

# Foundational Research

*Progress® English Language Arts* ©2014/2022

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## INTRODUCTION

*Progress English Language Arts* is a supplemental K–8 standards-based reading and writing program grounded in the tenets of the Science of Reading research. Respected findings in the Science of Reading identify five pillars of reading comprehension necessary in achieving reading mastery: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Oral Reading Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension Strategies (Catts, Hugh W. 2021). The *Progress English Language Arts* reading and writing program aligns with these findings by building the previously mentioned skills through direct and explicit **standards-based learning** using the **Gradual Release of Responsibility Model** (National Reading Panel 2000). Program components include formative and summative assessments and differentiation support; direct, explicit, and systematic instruction; and the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model and instruction and application of reading comprehension strategies. The information that follows provides a research base for each component of the *Progress English Language Arts* program.

### Standards-Based Learning: What Research Says

Standards-based instruction aims to ensure that there is a metric for consistency in learning across multiple states and subject areas. Clearly defined standards offer a vision of the knowledge and strategies that all students should develop in the English Language Arts, as well as of the curricular and instructional elements that can be used to foster this development. Students not only need to develop specific competencies and to acquire knowledge—they also need abundant opportunities to reflect on the process of learning itself (IRA/NCTE 1996/2012). Through these processes, states employ systems of accountability to ensure that student learning is standard across content areas and can be quantified to show progression towards meeting standards-based and grade-level outcomes. Strategies are also important when it comes to instruction. Many scholars agree that high-quality curriculum materials aligned to the standards can help translate standards to practice (Pak, K. et al 2020). As conveyed in “What We Teach Matters”, D. Steiner emphasizes that “the implementation of standards-based instruction necessitates strategies for teaching and learning that are high-yield and work to provide positive learning outcomes” (Steiner et al, 2018; Dwiningtiyas et al 2020).

### Research-Based Practice in *Progress English Language Arts*

*Progress English Language Arts* draws on a rich research base and supports the Guiding Visions of the Standards for the English Language jointly published by NCTE and IRA (1996, 2012), and recognizes the central role of the learner in the standards and the four dimensions of language learning: content, purpose, development, and context that lead to the attainment of the standards. These dimensions are integrated throughout the program and are integral to *Progress English Language Arts* and the sound foundation it provides for students’ academic success.

The program’s Scope and Sequence balances instruction and practice so that students grow in their language competencies and effectively integrate all aspects of language development to learn, think and communicate effectively. For example, the readability of texts increases across Chapters and Guided Practice and Independent Practice are scaffolded and allow students to engage with tasks that increase in cognitive demand.

The development of literacy and the attainment of ELA standards depends on experience with and systematic study of a wide array of texts. Students learn strategies for comprehending and producing texts. Program instruction is centered on text and skills with related readings and analysis of complex, content-area texts.

In *Progress English Language Arts* each standard is taught using one continuous text following the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Model. By gradually decreasing the level of support within each text, students are prepared for independent practice encounters with complex text and can best master complex standards. Skills-based lessons reflect a Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Model in which students assume increasing independence in reading and writing—including in response to texts, developing and using vocabulary, employing the conventions of standard English, and speaking and listening.

Content in the reading chapters introduces students to rigorous texts, both informational and literary, encompassing a wide range of genres and topics. Content-area texts build knowledge in history/social studies, science and technical subjects while increasing their academic and domain-specific vocabulary. Writing chapters builds students' skills for effective communication and provide meaningful opportunities for speaking and listening to develop oral communication, writing and grammar skills.

Reading and Writing chapters are connected by theme and, where appropriate, by reading genre/writing type. Students are first introduced to key concepts in reading selections based around a theme, usually a social studies or science topic based on grade-level standards. In the related Writing chapter, they encounter a Student Model, exemplifying excellent grade-level output in the same theme.

Writing chapters, along with the Writing Handbook, reflect the key writing types in English Language curriculum; opinion, informative/explanatory, narrative (fiction and non-fiction), and research report. Language and Speaking and Listening pages are integrated to build accurate use of academic language in both written and spoken form. Writing chapters ensure that students develop effective written communication skills for a range of purposes. Planned tasks increase in cognitive demand, allowing students to apply and expand their skills and knowledge.

## Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Model: What Research Says

Innate in ELA instruction are the scaffolds built to ensure mastery of skills, content and standards. Specifically, the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Model (GRR): Guided Instruction, Guided Practice, and Independent Practice. The mechanism behind the three-step **Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Model** is purposefully shifting the cognitive load from teacher as model to joint responsibility of teacher and learner, and then to independent practice and application by the learner (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Grounded in processes for cognition, **setting purpose** serves to activate schema while introducing new knowledge for students. As an instructional routine, teachers begin by setting a purpose to frame the learning experience for students and front load the necessary content for success (Wilhelm, Jeffrey, D.).

**Guided instruction** measures maximize student learning in ELA by allowing students access to key skills and content while providing opportunities for teacher facilitated instruction (Dagostino, Bauer, & Ryan, 2021; Presley, 2019). Following the natural progression of the teaching and learning process, the **Model and Teach** process begins after teachers set purpose for the lesson. Modeling refers to the patterning of thoughts, beliefs, strategies, and actions after those displayed by one or more models—usually teachers or parents who explain and demonstrate skills (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). As an instructional model for best practices in ELA, this process supports student learning by ensuring that “once students have had **modeling** from the teacher, the students need opportunities for guided practice, with support being removed gradually as students’ independence in using the new learning increases.” (Maynes & Schultz, 2010, p. 66).

Following the model of the Gradual Release of Responsibility, the next integral phase in the instructional design of the program is **Guided Practice**. The program incorporates this phase as a scaffold for student learning. This phase is essential in the initial stages of determining the outcomes of teaching and learning and provides opportunities for scaffolded practice while a teacher circulates to provide targeted support as needed.

At this point in the instructional sequence, in alignment with the instructional model and sequencing of the *Progress ELA program*, **Independent Practice** serves as the catalyst to student achievement in all strands of ELA instruction. Independent Practice, specifically in ELA instruction, allows students to practice fluency measures that will transfer into everyday contexts. This is especially important as students begin to develop transferable skills that are necessary in other academic areas and in life in general. The third stage, and ultimate goal and measure of quality ELA instruction should be building critical thinkers who are capable of understanding complex texts, and successful at independent fluent and prosodic reading.

## Research-Based Practice in *Progress English Language Arts*

*Progress English Language Arts* employs the Gradual Release of Responsibility instructional model as a complement to standards-based instruction, situating learning for all students and providing proper scaffolding and differentiation opportunities in each chapter. By gradually decreasing the level of support within each text, students are prepared for independent practice encounters with complex text and can best master complex standards. These stages of learning are the key elements that make up the instructional format and development of the program for both reading and writing chapters. *Progress English Language Arts* utilizes each stage of the Gradual Release of Responsibility instructional model to build on the one prior to create the best academic outcomes through a research and evidence-based approach.

### Guided Instruction

Whole-class instruction provides direct skill-based instruction and think-aloud modeling while students read along with the teacher. Discussion-based Comprehension Checks provide students an opportunity to engage in collaborative and meaningful discourse.

### Guided Practice

Lessons incorporate partner reading in heterogeneous pairs for scaffolded practice as the teacher circulates to provide targeted support as needed. Written Comprehension Checks offer multiple-choice and short-answer questions for pairs to work through together and then to share their thinking with the class.

### Independent Practice

Lessons offer independent reading application with callout support as the teacher circulates to ensure that all readers are on task and effectively engaging with text. Written Comprehension Checks offer multiple-choice and short-answer questions as opportunities to demonstrate standard mastery.

The Gradual Release of Responsibility model necessitates that the majority of instruction should culminate with opportunities for students to practice independently each time through the process. It is important to note that during the Independent Practice phase, there may be students that are struggling with skills, standards, and content for reading, writing, and communicating. The Progress ELA program addresses this in the program with “if, then” activities in Assess and Respond to remediate and scaffold student learning.

### Differentiation Support

Each chapter provides strategies for differentiating instruction to address students who may need additional support or enrichment. Throughout the program, context is provided for guided reading and writing activities and distinctions are made specific to skills and standards being taught. Alternative grouping models are suggested for struggling learners and English language learners, such as heterogeneous pairing with more proficient readers or small group work with the teacher.

In terms of fluency in reading, research indicates that prosody is a byproduct of fluency, and that fluency and comprehension are the result of a combination of rigorous and adequate additional practice. As Kuhn et al suggest, “prosody in reading is indicative of an otherwise invisible process, that of comprehension. This is because prosody contributes to shades of meaning and richer understanding of what is written.” (Kuhn, M. R., & Rasinski, T., Young, C.)

*Progress English Language Arts* includes additional practice online as opportunities to expand and strengthen growing reading skills including Additional Practice reading passages and Close Reading Selections.

## Improving the Effectiveness of Students’ Writing: What Research Says

Research indicates that successful ELA instruction prioritizes the writing process as a tool of communication to ensure that students are equipped to write effectively and efficiently across various disciplines. Writing to learn activities are incorporated more in ELA instruction than other academic subjects and writing is a function of the entirety of a literacy system that ensures communicative measures are met. Teachers use writing to

learn activities in ELA to support long-term learning and communicative processes that aid in comprehension (Rouse Gillespie, Kiuahara, & Kara, 2021). At the foundational level, sentence combining, modeling, summarization, peer assistance, self-regulated writing, handwriting, and transcription skills are predictors of student success in writing instruction (Kim et. al, 2021).

Fisher and Frey confirm that not only is the gradual release of responsibility key to success with reading and writing instruction and practice, but also that students benefit from “a connected and coordinated literacy curriculum—one that has a significant emphasis on writing instruction”. They continued to note while working with an “at risk” student population in California “Consistent with gradual release model, (e.g., Duke and Pearson (2002); Pearson and Gallagher 1983), writing models increased the amount of student control and provided them with a framework that supported their individual creations.” (Fisher & Frey 2003).

## Research-Based Practice in *Progress English Language Arts*

*Progress English Language Arts* outlines a writing process that is scaffolded in nature using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Model and integrates writing instruction into the reading and writing chapters in the program to aid students in their progress towards mastery of standards-based grade-level expectations. As skills progress, writing assignments become more rigorous to meet grade level standards.

*Progress English Language Arts* uses the Gradual Release of Responsibility instructional method to ensure that students master the writing process through modeling, practice and independent application. The goal of the writing system in *Progress English Language Arts* is to increase writing skills in the areas of grammar and language, with correlations to speaking and listening by using student exemplars as models. Each element of the prescribed writing process throughout *Progress English Language Arts* addresses foundational and accelerated writing needs.

As an educational system, it is important to develop these skills through multiple modes of writing with the appropriate support. Specifically, these include informative/explanatory, nonfictional narratives, and written evidence-based texts. Instruction and practice in the **Writing** chapters of the program reflect the key writing types in English Language Arts curriculum: **opinion, informational/explanatory, narrative** (both fictional and nonfictional), and **research report**. Writing chapters are connected thematically to Reading chapters and provide writing models as guidance.

Each writing model is surrounded with support, including explanations of each component of the type of writing and opportunities for student to analyze, organize, and produce the same text type. Integrated **Language** pages focus on conventions of English and knowledge of language—grammar, a usage and mechanics—through a gradual release instructional model. **Writing** chapter conclude with a review of **language skills** and **on-demand writing. Speaking and Listening** lessons support students as they engage in rigorous, academic discourse about the chapter’s Essential Question.

A Writing Handbook supports students at each stage of the writing process (Planning, Drafting, Revising, Editing, and Producing, Publishing and Presenting) with the goal of students’ writing activities culminating in a well-executed final form.

## Assessment: What Research Says

The role of assessment in the teaching and learning process is pivotal in appraising the degree to which students are mastering material and are proficient in the foundational skills necessary to mature in their English Language Arts skills. As a precursor, all instruction should be validated through multiple means of assessment. Both formative assessment and summative assessments are key in assessing standards-based learning. McMillan posits that assessment should answer the question “what evidence is needed to provide the best information to meet the stated purpose? In this case, the stated purpose is providing instruction and practice for learning and then assessing level of acquisition of information.

Formative, or on-going assessment is used during the learning cycle, is used to improve student learning and should change based on student outcome data. Formative assessment is typically used on an individual level, to help differentiate to meet the particular needs of an individual student. Summative assessment is used to determine how much students have learned over a period of time. The focus of formative assessment is to use data to determine if learning is happening and adjust as needed to ensure that the learning process is successful. The goal of summative assessment, then, is to look at students' data to see what students have learned and to use that data as is, with no emphasis on using the results to improve learning (McMillan, James H., 2008).

To determine requisite and prerequisite knowledge in ELA, an intentional system of ongoing assessment must be embedded through the curriculum and daily instruction. Such models for assessment must be adequately aligned to skills and knowledge. While students may perform at varying levels, grade-level appropriate assessment types ensure that a core foundation is built to determine instructional needs. There must be consideration for successful and thoughtful vertical articulation means and the role that vertical articulation plays in ensuring students' ability to perform at grade level. (Quenemoen, R., et al)

Furthermore, Zimmerman postulates, "By setting personal goals, learners create self-oriented feedback loops through which they can monitor their effectiveness and adapt their functioning. Studies have revealed that students who are proactive self-regulators: (a) set learning goals, (b) implement effective learning strategies (e.g., organization, rehearsal, note-taking), (c) monitor and assess their goal progress, (d) establish a productive environment for learning, and (e) maintain a sense of self-efficacy (i.e., perceived competence) for learning." (Zimmerman et al). To effectively monitor student learning, there are Comprehension Checks embedded throughout the chapter and Chapter Tests at the end of each chapter to assess learning before moving on to the next set of work.

Teachers can track student progress utilizing the instructional digital tools such as Benchmark Assessments and *Full Access*, an optional assessment tool, which provides student performance data reports and instructional recommendations. This allows the teacher to give accurate and immediate feedback to students. Additionally, it allows the teacher to determine trends in teaching and learning. This serves as an opportunity to create remediation and enrichment lessons for small or whole groups over the course of the year.

Effective research-based models of assessment show growth over time and the necessary measures to improve student achievement. This is predicated upon a continuum of the following Benchmark Assessments: Beginning-of-Year to screen and form a baseline for growth outcomes, Mid-Year to determine progression towards intended goals, and End-of-Year to determine overall acquisition of grade level skills and standards.

## Research-Based Practice in *Progress English Language Arts*

*Progress English Language Arts* follows a research-based approach for pre-assessing, assessing, and determining outcomes measures. Through *Full Access*, Benchmark Assessments are available to track student growth along with reports that aid in assisting teachers in the desegregation of data at the class and individual levels to target instruction.

Both formative and summative means to assess student learning and monitor student progress are intentionally and strategically embedded throughout the *Progress ELA* program. These measures are designed to ensure that student learning is measurable and that outcomes are met in alignment with skills, concepts, and standards taught. Program resources include comprehension checks, chapter assessments and a customizable assessment bank for use as needed.

Through the formative assessment process of screening, diagnoses, progress-monitoring, and outcomes measures, there are multiple opportunities to identify student needs, remediate and enrich, and to provide opportunities to differentiate instruction to meet those needs.



## Conclusion

The comprehensive nature of the *Progress English Language Arts* curriculum lies in its development and structure. As an instructional resource, the standards-based curriculum is crafted to address the development of content specific components in ELA standards and strands. Grounded in reading and writing research, and evidence-based practices such as Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Model (GRR) the curriculum's inclusive elements are intentionally developed for effective teaching and learning. On-going assessment skills and standards and data reporting, promote deep levels of cognitive thinking that are grounded in depths of knowledge. The instructional resources serve as supports for teachers as they work their way through the Gradual Release of Responsibility stages in each chapter, moving from direct instruction, and guided instruction, to application of independent practice. Through these methods, emphasis is placed on implementing best practices for ELA instruction and best practices for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of ELA instruction. Thus, *Progress ELA* proves to be aligned to ensure that school districts, schools, and teachers are fully equipped to promote student achievement in the English Language Arts.

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