

Introduction to ERWC 3.0

Developed through a unique collaboration between K12 and college educators, the CSU Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum (ERWC) was designed to prepare secondary school students for the literacy demands of higher education. To meet this goal, the original ERWC Task Force created a twelfth-grade course to support students in developing the critical thinking and rhetorical reading and writing skills needed to succeed in entry-level college composition classes. The first edition of the curriculum was published in 2008 with the second edition following in 2013.

We are now pleased to present the third edition of the ERWC—the edition created not by a task force, but by a multi-state literacy network. ERWC 3.0 includes 69 instructional modules developed by over sixty contributors. We've expanded the course to grades 11 and 12, included modules that facilitate integrated and designated English language development at grades 9-12, and created mini-modules for introducing the rhetorical concepts and skills that help students communicate across contexts. To those of you new to the ERWC, we welcome you to the curriculum and its professional community. You are joining a network of over 15,000 educators working to promote the postsecondary success of all students.

In this third edition of the ERWC, we offer not just new modules but new ways to teach texts rhetorically. We've enhanced the ERWC's rhetorical approach to include more attention to concepts such as audience, purpose, context, and genre and to the process of making rhetorical decisions and taking rhetorical action. We've also been more intentional about what it means to take an inquiry-based approach—to engage in dialogue, read with an open mind, and write as an act of discovery. Throughout the curriculum, you'll find expanded opportunities for students to do their own thinking and make their own choices.

We hope that in reading these modules and resources, you'll feel like you're in conversation with a group of caring and committed colleagues—teachers who are working hard to do right by their students and who can learn from your insights, too. There may be times when you see a better way to frame an activity or introduce a reading selection, one more suited to the needs and interests of your students. You are the one who will listen to your students, observe their growth, and adjust your instructional approach in response. You're the one who knows your students. We're relying on your professional expertise to adapt these materials as appropriate.

Key Principles

By its very nature, the curriculum privileges flexibility over formulas and choice over compliance. You'll see this in the ERWC's key principles, the set of beliefs guiding the curriculum's development and implementation. These include

- The integration of interactive reading and writing processes
- A rhetorical, inquiry-based approach that fosters critical thinking and engagement through a relentless focus on the text
- Materials and themes that engage student interest

- A student-centered approach that emphasizes student agency and metacognition
- Classroom activities designed to model and foster successful practices of fluent readers and writers
- Research-based methodologies with a consistent relationship between theory and practice
- Built-in flexibility to allow teachers to support students’ development as expert learners and respond to instructional contexts
- Alignment with California Standards for English Language Arts and English Language Development

Taken all together, the principles describe an approach to teaching and learning grounded in a deep respect for student agency and teacher expertise.

The Assignment Template

These generative principles are embedded in the ERWC Assignment Template: what we like to think of as the DNA of the curriculum. Here we find the ERWC’s core ideas and practices: reading and writing rhetorically, transfer of learning, the cultivation of expert learners, and English language development. All instructional modules are designed using this common template.

The repeated turns students take through the template over the course of a year-long experience affords them frequent opportunities to develop and internalize the rhetorical literacy skills and academic habits of mind that are essential to postsecondary success, such as the ability to read with and against the grain, to negotiate different perspectives and meanings, to analyze writer’s craft, and to respond to a variety of rhetorical situations. The spirals through the template are important and intentional; they support students’ growth as expert readers and writers.

At the same time, you might also think in terms of a “vanishing Assignment Template” when using these materials. As your students start to develop greater fluency and automaticity in key skills—for instance, surveying or annotating a text—you may no longer need to provide direct instruction in these areas. Some template sections will start to disappear from your lesson plans as your students progress from novices to experts.

Take the time to read the full Assignment Template and keep this big idea in mind: Through the ERWC Assignment Template, we model and engender the literate behaviors that support intellectual, personal, and civic engagement.

Designing a Year-Long Course

ERWC 3.0 gives teachers the opportunity to design cohesive year-long experiences that support students in making connections across texts, tasks, and topics. You can now build a course appropriate to your students’ needs and interests by choosing from among fourteen mini-modules, four portfolio modules (grades 11 and 12 only), and many full-length modules, including modules on books, issues, foundational documents, poetry, and plays.

Two design tasks are especially important: 1) pairing the mini-modules with full-length modules in productive ways; and 2) choosing modules according to learning goals and outcomes for a full year. Grade 11 teachers will also need to ensure students are well prepared for the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) summative assessment.

During the ERWC’s professional learning sessions, teachers are supported in selecting and sequencing modules in what is now a kind of “do-it-yourself” ERWC. There are several resources that can guide this process:

- Essential Pedagogies for Integrated and Designated English Language Development in ERWC
- Universal Design for Learning for the ERWC
- Formative Assessment for ERWC
- Teaching for Transfer and Engagement

Professional knowledge and collaboration are key to effective implementation. The ERWC is not a scripted curriculum. Teachers make strategic instructional decisions based on their knowledge of their students and their own professional expertise throughout the design and implementation of their year-long course. Remember: a key principle of the curriculum is “built-in flexibility to allow teachers to support students’ development as expert learners and respond to instructional contexts.” Anything less would not be rhetorical.

If you are looking for a way to enhance the flow of students’ year-long experience, you may want to create thematic pathways or extended lines of inquiry across the modules. For example, you may want to structure your course around a theme of social justice or a Career Technical Education (CTE) pathway, such as the field of health care. Or you may want to provide your students with extended practice in source-based argument writing or academic reading. Designing your year-long course with these kinds of connections in mind can extend and deepen students’ thinking from one module to the next.

Pairing Mods and Minis

A special feature of ERWC 3.0 is the addition of mini-modules that offer focused instruction in key rhetorical concepts and strategies. These mini-modules include “Introducing the Rhetorical Situation,” “Introducing Ethos, Pathos, and Logos,” “Introducing Genre as Rhetoric,” and “Analyzing Audience: Pathos as Inquiry.” The mini-modules are meant to be introductory experiences that build students’ rhetorical knowledge—essential knowledge for transfer of learning. Students then develop these understandings over time through extended practice and reflection.

By focusing on concepts such as genre and audience, the mini-modules afford students the language to describe what they are doing as readers and writers, particularly in regard to the choices they make in response to different rhetorical situations. These mini-modules are thus an important means by which the ERWC prepares students to read and write across contexts.

We encourage you to pair mini-modules with full-length modules in ways that allow students to deepen and apply their conceptual understandings and rhetorical literacy skills.

Teaching for Transfer and Agency

While the ERWC has always been about teaching for transfer and agency, we’ve tried to do even more in the third edition to put students in the driver’s seat. You’ll see opportunities for students to make their own choices about how to access and respond to the curriculum, more reflection and goal setting activities to support students in becoming expert learners, more English language development to engage and challenge culturally and linguistically diverse students, and more opportunities for the productive struggle that leads to independence.

That’s why the modules target depth and growth and why modules are organized around a shared set of transferrable literacy practices embodied in the ERWC Assignment Template. Look for opportunities throughout the modules to guide students in making choices that align with their learning goals.

Bringing the Curriculum to Life

ERWC students and teachers have more choices than ever. Decision-making is baked in to ERWC 3.0. You'll be drawing on what you know about your students and best practices to make instructional decisions, including decisions about which modules and activities to teach, and your students will be drawing on their knowledge of audience, purpose, context, and genre to make rhetorical decisions. They'll also be using their self knowledge to set and reflect on personal learning goals, and, in many cases, to choose appropriate options for culminating tasks. Through the choices you make about teaching and learning, you and your students will be co-creators of the implemented curriculum.

As you preview the module overviews, study the Assignment Template, and read the Theoretical Foundations, keep your students in mind. They're your best guide to bringing this curriculum to life in relevant and meaningful ways.

You are the expert on what works for your local context and classroom community. We trust you to use the best available means of engagement and instruction. After all, a rhetorical approach is nothing if not adaptive. And teaching for transfer is about playing the long game—about looking beyond the mandates of today to the learning that will still be valuable tomorrow.

So we ask you to lift this curriculum and transform it into vibrant social action.

Welcome to ERWC 3.0, the curriculum created by a community. This is your ERWC. We're excited to see what you and your students do with it.

Kind regards,



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