

Publisher Background

Units, Tools, and Methods for Teaching Reading, Writing, and Phonics, Grades K–8

Overview

Lucy Calkins and her Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) coauthors aim to prepare students for any reading and writing task they will face and to turn kids into life-long, confident readers and writers who display agency and independence. Lucy and her colleagues have drawn on their more than 30 years of research and work in thousands of schools across the country and around the world to develop powerful curriculum resources, instructional methods, and professional learning opportunities to support teachers as they work toward these vitally important goals.

The Units of Study curriculum is much more than just a curriculum. When schools commit to the Units, they are committing to a specific kind of culture, one where the whole school community—administrators, teachers, kids, families—comes together as a community of practice with shared values in an environment of caring and trust. It's a community where everyone belongs and where kids are immersed in a world of rich literacy. It's a community where kids build knowledge and develop skills they will carry with them through their whole lives.

About the TCRWP

Over its long history, the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project has become one of the world's premiere think tanks for teaching and learning. The mission of the Project is to help all children become avid and skilled readers, writers, and inquirers. They accomplish this goal through research and study, curriculum development, and through working shoulder-to-shoulder with students, teachers, and school leaders. This important work has become the foundation for powerful reading and writing workshop instruction in schools across the country and around the world.

In addition, thousands of teachers in the Units of Study community regard the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project as a continual source of professional renewal and education. The community gathers online for monthly Office Hours sessions with Lucy Calkins and her coauthors. Well over 200,000 teachers have attended their week-long summer reading, writing, and phonics institutes. Twice a year, thousands of participants convene at TCRWP's Saturday Reunions, and thousands more participate in Workshops and Institutes across each school year.

Why Workshop?

TCRWP’s process of continuous fine-tuning and improvement has yielded a workshop framework with the perfect combination of whole-class, small-group, and one-on-one instruction, along with ample opportunities for independent practice.

Workshop teaching recognizes that “one size fits all” does not match the realities of classrooms and schools. When you walk into a Units of Study classroom at any given moment, you’ll see instruction supports focused, engaged learning for all students.

You’ll see:

- teachers addressing individual learning;
- explicit instruction of strategies;
- students who have been set up to work with engagement and independence—and teachers coaching individuals and leading small groups;
- a strong learning community that helps move all learners along trajectories of growth;
- coherence across reading, writing, and phonics in the form of content, habits, strategies, and instructional methods.

Instructional time is a precious and limited resource and, in many schools, a great deal of it is wasted on lengthy transitions as students switch from one activity to the next. The Units of Study embed a workshop approach that offers students highly predictable routines that are easily internalized. As these routines become automatic, students are able to switch quickly and independently between activities, thereby maximizing the amount of time available for actual instruction. By minimizing transitions and maximizing instructional time, the Units of Study curriculum makes room in the school day for all of the important components that go into a comprehensive approach to literacy.

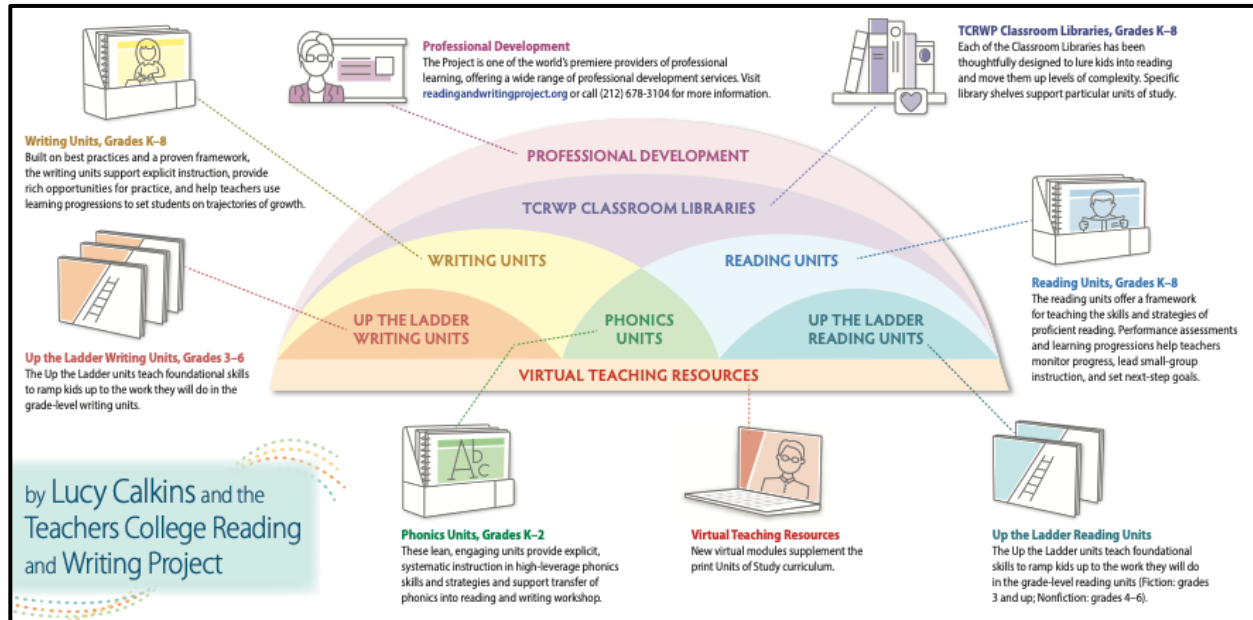
Units of Study in Reading, Writing, and Phonics

The Units of Study help all students become strategic, metacognitive writers and flexible, resilient readers who use particular processes and strategies to achieve particular purposes. Within a grade and across grades, units fit tongue-and-groove alongside each other. Together, they help students consolidate and use what they have learned to meet and exceed world-class standards for each grade.

The Units of Study in Reading, Writing, and Phonics were planned so that when a school is ready to embark on all, the units will support each other. The series are related in:

- the content they teach;
- habits they instill;
- strategies that are taught;
- instructional methods.

This infographic shows the instructional components that make up the Units of Study curriculum:



Evidence-Based Instruction / Proven Effective

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project is a think tank that has long built its ideas and practices off of established and new research. Review the Research Base document for a summary of some of TCRWP's key beliefs and practices as well as some of the research that informs those beliefs and practices.

Review the Research Base here:

http://d17j94wz7065tl.cloudfront.net/calkins/TCRWP_Research_Base_2021.pdf

In addition, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), a not-for-profit, independent research firm based in the greater Washington, D.C., area, recently completed the first objective, rigorous, quasi-experimental study of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project's reading and writing workshop and *Units of Study* curriculum.

The study used publicly-available aggregate state English Language Arts (ELA) data—spanning up to 10 years for some schools—and showed that beginning in Year 2 of program use, TCRWP implementation was associated with statistically significant positive effects on state ELA test scores. In addition, this difference became larger as time passed, suggesting positive cumulative effects of use of the TCRWP approach.

Review the AIR Study here: <http://d17j94wz7065tl.cloudfront.net/calkins/AIR-UOS-Study-Technical-Brief-2021.pdf>