Meeting Common Core Standards: Preparing Students to Read, Understand, and Respond to Complex Text

Jeanne R. Paratore, Ed.D.  
Boston University  
Two Silber Way  
Boston, MA 02215  
Jparator@bu.edu  
Access videos at: www.learner.org

Common Core State Standard 10.

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
Why does access to complex text matter?

- Reading complex text supports:
  - Acquisition of sophisticated (and grade-appropriate) vocabulary, concepts, and linguistic structures, and
  - Development of critical thinking abilities.

- Vocabulary, concepts, linguistic structures, and general knowledge acquired through reading complex text “anchors” further reading and learning.

What makes a text complex?

- Knowledge demands
  - Vocabulary
  - Concepts

- Linguistic demands
  - Word type/length
  - Sentence type/length
  - Text structure and cohesion

- Text/Task/Reader interactions
  - Motivation
  - Background knowledge & experience
  - Task familiarity, explicitness, purposefulness
What we read influences what we learn.

- When some students have access to complex text and others do not, the reading gap (that often causes teachers to assign less complex text to low-performing students) contributes to a knowledge gap (e.g., Stanovich, 2000; Neuman, 2006).

Children in lower-level texts typically:

- read substantially fewer in-context words,
- are asked fewer critical thinking questions,
- have fewer opportunities for discussion,
- have fewer opportunities to write.

(Allington, 1983; Hiebert, 1983)
“But, I can’t give students texts that are too hard for them to read!”

No, you cannot. BUT....

- Text difficulty resides in
  - the linguistic characteristics of the text,
  - the characteristics of the reader,
  - and the actions of the teacher.
There are different ways to achieve high-accuracy reading:

- Selecting easier texts is one way.
- Bringing difficult texts within the range of easier texts by mediating factors that cause difficulty is another way.

(e.g., Ehri, Dreyer, & Flugman, 2007).

How do I organize my classroom so that I effectively use BOTH texts matched to students and complex texts?
1. Begin with an instructional plan that considers the purpose of different types of texts.

- **Easy to read** texts support the development of word reading accuracy and fluency.

- **Complex texts** support the acquisition and use of sophisticated:
  - Vocabulary
  - Concepts
  - Linguistic structures
  - Rhetorical structures
  - General Knowledge

2. Create a grouping plan that supports instruction in multiple texts AND differentiates instruction in each type of text.

- **Complex Text**
  - Time each day when children read and reread (with teacher mediation) grade-appropriate text and engage in discussion and response.

- **Just Right Text**
  - Time each day when children read and reread text that is matched to their word reading abilities.

- **Self-selected Text**
  - Time each day when children read anything of their own choosing.
3. Incorporate instructional routines that make difficult text accessible.

- Preteaching key vocabulary and concepts
  - To introduce words that are essential to understanding
- Read Alouds & Choral Readings
  - To familiarize children with writer’s style and with specific vocabulary
- Assisted Reading
  - To “fill in” unknown words as necessary
- Partner Reading
  - To provide collaborative practice
- Purposeful Rereadings
  - To support accuracy, fluency, and comprehension
- Guided Readings
  - To focus students on particular ideas or events
- Graphic Organizers
  - To focus attention on specific purpose and information in text
Differentiating Instruction of Complex Text

- **Story Introduction (Whole Class)**
  - Preview text, develop vocabulary & concepts, make predictions

- **Reading the Selection (Needs-Based Groups)**

- **Responding to the Selection (Whole Class or Small Groups)**
  - e.g., Literature Circles, Book Talks, Group Discussions

**No Help (with peers)**
1. Read silently.
2. Reread with a partner.
3. Collaborative reading response.
4. Individual reading response.

**With Help (with teacher)**
1. Read aloud.
2. Reread chorally or reread with a partner.
4. Individual reading response.

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4. Attend to motivation and engagement.

- Establish knowledge goals
- Build relevant background knowledge
- Create a socially-relevant purpose through collaboration
- Allow student choice (texts, tasks, contexts)

(Guthrie, J., & Humenick, N. M., 2004)

5. Provide instruction that is both explicit and strategic.

- Explicit
  - Demonstration & modeling
  - Guided practice
  - Independent practice

- Strategic
  - What to do
  - How to do it
  - Why to do it

(Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Afflerbach & Pearson)
6. Use teacher talk as a curricular resource.

- Vocabulary and concept development is related to active encounters:
  - Focusing on novel words
  - Asking and answering cognitively-challenging questions
  - Prompting children to elaborate and clarify
  - Engaging in conversations that help children go beyond the text
  - Making connections between the text and events, objects, or ideas in their own lives
7. Make independent learning time count.

- Evidence-based
  - Base assigned tasks on credible research that completing them will contribute to children’s development as capable readers and writers.
- Accessible
  - Require use of skills and strategies that have been taught and that students are capable of applying independently.
- Sustained Practice
  - Engage students in literacy and language tasks that require extended reading and writing.
- Coherent
  - Assign tasks that connect to other literacy or content area studies of the day or week.
Teaching actions have learning consequences.

- Decisions about **TEXTS**
  - Difficulty
  - Curricular Coherence
- Decisions about **CONTEXTS**
  - Teacher Mediation
  - Group size
  - Group type
- Decisions about **TASKS**
  - Curricular coherence
  - Focus (coherence)
  - Explicitness
  - Purposefulness
  - Collaboration

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### A Few References