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Chapters 1-15 form a practical path from understanding the matrix to using it in reading and writing.

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THINK: Develop Meaning and Reasoning

THINK asks students to move beyond the literal. It includes inference, motivation, interpretation, explanation, elaboration, reasoning, reflection, and significance. In writing, THINK is often the place where a response either becomes meaningful or remains a summary.

- Question: Why does the narrator hesitate before speaking?
- Prompt: Explain why the narrator hesitates before speaking. Use evidence from the passage to support your reasoning.
- Composition prompt: Develop an argument explaining why the proposed change would benefit the community.

TOGGLE: Explain Relationships

TOGGLE focuses on what happens between ideas. Students may compare, trace cause and effect, analyze sequence, connect a claim to evidence, explain how setting shapes a character, or show how paragraphs build a conclusion. In writing, TOGGLE also supports organization and cohesion because writers must make relationships visible to the reader.

- Question: How does the setting influence the character's decision?
- Prompt: Analyze the relationship between the setting and the character's decision.
- Composition prompt: Compare the two solutions and explain how each would affect the community differently.

When a Prompt Uses More Than One Dimension

Complex tasks often require several dimensions. The teacher should identify the primary dimension - the thinking the prompt is mainly designed to reveal - and the supporting dimensions that make success possible.

EXAMPLE PROMPT

Analyze how the two authors develop different views of the same event. Use evidence from both texts to support your response.

Role	Dimension	Why it is present
Primary	TOGGLE	The student must analyze a relationship between two authors' views.
Supporting	TAP	The student must select evidence from both texts.
Supporting	THINK	The student must explain what the evidence reveals about each view.
Supporting	TAUGHT	The student applies taught knowledge about viewpoint and text development.

A Balanced Week of Writing Instruction

Day	Direct instruction and modeling	Student practice
Monday	Study a mentor text and model the target craft or composition skill.	Try the move in a sentence or short passage.
Tuesday	Model planning and drafting for a literary, informational, argumentative, or text-based task.	Plan and begin a draft.
Wednesday	Model revision for evidence, reasoning, organization, or craft.	Revise the authentic draft with focused feedback.
Thursday	Teach one convention in isolation and model how to apply it in context.	Practice the convention, then edit the draft.
Friday	Model sharing, reflection, and goal setting.	Share, publish, reflect, and identify the next Cognitive Address.

Keep Instruction and Practice Paired

Every skill students are expected to demonstrate should first be made visible through explanation and modeling, and every modeled skill should be followed by meaningful practice. A teacher guide becomes useful when it does more than describe quality; it shows the teacher how to teach it and gives students an opportunity to perform it.

KEYS TO KEEP

- The matrix supports complete writing instruction; it does not replace it.
- Explicitly teach and practice planning, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing.
- Teach conventions in focused lessons and require students to transfer them into authentic writing.
- Model literary, informational, argumentative, short, extended, and text-based writing with purposeful mentor texts.
- Pair every important teacher model with guided and independent student practice.

Teacher Scoring & RPLD Interpretation Guide

Score the thinking, not just the number correct

● Foundational	■ Emergent	▼ Visible	▲ Independent	◆ Reflective
(Beginning)	(Developing)	(Engaging)	(Independent)	(Highly Independent)

Three Sources of Evidence

Assessment evidence	What it measures best	Highest level it can support by itself	Teacher interpretation
Part 1	Recognition and discrimination among narrative choices	■ Emergent (Developing)	Correct answers show that the student can recognize effective narrative craft. Recognition alone is not evidence that the student can produce the craft independently.
Part 2	Guided construction of individual TRAILS™ elements	▼ Visible (Engaging)	The student's thinking becomes visible because the student must generate the element, but the prompt still tells the student exactly what to create.
Part 3	Independent integration and transfer	◆ Reflective (Highly Independent)	Independent writing is required to justify ▲ Independent or ◆ Reflective. Reflective additionally requires strategic, intentional craft and evidence of evaluation/revision/transfer.
Part 4	Broad revising/editing awareness	Supplemental only	Use to plan conventions support; do not lower a narrative thinking level solely because conventions are weak.

Teacher Scoring & RPLD Interpretation Guide

Score the thinking, not just the number correct

● Foundational (Beginning)	■ Emergent (Developing)	▼ Visible (Engaging)	▲ Independent (Independent)	◆ Reflective (Highly Independent)
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Three Sources of Evidence

Assessment evidence	What it measures best	Highest level it can support by itself	Teacher interpretation
Part 1	Recognition and discrimination among informative-writing choices	■ Emergent (Developing)	Correct answers show that the student can recognize effective TREES™ choices. Recognition alone is not evidence that the student can produce the craft independently.
Part 2	Guided construction of individual TREES™ elements	▼ Visible (Engaging)	The student's thinking becomes visible because the task names each component. Strong performance here does not automatically prove transfer into a complete response.
Part 3	Independent integration and transfer	◆ Reflective (Highly Independent)	Independent writing is required to justify Independent or Reflective. Reflective additionally requires strategic choice, self-evaluation, revision, or transfer.
Part 4	Broad revising/editing awareness	Supplemental only	Use to plan conventions support; do not lower a TREES™ thinking level solely because conventions are weak.

How to Assign a Level to Each TREES™ Strand

- Do not average the five TREES™ strands into one thinking level. Record each strand separately.
- Use the highest level supported by consistent evidence, not by one lucky selected response.
- If Part 1 is strong but Parts 2 and 3 are weak, the student likely recognizes the skill but cannot yet construct it independently.
- If Part 2 is strong but Part 3 is weak, the skill is Visible: it appears when the task names and structures it, but transfer is not yet dependable.
- If Part 3 shows the skill without prompting, Independent is appropriate. Reflective requires intentional choices, evaluation, revision, audience awareness, synthesis, or transfer.

A useful teacher question

Instead of asking “How many points did the student earn?” ask “What is the highest level of thinking this student can demonstrate consistently in this TREES™ strand, and what is the least support needed to help the next level appear?”