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Learn 2 Read Read 2 Learn®

K-8 Literacy Curriculum & Standards Guide

Clear Connections = Brighter Futures



Valedictorian

K-8 Literacy Curriculum & Standards Guide

English Language Arts, Listening Comprehension, Fluency, Writing, and Academic Identity

Valedictorian
Read to a Dog!

Boost reading confidence and help shelter dogs find forever homes!



- 1 Choose a book you're comfortable reading aloud.
- 2 Call (520)796-6323.
- 3 Enter **CENSORED**. Start reading aloud!

Read as many times as you'd like... every story helps a shelter dog feel calm and loved.



Valedictorian
Dial-a-Story

Listen to Valedictorian anytime, read by the author!



- 1 Call (520)796-6323.
- 2 Enter **CENSORED** to hear the story.
- 3 Listen to the story and follow along in your book.

Perfect for children who can't yet read on their own!

Required Core Text: Valedictorian by Guy Lodge

Designed for Arizona ESA families, home education, schools, and enrichment programs

1
READ
Be Inspired

2
LISTEN
Build Understanding

3
PRACTICE
Read With Purpose

4
REFLECT
Apply and Grow

One Story. Deeper Learning at Every Grade.

The text stays the same. The cognitive demand grows. Younger students listen, retell, build vocabulary, and connect the story to their own goals. Upper elementary students analyze theme, summarize, write, and apply academic habits. Middle school students cite evidence, analyze author choices, compare text and audio, argue from evidence, and reflect on academic identity.

1. Program Overview

Valedictorian is the required core text for the Valedictorian K–8 Literacy Program, a flexible English Language Arts course for Kindergarten through Grade 8. Using one story at increasing levels of complexity, students build reading and listening comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, writing, speaking and listening, literary analysis, goal-setting, and academic identity.

Designed as a four-unit course, the program allows families and educators to select grade-band tasks that match each student’s ability, so the same text can support beginning, upper-elementary, and middle-school readers at appropriately different levels.

Required Core Text

Valedictorian by Guy Lodge is used throughout the curriculum for reading, listening, comprehension, vocabulary, writing, discussion, and analysis.

Included Learning Supports

Dial-a-Story provides modeled reading and repeated listening by phone, while Read to a Dog gives students purposeful oral-reading practice. Both extend engagement with the core text throughout the course.

Recommended Companion Resource

Valedictorian: The Workbook provides additional grade-appropriate practice in reading, writing, vocabulary, comprehension, self-reflection, and goal-setting for students in Kindergarten through Grade 8.

Course Information

Course Title	Valedictorian: Literacy, Listening Comprehension, and Academic Identity
Grade Range	Kindergarten through Grade 8
Primary Subject	English Language Arts
Integrated Skills	Reading, writing, speaking and listening, vocabulary, fluency, reflection, goal-setting
Suggested Length	4 weeks, 2-3 lessons per week
Lesson Length	K-2: 20-30 minutes Grades 3-5: 30-40 minutes Grades 6-8: 40-50 minutes

2. Why Valedictorian Works Across K-8

The educational value comes from what the student is asked to do with the text. The curriculum intentionally increases the level of reasoning, independence, writing, and evidence required as students move through the grade bands.

Grade Band	Primary Focus	Student Work	Evidence of Learning
K-2	Understand and retell	Listen, identify key details, sequence events, practice vocabulary, respond with drawings and short writing	Oral retell, picture response, sentence response, fluency practice
3-5	Analyze and apply	Summarize, determine theme, use context clues, cite story details, compare text and audio, connect habits to goals	Paragraph responses, summaries, vocabulary work, goal plan
6-8	Interpret and argue	Analyze theme and author message, cite evidence, examine word choice and tone, compare media, write arguments and reflections	Evidence-based responses, discussion, analytical writing, academic identity project

K-8 Learning Objectives

- Understand and respond to key ideas and details.
- Build vocabulary and reading fluency.
- Discuss ideas, ask questions, and support responses.
- Analyze effort, discipline, goals, and academic identity.
- Write to summarize, explain, analyze, argue, and reflect.
- Set a personal academic goal and identify actions to achieve it.

Arizona ESA Documentation Note

ADE currently states that reading books are supplementary materials and that the title of each reading book must appear in the curriculum. This guide specifically identifies Valedictorian as the required core text and directly connects the book to the lessons and learning objectives below.

3. Unit 1: Discover Academic Excellence

Essential Question

What does it mean to see yourself as a capable learner, and what habits help you grow?

Learning Objectives

- Activate prior knowledge about goals, school success, effort, and achievement.
- Build understanding of key vocabulary connected to academic identity.
- Identify important details, characters, actions, and ideas in the story.
- Connect the story to the student's own learning experiences.

Core Learning Sequence

1. Preview the title and cover. Discuss valedictorian and qualities of a strong student.
2. Read Valedictorian aloud, together, or independently based on grade and reading level.
3. Pause at natural points to discuss key details and the story's message about achievement.
4. Create a vocabulary list: valedictorian, excellence, goal, effort, discipline, practice, confidence, and achievement.
5. End with a short response: "One thing a successful learner does is..."

Dial-a-Story Connection

Use Dial-a-Story before or after reading. Younger students listen for **sequence and repeated words**; older students examine **pacing, expression, emphasis, and meaning**.

Differentiate by Grade Band

Grade Band	Student Work	Output
K-2	Draw the beginning, middle, and end. Name one quality of a strong student. Practice 3-5 vocabulary words.	Oral retell plus one illustrated sentence.
3-5	Summarize the story. Identify its message using two details. Define vocabulary in context.	One paragraph explaining the story's message.
6-8	Identify a theme, cite evidence, and explain how actions develop ideas about achievement and identity.	Evidence-based analytical response.

4. Unit 2: Listen, Read, and Build Fluency

Essential Question

How can repeated listening and repeated reading improve understanding, expression, and confidence?

Learning Objectives

- Compare reading with a fluent audio model.
- Practice accuracy, pacing, phrasing, and expression.
- Build vocabulary and comprehension through repeated reading.
- Reflect on how fluency communicates meaning.

Core Learning Sequence

1. Listen to a section of Valedictorian through Dial-a-Story while following along.
2. Reread a short section for accuracy, phrasing, and expression.
3. Discuss what the narrator emphasizes and how voice, pacing, or pauses affect meaning.
4. Explore 3–5 words or phrases that contribute to meaning or tone.
5. Complete a brief self-rating: accuracy, expression, confidence, and understanding.

Dial-a-Story Connection

Dial-a-Story provides the fluent-reading model. Students can listen repeatedly, compare it with their own reading, and revisit challenging sections.

Differentiate by Grade Band

Grade Band	Student Work	Output
K-2	Echo-read 1–2 sentences. Respond to punctuation. Identify a favorite word or phrase.	Short oral reading plus teacher or parent observation.
3-5	Reread a passage. Mark pauses and emphasized words. Explain how expression affects meaning.	Fluency reflection plus comprehension response.
6-8	Compare how text and audio communicate tone, emphasis, and meaning. Cite specific examples.	Short comparative analysis.

5. Unit 3: From Inspiration to Action

Essential Question

How do goals become actions, and how do daily choices shape academic identity?

Learning Objectives

- Identify habits and choices associated with growth and academic success.
- Connect story ideas to a personal, measurable academic goal.
- Use writing to explain, reflect, and plan.
- Practice speaking and listening through discussion of goals and strategies.

Core Learning Sequence

1. Revisit parts of Valedictorian that connect achievement with effort and persistence.
2. Identify actions students can control to support success.
3. Choose an academic goal for the next 30 days.
4. Create an action plan with three steps and a way to track progress.
5. Share the plan with a parent, teacher, sibling, or learning partner.

Dial-a-Story Connection

Relisten to the story or a selected section before writing the goal plan. Students should identify one idea from the audio that motivates or informs their plan.

Differentiate by Grade Band

Grade Band	Student Work	Output
K-2	Complete: "I want to get better at..." and draw two things you can do to practice.	Illustrated goal card and oral explanation.
3-5	Write one measurable goal and three action steps. Explain which story idea connects to the goal.	One-page goal plan.
6-8	Write a reflection explaining the kind of student you are becoming, the habits required, obstacles you may face, and strategies you will use.	Multi-paragraph academic identity reflection.

6. Unit 4: Read With Purpose and Show What You Learned

Essential Question

How can reading, reflection, and action turn a story into something we practice?

Learning Objectives

- Apply oral reading skills with purpose.
- Connect the story's message to personal goals.
- Demonstrate comprehension, communication, and reflection.
- Recognize growth in reading and academic identity.

Core Learning Sequence

1. Practice a passage aloud for accuracy, phrasing, and expression.
2. Use Read to a Dog or another appropriate audience.
3. Review work from Units 1–3 and identify one area of growth.
4. Complete a grade-appropriate final project.
5. Present the project and share one idea from Valedictorian to carry forward.

Dial-a-Story Connection

Listen one final time and identify something new you noticed. This reinforces the value of revisiting a text.

Differentiate by Grade Band

Grade Band	Student Work	Output
K-2	Create a Valedictorian in Training poster showing three strong-learner habits and read a favorite passage aloud.	Poster plus oral presentation.
3-5	Create a vision board or success plan using a theme, story evidence, and action steps.	Written and visual final project.
6-8	Decide whether being a valedictorian is a title or a set of habits and choices. Support your position with evidence.	Argument or presentation supported by evidence.

Recommended Project Support

The Oversized Valedictorian Vision Board Activity (24" × 36") may support the Unit 4 final project. Students can use it to identify goals, strengths, habits, action steps, and future aspirations before completing or presenting their final work.

7. Assessment and Student Portfolio

Assessment should match the student's grade band and document growth in comprehension, fluency, writing, discussion, and application.

Suggested Portfolio

- Unit 1 response
- Vocabulary notes
- Unit 2 fluency reflection
- Unit 3 goal or identity reflection
- Unit 4 final project
- Parent/educator notes, if used

Simple Performance Rubric

Skill	4 - Strong	3 - Proficient	2 - Developing	1 - Beginning
Comprehension	Explains ideas with strong evidence.	Explains main ideas with relevant detail.	Shows partial understanding.	Needs help identifying main ideas.
Fluency	Reads smoothly, accurately, and expressively.	Reads accurately with appropriate pacing.	Reading is uneven or supported.	Requires substantial reading support.
Writing	Clear, organized, and well supported.	Complete and grade-appropriate.	Partially complete or supported.	Minimal response or significant support needed.
Discussion	Listens, builds on ideas, and responds clearly.	Participates and explains ideas.	Participates with prompting.	Requires substantial prompting.
Application	Strongly connects the story to goals and actions.	Connects the story to a personal goal.	Makes a general connection.	Needs help making a connection.

Progress Check

- Can the student explain the story's main idea?
- Can the student support an idea with text evidence?
- Can the student explain or use key vocabulary?
- Has oral reading become more accurate, smooth, or expressive?
- Can the student connect the story to an academic goal?

8. Arizona English Language Arts Alignment

Arizona's English Language Arts standards organize grade-specific literacy learning across Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. This curriculum uses those same strands and increases the expected depth of work across K-2, Grades 3-5, and Grades 6-8.

ELA Strand	K-2 Application	Grades 3-5 Application	Grades 6-8 Application
Reading	Ask and answer questions, retell, sequence, identify key details and central message.	Summarize, determine theme, explain characters and events, cite story details	Cite evidence, analyze theme, examine author choices, compare interpretations
Writing	Draw, dictate, or write short responses and personal connections.	Write summaries, explanations, opinions, and goal plans with supporting details.	Write analytical, argumentative, and reflective responses supported by evidence.
Speaking and Listening	Listen to a read-aloud, follow directions, ask questions, share ideas.	Participate in discussions, summarize spoken information, present ideas clearly.	Engage in collaborative discussion, evaluate ideas, present claims and evidence.
Language	Build vocabulary, use words in context, practice complete sentences.	Use context clues, word relationships, precise vocabulary, and gradeappropriate conventions.	Analyze word choice and tone, and use precise academic language.

Standards Use

This guide provides standards-aligned skills rather than a rigid daily script. Adjust pacing and task depth to the student's grade, reading level, and needs. See Appendix A for representative Arizona ELA standard codes.

9. Arizona ESA Curriculum Documentation Page

Vendor-provided curriculum documentation; not an Arizona Department of Education form.

Complete the fields below and submit only when curriculum documentation is requested.

Student Name	_____
ESA Application ID	_____
Grade	_____
Subject	English Language Arts / Reading / Writing / Speaking and Listening
Course of Study / Curriculum Title	Valedictorian: Literacy, Listening Comprehension, and Academic Identity
Required Core Text	Valedictorian by Guy Lodge

Learning Objective

Use Valedictorian to strengthen reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, communication, and age-appropriate analysis while connecting academic habits and goals to personal learning.

Instructional Methods & Activities

- Read Valedictorian aloud, collaboratively, or independently at the student's level.
- Use Dial-a-Story for modeled reading, repeated listening, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Complete grade-band activities in reading, writing, discussion, and analysis.
- Practice oral reading through Read to a Dog or another purposeful audience.
- Complete goal-setting, academic identity, and final-project activities.

Materials

Required: Valedictorian by Guy Lodge

Included: Dial-a-Story and Read to a Dog

Recommended: Writing tools, Valedictorian: The Workbook for K-8, and the Oversized Valedictorian Vision Board Activity (24" × 36")

ESA Purchase Description

Valedictorian by Guy Lodge is the required core text for the Valedictorian K-8 Literacy Program. The curriculum uses the book to develop comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, communication, writing, literary analysis, and goal-setting. Dial-a-Story supports modeled and repeated reading, while Read to a Dog provides oral-reading practice.

10. Family Quick-Start Guide

Choose the grade-band activities that fit your student. Use the four units to move from understanding the story to applying its message.

Week	Focus	Do This	Save This
1	Discover	Read or listen to Valedictorian. Build vocabulary and retell, summarize, or analyze the story.	Unit 1 response
2	Build Fluency	Use Dial-a-Story for repeated listening and reading. Practice accuracy, pacing, and expression.	Fluency reflection
3	Apply	Connect the story to a personal goal and create action steps.	Goal plan
4	Show Growth	Complete your vision board. Show your strengths, goals, habits, and next steps.	Vision Board + Reflection

Discussion Prompts by Grade Band

K-2

- What is a valedictorian?
- How did a character show effort?
- What is one thing you want to get better at?

Grades 3-5

- What is the story's main message?
- What details support that message?
- What habit from the story could help you reach a goal?

Grades 6-8

- What does the story suggest about identity and achievement?
- Which details most strongly develop its theme?
- Is excellence an outcome or a pattern of habits? Defend your answer.

11. Curriculum Basis and Current ESA Notes

This curriculum is built around the Valedictorian Literacy Ecosystem, connecting Valedictorian with Dial-a-Story, Read to a Dog, and Valedictorian: The Workbook. Together, these resources support academic identity, comprehension, fluency, oral reading, vocabulary, goal-setting, and reflection.

Current Arizona Department of Education guidance states that supplementary materials must be required or recommended by a curriculum and that reading-book titles must be specifically identified. Purchased or off-the-shelf curricula may stand on their own when they contain the required documentation elements.

Arizona English Language Arts (ELA) standards establish grade-specific expectations across Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. This guide applies those strands across K–8 while allowing families to adjust pacing and task complexity to the student’s needs.

Important

EESA guidance reviewed September 2026. Policies and documentation requirements may change. Families should consult the current ADE ESA Parent Handbook and ESA Support guidance before submitting purchases. This curriculum documents the educational purpose and recommended use of Valedictorian and its supporting resources; final eligibility and purchase determinations remain subject to ADE review.

Source: [Arizona Department of Education, ESA Support; curriculum and supplementary-material guidance. Reviewed September 2026.](#)

Curriculum Developed by

Learn 2 Read Read 2 Learn ®

Core Text

Valedictorian by Guy Lodge

Guide

Valedictorian K-8 Literacy Curriculum & Standards Guide, September 2026

One story. Four connected experiences. One mission: build lifelong readers.

Appendix A. Representative Arizona ELA Standards Alignment

The examples below show how selected Arizona ELA standards align with the Valedictorian K–8 Literacy Program. They are representative, not exhaustive. Use the grade-specific standards applicable to the student.

K-2	K.RL.1-2	Ask and answer questions about key details; retell familiar stories.
	K.RF.4	Read emergent text with purpose and understanding.
	K.SL.2 / K.W.8	Respond to read-alouds and use recalled information to answer questions.
	Program connection: retell, vocabulary, modeled listening, oral response, drawing, and short writing.	
3-5	3.RL.1-2	Refer to the text when answering questions; recount and determine the central message.
	3.RF.4 / 5.RF.4	Read accurately and fluently to support comprehension.
	5.RL.1-2	Quote accurately, determine theme, and summarize.
	5.W.1 / 5.SL.2	Write supported responses and summarize information presented through media.
	Program connection: Summary, theme, evidence, fluency, text-audio comparison, discussion, and goal planning.	
6-8	6.RL.1-2	Cite evidence, determine theme or central idea, and summarize objectively.
	6.RL.7 / 6.SL.2	Compare text with audio or visual media and interpret presented information.
	6.W.1 / 8.W.1	Write arguments using clear reasoning and relevant evidence.
	8.RL.1-2	Use strong evidence and analyze theme development.
	8.SL.1	Participate effectively in collaborative discussions.
	Program connection: literary analysis, audio comparison, evidence-based writing, discussion, argument, and academic identity reflection.	

Source: Arizona Department of Education, Arizona English Language Arts Standards. Representative alignment only. Alignment does not imply Arizona Department of Education endorsement or approval of this curriculum. Standards source reviewed September 2026.