Promoting Volume of Reading to Build Knowledge

The third advance in college and career readiness (CCR) standards is "building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction." This is critically important for its power to accelerate student growth. It is developed through curriculum material and lesson planning in several ways:

- **Building knowledge through exposing students to high-quality informational text.** The CCR standards privilege reading informational texts and are explicit about the importance of students being able to glean knowledge from what they read. Selecting texts for careful study from the content areas of history, social studies, technical subjects, and science (named in the CCR literacy standards) can promote this learning.

- **Offering additional readings on the same topic as the text from the lesson.** Staying with a topic and building expertise regarding it is a powerful way to accelerate knowledge, acquire vocabulary, and strengthen reading comprehension.

- **Requiring students to read independently at their own level of proficiency.** Students need more practice than they get during direct instruction to improve their reading ability. Reading independently is the most powerful way to increase both vocabulary and reading fluency. Students who are not yet comfortable or confident readers may need to be held accountable by instructors for engaging in independent reading. Materials should support independent reading by providing recommendations for texts related to what is being studied in class or high-interest texts on general topics.

Finding Additional Readings on the Same Topic

1. *General Tips on Finding and Selecting Additional Texts*
   - Consider materials that are available in print and digital formats.
   - Book excerpts can be superb short texts.
   - Primary documents, videos, graphics, charts, and photos can enhance your collection and engage your students.
   - Consider the complexity, quality, and relevance of each suggested text or resource.
   - Don't be discouraged if information from different articles overlaps. This is a plus, not a problem. What is known helps connect to what is new; repetition is key to learning new academic vocabulary that is not learned in direct instruction.

2. *Resource Examples*
- **Encyclopedias and Reference Sources**
    - World Book Online – Scott Fetzer
        - www.worldbookonline.com
    - Encyclopedia Britannica Online
        - www.britannica.com
    - Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia and Encyclopedia Americana (Scholastic Grolier Online)
        - http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/grolier
    - New Book of Popular Science (Scholastic Grolier Online)
        - http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/grolier
    - Oxford Reference Online (Oxford University Press)
        - www.oxfordreference.com

- **Library Catalogs, Vetted Lists, Reviews, and Bibliographic Information**
    - OCLC WorldCat
        - www.oclc.org/worldcat.en.html
    - Library of Congress
        - www.loc.gov
    - Your local public library
    - American Library Association, Association for Library Service to Children, Young Adult Library Services Association, American Association of School Librarians, American Association for the Advancement of Science
        - www.ala.org; http://www.ala.org/yalsa/
    - School Library Journal, The Horn Book, Young Voices
        - www.slj.com; www.hbook.com; http://youngvoicesadvocates.com
    - Amazon, Powell's Books, Google Books, and other booksellers
        - www.amazon.com; www.powells.com; https://books.google.com

- **Periodical Databases**
    - ProQuest
        - www.proquest.com
    - SIRS Discoverer (ProQuest/Scholastic)
        - http://ars.sirs.com/discoverer.html
    - EBSCO*host* (EBSCO)
        - www.ebscohost.com
    - NewsBank
        - www.newsbank.com

- **Web-Based Resources**
  - U.S. government websites
  - Museum and library websites
  - Academic and research institute websites
  - Other nonprofit organizations' websites (Beware: Many of these have a strong and sometime hidden ideological agenda.)
  - Project Gutenberg
    - www.gutenberg.org

Research in Support of Reading Volume and Building Knowledge

1. Recht, D. R., & Leslie, L. (1988). Effect of prior knowledge on good and poor readers' memory of text. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *80*(1), 16.

   Relevant finding: Knowledge of a topic led to dramatically improved reading comprehension.

2. Willingham, D. T. (2006). How knowledge helps. *American Educator*, *30*(1), 30-37.

   Relevant finding: The piece synthesizes and summarizes a vast body of research to show how knowledge of a subject aids thinking, memory, and learning of new information.

3. Kintsch, W. (1998). *Comprehension: A Paradigm for Cognition*. Cambridge University Press.

   Relevant finding: In this seminal work, Kintsch develops a model for comprehension showing the essential role of knowledge in the comprehension process. This model, termed the "situation model," now forms the basis of much current comprehension research.