



# Dennis-Yarmouth RSD



## Instruction Office Newsletter

### TEACHING A CORE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILL: PERSPECTIVE TAKING

In this *Kappan* article, Hunter Gehlbach (University of California/Santa Barbara and Panorama Education) says the current attention to social-emotional learning will have a longer shelf life than other trendy topics. But Gehlbach cautions that implementing social-emotional learning in schools raises some important questions:

Which “soft” skills matter most? Students being caring, morally upstanding, purpose-driven, or empathetic? Which proficiencies can teachers actually change? For example, is it realistic that schools can make students more caring?

Aren’t some social-emotional skills really values that should be addressed by families?

The danger with social-emotional learning, says Gehlbach, is that we’ll “get excited about it, implement a handful of versions, find ourselves daunted by the vast array of components that need to be taught and assessed, become frustrated, and then move on to the next big thing.”

But Gehlbach believes this won’t happen if we focus on “a single, teachable capacity that anchors almost all of our social interactions: social perspective-taking, or the capacity to make sense of others’ thoughts and feelings. The motivation and ability to ‘read’ other people,” he continues, “vividly imagining their unique psychological experience, provides the compass by which we navigate our social world. This capacity allows us to interpret the motivations and behaviors of our friends and neighbors, or to see situations from the point of view of strangers, or to understand and appreciate values and beliefs that diverge from our own.

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### October 2017

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#### IMPORTANT DATES

October 6-	All Cape Professional Day, 8:30-2:45
October 9-	Columbus Day, No School
October 31-	Halloween

### Important Notice:

Central office is a fragrance-free zone so please be respectful and plan accordingly when you visit.

Due to one of our members at the CO being highly sensitive to any type of fragrance, we ask that staff visiting/meeting at the Administration building refrain from using any scented products. Fragrances from personal care products, air fresheners, laundry and other cleaning products have been associated with adversely affecting a person’s health. We ask that we all work together to make the environment a safe and healthy workplace for everyone.



Thank you very much for your cooperation!





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Without it, we cannot empathize, engage in moral reasoning, love, or even hold a normal conversation.”



Research suggests that perspective-taking is linked to less stereotyping of others, responding less aggressively to provocation, and developing better relationships with those with different beliefs – in other words, there’s a ripple effect to a number of other social-emotional competencies.

Gehlbach’s and others’ research suggests that perspective-taking can be taught in schools, if four key steps are followed:

- ✚ Mustering the motivation to take the perspective of people outside our immediate family and social circle – for example, a cashier, a driver who cuts us off in traffic, a former classmate encountered at a reunion.
- ✚ Choosing a particular strategy to use when “reading” the other person – for example, empathizing with someone who is terrified of giving a wedding toast (something you have no problem with) by thinking about waiting for a dentist’s opinion on a root canal.
- ✚ Coordinating the available data to make inferences about the other person – for example, reading body language and facial expressions together with verbal cues.
- ✚ After making inferences, evaluating if we’re on the right track, because it’s not easy to know what makes another person tick. “All we can do,” says Gehlbach, “is keep seeking feedback, keep trying to read people, and keep refining our impressions as we learn more.”

These skills are learnable, Gehlbach says, and they have a domino effect with other social-emotional skills. He believes perspective-taking can be integrated into any class at any grade level, and suggests three precepts for teachers to keep in mind:

• **MAKE IT A CLASSROOM EXPECTATION FOR STUDENTS TO TALK ABOUT OTHERS’ PERSPECTIVES.**

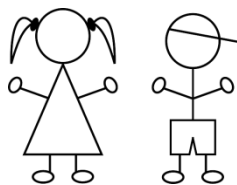
Teachers can ask questions like, “What are some possible reasons the British may have wanted to appease Hitler?” rather than “Why did the British

appease Hitler?” Students can also be asked to play devil’s advocate or restate a classmate’s opinion before responding to it. “When disagreements or interpersonal conflicts arise,” says Gehlbach, “it should be considered the norm for students to explain their side of the story and to listen while the other side explains theirs.”

• **ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO BE SOCIAL DETECTIVES, NOT JUDGES.** It’s easy for students to jump to conclusions about a teacher giving low grades because she’s mean or a classmate starting a rumor because he’s spiteful, but they can be weaned away from shoot-from-the-hip characterizations by asking questions like, *Why might she have done that?* or *What’s his version of what happened?* “The more students get in the habit of investigating others’ perspectives rather than rushing to judge them,” says Gehlbach, “the more skilled they’ll become at looking for clues that might illuminate others’ decisions and behaviors.”

• **PROVIDE LOW-STAKES OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE.** Perspective-taking is an unfamiliar process for many students, and it has to be okay to make mistakes as they learn.

“Once in the habit of trying to gauge other people’s ways of looking at the world,” Gehlbach concludes, “they will inevitably become more empathetic, more understanding, and more caring; they will become more thoughtful about how to navigate relationships; and they will become more likely to reach out across cultural groups rather than withdrawing into their own clique.”



“Learning to Walk in Another’s Shoes” by Hunter Gehlbach in *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2017 (Vol. 98, #6, p. 8-12), <http://bit.ly/2n6vzes>; Gehlbach is at [hgehlbach@panoramaed.com](mailto:hgehlbach@panoramaed.com).

## Jay McTighe on Test Prep

In this *NewseLA* article, curriculum design guru Jay McTighe warns that test prep can narrow the curriculum, undermine meaningful learning, dampen student interest and motivation, and, at best, yield modest, short-term test-score gains. What’s more, says McTighe, test prep “is grounded in





misconceptions that may, ultimately, undermine the learning that students need to perform well on standardized tests.”

Why is test prep so unhelpful?

**First**, test prep materials are made up of lots of decontextualized, multiple-choice items that focus on subset of the curriculum that will be tested in the format used by most standardized tests. This sounds logical, but in ELA, it has grave consequences: listening, speaking, and extended writing aren’t assessed in most state tests, but they are fundamental to literacy development. When test prep materials don’t cover them, students aren’t practicing skills that are vital to their future proficiency. In addition, a heavy focus on ELA, math, and science can lead schools to devote less time to social studies, the arts, and physical education.

**Second**, test prep often takes too much time explicitly teaching a number of test-taking strategies (for example, cross out choices you know are wrong, read all the choices before choosing your answer, always take an educated guess if you’re not sure, don’t spend too much time on one item) and train students to look for certain “trigger” words in tests (for example, *compare*, *distinguish*, *differentiate*, *major*, *significant*, *solve*). All this is sensible advice for handling a genre that students will experience throughout their school careers, but some schools way overdo the amount of time devoted to test-taking skills.

**Third**, McTighe says many U.S. educators fall victim to two misconceptions about test prep that lead them to engage in ineffective practices:

- ✓ **Misconception #1:** The best way to improve test scores is to practice the test. Consider this analogy: would we “study” for our annual physical? Of course not, because we want the data from the physical to tell us the truth about our day-to-day health habits and how we might need to change them. “But this confusion is precisely what we see in

schools all over North America,” says McTighe. “Local educators, fearful of results, focus on the indicators, not their causes.”

- ✓ **Misconception #2:** Since standardized test items are mostly recall and recognition in a multiple-choice format, drilling and practicing those skills in that format would seem to be the best way to prepare for tests. The problem is that local tests (and test prep materials) are often less rigorous than state and national tests, and rigorous multiple-choice items are more difficult than they seem at first glance. Item analyses of results from high-stakes tests reveal that the questions students most often get wrong are those dealing with higher-order thinking – inference and interpretation in reading, analysis and reasoning in math and science. “Such items often include distractors that present typical misconceptions, common errors, and flawed reasoning that will trip up test takers who only have learned by rote,” says McTighe. “Accordingly, low-

level, drill and practice is *not* the optimal instructional method for improving test scores.” An additional problem: when test prep materials tell teachers that their students have chosen the correct answer, teachers may assume their students have a conceptual understanding of the underlying concepts and skills and can apply them in a novel context – which is not necessarily true.

**Fourth**, there’s the opportunity cost of spending class time on test prep – time that could be used more wisely and effectively going deeper in core subjects and expanding students’ horizons in non-tested subjects.

**Finally**, students can become bored, disengaged, and cynical when they are force-marched through repeated drills on decontextualized items that aren’t engaging or relevant. “In short,” says McTighe, “it doesn’t matter how many practice tests we give; if the learners are not engaged or fail to see the purpose, their learning will not be optimized and performance







on high-stakes tests will not be bolstered... The use of precious classroom time for test prep can distort students' perception of the nature of schooling. They could easily conclude that a primary mission of schools is to improve test taking savvy and raise test scores rather than to strive for meaningful learning. Moreover, a focus on multiple-choice teaching and testing can convey the fallacious idea that navigating school and life is simply a matter of choosing the 'correct' answer from 4 or 5 alternatives!"

Much more important college and career readiness skills are discussion and debate, extended writing for real audiences, teamwork, creative problem solving, expression in the arts, and substantive research and experimental inquiry.

"Beware of the Test Prep Trap" by Jay McTighe in *Newsela Blog*, March 13, 2017, <https://blog.newsela.com/2017/03/13/jay-mctighe-beware-of-the-test-prep-trap>; McTighe can be reached at [jmctigh@aol.com](mailto:jmctigh@aol.com).

## Timothy Rasinski on Effective Early Intervention with Struggling Readers



"Let's face it," says Timothy Rasinski (Kent State University) in this article in *The Reading Teacher*: "Despite our best efforts over the past several years, despite various

policy initiatives at the national and state levels in the United States, despite the work of well-trained and highly motivated teachers and school leaders, despite the ever-growing body of quality literature available for children, despite a documented slow growth in overall reading achievement among fourth-grade students... we still have many children who struggle in becoming proficient readers." The most recent NAEP assessment found that 31 percent of fourth graders, 24 percent of eighth graders, and 27 percent of twelfth graders scored below the "basic" level in reading. This means they lack basic proficiency in reading comprehension – understanding vocabulary, locating relevant information, making simple inferences, and using their understanding of the text to identify details

that support a given interpretation or conclusion.

Why the persistent problem of so many children who are not reading well? Rasinski mentions poverty and family practices like reading to and with their children. "There are, however, specific competencies in reading for which schools take responsibility," he says, and focuses on two "essential and foundational"



competencies that he believes must be mastered between kindergarten and third grade: *word*

*identification* (being able to quickly and effortlessly recognize key words so attention can be devoted to meaning rather than decoding) and *reading fluency* (reading orally with appropriate expression and phrasing).

"If students continue to struggle in the upper elementary grades with competencies that should have been adequately developed in the primary grades," says Rasinski, "it is likely that those areas of concern will continue to plague students' overall reading proficiency... Lack of adequate development of basic foundational reading competencies is likely to snowball into more generalized difficulties in reading and in subject areas that are dependent on reading... Logically, then, the earlier we can help students achieve mastery in the foundational competencies, the more likely that students will be able to make good progress in comprehension and overall reading achievement in the early grades and well beyond."

Rasinski makes the case for "an authentic, intentional, intensive, consistent, and synergistic approach to word identification and reading fluency in kindergarten through grade 2 for all students." He unpacks each of the key elements:

- ❖ **Authentic – real reading of real materials for real purposes, for example, well-chosen poems (as opposed to reading words in isolation and practicing reading texts for the purpose of reading them fast);**
- ❖ **Intentional – instructional elements that have been shown to be effective;**
- ❖ **Intensive – delivered in an explicit manner;**





- ❖ **Consistent** – following a predictable protocol delivered on a daily or near-daily basis;
- ❖ **Synergistic** – by combining the proven elements of instruction, the effect of instruction on word recognition and fluency will be greater than the sum of its parts.

Rasinski cites Reading Recovery as an example of instruction that combines these five elements for struggling first graders.



Through all the primary grades, he says, much is known about effective instruction in word recognition – teaching words from texts being read, examining word patterns and rimes (word families), sorting words by critical features, playful practice with words, and classroom

word walls – and fluency – the teacher modeling fluent reading, assisted reading where the reader hears a text read fluently while reading it, repeated reading, and wide reading. These strategies, which shouldn't take more than 20-25 minutes of classroom time a day – become even more powerful when they are repeated and reinforced at home.

Rasinski goes on to recommend the Fluency Development Lesson – a daily 20-minute routine in which students are given the task of mastering a new 100-200-word text. The emphasis is not on speed but on appropriate and meaning-filled expression. Having chosen a good text, the teacher displays a copy; reads it two or three times with students following along silently; discusses the text and qualities of the teacher's oral reading; has students read the text two or three times chorally; has students, in groups of 2-3, practice reading the text with partners, getting help when needed; at this point, all students should be able to read the text fluently for an audience; the teacher then selects 5-10 words for quick word study activities such as finding other words that contain selected characteristics; finally, students read and discuss the text at home. Rasinski cites research showing that the Fluency Development Lesson is highly effective at

accelerating the reading proficiency of struggling primary-grade students.

"In my mind's eye," concludes Rasinski, "an effective foundational reading curriculum would occur in kindergarten through grade 2. Each day, students would receive the type of literacy instruction that would be considered exemplary:

- ❖ **Read-aloud by the teacher;**
- ❖ **Authentic reading of stories and dictated texts followed by meaningful response activities;**
- ❖ **Time to read and explore books and other reading materials independently;**
- ❖ **Instruction on how words work (phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study);**
- ❖ **Opportunities to engage in authentic writing.**

In addition to these critical instructional elements, students would also receive a daily synergistic fluency lesson such as the Fluency Development Lesson."

"Readers Who Struggle: Why Many Struggle and a Modest Proposal for Improving Their Reading" by Timothy Rasinski in *The Reading Teacher*, March/April 2017 (Vol. 70, #5, p. 519-524), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2nEgCBG>;

Rasinski can be reached at [trasinsk@kent.edu](mailto:trasinsk@kent.edu).



## The 6 Characteristics of Effective Praise

by [MiddleWeb](#) · 12/06/2015

By Barbara R. Blackburn

Most teachers regularly use praise in their classrooms. However, students can interpret praise positively or negatively. Let's look at six characteristics of effective praise, using a simple acronym:





## Effective PRAISE

### Positive

### Reinforces High Expectations

### Appropriate

### Independence Is Promoted

### Sincere

### Effort and Progress Are Noted

#### Praise Is Positive

First, praise should always be positive. That may seem to be self-evident, but I've observed teachers who said they were praising students, but it was done in a sarcastic manner, with the corresponding body language. This snarky approach undermines any positive effects of the praise.

You may think sarcasm is an effective tool to use, particularly with older students. I respectfully disagree. My experience is that, although students won't show it, deep down sarcasm reinforces any negative comments they've heard in the past. Again, too often, they experience enough sarcasm at home and from their peers. They need us to be encouraging and appreciative.

#### Praise Reinforces High Expectations

Next, praise should reinforce your high expectations. Notice I said HIGH expectations. If we praise something that is too easy for students, we can actually undermine their confidence. For example, let's say we give students less rigorous work so they can "finish it

easily and build their confidence," and then praise them for that work.

It's a strategy sure to backfire. They recognize they didn't do the same level of work as their classmates, and when we praise them, they understand that we are just trying to make them "feel better." In that case, rather than encouraging them, we are actually sending them the message that they aren't "good enough" to do the real work, and it undermines their confidence.

#### Praise Is Appropriate

Praise should also be appropriate. This encompasses several specific behaviors we should use. First, praise may be public or private. Sometimes students don't want to be recognized in front of other students. Choose whatever best fits your students' needs.

Next, praise may come in different forms. Sometimes you can praise students verbally, and other times you may want to use written praise. Written praise is particularly effective, as many students will share your words with their families or keep them to look at later. Lastly, praise needs to focus on what students do, not who they are. If we praise students for being the sister of a particularly strong student, we aren't encouraging growth, we are simply acknowledging the older sibling. Be sure you are praising students for the quality of their work, or their effort, rather than their looks, their family connections, or their personality.

#### Praise Promotes Independence

Next, praise should promote independence. If we aren't careful, students can become so attached to our praise that they can't be satisfied to simply do something well for the sake of it. We don't want them to be more dependent on us; we want them to be less so.

This means that as part of our praise, we should ask questions of our students. For example: "How do you feel about your work?" Then we can agree with their positive comments. Or, "I notice you are very successful with that assignment. What did you do?" and then praise those steps. Questions such as these encourage self-reflection and focus on the student's feelings rather than our own.







## Praise Is Sincere

Effective praise is always sincere. In other words, it's not false or faint praise, which students can identify in a moment. When we say "good job" and don't really mean it, or say it too often, it devalues praise and it undermines the trust students have with us.

Sincere praise comes from the heart. You mean it. It's authentic. And that comes through to students. It's also based in reality; it's not imagined. With sincere praise, you are identifying something specific the student has done or is doing, and that's what you praise.

Whether you are praising a successful action, or their effort, students know and appreciate the reality of the praise. When that happens, praise is meaningful to students.



## Praise Notes Effort and Progress

Finally, effective praise focuses on effort and progress rather than ability. Carol Dweck, in her book *Mindset*, provides research that supports this concept. She found that if students are praised for their ability ("you're so smart"), over time their effort and achievement decreases. But, if students are praised for their effort ("I can tell you tried hard and successfully read the paragraph"), over time their effort increases, as does their achievement. That's why it's important to consider how we phrase our praise.

When my stepson was in the sixth grade, he struggled with math. My husband was always telling him how smart he was, and that he could be successful. Then, one day, my husband heard me speak on this topic. He changed how he talked with Hunter, encouraging his efforts to learn the material. By the end of the year, Hunter was quite successful and scored above average on the achievement test.

## Praise can be a great motivator

Praise can be an effective tool to encourage students and to motivate them to continue to learn. However, we must use appropriate praise in order to accomplish this. By being positive, appropriate, and sincere,

reinforcing high expectations, promoting independence, and noting effort and progress, we can help our students thrive.

## Universal Design for Learning in Action

(Originally titled UDL: A Blueprint for Learning Success")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Spencer Salend and Catharine Whittaker (State University of New York/New Paltz) deconstruct Universal Design for Learning. UDL makes instruction accessible to all students in the same way that a ramp makes a sidewalk accessible to wheelchairs, strollers, bicycles, skateboards, and delivery carts. When UDL is executed skillfully, it meets the needs of a wide range of students by providing multiple means of:

- **Representation** – content is presented in a variety of ways;
- **Action and expression** – students can respond and show their learning in several modes;
- **Engagement** – teachers use a range of practices to boost student motivation.

Salend and Whittaker suggest seven steps for optimal implementation of UDL:

1. **Understand students' learning differences.** Before designing a unit and its component lessons, teachers need to get a handle on students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and their academic, behavioral, and social interests, strengths, preferences, and challenges.
2. **Conduct an ecological assessment.** This includes curriculum expectations, assessments, technology, class size, classroom layout, support personnel, collaboration with colleagues, and how students are accustomed to working with each other.
3. **Customize learning goals and objectives.** "Learning objectives may vary," say Salend and Whittaker, "in the amount of content to be learned, the level of difficulty of that content, the pace at which students are expected to learn, and the ways in which students are





expected to demonstrate their learning.”

4. **Identify possible barriers to student success.** Certain ways of presenting content may cause problems; there might be limits on how students are allowed to respond; and certain approaches might not motivate students.
5. **Select UDL solutions.** Taking into account the barriers, teachers need to find the best ways to present material, engage all students, and get them responding. For example, a teacher might use color, graphic organizers, and enlarged type size to highlight important information; incorporate animals to spur interest in particular students; use manipulatives; and get students working in small groups.
6. **Ensure that UDL solutions are well implemented.** This means monitoring timing, materials, technology, groupings, and implementation.
7. **Assess results.** The bottom line: how did the UDL plan affect student learning, behavior, and socialization? Artifacts might include tests, performance tasks, student work, teacher observations, interviews, and self-reflection.



“UDL: A Blueprint for Learning Success” by Spencer Salend and Catharine Whittaker in *Educational Leadership*, April 2017 (Vol. 74, #7, p. 59-63), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2oSIYK8>; the authors can be reached at [salends@newpaltz.edu](mailto:salends@newpaltz.edu) and [catharinewhittaker@gmail.com](mailto:catharinewhittaker@gmail.com).

## Getting Students Reading, Writing, and Thinking in Each Content Area

In this article in *Primer*, author/consultant ReLeah Cossett Lent acknowledges the pushback from some content-area teachers when they’re told to teach generic literacy skills in their classes. “Of course we want all students to read deeply, write with clarity and purpose, and use critical thinking to solve problems,” says Lent, “but mandating programs or generalized solutions without asking teachers what makes sense in their content area rarely gets us moving in the right direction.” There are big differences in how students read, reason, write, think, speak, inquire, and

participate in different content areas, and the disciplinary literacy movement needs to acknowledge that. Here are Lent’s suggestions for each subject:

### Science:

#### • When scientists read, they...

- Assume an objective stance;
- Ask why;
- Rely on data, sketches, and charts;
- Make connections from known concepts to new concepts;
- Determine validity of sources and quality of evidence;
  - Pay attention to patterns;
  - Make predictions;
  - Review and reflect;
  - Pay attention to vocabulary.

#### • When scientists write, they...

- Use precise wording;
- Compose in phrases, bullets, graphs, or sketches;
- May favor the passive voice;
- Seek exactness over craft;
- Communicate in a systematic format;
- Distinguish facts from opinions.

#### • When scientists think, they...

- Allow curiosity to drive learning;
- Look for connections;
- Understand when they need more data;
- Rely on prior knowledge or research;
- Consider new hypotheses or evidence;
- Propose explanations;
- Create solutions.

### History/Social Science:

#### • When historians read, they...

- Identify bias;
- Untangle conflicting perspectives and claims;
- Corroborate information and sources;
- Contextualize sources;
- Examine text structure;
- Compare and contrast events, accounts, documents, and visuals;
- Infer what is not explicit;
- Analyze and interpret.

#### • When historians write, they...







- Create timelines with accompanying narratives;
- Use information and evidence from multiple sources;
- Organize conflicting ideas or perspectives into a whole;
- Grapple with large quantities of information;
- Use the past as a mirror to the present;
- Summarize social or political consequences of an event.

#### • When historians think, they...

- Sift through fragments of information;
- Compare and contrast what they have been presented;
- Connect causes with effects;
- Synthesize events or ideas across long periods of time;
- Recognize bias;
- Think critically.

### Mathematics:

#### • When mathematicians read, they...

- Isolate information they have been given and look for information they need;
- Identify patterns and relationships;
- Decipher symbols and abstract ideas;
- Apply mathematical reasoning;
- Seek accuracy;
- Analyze, formulate, and interpret;
- Evaluate data.

#### • When mathematicians write, they...

- Explain, justify, describe, estimate, or analyze;
- Use representations;
- Seek precision;
- Use real-world situations;
- Communicate ideas clearly;
- Draw conclusions.

#### • When mathematicians think, they...

- Use all available information to solve problems;
- Consider generalizations and exceptions;
- Bring forth previous understandings;
- Know when to estimate and generalize;
- Employ mathematical principles;
- Engage in conceptual understandings.

### ELA or English:

#### • When students of English read, they...

- Find meaning through literary techniques;
- Identify underlying messages that evolve as a theme;
- Recognize bias;
- Use context to learn new vocabulary or words used in new ways;
- Summarize, synthesize, and analyze;
- Comprehend how devices such as tone, foreshadowing, or irony affect the text;
- Question the author;
- Make connections;
- Pay attention to the craft of writing.

#### • When students of English write, they...

- Use a process: drafting, revising, and editing;
- Understand how to flexibly use organization, details, elaboration, and voice to enhance meaning;
- Ask for feedback;
- Avoid formulaic writing;
- Employ literary techniques and devices appropriately;
- Use evidence;
- Avoid bias.

#### • When students of English think, they...

- Use reflection as a tool for understanding;
- Ask questions of the text;
- Compare texts or themes;
- Clarify through discussion;
- Use their thinking in speaking or written form;
- Make connections among texts, themes, or the real world.

Differentiating disciplinary literacy in this way, concludes Lent, “we can tap into the potential of every teacher to guide students in unlocking the mysteries of their content. No longer will teachers feel that someone has imposed literacy upon them, but they will discover the best literacy practices for their content, creating readers, writers, and thinkers who rely on their teachers’ expertise to gain access to content-area knowledge.”

“Disciplinary Literacy: A Shift in the Right Direction” by ReLeah Cossett Lent in *Primer* (from the Massachusetts Reading Association), June 2017 (Vol. 45, #2, p. 6-11), no e-link

