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INTRODUCTION

Higher standards in education highlight the need to engage students in reading with understanding from the early grades through high school. With the goal of reaching more advanced literacy achievement levels, students are now required to read more challenging texts than they were in the past. Moreover, many of the higher standards emphasize literacy across content areas, requiring reading and writing to be taught in subjects beyond English class, such as in social studies, history, math, and science.

With more than 30 unique titles for all ages, Scholastic Magazines+ is a classroom resource for teachers and students to meet standards from early childhood through high school. From *Let's Find Out*®, which introduces nonfiction pieces to students in Kindergarten, to *The New York Times Upfront*®, a magazine that challenges high schoolers to think critically about current events, Scholastic Magazines+ provides endless opportunities to support classroom learning. Magazines serve as learning supports by helping to develop literacy skills through the close reading of fiction and nonfiction texts. Instruction in close reading, "an instructional practice that makes complex texts accessible using repeated reading, cognitive scaffolding, and discussion" (Wertz, 2014, p. 78), can pose challenges if the materials are not engaging or age appropriate for students. Articles of varying lengths in Scholastic Magazines+ offer students the opportunity to perform close readings of relevant and current fiction and nonfiction pieces, as well as allow teachers to expand the range of text types used in classrooms for literacy instruction. Magazine articles may help engage readers of all levels, providing the opportunity for repeated readings and stimulating discussions with teachers and peers.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report explores educational research that identifies how classroom magazines can support instruction by fostering literacy and learning across disciplines in an engaging way for different reading- and grade-level students. It also describes multiple ways in which Scholastic Magazines+ serves as an integral resource for teachers and students, both at school and at home. Provided in this report are examples of the wide variety of Scholastic Magazines+ titles and how they support multigenre and cross-disciplinary reading and learning.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOLASTIC MAGAZINES+

Scholastic Magazines+ is a powerful resource for teachers. Each issue features engaging articles and stories, online tools, and instructional materials carefully crafted to fit classroom curricula. With more than 30 print magazines in circulation, Scholastic Magazines+ consists of Pre-K through Grade 12 offerings that are both grade- and subject-specific. These magazines cover a wide range of core subjects: English Language Arts (ELA), social studies, math, science, and support topics such as art, health, and social-emotional and life skills. Scholastic Magazines+ takes a cross-curricular approach by making connections between subject areas, and lends itself to instruction on a variety of literacy skills. Combining print and digital materials, these resources provide a regular delivery of fresh content to any classroom setting. Of particular importance, Scholastic Magazines+ meets the key anchor standards in reading, writing, and other content areas, and it offers one of the most engaging and effective ways to prepare students for the rigors of higher standards. Currently, Scholastic Magazines+ is used in over 80,000 school buildings in the United States, representing nearly 67% of school buildings in the United States.[1]

Through a compelling combination of print and digital instructional materials, Scholastic Magazines+ promotes reading comprehension and helps students make real-world connections and engage in meaningful discussions about a range of disciplinary topics. Scholastic Magazines+ provides clear learning objectives, teacher's guides, critical-thinking prompts, skills sheets, and standards alignments that support and enhance student skill development. Digital editions of the magazines can be used with interactive whiteboards or other devices for whole-class discussions, and accompanying online videos provide essential background knowledge on the topics covered in each print issue. Resources are carefully leveled to make them applicable and accessible for learners across reading levels. This extensive collection of teaching resources makes every issue a comprehensive means to deliver content-rich and skill-building instruction.

[1] School buildings include all school types, such as public, private, and charter.

WHY CLASSROOM MAGAZINES?

In examining the educational value of children's magazines, Morrow and Lesnick (2001) suggest that magazines are (1) *functional*—they provide information and expand the student's world; (2) *entertaining*—they offer a wide variety of reading opportunities on many levels; and (3) *sources of experience*—they elicit both aesthetic and emotional responses.

As such, magazines serve as valuable classroom resources by:

- Exposing students to realistic and practical informational texts;
- Building background knowledge to support comprehension;
- Serving as entry points to literacy;
- Encouraging peer and home-school interactions;
- Highlighting the benefits of digital literacy;
- Building graphical literacy by exposing students to graphs, charts, maps, timelines, and other visual representations of data; and
- Fostering literacy and learning across disciplines.

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EXPOSURE TO REALISTIC AND PRACTICAL INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

While magazines in general have long been used as supplementary reading material in classrooms, their value extends far beyond recreational reading. Scholastic Magazines+ provides information that is factual, current and specialized to support specific lessons or overall instructional themes. For example, the grade-leveled *Scholastic News*® magazine focuses on current events that captivate students' attention and support classroom curriculum; *Scholastic MATH*® provides students in Grades 6–9 with real-world connections to math that make the subject more accessible and relatable; and *SuperSTEM* provides students in Grades 3–6 with relevant, multigenre STEM texts that build knowledge.[2]

Scholastic Magazines+ supports the higher standards for kindergarten through Grade 5 that require elementary students to read an equal balance of high-quality, complex literature *and* informational texts in the classroom. Specifically, teachers are encouraged to include an array of text types within the informational text category, including biographies and autobiographies; books about history, social studies, science and the arts; and technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps on a range of topics. Yet students in these grades typically have greater exposure to fiction texts than other written texts in school; this is especially the case in lower socioeconomic communities (Duke, 2000).

Further, exposure to informational texts is crucial for students to meet national assessment standards. The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Framework in 2009 called for 50% of the assessment's reading passages to be informational text by fourth grade (National Assessment Governing Board, 2008). This inclusion of more informational passages in the NAEP Reading Assessment is representative of the trend toward rigorous reading assessments across literary genres. Researchers agree that exposure to informational text is critical to students' overall literacy development because these texts help expand vocabulary and background knowledge, while also teaching them the language and structure of informational text. "The evidence is compelling: We should involve students in informational text early in school—not only through such commonly mentioned practices as teaching text structure and vocabulary, but also by enacting the triad of reading real-world informational texts for real-world reasons in motivating contexts" (Duke, 2010, p. 70). In other words, students should be reading informational texts to enhance literacy development using authentic, engaging, and purposeful texts such as those found in Scholastic Magazines+.

[2] These are just a few examples from the collection of over 30 Pre-K through Grade 12 magazines offered by Scholastic Magazines+. For a complete list of Scholastic Magazines+ offerings, please visit: https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/.

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE TO SUPPORT COMPREHENSION

Access to informational texts is vital for students, given that these texts are an important means of building background knowledge, which in turn facilitates the meaning-making processes of reading comprehension (Gabriel, Allington, & Billen, 2012). Background knowledge is viewed as critical for constructing a basic understanding of a text as well as for helping readers build their own mental model of the content. Scholastic Magazines+ supports the development of background knowledge through engaging, fact-based articles. Additional supports for magazine articles, such as videos containing background information on a topic, are available through the Scholastic Magazines+ digital portal. Together, basic understanding and a mental model can lead to reading with deeper understanding. This holds true for both students learning to read and more experienced readers. When exploring middle-school students' magazine reading habits, researchers found that background and specific vocabulary knowledge were critical for students' reading comprehension and engagement (Gabriel et al., 2012).

Educators note that their classroom curriculum benefits from the rich content and engaging topics that magazines offer. Research on the habits of fourth-, seventh-, and ninth-grade teachers found that half of the teachers reported that they used magazines in teaching content subjects (Olson, Gee, & Forester, 1989). These teachers used magazines to teach students to identify authors' diverse points of view by assigning articles with opposing viewpoints and asking students to evaluate what they read. They also used magazines as a resource to help students develop reading strategies to activate prior knowledge, predict what articles would be about, and relate the content to their own experiences. This integration of prior knowledge with new information underscores the role of background knowledge in facilitating the meaning-making processes of reading comprehension (Gabriel et al., 2012).

ENTRY POINTS TO LITERACY

Research documents the importance of having multiple text types in early childhood settings (Duke, 2007), indicating that students can benefit from a classroom resource such as Scholastic Magazines+. Types of text that are crucial to expose students to from an early age include narratives that have characters, settings, events, problems, and solutions, as well as informational, or nonfiction, texts that convey information about the natural and social worlds. Even the youngest students need to acquire the skills to read and understand these different types of texts, and accessing a variety of such texts can help make reading more interesting to students.

Readers of all levels can find magazines to be an especially appealing entry point to reading and learning. Classroom magazines provide extra supports for reading comprehension such as color coding, pictorial depictions, and the repetitive use of target vocabulary, all of which can help improve accessibility for readers (Morrow, Rosen, & Dunston, 2006). Furthermore, pictures and graphics that accompany magazine articles may scaffold comprehension for striving readers, thus reducing pressure to read from a challenging traditional classroom text. Students can select articles that are accessible to them while keeping pace with classmates who might select articles at other reading levels (Morrow & Lesnick, 2001). Magazines also tend to feature shorter articles on high-interest topics with dynamic visuals—all features that can help students develop identities as readers (Gabriel et al., 2012b; Morrow & Lesnick, 2001).

For students of varying reading levels and interests, magazines can support their entry into reading in different ways. Magazines allow students to scan through content to find articles suitable to their reading level, eliminating the risk of embarrassment from abandoning the entire text because it was too challenging. Students can choose to read magazine articles on familiar topics for which they already possess some background knowledge and relevant vocabulary to help support their reading comprehension and fluency (Gabriel et al., 2012).

Scholastic Magazines+ can also be particularly valuable for students with special needs. In one study, 92% of special education teachers reported that they found magazines valuable because they motivated their students to read (Morrow & Lesnick, 2001). Additionally, some striving readers are more likely to read magazine content that can be read in a single sitting, thus making it a rewarding exercise (Gabriel et al., 2012b).

In classrooms that are culturally and linguistically diverse, magazines serve as an accessible entry point to literacy. In addition to providing articles that are inclusive of students' diverse interests and strengths, Scholastic Magazines+ is written with an eye toward students with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. *Scholastic News*® and *Let's Find Out*® offer digital versions of their magazines in Spanish, and titles such as *Junior Scholastic*® and *Scope*® profile real young people from diverse backgrounds. Stories about children in other countries, teens with disabilities, and young immigrants offer culturally sensitive perspectives and serve as resources for "multicultural lesson planning in inclusive classrooms and…provide teachers with information that will increase their knowledge of diverse groups" (Jairrels, Brazil, & Patton, 1999, p. 303). With more than 30 titles in circulation, teachers have a variety of options when choosing a Scholastic magazine that resonates with their classroom instructional goals, and students have access to diverse content that will resonate with them regardless of their reading level or cultural or linguistic background.

ENCOURAGING HOME-SCHOOL AND PEER INTERACTIONS

Students who are motivated to read and who enjoy reading are more likely to engage in literacy activities. This is true for students both inside and outside of the classroom; therefore, providing opportunities to read for enjoyment is one way to enhance classroom literacy experiences (Morrow & Young, 1997). Home-school connections and peer-to-peer interactions around literacy are two ways to foster reading motivation and an appreciation for reading, and magazines are a powerful medium for establishing these positive reading experiences.

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Research shows that magazines provide a valuable link between home and school; they have something for everyone, for all interests and reading abilities. Parents can enjoy their children's magazines, which can offer common ground and serve as a starting point for thoughtful discussion on various topics. In addition, "when students have the opportunity to learn from magazines in the classroom, they gain skills and confidence. Many children are then eager to share what they have learned with their family" (Morrow & Young, 1997, p. 738).

Moreover, successful literacy instruction at school is often tied to the experiences students have at home, therefore the home-school literacy connection is a powerful one. Research on connecting home and school literacy contexts by involving parents in literacy activities with their children found that the success of the program depended on the collaborative efforts of parents, teachers, and students as they focused on fun and educational activities that addressed the interests of both parents and children (Morrow & Young, 1997). These activities included the use of classroom magazines, which were "nonthreatening, not school-like, and could be used by those with different literacy abilities and cultural backgrounds" (Morrow & Young, 1997, p. 736). The accessibility and economical price of Scholastic Magazines+ encourage this type of interaction by allowing schools to provide a copy to each student to extend learning outside of the classroom; students are therefore given the ability to take magazines home to share and engage with family members.

The social interaction that occurs between students when reading magazines in the classroom is also important in that they share with each other points of interest, pictures, and highlights from an article. Magazines spark communication, debate, and awareness of current events (Morrow & Lesnick, 2001). Research found that high school students who were assigned to read and discuss articles about politics from a weekly classroom magazine, and who then discussed what they read with their classmates and parents, were more knowledgeable about politics and had a better sense of their ability to understand and influence politics after eight weeks than students who did not receive the magazines (Vercellotti & Matto, 2010).

BENEFITS OF DIGITAL LITERACY

Increasingly, classrooms are becoming blended-learning environments with a need for diverse print and digital texts (Wertz & Saine, 2014). Scholastic Magazines+ supports teachers and students in these blended-learning environments by providing digital versions of its print magazines and web-based resources. These digital resources are intended to further promote background knowledge and complement the content of its multi-disciplinary texts. Digital versions of the magazine articles offer links to additional content such as definitions of key words, videos, and digital activities. For example, available videos can be viewed before, during, or after reading a text to provide or expand upon background knowledge of a given topic, facilitating a deeper understanding of the content (Bridges, 2015). Background knowledge acquired from various mediums can facilitate learning overall and help students read increasingly complex texts.

Additionally, students can utilize a variety of tools in the digital versions of the magazines to enhance fluency, comprehension, and to improve word recognition. Such features include: draw, read aloud[3], zoom in and out, highlight, and sticky note. The read-aloud audio feature may enhance learning of fluency for early readers by modeling appropriate speed and intonation. When text is highlighted during the read aloud, learners have the opportunity to practice their word recognition (Stern, 2014). These features can reduce the cognitive load on early or striving readers, allowing them to learn about the content while simultaneously building literacy skills.

Other features, such as the zoom-in and -out feature, allow accessibility for students who may require larger print or who want to closely examine the details of a photo or image. The sticky-note and highlight functions may assist students in recording notes and observations about the text or help them to identify specific content—providing scaffolding for skills such as identifying the main idea or locating text to support a specific point of view or argument (Bus, Takacs, & Kegel, 2015).

As students live and are educated in environments rich in multimedia, an emerging role for educators today is to serve as mixed-media curators by providing content that is relevant and age appropriate in multiple formats. Digital magazines are unique in that their content is organized and tagged, increasing efficiency in locating content on a specific topic. Educators can use digital versions of Scholastic magazines to curate content, texts, and digital activities from one or multiple magazine offerings that are directly linked to the theme under discussion and that can help educators better target learning objectives. Additionally, "by reading content in a digital magazine format, students can relate the class theory to current events by using a smartphone, tablet, or laptop, which allows them to develop a deeper understanding of the class topics" (Luna-Nevarez & McGovern, 2018, p. 18).

The use of digital magazines, such as Scholastic Magazines+, and related resources (e.g. videos, digital activities) can enhance student engagement and skill building while offering students a blended literacy experience to further support their learning. Digital tools available to educators, such as the ability to curate information on specific topics, and readily available literary supports, such as key word definitions, further support learning objectives and make for a rich classroom resource.

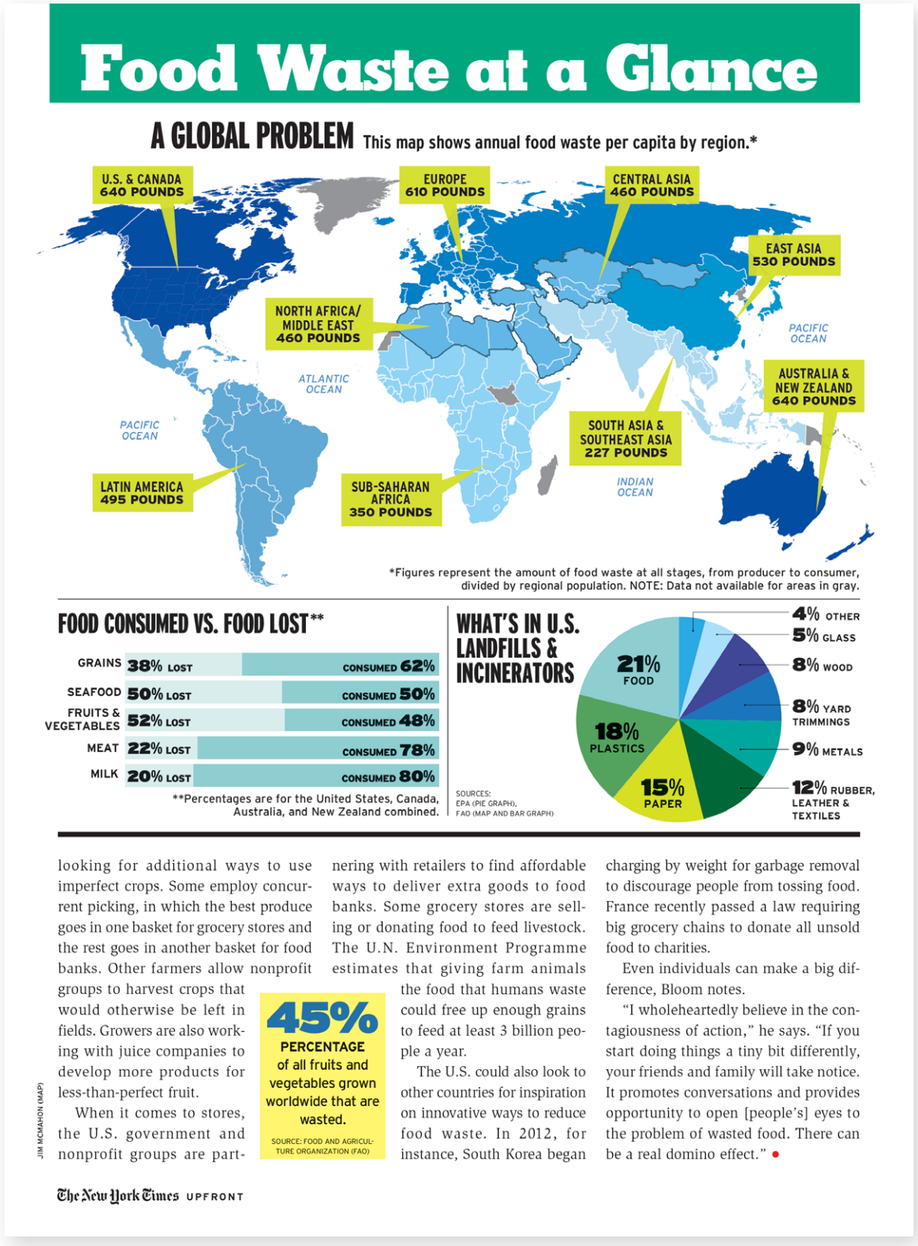
[3] Available for Pre-K through Grade 5 magazines.

GRAPHICAL LITERACY: READING GRAPHS, CHARTS, MAPS, AND TIMELINES

As students develop into fluent readers, they encounter and must interpret graphical elements embedded in texts, including diagrams, timelines, charts, maps, illustrations, flowcharts, graphs, and tables (Roberts et al., 2013). Developing graphical literacy is important, as literacy standards demand that students be able to integrate and evaluate many of these types of visual content. Some standards even recognize the importance of graphical comprehension by explicit references in their anchor and grade-level standards. However, despite the inclusion of graphical literacy in higher standards and in many texts for students, "there is surprisingly little published research on instructional approaches to teaching children how to comprehend or produce graphics" (Roberts et al., 2013, p. 13).

Magazine articles are often rich with graphical devices. Scholastic Magazines+ titles that target younger students often contain scaffolds that promote the understanding of graphical details; an example is the strategic use of color coding to clarify which visuals and text go together. Younger students may find it more challenging to understand that graphics and charts are connected to the text, but they can gain a stronger mastery with such conventions over time and increased exposure (Jordan & Massad, 2010). Moreover, older students can often navigate and interpret charts and images accompanying magazine articles because they are already interested in the content and topic, and therefore have prior background knowledge; the graphics serve to deepen their understanding of the topics (Gabriel et al., 2012).

Scholastic Magazines+ in particular uses visual graphics to enhance students' experiences with the text. For example, in one issue of *Science World*®, students will find a graph displaying the chemical structure of saturated and unsaturated fats in foods, while readers of *Scholastic MATH*® can use a graph to help calculate the volume of different sizes of dominoes. Social studies content in an edition of *The New York Times Upfront*® is accompanied by multiple graphics: a map of food waste across the globe, a line graph depicting food consumption and loss, and a pie chart showing the contents of landfills and incinerators. These graphical representations are presented in age- and reading-level appropriate ways to facilitate accessibility and understanding.



LITERACY AND LEARNING ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Building literacy skills across disciplines is of critical importance in the classroom, and Scholastic Magazines+ covers a range of subject areas that include both fiction and nonfiction texts that support learning from early childhood to high school. In *My Big World*™, students in Pre-K will encounter developmentally appropriate seasonal nonfiction and fun school-readiness activities, while students in Grades 1–6 can read about captivating current events in *Scholastic News*®. *Scholastic Action*® contains engaging stories and powerful support for striving readers in Grades 6–12, while *Junior Scholastic*® articles delve into news, history, and civics to support social studies in Grades 6–8. *Scholastic MATH*® (Grades 6–9) and *Science World*® (Grades 6–10) provide engaging math and science articles that offer skill-building practice problems and news that support STEM education.

Scope®, a Scholastic magazine dedicated to elevating ELA instruction, is filled with powerful multi-genre stories that foster discussions about world events, timely debates, and compelling nonfiction articles to support instruction. Like other Scholastic ELA magazines, *Scope*® provides print and digital tools that help build the language arts skills students need in order to become analytical readers and writers.

Many teachers supplement social studies or science textbooks, which can become dated or which students may find intimidating or dense, with more current sources of information (Olson, Gee, & Forester, 1989). Teachers can supplement lessons from traditional texts with newer, more accessible magazine material. For example, 30% of biology teachers surveyed said they used conservation magazines in their classrooms (Chipman & Brody, 1993). Teachers in this sample were interested in using the magazines as a resource to supplement their curriculum by providing "applied and basic current research, opportunities to discuss ethical issues surrounding environmental conservation, and local illustrations of basic ecological principles" (Chipman & Brody, 1993, p. 10). It may be challenging and time-consuming for teachers to find high-quality supplemental materials that cover a range of reading levels and present content in an objective and balanced way. Scholastic Magazines+ fills this gap in a timely and cost-effective way by offering up-to-date, objective coverage of issues across a wide range of topics and reading levels that can be used across disciplines.

Support for the use of Scholastic Magazines+ across disciplines can be found by speaking directly with educators. For instance, one teacher shared that "[she] really like[s] using the *Upfront* [magazine] by Scholastic. It is a social studies driven current events magazine that is very age appropriate, and reading level appropriate" (Solari & Collins, 2017, p. A1). Administrators also acknowledge the value in providing Scholastic Magazines+ in their buildings. In response to *Choices*®, a health, life skills, and social-emotional learning magazine for teens, one principal shared, "The magazine helps the teacher engage in conversations with the students about race, gender, and how to build empathy. It's also a great opportunity to open up these kids' eyes to the world around them so that they can start processing all of the things that are coming at them in the world that we live in" (Chanel Hill Tribune, 2018, p. 1). These cross-discipline magazines not only provide a way to cover relevant and important topics in accessible ways, but they also offer engaging content, teacher and student supports to extend learning beyond one specific discipline, and the ability to learn and practice different literacy skills.

CONCLUSION

Research has shown that magazines are valuable tools for engaging students in literacy and enhancing opportunities for them to read with deep comprehension across disciplines and topics. Both print and digital magazine resources are appealing to students and they encompass a wide range of reading levels and interests because they are informative, entertaining, supportive, and instructive.

By exposing students to realistic and practical texts, fostering literacy across disciplines, and building graphical literacy, Scholastic Magazines+ provides rich, timely content to help students of all ages develop new skills, make real-world connections, and access leveled content that they are excited to read. Teachers can use these relevant, cost-effective magazines and related digital resources to motivate students, supplement the curriculum, and involve students' families as they provide high-quality literacy instruction across disciplines to meet higher standards in literacy education.

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NOTES

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