Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community

by Susan Verde

After Angel notices a big, bleak wall in his neighborhood, he observes the lively surroundings in his community and feels like they don't match. So, Angel gathers his friends, family, and neighbors, and they work as a team to paint a beautiful mural. The new mural highlights community members and their contributions to the neighborhood. This story is about the power of art in bringing people together.

Create Successful Reading Habits

Academic language is a critical component of vocabulary development, oral language, and developing a student's ability to read, think, speak, and write about a topic. By guiding students to develop their academic language skills, teachers can mitigate some of the challenges that students encounter when learning to comprehend text.* Students should engage in a variety of activities that purposefully support the development of their academic language. Inferential language instruction can be helpful when learning about figurative language because it supports a student's ability to think critically, make inferences, connect ideas, and determine the deeper meaning of the text.

* U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, What Works Clearinghouse. (n.d.). Practice Guides. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuides

SCIENCE OF READING – CONNECTING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Reading Skills

The National Reading Panel report in 2000 categorized reading instructional content into five major areas: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. The science of reading focuses on a hierarchy of skills that develop when students are learning to read.

- First, it is important for students to develop **phonemic awareness**, which is the conscious awareness of the individual sounds in language. The students then need to know the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds.
- After developing phonemic awareness and basic letter knowledge, students are able to use this knowledge to begin to decode. This is called the **alphabetic principle**, which is the understanding that letters make sounds, and sounds go together to make words.
- Through explicit and systematic **phonics** instruction paired with repeated practice, children's **decoding** skills become more automatic. Students are able to decode words without much thought, which leads to **fluent** reading.
- Ultimately, with sufficient practice, reading becomes automatic.

In addition to this hierarchy of skills, in order to **comprehend** what they read, students need to have:

- a robust **vocabulary** and knowledge about texts.
- knowledge about the world.

This knowledge is:

- developed through life experiences and instruction students receive in school.
- described as **schema**, which is the framework and organization of what someone has learned and how that information is stored in the brain.

A student's schema, along with the aforementioned knowledge and skills, influences how well they learn to read and comprehend written text.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT FLORIDA'S B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

The ELA standards are designed to be user-friendly, so every stakeholder will understand what students are expected to master. Taken together, the benchmarks, clarifications, and appendices represent the expected outcomes for the students of Florida and carry the full weight of the standards.

Look for standards alignment in each section of this guide.

WORD WORK – SYLLABLE PATTERNS

Help your students build their decoding abilities with open and closed syllables.

Decode Multisyllabic Words with Open and Closed Syllables
Say to students, "Syllables are a word, or part of a word, pronounced as a unit and contain one vowel sound."

A **closed syllable**:
- ends with one or more consonants.
- has a **short-vowel** sound that is spelled with one vowel letter.

An **open syllable**:
- ends with a vowel.
- has a **long-vowel** sound spelled with one vowel letter.

"Let's practice decoding some words from the text that contain open and closed syllables."

Display the word **ta - ken** (p. 4). Say to students:
- "Look at the word *taken*. How many syllables does it have?" (Two)
- "*Taken* has two syllables *ta - ken*."
- "Look at the first syllable *ta-*. What vowel do we see in this syllable? (*a*)
- "Does the *a* have one or more consonants after it?" (No)
- "Since the *a* is not followed by a consonant, that means this is an open syllable and will have a long vowel sound, /ā/. Let's sound out the syllable /t/, /ā/."
- "Remember that *taken* has two syllables, *ta - ken*."
- "Look at the second syllable *-ken*, What vowel do we see in this syllable?" (*e*)
- "Does the *e* have one or more consonants after it?" (Yes)
- "Since the *e* is followed by the consonant *n*, that means this is a closed syllable and will have a short vowel sound, /ĕ/. Let's sound out the syllable /k/, /ĕ/, /n/."
- "Let's sound out both syllables together to say the word *taken*, /t/, /ā/, /k/, /ĕ/, /n/.
- "As we read the book, we'll read more words together with open and closed syllables."

Continue to practice applying this skill by choosing words from the text that follow the open/closed syllable pattern.

ELA.3.F.1.3: Use knowledge of grade-level phonics and word-analysis skills to decode words.
c. Decode multisyllabic words.

ELL and SWD suggestion:
Multisensory instruction can be utilized to engage various sensory pathways. Put hands together for closed syllables and hands apart for open syllables. This will help reinforce open and closed syllables by incorporating kinesthetic movement.

TALK ABOUT NEW AND INTERESTING WORDS

Piles (p. 7), **rolls** (p. 9), **reaching** (p. 10), and **sketches** (p. 21) are suggested Tier 2 words that can be used for explicit vocabulary instruction. Create and share a student-friendly definition that is appropriate for the level of your students. Help students make connections to the word by providing contextual information that relates to the text being read and builds upon their background knowledge.

Authors often use personification to make literature and poetry vivid to their readers. Writers can use personification to explain concepts and ideas, create interesting characters, convey emotions, and describe the setting. This can help increase a reader's attention and make the content of the story or poem more relatable.
- The B.E.S.T. Standards define personification as representing a thing or idea as a person in art or literature.
  - Example: The cupcake is calling my name.

Explain to your students that personification is when an author gives an object human traits. Review personification with your students using the following prompts:
- "One example of personification is, *lightning **danced** across the sky*. What human characteristic did I give lightning in this example?" (danced)
- "What does it mean to dance? How would you describe dancing?"
- "Can lightning really dance?" (no)
- "If I say the lightning dances, I really mean that it moves across the sky just like a dancer would move across the stage while dancing."

While reading *Hey, Wall*, have students identify how the author personifies the wall in this free verse poem. Here are a few examples from the book:
- Hey, Wall! **You** are big. A city block big. (p. 3)
- When **you** were beautiful! (p. 8)
- **You** are only **lonely** concrete. (p. 10)
- Can you **hear** the stories we share about the way things used to be? (p. 13)
- **You** don't **laugh**. **You** don't **share** your stories. (p. 15)

ELA.3.R.3.1: Identify and explain metaphors, personification, and hyperbole in text(s).
- Clarification 2: See Elementary Figurative Language.

ELL and SWD suggestion:
Figurative language uses figures of speech that can be challenging for learners to understand. Language, culture, and background knowledge play a major role in students' ability to identify and explain figurative language. Here are a few things you can consider when working with figurative language:
- Ask students to try and find examples of figurative language in their native language. Be aware that not all examples will directly translate.
- Use pictures to illustrate examples of figurative language. This can help students understand that it is not meant to be taken literally.
- Ask students to illustrate examples of figurative language they have learned. This will allow students to process the information and show their understanding of its use.

This section will contain activities for reading fluency and/or comprehension with embedded supports for ELL and/or SWD.

- **ELA.3.R.1.3: Explain different characters' perspectives in a literary text.**
- **ELA.3.R.1.4: Identify types of poems: free verse, rhymed verse, haiku, and limerick.**
- **ELA.3.R.3.1: Identify and explain metaphors, personification, and hyperbole in text(s).**
  - **Clarification 2: See Elementary Figurative Language.**
- **ELA.3.V.1.3: Use context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the meaning of multiple-meaning and unknown words and phrases, appropriate to grade level.**

Before:
- Say to students, "The story *Hey, Wall* is written as a free verse poem. A free verse poem doesn't use any particular rhyme scheme or form. Instead, it allows the author to portray powerful feelings and emotions about a topic. While reading this text, we will analyze the words the author uses, explore the illustrations, and make inferences about the meaning of this poem."

During:
- Who is the speaker in the poem? (p. 4)
- In this story, the boy speaks directly to the wall like he is having a conversation with the wall. He calls it, "you." What words does he use to describe the wall at the beginning of the story? (p. 3 - 4)
- Look at the picture of the outside of the wall. What details do you notice about the wall? What words would you use to describe it? (p. 5)
- On pages 6 - 10, the author uses imagery and word choice to portray an emotion about how the community feels about the outside of the wall. When you read the examples below, what emotions do you think the author is trying to convey? How would you feel if the boy was saying these things to you?
  - We skateboard past you as fast as we can.
  - Snow piles up in front of you, and no one shovels it.
  - When you were beautiful!
  - We chase it to a spot far from you.
  - You are only lonely concrete.
- Why does the author want readers to feel these emotions? Do you think the boy feels sorry for the wall? (p. 10)
- On pages 12 - 14, the author uses imagery and strong word choice to emphasize an emotion about how the community feels when they are inside the wall.
  - How is what happens inside the wall different from outside the wall?
  - What words and phrases are used to show emotion?
  - What words and phrases appeal to our senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch)?
- Look at the image on page 17. How do you think the boy is going to change the wall?
- The boy tells the wall, "You are our wall now." How do different members of the community work together to change the wall? (p. 18 - 25)
- At the end of the story, the author writes, "Now you tell the real story of us. And together we are somethin' to see!" Discuss what this means.
  - What is the "real story" of the people in the community? (Look at the completed mural on pages 28 and 29 to help answer this question.)
  - Why doesn't the original wall best represent the community?

After: Using imagery.

The author uses imagery in this free verse poem to tell a story about the boy and the wall. Using the graphic organizer provided, ask students to go back into the text to find examples of how Susan Verde uses imagery to appeal to the different senses of the reader.

Imagery and the Five Senses	
Senses	**Example(s) from Story**
Touch: What do you feel?	
Smell: What can you smell?	
Hear: What sounds can you hear?	
See: What do you see?	
Taste: What do you taste?	

Think about something (a place or an object) in your community that means a lot to you. Brainstorm a list of how the five senses apply to your place or object. Write a detailed description of what you choose using imagery. Include at least three of the five senses in your description.

Think about how the boy describes himself when he says, "I am a writer, a creator, a game changer, a wall changer."
- Name three words or phrases you would use to describe yourself. Why did you choose these three words?
- Why are these important qualities to have and share with your community?

Extension Activity: Cultivate your classroom community.
Work with your students to create a school community art project.

ELL and SWD suggestion:
The words and illustrations in this story work together to explain the key concepts students are learning and the details that support them. Use the illustrations to prompt a deeper discussion with students. Use the following questions to help guide the discussion:
- What details are provided only by the words?
- What details are provided only by the illustrations?
- How do the words and illustrations work together?
- What does the wall look like before it is painted? What words would you use to describe this wall?
- What does the wall look like after it is painted? What words would you use to describe this wall?