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THE SCHOLASTIC CREDO, a statement of corporate values and editorial mission, was originally written in the 1940s and has remained largely unchanged since 1972. The Credo is at the core of everything we do at Scholastic and even as the company changes and grows we always stay true to this statement.

Scholastic produces educational materials to assist and inspire students:
- To cultivate their minds to utmost capacity
- To become familiar with our cultural heritage
- To strive for excellence in creative expression in all fields of learning, literature, and art
- To seek effective ways to live a satisfying life
- To enlarge students' concern for and understanding of today's world
- To help build a society free of prejudice and hate, and dedicated to the highest quality of life in community and nation

We strive to present the clearest explanation of current affairs and contemporary thought, and to encourage literary appreciation and expression consistent with the understanding and interests of young people at all levels of learning.

We believe in:
- The worth and dignity of each individual
- Respect for the diverse groups in our multicultural society
- The right of each individual to live in a wholesome environment, and equally, the personal responsibility of each individual to help gain and preserve a decent and healthful environment, beginning with informed care of one's own body and mind
- High moral and spiritual values
- The democratic way of life, with basic liberties—and responsibilities—for everyone
- Constitutional, representative government, and even-handed justice that maintains equality of rights for all people
- Responsible competitive enterprise and responsible labor, with opportunities for all
- Cooperation and understanding among all people for the peace of the world

We pledge ourselves to uphold the basic freedoms of all individuals; we are unalterably opposed to any system of government or society that denies these freedoms. We oppose discrimination of any kind on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation or identity, age, or national origin.

Good citizens may honestly differ on important public questions. We believe that all sides of the issues of our times should be fairly discussed—with deep respect for facts and logical thinking—in classroom magazines, books, and other educational materials used in schools and homes.
ENCOURAGING THE INTELLECTUAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH OF ALL CHILDREN

We work to accomplish our mission in three ways:

• We place students’ well-being and academic success at the heart of everything we do by drawing on every component of support—academic, social-emotional, and community—to create a continuum of coordinated learning that spirals in challenge across the year and the grades.

• We promote the power of text. We understand that learning flows through language, both oral and written, and immerse students in abundant authentic texts while providing the resources and support that students need to read, write, critique, and discuss.

• We promote expert, responsive teaching through exemplary models, resources, and opportunities for continuous professional learning for all members of the school community.

WE OFFER:

Authentic and culturally diverse texts that promote invigorating academic conversations and deep thinking:

• We help students become critical, passionate, and voluminous readers, writers, and thinkers who build confidence, fluency, stamina, vocabulary, and deep comprehension across a range of literary and informational texts, both digital and print.

• We help students develop the background and skill to read, write, and discuss increasingly complex texts across rich content.

• We encourage students to learn about the diversity of the human experience and consider who they are and what they believe, which empowers them to effectively express their own opinions, argue their positions with facts and details, and persuade others to join them.

Expert, responsive teaching and continuous professional learning:

We respect and honor students as learners with unique strengths and challenges. We help teachers continually monitor, assess, and document student progress, build on student strengths, differentiate instruction, and teach toward independence.

• We understand that students learn best when they are engaged with texts and projects that tap into their passions and interests. We provide teachers with the rich content and resources they need to support student inquiry.

• We value family and community, honor cultural and linguistic diversity, and help teachers implement the strategies to reach all members of their school community.

• We support teachers with continuous professional learning—shaped by the research of the thought leaders who inform our work and by the practice of the educators and students who use our resources and make them their own.
Our Framework and Gradual Release Model

Scholastic's comprehensive literacy approach scaffolds students to independence through the gradual release of responsibility model. Scholastic Literacy adds a fourth step to the model. We move from modeling/sharing to guiding, to applying, and then to transferring.

The Importance of Transfer in the Gradual Release Model

Transferring is the practice of applying knowledge or meaning from a familiar context to an unfamiliar context. It is only at the point of independent transfer that children will truly embrace choosing to think instead of simply choosing to remember. Transfer, by design, is really about engagement. When we engage students in reading, writing, thinking, and learning within contexts they can relate to we offer them the opportunity to apply what they are learning in school to the world outside of the classroom.

Research on Gradual Release and Transference

- You can only get students to transfer knowledge with real-world reading. If the only texts that you expose your students to are contrived and contracted texts, then there is no way for them to truly comprehend the real-world experiences and information that will help them become the thought leaders of the next generation (Klein 2017).
- Literacy best practices should be implemented within a gradual release of responsibility model, incrementally turning over responsibility for meaning-making practices from teacher to student, then cycling back through this release with increasingly complex texts while simultaneously employing instructional approaches that include several essential elements of effective comprehension instruction (Duke et al. 2011).
- Teaching for transfer in small groups is a highly effective classroom-based intervention because it includes familiar routines and consistent patterns of interaction, close supervision and observation of tasks, short, focused lessons, and learning linked to other classroom activities (Klein 1992).
- The key to building dialogic conversations around texts and text sets is in the ways teachers talk with children. Teachers help children understand what they are doing (not merely reading), who they are, and what to value. The foundation that this instruction provides for children includes building a tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, which allows them not only to keep a conversation open and treat each other with respect, but to keep their minds open (Johnston 2009).

SCHOLASTIC CREDO

We strive to present the clearest explanation of current affairs and contemporary thought, and to encourage literary appreciation and expression consistent with the understanding and interests of young people at all levels of learning.
Central to our mission and philosophy is our conviction that every child both deserves to read and can read complex books that can be found in a library or bookstore. Scholastic Literacy incorporates authentic texts into every area of the literacy block. We believe that “starting with the end in mind”—the end being a confident, engaged, and responsible reader—requires constant access to authentic books. If we only provide children with texts designed, written, and encountered exclusively for instruction in school, we risk children internalizing the idea that real, engaging, and authentic books are not for them. The more we can expose children to real books and real texts (including excerpts of texts pulled from trade books, magazines, and newspapers) both inside and outside of instructional settings, the more we can help children build their identities and confidence as capable and engaged independent readers, thinkers, and learners.

Classrooms Need Real Books

Authentic texts are written in real, living language that engages readers and draws them in. They may entertain, inform, or persuade. They invite active reading, robust problem-solving, and deep analysis because they consist of conceptually rich, compelling ideas and language from life (Bridges 2018).

An important distinction between authentic and contrived texts is how readers engage and learn from them. When it comes to literacy instruction, both authentic and contrived texts can be used to teach reading strategies and skills. But contrived texts require the teacher to mediate between the text and the reader to ensure learning, while authentic texts instruct on their own because of their rich content and language (Bridges 2018).

Authentic texts are conceptually and linguistically rich. They strengthen students’ analytical problem-solving ability, spark their intellectual curiosity, deepen their understanding of the world, feed their imaginations, expand their vocabularies, and build their agency and reading identity. Reading authentic books helps students become better readers, writers, spellers, grammarians, mathematicians—and better human beings who are more compassionate and engaged citizens (Sullivan and Brown 2013; Kidd and Castano 2013.)
The Importance of Authentic Texts

- A common feature of effective reading programs is student access to a wide variety of appealing trade books and other reading materials (Allington 2012).
- Highly effective literacy educators create print-rich classroom environments filled with lots of high-quality, diverse reading materials (Gambrell et al. 2007).
- Trade books are powerful instructional tools for both celebrating and supporting diverse learning styles and perspectives (Draper 2014; Haddix 2014; Parker 2014; Siu-Runyan 2014; Sumida 2014; Tatum 2014).
- Al Azri and Al-Rashdi (2014) call authentic texts “vital” to language learning. Nuttall (1996) agrees: “Authentic texts are motivating, because they are a proof that the language is used for real-life purposes by real people.”
- When it comes to supporting the needs of emerging bilinguals, authentic texts are much preferred. Indeed, language researcher Baniabdelrahman (2006) writes, “Teachers of English are advised to provide their students with different sources of authentic materials to increase their interest and motivation because authentic materials are closer to students’ real life than non-authentic materials.”
- In general, authentic texts are intrinsically more interesting and stimulating than contrived texts, as authentic texts reflect the real culture, knowledge, and values of the sociocultural community in which they were written (Baniabdelrahman 2005).
- One important goal is for literature to offer readers a realistic and authentic mirror of their own lives and experiences. If children recognize themselves reflected accurately and sympathetically in the books they read, they may develop positive self-images and sense of worth (Lehman, Freeman, and Scharer 2010).
- Children must have easy—literally fingertip—access to authentic texts that provide engaging, successful reading experiences throughout the calendar year if we want them to read in volume (Klein 2018; Johnston 2010).
- Authentic texts—unlike contrived texts that are put together to teach a skill—allow students to think and feel about what they read. Students discover favorite books while developing a love for reading. In addition to the benefits of motivating learners, arousing their interest, and exposing them to the real language that they will encounter in the real world, authentic materials enable successful language learning (Bridges 2018; Miller and Sharp 2018; Klein 2018; Scharer et al. 2018; Harvey and Ward 2017).
- Reading fictional authentic texts as opposed to contrived texts has benefits to the student by positively altering brain development and bolstering social abilities to allow students to understand meaning, motives and track their social encounters. The more storeies children have read to them, the keener their theory of mind (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, Paz and Peterson 2006; Paul 2012).

The Research behind the Importance of Authentic Texts

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Standards-Informed Instruction

Our goal is to ensure that every student receives instruction of the highest quality. Scholastic Literacy equips teachers with a deep conceptual understanding of a number of universal literacy skills, the academic language related to those skills, and the tools necessary to plan and facilitate instruction to meet the nuanced expectations of the skills and standards.

Scholastic Literacy includes instructional tools that provide districts, teachers, and students with:

- A shared, spiraled understanding of the standards and their vocabulary across and through all grades
- Equity of understanding of expectations, learning outcomes, and objectives
- Vertical planning for teachers and administrators
- Interpretation of the standards and important teacher reminders
- Way to think about and find patterns within and across texts

Lessons begin by unpacking and breaking down standards into clear, easy-to-understand explanations for both educators and students, enabling the latter to be active participants in their own success. Lesson objectives incorporate these standards, ensuring that student work is tied to what students are expected to know.

Graphic organizers move beyond simply providing an outline and organization for students. These tools are standards driven, allowing students to think about, analyze, write, and provide evidence for what they’ve learned related to those standards.

The Importance of Assessing Universal Literacy Skills within the Standards

By starting with the state standards and designing a curricular framework based on the skills and strategies that students need to meet those standards, educators are well equipped to provide high-quality literacy instruction for all students.

However, it is important that as our understanding of reading and literacy instruction evolves, so too should our understanding of assessing. Strategy and skill testing become a challenge when we expand the focus of student assessments. Literacy programs are only useful for teachers and students if their formative assessments measure the skills that are needed to meet the standards (Afflerbach 2016).

Research on Assessing Skills Linked to Standards

- We certainly don’t want any students attempting the grand performance that is the summative assessment of RI.2.7 (Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text) without continued checks that they are developing the collection of needed strategies and skills to the point that they can do so (Afflerbach 2016).
- Assessment should describe whether students attain a particular standard through summative assessment, and prior to this, how they are developing on this path to attainment using formative assessment (Afflerbach 2016).
• Federal policy shapes reading assessment and reading instruction in the United States, and the Report of the National Reading Panel (NRP, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000) continues to shape federal policy. The NRP recommended five cognitive strategy and skill areas—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—to be the focus of reading instruction because they “currently reflect the central issues in reading instruction and reading achievement.” A key conclusion of the NRP report was that strategies and skills should be the focus of reading instruction and reading assessment.

• We must augment the assessment of the “big five” of NCLB to include a measure of what students do with the meaning they construct from reading, including complex acts of applying, analyzing, critiquing, synthesizing, and evaluating (Afflerbach 2016).
Whole Class: Interactive Read-Aloud and Shared Reading

Scholastic Literacy’s whole-class instruction includes systematic routines that offer reading and writing opportunities every day. Key instructional strategies include interactive read-alouds, shared reading, writing workshops, and more to support students’ literacy development. The 30 weeks of instruction begin with a spiraled, thematic interactive read-aloud program and learning matrix. Each theme-based unit of study is framed around a unifying topic, theme, or genre, as well as an essential question. Every week offers a daily interactive read-aloud routine that allows for rich, in-depth, conversations and thinking about the text and complex, global ideas.

Student Voice
As teachers read aloud to their students, they invite them to participate, make comments, extend the ideas of their peers, evaluate the author’s point of view, and ask and respond to questions. Students follow their teacher’s modeling and participate in safe, scaffolded book conversations, quickly learning how to comment, critique, and claim their own thoughts. In this way, students build a more intricate network of meaning than they could accomplish on their own (Scharer et al. 2018; Laminack 2016; Laminack and Wadsworth 2006). During these open-ended discussions students’ voices are heard and they make deeper, more personal connections to the text. When whole-class instruction is clearly laid out and informed by the standards, educators are able to focus on individual student needs.

The Research behind Shared Reading and the Interactive Read-Aloud
- As teachers read aloud to children, they invite children to participate, make comments, extend the ideas of the author, and ask and respond to questions (Scharer et al. 2018).
- The interactive read-aloud builds student vocabulary (Beck and McKeown 2001), comprehension strategies, story schema (Scharer et al. 2018; Lever and Sénéchal 2011), and concept development (Wasik and Bond 2001; Bennett-Armistead, Duke, and Moses 2005).
- Simply inviting children to talk during interactive read-alouds doesn’t provide the needed learning boost. It’s the close reading—and deep, intentional conversation about the text—that makes the difference (Scharer et al. 2018; Bennett-Armistead, Duke, and Moses 2005; Pinnell and Fountas 2011; Cunningham and Zilbusky 2014).
- To help students rise to the challenge of increasingly complex texts and engage in close reading across both fiction and nonfiction, Hiebert (2011) recommends two intertwined goals: 1) undertake the close, attentive reading that lies at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature; and 2) perform the critical reading necessary to analyze the staggering amount of information available digitally and in print.
- Interactive shared reading successfully supports EAL learners as well as native English speakers (Silverman 2007).
Scholastic Literacy helps students take what they have just learned during whole-class instruction and apply it to a developmentally appropriate, leveled authentic text strategically chosen by the teacher. Guided reading opportunities in small group provide children with the opportunity to build confidence in their reading abilities through additional teacher-led guidance each day. For the teacher, it provides opportunities for more meaningful observations of students’ understanding and acquisition of targeted skills to truly differentiate instruction and focus on student needs.

**Guided Reading Creates Confident Independent Readers**

Guided reading is smart, differentiated reading instruction that centers on a close read of texts, literary conversation, and writing about the reading—which aligns with the standards’ call for integrated language arts. This approach is a fast track to successful, independent grade-level reading and an indispensable first step in helping students achieve the primary objective of new rigorous reading standards—to independently and proficiently read and comprehend the kinds of complex texts commonly found in college and on the job.

Based on 40 years of research drawing from cognitive science and the linguistic principles that inform our understanding of language and literacy development (Scharer et al. 2018; Richardson 2016; Fountas and Pinnell 2017; Johnston 2010; Allington 2012), guided reading supports all readers: challenged, gifted, and those for whom English is a target language.

**The Research behind Guided Reading**

- Guided reading places students on an accelerated course to independent reading with accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Scharer et al. 2018; Richardson 2016).
- Guided reading is potent, strategic, and differentiated small-group reading instruction, and its aim is clear: to help readers process—accurately, proficiently, and independently—increasingly challenging, conceptually rich, complex texts on grade level (Scharer et al. 2018; Richardson 2016).
- Guided reading also acknowledges that children bring different backgrounds and instructional experiences to the reading process and therefore move forward at different rates. The small-group model allows teachers to target specific learning needs, provide appropriate scaffolding, and gradually reduce support to promote independence. Guided reading essentials include small groups, instructional-leveled texts, and targeted teaching (Richardson 2016).
- After systematic assessment to determine their strengths and needs, students are grouped for efficient reading instruction. Though individuals always vary, the students in the group should be alike enough that they can be effectively taught in a group. Texts are selected from a collection arranged along a gradient of difficulty. The teacher selects a text that students will be able to process successfully with instruction (Pinnell and Fountas 2017).
- Students should be provided with the instructional scaffolding they need to succeed—which is most effectively delivered in small groups or through one-on-one instruction (Richardson and Lewis 2018; Scharer et al. 2018; Harvey and Ward 2017).
Access to Genres and Text Sets

Scholastic Literacy exposes students to a diverse range of informational and literacy texts across genres.

The Value of Diverse Genres and Text Sets
The relation each text has to the texts surrounding it is often known as intertextuality. Readers build understanding as they draw information from a range of texts. Reading multiple texts across the same theme, topic, genre, or issue fosters close reading and deepens and refines subject knowledge. As noted by renowned literacy researcher Peter Johnston, “To understand a text deeply, we need multiple perspectives. To understand a subject, idea, or concept more deeply, we need multiple texts because each text offers another author’s perspective on the subject” (2009).

Our students thrive when they read a diverse range of classic and contemporary literature, as well as engaging nonfiction on a range of topics. They build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their understanding.

The Benefits of Nonfiction
Extensive nonfiction reading may well be the key to success in later schooling. As students advance in grade level, they more frequently face content-area textbooks as well as informational passages on tests. Including more informational texts in early schooling prepares them for these reading and writing demands. Students who know something about topics they meet in different academic subjects bring a great advantage to their reading and writing. The more specialized academic knowledge they have, the easier it is to comprehend and convey new information when they read and write (Hampton and Resnick 2008).

The Research behind Genres and Text Sets
- In order to become competent, literate members of society, students must be able to navigate multiple genres (Lattimer 2003).
- Fiction opens our minds to the creative process, enhances our vocabulary, influences our emotions, and strengthens our cognitive functions (Oatley 2014).
- For many, fiction is the gateway to proficient reading because it encourages avid, voluminous reading (Gaiman 2013).
- Children benefit from the wide-ranging world knowledge that informational texts provide. Comprehension is strongly influenced by what one knows (Duke and Pearson 2002), so proficient readers tend to have more expansive world knowledge. We see the benefits of introducing even young children to content-rich informational texts (Duke and Carlisle 2011).
- Text sets are a collection of sources of information that have a commonality—they explore a shared topic, issue, or big idea. Text sets invite children to explore, discuss, and pursue additional questions (Scharer et al. 2018; Nichols 2009).
- Balance text complexity with task complexity—when students tackle a new genre, structure, or topic, provide more scaffolding for the complex text and set an easier reading response task for them. If students are reading their preferred genre or reading about their favorite topic, challenge them to read a book at a higher text level and suggest that they take on a more challenging reader’s response task (Klein 2017)
Reading and Writing Connections

Writing happens every day in Scholastic Literacy utilizing a Writing Workshop model. Writing Workshop lessons expose students to a wide variety of genres including social media, blogging, and other 21st-century applications.

With Writing Workshop, teachers model different writing skills using mentor texts. Students apply what they’ve learned and practice writing during small group or independently. Educators wrap up by bringing the class back together to share examples from their writing.

Educators can also develop students’ traits writing skills that teach students how to write.

Writing into Understanding

Writing helps students better understand what they read by actively engaging them in practicing comprehension. Students must understand what they are reading to present their ideas about texts effectively in writing. This requires students to go back to the text, reread, and clarify misunderstandings. Writing about texts pushes students to practice the habits of effective reading (Hampton and Resnick 2008).

Writing makes reading comprehension visible and that is the heart of effective teaching (Hattie 2008). When we can see what our students know and what they need to know, we can create clear goals for each student and provide the targeted feedback they need to surge forward.

The Research behind Writing

- Reading and writing are mutually supportive language processes. They are “interdependent processes that are essential to each other and mutually beneficial” (Cunningham and Zilbusky 2014; Pinnell and Fountas 2011; Holt and Vacca 1984).
- Writing about reading makes comprehension visible, and it helps readers frame and focus their understanding (Graham and Perin 2007; Graham and Hebert 2010). Asking students to write about their reading may provide the best window into their reading process and comprehension (Serravallo 2012, 2013; Roessing 2009).
- Reading and writing are complex developmental language processes involving the orchestration and integration of a wide range of knowledge, strategies, skills, and attitudes. Both processes develop as a natural extension of children’s need to communicate and make sense of their varied experiences (Pinnell and Fountas 2011).
- Young writers come to understand the responsibilities of an author and learn to follow the rules of conventional writing. All young writers eventually learn to write with their potential readers in mind (Bennett-Armistead 2005; Cunningham and Zibulsky 2013).
- Every time we enter a text as a reader, we receive a writing lesson: how to spell, punctuate, use proper grammar, structure a sentence or paragraph, and organize a text. We also learn the many purposes that writing serves and the different genres and formats it assumes to serve these varied purposes (Culham 2012, 2014; Paterson 2014; Hansen 2014; Smith 1988).
Independent Reading: Choice and Access to Books

Independent reading in Scholastic Literacy occurs daily while educators work with small groups. Students in Scholastic Literacy can read independently with our print classroom library or the independent reading management system with eBooks in Literacy Pro. Our classroom library is based on Pam Allyn’s 7 Strengths Model and features culturally relevant titles that support the social-emotional learning of all students.

Scholastic’s Literacy Pro is our digital independent reading resource, which meets children where they are and builds them up with the right titles at the right time. Backed by intuitive discovery tools and technology, children are motivated by titles tailored to their interests. Literacy Pro not only does the hard work of matching a child with the perfect book, it also allows children to set goals, monitor their reading progress, and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills through optional “Think More” comprehension checks. Literacy Pro provides students with endless book choices so they develop a sense of ownership, purpose, and self-discovery by choosing what they want to read. Teachers and administrators will get robust reporting about their students’ reading history, progress toward their goals, and other reading-related activities.

The Importance of Access and Choice

A key element to the Comprehensive Literacy framework is having a classroom that is filled with print. Print-rich classrooms are key to encouraging voluminous independent reading, and as we know from research, voluminous reading (Atwell and Merkel 2016) is the most reliable path to the development of proficient readers.

Access to books is also an issue of equity. As Stephen Krashen’s research (2011) has demonstrated, access to books is as strong a factor in school success as poverty is a detriment. In other words, if children have access to books in their schools (Miller and Sharp 2018; Krashen, Lee, and McQuillan 2010) there is a chance that they can read their way out of the disadvantages of poverty (Sweeney 2014).

Choice is another key element to fostering a lifelong love of reading and learning. Allowing students to self-select their books results in more involvement and thus more motivation to read (Sewell 2003; Gallagher 2009; Pruzinsky 2014). At the end of the day the goal of every educator should be to encourage students to find titles that they can read, but more importantly, that they want to read. By providing students with this choice we are empowering them and saying to them that reading is not just something you do at school. Reading is something to enjoy and something you can chose to do on your own, inside and outside of the classroom.
The Research behind Independent Reading: Choice and Access

- Students choose books that match their personal interests—both narrative and expository texts. Kids are also drawn to books that their friends or other trusted readers recommend (Edmunds and Bauserman 2006).

- Self-selection allows students more latitude to be deeply involved with the learning process, thus fostering an interest in, as well as developing an ownership of, the reading process (Kragler 2000).

- The most successful way to improve the reading achievement of low-income children is to increase their access to print (Neuman and Celano 2012).

- Though low-income children have, on average, four children’s books in their homes, a team of researchers concluded that nearly two-thirds—or 61 percent of the low-income families they studied—owned no books for their children (U.S. Department of Education 1996).

- Access to books is fundamental to a hopeful, productive life. Being read to, reading for yourself, and discussing what you’ve read creates a positive upward spiral that leads to more reading, greater academic achievement, and more personal fulfillment years down the line (Cunningham and Zilbulsky 2014; Jacobs 2014; Neuman and Celano 2012).

- Placing books in the hands of children fundamentally influences their chances for both personal and academic success (Constantino 2014; Neuman and Celano 2012; McGill-Franzen 2016; Allington and McGill-Franzen 2013; Kim 2009).

- Self-selected reading is twice as powerful as teacher-selected reading in developing motivation and comprehension (Guthrie and Humenick 2004).


- As essential aspect of becoming a real reader is knowing yourself as a reader, which is made possible through wide reading driven by access to abundant books and personal choice (Wilhelm and Smith 2014; Miller 2013; Tatum 2009, 2013; Allington and Gabriel 2012).
Digital and Independent Learning

Scholastic Literacy uses highly adaptive and personalized digital programs during the independent learning block. Students are engaged in purposeful reading and educators are equipped with actionable data to inform instruction in whole-class and small-group lessons. Our digital independent learning suite includes three programs: Scholastic Literacy Pro, Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. (Foundations in Reading, Sound and Text), and Scholastic W.O.R.D. (Words Open Reading Doors).

Literacy Pro empowers teachers with a blended learning solution for every child from Grades K–6 and ensures purposeful and effective independent reading every day. Literacy Pro provides students with a personalized bookshelf filled with titles aligned to their interests and grade levels.

For Grades K–2 Scholastic Literacy offers F.I.R.S.T (Foundations in Reading, Sound, and Text), an Adventure on Ooka Island, a one-of-a-kind approach to teaching the five foundational skills—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The program has a robust reporting system that enables educators to ensure that their students are on the right path to reading proficiently by third grade.

W.O.R.D is a digital learning tool that develops students’ vocabulary and comprehension in Grades K–5. Through fun and research-based gameplay, students will master the 2,500 morphological word families that make up 90% of all texts.

The Importance of Digital Learning

John King, former U.S. secretary of education, said, “One of the most important aspects of technology in education is its ability to level the field of opportunity for students.” Technology is a powerful tool that can transform learning for many students, shrinking the education gap by meeting students where they are and putting them on a path to success based on their individual needs. Technology also opens doors that provide educators with powerful insights into student learning and motivate students who may not enjoy reading print books but find the appeal of e-books more engaging.

The Research behind Digital Learning

- Technology can facilitate young people’s active participation in online spaces and promote the development of sophisticated literacy skills (Curwood 2013).
- Half of children aged nine to 17 say they would read more books for fun if they had greater access to e-books—a 50% increase since 2010 (Scholastic Kids and Family Report 2016).
- Teens are reading a wide variety of texts including traditional print texts and digital (multimodal) texts (Moje et al. 2008; Burke 2013).
- Motivation and reading comprehension go hand in hand; avid readers read extensively with deep comprehension (Duke et al. 2011).
- Motivation works in a spiral—avid readers read more, and their reading prompts increased learning and a passion for even more reading. The reverse is also true (Guthrie et al. 2012).
- Engagement, motivation, and a growth mindset work hand in hand (Conley 2014).
Assessment: Data to Inform Instruction

Scholastic Literacy offers numerous formal and informal assessment opportunities to monitor students’ learning. Results from these assessments provide teachers with actionable data to inform instruction, identify areas of need for intervention or acceleration, and form small groups.

When used comprehensively, Scholastic Literacy provides multiple means and modes of assessment. End-of-unit assessments and graphic organizers assess knowledge and understanding of lesson content and standards. Diagnostic assessment is provided as students use both W.O.R.D. and F.I.R.S.T. Placement and growth assessments are provided in and by the Scholastic Reading Measure, a part of Scholastic Literacy Pro that assesses and reports independent reading levels in both Lexiles and Next Step Guided Reading Assessment 2.0, an assessment that reports guided reading levels. Educators can use these data points to connect to the Leveled Bookroom Accelerator and target small group instruction to student needs.

Why Assessment Matters

Assessment can be done in many ways and every school, district, and educator has different assessment needs. But the key to assessing students’ abilities is not only to ensure that they are meeting the standards, but also ongoing observation and assessment of children’s language and literacy development so that teachers can inform their instruction and help students gain a deeper understanding of their own educational trajectory. When we make students aware of their progress we offer opportunity for internal motivation, and when we have a full picture of student progress we can see where we need to target instruction and where we can celebrate student successes.

The Research behind Assessment

- Assessment of learning is administrator supported, assessment for learning is teacher guided, and assessment as learning is student centered (Gottlieb 2016).
- Intentional and intensive instruction, informed by continuous formative assessment, characterizes the daily routine of the thoughtful guided reading teacher (Richardson and Walther 2013).
- Draw upon the assessment prevalent in new literacy spaces—the continual cycles of feedback that are always in the service of learning. It’s this assessment, available at the moment of need, that fosters deep learning (Knobel and Lankshear 2014).
- Assessment should produce information that is useful in helping students become better readers, and assessment should do no harm (Afflerbach 2016).

SCHOLASTIC CREDO

Good citizens may honestly differ on important public questions. We believe that all sides of the issues of our times should be fairly discussed—with deep respect for facts and logical thinking—in classroom magazines, books, and other educational materials used in schools and homes.
Foundational Skills

With Scholastic Literacy, teachers can choose from different phonemic awareness, letter recognition, phonics, word study, comprehension, and meta-cognitive skills lessons each day. Throughout each week, different foundational skills are introduced and applied within the context of reading so students can apply what they learn to a concrete activity.

For additional foundational reading skills development, students work independently with Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. (Foundations in Reading, Sound, and Text)—an adaptive, game-based program in which students explore Ooka Island. Built on 25 years of research from Dr. Kay MacPhee, Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. unlocks the potential within every child to become a confident, fluent reader. Through 24 levels of explicit foundational reading skills instruction covering phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, and alongside 85 e-books that follow a gradual release model, every child becomes a hero with Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. With continuous formative assessment that adjusts instruction, each child learns on a personalized path. Real-time reports help monitor children’s progress and inform instruction, while detailed administrator-level reports drive wider-reaching reading goals.

The Importance of Foundational Skills

Dr. Kay MacPhee, the author behind Scholastic F.I.R.S.T., said that “Reading achievement in the early years is highly correlated to success later in life. If a child can read fluently and well by age seven, the likelihood that that child will reach higher education doubles.” In addition, the National Reading Panel suggests that phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of a student’s ability to read fluently, yet this foundational set of skills is rarely formally taught. The research also suggests that sounds are the basis of all higher phonological brain tasks and the foundation of what allows us to read fluently. Even since the 1990s reading research has said that reading instruction needs a theory of speech (Liberman 1999). Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. trains the brain to hear sounds at the phoneme level. It works with students to teach this important skill before coping mechanisms like memorization take over. Without these foundational skills of phonemic awareness and letter knowledge, students, especially those whose native language is not English, are likely to struggle to develop the other, more complex literacy skills needed to meet the rigorous standards. But when these skills are taught, and when students can apply these skills in the context of daily literacy instruction, we will see children succeed at reading and writing.

The Research behind Foundational Skills

- To break the code for reading a child must become “phonologically aware” that words can be broken down into smaller units of sounds (phonemes) and that it is these sounds that the letters represent (Tallal 2012).
- A National Reading Panel in-depth review of 52 phonemic awareness studies found that explicitly teaching phonemic awareness has a direct and more significant benefit to children’s reading than instruction that lacks any attention to phonemic awareness.
- Phonemic awareness and letter knowledge are the two best school-entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first two years of instruction (National Reading Panel).
- The early ability to sound out words successfully is a strong predictor of future growth in decoding and comprehension (Lesgold and Resnick 1982). Weak decoding skills are characteristic of poor readers (Carnine, Carnine, and Gertsen 1984; Lesgold and Curtis 1981).

• Instruction and practice with computers in the first years of primary education is a very promising approach. First, it enables any child who is ready to learn to read and spell to do so in an efficient way. Second, stronger students can become largely independent of their teachers. Once they have mastered reading skills, they can proceed independently because books give access to further ways of developing their learning. Third, the computer may serve as a diagnostic tool: children who do not swiftly acquire elementary reading and writing skills can easily be detected and given remedial help (Daal and Reitsma 2000).
Word Work and Vocabulary Development

Scholastic Literacy teachers can choose from different word study, comprehension, vocabulary, meta-cognitive skills and strategies, and writing/revisions and grammar lessons each day. Educators are provided with key vocabulary words to pre-teach, and those words are also listed and defined in the students’ graphic organizers. Throughout the week content-based vocabulary words are also introduced and modeled, and then students are asked to apply what they’ve learned in a concrete way.

Another one of the key ways that Scholastic Literacy helps students develop vocabulary is through our trade titles and ample opportunities to read across genres and in every area of the classroom. Exposing students to a print-rich classroom exposes them to new words in the context of real-world texts.

For independent vocabulary development, students will work with Scholastic W.O.R.D.—Words Open Reading Doors. W.O.R.D. is an engaging, research-based vocabulary program that deepens comprehension by teaching the 2,500 word families that make up 90% of all texts. Grounded in the renowned research of Dr. Elfrieda Hiebert, W.O.R.D. gives children a deep understanding of the high-utility words needed to succeed in literacy and life within a game-based guided program. Students achieve learning objectives and develop deep word knowledge through repeated exposure to high-utility, high-exposure words and their various meanings in multiple contexts. W.O.R.D. ensures that students will understand nine out of every 10 words that they encounter in grade-level reading!

The Importance of Vocabulary Development

In a comprehensive meta-analysis of vocabulary instruction, Wright and Cervetti (2017) found that “Whether [educators] provided students with brief information about word meanings or whether they were longer-term, more intensive programs that taught word meanings, they led to improved comprehension compared to no intervention when taught words were embedded in the comprehension passages.” Vocabulary is another key skill, like phonics and phonemic awareness, that students need to develop in order to meet literacy standards. Additionally, increased vocabulary knowledge helps students understand what they read, and reading comprehension is enhanced when students understand the meaning of words (Bridges 2018).

The Research behind Vocabulary Development

- Vocabulary, in particular, is very highly correlated with reading comprehension in the upper elementary years (Hiebert 2016; Duke and Carlisle 2011; Baumann 2009; Wagner, Muse, and Tannenbaum 2007). What’s more, vocabulary demand is the feature of text complexity that is likely the greatest challenge (Nelson et al. 2012).
• Based on a comparison of effect sizes, Stahl and Fairbanks concluded that the most effective vocabulary teaching methods include both definitional and contextual information in their programs, involved the students in deeper processing, and gave students more than one or two exposures to the words to be learned (Wright and Cervetti 2017).

• Actively teaching students to monitor their understanding of vocabulary and to use multiple, flexible strategies for solving word meanings may be a promising approach to supporting students’ comprehension of passages, including their generalized comprehension of passages that do not contain pre-taught words (Wright and Cervetti 2017).

• On average, 90% of the words in a text are drawn from 2,500 complex word families (e.g., help, helping, helps, helped, helper, but not helpless or helpful). The other 10% of the words in texts come from the remaining 300,000 (or more) words in the English language (Hiebert 2016).

• Developing the core vocabulary (i.e., the 2,500 complex word families) through voluminous reading (the best and most effective way to develop vocabulary)—together with instructional strategies that spotlight the core vocabulary—enables students to successfully tackle the new and unique words that they might encounter in texts (Hiebert 2016).

• The more children read, the more their vocabularies grow (Hiebert 2016; Cunningham and Zibulsky 2014; Kuhn et al. 2006; Allington 2009, 2012; Baumann 2009). Conversely, reading comprehension is dependent on the depth and breadth of the reader’s vocabulary (Wong Fillmore 2014; Tannenbaum, Torgeson, and Wagner 2006).

• Incidental word learning accounts for a large percentage of all new words learned. Estimates are that each year children learn on average 3,000 words, only about 300 of which are explicitly taught to them in school (Krashen 2011; Massaro 2016; Beck and McKeown 1991).

• Still, children benefit from both implicit and explicit instruction. For example, children are more likely to remember new words in a read-aloud when teachers offer a brief definition of the words before or during the read-aloud (Neuman and Taylor 2013).

• Vocabulary, in particular, is highly correlated with reading comprehension in the upper elementary years (Hiebert 2016; Duke and Carlisle 2011; Baumann 2009; Wagner, Muse, and Tannenbaum 2007). What’s more, vocabulary demand is the feature of text complexity that is likely the greatest challenge (Nelson et al. 2012).

• Teachers can make Tier II words (the more sophisticated words that typically appear in more challenging texts) accessible to their students by building background knowledge in book talks, explaining the words, using them in conversation, and prompting students to use them as well (Beck et al. 2007).
Critical Thinking and Social-Emotional Learning

Scholastic Literacy develops students’ social-emotional skills in multiple ways. The first is through our Independent Reading print library that features the 7 Strengths. Pam Allyn developed the 7 Strengths Model, which is based on student voice and student choice. One of the key tenets of this framework is that literature can reflect a student’s experience, and that it can open up new worlds and provide students with an opportunity to learn more about people who may be different from them.

The 7 Strengths (belonging, curiosity, friendship, kindness, confidence, courage, and hope) foster social-emotional learning, independence, empathy, and civic engagement. Each authentic trade title was carefully selected to engage students through the lens of the 7 Strengths. These books encourage reading that leads to richer, deeper experiences with information, ideas, and connections to others in their classrooms, families, and the world at large.

Another key element of executive function skill development and social-emotional learning in Scholastic Literacy comes during whole-class instruction. Students are asked daily to participate in critical-thinking skills. Rather than only asking yes and no questions about the books they read with Scholastic Literacy students are asked open-ended questions that lead to deep discussions and personal connections to the texts. At the end of each week students are also encouraged to connect with the text in personal ways, building social-emotional skills.

The Importance of Critical Thinking and Social-Emotional Learning

Often students are merely asked to write down facts rather than to question or reflect on their reading, and as a result, they are incapable of drawing inferences or engaging in complex conversations about the literature they read (Karbalaei 2017). When we change the way we teach and ask students to think critically, reflect, and make connections, we make reading and writing personal for our students.

Social-emotional learning allows our students to “understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CASEL 2008). The ability to process one’s own emotions and acknowledge the emotions of others is crucial to a positive classroom environment. “Because relationships and emotional processes affect how and what we learn, schools and families must effectively address these aspects of the educational process for the benefit of all students” (Elias et al. 1997). With enhanced empathy and understanding for their peers, students can feel safe and secure to express themselves and learn.
The Research behind Critical Thinking and Social-Emotional Learning

- Cognitive research demonstrates that students learn in ways that last when they are able to connect and integrate ideas and wrestle with authentic, real-world questions and challenges (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking 1999; diSessa 2000; Linn and Hsi 2000).
- Research explains that the brain learns, and recalls learning, through nonlinear patterns that emphasize coherence rather than fragmentation. The more teachers make connecting patterns explicit and accessible for students, the easier it is for the brain to integrate new information (Hart 1983; Jensen 2009).
- A systematic process for promoting students’ social and emotional development is the common element among schools that report an increase in academic success, improved quality of relationships between teachers and students, and a decrease in problem behavior (Durlak et al. 2011).
- Educators agree that the development of higher order cognitive intellectual abilities is of utmost importance and that critical thinking “is central to both personal success and national needs” (Paul 2004).
- Sternberg (2003) argues that educational institutions far too often emphasize rote memorization: while “rote memorization requires recital and repetition,” critical thinking “requires skillful analysis, evaluation, and interpretation.”
- Compared to controls, SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile gain in achievement (Durlak 2011).
- The development and implementation of pedagogy that promotes students’ engagement in the learning process could encourage students’ critical thinking abilities and the transfer of those abilities necessary for academic achievement, personal success, and success in the workforce (Karbalaei 2017).
- Students are on their way to becoming critically aware and insightful learners and thinkers as they wrestle with different concepts, ideas, perspectives, and opinions across a range of texts and learn to construct their own beliefs drawing from multiple sources of information—as opposed to simply believing a single source (Robb 2003).
- “Psychological factors—often called motivational or non-cognitive factors—can matter even more than cognitive factors for students’ academic performance. These may include students’ beliefs about themselves, their feelings about school, or their habits of self-control. Educators, psychologists, and even economists recognize the importance of non-cognitive factors in achievement both in school and in the labor market. These factors also offer promising levers for raising the achievement of underprivileged children and, ultimately, closing achievement gaps based on race and income” (Dweck, 2014).
- “Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, which previously have shown immediate improvements in mental health, social skills, and academic achievement, continue to benefit students for months and even years to come” (CASEL 2017).
- “Giving children mindfulness attention training in combination with opportunities to practice optimism, gratitude, perspective-taking, and kindness to others can not only improve cognitive skills but also lead to significant increases in social and emotional competence and well-being in the real-world setting of regular elementary classrooms” (Schonert-Reichl et al. 2015).
Scholastic’s team of literacy specialists will work alongside your staff to support instructional effectiveness, teacher confidence, and collaboration among professionals at all levels.

As part of the Scholastic Literacy complete package, two days of professional learning offer educators the opportunity to learn about the instructional strategies that are crucial for a successful comprehensive literacy classroom. Ongoing, in-person coaching throughout the school year will increase best practices through modeling and collaboration around these routines.

Scholastic Literacy’s Teacher’s Editions and Implementation Guides include key instructional strategies and routines to support students’ literacy development during read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, writing workshops and traits writing as well as while conferring during independent reading and writing.

The Importance of Ongoing Professional Learning

In addition to implementation training and the embedded professional learning within a program, educators need continued opportunities to grow. Onsite workshops and personalized coaching are other ways to help educators leverage literacy expertise with effective tools to ensure that students achieve their academic goals. With Scholastic Literacy’s in-person training educators receive the tools and best practices to ensure their students succeed.

The Research behind Professional Learning

- For students to develop mastery of challenging content, problem-solving, and effective communication, teachers must employ more sophisticated forms of teaching. Effective professional development is key to teachers learning to teach these skills (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017).
- Effective professional learning should be directly relevant to the needs of teachers and students, and should provide teachers with opportunities for application, reflection, and practice (Reeves, 2010).
- Teachers judge professional development to be most valuable when it provides opportunities to do hands-on work that builds their knowledge of academic content and how to teach it to their students, and when it takes into account the local context (Darling-Hammond 2010).
- Brady et al. (2009) indicated how a well-planned professional development model can have positive impacts on teacher knowledge and efficacy.
- Nine different experimental research studies of teacher professional development all found that programs of greater duration were positively associated with improvements in student learning (Darling-Hammond et al. 2009).
- The ideal structure for ongoing professional development is to provide teachers with time embedded in the school day, preferably setting aside three to four hours per week for collaboration and coaching (Killion 2013).
Scholastic Literacy includes The Family Guide to Literacy, which provides families with the information and strategies they need to support their children’s literacy development at home. Available in both English and Spanish, this digital component is an essential tool for helping students transfer the knowledge they are gaining at school to meaningful application outside of the classroom.

The Importance of Family and Community Engagement

Decades of research prove a simple truth: more often than not, strong families raise successful students. All families have dreams for their children and want the very best for them, but without open communication and collaboration, how families can best support their children isn’t always easy or clear.

A strong school-family partnership can make all the difference, as Bryk et al. (2009) demonstrated in their study of Chicago schools. They found that student performance is not only influenced by the home, school, and community environments in which children live, but also by the relationships among these settings. When home, school, and community forces come together to offer students both academic and personal support, student motivation and participation increases.

The Research behind Family and Community Engagement

- Recognizing and investing in family engagement policies and practices is key to closing the achievement gap and supporting the success of all students (Harvard Family Research Project 2010).
- Parent participation is the leading predictor of students’ academic success, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or cultural background (Mapp 2017).
- The family seems to be the most effective and economical lever for fostering and sustaining children’s development. Without family involvement, intervention is likely to be unsuccessful, and what few effects are achieved are likely to disappear once the intervention is discontinued (Bronfenbrenner 2006).
- Schools must learn to embrace and implement different strategies and techniques to reach all members of their school community (Edwards 2009).
- In multiple ways, family members are a child’s first and most important teachers, and when they are actively engaged in their children’s learning, students are not only better prepared for school but continue to achieve at higher levels (Stark 2010).
- As reported in an issue brief published by the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2009), “Family involvement tends to decrease across the middle and high school levels, yet it remains a strong predictor of adolescents’ academic achievement and social outcomes.”
- The best way to prevent a failure to thrive as a proficient reader is to marshal the support of all involved: families, schools, and communities (Mapp et al. 2017).
References


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References


CREATING INDEPENDENT THINKERS, READERS, AND WRITERS