

Beaverton School District Harcourt StoryTown Concerns to Be Addressed

ESL/ELL

Story Town was created using the elements of considerate text. Considerate text refers to the embedded support that assists students as they read. These features include picture support, highlighted vocabulary, graphic organizers, student friendly objectives, easy to follow paths, skill lessons, mentor text, student models, paired-selections, and the glossary to name a few. These features have been found to successfully assist EL learners when navigating the text.

Outside the student edition, an additional wealth of support can be found to assist English Language Learners. For instance, each week the classroom teacher will have, at point of use in the teacher's guide, tips to modify instruction, scaffolded lessons, and the opportunity to frontload vocabulary. Four leveled readers are referenced each week, one of which is the ELL reader. This reader is unique to the StoryTown program, in that it does not simplify the below level reader, instead it provides background information to fill schema gaps, and instructs in Tier 1 words that these learners need in order to increase their rate of reading and comprehension. In addition to the four leveled readers you will find leveled practice, the ELL practice book is utilized to revisit, review and extend StoryTown instruction.

The StoryTown small group planner also provides suggestions, each day, for teacher led or small group activities for the EL learner.

For additional support in or outside the classroom:

The **ELL Extra-Support Kit** provides approximately 30 minutes of daily scaffolded instruction for English-language learners who are using the **StoryTown** program. Each day's ELL instruction either preteaches or reteaches the key content and skills taught in **StoryTown**, to help ensure that all students reach the highest possible academic standards. In addition, the **ELL Extra-Support Kit** includes special features to help reinforce difficult sounds and structures of English and to develop students' academic language.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary seems too hard for ELL and special ed students

At kindergarten and first grade the robust vocabulary words are taught orally, and explained in terms that children understand. Children don't have to read them, but they are expected to understand what they mean and to use them in contexts that are different from the story contexts. This helps children become familiar with the words and their meanings before they ever see the words in print. They will benefit by having knowledge of the words before seeing them in print.

The concepts of the words are all easily explained and understood by children (When you are famished, you are very, very hungry.) The words also either appear in, or relate closely to the literature selection, thus giving children a context for the words' introduction.

There is a wealth of research pointing to vocabulary (spoken vocabulary) as a precursor to reading success. Children who come from print-rich homes and who are the children of more well-educated parents have a vocabulary advantage. StoryTown engages children who do not come from vocabulary-rich backgrounds to become familiar with some of these words. Young students love big words and feel special using them.

Many of the words have Latin roots, which would actually help second-language learners who speak romance languages (Spanish, Portuguese, French), as the base of these words and the base of their first language is often the same. We bring the words back over the course of the year, and there is support and reteaching in the small-group instruction pages at the back of the teacher edition.

Online books, printable? Leveled readers? Decodable books?

Decodable books are core to the StoryTown program in Grades Kindergarten through second. These books allow students the opportunity to review, practice and extend phonic elements taught within the grade.

There are four leveled books for each week in all grades (K-6). The four levels include: below level, on-level, advanced, and ELL. These books review, practice, and extend the weekly theme, skill, vocabulary and strategy.

The leveled readers are all available on-line; students can read these on-line or listen to them. They can also be emailed home so parents can have access.

Below level not low enough at kindergarten
StoryTown focused on the letters and sounds for the below-level readers. (It's hard to decide how actually a kid can be below-level in the first weeks of kindergarten and how to make a reader for that.) So the kindergarten below-level books have a photo above a letter (or above a word during weeks when kids are word building and learning phonograms). This will help make some children more aware of the letter-sound connection which assists them in learning how to read.

The Below level book is written a half to a full grade level below the reading level of the anthology story student's are currently reading. Should students needs to go further below the strategic intervention reader drops lower in reading level.

Below level reader is a label book as opposed to a fiction or non-fiction text (is this the same throughout the grades?)

Actually, this is only for kindergarten, and the last two below-level books are stories (one is a photo essay and the other is a fictional story. By first grade even the below level books are little repetition stories.

Multi-copies of leveled readers-
Classroom teachers will receive 10 copies of the below, on and advanced leveled readers as well as five ELL readers along with full teaching guides, activities and audio CD's.

Assessments

What pieces are there?

StoryTown assessment options provide data-driven information that informs instruction. Assessments help match StoryTown instruction to student's needs, and they also:

- √Build a comprehensive portfolio of student achievement
- √Monitor student's ongoing progress of reading and language skills
- √Diagnose proficiencies and weaknesses in reading and writing skills, and strategies
- √Prescribe appropriate instruction for reading, language, and writing

Assessment options include:

- **Weekly assessment** to assess: selection comprehension, focus skill, vocabulary, grammar, high frequency words (grades 1-2), phonics (grades 1-3), oral reading fluency, research skills or vocabulary

- **Theme Tests** to measure student's strengths and weaknesses in reading and language skills taught over a five-week period. These tests evaluate: reading comprehension, focus skills, robust vocabulary, grammar, spelling, writing, oral reading fluency, and in grades (1st-3rd) phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, high frequency words.

- **Benchmarks tests** show progress toward mastery of reading and language standards over times. Students demonstrate reading and writing skills as well as fluency. Benchmark assessments mirror standardized assessments and are accompanied by a technical manual explaining how they were tested for reliability and validity. These tests offer beginning, middle, and end of the year assessment in the following categories: reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, grammar, oral reading fluency, grades 1st and 3rd include high frequency words and phonics.

Additional StoryTown assessments include assessment for: diagnostic assessments, English-Language Learners, intervention assessment, and informal assessment at point of use in the teacher's guide.

Online assessment includes weekly lesson tests, theme tests, and benchmark assessments. Harcourt online assessment allows the students to take assessments online and the teacher to view responses, track assessments, and examine prescriptive reports formulated according to student response. Teachers can view individual scores, or entire class reports, examine Oregon state standards and how students are moving toward mastery of these skills. Data can be formulated into graphs and charts to share with parents or principals.

Kindergarten, unlike the other grades, does not have online assessment. We do offer benchmark assessments and there is a test at the end of each theme that tests phonemic awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, and often a comprehension skill from the theme.

In addition to these formal assessments there is on-going informal assessment built in to every lesson for day-to-day assessment. Monitoring Progress boxes provide on-the-run assessments and prescriptions in order to provide teachers with current and relevant data for guiding class instruction and meeting individual needs.

Didn't see practice books to accompany stories

There are practice book pages to review and extend skills and strategies taught each week. Practice is another opportunity to level instruction, in that each teacher will have an on-level, below-level, challenge and ELL practice book, tied directly to weekly instruction.

In Kindergarten there are practice book pages for literature response and for the comprehension skills. There is also a page once per theme for children to compare two texts from the theme.

Teacher's guide

Grades not evident on material

Grade levels are on the back of the TEs and SEs.

Doesn't have teacher prompts on text pages in TE Yes, even in kindergarten they are provided. During the first reading of a Big Book, we just show the reduced facsimile pages of the book as we want the teacher to model fluent reading. After those reduced pages, there is a page in the TE where kids respond to the literature and a "focus on" box regarding an element or skill that the teacher can focus on in a rereading of the text. The next time the Big Book is read (day 2) there are point-of-use questions, etc. During week 3 of a theme (all themes at K are three weeks long, the literature from the previous two weeks comes back and we don't show the facsimiled pages again.

Doesn't look teacher friendly

With familiarization of the structure, it will seem easier to use. We provide inservicing on how to best utilize the teaching tools. The program is structured and full of routines which are followed in the same order every day. Each week follows a familiar and consistent pattern. StoryTown is notable in terms of being the easiest to navigate Teacher's Edition available.

Difficult to follow

The K-3 teacher guides are set out as 5-day daily plans. Grades 4-6 provide support at point of use for the teacher before, during and after the literature selection. These grades will also include 5-day plans for spelling, writing and grammar. Every week provides a predictable pattern reflecting good teaching practices.

Student edition

Stories seem very in-authentic:

The early grade 1 stories are commissioned so that we can guarantee a 100% potential accuracy for kids to read them. Either kids have the phonic elements to decode the words, the words are known high-frequency words, or the words have been introduced as story words for that or a previous selection. All the kindergarten literature except the Pre-decodable and Decodable books are authentic trade literature. Beyond grade one, student's encounter 100% authentic literature. This literature was compiled to cover over 30 different genres in grades K-6. Students will encounter, at each grade level, 60% non-fiction, 40% fiction. The student edition is more than just a collection of literature but an opportunity to encourage a love of reading as well to instruct in how to read non-fiction. It helps make students partners in their learning.

Big Books?

In kindergarten, there are 20 Big Books, 2 for each 3-week theme. In grade 1, there are 12 Big Books, 2 for each of 6 themes.

Trade books?

In kindergarten, there are 20 Library Books, 2 for each 3-week theme. These would be longer and more narrative than the patterned Big Book texts, or would be nonfiction, photo-essay kind of books. In grades 1-6 three trade books are referenced each week and are available in the library collection.

Kindergarten

See kindergarten handout

Teacher training

Harcourt is committed to the success of StoryTown and will provide in-service for the life of the adoption to meet district needs. An in-service proposal guide will be provided that will list professional development options and well as suggestions to get StoryTown off to a great start. Professional development is now available through the internet, via Podcasting. These professional development videos are topical and address current issues and instruction in reading, such as phonics, fluency, assessment and comprehension to name a few. These videos offer model lessons and ways to interact with the online support.

Thinking strategies in TM not in SE

The focus strategies for literature selections in grades 1-6 are named on the opener for the selections and a graphic organizer is also shown right in the pupil text.

Didn't see too much small group support

Small group instruction is presented each and every week immediately following the 5-day planner. The small group planner page allows for differentiated instruction by reading level (on, below, advance, ELL and strategic intervention) as well as by skill, vocabulary, writing and grammar. Leveled readers and literacy centers provide additional small group ideas each week for the on-level, below-level, challenge and EL reader. Small group suggestions can be organized in the literacy center pocket chart that is provided as core with the program.

Not many cross curricular ties

There are cross-curricular notes at point-of-use in the teacher editions as well as the natural tie with the abundance of non-fiction.

Intervention kit: is it tied to instruction?

Story Town provides 3 tiers of intervention instruction. The core instruction provides tier 1 intervention with the purposeful design of the student edition, teacher's edition and ancillary resources.

Tier 1 intervention scaffolds the core instruction with leveled readers, leveled literacy centers, small group instructional plans and point of use modifications in the teacher's edition.

Tier II intervention/Strategic intervention provides the scaffolding, extra support and extra reading practice that below-level readers need to succeed in the mainstream reading classroom.

Strategic Intervention readers:

- help struggling readers improve their reading ability and read-on grade level by the end of the school year.
- provide built-in supports before, during, and after reading that improve reading comprehension and critical reading skills.
- closely parallel selections in StoryTown student editions in content, genre, and story themes, while being substantially easier to read
- provide selections that gradually increase in difficulty from one theme to the next—so that by the end of each book, selections are written on grade-level.

Strategic Intervention teachers' guides provide systematic scaffolding of the vocabulary, phonics, spelling, reading comprehension, fluency, writing, and grammar skills that are taught each day in the core reading program as well as provide writing prompts which facilitate higher order thinking and take students back into the reading selection.

The intensive intervention (tier III) is a stand alone program that focuses on the key technical skills of reading—phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Although the intensive intervention program is a stand alone program, it is aligned to the instructional plans of StoryTown. The program aligns the sequence of the phonemic awareness and phonics strands in StoryTown. The comprehension lessons consider the comprehension skills that are taught in StoryTown, and the vocabulary lessons account for the vocabulary taught in early grades of StoryTown. The fluency strand focuses on the automaticity of letter-sounds, progressing to word naming. Reading passages provide practice in reading connected texts.

Writing

In Kindergarten and grade 1, the writing strand instructs children how to write forms that we deal with. We spend a week on one form, teach kids why people use that form and give them several days to learn the form in shared/interactive writing sessions with the teacher as the scribe or guiding the writing and then having the kids do the same type of writing on their own.

As we move up the grade levels you'll see StoryTown focus on purposefully learning the traits and forms of a skillful writer. Each week's instruction will focus on a specific trait. Students will practice this trait in various forms. Notice the sequence of writing traits across a theme. We spend two weeks on each trait – 2+2. Also notice that we don't take each piece to the publish phase. Students need time to really learn and practice a skill before they can finalize it. In week 5, we will then have students choose one of their drafts to take to the final stage.

Beyond explicit instruction in the traits of writing, teachers have asked us for the resources to scaffold and support their students. Teachers love the transparencies that provide them with the models to teach, both mentor and student models. For writing instruction you will find reference to the Writer's Companion. The writer's companion provides additional explicit, interactive instruction that focuses on trait writing. This student support is what is going to not only develop writers for the state test, but writers for life. This component is unique to StoryTown and provided for every teacher.

Phonics

Introducing b/k in units 5/6 too late /b/b and /k/k are introduced in week 13 of the program, roughly late fall. Coming before those letters are m, s, r, t, n, p, c, a, d, i, g, and f. Once the first vowel is introduced, we take weeks where the vowels and consonants that have been introduced are used in word building activities, in which kids build and read CVC words. During word building weeks we also introduce two phonograms and kids work with the words in these "word families." This gives children ample practice in applying their letter-sound knowledge and solidifying the letter-sounds they do know before new letter-sounds are introduced. Our phonics sequence was driven by the research findings supporting the National Reading Panel report.