

FCPS MIDDLE SCHOOL ELA Connections

Quarter 1, 2025-2026

Highlighted Resources

SAVVAS/Canvas: Linking Courses

Create a link between Infinite Campus, Canvas, and Savvas Realize by following the steps in this [video](#).

Planning Resource: Unit Internalization Note-Catcher

Consider [these questions](#), either independently or with your PLC, as you plan a new unit. They are designed to keep your focus on overarching goals and prevent unit planning from becoming fragmented by day-to-day lesson details.

Upcoming Events

iReady Testing Window

August 18- September 12

MAP Testing Window

August 25 - September 9

Kentucky Reading Association 2025 Conference

October 1, 2025: [Details HERE](#)

Banned Book Week

October 5 - October 11

FCPS Book Club

9/11/2025; 5pm @Joseph Beth Books-
Nora Krug's *Belonging*

10/23/2025; 5pm @Joseph Beth Books-
Crystal Wilkinson's *Praise Song for
Kitchen Ghosts*

Instructional Spotlight: Student-led Reader and Writer Notebooks

Lessons from Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle

Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle remind us that the writer's notebook is more than a place for assignments—it's a space where students live like writers. In their notebooks, students collect observations, quick-writes, and reading responses in low-stakes ways that build fluency, confidence, and a bank of ideas for future writing.

In the first weeks of school, Gallagher and Kittle ask students to divide their notebooks into clear sections. Throughout the year, students return to these pages to revisit, revise, and refine their thinking and craft. Take a look at how they organize their notebooks below.

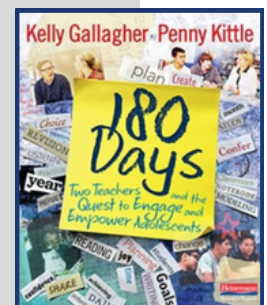
Many of us in FCPS use writer's workbooks. The question is: how can we make them a true record of students' growth as both readers and writers?

p. 1-70: Writing – a space to respond to pictures or short articles and poems. Always followed by targeted revisions

p. 71-90: Passage Study – a space to collect, study, and imitate the craft and conventions moves by expert writers with mentor sentences and short passages

p. 91-100: Word Nerd Study – a space to "harvest" words found in their readings that intrigue them

Inside front cover: What I'm Reading List
Inside Back Cover: What I Might Read Next List



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Science of Reading in Secondary ELA

Why First Read Routines Matter! (RL/RI.10; L.4)

When we talk about the science of reading, we often think about early literacy—specifically phonics and decoding. But the same research reminds us that comprehension in the upper grades depends on **explicit strategies**, **background knowledge**, and **repeated opportunities** to process text. That's why first read routines in middle school ELA are so valuable: they bridge what we know about how the brain makes meaning from print with the practical reality of helping adolescents read more complex texts.

During a first read, students' cognitive load is already high—they're decoding multisyllabic words, figuring out how the sentences work, and trying to construct meaning at the same time. Without structure, many either skim superficially or shut down. A purposeful first read routine reduces that load by clarifying goals: *What should I pay attention to right now?*

Tier 1 Close Reading: The FCPS Process

Before Reading	First Read	Second Read	Third Read
<p>Provide access to complex texts - build word and world knowledge.</p> <p>Introduce students to academic vocabulary and activate prior knowledge.</p>	<p>Hold students accountable for wrestling with complex texts.</p> <p>Teachers share purpose and process: Students engage in the first reading and meaning making, prompted by a posed question. This purpose is set by the standard for alignment.</p> <p>Chunk the Text: Model how to read the text and annotate, then allow time for students to read independently</p> <p>Discuss: Students share responses and annotation with peers.</p>	<p>Teacher questioning that links comprehension and understanding the studied standard.</p> <p>Teacher provides text-dependent questions that return students to the text multiple times to accomplish the lesson purpose.</p> <p>Discussion: Conversation occurs after each return to the text. Share responses to text-dependent questions.</p>	<p>Students apply or communicate understanding of the standard.</p> <p>Collaborative and/or Independent:</p> <p>Engage in a task to illustrate their understanding (writing text-supported arguments, etc.)</p> <p>Synthesizing that is text-supported (multimedia project, literary analysis, argument essay, collaborative poster, etc.)</p>

↑
We're focusing here!

Strategies like annotating with marginalia, two-column journals, and structured student-led talk make this **student wrestling with text visible and accountable** so that as teachers we can validate and troubleshoot. Circling unfamiliar vocabulary supports word recognition and vocabulary development, while underlining key details and jotting reactions strengthen working memory and comprehension monitoring. These are all evidence-based practices aligned with the science of reading, and emphasize the active integration of word recognition, language comprehension, and strategic processing.

For teachers, the benefit is twofold. First: first read routines give every student a way in, no matter their reading level, without limiting what our more proficient students can do. Second: they set the stage for the "deeper dives" that follow—close reading, text analysis, and synthesis across sources in service to the Kentucky Academic Standards. Instead of trying to analyze too much at once, students move through the text in layers, with each reread adding to their understanding.

In short, solid first read routines are grounded in how expert reading actually works. By making them a consistent part of instruction, we help students build confidence, stamina, and the cognitive habits that lead to stronger comprehension across all subjects.

**FCPS Close Reading Presentation:
Annotation Guide (Slide 17)**

**Notice and Note
Double Entry Journal Template:
Fiction**

**Notice and Note
Double Entry Journal Template:
Non-Fiction**

**Video: Close Reading Routines
in Action**

Novel Educators Book Club

Join other Lexington educators to devour books that **engage students and will engage you!**

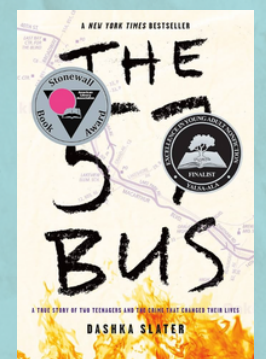
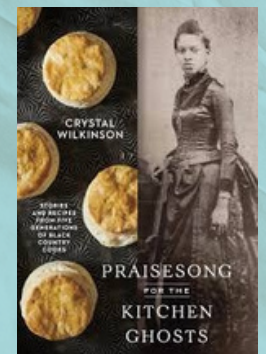
- Meetings at Joseph Beth Book Sellers @ 5pm
 - Club picks are **20% off when purchased at Joseph Beth**
 - Click the titles below for more info.
- **All subject areas and roles are welcome!**

9/11: *Belonging*
by Nora Krug (Middle)

10/23: *Praise Song for Kitchen Ghosts*
by Crystal Wilkinson (High)

11/20: *The Last Cuentista*
by Donna Barba Higuera (Middle)

12/11: *The 57 Bus*
by Dashka Slater (High)



Can't finish the book? Can't come to the meeting?

NO PROBLEM!

Read along as you can & come for the conversation. Leave with ideas for your TBR Pile and classroom.



Want to RSVP or need more info?
Email: tiffany.carsongivan@fayette.kyschools.us



QUARTER 1, SY 2025-2026

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SHOUT OUTS!

A HUGE thank you to all the FCPS ELA teachers that helped support and lead professional learning for the Office of Teaching and Learning at the Middle School hub this year: McKenna Best (EJHMS), Annabelle Buchignani (SMS), Tiffany Carson-Givan (LMS), Samantha Evans (BMS), Alexis Goforth (EJHMS), Kim Haggerty (LMS), Lauren Hyde (MEBMS), Kelly Maggard (EJHMS), Sarah McPeck (CMS), Anna Predmore (SMS), Jasmine Rollins (MMS), Brandon Smoot (TCMS). The FCPS ELA team is amazing!

RESOURCE CONNECTION

Looking for a great text, lesson idea, or strategy, or willing to share your own? This form is a quick way for teachers to request resources or pass along something that's worked well in your classroom. Fill it out, together we'll keep building a bank of vetted ideas we can all use.

[Resource Submission and Request](#)



CIA FEEDBACK

District guidance on curriculum, instruction, and assessments is always a work in progress. If you would like to provide feedback on an assessment, a unit framework, a blueprint, or any other FCPS recommended resource, please submit here:

[End of Unit Assessment Feedback](#)

[Curriculum Feedback: Frameworks and
Blueprints](#)