p. 84).

Showing parents, then, how to share books with their children is an important way of solving the literacy dilemma. Once children are in school and experiencing difficulties in reading, the solution to the problem becomes more complex.

I need you to help me spread the message that reading is important and that all parents can and should support their children's literacy development. More importantly, I would like you to tell your neighbors and friends that the *Parents as Partners in Reading* program will "show" and "tell" parents how to support their children's literacy development.

Accept my challenge, if you will. Take the responsibility for encouraging at least one parent you know to participate in this program. Also, care not only about the reading skills of your own children but

also about those of your neighbors' children and of your friends' children. Working together, we can create better human resources in our community.

Helping parents help their children is

- a challenge . . . meet it
- a gift . . . accept it
- an adventure . . . dare it
- a duty . . . perform it
- an opportunity . . . take it
- a journey . . . complete it
- a promise . . . fulfill it
- a struggle . . . fight it
- a goal . . . achieve it
- a puzzle . . . solve it

In closing, let me emphasize my challenge to you: Join me in making reading an adventure. I promise you that the experience will be well worth your effort.

Open House Ideas

Open houses, back-to-school nights, and meet-the-teacher nights are among the annual rites of passage for every classroom teacher. Open houses provide parents with an "inside look" into the daily activities and occurrences of your classroom. Open houses occur sometime during the first few weeks of the school year and are an opportunity for parents to get to know you and their child's academic program. It's also a wonderful opportunity for teachers to actively recruit parents as partners in the education of their children. Good first impressions make a difference, and the first open house of the school year gives you a chance to gain parents' support. It also allows you an opportunity to create a personal connection with parents and establish ways for continued communication throughout the school year. Here are some tips and ideas that can help you make this annual event successful and purposeful.

The What	The Why
Welcome Parents!	Schools send messages to parents in many different ways. These messages can create a clear picture in the minds of parents about how the school sees them. Does the school see them as partners and valuable resources in their children's education? Or does the school see them as a potentially disruptive influence needing to be controlled? These messages can be delivered in subtle ways including how welcome parents feel at the school, the tone of notes and newsletters, how approachable staff are at the school, and the opportunities for parents to be actively involved in the school.
• Make a PowerPoint of your class or you can use some other visual. Have each child make his or her own slide. Students can use WordArt to put their names on individual slides, right in the middle. Then they can use text boxes to use adjectives to describe themselves. Also, have them take and insert digital picture of themselves (one picture for each student) on the slides as well. Put all the slides together for our very first class PowerPoint. Put it on "loop continuously," and let it run as you visit with the parents.	According to Purkey and Novak (1984), schools should be "the most inviting place in town" (p. 2). Four principles of invitational education were outlined by Purkey and Novak: (1) people are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly; (2) teaching should be a cooperative activity; (3) people possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of human development; and (4) this potential can best be realized by places, policies, programs that are specifically designed to invite development, and by people who are personally and professionally inviting to themselves and others (p. 2).
• Welcome parents to your open house and tell them how pleased you are to meet them. Sometimes, a little token of appreciation for them coming goes a long way. Katie Davis, a classroom teacher, prepares little bags for each parent with a few little items and a poem about each item's significance (e.g., a tissue to wipe your tears as you drop off your children and entrust them into my care each day; a rubber band because I appreciate the flexibility you will bring in helping your child learn this year in helping your child know that it's okay to make mistakes, etc.). This makes parents smile, helps them to know you care, and is a great conversation starter.	The variety of activities listed for "welcoming parents" will connote to parents that school personnel have made a concerted effort to invite/welcome them. Similarly, it will connote that school personnel have closely examined their school's history to determine whether past policies and practices made parents feel invited or uninvited.
• Tell a little about yourself.	
• Describe the goals you hope to accomplish this evening.	
• Give an overview of the most exciting things you have planned for the year to get parents enthusiastic about what is happening in the classroom.	
• Use your daily schedule to introduce parents to the way their children will be learning.	
• Make a video to show the parents a day in the life of a student.	
• Spend no more than a minute or two discussing standardized tests.	
• Survey parents regarding methods of communication that they would prefer—one way (newsletters, voice mail, cellphone) or two-way (email, class website, text message)—and explain what type of communication you currently use.	
• Explain how parents can communicate with the teacher (text, email, letter, phone, leaving comments and suggestions at school, meetings, etc.).	
• Surveys of parent preferred methods of communications could also be given and/or emailed out in order to gather data on how to effectively communicate with families based on their needs.	
• Explain how you will handle parent questions.	
• Explain that the open house will inform them of your expectations of their child and will help them to better assess and assist in their child's learning.	

The What	The Why

School Policies
 	
• Give a handout or post on the school wiki or website important school policies. The website can also be projected in the classroom for parents to see as they walk around your classroom) during open house. To make access to the website even easier, some teachers create a QR code for their website, so that parents who come to their classroom simply scan it with their mobile devices and are taken directly to their sites.
 	
• Within these websites/handouts include the following items:
  » The school's discipline policy, including procedures regarding absence and tardiness
  » The schools positive behavior and intervention support plan Getting parents informed about how their children will be rewarded for good behavior is just as important as letting them know consequences for poor behavior
  » The timing of report cards and progress reports
  » Emergency procedures for bad weather and other events
  » Transportation schedules
  » Provisions for after-school activities
  » Special programs at the school
	School policies and procedures are essentially the governing documents by which your school district and school buildings are run. It is essential that your policies and procedures be current and up-to-date. These should be reviewed and revised as necessary, and new policies and procedures should be written as needed. Every school should have a student handbook, support staff handbook, and certified staff handbook which are loaded with policies and procedures. These are vital pieces of each school because they govern the day-to-day occurrences that happen in your buildings. They are valuable because they offer the guidelines for how the administration and school board believe their school should be run. These policies come into play every single day. They are a set of expectations that all constituents within the school are held accountable by.
	
	    Delta Center Elementary School put together a Behavior Matrix in which expected behaviors for all areas of the school building are clearly laid out. The Building Leadership Team worked hard in putting this together to meet the needs of their specific school and shares it with students, families, and the community. This example is presented in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.2) of the book for reference and can be used for help in designing one to match your students and school.

The What	The Why

Class Policies
 • Provide a handout with information about the class wiki or website that might offer the following items:
   » Attendance and tardiness policy
   » Grading policy
   » Amount of homework and homework policy
   » Policies for addressing academic and behavioral problems
   » Calendar of upcoming events, such as class fieldtrips and future parent–teacher meetings
 • Collect parent emails while they are present at the open house. These emails can be used to create an email group that you use to send an email to each week with a link to the classroom website. This quick and easy communication can really help in getting parents to check your classroom website on a regular basis. An open house is also a great place to have parents write their names down on a list if they do not have Internet access, so that you know which parents to communicate with by phone or paper.
	What are the policies that students need to observe to succeed in your class? What do you expect from your students, and what can they expect from you?
	
	   Start your year on the right foot by developing your own expectations with your class. These procedures are intended to facilitate the smooth operation of your classroom environment in order to maximize the time you have to work on your assigned tasks. These procedures are all about "how we will do things" in this classroom. Your students want to know their boundaries; they want to understand both the rewards and consequences of their behavior. Most importantly, they want to feel secure in their relationships with you and with their classmates.

Class Rules
 • Give information on the behavior policy in your class and how it relates to the skills children need to be successful in school and life in general. This policy might include rules such as these:
   » Be prepared.
   » Be respectful.
   » Be responsible.
   » Follow directions.
   » Be punctual.
   » Be organized.
   » Be a self-starter.
	Teach the rules as you would a regular lesson. It should be your first lesson. Discuss each rule individually, explaining the rationale behind it, and ask for examples of how it could be broken. Explain that rules help make everyone's time in school more enjoyable; use examples to illustrate this point. It is also a good idea to post the rules as a reminder and send a copy home with each student.
	
	   Rules are the foundation of effective classroom management. The extent to which students know the rules and how to follow the rules is positively correlated with appropriate behavior (Rosenberg, 1986). Rules for the classroom should reflect and support schoolwide expectations yet be tailored to promote behavior specific to the classroom setting.
	
	   Classroom rules are a crucial component to allow teachers to be successful in the classroom. Each teacher must tailor the classroom rules to his or her particular style and pet peeves. What works for one teacher may not work for the next. Classroom rules set boundaries and provide distinct parameters of behavior for your students. Classroom rules set limits to inform students of how far they can "push the envelope" and what will be tolerated in the classroom. Teachers should establish and clearly explain the classroom rules on the first day of school. Classroom rules should also be disseminated to parents. A signed copy acknowledging the child and his or her parents read and understand the classroom rules should be obtained in the first week of school.

The What	The Why

Opportunities to Get Involved in the Classroom
 	
• Give a detailed list of parent-involvement policies at the school including suggestions on how to encourage reluctant parents. Also, play up that all parents have special skills that would be appreciated in the classroom.
 	
• List opportunities for parents to get involved in volunteer programs, advisory councils, and the PTA.
 	
• Provide parents with your clear expectations for them. Do you expect your students to read independently or with an adult? Should homework be checked at school by the teacher or at home by the parent before it is turned in? Should parents look at students' binders and backpacks every day? What should they be looking for?
 	
• Provide sign-up sheets for parents interested in helping with planning parties or special projects for your class. There are so many ways to involve parents—both in the traditional sense and by way of 21st-century communication. In Mrs. Davis's classroom she has such roles as the following:
 	
  » *A Pinterest parent:* This parent follows a specified Pinterest board of projects, materials, and so forth that the teacher has placed here in hopes of having these things made for the classroom. (This is the perfect job for the parent who wants to help but cannot come in to school during the school day because of work or young children at home).
 	
  » *Intervention parents:* These are parents who are available to come into the classroom on a regular basis. They can be trained to do a simple intervention such as fluency phrase cards and can become skilled and confident in providing the same intervention each week. This is perfect for a parent who worries about knowing what to do and wants clear expectations.
 	
  » *Wish-list watcher:* This parent is in charge of watching the classroom wish list (which is on the classroom website and on a shared Pinterest board). This parent monitors that the classroom needs are being met and communicated with other parents when needed to gather supplies that are asked for.
	The evidence is clear and consistent: When schools and families work together, student learning and outcomes improve (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). So do the following:
	
	• children's attitudes toward school
	• their social skills and behavior
	• the likelihood that they will take more challenging classes and pass them (Henderson & Mapp, 2002)
	
	This holds true across families of all economic, ethnic/racial, and educational backgrounds—and for students of all ages (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
	
	A 2009 study conducted by the National PTA and the National Center for Fathering found significant increases in father involvement compared to a 1999 report—more fathers are engaging with their children at school as well as interacting with teachers, administrators, and other parents. "Father involvement in schools is associated with the higher likelihood of a student getting mostly A's. This was true for fathers in biological parent families, for stepfathers, and for fathers heading single-parent families."

The What	The Why
Opportunities to Get Involved in the Classroom (continued) • Create bulletin boards and newsletters from the viewpoint of a parent. • Hold dads' breakfast, dads' lunches, open houses for dads. • Provide a parent-resource liaison to help with tutoring, housing, food/clothing vouchers, medical. • Implement father-support networks. • Plan parent outings. • Create family support teams. • Facilitate parent-led workshops. • Create parent videos to detail how parents can help with their child's homework and model various types of questions they can ask while their child is completing his or her homework/reading to ensure that their child is comprehending the material. • Hold a meeting at home for those parents who cannot make it to school, to help with planning of cultural events and to provide resources. • Help or encourage parents to create quiet spaces at home for homework and reading time. • Match their skills to the needs of parents. • Be a translator. • Provide transportation to parents for events. • Send home a weekly or monthly newsletter sharing with parents what you are covering in class and some highlights of student accomplishments. ***Things Parents Can Do at Home with Their Children*** • Play board games. • Sit with children while they are completing their homework and paying bills. • Prepare meals together. • Do chores together. • Read and talk about literature together (newspaper, magazines, comic books, comic strips, plays, books, brochures, food labels, flyers, mail, cookbook, etc.). • Spend time outside playing/discovering inquiries about things observed on nature walks, at the park, or in the backyard. • Start discussions regarding what children are learning at school. Read the teacher's newsletter and use the information in it to ask more specific questions about what they are learning and doing. • Incorporate rules (as well as consequences) at home that are similar to classroom rules.	

Positive Family Support in PBIS Schools

The Family Check-Up (FCU) is an evidence-based, family-centered intervention that is being successfully used in school settings. In this project, called *Positive Family Support*, the FCU is being implemented by school personnel, with the goal to study schools' integration of the FCU into their Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system. Positive Family Support uses the FCU model at the universal, selected, and individual levels to give parents tools to help them guide and support their adolescents. This support includes proven strategies to prevent youth problem behavior and substance abuse and to improve academic success. Consistent with PBIS, Positive Family Support exists at all three tiers:

1. *Universal Family Support* involves creation and use of a Family Resource Center housed in each school, training and support for school staff to provide parenting information and consultation with families, positive family outreach to form stronger home–school relationships, and a parent and teacher screening system to identify those who need support.
2. *Selected Family Support* enhances parent involvement in selected-level student interventions, such as Check-In/Check-Out, or creates interventions for schools interested in developing selected-level support. Specialized modules also have been developed for family support of attendance and homework success.
3. *Individualized Family Support* involves intensive family support using the FCU family assessment, feedback, and follow-up support services for students and families with the highest needs.

The Language of School

Katie Davis, a classroom teacher in a small Midwestern community describes how their school defines "the language of school." Katie stated,

> This is where teachers/the school sets up a language about behavior and classroom instruction across the entire school. For example, all classes use the same language as rules and consequences. All teachers when they implement a strategy, they use the name; instead of saying "guess" what happens, teachers will use the correct terminology, "Predict." Also, the subject matter terminology will be used. Instead of saying "plus" in math, all teachers will use the terminology "add." This way when homework goes home or when workshops are being implemented, everyone is using/understanding the same terminology across all grade levels.

Katie noted that teachers had the opportunity to revise the plan if they so desired. In addition, Katie suggests that teachers could create a glossary of the terminology that parents would need to know as they communicated with staff members.

One other way that Katie uses consistent language in her school is by using the same behavior system throughout all classrooms, grades 1–6. This helps parents to understand the language that students and teachers are referring to with daily behavior choices—rather than its being different classroom by classroom. Having this consistent language also helps students understand expectations. The picture on the following page shows the rules and expectations chart that she helped to create for her building, which all teachers in her school use.

SOARing **Safety Ownership Attitude Respect**
ROLE MODEL
WAY TO GO!
READY TO LEARN
THINK ABOUT IT
TEACHER'S CHOICE
CONTACT HOME

The following chart is used by teachers to describe voice-level rules and expectations for parents and children.

Voice Levels
Silence is Golden— Absolute silence. No one is talking.
Spy Talk—Whispering, only 1 person can hear you.
Low Flow—Small-group work, only the group can hear you.
Formal Normal—Normal conversation voice.
Loud Crowd—Presenting voice. Everyone can hear you.
Out of Control— Playground voice, never used inside.

Student-Led Conferences

This resource is an overview of the elements that should be included in the portfolio for the student-led parent–teacher conference (3rd grade and beyond), whether it is presented using technology or on paper. Students (depending on availability of technology resources in their building) can present using a PowerPoint on laptops or iPads. If the building does not have technology (e.g., computer, iPad, projector, etc.), students can present a reflective portfolio presentation on paper during the conference. It is always beneficial to parents and child when the child (instead of just the teacher) can explain their Knowledge, Practice, and Reflection. Students will be given a list of artifacts that will represent the three areas (Knowledge, Practice, and Reflection). They will need a minimum of two artifacts for each area. The time allotted for the presentations will be 20–25 minutes.

INTRODUCTION

Developing one's identify as an emerging all-around student is more than acquiring knowledge and applying that knowledge. Students also need to articulate their skills through reflections of their work, which is essential to the process. Students' artifacts in their reflective portfolio document their growth and success as well as what they believe they need to improve on in all subjects. See Resource 3.5 for an example of portfolio artifacts.

THE PORTFOLIO PROCESS

Preparation for the reflective portfolio begins at the beginning of the school year. Specific information regarding the portfolio expectations is discussed during the first week of class, and information is presented at the open house; hard copy information is sent home as well.

Feedback will be provided to the students from their parents and teacher(s) as part of the assessment process.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed (not with a grade, just to ensure that they follow the proper steps) on each of four dimensions: Documentation, Organization, Artifact Inclusion, and Understanding of Self.

1. Documentation

Satisfactory: Artifacts that clearly support the three elements (Knowledge, Practice, and Reflection).

There must be at least three artifacts for each subject. The students must explain what they learned (Knowledge), how they applied their knowledge (Practice), and how they believe they did or will use their knowledge (Reflection) or what other knowledge and practice is needed for them to be proficient with that content.

2. Organization

Satisfactory: The portfolio has a clear purpose or theme, and it is organized in a continuing and fluent procedure.

The purpose or theme for the portfolio should be located in an opening statement at the front of the portfolio. This could be the student's overview of his or her portfolio (a short paragraph that sums up their learning; for example, "This portfolio will showcase what I have learned in all subjects. I have become a stronger writer in all subjects, and my literacy knowledge has come from a 2.3 to a 3.1 because of the hard work I have put forth at school and home. You will see that there are some subjects, like social studies and art, that I am still having some difficulties in, but I have a plan that I will share with you on how I will improve in those subjects") or a theme ("I am the light—I have knowledge"; "I am a work in progress"; "Science buff"; etc.). Whatever the opening statement is, students should lay out the process as to how their portfolio is organized.

Use of section dividers, distinct paper or color-coding for introductions or sections, graphics, and other visuals can help the organization of the portfolio.

3. Artifact Inclusion

Satisfactory: Introductory pieces for the artifacts provide evidence that the student was reflective.

Each artifact in the portfolio must have an explanation of what the artifact is and why it is in the portfolio. The explanations must go beyond just the "what" to the "so what" that is the essence of the reflection. Thus, students should stay away from "This was my favorite." Instead, they might include why it was their favorite, how it connects to other learning in that particular subject or other subjects, what they learned from doing that assignment, and so forth.

4. Understanding of Self

Satisfactory: The portfolio is a reflection of the student and his or her talent, interests, and learning. The portfolio reflects creativity and individuality.

The student's voice must come through in the portfolio. While students should be creative, it is not necessary to be an artist to create a portfolio. Creativity can be shown in how a portfolio is organized as much as in how many different colors are used. A reflective portfolio is not a scrapbook; the heart is in the substance, not solely in the presentation.

Nina Hasty, a former classroom teacher and literacy coach, provides a transcript of plausible presentation between teacher, student, and parent(s).

Teacher (T): Welcome to our annual Student-led parent–teacher conference. Your children have been working on their portfolios for the last 3 weeks. Their portfolios will highlight their knowledge, practice, and reflection of the CCSS/GLCEs (Common Core State Standards/Grade Level Content Expectations) that were covered within the card marking period of 10 weeks. Some students will showcase their portfolio using technology or in the traditional way (paper).Your child will present his or her portfolio to you, and I will also observe for assessment purposes. Your child will not receive a grade. However, I will provide extensive feedback to help your child with the next portfolio as well as with his or her thought process on the artifacts. You, as the parent, will also provide feedback; you may ask questions as well. You

do not have to wait until the end; in fact, you should not wait until the end—ask questions after each artifact.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS THAT YOU CAN ASK
FOR THE PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION

Knowledge:

1. How has this particular artifact helped your development in this subject?
2. Can you discuss how this artifact connects to prior knowledge that you had within this content?
3. How can you improve your learning/knowledge in this subject?

Practice:

1. How has being able to practice your learning helped you to retain the information?
2. Did this practice push your thinking about the content?
3. Was this an assignment that you were able to come up with on your own, or was it something that your teacher created?

Reflection:

1. How can you use this knowledge to help yourself in the future in this class and the next grade?
2. What reflection was the most beneficial?
3. How can your learning improve?
4. What else is needed to help you improve in this area?

Now I will provide an overview of the information you will hear during the presentation:

Students were given a list of artifacts that they could include to represent the three areas: Knowledge, Practice, and Reflection. The student's portfolio will showcase his or her development as an emerging all-around student who has acquired knowledge and who is also capable of applying that knowledge. Students will articulate their skills through reflections of their work, which is essential to the

process. The students' artifacts in their reflective portfolios document their growth and success as well as what they believe they need to improve on in all subjects.

Student 1: Good afternoon, my name is Johnny Smith, and welcome to my 4th-grade portfolio presentation. I will use a traditional approach, as I have a portfolio folder that contains all of the required documents.

I will demonstrate my knowledge of what I have learned in the past 10 weeks, how I have practiced that knowledge, as well as my reflections on my learning. My portfolio, as you can see, is organized around the theme, "Never Stop Learning." On the front cover I have pictures of me "learning" something since I was 1 year old. I believe that everyone learns something each day of their life.

> "That there should one man die ignorant who had capacity for knowledge, this I call a tragedy." —Thomas Carlyle

Therefore, everything that I speak about in my portfolio represents my learning, my eagerness to continue to learn, and my plan of action for my improvement. I will begin with knowledge of a subject, and then explain my practice with the content, and lastly I will provide a reflection. If you have a question, please ask.

ELA

Knowledge: Determining Importance is a very difficult comprehension strategy to not only understand, but to apply as well.

What Is Determining Importance? In any text in determining importance or to create the "big umbrella" meaning or theme that is supported by the text, personal experiences and prior knowledge in order to deepen their understanding and comprehension of a given text.

Text Level: When the text contains main ideas, concepts, themes, opinions when I encounter the piece of text being used at different times throughout my life and determine the meaning and importance to myself. I look at the theme or message of the whole book once done reading the text and using the key details from the text, such as

repetition or emphasis on words, illustrations, symbolism, character and setting, conflicts, etc.

So now I have the knowledge of this comprehension strategy. I will explain how I applied this comprehension strategy to a text that I read. I also had to do a class presentation or a lesson to my group and then they evaluated how well they understood the comprehension strategy and I evaluated myself on how well I believed I delivered the material.
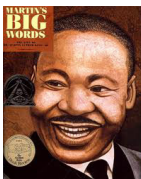
Overview of the Book: Explore the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through this wonderfully illustrated biography informational text. Discover his life-changing actions and beliefs through his life story and powerful quotes that once changed the world of segregation.

DETERMINING IMPORTANCE LESSON/PRESENTATION

- I put on the board: How do you determine the important parts of a text? And I gave students 5 minutes to discuss the questions with one another.
- I created an Anchor Chart on the board to help them begin to think of how to determine the important parts of the book.
- I introduced the book Martin's Big Words: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr. to the students. I said that to determine importance we are looking for anything major that sticks out to us as good readers that we think may help us determine the theme of the book as a whole, which can be activated by our prior knowledge, experiences, and connections that we have to the text and our personal lives. We want to make sure that we are not paying too close attention to the "fluff" or extra wording of the text, but rather wanting the big ideas the "chunks" that help lead us to the overall theme of the book. Make sure to tell them that illustrations, different text/sentence formats in the text will also help us determine importance because the author may be trying to subtly lead us to the overall theme.

- I conducted a Think-Aloud with the students during the first two pages of the book. After that, I had the students continue to dig deeper into the text by looking at the book as a whole to discover the theme and the important details that help support their theme choice. I provided copies of the book to students so they could highlight and mark up the text when they were making connections or were determining the "big idea" or the "big umbrella" of what they thought the theme or message of the text meant to them as individuals.

I gave them the following Example as my Think-Aloud because we learned how to use Think-ALouds and how effective they were, so I used this comprehension strategy in my lesson.

In church Martin sang hymns. He read from the Bible. He listened to his father preach. These words made him feel good.

"When I grow up, I'm going to get big words, too."

Hmm . . . well, when I read this first page, it's good to know what Martin did in church, but I don't think that is what the most important part is. That part of the text is just setting up the biography for us to give us a little bit of background information on MLK Jr. However, when I see the actual quote from MLK Jr., I know that that must be important because it stands out by itself, it's in a different font, maybe this is helping set up our theme. Let's mark this page.

Martin grew up. He became a minister like this father. And he used the big words he had heard as a child from his parents and from the Bible.

"Everyone can be great."

Wow, that's cool that he is following in his father's footsteps. He was a very religious man who was firm in his beliefs. He believed everyone had something to offer to contribute to change the world. Also, because MLK Jr. was such a strong believer we get to know him more and more, and we know that he will fight for his right to end segregation based on activating our prior knowledge on what we know about MLK Jr. and his "I Have A Dream Speech" that we read over. So far, what I think for the theme or our "big umbrella" is that MLK Jr. was a very passionate man that fought for the rights of African Americans. I wrote the theme on the umbrella on the graphic organizer that I had posted on the board.

I modeled the first couple pages of the book, and then I had the students finish reading and marking up the book along with the graphic organizer. We came back as a whole group to see what everyone's theme ended up being and the supporting details and connections.

Reflection: I had 8 students in my group. After looking at their Anchor Chart and listening to their Think-ALouds and themes that they came up with, I believed that I should have not given them the entire book to do; maybe the next 2 pages to model with another student. Even though all of the students were able to understand the comprehension strategy, Determining Importance because they had prior knowledge, I wonder how well they would have done if it would have been a text that they did not have prior knowledge on the content. I was surprised that I had so much knowledge on this strategy. My teacher gave me high marks, 9/10, and gave me positive feedback on my lesson outline.

> **Parent:** Why was that book used? Was it a requirement?
> **Student 1:** Well, I liked the book, and I think it was just easier for me to explain the strategy.
> **Parent:** Are you able to continue to use this strategy successful using other books and in other subjects?
> **Student 1:** Yes. It is easier for me now, especially using informational text in science and social studies. I think, especially with learning how to do Think-Alouds, which is another comprehension strategy that I learned, the material is becoming easier for me to understanding, which you have noticed has helped my grades.
> **Parent:** What exactly is informational text?
> **Student 1:** Informational text is nonfiction books. Many times they have charts, graphs, subheadings, pictures of the information that they are talking about. You know, the science, math, and social studies books that I bring home.

The conference would continue with the student presenting the next section of his or her portfolio. The teacher can have students skip certain subjects or shorten their presentation on subjects if time is running out.

Example of Portfolio Artifacts

The following table provides a description of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (ELA). Writing, Math, Social Studies and Science. It demonstrates how teachers would list the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) in which they taught during the card marking period. Students would take those CCSS/GLCEs and be able to match possible artifacts that they would add to their portfolio.

Standards	Possible Artifacts

Knowledge

ELA

R.MT.01.04 self-monitor comprehension by using a graphic organizer to sequence events, sort and order information, or identify author's perspective. *(Determining Importance)*

R.MT.03-05.01 self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to texts by automatically applying strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension including: predicting, constructing mental images, visually representing ideas in text, questioning, rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning, inferring, and summarizing.

Writing

W.PS.03-05.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message in both narrative (e.g., varied word choice and sentence structure, character description) and informational writing (e.g., examples, transitions, grammar and usage).

Math

Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA. Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems.

1. Interpret a multiplication equation as a comparison, e.g., interpret $35 = 5 \times 7$ as a statement that 35 is 5 times as many as 7 and 7 times as many as 5. Represent verbal statements of multiplicative comparisons as multiplication equations.

2. Multiply or divide to solve word problems involving multiplicative comparison, e.g., by using drawings and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem, distinguishing multiplicative comparison from additive comparison

Social Studies: National Geography

Standards: G4 Human Systems

4.1. Cultural Mosaic

4.2. Patterns of Human Settlement

G4 Human Systems

Understand how human activities help shape the Earth's surface.

G4.0.1 Use a case study or story about migration within or to the United States to identify push and pull factors (why they left, why they came) that influenced the migration. (H)

G4.0.2 Describe the impact of immigration to the United States on the cultural development of different places or regions of the United States (e.g., forms of shelter, language, food).

Science: Inquiry Process

K–7 Standard S.IP Develop an understanding that scientific inquiry and reasoning involves observing, questioning, investigating, recording, and developing solutions to problems.

S.IP.E.1 Inquiry involves generating questions, conducting investigations, and developing solutions to problems through reasoning and observation.

S.IP.04.11 Make purposeful observation of the natural world using the appropriate senses.

S.IP.04.12 Generate questions based on observations.

S.IP.04.13 Plan and conduct simple and fair investigations.

S.IP.04.14 Manipulate simple tools that aid observation and data collection (for example: hand lens, balance, ruler, meter stick, measuring cup, thermometer, spring scale, stop watch/timer, graduated cylinder/beaker).

S.IP.04.15 Make accurate measurements with appropriate units (millimeters centimeters, meters, milliliters, liters, Celsius, grams, seconds, minutes) for the measurement tool.

S.IP.04.16 Construct simple charts and graphs from data and observations.

Possible Artifacts:
- Projects
- Class presentations
- Papers (book reports, research, etc.)
- Tests

Standards	Possible Artifacts

Practice

ELA

R.MT.01.04 self-monitor comprehension by using a graphic organizer to sequence events, sort and order information, or identify author's perspective. *(Determining Importance)*

R.MT.03-05.01 self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to texts by automatically applying strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension including: predicting, constructing mental images, visually representing ideas in text, questioning, rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning, inferring, and summarizing.

Writing

W.PS.03-05.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message in both narrative (e.g., varied word choice and sentence structure, character description) and informational writing (e.g., examples, transitions, grammar and usage).

Math

Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA. Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems.

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S.IP.04.15 Make accurate measurements with appropriate units (millimeters centimeters, meters, milliliters, liters, Celsius, grams, seconds, minutes) for the measurement tool.

S.IP.04.16 Construct simple charts and graphs from data and observations.

Possible Artifacts:

- Class response journals
- Research reports
- Projects
- Assisting classmates on content
- Using technology to teach/present content learned
- Student-led discussions (book clubs, literacy circle, etc.)

Standards	Possible Artifacts

Reflection

ELA

R.MT.01.04 self-monitor comprehension by using a graphic organizer to sequence events, sort and order information, or identify author's perspective. *(Determining Importance)*

R.MT.03-05.01 self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to texts by automatically applying strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension including: predicting, constructing mental images, visually representing ideas in text, questioning, rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning, inferring, and summarizing.

Writing

W.PS.03-05.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message in both narrative (e.g., varied word choice and sentence structure, character description) and informational writing (e.g., examples, transitions, grammar and usage).

Math

Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA. Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems.

1. Interpret a multiplication equation as a comparison, e.g., interpret $35 = 5 \times 7$ as a statement that 35 is 5 times as many as 7 and 7 times as many as 5. Represent verbal statements of multiplicative comparisons as multiplication equations.

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Social Studies: National Geography
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S.IP.04.15 Make accurate measurements with appropriate units (millimeters centimeters, meters, milliliters, liters, Celsius, grams, seconds, minutes) for the measurement tool.
S.IP.04.16 Construct simple charts and graphs from data and observations.

Parent Conference Form 2

The following questions are the most common questions that parents have asked when they discuss their child's progress. You may add other questions that you may have to help you understand your child's progress, as well as strategies that can help you aid your child during the school year to be as successful as possible:

1. What is the progress that my child has made in each content area?

2. What do my child and I need to do to continue to be successful or to begin to have success?

3. Where is my child compared to the other students in the classroom?

4. What classroom and/or homework is my child missing?

5. What are the goals that you have for my child (academic, behavior, and social)?

6. What extracurricular activities can my child join that can improve his or her academic, behavior, and/or social skills?

7. Is my child participating in classroom discussions, group discussions, and/or student–teacher conferences?

8. What can I do to help assist you to help your child at home?

9. What suggestions can you provide me that can help your child? (see Resource 3.7 for Sample Responses to Parent Conference Form 2)

Sample Responses to Parent Conference Form 2

1. **What is the progress that my child has made in each content area?**

Looking at: Johnny (4th grade)

Johnny's standardized test scores (Michigan Education Assessment Program): Looking at Johnny's scores last year versus this year, he has shown 3 months growth in math, 4 months growth in science; he regressed by 2 months in ELA as well as 1 month in social studies. Compared to the other students in the classroom he ranks 10th out of 31 in math, 8th out of 31 in science, 18 out of 31 in ELA, and 15 out of 31 in social studies. (Parents like to know the growth from one testing year to the next testing year as well as where their child ranks with the other students in the classroom.)

District's benchmark test scores: Looking at the district's benchmark scores from the first 10 weeks and now, Johnny had the following scores: Some districts use their state's GLCE [Grade Level Content Expectations] or CCSS [Common Core State Standards] to create tests to measure their students' progress before the end of each card marking.

First card marking (10 weeks)	Second card marking (10 weeks)

Math

First card marking	Second card marking
Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA **Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems.** 1. Interpret a multiplication equation as a comparison, e.g., interpret $35 = 5 \times 7$ as a statement that 35 is 5 times as many as 7 and 7 times as many as 5. Represent verbal statements of multiplicative comparisons as multiplication equations. 2. Multiply or divide to solve word problems involving multiplicative comparison, e.g., by using drawings and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem, distinguishing multiplicative comparison from additive comparison 3.7: 3rd grade, 7th month. Schools have 9 months of growth; therefore, he is 2 months behind. His weaknesses are: 3 digit multiplication (shows partial proficiency—L2) and (shows no proficiency—L1) story problems—reasoning. Compared to his classmates, the average for 3 digit multiplication is L2 and story problems (reasoning) L2.	Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA **Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems.** 1. Interpret a multiplication equation as a comparison, e.g., interpret $35 = 5 \times 7$ as a statement that 35 is 5 times as many as 7 and 7 times as many as 5. Represent verbal statements of multiplicative comparisons as multiplication equations. 2. Multiply or divide to solve word problems involving multiplicative comparison, e.g., by using drawings and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem, distinguishing multiplicative comparison from additive comparison 3.9: He has made 2 months of growth. He is 1 month away from being at grade level. He is now proficient in 3 digit multiplication (L3) and partially proficient (L2) with story problems—reasoning. Compared to his classmates, the average for 3 digit multiplication is L3 and story problems (reasoning) L3.

Social Studies

First card marking	Second card marking
These are the 4th-grade Social Studies Michigan GLCEs. Students were provided a pre-and postassessment after each unit. The first score is the pre- and the last score is the postassessment; scores are out of 100% *G4 Human Systems—Standard* 4.1 Cultural Mosaic 24–57 4.2 Patterns of Human Settlement 56–78 4.3 Forces of Cooperation and Conflict 12–32 4.4 Economic Interdependence 66—80 In social studies our topics do not repeat, only with math and reading comprehension strategies; therefore, units are created to teach each standard. As you can see, before the Standard of Human Systems was introduced I administered a preassessment to understand what knowledge my students had on the topics. After each topic was covered using multiple teaching strategies such as documentaries, research, collaborative group work with trade books, role-playing and inquiry, Johnny had a better understanding of the topics. Even though 4.1 and 4.3 is at a L1 still, there was a huge improvement. We need to concentrate on the growth and not the final score. We need to let Johnny know that progress is what we are looking for and not necessarily a passing grade—even though that is very important. But he is making progress.	**These are the 4th-grade Social Studies Michigan GLCEs. Students were provided a pre- and postassessment after each unit. The first score is the pre- and the last score is the postassessment; scores are out of 100%** *C4 Relationship of the United States to Other Nations and World Affairs–Standard* 4.1 U.S. Foreign Policy 4–70 4.2 International Institutions and Affairs 1–49 4.3 Conflict and Cooperation Between and Among Nations 11–69 Again, Johnny didn't have a lot of knowledge regarding the standard; however, he gained so much knowledge at the end of the unit. Compared to the first topic I noticed that Johnny was more involved with the class discussions, turned in all of his homework, and did extra research on the topics using the websites that I placed on the newsletter. He even told me that you all went to the library and checked out some books on the topics. I believe that this contributed to the high gains that he exhibited on his postassessments.

First card marking (10 weeks)	Second card marking (10 weeks)
ELA	

First card marking (10 weeks)	Second card marking (10 weeks)
R.MT.01.04 self-monitor comprehension by using a graphic organizer to sequence events, sort and order information, or identify author's perspective. *(Determining Importance)* **R.MT.03-05.01** self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to texts by automatically applying strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension including: predicting, constructing mental images, visually representing ideas in text, questioning, rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning, inferring, and summarizing. The comprehension strategies are taught and retaught throughout the school year in ELA as well as science and social studies. So these scores represent the three reading strategies that were introduced, modeled, and practiced. The first score represents the preassessment score and the last score is the postassessment. • Determining Importance through self-monitoring, 54–69 • Prediction 89–98 Compared to his classmates, the average for Determining Importance is 61% L1. Prediction is 94% L3. Johnny is not doing any better or worse than his classmates. Again, these strategies are reviewed, modeled, and practiced continuously. I am confident that Johnny will be at a L2 or higher on all L1 strategies.	**R.MT.01.04** self-monitor comprehension by using a graphic organizer to sequence events, sort and order information, or identify author's perspective. *(Determining Importance)* **R.MT.03-05.01** self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to texts by automatically applying strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension including: predicting, constructing mental images, visually representing ideas in text, questioning, rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning, inferring, and summarizing. **R.CM.04.03** explain relationships among themes, ideas, and characters within and across texts to create a deeper understanding by categorizing and classifying, comparing and contrasting, or drawing parallels across time and culture. *(Text-to-Text Connections)* The same comprehension strategies are continuously covered in all subjects throughout the school year. • Determining Importance through self-monitoring, 69–72 • Prediction, 98–100 • Text-to-Text Connection, 70–82 Compared to his classmates, for Determining Importance, the average is 68% L2 and Johnny has surpassed that average. In all other strategies, Johnny and his classmates are L3. He is continuing to progress wonderfully. We will continue to use all strategies in all subjects; therefore, you will see improvement in all subjects since these strategies are used in all subjects.

First card marking (10 weeks)	Second card marking (10 weeks)

Writing

W.PS.03-05.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message in both narrative (e.g., varied word choice and sentence structure, character description) and informational writing (e.g., examples, transitions, grammar and usage).

- Conventions L2
- Fluency L3
- Descriptive L1

Johnny's conventions (grammar usage) are progressing as he uses punctuation, verbs, verb tense and agreement, and apostrophes. He is having some difficulties in approximately 25% of his writing with homophones. To help with this problem, he uses the iPad to use the homophone app. His sentences are fluent. (Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear, not just the eye.) The usage of descriptive language in informational writing is very difficult because he believes that only facts should be given. He is learning that informational descriptive writing is the same as narrative descriptive writing; all readers need to be provided a visual picture through the words of the subject. I have provided him with a checklist to help while he is thinking and writing:

- Did you make sure that you provided enough of a description of the subject (e.g., the baby elephant stood 5 feet tall when he was born. His face was as wrinkled as an old man's hand.)?
- Did you use comparisons of other subjects when appropriate?
- Did you use similes when appropriate?

W.PS.03-05.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message in both narrative (e.g., varied word choice and sentence structure, character description) and informational writing (e.g., examples, transitions, grammar and usage).

- Word Choice, L2
- Sentence Structure, L3
- Character Description (Style), L2

Johnny has improved from his informational descriptiveness to his narrative descriptiveness to his app.

With his description, we are working on his providing more in-depth descriptions of nouns in his writing so that one can gain a visual from his writing. When writing, he is given a checklist:

- Did you describe the characters?
- Did you describe the setting?
- Did you provide the reader with how the characters looked, felt, standing position, facial expression (body language) when they were speaking?
- With your words can your audience relate to the characters?

Word choice goes with descriptive. I have continued to provide the same resources for this skill that I did during the first report card marking.

Authentic test scores/assignments (Test that the teacher has created or a test developed by the textbook publisher.)

Assessment of Johnny's work Levels indicate readiness level: L1—not proficient (Below 65%); L2—partial proficiency (66%–84%); L3—proficient (85–100%). The percentage can coincide with standardized test scores, or, if the school district or individualized school has cut-off scores, then make sure that is provided and explained to the parent before you begin discussing scores.

First report card (10 weeks)	Second report card (10 weeks)
Math (I would have all content and Common Core State Standards that were taught along with the assessments given, dates of those assessments, and scores.) If it is the second card marking, I would compare and contrast the two sets of scores.	
Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA **Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems.** • 2-digit Multiplication: 88% or a Level 3 • 3-digit Multiplication: 84% or a L2 • 2-digit Division: 80% or L2 • 3-digit Division: 78% or L2 Johnny's preassessment scores were all L2 at the low end at the beginning of the school year (Week 1). He has made extensive progress within the first 10 weeks. • Story problems (reasoning): 59% L1 Compared to his classmates: The average • 2-digit multiplication: 86% • 3-digit multiplication: 85% • 2-digit division: 76% • 3-digit division: 81% • Story problems (reasoning): 72%	Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA **Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems.** • 2-digit Multiplication: 91% or L3 • 3-digit Multiplication: 88% or L3 • 2-digit Division: 75% or L2 • 3-digit Division: 77% or L2 Johnny has improved in 2- and 3-digit multiplication. He has regressed in 2- and 3-digit division. At the beginning of the second card marking, three new strategies were implemented and the students had to apply all strategies for division, and Johnny, as stated in the progress reports sent home, Johnny was not able to grasp them as quickly as he had done with the first two strategies that were implemented during the first card marking. However, he is showing progress from 1 week ago when an informal assessment was given to determine what math group he would be placed in to continue to practice those strategies. • Story problems (reasoning): 71% L2 Compared to his classmates: The average • 2-digit multiplication: 94% • 3-digit multiplication: 86% • 2-digit division: 77% • 3-digit division: 78% • Story problems (reasoning): 81%

First report card (10 weeks)	Second report card (10 weeks)

Social Studies

National Geography
Standards: G4 Human Systems
4.1 Cultural Mosaic
4.2 Patterns of Human Settlement
G4 Human Systems
Understand how human activities help shape the Earth's surface.
G4.0.1 Use a case study or story about migration within or to the United States to identify push and pull factors (why they left, why they came) that influenced the migration. (H)
G4.0.2 Describe the impact of immigration to the United States on the cultural development of different places or regions of the United States (e.g., forms of shelter, language, food).
Research papers were used as authentic assessments for 4—G4.0.1
81% L2
Role-playing was done for this assessment. Johnny had to do research with three other members in his team to place himself in the time period and conditions 4-G4.0.2 88% L3
Johnny is a very articulate writer, and he loves researching about subjects that interest him or where he can make a connection; therefore, he thrives, versus answering multiple-choice questions.

States to Other Nations and World Affairs–Standard
4.1 U.S. Foreign Policy 4–72% L2
4.2 International Institutions and Affairs 1–72% L2
4.3 Conflict and Cooperation Between and Among Nations 11–73% L2
Johnny struggled with the content; however, because in social studies there are always projects or presentations to present, he was able to bring his scores up from the benchmark assessments, which are given in multiple-choice form.

First report card (10 weeks)	Second report card (10 weeks)

ELA

R.MT.01.04 self-monitor comprehension by using a graphic organizer to sequence events, sort and order information, or identify author's perspective. *(Determining Importance)*

R.MT.03-05.01 self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to texts by automatically applying strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension including: predicting, constructing mental images, visually representing ideas in text, questioning, rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning, inferring, and summarizing.

The comprehension strategies are taught and retaught throughout the school year in ELA as well as science and social studies. So these scores represent the three reading strategies that were introduced, modeled and practiced.

- Determining Importance through self-monitoring, 65
- Prediction, 87

R.MT.01.04 self-monitor comprehension by using a graphic organizer to sequence events, sort and order information, or identify author's perspective. *(Determining Importance)*

R.MT.03-05.01 self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to texts by automatically applying strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension including: predicting, constructing mental images, visually representing ideas in text, questioning, rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning, inferring, and summarizing.

R.CM.04.03 explain relationships among themes, ideas, and characters within and across texts to create a deeper understanding by categorizing and classifying, comparing and contrasting, or drawing parallels across time and culture. *(Text-to-Text Connections)*

The same comprehension strategies are continuously covered in all subjects throughout the school year.

- Determining Importance through self-monitoring, 78
- Prediction, 100
- Text-to-Text, 86

All strategies, Johnny has shown improvement. He didn't have a major gain in Determining Importance, but he is improving. We are using the "think aloud" strategy where the student is asked to stop and ask self-questions to figure out if the information is relevant to understand the text. We are also using graphic organizers to provide a visual. Text-to-text connection is a new strategy where the students observe the similarities within two or more texts. Compared to his classmates, on Determining Importance, the average is 68% L2 and Johnny has surpassed that average. All other strategies, Johnny and his classmates are L3. He is continuing to progress wonderfully. We will continue to use all strategies in all subjects; therefore, you will see improvement in all subjects since these strategies are used in all subjects.

First report card (10 weeks)	Second report card (10 weeks)

Writing

W.PS.03-05.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message in both narrative (e.g., varied word choice and sentence structure, character description) and *informational writing (e.g., examples, transitions, grammar and usage).*
- Conventions, L2
- Fluency, L3
- Descriptive, L1

Johnny's conventions (grammar usage) is progressing as he uses punctuation, verbs, verb tense and agreement, and apostrophes. He is having some difficulties approximately 25% of his writing with homophones. To help with this problem, he uses the iPad to use the homophone App. His sentences are fluent. (Sentence Fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear, not just the eye.) The usage of descriptive language in informational writing is very difficult because he believes that only facts should be given. He is learning that informational descriptive writing is the same as narrative descriptive writing; all readers need to be provided a visual picture through the words of the subject. I have provided him a checklist to help while he is thinking and writing:
- Did you make sure that you provided enough of a description of the subject (e.g., the baby elephant stood 5 feet tall when he was born. His face was as wrinkled as an old man's hand.)?
- Did you use comparisons of other subjects when appropriate?
- Did you use similes when appropriate?

W.PS.03-05.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message in both *narrative (e.g., varied word choice and sentence structure, character description)* and informational writing (e.g., examples, transitions, grammar and usage).
- Word Choice, L2
- Sentence Structure, L3
- Character Description (Style), L2

Johnny has improved from his informational descriptiveness to his narrative descriptiveness to his
With his description, we are working on his providing more in-depth descriptions of nouns in his writing so that one can gain a visual from his writing. When writing, he is given a checklist:
- Did you describe the characters?
- Did you describe the setting?
- Did you provide the reader with how the characters looked, felt, standing position, facial expression (body language) when they were speaking?
- With your words can your audience relate to the characters?

Word choice goes with descriptive. I have continued to provide the same resources for this skill that I did during the first report card marking.

Newsletter and Screenshots of Outstanding Classroom Websites

SAMPLE NEWSLETTER

Dear Parent/Guardian,

It's that time again to start a new reading unit! This upcoming week the 3rd-grade class and I will be reading the book *When Lulu Went to the Zoo* by Andy Ellis. This story is about a time when Lulu, who is 4 years old, goes to the zoo at night and feels sad for the animals that are locked in their exhibits and she wants the animals to experience being free. Also, the main character, Lulu, hosts a party with the animals late at night; however, in a short time period she has to return them back to the zoo. She begins to miss her animal friends, so she creates "Luluand" so that she can always look at and remember the fun times that she had with the animals.

The class and I will be focusing on the importance of phonemic awareness and rhyming. We will concentrate on the reading strategies, main idea, and retelling to enhance their comprehension. We will have in-depth class discussions regarding the content within the book. In addition, we will attend a fieldtrip to the local zoo so that the students can select animal(s) for the summative project. The students will have two project options to choose from. We will discuss each rubric in class, and they will be sent home for your review. One of the project options is to have the students create a brochure of a "land," compare their land to "Lululand's," and the last option is to describe and select pictures of four different animals from our trip to the zoo and compare and contrast their habitat, food intake, and origin, as well as other items that will be sent home in detail at a later time.

I encourage parents to ask their child about the main ideas and character through a mini-discussion and to review the key elements of the book. Some questions to consider when discussing the book with your child are these: Have you ever felt like Lulu has in the book? or What's your favorite animal from the zoo and why? The students are looking forward to reading this book and the project ahead!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me!

Thank You,
Ms. Samantha Walker
samanthawalker@turnerschool.edu

SAMPLE SCREENSHOTS

Below are some screenshots of great classroom websites created by teachers in a small midwestern school district.

Classroom teacher Katie Davis ties in her garden-themed classroom with her website. She keeps the website updated regularly with easy-to-use tabs across the top for parents to navigate the site, as well as quick buttons such as the one shown here to take parents to the Scholastic online ordering site.

The first page of Katie's website features her blog, where she posts regularly about learning that is happening in the classroom, such as the writer's celebration shown in the screenshot below. She has chosen Weebly has her site provider because of its easy-to-follow interface and uses the comment feature in order to provide two-way communication with parents.

Writer's Celebration!

05/12/2014   3 Comments

We will be having a writer's celebration in our 2nd grade classroom this Friday (May 16) from 11:15 - 11:45ish. If you are available, would you consider joining us during this time?

We have just finished a unit on opinion writing and we have been writing book nominations for some of our favorite books that we think deserve awards! We are going to be having a "book fair" type celebration, where students are standing near their book nomination and the great books they are nominating. You, as guests, will get to rotate around the room and hear some GREAT writing!! :)

Please RSVP if you will be coming - we are really hoping for a good turn out! :) And of course, after our celebration, you are always welcome to stay for a treat and a "toast" to great writing, like always! :)

Also, would someone be willing to send in a treat for our celebration and a drink for us to toast with (we usually do sparkling flavored water)? Please just comment below if you are able and willing to do either of those things for us! :)

Thanks for considering!

One of the tabs featured on Katie's website provides parents with information about all of the high-frequency words that are taught throughout the year. Providing this list ahead of time, at an easy-access location, allows families the freedom to review, teach ahead, and so forth with skills connected to the curriculum.

First Grade Word Wall Words!

Each week listed below contains the word wall words that will be taught and practiced that week.
Please see your child's B.E.E Notebook for more information on how you can practice the word wall words each week with your child at home. We will continue to review all of the words throughout the year, and your child is expected to know the words of all of the weeks previous to where they are now.

Week 1:	Week 2:	Week 3:	Week 4:	Week 5:	Week 6:
the	of	on	all	have	do
and	was	had	is	we	when
a	his	him	some	then	what
you	she	with	as	down	see
he	in	but	look	go	could
I	said	that	here	am	did
it	at	her	out	little	so
	for	up	be	can	like

Week 7:	Week 8:	Week 9:	Week 10:	Week 11:	Week 12:
not	me	are	an	good	too
get	yes	now	your	about	got
love	went	no	ride	want	every
my	come	ask	just	right	jump
were	will	of	over	any	know
them	big	long	its	around	take
this	there	came	into	how	where
would	they	very	from	put	away

Week 13:	Week 14:	Week 15:	Week 16:	Week 17:	Week 18:
pretty	think	or	stop	don't	sit
by	let	walk	never	best	first
saw	make	play	today	run	new
after	sleep	been	myself	open	one
old	ran	before	off	better	work
their	help	again	cold	made	try
call	going	who	fly	laugh	must
well	eat	may	round	has	two

The website can also be a great place to post information for parents such as school supply lists and classroom needs. The comment feature allows for parents to post when they have purchased something the classroom needs, and then the other parents can see that comment and provide the other items needed.

Supply List!!!

"The door of opportunity is wide open if you are well prepared..."

We do not mandate that your child bring any school supplies. This is an optional list that will help create our classroom supply and will be shared by all students. If you are willing and able to donate any or all of the following items to our classroom they would be greatly appreciated! Please send your child with the following items on the FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL.
2 packages of glue sticks
1 box of kleenex
1 package of washable dry erase markers
1 package of baby wipe refills
1 container of Clorox wipes
1 package of washable markers (thin and/or thick)
1 package of colored pencils
1 package of red and/or blue pens
1 box of crayons
1 T-shirt with your child's first name written clearly on the front (this will be for art and gym - it will help keep them nice and clean as well as help our gym and art teachers learn their names!)
1 white 3 ring binder (1 inch) with clear plastic cover

1 set of headphone earbuds for your child to use during listening center (this is a safety precaution for them to all have their own headphones rather than sharing with others - they can be purchased for under $5, used all year, and returned to you at the end of the year)

Thank you so much for being willing to give so much to our classroom and your child's education! :)

Elementary teacher Joy Marshall keeps a tab on her classroom website dedicated to sharing links to other learning sites for her students to use. This helps her students find these websites easily when using computers or mobile devices at home and/or school.

Below is a list of educational websites.
Click on the colored title link to check them out!

Scholastic Reading Club Order books online each month. Orders are due on the 28th of each month.

Phonics Genius Spelling and word recognition skills

Cookie.com   This free website seems to have lots of different choices for lots of different kids - learning games of all sorts.

Everyday Math This is the website from our math program. You will find curriculum information, homework pages
             and practice games. Each of the students will soon have a personalized login and password on their Home Link pocket in the STAR Notebook.

Sumdog Math   A great site for practicing math facts! Student sign-in information is on their HomeLinks folder in the STAR Notebook.

Rocket Math Practice Practice your math facts here!

One of Katie's favorite features of her classroom website is the ability to add teaching videos for the students and parents. Using the Educreations app, she makes short review videos of concepts being taught in class. After she posts these to her classroom website, students and parents can watch them for help when doing homework at home.

Google calendars can be embedded into classroom websites to show when parents are signed up to volunteer, who is signed up to send in snacks, when there is a day off from school, classroom events, and more!

Teacher Krista Hunsanger features facts about herself on the homepage of her classroom website. This helps families to get to know her on a personal level—something she excels at in order to build strong community relationships. Parents feel like they know her and therefore trust her when having both positive and difficult conversations about their children.

Meet... Mrs. Hunsanger!

Top Ten
1. I love to water ski at the lake.
2. Our family has two black labs, Caite and Colt
3. I love the Food Network!
4. I went to Western Michigan.
5. I love Carmel Marvels from Biggby!
6. My husband and I play flag football together!
7. Go Blue! :)
8. I've taught First Grade and Kindergarten too!
9. My favorite season is Fall.
10. I love teaching 2nd Grade at Delta Center!

Examples of Teachers' Tweets

This tweet was sent out after a social studies lesson about George Washington Carver. Parents were able to quickly click the link and watch a fun YouTube video about him with their children that evening.

Tweeting quick homework reminders like the one shown above with links to directions is a great way to reach parents with 21st-century skills.

Family and community reminders and educational resources can be shared quickly and easily through Twitter.

Many teachers use Twitter as a professional learning resource in addition to communicating with parents. Teachers Katie Davis and Krista Hunsanger have a joint professional Twitter account called The Literacy Ladies. Through this Twitter handle they follow the news of top literacy researchers and trending hashtags in the field of education. They also connect with other educators by sharing information about their own exciting learning opportunities such as the one shown here when they attended the Michigan Reading Association conference. During a session with Dr. Richard Allington, they tweeted out new learning and connected with other teacher learners throughout the state!

Enabling Parents to Take the Lead

EXAMPLE 1: INVOLVING PARENTS IN PLANNING EVENTS

In order to determine how its partnership with parents could be improved, the school solicited suggestions from parents. Parents felt that there should be two or three parents' meetings—one in the morning, one in the afternoon/evening, and one on a Saturday. They also believed that with a parent/student population that included African American parents, Caucasian parents, Asian parents, and Hispanic/Latino parents, each culture should be represented in history, food, decorations, and music. They also suggested that stations for each grade level and culture be stationed around the building.

Activity: A Survey on Arrangements for Parents' Evenings/Meetings

Purpose: To identity times and methods to make it more feasible for parents to attend parents' evenings/meetings

Step 1: Plan the survey:

- The Parent Council will work with teachers to plan the questions to ask—see the sample parent survey, which can be adapted.
- Agree on how long the parents have to respond to the survey—4 weeks is standard.

Step 2: Contact parents:

- Send the survey to each parent, ensuring that all, have access to the message.
- Put up posters in the school entrances where the questions are placed on the poster.

- Encourage students and their parents/loved ones to provide suggestions.

Step 3: Analyze findings and agree on the action to take:

- Collate the responses and analyze them.
- The Parent Council could/should solicit help from other teachers.

Step 4: Inform *all* parents:

- Report to all involved on the survey results and the action that has been agreed upon.
- Use a variety of methods to get the information to parents.
- Keep all involved updated.

Sample Parent Survey for Parents' Evenings/Meetings

Parents' meetings are held each semester. We want to make sure that they are as informative and positive for you as possible. We would appreciate any suggestions you have that might make these meetings useful and convenient for you and your children. Please provide us your vision of these meetings.

Question 1: Time and day of meetings

Parents' meetings are scheduled to be held in the morning, afternoon/evening, and on a Saturday. Which would you be interested in attending?

_____ 9–11 A.M.
_____ 4–7 P.M.
_____ Saturday afternoon—2 P.M.

Question 2: The place meetings are to be held

The meetings are scheduled to be held in the hallways at the school. Is there another area where you believe these meetings could take place?

_____

_____

_____

Question 3: Information about activities in the school and community to be provided at meetings

There will be a booth that will have information available. What information would you be interested in having available from groups/topics?

_____

_____

_____

Question 4: Your thoughts about the meetings

Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to share?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your support.

Please return this survey to the school's office by (date), or you may send it back with your child. You can also email the form back by (date)—the form is on our website (provide website address).

EXAMPLE 2: PARENTS DEVELOPING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

A parent-led library was initiated by the parents to ensure that literature was available for all cultures that represented the school and community. The fundraising committee financed the cost.

Within this committee, parents were asked to select where they would be more useful, working with decorations or attending workshops at the local library to understand how the library should be set up and utilized.

A vote determined that the library committee would solely manage and operate the library. They made a weekly commitment to work with the students and hold meetings and send out electronic

information asking for their advice on what other literature should be purchased for the library. Library committee members came up with ideas to present during one of the parents' meetings that will help the school and parents develop and maintain positive relationships. The ideas include the following.

Great Communication Between School and Parents:

- Reach out to parents at places they already visit: libraries, doctors'/dentists' offices, shops, post offices, restaurants, and supermarkets—to ensure that information is constant and available there to project a positive image of school.
- Use local media—TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, posters, and so forth—to inform parents of what is happening in the school and to spread and share "good news" stories about what the school and the children are doing.
- Make all information attractive and easy to read; use large print and color.
- Avoid using words that are not clear to noneducators.
- Use electronic methods to deliver information—text messages and emails.
- Build relationships through contact other than parent–teacher conferences, such as music and sport events, parents' night, school concerts.
- Make use of parent-to-parent contacts—where one parent is responsible for contacting 5–10 parents, regarding information or events at the school.
- Build on relationships in the community and at other schools.
- Share informative information that parents bring forth.

EXAMPLE 3: MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

As there are a variety of ways to communicate effectively with parents, the Communication Committee proposed that parents have a voice as to how best they would like to be contacted. All parents were surveyed to ask if they were interested in using email or other communication modes and, if so, for what types of communication.

The following was a list that the committee compiled as to the preferred modes and manner of communication:

- Email—school and class newsletters, progress reports, monthly school calendars
- Text message—emergencies *only*
- Website—weekly updates with reports of what is going on in the classrooms and with academic/sport clubs, fundraisers, committee meetings, programs at school
- Snail mail—important forms
- Phone calls—school closings, emergencies

All email and cellular phone numbers were collected and entered into the district's system to ensure efficient and effective responses and acknowledgments. Guidelines were provided to the parents/staff as to what the communication modes could and could not be used.

EXAMPLE 4: PUPIL FOCUS GROUP

Teachers and parents came together after several meetings and decided to implement Pupil Focus Groups in which certain teachers and the Parent Council lead. Teachers believed that parents would benefit from establishing closer relationships with young people. These special pupil subgroups will address issues that their peers are having—equality, bullying, health, inclusion, and career. Each group will deal with a different issue.

A Study of Differing Parent and Teacher Perspectives

Guofang Li (2006) studied middle-class Asian immigrant parents and mainstream Canadian teachers' perspectives on literacy teaching and parental involvement. In terms of literacy teaching, she found out that while mainstream teachers prefer a whole language approach to literacy instruction with added components for basic literacy skills such as vocabulary and phonics instruction, the Chinese parents preferred discrete skills instruction (i.e., reading and writing strategies, grammar, and vocabulary) and homework (i.e., the nature and the amount of assignments). Differing from the schools' and teachers' monolingual orientation, the parents expected their children to become bilingual and biliterate. When school did not address these expectations, the parents took actions outside school (e.g., sending their children to private tutoring classes) to pursue their own beliefs.

In terms of parental involvement, while the mainstream teachers regard the Chinese parents as being supportive of their children's education and having extremely high expectations of their children, they did not agree with the approaches at home. Both teachers were aware that the Chinese parents wanted traditional literacy instruction and had enrolled their children in a variety of study activities such as attending Math and English classes, Chinese school, and piano lessons. The teachers strongly disagreed with the Chinese parents' narrow emphasis on academic activities at home and believed that the Chinese students were overprogrammed and deprived of opportunities to run, jump, play, and just be children. The teachers believed that the Chinese students' home life was "very sheltered, very protected, and very closed" and considered their overemphasis on academic pursuits rather than active human interaction (such as involvement with housework or shared home activities) as the parents' overindulgence of their children (Li, 2006). Instead, the teachers believed that reading

was an important family activity in which the parents could spend time with their children and model reading for them at home, but they realized that the parents did not consider reading as homework and often did not read with their children at home.

The parents, on the other hand, believed that out of love for their children, they need to send their children to the after-school classes to catch up, so the parents believed that they were providing something that was "missing" in the existing public school system (e.g., rigorous teaching of language and math skills and homework). Precisely because they thought that students at the school had been spending too much time playing in school rather than working on the kind of rigorous teaching they valued, many parents expressed their dissatisfaction over the reading homework. They did not feel that it was their responsibility to teach English reading or writing. Some parents did not know English themselves and saw teaching English as the responsibility of the teachers. Other parents, who could speak English, did not feel they could help their children because of their limited English proficiency, nor did they want their children to pick up their accents.

It is also important to recognize that parents may have different ideas about involvement in the school versus at home. Li (2006) explains,

> Esptein (1992, 1995) theorizes that there are different levels of parental involvement, ranging from involvement in the home, to participation in activities and events at school, and to participation in the schools' decision-making process. Parental involvement at home includes attending to children's basic needs, discipline, preparing for school, and supporting school learning or engaging actively in homework. However, the degree and the ways of involvement vary from family to family and from culture to culture as families of different races, classes, and religions have different ways of transmitting and socializing literacy, different perceptions of families' and schools' roles in their children's education, and different ways of involvement in their children's academic learning. (p. 30)

Understanding the differing perceptions of what it means for parents to be involved at home and school can help schools and teachers to identify and invest in the parental involvement ideas that are the most likely to work for their families.

Family-Friendly School Parent Survey

Hello, Parent!

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. The survey is designed to find out your thoughts about the environment at your child's school and how welcome you feel in the school building. You, the parent, play an important role in supporting student achievement and contributing to the school's success. Your opinion is very important to us, and we appreciate your cooperation. How *welcoming* is the school building and environment? Does the school *communicate effectively* with you? Are you encouraged to *support student success*? Are you supported in *speaking up* to make sure that all students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities? Are you allowed to *share power* as an equal partner in decisions that affect your child? Does your school *collaborate with the community*?

Please complete the following survey for [school name].

1. At this school, I am a (please select all that apply):

    *   Parent
    *   Grandparent
    *   Legal guardian
    *   Other

2. For the following questions, please select the answer that you agree with the most.

Question	Yes	No	Not Sure	Does Not Apply
I feel welcome and accepted at my child's school.				
I enjoy visiting my child's school.				
The school has parking spaces for parents.				
I am able to find my way easily around the school.				
The school has opportunities that allow me to meet and speak with the staff at my child's school.				
My child's principal and assistant principal are available and easy to approach.				
I am comfortable going to the front office when visiting my child's school.				
The school's front office staff is nice, polite, and helpful.				
The school has a translator for non-English speaking families when needed.				
The school provides written materials in languages other than English to non-English-speaking families.				
The school has designated space for parents to get information on things such as events, test dates, workshops, resources, and so forth.				
The school has a parent resource center.				
I have received information about the performance standards.				
I am invited to the school to discuss my child's schoolwork and progress.				
I am invited to the school to discuss my child's test scores.				
I receive timely and regular communication about upcoming events at the school.				
The school has a parent coordinator or parent liaison available if families have questions or need assistance.				
I am asked and given a list of various ways to volunteer at my child's school.				
I am informed regularly about my child's progress by his or her teachers.				
I have been given the opportunity to review the school improvement plan.				
I have been given information on how to participate in the development of the school improvement plan.				

Question	Yes	No	Not Sure	Does Not Apply
I know where to go and whom to talk to if I want to volunteer at my child's school.				
The school encourages me to use my skills and strengths to contribute to student events.				
The school helps me in learning what I should ask about my child's progress and placement.				
The school explains programs that are available to me to help in my child's development.				
I am aware of the homework assigned to my child each night.				
I have received information on how to join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or other parent organization at the school.				
The school's parent organization has a fair representation of the racial/ethnic population at the school.				
The school has active community partners that help promote student achievement.				
The school provides information on community resources and social services support.				
The school building is open to community organizations to use for events during non–school hours.				
The school offers workshops to parents provided by community organizations.				
The school offers after-school activities in partnership with community organizations for students.				
The school works with local businesses and community organizations to have student mentors, provide job shadowing, or teach new skills to students.				
The school invites community organization representatives to serve on committees for school events.				

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