

OUSD Language and Literacy Framework (Tier 1, High School) [[1-pager version](#)]

Literacy is the foundation for student success in college, career, and community. Considering the long-standing inequities in access to literacy within our system, it must be our collective call as Oakland educators to guarantee the basic right to literacy for every student - especially those we have historically failed to serve, such as Black students, English Language Learners, and students with IEPs. To make that vision a reality, we must operate from a shared understanding of high quality literacy instruction. This framework provides such a definition, focusing on Tier 1 instruction across high school content areas. It was drafted by the High School Literacy Equity Collaborative (HSLEC), a [cross-stakeholder group](#), drawing on both research and direct community input. This high school-specific framework builds on literacy guidance for earlier grades, such as the vision outlined in the [TK-5 Language and literacy Framework](#).

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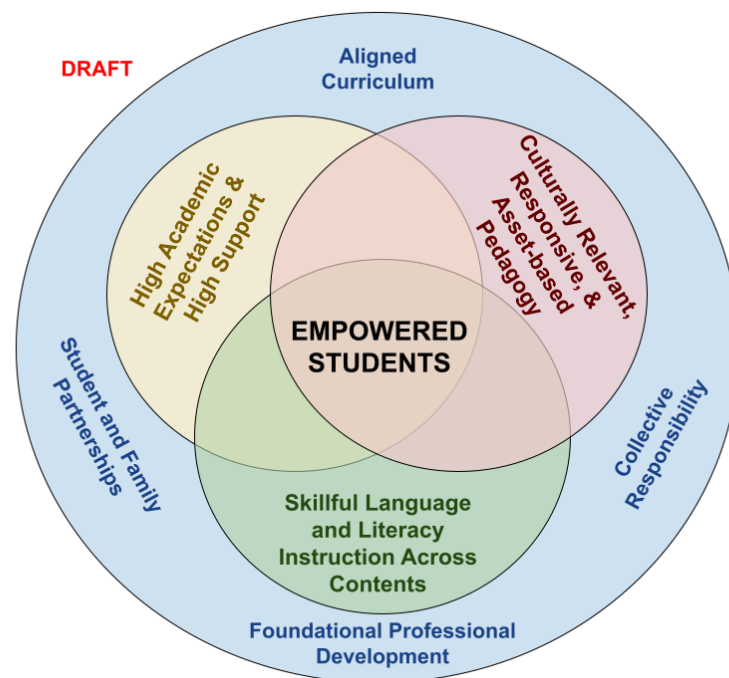
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At the Center/Our Why: Empowered Students

“The basic question in school is how to not separate reading the word and reading the world” ([Paolo Freire](#))

Literacy does not merely refer to the technical skills we need in order to read college-level texts or produce academic writing. Rather, literacy refers both to our technical skills and to our ability to connect what we are reading, speaking, or writing about to our own experiences and to our understanding of the world around us. Reading, writing, discussing, listening, and story-telling are deeply human acts that help us make meaning and make change.

Building on the [OUSD Graduate Profile](#), we envision each student graduating from OUSD:

- Grounded in their own story
- As a joyful reader
- Equipped with college- and career-ready reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills
- Critically literate, and ready to create change in the world and in their communities

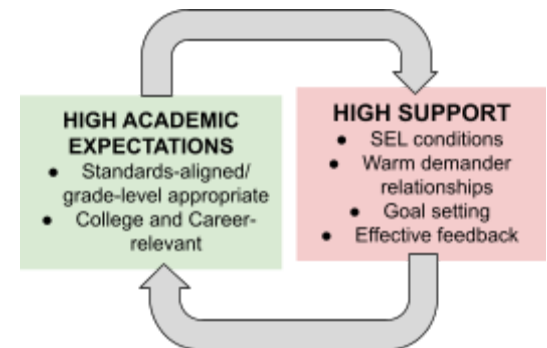
Three Components of Equitable Literacy Instruction



High Academic Expectations with High Support

"... literacy was not a single skill to master; instead, it was the means to navigate their lives." ([Gholnecsar E. Muhammed](#))

Students have big dreams for their lives beyond high school. But in order to gain access to the college, career, and community opportunities that put students on the path towards their dreams, students need practice and support with the types of language and literacy tasks they will experience beyond high school. In fact, the tasks that students do every day are the best predictors of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they will develop over time. The [Common Core State Standards for Literacy](#) were backwards-mapped from college and career-level texts and tasks, so, aligning daily tasks to Common Core Standards is one of the most powerful shifts teachers can make in service of students' access to college and career. Pathway student learning outcomes, the [OUSD Graduate Profile](#), and the Graduate Capstone task are other valuable tools for aligning instruction to high expectations.



Four Key Resources for College- and Career-Ready Students:

- ☐ Consistent opportunities to work on grade-appropriate assignments
- ☐ Strong instruction that lets students do most of the thinking in the lesson
- ☐ A sense of deep engagement in what they're learning
- ☐ Highly qualified teachers who hold high expectations for students and truly believe they can meet grade-level standards


Research has found that high expectations from teachers and access to grade level assignments have a huge impact on student growth, particularly for students who enter the school year “behind” according to standardized measures ([Opportunity Myth](#), figure to left). Racism and white supremacy in our school system make it less likely that students who are African American, English Learners, from low income families (among other groups) get access to these critical resources, so as educators - especially those of us who do not share cultural identities with our students - we have to consciously cultivate high expectations and supportive conditions in order to interrupt inequities.

Those conditions include both social emotional and academic supports:

- Opportunities for students to explore the multiple facets of their own identities as well as the identities of others; and to approach texts with a lens of power, oppression, and privilege ([Muhammed](#)).
- Strong relationships and SEL conditions with teachers and among students, so that students are in the state of “relaxed alertness” that is most conducive to learning. “[Warm demander](#)” teachers serve as students’ allies, communicating care and belief in a students’ abilities, while challenging them to grow academically (Hammond). (See more in the “Culturally Relevant, Responsive, and Asset-Based Pedagogy” section.)
- Differentiated support and scaffolding for students designed to offer them access to grade-level texts and tasks. This differentiated support would include accommodations/modifications based on students’ IEPs (See more under “Culturally Relevant, Responsive, and Asset-Based Pedagogy” - Universal Design for Learning), integrated English Language Development, and support for foundational literacy skills as needed (See more under “Skillful Language and Literacy Instruction”).

Mastery Based Grading offers a powerful framework for communicating high expectations and supporting student learning. OUSD defines [three core elements of mastery based grading](#), which overlap with the above guidance and examples below:

1. Identify learning goals that are relevant to their specific students and that prepare students for postsecondary life
2. Make these goals transparent to students from the start along with criteria for success (e.g. rubrics, checklists, etc.) and give grades that communicate progress towards these goals
3. Give students multiple opportunities to practice, receive feedback, and demonstrate mastery as well as multiple formats for demonstrating mastery

Example Practices for High Academic Expectations with High Support	Supporting Videos
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set high expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Draw from curriculum aligned with Common Core Standards ○ Make a “College/Career-Ready Revision” to an upcoming lesson ○ Practices for Mastery-Based GradingCollege- and Career-Ready Revision (Lesson, Task, Prompt, Text) ○ Develop student-friendly criteria for an upcoming assignment (See slide 4 - blue = teacher rubric, orange = student-friendly version) and share with students to establish criteria for success. ○ Analyze model student work with students: identify what specifically makes it strong and how they can incorporate those elements in their own work. ○ Map out how an upcoming lesson addresses Gholdy Muhammad’s four-layered model for culturally and historically responsive literacy. ○ Use a tool like this matrix, which combines Bloom’s Taxonomy with Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, or these visuals representing DOK in the core contents, to reflect on the depth of thinking you’re asking of students in a given lesson or task ○ Engage in a Future Vision exercise about a focal student (Asset-Based Strategy Cards, p. 14) ● Be a warm demander/build learning partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish trust and rapport, track interactions ○ Set goals with students ○ Give wise feedback ○ Reflect and act on feedback from students ○ Build developmental relationships (& see this distance learning version) ● SEL 3 signature practices ● ELLMA Essential Practices - See #1 Rigor and Access 	<p>Click the image below to hear Karega and Jonathan speaking to how teachers can create a classroom environment that allows all students to meet high expectations:</p> 

Culturally Relevant, Responsive, and Asset-Based Pedagogy

Culturally Relevant, Responsive, & Asset-Based Pedagogy

[Culturally Relevant Pedagogy] “is an approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitude.” - Gloria Ladson Billings

Our approaches to literacy instruction over the last 10 years have resulted in inequitable outcomes, particularly for African American students. Other student groups, including Indigenous, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander students, as well as English Learners and students with IEPs, are also not served equitably by our current practices.

In order to address the systemic disparities historically evident in language and literacy instruction for our students, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy is critical. These approaches, along with [Universal Design for Learning](#), sit under the broader umbrella of **Asset-Based Pedagogy** - that is, practices rooted in the belief that students bring rich knowledge, skills, and language into the classroom, and that teaching is most effective when educators recognize and build off of these assets, as opposed to viewing students as deficient (this belief is termed a “deficit mindset” or “deficit thinking paradigm”).

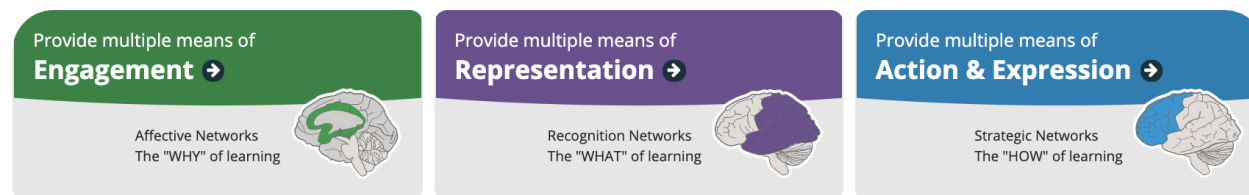
We offer the following definitions of **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy** and **Culturally Responsive Teaching**:

- Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings) affirms student choices, acknowledges the social-political context, and creates opportunities for students to critique literature to activate critical thinking and social awareness.
- Culturally Responsive Teaching utilizes students’ cultural knowledge and ways of being in the world to support learning. Teachers recognize students’ “cultural wealth” ([Yosso](#)), and empower students to take ownership of their journey with language and literacy.
- Zaretta Hammond’s [“Ready for Rigor” framework](#) for culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the importance of teachers’ building cultural awareness, learning partnerships, practices that allow for student information processing, and a strong community of learners/learning environment (see resources below).



Synthesis: Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
(White, Cooper, & Mackey)

[Universal Design for Learning](#) leverages students’ assets by offering multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression.



OUSD offers the following Equity Learning Questions and Guidelines as tools for educators:

Equity Learning Questions

How can we build Empowering Narratives off/for our students?	How do we identify and counter deficit thinking with Asset-Based Practices ?
How can we integrate students' Linguistic and Cultural Assets into instruction?	What does Self-Work look like for me/my team?

1. **Empowering Narratives.** Be aware of and provide [sociopolitical context](#) that goes against the status quo. Help students understand the systems working around them and support the exploration of ways to dismantle historically oppressive systems.
2. **Asset-Based Practices.** Focus on [student strengths](#) with instruction that promotes growth mindset.
3. **Integrating Linguistic and Cultural Assets.** Value students' [multiple and dynamic cultural literacies](#). Encourage use of [home languages and dialects](#) while supporting academic English language development.
4. **Self-Work.** Conduct a self-audit. Take some time to ask yourself hard questions and reflect on past and current practices. Identify those places in your instructional planning where you might have allowed your [implicit biases](#) to prevent you from pushing your students to achieve at optimal levels.

Example Practices for Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy	Other Supporting Videos and Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships. Get to know your students beyond the classroom. Make space for students to bring their “whole self” into pedagogy that includes but does not define them by ethnic background and culture. • Select “enabling texts” (Tatum). The strategic selection of authentic texts that are reflective of students’ experiences and related to local issues, especially those texts that present empowering narratives using cultural relevancy rubrics as a guide. • Integrate student choice into instruction. • Create Culturally Responsive Classrooms by aligning classroom practices with students’ cultural values, beliefs and practices. • Use a lesson planning template like Zaretta Hammond’s 4-part CRT lesson model and other equity-based planning tools. • OUSD Asset-Based Strategy Cards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Questioning tips p. 6 ○ Leveraging home language p. 10 ○ Empowering storytelling/Narrative re-design p. 16 • Refer to the interactive Universal Design for Learning guidelines chart, UDL slide deck, and UDL toolkit for differentiated teaching practices. • ELLMA Essential Practices - See #4 Asset-Based Approach and #5 Whole Child • 5 Strategies for Activating and Building Schema with ELLs 	<p>Materials for teacher comprehension, practice, and reflection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally Relevant Teaching vs. Culturally Responsive Teaching - Rosalba Serrano • Successful Teachers of African American Children - Gloria Ladson-Billings • “Employing culturally responsive pedagogy to foster literacy learning in schools.” - Janet Wearmouth • Resources About “Culturally Responsive Teaching” & “Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy - Ed Week • Why English Class is Silencing Students of Color - Jamila Lyiscott <div data-bbox="1291 1153 1921 1412"> <p>“ Culturally responsive teaching is not a quick fix, nor is it a simple strategy to add into your lessons. - Barbara Lellani Brazil Keys in Education Week Teacher</p> </div>

Skillful Language and Literacy Instruction



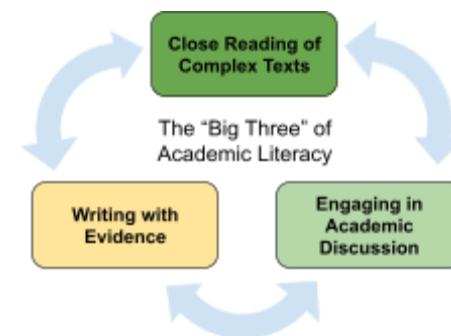
"Amplify, don't simplify!" ([Walqui and Bunch](#))

Students grow their language and literacy skills through practice. Skillful teachers embrace, rather than shy away from, opportunities for students to stretch their skills and engage with challenging texts, concepts, and tasks. These opportunities are the means, rather than the ends, of language and literacy development, and all students can engage in "reading for diverse purposes, constructing arguments using evidence, and solving problems" regardless of their English proficiency. Teachers offer scaffolds as needed to support students with these challenging tasks, and remove those scaffolds as students gain independence.

Three ways that teachers of every discipline can support student language and literacy development are:

1. Offer daily opportunities for students to engage in the **"Big Three" of Academic Literacy**:

- Close reading of complex texts:** "Close Reading positions students to be critical consumers of complex texts, genres, and structures" through multiple reads, close examination of shorter passages, and intentional prompting ([ELA & History Handbook](#)).
- Academic discussion:** Talking with others is an essential step in helping us make meaning of a text, prompt, or topic. Students should have daily opportunities for discussion. Discussion is especially supportive of literacy development when student talk is grounded in a text, and/or when students are discussing in preparation for writing.
- Writing with evidence:** "Researchers note that the task 'most associated with college-level work' across the disciplines is 'reading-to-write'" ([Reading as Liberation](#)). Writing that is grounded in text supports students to deepen their understanding of what they've read. Furthermore, developing evidence-based arguments is critical for civic engagement.



Amplify Instruction for ALL students, especially ELLs

Simplify → Amplify

Reduction → Elaboration

Surface Learning → Deeper Learning

Fixed, Reduced → Extension, Expansion

Multilingual and multicultural expertise needed for our globalized world

2. **Amplify (rather than simplify) the language of texts and tasks (Integrated ELD):**

- Build your own language awareness by **analyzing the language demands** of texts and tasks
- Before Reading:** Activate students' prior language and conceptual knowledge, build new language and conceptual knowledge
- During Reading:** Support students to read and discuss a text with a focus on language and content/conceptual understanding
- After Reading:** Support students to express their language and content/conceptual understanding, and to use new language tools orally and in writing

3. Use **text sets to support background knowledge and vocabulary**

When students study complex, unfamiliar topics in their classes, a lack of background knowledge can be a key barrier to reading comprehension - even more so than gaps in a student's reading skills (Recht and Leslie). Though it may seem counter-intuitive, providing students with *more texts* on the same topic or theme helps them build the background knowledge and vocabulary they need in order to comprehend complex texts. Teachers can:

- Plan units so students get access to a series of texts (including multimedia sources) related to the same topic, theme, or essential question
- Scaffold towards a particularly complex text by engaging students first with more accessible texts. If students are engaging in inquiry or research, guide them to more accessible resources first, so they can better understand more complex sources later (see also “Before Reading” strategies).

“Reading a volume of texts on conceptually related topics is one of the most efficient ways to grow students’ knowledge and accelerate literacy outcomes.”
(*Reading as Liberation Report*)

What if some of my students aren’t comprehending what they read?

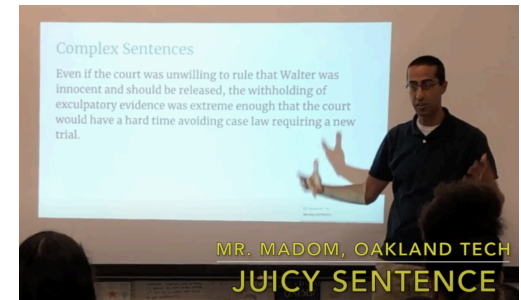
You’ve tried the strategies above. Now what?

- Practice close reading of complex texts together as a class. Mix texts that are mirrors to student experiences with texts that provide windows into new topics and cultures. Get all students talking to one another about the shared text. Differentiate by picking smaller chunks of the text to look at closely with students that are struggling.
- Focus those students’ attention on *connectives* - words that signal how ideas within a sentence, or across sentences, are related - such as *while*, *earlier*, *additionally*, *but*, etc.
- Teach root words and affixes to support those students with comprehending multi-syllable words.
- Help those students build fluency through choral reading, repeated readings of the same text, by providing audio recordings along with written text, and by coaching students to read passages aloud with expression.

The approaches outlined above are essential for supporting the academic language development of our English Language Learners and Academic Language Learners (including those African American students who speak [African American Vernacular English/AAVE](#)) and students who are “behind” or have been denied access to challenging instruction, but they benefit *all* students. This section emphasizes *academic English language development* - not because academic English is inherently superior to any other language or dialect, but because the reality of our current educational system, employment system, and culture is such that knowledge of academic English grants greater access to opportunity and power. These practices are intended to be combined with the asset-based and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy outlined in the previous section. Furthermore, given the high cognitive demands of the practices outlined, it’s especially important to draw on strong learning partnerships, SEL conditions, and knowledge of cognitive information processing when designing instruction.

Example Practices for Skillful Language and Literacy Instruction	Supporting Videos
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA and History Handbook - Practices to support the Big Three <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Close reading of Complex Text example: Text-dependent questions (TDQs) (handbook p. 29-30) ○ Academic Discussion example: Think-Pair-Share (handbook p. 13), developing a worthy prompt ○ Writing with Evidence example: Claim-Evidence-Reasoning paragraphs (handbook p. 38) • Analyze the language demands of a text or task 	<p>Click the image below to see Heath Madom, CTE teacher in Oakland Tech’s Race, Policy, and Law Academy, supporting language and literacy in his classroom using the “Juicy Sentence” strategy with an excerpt from Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson:</p>

- [Lesson Design Framework](#) - Before, During, and After practices that amplify language
 - Before example: [Wide angle reading](#)
 - During example: [Reading with a purpose](#)
 - After examples: [Stronger and Clearer](#), [Sentence expanding](#)
- Text sets on a theme or topic: see this general [tip sheet](#), this [collection](#) of examples, and this guidance specifically for [multimodal STEM text sets](#), all from Achieve the Core
- Explicitly teach [word roots and affixes](#) to expand students' vocabulary
- [IM Math Language Routines](#)
- Fishtank ELA Curriculum for [9th](#) and [10th Grade](#)



Essential Conditions



In order to realize the vision for student learning and teaching described above, we must align mindsets, resources, and support across our system.

1. **Collective responsibility:** From our central office, to our classrooms, to our families, we must embrace our collective responsibility for supporting students' language and literacy development.
2. **Student and family partnerships:** Building on the above, those of us who work for the district must build strong partnerships with our students and families, grounded in mutual trust and respect, with the shared goal of supporting student learning. This means ensuring that families have access to information about student progress toward academic goals as well as information about what they should expect from classroom instruction and district support.
3. **Foundational and sustaining professional development:** Secondary teachers often enter the classroom without extensive training in supporting student literacy. If we expect all teachers to implement the practices described above, we must support them with foundational and ongoing training that is high quality, differentiated, and whenever possible, led by their peers.
4. **Aligned curriculum:** Similarly, as we adopt new curriculum materials for ELA and other subject areas, we must consider both rigor (alignment with the demands of college and career as well as student aspirations for their future; resources for supporting language development) and relevance (alignment with the identities, cultures, experiences, and interests of our students), and assess how well various curriculum options align with the practices described above.

See the [Implementation Toolkit](#) for resources to use to introduce this framework to your school site.

HSLEC Beliefs and Values

- Literacy is a fundamental right, and all students are capable of developing college- and career-ready literacy skills if given access, tools, and support.
- Students' identities, experiences, languages and cultures are assets. For all students to succeed, we must be intentional in selecting content and practices that affirm our students.
- Strong literacy instruction empowers our scholars to better understand themselves and articulate their own stories, to critically read the world and create change, and to experience joy.
- Multiple forms of literacy, informed by our students' multiple cultures, are valuable.
- Our relationships with students and families must be built on a foundation of trust and authentic listening.
- All educators should be trained in strategies that support literacy for all students.

Research Citations and Additional Resources

1. [Reading the World and Reading the Word: An Interview with Paulo Freire](#) Author(s): Paulo Freire Source: Language Arts, Vol. 62, No. 1, Making Meaning, Learning Language (January 1985), pp. 15-21

On High Academic Expectations with High Support

2. [A Plea for Identity and Criticality: Reframing Literacy Learning Standards Through a Four-Layered Equity Model](#) (2018, Muhammad). Suggested excerpts - full article, p. 137-142 (Summarizes key ideas in the book *Cultivating Genius*)
3. [California Common Core State Standards for Literacy](#)
4. [The Opportunity Myth](#) (2018, The New Teacher Project). Suggested excerpts - "Introduction" p. 4-5, 23-34 (full pages), Graphics p. 25, Graphics p. 27
5. [Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain, Ch 6](#) (2014, Hammond). Suggested excerpts - "Becoming a Warm Demander" p. 97-98, Diagram p. 99, "Making Feedback Culturally Responsive: Giving 'Wise' Feedback" 104-top 106

On Culturally Relevant and Asset-Based Instruction

6. Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing Co.
7. [Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth](#), Tara Yosso, Race Ethnicity and Education, Volume 8, 2005 - Issue 1
8. White, Cooper, & Mackey (2014). [Culturally Relevant Education and Critical Pedagogy: Devolution of Hierarchies of Power](#). Revista Internacional de Educación para la Justicia Social (RIEJS), 3(2), 123-140.
9. [Promising Literacy Practices for Black Males](#) (2020, Husband and Kang). Suggested excerpts - Abstract p. 1, "Recommendations for Practice" p. 17-20
10. *A Practical Reader in Universal Design for Learning* (2006, Rose), Ch 1: [Applying Universal Design for Learning in the Classroom](#). Suggested excerpts - p. 2-6 (Start at "The UDL Approach" and stop at "Instruction that supports...")
11. [UDL Guidelines chart](#)
12. [Amplifying the Curriculum: Designing Quality Learning Opportunities for English Learners](#), Ch 1 (2019, Walqui and Bunch). Suggested excerpts - "Challenges and opportunities for English Learners" p. 13-14
13. OUSD [Equity Literacy Practices slides](#)
14. [Engaging African American Males in Reading \(Reprint\)](#) by Alfred Tatum, The Journal of Education, 2015, Vol. 195, No. 2 (2015), pp. 1-4
15. OUSD [Asset-based practices cards](#)

On Skillful Language and Literacy Instruction

16. [Amplifying the Curriculum: Designing Quality Learning Opportunities for English Learners](#), Ch 1 (2019, Walqui and Bunch). Suggested excerpts - p. 1-2 (stop at "The Plan for the Book"), "Quality Learning in the Classroom" p. 8-top 10
17. [ELA and History Handbook](#) 'Instruction: The Big Three and Integrated ELD' p. 11, "Academic Discussion" p. 12 (option to skim 13-27), "Close Reading of Complex Text" p. 28-30 (option to skim 31-36), "Evidence-Based Writing" p. 37 (option to skim 38-44)
18. [Reading as Liberation--An Examination of the Research Base: How Equity, Acceleration, and Personalization Improve Student Learning](#) (2021, Student Achievement Partners)
19. "Effect of Prior Knowledge on Good and Poor Readers' Memory of Text" (1988) Recht and Leslie, Journal of Educational Psychology 80(1):16-20
20. OUSD ELLMA's [Lesson Design Framework](#) (based on Walqui and Bunch and other research)