

Implementing Labs

EL Education is fiercely focused on equity for all children. All children deserve schools that foster their unique abilities, give them the real opportunity to achieve high academic standards, and help them take their full place in a society for which they are well prepared when they leave school. Equity is the foundation on which the entire curriculum rests.

The Grades K–2 Language Arts Curriculum consists of three hours per day of instruction: the module lessons and Labs (which together are the two hours of content-based literacy in K–2), and the separate Reading Foundations Skills Block. This is your introduction to Labs.

Labs are an important feature of the K–2 Language Arts Curriculum because they deepen students' learning on the module topic. They are designed to help teachers ensure that all of their students get the time to play and explore, become immersed in oral language and content knowledge, and practice skills and habits of character that they need—both to live joyfully and to be fully successful and proficient.

This document helps teachers understand the why, as well as the concrete what and how, of the Labs. Specifically:

- How does the structure of the Labs fit with the structure of the module lessons?
- How do the Labs meet the developmental needs of primary learners?
- What are the five Labs, and how does each promote proficiency and growth?
- How do the Labs reinforce and extend work from the module lessons?
- How is the Labs hour structured?
- How do Labs unfold over the course of an entire module in order to build students' independence?
- How are students grouped in Labs?
- What might a day in Labs look like for teacher and students?
- What are some frequently asked questions about Labs?

How does the structure of the Labs fit with the structure of the module lessons?

Labs are one hour long and complement the module lessons. These two hours of content-based literacy instruction work together to accelerate the achievement of all students.

The Labs are designed for six weeks of instruction within an eight- to nine-week module. This supports flexible pacing and scheduling: Based on the needs of their specific students, teachers may choose to spend that hour during those additional two to three weeks on such things as solidifying structures and routines, providing additional “spill-over” time to address learning targets from module lessons, providing additional instructional time for English language learners (ELLs), or for additional explicit language instruction.

How do the Labs meet the developmental needs of primary learners?

Each of the components of the K–2 Language Arts curriculum (module lessons, Labs, and Reading Foundations Skills Block) honors the characteristics and needs of primary learners. Labs in particular are designed to help teachers ensure that all of their students get the time to play and explore, become immersed in exploring content, developing oral language, and practicing skills and habits of character that they need—both to live joyfully and to be fully successful and proficient. What follows is some of the research that points to the need for such focus:

- **Build Content Knowledge:** Students make meaning about the world and the content they are studying in diverse ways. Studies have shown that students who are engaged in projects that provide a variety of entry points (e.g., art, music, drama) into a single topic make more connections and are better able to engage in content-connected discourse with their peers (Halvorsen et al., 2012). The Labs provide these multiple points of entry around the module topic. As a result, students deepen their content knowledge and are more likely to meaningfully engage in the topic and have more spontaneous and authentic conversation about it with their peers.
- **Develop Oral Language:** Young learners love to talk. The Labs use this basic truth as a learning opportunity, harnessing student conversation as a learning tool to build content knowledge as well as foster language development. Research shows that when children are in control of an interaction, as they are in the Labs, they are more engaged. This engagement, which emerges from a sincere curiosity and personal stake in the conversation, leads to learning a greater number of words and more sentence structures. Students’ acquisition of language in play environments is especially potent in “guided play” scenarios, in which an adult has carefully created scenarios and provided materials to help lead students to predetermined learning goals (Weisberg, Zosh, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013).
- **Engage in Play and Social Behaviors:** Research shows that giving primary learners student-directed, collaborative spaces has a direct effect on their academic and social success. In a child-directed, play-based environment, children are more likely to “rise to the challenge” of negotiating complex social scenarios and exhibit levels of maturity greater than outside of these environments (Berk & Meyers, 2013). The Labs, which provide students with a large degree of independence, invite students to become their best selves, both in their own learning and in interacting with their peers.
- **Promote Executive Functioning Skills:** Labs give students an authentic need to learn and practice executive functioning skills, including setting goals, controlling attention, self-monitoring, organizing, and reflecting, that translate to other aspects of their learning and social lives. The Labs do this by dedicating time, instruction, and practice to goal-setting and reflection and also by immersing students in authentic, compelling tasks with highly engaging materials. Research indicates that development of executive functioning skills in early childhood is a strong predictor of academic achievement through high school (Berk & Meyers, 2013).

- Honor Multiple Intelligences:** Labs invite all students into the learning process through the use of multiple modalities and a variety of materials that may not be available in other parts of the curriculum. Children form their identities and identify their strengths by experimenting with a variety of activities and mediums, and they do this best in a playful and child-directed space (Eberle, 2011). As a result, a greater number of students are able to feel successful in their learning and, therefore, develop more positive attitudes about school, increase their engagement, and deepen their learning.

For ELLs, oral language is particularly important. It is the basis for reading with comprehension and writing fluency. Therefore, for ELLs, it is important to opt for more productive interactions and academically based conversations, such as those cultivated in the Labs. The Labs also provide opportunities for ELLs to participate in extended, task-based interactions with peers, with teachers present to provide guidance and feedback to support effective communication. This affords ELLs authentic opportunities to self-correct and to grapple with language to achieve specific goals. Second language development is enhanced when students negotiate meaning through collaboration on authentic tasks (Long, 1996).

What are the five Labs, and how does each promote proficiency and growth?

There are five distinct Labs. All are designed to promote student proficiency and growth.

Lab	How This Lab Promotes Proficiency and Growth
Explore <i>Students build background knowledge and immerse themselves in a hands-on exploration of the content they are studying in the module.</i>	Young children are natural explorers and scientists. They learn first by doing. The Explore Lab gives students a space for this. Students wonder, handle authentic objects and tools, and experiment. Students may try and fail, and then try again. The Explore Lab allows students to make meaning of abstract ideas and build content knowledge through hands-on, collaborative activities.
Engineer <i>Students represent their learning and/or attempt to solve a design dilemma by building or designing various types of two- or three-dimensional models related to content of the module.</i>	In an ever-changing and quickly moving world, we cannot yet imagine some of the careers, opportunities, and obstacles of the future. We do know, however, that certain skills will be invaluable to our students: design thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. In the Engineer Lab, students engage in the design process, independently and collaboratively, in order to solve problems and address wants and needs. Problem solving, content knowledge, and play come together as students become scientists, engineers, designers, and inventors.
Create <i>Students use a variety of media to artistically expand and represent their content learning through visual arts.</i>	As young learners' literacy skills continue to emerge, the Create Lab gives them the opportunity to express a range of content understanding through another modality: the visual arts. This medium helps students develop their fine motor skills, a sense of craftsmanship in their work, and the perseverance required to take a product through multiple drafts.
Imagine <i>Students use their imaginations to engage in play through role-playing and make-believe. Students take on, interpret, and become immersed in the content they are studying as they play and perform. In Module 4, Grades 1 and 2, students write and perform narratives.</i>	One of the most powerful learning tools at the disposal of primary learners is also one of the most obvious, yet most overlooked: play. Play provides a joyful context for students to build the vital life skills often more difficult to re-create in more structured learning environments: leadership, negotiation, decision-making, and executive functioning. Through content-connected play and storytelling, the Imagine Lab gives students the time and the tools (in both the concrete and abstract sense) to narrate their own worlds, grapple with complex ideas, and navigate social interactions.

Lab	How This Lab Promotes Proficiency and Growth
<p>Research <i>Students expand their understanding and knowledge of content through a range of research activities: They study pictures and photographs, watch videos, and conduct original research based on their own questions. As students acquire greater literacy skills, they are able to read a variety of texts to build content knowledge and write to build fluency and stamina. At all grade levels the Research Lab begins in Module 2. This gives students time to build strong reading and writing routines in other parts of the curriculum before expanding volume of reading and writing in the Labs.</i></p>	<p>Young learners have a lot of questions. Sometimes these questions are answered in the course of whole group learning, but often not. The Research Lab gives students the materials, the skills, and the space to pursue answers to questions. In the Research Lab, students have the space, time, and materials to answer teacher-generated questions or their own burning questions about the content they are learning in the module lessons. This pursuit of knowledge creates an authentic need for students to increase their volume of reading, build word and world knowledge, and communicate (in a variety of ways) their learning with others.</p>

How do the Labs reinforce and extend work from the module lessons?

Labs are scaffolded experiences with specific learning related to literacy skills, content knowledge, and habits of character. Each Lab connects to and extends what students are learning during the module lessons.

For example, in Module 1 of Grade 1 students are learning about tools. The literacy and content focus of the module revolves around reading and writing about tools, including the anchor text *The Most Magnificent Thing*. Students also spend time using tools. For the performance task at the end of the module, students design, build, and write about their own “magnificent thing” for classroom use. The four Labs for Module 1 deepen this work through more hands-on activities and play:

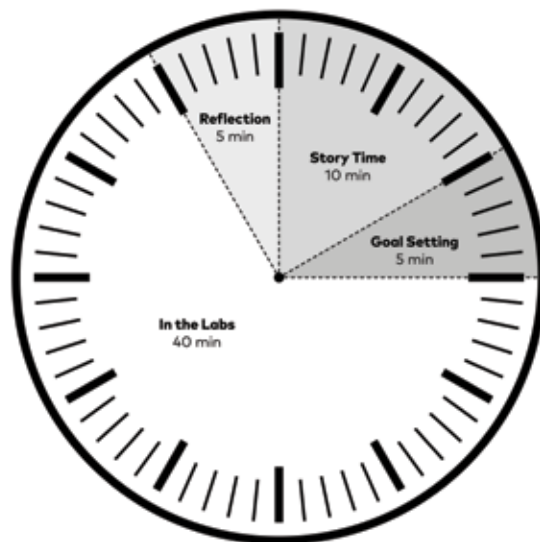
- In the **Explore Lab**, students experiment with moving a material (e.g., water, rice, or beans) from one container to another using a variety of tools. Working with a partner, they time their work, eventually determining the “best tool for the job.”
- In the **Engineer Lab**, students use a variety of materials to create their own “magnificent thing” like the character in one of the module lessons’ central texts. Students work with a partner to practice collaborating and working through a design process.
- In the **Imagine Lab**, students use blocks, puppets, dress-up materials, and writing spaces to create imaginative play scenarios, independently and collaboratively. They explore ways to bring the stories of the module lessons to life, or create their own stories based on narrative structures and content they are learning.
- In the **Create Lab**, students use real-world tools, or pictures of tools, as models, as well as a set of skills in their “Artist’s Toolbelt,” to create realistic drawings of tools (e.g., construction tools, cooking tools). They practice perseverance as they grapple with drawing lines and texture, and craftsmanship as they create multiple drafts incorporating peer feedback.
- *Notes: For any given module, students rotate through four of the five Labs. There is no **Research Lab** in Module 1 of Grade 1.*

How is the Labs hour structured?

As noted above, for any given module, students rotate through four of the five Labs. Each of the four Labs unfolds in a similar way across the entire module.

The hour-long Labs time is broken into four daily activities:

- *10 minutes: Story Time.* Students listen to a rich text read aloud (core instruction, aligned to **R.10**).
- *5 minutes: Goal Setting.* Students decide on and articulate what their individual goals are for the Lab(s) for that day.
- *40 minutes: In the Labs.* Students work in the Labs. Depending on the stage (see figure on following page), students may spend the whole time in one Lab or move between two Labs.
- *5 minutes: Reflection.* Students discuss and reflect on how their time went in the Labs. What went well? What might they still need to work on?

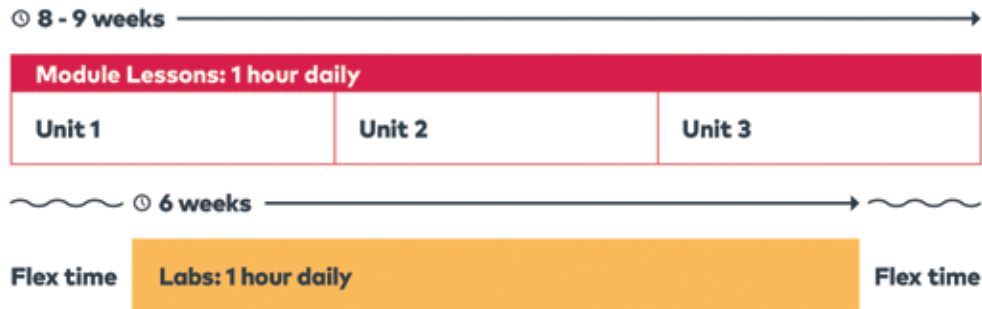


How do Labs unfold over the course of an entire module in order to build students' independence?

Labs unfold across an entire module. In any given module, however, just four of the five Labs are used. This design helps to limit the number of materials and overall preparation required at any given time. It also supports students by limiting the number of learning targets and helping them track the purpose, expectations, and materials for the Labs with which they are engaged. Finally, some Labs are a more natural fit for certain modules. For example, when first graders are studying light and shadow in Module 2, it makes more sense for them to explore these phenomena in the Explore Lab than in the Engineer Lab; therefore, the Engineer Lab is not a part of that module.

Each of the four Labs runs across the whole module and goes through stages. Among the stages are the Launch, Practice, Extend, and Choice and Challenge stages. The stages are designed to intentionally build students' learning experiences in a way that leads to a final product. Every Lab goes through the first three stages, but not every Lab goes all the way through the Choice and Challenge stage. Refer to the Labs Overview section for additional information.

For each module, Labs start a week after the module lessons begin and end a week before the module lessons end. This design allows teachers to use their discretion to flexibly schedule the Labs to best meet the needs of their classroom. Teachers may choose to spend that hour during those additional two to three weeks on such things as solidifying structures and routines, providing additional “spill-over” time to address learning targets from module lessons, providing additional instructional time for ELLs, or for additional explicit language instruction.



The overarching intent of Labs is to build student independence. Therefore, Labs are structured to gradually release responsibility from the teacher and gradually increase independence of the student across the six weeks:

- **Launch:** Students are introduced to each of the four Labs that are used during the module, including learning targets, materials, and expectations.
- **Practice:** Students continue to work toward the learning targets, explore materials, and practice the expectations established in the Launch stage.
- **Extend:** Each Lab becomes more complex in terms of the task, the materials used, and/or the level of independence in the student experience.
- **Choice and Challenge:** Students choose one Lab to specialize in at this stage. This stage culminates in creating a Labs product.

LABS: FOUR STAGES ACROSS A MODULE

Labs are scaffolded experiences with specific learning related to literacy skills, content knowledge, and habits of character. Each Lab connects to and extends what students are learning during the Module Lessons.

THERE ARE 5 DISTINCT LABS: Engineer, Create, Imagine, Research, Explore
For any given module, students rotate through four of the five Labs.

Complexity of the work and student responsibility increases over the 25-30 days of Lab lessons.

LAUNCH	PRACTICE	EXTEND	CHOICE AND CHALLENGE
<p>Whole Group: Students are introduced to each of the four Labs for a given Module (one day each).</p>	<p>Small Group: Students work in two Labs each day (for 20 minutes each).</p>	<p>Whole Group: Students spend two days of the Extend stage clarifying expectations for their work in each Lab.</p> <p>Small Group: Then students continue to rotate to two Labs per day with increased independence. Materials and/or task change for increased complexity.</p>	<p>Students choose one Lab to specialize in: work on a product, revise based on feedback, share.</p> <p>Small Group: They rotate to that Lab and Imagine Lab daily (exception in Module 4).</p>

In all four stages, Labs are an hour long and much of that daily schedule remains the same: Students always start with Story Time and then set goals; they always end with reflection. But across the four stages, the “In the Lab” time looks different, as students gradually increase in independence across the six weeks.

Labs Daily Schedule: Increasing Independence During “In the Labs” Time			
Story Time (10 minutes)	The first 10 minutes of Lab time—no matter the stage—is Story Time. Teachers have flexibility in these texts. Refer to the Labs Teacher Guide that accompanies each module for suggestions on texts and structure of these 10 minutes.		
Setting Lab Goals (5 minutes)	5 minutes is spent on goal setting during all stages. Refer to the Labs Teacher Guide that accompanies each module for specific learning targets and questions.		
In the Lab ¹ (40 minutes)			
Launch Stage: During the Launch stage, students are introduced to each of the four Labs for the module, one Lab per day. They learn the focus and routines so they are prepared for greater independence in subsequent stages.	Practice Stage: During the Practice stage, students work in two Labs each day (for 20 minutes each). They have greater independence than in the Launch stage as they rotate through the Labs. Students rotate through all four Labs during this stage. Teachers can sequence the Lab rotations in whatever way they think is best for their students.	Extend Stage: Students spend the first two days of the Extend stage in whole group lessons clarifying expectations for their work in each Lab before beginning a more independent rotation through two Labs per day. At this stage the materials and/or the task change for added complexity. Students rotate through all four Labs during this stage. Teachers can sequence the Lab rotations in whatever way they think is best for their students.	Choice and Challenge Stage: Students choose one Lab to specialize in. In this Lab, students complete a different task from the one they did the first time through the Lab. This task challenges them in a new way. Students work on a product, give and receive feedback, apply feedback, and share their final product.
Reflecting on Learning (5 minutes)	5 minutes is spent reflecting on learning and reinforcing habits of character every day during every Lab stage. Refer to the Labs Teacher Guide that accompanies each module for specific guidance on reflection questions and activities.		

¹ Specific guidance on what students experience during the Labs and how to prepare the materials is offered in the Labs Teacher Guide that accompanies each module. Teacher guides do not provide day-to-day lesson plans; however, a lesson plan is provided for the first day of a new stage when students are introduced to new tasks, materials, and expectations. Thereafter, students have ongoing tasks and goals for the remainder of the stage. A Labs Day-to-Day schedule is also included in the Labs Teacher Guide. This is the recommended schedule for implementing the four stages of Labs over the course of the module.

Throughout the “In the Labs” time, students work on different tasks throughout the room. For the most part, teachers circulate and support students in all Labs. However, some Labs, because of the complexity of the task or the materials involved, require greater teacher support than others. Teachers are called on to use their best professional judgment as to where to focus their time and energy. They can also utilize the provided checklists as they circulate to collect individual student data around literacy skills and habits of character.

How are students grouped in Labs?

During Labs, students are grouped heterogeneously, including ELLs. Lab groups should be balanced in regard to students’ abilities as readers and writers, their language development,

their work styles, and their strengths and needs in habits of character. All students have something to offer, and all students can benefit from others in some way. Students may surprise teachers in terms of what they can handle when given explicit modeling and sufficient practice.

Determining a grouping strategy for Labs is an important part of teachers' planning process. Because all of the Labs require varying levels of student collaboration, students will need to rely on one another to stay engaged and productive and to meet learning targets. Taking the time to create, support, and celebrate a collaborative learning environment supports students in this work. Refer to the *Fostering Character in a Collaborative Classroom* section in the back of the Module 1 Teacher Guide for additional information on creating a positive and collaborative classroom culture that is conducive to this work.

What might a day in Labs look like for teacher and students?

The scenario that follows describes a typical day for first grade teacher Ms. Sanchez and her students:

On Wednesday morning, Ms. Sanchez worked on Module 1, Unit 3, Lesson 2. After lunch, students begin work on Day 13 of the Labs (the second day of the Extend stage). Throughout the Launch and Practice stages leading up to this session, students have met the learning targets and become familiar with the basic materials for each Lab. They are ready for the new challenges in the Extend stage!

Before the launch of the Labs, Ms. Sanchez divided her class into four Lab groups. She created these heterogeneous groupings by carefully balancing students' academic strengths and needs, language needs, and habits of character. Each of the four Lab groups remains together through the first three stages of the Labs experience (i.e., Launch, Practice, and Extend). Grouping during the final stage—Choice and Challenge—is largely determined by student interests:

- *Bears (Anna and five other students)*
- *Birds (Elvin and five other students)*
- *Butterflies (Kristina and five other students)*
- *Bees (Omar and five other students)*

She has posted the Labs Daily Schedule so each group knows which two Labs they will visit today.

Ms. Sanchez begins singing the Labs song, a familiar way to signal that Labs are beginning. As students join the song, they move to a designated spot in the whole group meeting area near their Lab group.

Once students are settled, Ms. Sanchez introduces the book for Story Time, a story about a boy baking birthday treats in his kitchen. Before she begins reading, she invites to students to think about the questions: "What tools does the boy in this story use?" and "How does the boy collaborate, or work together with others, throughout the story?" Ms. Sanchez proceeds to read aloud the story, slowly, fluently, with expression, and without interruption, pausing occasionally to clarify unknown words or remind students of the focusing questions.

After reading the story, Ms. Sanchez directs students' attention to the Labs Daily Schedule. She invites students to find their Lab group on the schedule and then silently point to the Lab space in the room they will visit first that day. She reminds students of the learning targets and purpose for each Lab (both of which were introduced in previous Lab sessions). She then asks students to turn to a partner and, using a familiar sentence frame, articulate their goal for their time in that

Lab. She repeats this process for the second Lab students will visit. Ms. Sanchez invites students to dramatically put on their imaginary lab coats and their imaginary Lab goggles before transitioning to their four separate Lab spaces.

The Bears' first Lab that day is the Create Lab. Anna and her Lab group head to the Create Lab space, which Ms. Sanchez has already prepared with paper, pencils, colored pencils, magnifying glasses, a variety of tools (or photographs of tools), a laminated card with different types of lines, and an anchor chart about drawing different textures. Anna and her group get to work drawing, or revising, realistic pictures of tools, many of which they have encountered in the module lessons.

The Birds are headed to the Engineer Lab. Elvin and his Lab group go to the Engineer Lab space, which is filled with a variety of building materials: cardboard, paper bags, paper, pipe cleaners, string, tape, and scissors. There are also real-world objects (or photographs of objects) that serve as models: boxes with hinges and clasps, picture frames, a matchbox car organizer. Elvin is working with his Lab partner today. They need to collaborate in a design process that Ms. Sanchez showed them in the previous Lab sessions. Their design challenge: Use the materials of the Engineer Lab to re-create one of these real-world objects. Elvin and his partner get to work talking together to decide which object they are going to build, and then they begin choosing the materials they will need to build it.

The Butterflies begin in the Imagine Lab today. Omar wants to use the puppets. He set a goal of re-creating one of the stories the class is studying in a close read-aloud in the module lessons. Another student in Omar's Lab group wants to use the puppets, as well. At first, the two students cannot resolve who will use puppets first. However, Ms. Sanchez, who is checking in with the Butterflies, reminds the students of their conversations about respect of materials and peers, as well as their practice with collaboration. Omar and the other student decide to work together: They will first use the blocks to build a small stage and then create a puppet show together.

Meanwhile, the Bees are visiting the Explore Lab first. Kristina and her team are exploring a variety of tools that help move materials. Ms. Sanchez has set up this space with two large bowls, one filled with beans, a funnel, measuring cups, spoons, tweezers, and a stopwatch. Kristina and her Lab partner are trying to discover the fastest way to move the beans from one bowl to another and determine the best tools for the job. One student serves as the timer while Kristina uses the measuring cup to start moving the rice. After they have finished, recorded their results, and talked about the process, they decide to try again. They decide that the funnel may help them get the rice in faster, so they try it again.

Throughout this first part of Lab time, Ms. Sanchez has been circulating through the room, supporting students in their work and using a checklist to monitor their progress toward the targeted standards for each Lab. She has ensured that students are clear in their goals and use of materials. She has discussed with students their thinking behind choices they are making. She has helped students make connections between this work and the learning from their module lessons. And she has given students specific, positive feedback for their displays of habits of character.

After about 20 minutes of "In the Labs," Ms. Sanchez gives the familiar signal to clean up Lab spaces. Students reset their Lab spaces by putting materials back where they found them and storing their work in the designated storage space. Once Ms. Sanchez has determined the Lab spaces are cleaned up, she invites students to point to their next Lab space, think about their goal for that Lab, and then transition with their Lab group to the second Lab of the day. Students then begin work in their second Lab.

At the conclusion of the next 20 minutes, Ms. Sanchez once again gives the signal to clean up. She gives students specific, positive feedback around their organization and respect for materials. Once

again, Ms. Sanchez begins to sing the Labs song. As students join in the song, they return to the whole group meeting area. Once students are settled, Ms. Sanchez invites students to quietly reflect on the question: “What is something you did in the Labs today that you are really proud of?” Students give her a silent signal (e.g., a thumbs-up on their knees) when they have thought of something. When all, or the majority, of students have signaled, Ms. Sanchez uses a total participation technique for students to share their ideas. Omar says, “I’m proud of how Marissa and I solved our problem when we both wanted to use puppets to act out the story.” The teacher then asks, “What is something you want to do better tomorrow?” Again, students reflect quietly before sharing their goals for the next day. Kristina says, “The next time I visit the Explore Lab, I want to remember everything I have already learned about tools so I can make a better choice about which is best for the job.”

Frequently Asked Questions about the Labs

Given limited time and resources, why should I do Labs?

Labs are central to ensuring equity. Through hands-on learning experiences, peer-to-peer learning, independent exploration of students’ individual interests, and play, the Labs address a different, and complementary, way of accessing complex ideas, content knowledge, literacy skills, and habits of character than the module lessons can do on their own. This point of access is vital for the success of all primary learners.

What if small group work and purposeful play are somewhat new instructional practices for me? How can I ensure this time is productive for my students?

For primary learners, lack of productivity often is the result of one or more of three causes: a lack of engagement, a lack of understanding or clarity around learning goals, or difficulty with a skill required to complete a particular task. Labs are designed to help all students overcome these possible obstacles. The nature of the tasks, the materials, and the variety of mediums students are invited to explore are all chosen with a mind toward student engagement. Learning should be fun! The goal-setting portion of the Lab, as well as the overall design of gradual increase of student independence across a module, ensures that all students enter the Labs with a sense of understanding and purpose. To ensure student success, they need time to identify what their goal for the day is, and then clarify how they will work toward their goal. Finally, since all Labs require varying levels of student collaboration, peers serve as each other’s “first line of defense” when they encounter an obstacle in their learning. Taking the time to create, support, and celebrate a collaborative learning environment means students spend less time feeling stuck and more time working toward their learning targets. Refer to *Management in the Active Classroom* and the *Fostering Character in a Collaborative Classroom* section in the back of your Module 1 Teacher Guide for more general advice on how to manage small group instruction.

How can my students and I best manage materials?

In regard to materials, Labs can best be compared to traditional “centers.” If possible, each Lab should have its own space in the classroom, where all the materials are stored. If space is limited, each Lab could have its own container that students are taught to access and store at the beginning and end of their time in that Lab.

What discretion do I have to modify Labs?

Teachers may choose to alter the Labs to best meet the needs of their students. For example, a teacher may decide to omit a Lab if students are already doing something similar in a STEM or visual arts class, if certain materials are not available, or if students would be more successful with more limited choices. However, please note that if a Lab is critical scaffolding for the module performance task, then the Lab should not be omitted. Teachers may also modify the Labs to include more writing. For example, students could formally write up their notes from the Research Lab, write narratives in the Imagine Lab, or engage in more formal written reflection during the Choice and Challenge stage.

What if my school does not provide two hours for content-based literacy instruction?

EL Education’s Grades K–2 Language Arts curriculum is most effective when done in its entirety. Each part is a piece of a larger puzzle, working in concert to address the needs of all learners. Therefore, Labs are most effective if done every day in their entirety. Consider if other activities during the day could be shifted or removed to make space for this. If this is not possible, the next best option is to run Labs in their entirety (the full hour) a limited number of times per week (e.g., one hour, three days per week) rather than running just portions of a given Lab hour. This ensures that students experience all Lab components (i.e., Story Time, Goal Setting, In the Labs, and Reflecting on Learning).

How are teacher guides organized?

Labs unfold across an entire module; they do not directly correlate with the three separate units of the module lessons. This was intentional: It gives teachers more flexibility in when they begin and end the Labs for the module.

Teacher guides are organized first chronologically, by each of the four stages: Launch, Practice, Extend, and Choice and Challenge. Then, within each stage, the teacher guides are organized into the chunks of time that make up the Labs hour (i.e., Story Time, Goal Setting, In the Labs, and Reflecting on Learning).

The Labs Teacher Guide includes a section titled “In the Labs.” This section is divided into the four Labs (i.e., Create, Explore, Engineer, and Research). For the most part, the teacher guides do not provide day-by-day lesson plans; instead, a detailed lesson is provided for the first day of a new stage, during which students are introduced to new tasks, materials, and expectations. Students then have ongoing tasks and goals for the remainder of that stage.

How can teachers best support ELLs during Labs?

Labs are inherently supportive of ELLs: Students explore compelling content through multiple modalities and have rich opportunities to talk with peers about what they are discovering and are curious about. In addition, a variety of supports for ELLs are embedded within the Labs lessons and the supporting materials. These include (but are not limited to) anchor charts, schedules and task cards with picture supports, time to process alone and with peers, and sentence frames to support common verbal interactions (e.g., goal setting and reflecting).

What should I be doing during Lab time?

As noted above, throughout the “In the Labs” time, students work on different tasks throughout the room. For the most part, teachers circulate and support students in all Labs. However, some Labs, because of the complexity of the task or the materials involved, require greater teacher support than others. Teachers are called on to use their best professional judgment as to where to focus their time and energy. They can also utilize the provided checklists as they circulate to collect individual student data around literacy skills and habits of character.

How do Labs support a volume of reading? What do students read in the Research Lab, and what support will they need?

Accountable independent reading lives across all three hours of the comprehensive literacy curriculum (most formally, it is found in the K–2 Reading Foundations Skills Block). In the Labs specifically, especially in the Research Lab, students become immersed in content-based literacy as they pursue new information and answers to new questions about the content of the module. Students will need support in choosing appropriate texts from the range of levels provided, and then using those texts in service of the standards identified for that particular Lab.