

Independent Sustained Reading (ISR) Guide for Grades 6-8

ELA Reading Standard 10 for grades 6-8 requires students to read text, within their grade level complexity band, proficiently and independently for sustained periods of time.

Independent Sustained Reading provides students with the opportunities needed to meet these expectations and become skilled readers. ISR focuses on growing students as readers, increasing their reading abilities through a combination of purposeful instructional strategies, and holding students accountable for their reading (Sandán, 2014). The purpose of this guide is to help teachers successfully integrate ISR practices into their regular, daily ELA instruction.

What is ISR?

ISR integrated in regular, daily classroom instruction differs significantly from other silent reading practices, such as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and Drop Everything And Read (DEAR). Unlike SSR and DEAR, which requires teachers to model silent reading for students for an isolated block of time, ISR practices are integrated into regular, daily classroom instruction and require teachers to model and explicitly teach students how to read with a purpose and/or strategy, how to create meaning from texts, and how to talk about texts. Students apply what the teacher models or teaches while reading on their own in class, participating in text-based discussions, monitoring their own comprehension, and/or taking time to reflect on what was read.

ISR in regular, daily classroom instruction provides students with a natural opportunity to read assigned text(s) on their own. Teachers integrate ISR into their daily instruction by designing lessons focused on Reading Standard 10 and centered around complex texts. Teachers design lessons that provide students with direct instruction on *how* to read assigned class texts with a specific purpose and master the focus standard. The teacher uses a section of the text, or a similar text, to illustrate *how* to read the assigned text for students. Then, students are provided with the opportunity to read the assigned text independently while the teacher monitors their reading progress and provides further support and/or instruction, if needed.

Improving students' reading is most effective when teachers provide direct teacher instruction and supports for their students (Bosworth, 2017). SSR is no longer considered a best practice; research does not support student reading achievement through SSR practices (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Providing students with silent reading opportunities, without direct teacher instruction, does not sufficiently improve students'

reading skills. With independent reading, “supporting readers is the differentiator” in significantly impacting readers’ growth (Bosworth, 2017, par.7).

Planning for ISR

Teachers begin with selecting rich texts and/or text sets that are appropriate for teaching the reading skill and standard and fall within the Lexile band for the grade level they teach. Teachers should also consider the qualitative measures of the text and reader and task considerations. The Lexile band for middle school is 955-1155.

Though students choose their own texts during SSR or DEAR, teachers can also allow for student choice during ISR by providing students an opportunity to self-select a text from a text set. Teachers may design text sets with a range of complexities appropriate for the grade levels they teach and a balance of literary and informational text which conceptually-relate to the anchor texts read in class. For independent reading, the teacher may encourage students to self-select texts from the teacher provided text set.

See NCDPI ELA’s Text Selection Guide for more information about text complexity and selecting rich and worthy texts.

Essential Elements of ISR

The focus of modeling in ISR should be on *how*, not *what*. Teacher’s modeling should focus on the thought processes involved in reading with a purpose, creating meaning, and talking about texts, instead of just focusing on personal responses to the text. Students need explicit modeling and instruction on how to comprehend a text. For example, when modeling how to create meaning from texts, the teacher should focus on *how* to determine a central idea instead of just sharing what he/she thinks the central idea might be. When teachers use the think-aloud method and focus on how and when to employ certain thinking processes or strategies, students learn how to comprehend a text, how to monitor their comprehension of the text, and how to cite textual evidence to support their thinking.

How to Model Reading with a Purpose

To model reading with a purpose, teachers can think aloud while they show students how to:

- Pre-read
- Annotate a text
- Use a set of text-dependent questions while reading
- Use context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary

- Re-phrase difficult sentences or larger portions of text
- Re-read parts of the text or look forward into the text for information
- Use a graphic organizer to collect their thoughts
- Apply a reading strategy
- Self-monitor for comprehension

How to Model Creating Meaning Out of Texts

While thinking aloud, teachers can uncover the processes they use to connect prior knowledge and experiences to the text and/or topic under study while they:

- Make predictions, inferences, and draw conclusions
- Examine the structure of the text
- Annotate for key details and main ideas
- Write summaries or responses
- Question the text and/or author
- Use textual relevance to determine what is important in a text
- Visualize the text

How to Model Talking about Texts

Teachers should model how to talk about texts by:

- Posing open-ended questions
- Asking follow-up questions that encourage elaboration and participation from others
- Using sentence starters and frames
- Modeling good listening skills
- Demonstrating how to provide textual evidence for support
- Showing how to clarify ideas and information
- Making connections between texts

Essential Elements of ISR

The chart below provides the essential elements and strategies for ISR as well as points of considerations for when teachers plan lessons that integrate ISR.

Essential Elements	What the Teacher Can Do
Before Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide any necessary background information ● Teach pre-reading strategies

<p>Setting the purpose and/or modeling the strategy for reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a purpose for reading • Model reading strategies that students will be expected to use during ISR
<p>During Reading</p> <p>Ensuring students are creating meaning from texts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind students of their reading purpose • Guide students as they use the modeled reading strategy • Monitor students’ engagement, understanding, and progress towards mastery of Reading Standard 10 and determine how to inform instruction • Re-focus the class, if needed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask or re-ask guiding questions ○ Teach a quick mini-lesson or review to address misunderstandings • Ask students to make new connections to their prior knowledge • Encourage students to relate the text under study to other texts, their lives, or the world. • Hold one-on-one or small group reading conferences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meet weekly with each student for a five-minute reading conference, while the rest of the students are actively reading. ○ Pair students for peer conferences. ○ Facilitate a small group reading conference. • Provide additional scaffolds, if needed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Chunk” a longer text to scaffold reading ○ Provide additional guiding text-dependent questions that help students comprehend challenging portions of text
<p>After Reading</p> <p>Ensuring students reflect on and talk about texts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model how to hold academic conversations about texts • Ask students to share new insights or connections they’ve made • Instruct students to compare their prior knowledge and experiences to their new insights and connections • Direct students to reflect on their own comprehension, reading progress, and growth. • Participate with small groups in discussion • Lead discussion through questioning during discussion

Accountability

Teachers hold students accountable for their reading by providing students with a variety of opportunities to share their gained knowledge and reading skills with the teacher and/or their peers. Students share their learning through various discussion protocols, creative expressions, and/or evaluation processes.

- Facilitate activities like Socratic Seminars, online collaborative discussions, and round-robin discussions
- Create tasks, and/or projects
 - Write and share summaries
 - Record unfamiliar vocabulary, look up definitions, and replace words with synonyms or short definitions
 - Complete graphic organizers
 - Use collaborative online programs and apps for tasks and projects
 - Create their own text-dependent guiding questions to use for different types of text
- Ask students to keep reading logs/journals and collect them periodically
- Instruct students on how to self-evaluate their reading progress
 - Use a checklist of “I can” statements for reading goals & objectives
 - Use a self-assessment to reflect on mastery of Reading Standard 10
- Conference with students about their reading progress

ISR Time Considerations

There is no set amount time for ISR. Time for ISR is influenced by several factors: grade level and ability; length of class periods; text type, length, and complexity; and the purpose for reading. Time for ISR also depends on whether the lesson integrates Reading Standard 10 as a focus or supporting standard. Lessons that focus on Reading Standard 10 may require more ISR time than lessons that use Reading Standard 10 as a supporting standard. A lesson focused on Reading Standard 10 may spend more time on the thinking and strategies involved in connecting prior knowledge and experiences to text. A lesson using Reading Standard 10 as a supporting standard might spend more time on the expectations of the focus standard, but provide students with the opportunity to master the focus standard when reading independently. For example, instruction focused on Reading Standard 1 would require more time for teaching students to cite evidence from text, but would provide students with the necessary time to practice the skill on their own while reading the text independently. When planning lessons focused on Reading Standard 10, teachers also need to consider the time needed for modeling strategies, purposes, and thinking before independent reading and the time needed for talking about texts during and/or after independent reading.

For Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Teachers will benefit by collaborating with colleagues on ways to integrate ISR into the ELA 6-8 classroom. PLC’s can engage in discussions on topics such as:

- How will we introduce ISR to our students and parents?
- How will we use ISR in our daily lessons to meet the expectations of Reading Standard 10?

- What texts should we select for our students to read using the quantitative and qualitative Lexile scores?
- What are our student expectations and intended learning outcomes?
- How can we assess and monitor students' mastery of Reading Standard 10?

Involving Parents in ISR

To inform parents of ISR, teachers can write letters home, include a parent section in their syllabi, or discuss ISR during conferences or back-to-school night. Teachers may want to include a list of parent strategies or tips for supporting ISR at home. Strategies and/or tips might include:

- reading the same text as the student and talking about what the student is reading.
- discussion questions that pair with the text being read in class that parents can use as they discuss texts with their students.
- provide a list with a variety of texts that pair or relate to the anchor text being read in class (i.e. newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and books) that are within their student's grade level complexity band.
- Providing a strategy to use with the text that parents and students can use at home, if reading is assigned for homework.

References

Bosworth, N. (2017). Empower students through independent reading. Retrieved from <http://edublog.scholastic.com/post/empower-students-through-independent-reading>

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read.* (2000). Retrieved from <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/Pages/smallbook.aspx>

Sanden, S. (2014). Out of the Shadows of SSR: Real Teachers' Classroom Independent Reading Practices. *Language Arts, 91(3)*, 161-175.