

GRADE 8 FLEX DAY ACTIVITIES GUIDE

Introduction

The Flex Days are an opportunity for you to provide students with needed grammar instruction and also support additional practice in a targeted area of reading, writing, language, or speaking and listening. Depending on students' performance during the previous sequence of lessons, you might assign a particular group to work on reading fluency, revise an existing piece of writing, create a new piece of writing, practice close reading and discussion, or work on one of the key reading standards. This guide provides an overview and goal for each activity, key guidelines for selection, and the preparation required before having students work with each activity.

Selecting Activities

The EAM (Embedded Assessment Measure) report aggregates student data (both in-class and Solo activities) over the course of a unit, then sorts and reports on student performance in key areas of reading, writing, and language. Teachers use their EAM reports to note where a student could benefit from additional practice and assign Flex Day activities based on those areas. Teachers should refresh the report before planning for each Flex Day, as student data may have changed since the report was last viewed.

Each Flex Day activity can be assigned to a student or group of students independent of other activities. An activity is generally designed to last 15 minutes, so students will be able to work with more than one activity. Ideally, students have your support the first time they work with a new activity; after that, the teacher prep for most activities involves selecting the text passage or prompt to accompany the activity.

The activities within the Flex Day are designed to support practice within the key areas of reading, writing, and language.

NOTE: Notice a student's current level of differentiated supports as you review EAM data. In addition to the extra practice of the Flex Day activities, you might consider providing a student with additional or reduced supports during the core lessons.

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Reading

Why did the EAM report place students in this group?

A student whose lowest EAM score was in Reading would be placed in this group.

Which activities are recommended for students in this group?

The activities recommended for students in this group are:

- Close Reading and Discussion
- Key Idea and Theme
- Language Analysis
- Comparative Reading
- Fluency: Rate
- Fluency: Expression

Writing

Why did the EAM report place students in this group?

A student whose lowest EAM score was in Writing would be placed in this group.

Which activities are recommended for students in this group?

The activities recommended for students in this group are:

- Revision Assignments
- Write: Analyze One Text
- Write: Connect Two Texts

Language

Why did the EAM report place students in this group?

A student whose lowest EAM score was in Language would be placed in this group.

Which activities are recommended for students in this group?

The activities recommended for students in this group are:

- Vocabulary
- Grammar

How do I choose among the activities recommended for students in each group?

Information on the activities in each area (Reading, Writing, Language), how to prepare, and why you might choose them is provided on the pages that follow.

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Speaking and Listening

The EAM report does not include speaking and listening. Which students should be placed in this group?

Any students who would benefit from extended discussions about unit topics and themes can be placed in this group.

Which activities are recommended for students in this group?

The activity recommended for students in this group is:

- Conversation Connections

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Reading Activities

Close Reading and Discussion

TEKS 8.1.D

TEKS 8.6.I

ELPS 4.K

ELPS 3.G

ELPS 3.H

ELPS 4.G

ELPS 4.J

What is this activity?

In this activity, students work collaboratively with a challenging piece of text—whether it’s a passage from the unit text or an outside text that you want to assign. In this three-card sequence, students work with partners to discuss and refine their analysis of the text in response to a debatable statement that you create.

Card 1: Students read a passage and use evidence to identify and explain whether they agree or disagree with the posted statement you create and project.

Card 2: Students discuss their response with a partner who had a different response, using and refining their evidence from the text to convince their partner that their response is better supported by the text.

Card 3: Students document how their thinking has changed or stayed the same as a result of their partner discussion and share their thinking in a whole class discussion.

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review the activity in the lesson and read the Instructional Guides.
2. Select a passage (in the unit text or in an outside text) that you want students to closely read and discuss. Prepare to distribute this passage to students or direct students to the correct passage within the Amplify Library.
3. Prepare a statement about something within the selected text that is open to discussion or argument and where there is textual evidence that can support a range of responses (although the range may narrow as students reread and work more closely with the text during the discussion).

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Examples:

- a. The writer wants us to feel sympathy for the character.
- b. Dr. Reed did not treat human volunteers ethically during his investigations.
- c. Based on our understanding of brain development, teens should not be allowed to drive.
- d. Physical capacity is more important than intellectual capacity for Frederick Douglass's understanding of himself as a man.
- e. Romeo is responsible for Mercutio's death.

Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Reading activity for a student in the Reading group?

There is a key passage in the unit text or an outside text (such as an article, a poem, or a short story) that I want students to discuss with a partner.

Key Idea and Theme

What is this activity?

Each of the cards in this activity is a distinct exercise that should be assigned independently. Each exercise provides additional practice working with Key Idea and Theme.

Card 1: Key Idea and Supporting Details Students use a graphic organizer to identify the key idea and supporting details of the passage.

TEKS 8.5.A

TEKS 8.5.G

ELPS 4.I

ELPS 4.J

Card 2: Connect Two Passages Students use a graphic organizer to identify two connected passages in a text and identify an emerging theme.

TEKS 8.6.E

TEKS 8.5.H

ELPS 4.I

ELPS 4.J

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review the activity in the lesson, read the Instructional Guides, and decide whether you will assign the exercise on Card 1 or Card 2.

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2. Select the text(s) or passage(s) that you want students to work with.
3. Decide how you will direct students to the passage(s).
 - a. You can ask students to open the Amplify Library in a separate tab of their browser to access the core text or other texts in the Library.
 - b. You can provide photocopies of an outside text of your choosing.

Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Reading activity for a student in the Reading group?

Card 1: Key Idea and Supporting Details My students' lesson work or most recent reading assessment results suggest that they could benefit from additional practice determining the key idea of a passage.

Card 2: Connect Two Passages My students' lesson work or most recent reading assessment results suggest that they could benefit from additional practice tracing an idea or theme through a text.

Language Analysis

What is this activity?

Each of the cards in this activity is a distinct exercise that should be assigned independently. Each exercise provides additional practice working in the area of Language Analysis.

Card 1: Paraphrase to Determine Meaning Students use a graphic organizer to paraphrase a short key passage, collaborate with a partner to refine their paraphrase, and explain what idea is captured by the passage. This exercise supports students in considering how the specific word and syntax choices made by the author impact the meaning.

TEKS 8.1.D

TEKS 8.5.A

TEKS 8.6.D

TEKS 8.6.E

ELPS 1.H

ELPS 4.F

ELPS 4.G

ELPS 4.I

ELPS 4.K

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Card 2: Analyze Author's Choices Students use a graphic organizer to analyze an author's word choices and the effects created by his or her language. This exercise supports students in considering how the type of language (verbs, imagery, figurative language, etc.) contributes to the meaning and impact of the passage.

TEKS 8.9.A

TEKS 8.9.D

TEKS 8.9.F

ELPS 1.H

ELPS 4.F

ELPS 4.G

ELPS 4.I

ELPS 4.K

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review the activity in the lesson, read the Instructional Guides, and decide whether you will assign the exercise on Card 1 or Card 2.
2. Select the text or passage that you want students to work with.
3. Decide how you will direct students to the passage.
 - a. You can ask students to open the Amplify Library in a separate tab of their browser to access the core text or another text in the Library.
 - b. You can provide photocopies of an outside text of your choosing.

Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Reading activity for a student in the Reading group?

Card 1: Paraphrase to Determine Meaning My students' lesson work or most recent reading assessment results suggest they could benefit from weighing the specific words or phrasing of a sentence and how those choices impact meaning.

Card 2: Analyze Author's Choices My students' lesson work or most recent reading assessment results suggest they could benefit from considering how word choice reveals the mood or tone adopted toward what is being described.

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Comparative Reading

TEKS 8.5.G

TEKS 8.5.H

TEKS 8.6.B

ELPS 1.H

ELPS 4.I

ELPS 4.J

What is this activity?

Students work visually to compare/contrast two closely related texts, such as an original and a modern retelling, or an original and an audio or video recording.

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review the activity in the lesson and read the Instructional Guides.
2. Select the texts or passages that you want students to work with.
3. Prepare to distribute the passage(s) for students or direct students to the correct passage(s) in the Amplify Library.

Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Reading activity for a student in the Reading group?

- I have located an outside text (such as an article, a poem, or a short story) that is a retelling of the unit text, and I want my students to work visually to compare the two versions.
- My students' lesson work or most recent reading assessment results suggest that they could benefit from additional practice considering how the different choices made by authors in related texts impact the reader's understanding, emphasis, or developed ideas or themes.

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Fluency: Rate

TEKS 8.3

ELPS 2.A

ELPS 3.A

ELPS 4.A

ELPS 4.B

ELPS 4.E

What is this activity?

This activity has pairs of students practice reading aloud a familiar passage from a grade level text to improve their fluency. Students work with their partner to identify tricky words, track their rate, and note the number of mistakes in order to develop pace and fluency with a grade level text.

This activity is recommended as part of the 5-Day Fluency Routine where students use the activity for 5 days, reading this same passage to practice fluency.

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Plan to put students in pairs for this activity. Students should work with a peer at a similar reading level.
2. Identify a spot in the classroom where students can read out loud to each other without disturbing other students.
3. You will need to support students to complete the routine correctly the first time they work with this activity.
4. If students will complete the 5-Day Fluency Routine, plan other times throughout the week for students to spend 10 minutes practicing their reading fluency with their partner.

Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Reading activity for a student in the Reading group?

The EAM reading score for this student is 25% or below, indicating this student needs significant support to read grade level texts. Reading fluency has been shown to have a high correlation rate with reading comprehension. Students who need more support with reading benefit from having time to practice and improve their fluency.

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Fluency: Expression

TEKS 8.3

ELPS 2.A

ELPS 3.A

ELPS 4.A

ELPS 4.B

ELPS 4.E

What is this activity?

This activity has pairs of students practice reading aloud a familiar passage from a grade level text to improve their fluency. Students work with their partner to track phrasing, expression, intonation, and attention to punctuation to practice expression and fluency with a grade level text.

This activity is recommended as part of the 5-Day Fluency Routine where students use the activity over 5 days to practice fluency.

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Plan to put students in pairs for this activity. Students should work with a peer at a similar reading level.
2. Identify a spot in the classroom where students can read out loud to each other without disturbing other students.
3. If students will complete the 5-day sequence, plan other times throughout the week for students to spend 10 minutes practicing their reading fluency with their partner.

Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Reading activity for a student in the Reading group?

The EAM reading score report for this student is 25% or below, indicating this student needs significant support to read grade level texts. Reading fluency has been shown to have a high correlation rate with reading comprehension. Students who need more support with reading will benefit from having time to practice and improve their fluency.

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Writing Activities

Revision Assignments

What is this activity?

Each of the three cards in this activity contains a revision assignment that targets a distinct writing skill.

TEKS 8.10.C

For each revision assignment, students use the indicated writing skill to revise and strengthen a recent in-class writing assignment. Assign students to the revision assignment that matches a targeted need you observe in their writing.

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review the activity in the lesson and read the Instructional Guides.
2. Review recent student writing submissions and flag assignments that you would like your students to revise, or have students select an assignment to revise.
3. Assign students the specific revision assignment you want them to complete: Focus, Use of Evidence, or Organize and Refine.
4. For students who may struggle to identify a place in their writing to revise, consider marking a place in their writing where they could develop Focus or Use of Evidence, or consider marking the sentence that best states the claim for the Organize and Refine RA.

Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Writing activity for a student in the Writing group?

My students are forming solid ideas during the end-of-class writing assignments, but they need practice making their writing more focused, developing their use of evidence, or organizing their ideas.

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Write: Analyze One Text

TEKS 8.6.B

TEKS 8.6.C

TEKS 8.10.B.ii

ELPS 5.F

ELPS 5.G

What is this activity?

Students create a new piece of writing in response to a single text—either the unit text or an outside text that you want to assign. We've provided generic prompts that address three key ways in which readers analyze text:

- Key Idea and Theme
- Language Analysis
- Comparative Reading

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review the activity in the lesson and read the Instructional Guides.
2. Select a passage (in the unit text or in an outside text) that you want students to write about.
 - a. Decide how you will direct students to the passage. Card 2 of the activity shows the part of the core text that students worked with most recently.
 - b. You can ask students to open the Amplify Library in a separate tab of their browser to access the core text or another text in the Library.
 - c. You can provide photocopies of an outside text of your choosing.
3. Review the Writing Prompts and decide which one(s) you want to assign.
 - a. Assign all students the same prompt by projecting the prompts and circling the one you want them to respond to.
 - b. Give students a choice by projecting the prompts and circling 2 or 3 prompts that you want students to choose from.
 - c. Create a prompt of your own and project it or write it on the board.

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Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Writing activity for a student in the Writing group?

- My students' recent writing and writing reports show that they could benefit from additional practice writing in a short, focused way about one claim or idea.
- I want my students to write in response to a particular passage in the unit text, but there is not a writing assignment about this passage in the core lessons.
- I have located an outside text (such as an article, a poem, or a short story) that I want my students to analyze by writing about it.

Write: Connect Two Texts

TEKS 8.6.B

TEKS 8.6.C

TEKS 8.10.B.ii

ELPS 5.F

ELPS 5.G

What is this activity?

Students create a new piece of writing that explores connections between two texts—such as a core text and an outside text of your choosing. We've provided generic prompts that address three key ways in which readers analyze text:

- Key Idea and Theme
- Language Analysis
- Comparative Reading

You may also choose to create and post your own Writing Prompt.

NOTE: *You may want to have students prepare for this writing assignment by assigning them the Close Reading and Discussion activity or one of the Read activities before they write.*

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review the activity in the lesson and read the Instructional Guides.
2. Select the two texts or two passages that you want students to write about.
3. Decide how you will direct students to the passages.
 - a. Card 2 of the activity shows the part of the core text that students worked with most recently.
 - b. You can ask students to open the Amplify Library in a separate tab of their browser to access the core text or other texts in the Library.
 - c. You can provide photocopies of an outside text of your choosing.

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4. Review the Writing Prompts and decide which one(s) you want to assign.
 - a. Assign all students the same prompt by projecting the prompts and circling the one you want them to respond to.
 - b. Give students a choice by projecting the prompts and circling 2 or 3 prompts that you want students to choose from.
 - c. Create a prompt of your own and project it or write it on the board.

Why would I choose this activity as opposed to another Writing activity for a student in the Writing group?

- My students' recent lesson writing—particularly assignments when they have been asked to work with two texts—suggests that they could benefit from more practice writing in a short, focused way to develop one claim or idea, and using evidence from two texts to develop that claim or idea.
- I have located an outside text (such as an article, a poem, or a short story) that I think would pair nicely with the unit text(s), and I want my students to analyze these connections by writing about them.
- I have located two passages in the core texts that I want students to connect through analytic writing.

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Language Activities

Vocabulary

TEKS 8.2.A

TEKS 8.2.B

TEKS 8.2.C

ELPS 1.A

ELPS 1.C

ELPS 1.H

What is this activity?

This activity links students to the Vocab App, so they can warm up by doing vocabulary practice just as they would at the start of any other lesson.

How do I prepare for this activity?

The first time a student clicks on the Vocab App, the student's initial stream will be set as At Grade for the grade of the class the student is in. However, the teacher can manually set or revise the student's stream at any time from the Stats view in the Vocab App. The Vocab App includes streams of content for Substantial, Core, and Challenge level readers for each grade, as well as three fully differentiated streams of ELL content for Emerging/ELL (Dev), Expanding/Moderate, and Bridging/Light students. Students also receive two academic words each time they click on the Vocab App link from within a new lesson.

Why would I choose this activity for a student in the Language group?

Students who move slowly through vocabulary activities during the regular ELA lessons might benefit from being given a longer session to use the Vocab App during the Flex Day. Choose Vocabulary if your students need help reinforcing and expanding their vocabulary.

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Grammar

TEKS 8.10.D

ELPS 1.B

ELPS 5.D

ELPS 5.E

ELPS 5.F

What is this activity?

The teacher assigns students to self-guided lessons within the Grammar unit so they can learn, review, or practice a key grammar skill.

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review student writing and flag key grammar skills as targeted areas for instruction.
2. Review the Grammar Unit Overview to direct students to the digital lesson that best targets their needs.
3. Consider giving students a grammar revision assignment at the end of their grammar activity, allowing them to practice the skills they have just learned in the context of their own writing. Students can complete the grammar revision assignment on the final card of the Flex Day grammar activity, which targets sentence variety. Another option is to review and assign one of the grammar revision assignments that targets additional grammar skills in the PDF “Revision Assignment—Grammar,” found in the Flex Day lesson materials.
4. Plan to review student writing over the next week or two to determine whether students are able to apply the grammar instruction to their writing.

Why would I choose this activity for a student in the Language group?

All students should receive grammar instruction on key grade level topics during Flex Days. In addition, students whose writing shows very limited control over conventions may benefit from additional grammar work during Flex Days—particularly with the basics of complete sentences.

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Speaking and Listening Activity

Conversation Connections

TEKS 8.1.A

TEKS 8.1.D

TEKS 8.5.E

ELPS 1.D

ELPS 1.E

ELPS 1.F

ELPS 1.G

ELPS 2.D

ELPS 2.G

ELPS 3.B

ELPS 3.C

ELPS 3.I

What is this activity?

Students discuss a unit-related topic of their choice, following a supported protocol to develop discussion skills.

How do I prepare for this activity?

1. Review the activity in the lesson and read the Instructional Guides.
2. If students are doing the activity for the first time, plan to model the discussion item(s) or provide additional teacher support at each stage.
3. Assign students to partners or groups. Optionally, larger teams can be assembled by allowing more time for all students to share.