APPROACH TO READING

Classroom, Inc.
After The Storm:
A Common Core State Standards Online Literacy Game

APPROACH TO READING
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AFTER THE STORM’S APPROACH TO READING

At Classroom, Inc. we believe that struggling students can improve their reading and writing skills when they are presented with authentic, real-world tasks that empower them, give them choice, engage their attention, and are relevant to their lives and their futures. Our workplace-based learning games do just that.

Our approach to reading rests on two important foundations:

- Reading and writing best instructional practices, and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA) in Reading: Informational Text and Writing; and
- Learning game design best practices.

Literacy is a pillar of both our program and our research base (Classroom, Inc. 2005), with a particular focus on nonfiction reading and writing. Our learning games, set in magazines, banks, clinics, and law firms, present a range of reading and text complexities, with many opportunities for students to practice literacy across content areas. We believe that literacy is the foundation of students’ ability to understand and communicate ideas and that success in college and careers depends on literacy acquisition.

After the Storm (ATS) focuses specifically on CCSS-ELA in Reading: Informational Text and Writing. A brief explanation of our game approach is presented first, for context, followed by sections on reading and writing, each with detailed information on the game’s standards, instructional approach, and research base for the instructional strategies.

Our learning game is interactive, simulating a real-life work experience. Students take on management roles and perform in-game, work-related activities. Each unit focuses on a main problem that students solve by gathering information, analyzing the situation, and making decisions.

In our first game, After the Storm: The Daily Byte, students navigate through a day in the life of a working professional at an online magazine and deal with the aftermath of a recent storm that has affected their workplace and community. For example, their first goal is to get information out to as many people as possible on the day after the storm, including people who have no electricity; later on they need to deal with the magazine’s financial crisis. Students decide how best to respond to these challenges based on informational texts such as press releases, official reports, emails, text messages, conversations with colleagues, and persuasive texts such as editorials. These problems can only be solved
by analyzing the text-based evidence, considering multiple points of view, and applying critical thinking skills. Students receive feedback on their decisions, and they learn the real-world consequences of their decisions through realistic feedback from their colleagues. While playing the game, students are seamlessly assessed on the standards and routed to support or more challenging tasks, depending on their performance. Each game unit ends with the player making a key decision about the day’s critical issue, and seeing the impact of that decision on the community.
READING: BEST INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES & COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS (CCSS)

The two principal research-based sources informing ATS’s reading pedagogy are the Teaching Reading Sourcebook (Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn 2012) created by the Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education, Inc. (CORE) and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) themselves. Following is a discussion of the direct—and unique—ways in which ATS puts the thinking behind these key sources into action, starting with our four target CCSS for Reading: Informational Text. We selected these standards for their critical value to struggling readers and their compatibility with our game-based program.

Note: Appendix A features sample activities and scaffolds students use to progress towards proficiency in ATS’s target CCSS for Reading: Informational Text.

The game instructs, provides practice on, and assesses students on the following Common Core Reading: Informational Text standards:

**Key Ideas and Details: RI.6.1** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**Classroom, Inc.’s Approach:** Working with informational text of different types (e.g., articles, research presentations) and in different content areas (e.g., social studies, science, math), students identify explicit claims and pinpoint various kinds of support for those claims, e.g., examples, research findings, and sourced quotes. They use different colored digital highlighters to note different types of support.

**Craft and Structure: RI.6.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

**Classroom, Inc.’s Approach:** Our games are set in the workplace and require students to read and understand specialized vocabulary, as specified in R.1.6.4. They also work with pre-identified vocabulary words “as they are used in a text” and figurative language.

To understand words as used in a given context, students read a storyline-related text that is missing target words, read optional definitions for the missing word, and then click their choice so that the word pops into the sentence. To understand figurative language, students replace literal language with figurative expressions or do the reverse, always with text or visual cues to help them out.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

Classroom, Inc.’s Approach: This standard is key to achieving 21st century literacy. The game integrates multimedia presentations with the expectation that students will come to understand the meaning of their individual parts and the main ideas and purpose of the presentation as a whole.

Our in-game assessments either ask students to 1) contribute to a multimedia presentation by choosing the appropriate elements and content; 2) analyze both textual and nontextual information to form conclusions about the information presented; or 3) identify the best format or media to convey different types of information. In addition to gaining experience in interpreting information presented in a variety of ways, students learn that multimedia presentations are more than the sum of their parts—each element needs the unique traits of the other to most effectively convey intended meaning. Different media and formats in assessed presentations include—in addition to running text—photos, cartoons, icons, graphs (line, pie, and bar), tweets, titles, and headings.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.6.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

Classroom, Inc.’s Approach: Working with persuasive texts of different types (e.g., editorials, op-eds, advertisements) and in different content areas, students identify authors’ main and secondary claims. These claims might take the form of an opinion or a real or perceived problem the author identifies. Students then identify 1) persuasive arguments based on logical reasoning; 2) fact-based supports for the claim; 3) examples or quotes supporting the claim. In the case of some opinion pieces, they identify the author’s recommended solution to a problem, or a “call to action.”

Other CCSS: The reading offered in the game addresses, but does not assess, a variety of other RI standards. For example, RI.6.2 (central idea and how it is conveyed through details) is addressed. The very nature of the game’s overarching fictional narrative, along with its plot and characters, allows us to address some CCSS-ELA Reading: Literature standards, including RL.6.3 (how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution).
WHAT STUDENTS READ IN THE GAME

The informational reading in the game is contained within a fictional narrative of exceptional real-world authenticity. Taken together, the units in the online game read like linked short stories. Featuring the same setting and cast of characters, each unit has its own compelling narrative that is based on a problem that can only be solved by the student as Editor-in-Chief. To arrive at the best solution for the unit problem, students are exposed to a wide range of texts, many of which they must read and analyze in order to solve the problem.

Some informational texts in the game target specific CCSS and serve as embedded assessments; performance on these serve to differentiate further instruction within the game and is reported to teachers via the dashboard. Some informational texts in the game are not explicitly assessed but provide additional reading opportunities and show students the variety of text types typically encountered in a contemporary workplace. Many model the same features of the assessed texts, which include subject matter from varied content areas including ELA, Social Studies, STEM, and the Arts.

The types of assessed texts students read and interact with include:

- dialogue in which a choice or decision is required of them
- feature articles
- press releases
- opinion pieces
- business communications
- blog posts
- multimedia presentations
- newsfeeds
- social media postings
- political columns
- arts reviews
- technology articles

The types of non-assessed texts students read include:

- conversations with their workplace colleagues (in the form of speech balloons)
- workplace texts, such as magazine articles, job descriptions, instant messages, social media feeds, and notices to staff
- environmental texts, such as posters, maps, flyers, and advertisements
- radio and television broadcasts (in the form of text transcripts)
HOW STUDENTS READ IN THE GAME

The game’s instructional approach in reading is built upon research-based strategies for teaching reading comprehension and vocabulary to struggling adolescent readers, as well as on strategies for addressing the CCSS. We rely heavily on the reading comprehension framework and strategies delineated in the CORE’s *Teaching Reading Sourcebook* (Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn 2012), and on the CCSS approach and recommendations for informational text complexity. The game’s design and features are also critical to our instructional approach, as demonstrated in these important elements of a literacy game:

- embedding reading tasks and assessments directly in the game
- motivating students to read by ensuring that the texts are critical to solving the game’s problems
- giving students additional support and/or more challenging tasks to complete based on their performance
- providing meaningful feedback and opportunities to try tasks again

CORE outlines three elements of reading comprehension that need to be attended to: the reader, the text, and the task. We focus on each as follows:

- the *reader* by motivating students with real-world content and engaging gameplay;
- the *text* by carefully monitoring qualitative and quantitative dimensions of text complexity (e.g., Lexiles and CCSS Text Complexity Scale);
- and the *task* by ensuring that students are reading for a relevant and engaging purpose—solving workplace problems.
READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Our game provides multiple opportunities for students to use six of the recommended CORE comprehension strategies: monitoring comprehension, connecting to world knowledge, recognizing text structure, answering questions, summarizing, and constructing mental images. CORE’s general recommendation to scaffold instruction is also critical to our game’s approach.

Note: Appendix B features example activities reflecting each of the recommended CORE reading comprehension strategies students use in ATS.

Monitoring Comprehension: Being actively aware of whether one is, or is not, understanding the text and then dealing with problems as they arise

Within the natural context of the story and their role, students frequently monitor their thinking in regard to decisions they made while reading a text. This is done both within the story, where they make decisions and then learn from the real-time consequences of those decisions, and through brief writing assignments, where they explain the thinking that informed their decisions and opinions.

Connecting to World Knowledge: Linking knowledge that stems from previous experiences with ideas in the text

The content of the game draws on students’ previous experiences by making connections between text types they’re already familiar with. In this vein, students see how a poster in a school corridor might be a persuasive text, or a graph needed to analyze trends among The Daily Byte readers is the same type of graph they use to analyze data in math class.

Moreover, through prompts calling for brief responses, the game periodically calls upon them to make direct connections with their own experiences.

Recognizing Text Structure: Identifying the way a text is organized

The texts in After the Storm reflect a variety of organizing principles, such as articles with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion; a résumé and a steps-in-a-process article (both organized by sequence); recommendations (problem and solution); and presentations organized to create a message through the use of text and different graphic elements. Students are instructed in how to recognize different text structures, and they
are prompted to write texts that use different structures.

Super Ed, our in-game instructional coach, provides explicit instruction to help students identify and become comfortable with various organizing principles of texts.

**Answering Questions: Finding information from text to answer [teacher] questions**

Finding evidence, both in the texts and storyline in the game, is a central and frequently used means to strengthen students’ reading comprehension. It is a strategy students use with assessed informational and persuasive texts alike.

In fact, the unit “Unbiased Reporting” focuses on the importance of using fact-based evidence when reporting, and the game as a whole provides ample instruction and practice in identifying and citing multiple types of valid evidence within texts. Other units have multiple tasks that call upon students to identify textual evidence for a given claim or main idea.

**Summarizing: Distilling information into a concise, synthesized form**

Students are asked to both choose among effective summaries for the texts they read and, through the brief writing prompts (QuickWrites) that follow many assessed activities, to summarize texts themselves.

**Constructing Mental Images: Forming mental pictures in one’s head as one reads**

For students who have not grasped the ideas conveyed in texts alone, the program combines text with visual clues as a means of helping them to picture what they read. As bicycle training wheels lead to independent riding, the expectation is that this strategy (the ability to create and make use of mental pictures) will transfer to their reading.

In particular, the second level of support makes use of ELLs’ and struggling readers’ visual literacy.
VOCABULARY STRATEGIES

The *ATS* vocabulary strand follows the consensus point of view, also pointed to in CORE’s Teaching Reading Sourcebook (Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn 2012), that “vocabulary is acquired incidentally through indirect exposure to words.”

Repeated use of given words in context is central to students’ understanding of them. *ATS* features targeted Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words (as defined by the CCSS), and the program is designed to expose students to those words multiple times, both before and after they are assessed on their meaning.

We agree with CORE’s assertion that dictionary use is “a powerful aid to word understanding” (Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn 2012). To make looking words up as convenient for students as possible, *ATS* provides a comprehensive text-embedded glossary featuring over 1,000 words. Students look up words directly in the text they are reading, without ever leaving the text screen. All glossary words are linked to their contextual definitions every time they are used.

As CCSS RI.6.4 is one of our target standards, the game provides regular opportunities for students to practice contextual analysis. Using texts following the game’s storyline, students determine a word’s meaning by analyzing its context. In the game’s support activities, students get explicit instruction in how to identify different types of contextual clues to a target word’s meaning.

Here are the target vocabulary words used in *After the Storm: The Daily Byte*:

**In Primary Assessments** (all students take)
- Tier 2: aftermath, structural, mandatory, evacuate, integrate, instantaneous, reappear
- Tier 3: surge, interactive, digital

**In Support-Level Assessments**
- Tier 2: tragic, robust, naïve, unsatisfactory, inexperienced, submerged
- Tier 3: hieroglyphics, pyramids, mummy, root, refuse (waste), reservoir

**In Challenge-Level Assessments**
- Tier 2: tolerance, population, fleeting, manifestation, collapsed, peril, ghoulish
- Tier 3: Islam, Christianity, Hinduism
ADDRESSING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF READING COMPETENCY

Many classrooms today are comprised of students reading within a range of three or four different grade levels—yet the CCSS requires grade-level reading proficiency. Classroom, Inc. has created an instructional model scaffolded to help close the gap between divergent classroom reading levels. Students proceed through the instructional path for reading, as outlined in the graph, three times in every unit of the game.

**AFTER THE STORM INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL**

**PRIMARY** All students encounter this primary activity, with every text leveled according to the Lexile CCSS grade-level range and the CCSS Text-Complexity Scale. When they complete the Primary Assessed Activity, students see what they have answered correctly and incorrectly, and a game character gives them positive or negative feedback.

**Support Level 1** Players who score at or below 79% on the primary activity are seamlessly routed to Support Level 1, a simpler and shorter task on the same target CCSS. Generally, the new text is at the low end of the Lexile CCSS range for the grade.

The activity is introduced by Super Ed, the program’s literacy coach, who prepares students with brief direct instruction on applying a required skill. Students then get instructional feedback from Super Ed and, if need be, a second chance on the item.

**Support Level 2** Students’ scores on Support Level 1 determine whether they move directly back to the primary activity or are routed to a second level of support. This activity is less text-heavy than either primary or first support activities and the text is Lexiled one or two grade levels below the students’. The second level of support makes strong use of visuals (effective with ELLs and struggling readers alike), and typically approaches the strategy from another angle.

The introductory and instructional feedback loop matches that of Support Level 1.

**Challenge** Players who perform at or above the threshold (80%) on the primary assessment are routed to this challenge activity. Challenge texts are at the upper end of grade-level readability (quantitative and conceptual complexity level).

Note: When students on the support path return to the primary activity, as shown in the graph, they only retake assessed items they got wrong the first time.
HOW STUDENTS ARE INSTRUCTED IN THE GAME

In ATS, students receive direct instruction in the game’s two support levels.

The CORE’s Teaching Reading Sourcebook (Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn 2012) advocates the use of four clear steps to instruct students explicitly in comprehension strategies. ATS’s instructional design puts these steps into action for both vocabulary and comprehension.

**Direct Explanation:** Explain to students what the strategy is, how to use it, why the strategy helps comprehension, and when to use it.

Each of the game’s two levels of support begins with direct explanation from Super Ed, the game’s literacy coach. He identifies and explains the skills(s) associated with the target CCSS and also gives students tips on how to apply the skill(s) to the text they’re about to read.

**CCSS RI.6.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

Here Super Ed gives students a brief overview related to the coming task on figurative language.
**Modeling:** Model or demonstrate how to apply the strategy, usually by thinking aloud while reading a text.

Super Ed models or explains the use of the skill, as in this example of how to find the meaning of a vocabulary word:

![Example of Modeling](image)

**Guided Practice:** Guide and assist students as they begin to apply the strategy. Provide feedback about students’ use of the strategy and its effectiveness.

After Super Ed models or explains a given strategy, he helps students apply the strategy in their reading by introducing and providing feedback for each practice opportunity.

**A. First Super Ed introduces the item in which students will apply the strategy.**

![Example of Guided Practice](image)
B. Then he gives students feedback on their choice. If students made the wrong choice, Super Ed gives them an instructional tip and asks them to try again.

C. For both incorrect and correct answers, Super Ed provides more feedback in response to students’ second attempt to apply the skill in the assessed item.
4. **Independent Practice**: Assess the need for further support or reminders. Monitor students’ strategy use as they transfer what they have learned to new tasks.

*After the Storm* includes a robust off-game experience during which students work collaboratively to transfer what they’ve learned in *The Daily Byte* to creating their own magazine. Not only do students draw upon the content knowledge they’ve gained playing the game, but they apply the skills and strategies they’ve acquired to a new context.

For example, students are expected to create an informative article (CCSS W.6.2), a persuasive piece, and an advertisement (CCSS W.6.1) for their magazine. Monitoring and evaluating this work done by students enables teachers to assess how well they have transferred what they’ve learned in the game to another task.

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**INFORMATIVE ARTICLE TOPIC:**

**THINK ABOUT: HEADLINE**
*You want a title that catches the reader’s eye.*

**WRITE: HEADLINE**

**THINK ABOUT: INTRODUCTION**
*In your first paragraph, you want 1-2 sentences that create excitement and show why the topic is interesting, important to understand, or something worth knowing how to do.*

**WRITE: INTRODUCTION**
THINK ABOUT: THE BODY
In your second paragraph, you want to expand on the topic. Provide information (a fact, definition, poll data, or a step). (Hint: This can be more than one paragraph if you want to provide additional information.)

WRITE: THE BODY

THINK ABOUT: CONCLUSION
In your third and final paragraph, restate the topic you have taught or explained, summarize your information, and conclude your article. (Hint: Your last sentence, or kicker, should be as interesting as your first.)

WRITE: CONCLUSION
HOW GAME DESIGN FITS IN

According to the 2013 Report Card from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 64% percent of eighth graders score below proficiency level in reading (U.S. Dept. of Ed.). As a national average this constitutes a crisis, one that has improved only slightly since 2002, when The Carnegie Corporation of New York first drew the public’s attention to the dropping literacy rates of U.S. teens.

By offering a high degree of engagement, computer games motivate adolescent readers at all levels. “The Mismeasure of Boys: Reading and Online Video Games” is a 2011 study done by Constance Steinkuehler, Professor of Education and Game-based Learning at the University of Wisconsin, and its findings are powerful. Steinkuehler found that when the subjects read texts related to the game they were playing, such as instructions and FAQs, “struggling readers read text averaging 6.2 grade levels above their diagnosed competency.” Despite substantial differences between text difficulty and diagnosed reading level, “all participants read at the ‘independent’ or ‘instructional’ level, with accuracy rates between 94% and 99%.”

Clearly motivation plays a pivotal role in reading comprehension. It follows that online games with a sound instructional design, a compelling storyline, and challenging activities can improve teen users’ performance in reading. Classroom, Inc. has transferred that tremendous growth potential to a game actually focused on reading.

Learning by Design

Classroom, Inc.’s reading game After the Storm rests on these bedrock principles of effective learning games. The following quotes are from James Paul Gee in “Learning by Design: Good Video Games as Learning Machines”:

Empowering Readers: “Good learning requires that learners feel like active agents.”

ATS: To solve the core problem in every unit, students must deeply read and evaluate the information in a minimum of 10 different texts that they discover as they pursue their goal. In this sense, game texts become clues as well as resources.

Customization: “Different styles of learning work better for different people.”

ATS: By tracking them to appropriate tasks based on their performance in primary assessments, the game is designed to allow students with different levels of reading proficiency and different learning styles to experience success.

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**Identity:** “Deep learning requires an extended commitment and such a commitment is powerfully recruited when people take on a new identity they value and in which they become heavily invested.”

As a role-playing game, *ATS* puts students in empowering positions, such as that of Editor-in-Chief of *The Daily Byte*—a position charged with ultimate decision-making authority and with responsibility for employees. Their position as “boss” is one they take very seriously; it allows them to become immersed and invested in the action.

**Education:** “[Tools and technologies] have their own built-in knowledge that allow the learner much more power over the world being investigated than he or she has unaided by such tools.”

*ATS* offers tools and technologies designed to support students in their quest for successful problem-solving. Among these is the comprehensive point-of-use glossary, a powerful vocabulary and reading support tool; Super Ed (the literacy coach); and the To Do List that automatically tracks students’ task completion.

**Pleasantly Frustrating:** “Good games adjust challenges and give feedback in such a way that different players feel the game is challenging but doable and that their effort is paying off.”

In order to make the game “doable” for struggling readers, we combined challenging material with the opportunity to redo individual activity items after skill scaffolding has been provided.

**Skills as Strategies:** “In good games, players learn and practice skill packages as part and parcel of things they need and want to accomplish.”

All academic and strategic skills practiced in *ATS* are purposeful and deeply embedded in content; students apply reading skills as part of their effort to gather the information and insights they need to solve immediate workplace problems, and to make the decisions that will most benefit *The Daily Byte*.
Evidence-Centered Design

We designed ATS as a learning game that would analyze student performance as evidence of learning, particularly on the targeted CCSS. The game collects these data invisibly while students are engrossed in gameplay. To do this, we used some broad principles of evidence-centered design (ECD) and embedded, or stealth, assessment.

ECD is a system for developing assessments that relies on gathering evidence from performances on tasks to show students’ knowledge, skills, or abilities (Messick 1994; Mislevy, Almond, and Lukas 2003). Shute (2011) used these underlying ideas to conceptualize assessments in games, known as “stealth” or “embedded” assessments. These in-game assessments rely on ECD concepts to elicit game behavior that provides evidence of students’ learning.

ECD requires us to define student competencies of interest, observations that will provide the best evidence for these, and tasks that allow us to make these observations. Early on, Classroom, Inc. Identified select target CCSS and then established criteria for students meeting the objectives of these CCSS within the game. As an example, for one standard, CCSS-ELA RI.6.1, we addressed these ECD requirements as follows:

- **Competency:** Struggling readers will read and understand complex informational text at the appropriate CCSS level.

- **Observation/Evidence/Indicators:** We will observe students citing evidence from text that supports their analysis of what the text states explicitly, and inferences from the text. If students can do this at least 80% of the time on text at the appropriate level, that indicates that they have this competency.

- **Tasks:** We will provide students with complex informational text within a game in the form of, e.g., a memo, email, or report. Their task will be to answer questions about the text posed by game characters or to perform tasks that are designed to target their comprehension of explicit statements and inferences. They may, for example, answer the questions by highlighting specific sections of the text.

Using these assessment principles during game design resulted in a learning game that can provide information about student learning to allow the game to provide needed support or additional challenges, and to provide educators with student performance data they can rely on.
Teacher Reporting

The ATS Teacher Dashboard, in addition to allowing teachers to manage their classes and monitor students’ game progress, reports on students’ reading performance using two reports. The first, the Class Performance Report, shows how well each student—and the class as a whole—are performing on each CCSS. The second, the Student Activity Report, shows individual students’ actual work on the reading assessments. (See samples of each report below).

Class Performance Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Average</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axelrod, Nick</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Jude</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis, Michelle</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin, Meg</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otis, LeRoy</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Activity Report

One Day After Hurricane Dante: Safety First

Our community can breathe one big sigh of relief that Hurricane Dante is over. The greatest danger may be behind us, but there are still plenty of safety concerns in the resolution of the storm.

This storm was so extreme for our area that on Monday everyone living within a quarter mile of a shore had to evacuate, grabbing only what they could in the minutes before they left.

Mayor Young made it clear that following her instructions was optional yet there were those who seemed to think they had a choice about leaving. On Lower Broadway, five families stayed in their homes even though they knew the evacuation order. The mayor later described their decision as brave.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


*After The Storm: Approach to Reading*
APPENDIX A

Sample Activities and Scaffolds for ATS CCSS for Reading: Informational Text (Primary, Supports, and Challenge)
Key Ideas and Details: RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

FIRST SUPPORT ACTIVITY
(taken by students who score 79% or lower on the Primary activity)

Step 1: Super Ed provides direct instruction on the reading strategy students will apply in the activity. In this case, LaDonna has asked them to identify statements from Port Douglas business owners that prove their business is affected by the economic downturn.

As you read LaDonna’s interviews, look for different types of evidence. To help prepare you, read the statements in this table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Evidence</th>
<th>Counts as Evidence</th>
<th>Does Not Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>I’ve noticed that since the storm struck, fewer people are going to restaurants.</td>
<td>People probably spend their money on downloading videos instead of eating out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement Using Data or Statistics</td>
<td>Readership of the magazine is down by 30% this month.</td>
<td>Readership for the blog is down too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>My store manager said, “Our sales are way down this week.”</td>
<td>She said that the boots coming in next week should sell well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the statements in the column with the heading "Counts as Evidence" are factual evidence because others can verify whether or not the statements are true. The statements under "Does Not Count" are the speaker’s guess or opinion — they are not evidence.

(cont.)
Key Ideas and Details: RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (cont.)

Step 2: For each of the three quotes from Port Douglas business owners, Super Ed prompts students to highlight the statement proving that the post-storm financial slump has hurt his or her business.

Step 3: If students do not identify the correct evidence supporting the main idea that business owners suffered in the wake of Hurricane Dante, Super Ed gives them an instructional tip and they can try again.
**Craft and Structure: RI.6.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

**SECOND SUPPORT ACTIVITY**
(taken by students who score 79% or lower on the first Support activity)

**Step 1:** *The Daily Byte’s* photographer introduces the activity. He needs students’ input on a photo essay he’s preparing about the damage the storm did in Port Douglas.

**Step 2:** Because this student’s performance on the primary and first support activities showed that he or she does not yet understand how to apply RI.6.4 when reading, *Super Ed* steps in to deliver **direct instruction**. He prepares him or her to approach the standard in a more visual way.

(cont.)
Craft and Structure: RI.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings. (cont.)

**Step 3:** Next, Super Ed clarifies the task.

**Step 4:** The student made the correct choice for this item. Super Ed gives feedback.

In the last item, the student chose the best caption and sees the word used in context.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats.

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY**

Each activity is introduced by a *Daily Byte* character who needs the Editor-in-Chief’s input on his or her project. Here, Grace, the Director of Technology sets the goal.

Students then give Grace feedback by answering her individual questions.

(cont.)
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats. (cont.)
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.6.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**
(taken by students who score 80% or higher on the Primary activity)

**Step 1:** Maggie introduces an activity in which students will find different types of evidence supporting her strong opinions on “hair rights” in the office—as well as a poor argument she makes to support her claim.

**Step 2:** Students use multiple colored highlighters to make their choices.

(continues)
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.6.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not. (cont.)

**Step 3:** Regardless of the CCSS the activity targets, Challenge activities are designed for students to apply the standard at a higher level and to have fun while doing so.

After Maggie provides feedback for the hair rights op-ed, students go on to choose photos and captions for her piece.
APPENDIX B

Six Recommended CORE Comprehension Strategies: Sample ATS Activities
Monitoring Comprehension: Being actively aware of whether one is, or is not, understanding the text and then dealing with problems as they arise.

ATS QuickWrites, brief writing assignments, often call upon students to explain the thinking that informed their text-related judgments.

Connecting to World Knowledge: Linking knowledge that stems from previous experiences with ideas in the text.

To help students understand their reading, the game periodically calls on them to make connections with their own experiences. In this case, they’ve read a review of various weather apps. To help them decide what goes into making a wise purchasing decision, students are asked to reflect on their own shopping experiences.
Recognizing Text Structure: Identifying the way a text is organized

Students playing ATS are exposed to a variety of organizational text structures. At the support level, Super Ed provides explicit instruction in those structures. Following are two examples from his guidance on a text organized by introduction, body, and conclusion.

Introduction

[Text example]

Body

[Text example]
**Answering Questions:** Finding information from text to answer [teacher] questions

Two of our target CCSS—RI.6.1 and RI.6.8—call upon students to identify and understand different types of authentic evidence supporting main ideas or opinions in a text, so students practice this strategy continuously throughout their progress on the game, as in the following sample for RI.6.1.

Here students find evidence for main ideas that appear in bold at the beginning of the text.
**Summarizing: Distilling information into a concise, synthesized form**

There are several opportunities for students to summarize in ATS. They are asked in QuickWrites to summarize information, and also to choose the best summary from among four choices.

In this sample, students cross out statements in a summary that Ernie, the intern, has written. The activity helps students gauge the most important and appropriate ideas for a summary.
**Constructing Mental Images:** Forming mental pictures in one’s head as one reads

Most second-level supports in *ATS* tap students’ visual literacy through pictures to help them understand concepts that they don’t understand exclusively by reading.

In this example, students need to study pictures and find the captions that serve as clues to the whereabouts of Aziz, the missing photographer.

1. LaDonna introduces the situation.

2. Super Ed discusses the connection between images and captions.

3. Students complete the activity.