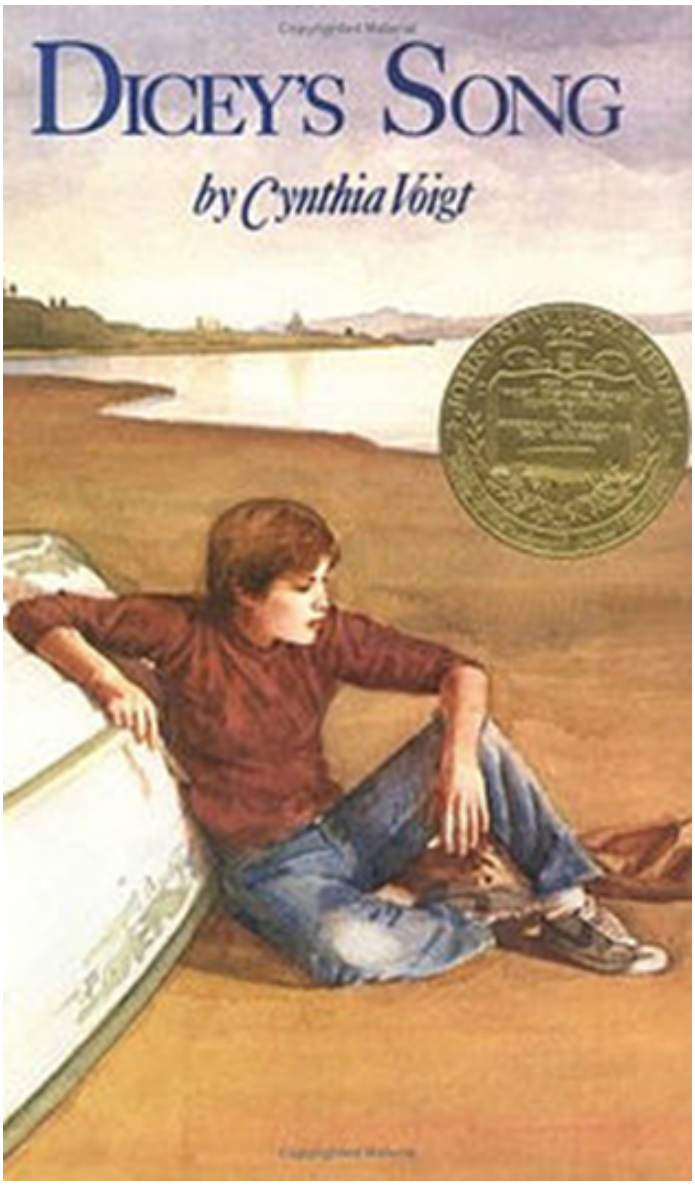
BCSCR

Building Communities that Support Children's Reading

Dicey's Song
By
Cynthia Voight

New Mexico - Colorado
Grades 9-10



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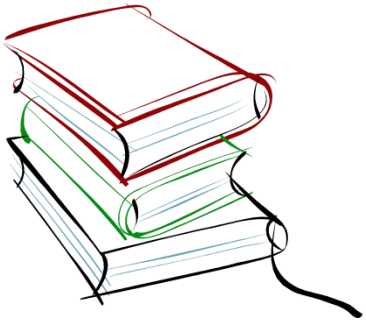

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Synopsis
Dicey's Song

Traveling by whatever means she can find, thirteen-year-old Dicey has brought her three younger siblings from Massachusetts to live with their Gram in Crisfield, Maryland as they were recently abandoned by their Momma and a dad who passed away when they were very young. This novel details their lives as they all adjust to a life with a Gram who has family issues of her own, new schools and new friends. Unaware of their mother's mental illness, the children wonder constantly about whether their Momma will ever come for them. In the midst of these struggles, the children learn of their own potential and ability to be resilient in the face of so many unknowns. As life unfolds at Gram's, they learn a new meaning of what makes a family and how to adjust to the many pitfalls of growing up.

New Mexico & Colorado CCSS

These are the main New Mexico/Colorado Common Core State Standards addressed by the activities in this module.

RL.9-10.1: I can cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.9-10.2 I can determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.9-10.3 I can analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

RL.9-10.4 I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

RL.9-10.5 I can analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

RI.9-10.3 I can analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

RI.9-10.6 I can determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

W.9-10.1 I can write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning, relevant, and sufficient evidence.

W.9-10.3 I can write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

W.9-10.4 I can produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.9-10.6 I can use technology to produce, publish, and display information flexibly and dynamically.

W.9-10.7 I can conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.9-10.9 I can draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

SL.9-10.4 I can present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

SL.9-10.5 I can make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest

<u>Vocabulary</u>
Dicey's Song

fallow - land left unseeded during a growing season

hunker - to squat close to the ground

mottled - spotted or blotched with different shades or colors

harmonize - to bring about or come to an agreement

scheme - to plot; to make plans

unkempt - not properly maintained; disorderly

rummaging - to discover by searching thoroughly

chastened - to correct by punishment or reproof

engrossed - to occupy exclusively

hoisted - the act of raising or hauling up

distributor - one that markets or sells merchandise; a wholesaler

scraggly - ragged; unkempt

diminished - to make smaller or less or to cause to appear to

Using Journal Prompts

Journal writing in response to a provided prompt is beneficial for student integrating the text and relating it to their own lives. As we strive for more concrete text-to-text, text-to-world and text-to-self connections, journal writing fulfills this in a way that also employs writing. Although one can use journal prompts as an impetus to a discussion, they are best utilized for writing first so a student has time to consider how the question affects them personally. Providing a quiet 5-10 minute personal class time to do this writing makes for a better outcome and the oral responses can be voluntarily (some may be too personal to share out loud) given if the student so chooses.

As journals are more of a personal nature, assure your students that you won't share what they have entrusted to you alone to read (unless it is of a legal issue like harming or killing oneself or another). If they wish to share orally to the class, that is their prerogative. You may wish to grade journals simply on the fact that they have responded to a journal prompt or that they have completed so many out of the total given over the course of the book – this might include the amount of writing per entry. Ten lines or more per entry should give an acceptable-in-length response.

Journal Prompts

Title **“Who Are You?”** In 10 lines or more, describe yourself as a stranger may see you (it doesn’t all have to be a physical description).

Title **“Afraid”** Describe a time when you were afraid. What did it take to get you through it? Explain.

Title **“Family Character”** In your family, are you the leader, clown, servant, trouble-maker, peace-maker, what? Explain.

Title **“Forbidden”** What is it that makes one want to go or do what is forbidden? Explain.

Title **“Competition”** Do you compete with your siblings (if you don’t have siblings, how about your cousins or neighbor’s children)? Why or why not? Explain.

Title **“ Best Friend”** What are the qualities a best friend must possess? Explain.

Title **“Anger”** What is the one thing someone else tells you to do that makes you angry? Why? Explain.

Title **“Responsible”** Do you consider yourself a responsible young adult? Explain your response.

Title **“Parents and Friends”** How do your parents feel about your best friend(s)? How does this affect your relationship with your friends? Explain.

Title **“Friendly Unknown”** Tell about the last time an unknown-to-you person did something for you. How did it make you feel? Explain.

Title **“Prom Date”** Do you believe one has to have a date to the prom to attend? Why or why not? Explain.

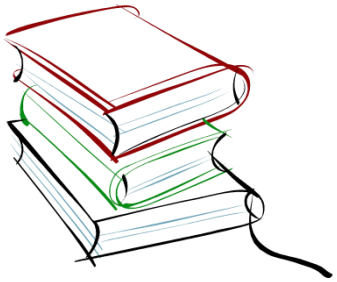
Title **“Teacher Issue”** Describe a time you had an issue with a teacher and how it was resolved. What did you learn from the experience? Explain.

Title **“Charity”** How do you feel about someone giving you something you didn’t earn or pay for? Explain.

Title **“Experience”** Oscar Wilde said, “Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.” What have you learned from experience? Explain.

Title **“Becoming an Adult”** Are you worried about becoming an adult? Why or why not? Explain.

High Level Questions
Dicey's Song



Now that Dicey has got her siblings to their Gram's, is her 'job' over? Explain.

Dicey discovers that Gram is a 'worrier.' Why is this an interesting piece of information for Dicey?

In the beginning, Dicey has taken on the responsibility for all three of her siblings. In the progress of this novel, that is no longer the case. How does Dicey feel about this? Cite information from the text to support your answer.

Describe Millie, the store owner. Why do you believe she is part of this story? Cite information from the text to support your answers.

How does Dicey feel about her brothers working to help out financially? Why?

Unwanted attention can often lead to trouble – one reason Dicey likes her solitude. Give another reason why Dicey prefers solitude when it comes to anyone but family. What can you infer about the character of Dicey because of this? Cite information from the text to support your answer.

Sammy is no longer getting into fights in school. Why not?

Dicey comes home one evening to find Mr. Lingerle playing the piano. What amazes Dicey about this? Explain your answer.

What is it that has Gram upset in regards to the younger children getting into the attic? Why did the children do it? Why is this important?

Why does Dicey choose to speak with and even sing with Jeff and his guitar after school/before work but continues to brush off any attempt made by Mina to become friends?

Gram and Dicey have a great bonding experience over the lunch they share after shopping together. Dicey's wants to talk to Gram about Gram's past but doesn't. Why not?

Dicey has not been allowing Sammy help her with the work on the sail boat. Then she relents and lets him help. What changed her mind? What does she discover from her conversation with Sammy as they work together on the boat?

Explain what makes James finally decide to help Maybeth and what is his plan? Do you believe it will work where others have failed? Explain your answer.

Gram brings clothes down from the attic and gives them to the children. Who do you think they belonged to? Why do you believe she is giving them to the children?

Dicey declines Jeff's offer to accompany her to the school dance. She tells him she's too young – truth or lie? Explain.

One major resolution of this story is that the adoption of the four children is finalized and the children are Gram's wards. At this point, explain what other issues have been resolved and cite information from the text to support your answer.

Explain what you believe is the underlying issue with Dicey not doing well in Home Economics (the issue with the apron) and cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

Explain how music is used in this story. How does it support the theme of the story? Cite instances from the novel to support you answers.

What brings on the positive conversation between Ms. Eversleigh and Dicey regarding the benefits of domestic skills? Do you believe Dicey's feelings have changed for Ms. Eversleigh? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

Why do you think Dicey finally opens up to Mina in regards to the essay Dicey wrote about her mother?

Discuss the ways Gram confronts the mistakes from her past. Explain how this is a second chance for Gram. What can you infer about the character of Gram from this?

Explain how Dicey and James use writing to reach out and deal with all that has happened to them? Cite examples from the story to support your answers.

The author juxtapositions Dicey's attitude about school, her classmates and teachers and the convention of school to her attitude about her family. Explain, citing information from the story.

Why do you think the author keeps the character of the Tillerman children's Momma hidden – only giving small glimpses as the story unfolds?

One theme of this story may have something to do with reaching out. Explain how this story does that and what elements does it use to do so.

This story has two major settings – Gram's home and the school. Explore these two settings and determine how they are important and enough for the telling of this story. Explain how each of the four Tillerman children use Gram's home to deal with the outside world.

Concept Organizer

New concept - **Family**	
Example sentence:	
Synonyms: Definition:	Essential Characteristics: * * * *
Examples: * * *	Non-examples: * * *
My sentence:	

Concept Organizer

New concept -	
Example sentence:	
Synonyms: Definition:	Essential Characteristics: * * * *
Examples: * * *	Non-examples: * * *
My sentence:	

Using Choice Boards

Choice boards give students the opportunity to participate in multiple tasks that allow them to practice skills they've learned in class or to demonstrate and extend their understating of concepts. From the board, students either choose or are assigned tasks to complete. Individual tasks address the grade level specific Common Core State Standards and also learning style modalities.

To scaffold the activities for struggling readers, teachers can modify the tasks using the blank template provided or give more details for performance criteria. Some teachers like to assign point values for the different tasks.

In order to support teachers, the choice boards developed for BCSCR are coded for specific Common Core State Standards.

Choice Board
Dicey's Song

W9-10.9 Name three things that happen as a result of Dicey "reaching out." Then illustrate these 3 depicting details from the story.	**SL9-10.4**Create a new a book cover for *Dicey's Song* that represents Dicey and her siblings. Present orally to your class.	**RL9-10.2 -**Draw two of the many symbols in this story and then explain in writing what their importance was to the theme of the novel.
W9-10.3 Write a new ending to the novel depicting what happens to Dicey, her siblings and Gram.	**RL9-10.3**Write a dialogue between Dicey and Mr. Chappelle where Dicey explains to him about the essay she wrote about her mother.	**RL9-10.5** Write a skit depicting the three younger Tillerman children and their curiosity over Gram's attic and then with a partner, present the skit to your class.
RL9-10.3 Analyze the character of Dicey and how she develops over the course of the novel. How does this advance the plot (or theme) of the novel? Cite textual evidence to support your findings.	**RL9-10.3** The relationship between Dicey and her Gram is something the author comes back to time and time again. Explain why this is important to the theme of the novel and how it benefits Dicey and Gram as the story unfolds.	**RL9-10.3**Dicey and James – brother and sister. Create a Venn Diagram, gathering details from the story and depict what they have in common and what makes them different – considering their character, actions, and how others relate to them.

Choice Board

_____

Using Character Analysis

A strong character analysis will:

1. Identify the type of character it is dealing with
2. Describe the character, using various measures as detailed below
3. Discuss the conflict in the story, particularly in regards to the character's place in it

To describe the character:

Consider the character's name and appearance

- Is the author taking advantage of stereotypes? The hot-tempered redhead, the boring brunette, the playboy fraternity guy
- Is the author going against stereotypes? The brilliant blonde, the socially inept professor, the rich but lazy immigrant
- Is the author repeating a description of the character? If so, then it is important.
- Is their name significant? Is it a word that means something like Honor or Hero? Does it come from a particular place or time and make reference to that? Scarlett, Beowulf, etc.
- Appearance and visual attributes are usually far less important than other factors unless it adds to the theme of the novel

Consider if he/she is a static (unchanging) or dynamic (changing) character

If the character has changed during the course of the story:

- Was the change gradual or rapid?
- Was it subtle or obvious?
- Are the changes significant to the story or are they a minor counterpoint?
- Are the changes believable or fantastic?
- What was his/her motivation to change?
- What situations or characters encouraged the change?
- How does the character learn from or deal with the change?

Consider how the author discloses the character

- By what the character says or thinks
- By what the character does
- By what the other characters say about him/her
- By what the author says about him/her
  (Short form for this is STAR (says, thinks, acts, reacts)

Look for these within the creation of the character:

Psychological/personality traits

- Do these characteristics aid in the character being consistent (in character), believable, adequat3ely motivated, and interesting?
- Do the characteristics of the character emphasize and focus on the character's role in the story's plot?

Motivation

- Is the character ethical? Is he/she trying to do the right thing but going about it in the wrong way?
- Is the motivation because of emotion (love, hate) or a decision (revenge, promotion)?

Behavior/actions

- Does the character act in a certain way consistently? Or is the character erratic?
- Could one pluck the character from the story, put them in another story, and know how they would react?

Relationships

- With other characters in the story
- How others see/react to him/her

Strengths/virtues

- There are many different strengths and virtues
- One strength/virtue is being good in trying times
- Another strength/virtue is caring for family
- Another strength/virtue is being smart
- Most protagonists have more than one strength/virtue

Weaknesses/faults

- Weakness could be anything

History/background

- Sometimes a character analysis looks at the history of the individual character. Was that person mistreated? Abused? Well-loved? Liked?
- Sometimes the history of the work matters more

Character Analysis Chart
Dicey's Song

Analyze Dicey and a character of your choice from the novel. Then write a comparative character analysis paper.

Areas of Consideration	Dicey	
Psychological/ Personality Traits		
Motivation		
Behavior/ Actions		
Relationships		
Strengths/ Virtues		
Weaknesses/ Faults		
History/ Background		

Extension Resources

Foster Care System

http://people.howstuffworks.com/foster-care.htm

http://www.adopt.org/what-foster-care

http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/FosterCare/Story?id=2017991&page=1

Mental Health

http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/default.htm

http://www.mentalhealth.gov/

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/mentalhealth.html

Adopting Older Children

https://www.adoptivefamilies.com/adoption-bonding-home/adopting-an-older-child-tips-advice/

http://older-child.adoption.com/

http://www.parents.com/parenting/adoption/stories/adopting-older-children/

Grades 9–10 Narrative Writing Rubric

	Not Yet	*Approaches*	*Meets*	*Advanced*
	1 (Not Meeting)	**2 (Approaching)**	**3 (Effective)**	**4 (Distinguished)**
Focus/Controlling Idea **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which development, organization, and style are appropriate to tasks, purposes, and audiences.	I attempt to address the prompt, but my paper lacks focus or is off-task. I do not focus on a specific experience or event, which weakens the unity and coherence of my narrative.	I address the prompt appropriately, but my focus is uneven. I focus on a specific experience or event, but I lose focus, which weakens the unity and coherence of my narrative at times.	I address the prompt appropriately and maintain a clear and steady focus. I focus on a specific experience or event in a clear way, and my narrative is unified and coherent.	I address all aspects of the prompt appropriately, and I have a strongly developed focus that builds reader interest. I focus steadily on a specific experience or event in an engaging way, and my writing is unified and coherent.
Organization (Structure: Overall, Lead, Transitions, Ending) **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3a:** Engage and orient readers by setting out problems, situations, or observations, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing narrator sand/or characters; create smooth progressions of experiences or events. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3c:** Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so they build on one another to create a coherent whole. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3e:** Provide conclusions that follow from and reflect on what is experienced, observed, or resolved during the course of narratives.	I do not present my narrator and/or characters, or I am not clear in how I present them. I do not have a distinct point of view. The progression of experiences or events is not smooth. I do not use transitions to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame to another or to show relationships among experiences and events. I do not have a clear conclusion to my narrative, or I do have a conclusion, but it does not connect to the rest of the narrative.	I present my narrator and/or characters, but sometimes I present them in a confusing or unclear way. I try to establish a point of view, but I am not consistent. I try to show a smooth progression of experiences or events, but I am unclear or confusing in parts. I use transitions to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame to another, and show relationships among experiences and events, but I am not consistent. I have a conclusion, but it does not reflect on what is experienced, observed, or resolved during the course of the narrative.	I present my narrator and/or characters in a clear manner. I establish one or multiple points of view that is/are distinct and consistent. I include a smooth progression of experiences or events. I consistently use transitions to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show relationships among experiences or events. My conclusion provides a sense of closure by reflecting on what is experienced, observed, or resolved during the course of the narrative.	I present my narrator and/or characters clearly, but I also make them interesting to readers. I establish one or multiple distinct and consistent points of view that is/are captivating to readers. My narrative includes a smooth progression of clear and appealing experiences or events. I consistently use transitions to connect the different parts of my narrative, and I use them to build readers' interest. My conclusion provides a sense of closure by reflecting on what is experienced, observed, or resolved during the course of the narrative.

Development (Elaboration, Description) **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3b:** Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3d:** Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey vivid pictures of experiences, events, settings, and/or characters.	I do not include descriptions related to my narrative. I do not include dialogue, or I use it incorrectly. My narrative is either underdeveloped or the pacing is very inconsistent. I use a lot of choppy sentences. I do not reflect on any events in my narrative. I do not include multiple plot lines. My word choice is very basic. I do not include sensory language or precise words to describe the action, experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.	I include some descriptions related to my narrative. I use dialogue, but it is not realistic. I try to use pacing in my narrative, but some parts drag because some of my sentences are choppy. I try to reflect on events in my narrative, but I am unclear. I attempt to include multiple plot lines, but I present them in a confusing way. I use some precise words and/or sensory language when describing the action, experiences, events, setting, and/or characters, but I am not consistent.	I provide descriptions that bring my characters and events to life and are related to my narrative. I include realistic dialogue to show character relationships and motivations. My narrative moves at a good pace. I vary my sentence structure to keep my narrative progressing. I reflect on events in my narrative. I include multiple distinct and understandable plot lines. I use precise words and sensory language in my description to create a clear picture of the action, experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.	I include thoughtfully stated descriptions that help develop my narrative in an interesting manner. I creatively include dialogue to show character relationships and motivations. My narrative shows excellent pacing; it moves along quickly, and my sentence structure is consistently varied and engaging. I reflect on events in my narrative in a thought-provoking manner. I include multiple distinct plot lines that hook readers' attention. I thoughtfully select precise words and sensory language. The sensory language I select creates a vivid picture that engages readers and fully captures the action, experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

	Not Yet	***Approaches***	***Meets***	***Advanced***
	1 (Not Meeting)	**2 (Approaching)**	**3 (Effective)**	**4 (Distinguished)**
Conventions **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1:** Demonstrate command of conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1b:** Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2:** Demonstrate command of conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	I attempt to demonstrate standard English conventions, but I lack control of phrases and clauses, which makes my narrative hard to understand. I make many errors in punctuation, spelling, and capitalization that detract from my narrative. My sentences are all short and choppy.	I show an uneven command of standard English conventions, such as phrases and clauses, which makes my narrative hard to understand at times. I make several errors in punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization that occasionally detract from my narrative. I try to vary my sentence structure, but I am not consistent.	I show a steady command of standard English conventions, including phrases and clauses, and have few errors, but they do not detract from my narrative. I have a few minor errors in punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization, but they do not detract from my narrative. I vary my sentence structure several times throughout my narrative.	I show a well-developed command of standard English conventions, including phrases and clauses, with few, if any, errors. I consistently use correct punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, which contributes to the coherence of my narrative. My sentences are different lengths, which makes my narrative more interesting to readers.

BCSCR

Building Communities that Support Children's Reading

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Community-Based Components

- **Read Alongs:** Held at the schools, community centers, or community libraries for children 0-4 and 5-8.
- **Little Libraries:** Little Libraries will be placed in each community. A Little Library is a location where anyone may stop by and pick up a book (or two) and bring back another book to share if they have one.
- **Reading and Outreach:** Public service announcement (PSAs) placed in print and electronic media outlets, as well as brochures placed throughout the community.
- **Community Reading Nights:** One-hour reading blocks with follow-up discussions and book distribution for all community members of all ages.
- **School and Community-Based Tutoring:** Small group (3-4 students) tutoring will be offered at each targeted school, to over 12,000 students over 2 years.

School-Based Components

Regional coordinators will work with school administrators to determine critical areas for enhancing reading instruction in a particular school or district and to address professional development needs focused on literacy.

- **Book Distribution:** Class sets of books and instructional packets with multiple options per grade level are available for checkout.
- **Reading Achievement and Readiness:** Analysis of state standardized testing; reporting of assessment data.
- **Needs Assessment:** Collaboration with district personnel to identify areas of need for supporting student literacy development.

Classroom Book Sets

Teachers have access to a variety of fiction and informational classroom book sets selected to address rigorous college and career readiness skills.

- **Materials available for K-3, 4-6, and 7-12:** Each set comes complete with high quality curriculum unit plans and additional resources appropriate for a specific grade level. For a complete list of books available, visit the bcscr.3riversed.org website. Select the 'Schools' tab and then the 'Unit Plans' link. All unit plans are available for free download.

Contact your regional BCSCR coordinator to schedule a time to utilize these resources with your students. Your coordinator will deliver the book set directly to your school site and retrieve the set 6-8 weeks later.

Parent-Based Components

- **Book Distribution:** Take home books with activity packets based on books for each reading component, for all age groups.
- **Monthly 'help your kids read' workshops:** Parent training will be held in each district on a monthly basis. Workshops will be broken down by age group (Pre-K, K-3, grades 4-6).
- **Understanding Your Child's Assessment Scores:** A 4th workshop will help parents understand what reading achievement scores mean and how they might support their child's reading success.

Fully funded through a federal grant from the Department of Education

Grant award number S215G140114

Project Goals

By the end of the funding period, in comparison to 2014 baseline:

- 40% of participating 4-year-old children will achieve significant gains in oral language skills;
- the percentage of 3rd-grade, 8th-grade, and high school students who meet or exceed proficiency of State reading or language arts assessments will increase by 15 percentage points;
- the percentage of parents who report reading with their children will increase by 25 percentage points; and
- 65% of teachers will indicate improvements in their reading instruction as a result of professional development as evidenced by school- and classroom-based assessments