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# Back to School with STEP
Supplemental Handout

## Overview

The research base on literacy development is constantly growing and evolving, which eventually results in changes and adjustments to classroom instructional practices. The STEP Team works to stay informed about foundational and new research, so that our coaching support and instructional resources and strategies are fresh and accurate. Over the past 6 months, our team has been working on some exciting and helpful updates to aspects of steptool.org functionality and some professional learning resources so that they are more reflective of STEP's pedagogical perspectives, as grounded in research. The following pages of this document will outline those changes for your convenience.

You can also watch our series of short videos that explain and demonstrate the changes and updates outlined in this document. You can find those videos [here](here). **The password to access all of the videos outlined in this document is: STEPUpdates22**. If you have any questions about these updates, we encourage you to reach out to your school's assigned STEP trainer or email step@uchicago.edu.

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# Video Series Part 1: Developmental Map & Bottom Lines

The STEP Reading Milestones Developmental Map is a visual representation of the researched-based reading milestone(s) measured within and across each "step" of our literacy assessment and is also aligned to grade-level performance expectations. There are no substantive differences between the current STEP Developmental Map and the new STEP Reading Milestones Developmental Map. Rather, the updated version is more streamlined and solely focused on STEP terminology. The new version of the STEP Developmental Map map will be available for download on steptool.org and included in the 2022-23 updated STEP Manual to Guide Teachers.

## STEP Reading Milestones Developmental Map

| Grade | Step |
|-------|------|
| 3rd | STEP 12: Subtlety and Flexibility |
| 3rd | STEP 11: Subtlety and Flexibility |
| 3rd | STEP 10: Overall Meaning |
| 2nd | STEP 9: Reading Stamina |
| 2nd | STEP 8: Character Change |
| 2nd | STEP 7: Character Motivation |
| 1st | STEP 6: Reading Silently |
| 1st | STEP 5: Endurance and Interpretation |
| 1st | STEP 4: Self-Reliance |
| K | STEP 3: Word-Solving |
| K | STEP 2: Cross-Checking |
| K | STEP 1: Concepts about Print |
| Before K | Pre Reading: Concepts about Print |

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# Video Series Part 1: Developmental Map & Bottom Lines

Additionally, we have added some clarifications to STEP's Bottom Lines. See the chart below for a side-by-side comparison:

| Level | Orginal | Updated Bottom Line |
|---|---|---|
| STEP 2 | **Cross-Checking**: Using both pictures and letter sounds to solve unknown words) | **Cross-Checking**: Use both initial letter names and sounds to solve unknown words, after that- check the picture to verify- if needed. |
| STEP 3 | **Word-Solving**: What do I do when I get to an unknown word? | **Word-Solving**: What strategies can I learn to help me with unknown words? |
| STEP 4 | **Self-Reliance**: What can I do to help myself? | **Self-Reliance**: What strategies can I select from and apply to help solve unknown words when I'm reading? |
| STEP 5 | **Endurance and Interpretation** | **Endurance and Interpretation**: How can I make sense of the story while reading longer texts with more advanced word solving? |
| STEP 11 & STEP 12 | **Subtlety and Flexibility**: Recognizing figurative language, genres and text structures while self-monitoring comprehension. | **Subtlety and Flexibility**: Utilizing knowledge of figurative language, genres and text structures to help self-monitor comprehension. |

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# Video Series Part 2: Updated Terms & Definitions

This past school year, our staff spent a significant time reviewing the foundational and current research regarding Schema Theory and background knowledge. We realized we had often been using the two terms interchangeably, as do many of our partner schools. However, during the course of our review of research, we realized that we needed to make transparent to you, our clients, the important distinctions between the two phrases. Following are the top differences between them:

| Schema | Background Knowledge |
|---|---|
| A theory that describes an interpretation of how the brain structures knowledge. It is essentially your brain's "filing cabinet" of knowledge. | A term used to encompass all the different types of experiences, contexts, perspectives, and understandings that students bring to the act of reading. |

In a nutshell, your brain's "schemata filing cabinet" is filled with background knowledge that students need to access while reading and thinking.

We have leveraged those distinctions to anchor the rationale behind STEP's decision to consistently use the term "background knowledge" when referring to a student's prior experience and learning. We have updated our materials and resources by replacing the term "schema" with "background knowledge" wherever we reference the idea that students have a variety of experiences, contexts, perspectives and understandings that they bring to the act of reading. Similarly, we will only reference "schema" when referring to the theory of how the brain structures the information it houses.

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# Video Series Part 2: Updated Terms & Definitions

Please find the definitions of STEP question types and prompts in the following two charts:

| STEP Question Type | Construct & Stabilize Definition | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Factual/ Literal Thinking | Requires readers to use specific information stated or shown/ illustrated explicitly in the text | Responses must be accurate based on what is stated in the text. At early developmental levels (through STEP 5), responses may also be based on what is available in the pictures. |
| Inferential Thinking | Requires readers to attend to facts from one place in the text, and then leverage their background knowledge to assert an interpretation otherwise unstated in the text | This is often related to aspects of a person or character's:<br>• feelings<br>• motivation and/or<br>• perspective |
| Critical Thinking | Requires readers to add up multiple inferences from various points or chapters across the text, and then leverage their background knowledge to assert an interpretation unstated in the text. | This is often related to a person or character's:<br>• ability / motivation to change (or not)<br>• perspective<br>• traits<br>• big ideas of the text |

**Note**: There are no substantive differences to the above terms and definitions, our team simply added more clarity to the existing definitions.

# Video Series Part 2: Updated Terms & Definitions

| Prompt | Code |
|---|---|
| **"Tell me more."**<br>Use when the reader is on track, but lacking details (e.g., a push for elaboration on a thought and/or text evidence). | TMM |
| **"What in the story makes you think that?"**<br>Use when the reader has not yet provided text evidence in support of their response. | WIS |
| **"Why is that important?"**<br>Use when the reader has provided text evidence, but omitted an interpretation of those facts. | WI |
| **"Why do you think that?"**<br>Use when you want the reader to explain how the evidence they chose supports the interpretation they made. | WTT |
| **Repeat question**<br>Use as a reminder to the reader that they have not yet answered the question they were asked. | RQ |

**Note:** There are no substantive differences to the above terminology, our team simply added more clarity to the existing STEP prompts.

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# Video Series Part 3: Updated Text Evidence Criteria

A significant update for 2022-23 focuses on STEP's expectations regarding text evidence criteria. We always strive to be as clear and explicit in our messaging to you, our partner schools, regarding comprehension reliability and scoring procedures. As a STEP team, we spent a lot of time mapping out more detailed guidelines that we believe will provide you even more clarity regarding acceptable text evidence expectations across the STEP levels.

First, we want to provide some framing regarding the research base available on textual evidence. You may be aware that there has been a persistent gap between the current research base on text evidence expectations and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards(NGSS), and National Council for Social Studies(C3) standards indicators and their expectations on how to accurately interpret and implement all of these standards into instruction and daily practice. There is a lot of gray space across and within these standards, which makes it challenging for the average teacher to know how to hold students and themselves accountable to this aspect of the standards. In addition, while there is a lot of research on the topic of textual evidence, we could find little that has been focused on trying to clarify these expectations as provided within these three sets of national standards.

The STEP staff worked together to pour over the current research and better unpack and link expectations from the research base and the current instructional standards. A high-level summary of the findings follow:

Overall, there is consensus that students should be providing answers that are grounded in the text at all grade levels, including Kindergarten. Additionally, research indicates that picture evidence is acceptable at lower grades. Furthermore, research shows that students naturally tend to transition away from picture evidence and towards implicit text/word evidence by 2nd grade. There is a clear shift beginning in 3rd grade to the expectation that students should explicitly use the text as a basis for their answers.

Given our understanding of the research, we have created the following chart as an outline summarizing STEP's revised criteria regarding acceptable ways for students to provide text evidence across and within the STEP levels:

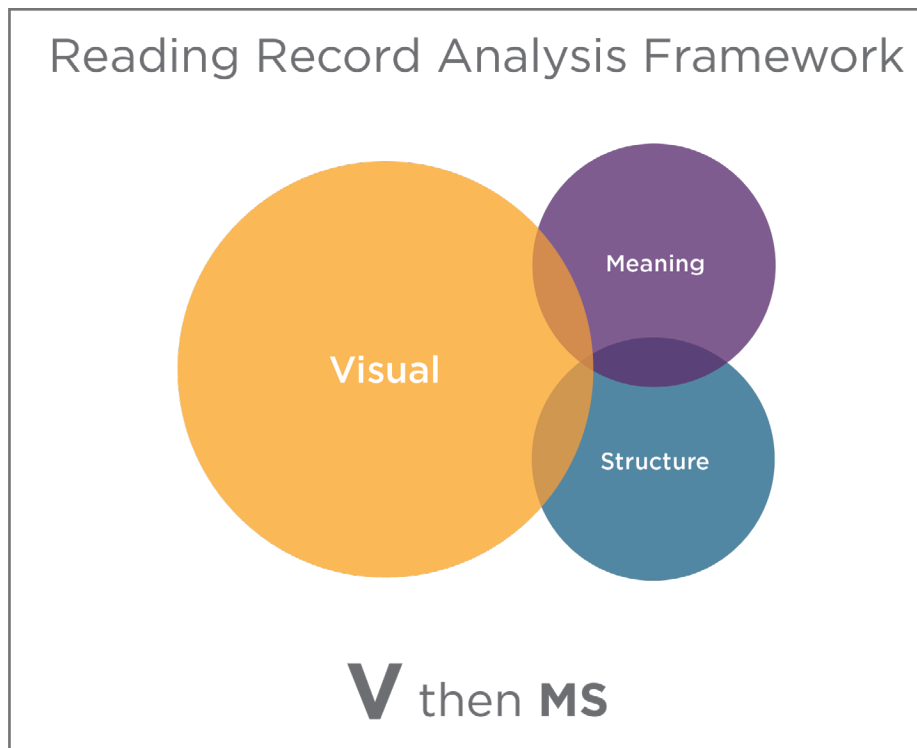## Progression of Text Evidence by STEP Level Bands

|  | Describing/ and or recalling specific picture evidence | Pointing to pictures | Pointing to words | Saying a page number | Saying a paragraph number or pointing to a paragraph | Using keywords/ phrases | Paraphrasing | Quoting |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| STEPs 2-5 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| STEP 6 |  |  |  |  | X | X | X | X |
| STEPs 7-9 |  |  |  |  |  | X | X | X |
| STEPs 10-12 |  |  |  |  |  | X | X | X |

Please refer to this link in order to view the associated support video, in which we address more thoroughly the updates we have made to text evidence criteria by unpacking some examples from various levels between STEPs 2 and 12. Additionally, if your school has professional learning hours with STEP in 2022-23, your assigned STEP Manager of Professional Learning (trainer) will also serve as a helpful resource with whom you can further discuss any questions or concerns you might have.

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# Video Series Part 4: Reading Record Analysis Framework

Our next update pertains to the concept of Reading Record Analysis. When practiced correctly, analysis of reading records using a three-cueing system can empower teachers to prepare more targeted reading instruction. However, we want to note that analyzing reading records with the three-cueing lens is not a requirement to implement, use and/or partner with STEP. We have updated our system so that your school can choose to opt out of MSV coding on an annual basis (completed during steptool.org onboarding). As you are likely aware, coding reading records has never impacted a student's performance outcomes on any STEP assessment administered to them. Furthermore, we want to note that STEP's Reading Record (running record) is just one of many data points that comprise the STEP Assessment.

So that you can understand where STEP aligns with research and theory regarding reading record analysis, we have updated our reading record analysis framework to be overtly aligned with the Science of Reading, specifically research from Gough & Tunmer (1986), Scarborough (2001), Burkins & Yates (2021). The following visual aligns to our belief that it is most important to analyze a student's application of visual information (phonics) when reviewing a reading record to determine instructional needs, just as it is most important to encourage a student working to decode words to apply their phonics knowledge first and foremost before considering any other data points. Below you will find a graphic reflecting this perspective:
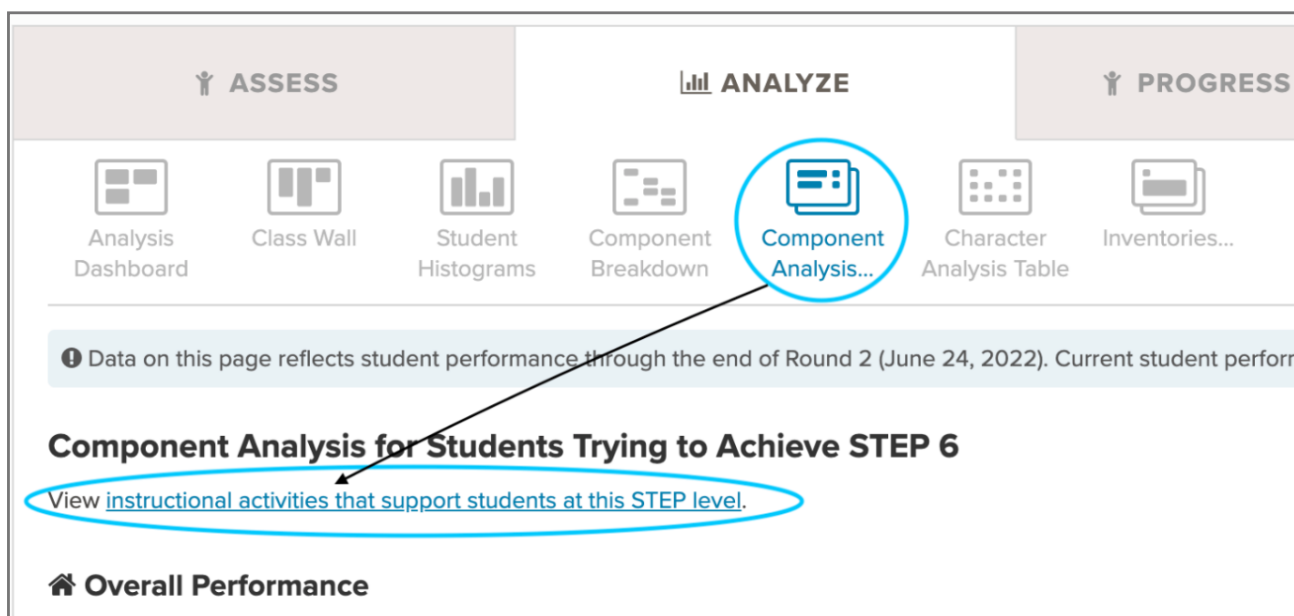


Reading Record Analysis Framework

Visual

Meaning

Structure

**V** then **MS**

Please refer to this link in order to view the associated support video on Reading Record Analysis. Additionally, if your school has professional learning hours with STEP in 2022-23, your assigned STEP Manager of Professional Learning (trainer) will also serve as a helpful resource with whom you can further discuss any questions or concerns you might have.

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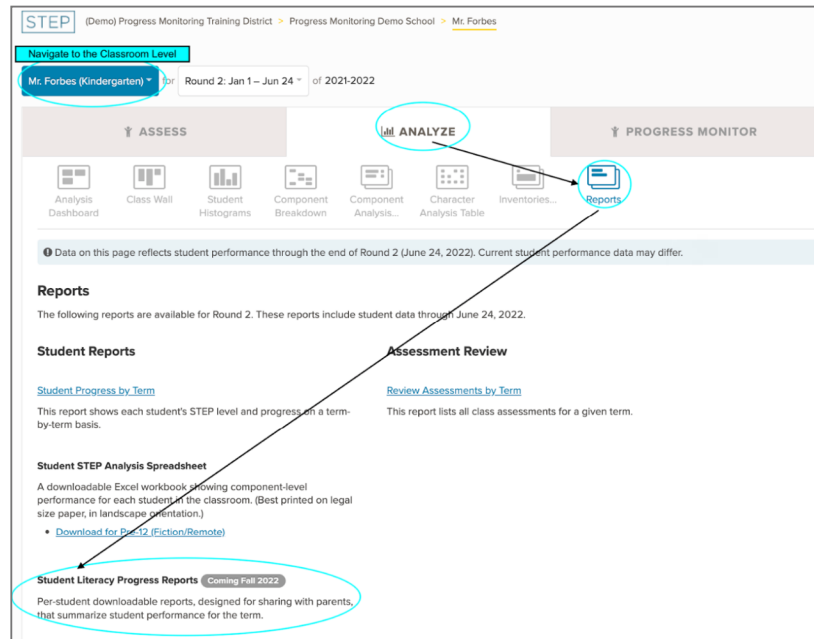
# Video Series Part 5: Updates to STEP Tool

Finally, we want to make sure you are aware of the some functional, helpful updates to steptool.org:

- We now support SSO (Single-Sign On) authentication services for partner schools that have accounts with Clever. Please refer to the STEP Blog for additional information. More information about this process will be available during the client onboarding (rostering) process or by contacting: support@steptool.org.

- You will find that scoring comprehension conversation items will be easier than ever due to changes we have made within steptool.org. Acceptable text evidence, which can be viewed during the assessment and while scoring responses, has been updated to be more comprehensive and explicit.

- Instructional activity resources have been refreshed to provide current and additional suggestions to aid teachers when planning instruction. You will find these updated resources available within steptool.org via the tabs/buttons and links indicated below:

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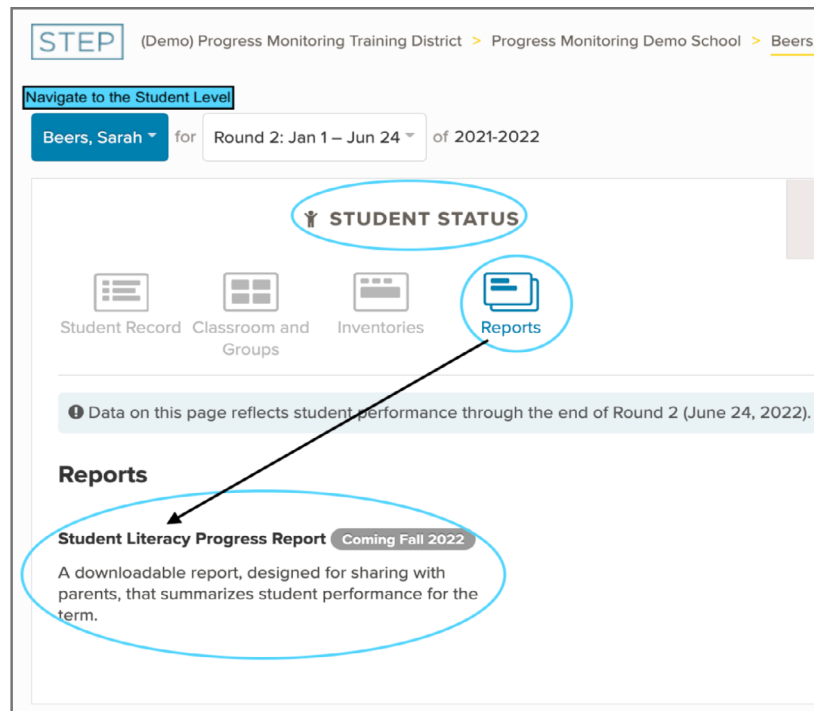URBAN EDUCATION INSTITUTE

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- Parent literacy reports, customized by student, are now available within the Reports section of steptool.org. These on demand reports can be generated from two locations within steptool.org:

1.) The classroom level (below)



2.) and/or the individual student level (below)

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These reports can be generated at any time during the year, however they are only updated based on the most current assessment data available within steptool.org. The intended audience for these reports is parents/guardians. Please refer to the STEP Blog for additional information.

Please refer to this link in order to view the associated support video on the latest steptool. org updates. Please email **support@steptool.org** with any additional questions related to this new functionality in steptool.org.

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