On November 14, 2017, the South Carolina Department of Education convened a panel of experts to review item data on the ELA SC READY assessment for grades 3-5. The panel looked at items with a high percentage of students answering correctly and items with a low percentage of students answering correctly. The discussions of that panel yielded the following recommendations.

The panel recognizes the hard work of SC educators and offers the following as suggestions for ways to improve student success on the ELA SC READY assessment for grades 3-5.

### Inquiry

The panel recommends that during instruction, students should have practice developing, writing, and refining research topics and questions. Also, the panel recommends that teachers provide students with research opportunities that allow them to evaluate a variety of sources, determine the relevancy and credibility of those sources, and decide to either use or discard those sources. While the panel suggests that more instructional emphasis should be placed on the process of research rather than the product of research, they especially stress students’ ability to evaluate the credibility of sources as an area of weakness.

Based on these areas of weakness, the panel recommends students receive more instructional guidance and practice:

- reading a scenario and then formulating a research question.
- reading a scenario and then determining how to narrow a research topic or broaden a research topic.
- evaluating sources for relevance, credibility, and validity.
- organizing and categorizing important information as it relates to a research topic or question.

### Reading Literary Text

The panel recommends that students should have experience reading a variety of rigorous, complex, literary text types as recommended in the South Carolina College-and-Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts. “By the end of fifth grade, students read four major types of literary texts in print and multimedia formats: fiction, literary nonfiction, poetry, and drama. In the category of fiction, the read the following specific types of texts: chapter books, adventure stories, historical fiction, contemporary realistic fiction, science fiction, picture books, folktales, legends, tall tales, and myths. In the category of literary nonfiction, they read personal essays, autobiographical and biographical sketches, and speeches. In the category of poetry, they read narrative poems, lyrical poems, humorous poems, and free verse.”

In grade 3, the panel recognizes that students need more instructional guidance and practice:

- using explicit textual information to support inferences and conclusions.
- identifying key details that support a theme.
- explaining how characters’ actions contribute to the development of the plot.
- explaining how an author’s word choice emphasizes aspects of a character or of a setting.
In grade 4, the panel recognizes that students need more instructional guidance and practice:

- referring to examples and details within a text to support inferences and conclusions.
- determining how a theme is developed.
- summarizing a text.
- explaining the interaction between conflict and plot resolution.
- determining how an author’s point of view influences the content and meaning of a text.

In grade 5, the panel recognizes that students need more instructional guidance and practice:

- analyzing the meaning of text to support inferences and conclusions.
- analyzing how a theme is developed within a text.
- summarizing a text and evaluating summaries of texts.
- analyzing the interactions between characters, settings, events, and how they impact the plot of a text.
- explaining how an author’s point of view influences the content and meaning of a text and supporting this connection with evidence from the text.

Reading Informational Text

The panel recommends that students should have experience reading a variety of rigorous, complex, literary text types as recommended in the South Carolina College-and-Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts. “By the end of fifth grade, students read informational (expository, persuasive/argumentative) texts in print and multimedia formats of the following types: essays, historical documents, informational trade books, textbooks, news and feature articles, magazine articles, advertisements, encyclopedia entries, reviews (for example, book, movie, product), journals, and speeches. They also read directions, maps, time lines, graphs, tables, charts, schedules, recipes, and photos embedded in informational texts.”

In grade 3, the panel recognizes that students need more instructional guidance and practice:

- asking and answering literal and inferential questions to determine meaning.
- using explicit textual information to support inferences and conclusions.
- using key details to summarize texts.
- identifying the author’s purpose in an informational text.

In grade 4, the panel recognizes that students need more instructional guidance and practice:

- using details and examples within a text to support inferences and conclusions.
- asking and answering literal and inferential questions to determine meaning.
- using key details to summarize texts.
- providing evidence of how the author’s purpose affects the content, meaning, and style of an informational text.

In grade 5, the panel recognizes that students need more instructional guidance and practice:

- analyzing the meaning in and beyond the text.
- summarizing a text with more than one central idea and by identifying and citing key supporting details.
- providing more than one supporting detail or identifying the best summary of a text.
- providing evidence of how the author’s purpose affects the content, meaning, and style of an informational text.
Overview of Reading Literary and Informational Texts

In grades 3-5, the panel offers the following as suggestions for ways to improve student success with literary and informational texts.

- Literary Text Standards 9-12 and Informational Text Standards 8-11 fall under the key idea of Language, Craft, and Structure. The panel suggests that more instructional time be devoted to not just identifying text structures, but analyzing how the structure of a text relates to the author’s craft. In other words, the panel encourages teachers to focus more on the “how and why” of the standards.
- The panel recommends that more instructional focus be placed on the “how and why” of Reading Literary Text Standard 8. The panel notes that the “how and why” of this standard’s indicators is an area of concern for grades 3-5. On the assessment, students may be asked to provide evidence showing the interaction and/or development of character and plot.
- The panel also recommends that analysis of text should be on-going through close reading of text and that teachers provide more opportunities for students to think through and talk through the analysis of text.
- The panel recommends that students be presented with multiple summaries of a text and be asked to evaluate each summary. On the assessment, students may be presented with several summaries of text and asked to select the best summary. The panel suggests that students have practice writing their own summaries and evaluating summaries written by others.
- The panel suggests that students be exposed to more paired texts. On the assessment, students may encounter paired literary texts, paired informational texts, or a combination of the two.

Writing

Grade 3
- W1.1e, W2.1f: develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing building on personal ideas and the ideas of others.

Grade 4
- W1.1e, W2.1e: develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing building on personal ideas and the ideas of others.

Grade 5
- W1.1e, W2.1h: develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing building on personal ideas and the ideas of others

The panel suggests that instruction should focus more on the process and quality of writing rather than the product of writing. In addition, the panel suggests that teachers provide students with more opportunities to think and talk before they write.
General
The panel recommends that students have more exposure to and practice with the test item types that may appear on the SC READY assessment. These item types may be found at [https://ed.sc.gov/tests/middle/south-carolina-college-and-career-ready-assessments-sc-ready/](https://ed.sc.gov/tests/middle/south-carolina-college-and-career-ready-assessments-sc-ready/). In particular, the panel suggests that teachers provide students more practice with evidence-based selected response items (EBSR) and multi-select items.

- EBSR items are two part items that require students to “read a piece of text or passage and choose the best answer from the answer choices.” Students will then be asked to “support their response [to part A] with evidence from the text [Part B].” Sample EBSR items may be found in the Online Tools Training (OTT) on our website.
- Multi-select items are items that prompt students to select more than one correct answer. “The multi-select items may have 5 or 6 answer choices.” Sample multi-select items may be found in the Online Tools Training (OTT) on our website.

The panel also recommends that teachers more frequently incorporate the language of the *South Carolina College-and-Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts* into routine classroom instruction and assessment.