URBAN SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COLLABORATIVE, OCTOBER 24-27, 2012

CHALLENGES OF COMMON CORE:
Climbing the Staircase of Complexity

District 75, New York City Department of Education

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What is a Complex Text?

- Pair up with someone next to you. Discuss the following questions with each other. You will have 5 minutes to do this.

- Think of the last time you were challenged by a text. What made the text challenging? What did you do to meet the demands of the text?
Students experience Common-Core aligned instruction across subjects.

- In grades pK-5, students will experience four Common Core-aligned units, two in math and two in ELA, social studies and science.
- In grades 6-12, students will experience eight Common Core-aligned units, two in math, two in ELA, two in Social Studies, and two in Science.

- Infuse opportunities to read and respond to a combination of literary and informational texts.

- Reading Standards 1 and 10; Writing Standard 1; Speaking and Listening 1; Language 6
# Instructional Shifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shift 1: Balancing Informational and Literary Text</th>
<th>Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shift 2: Knowledge in the Disciplines</td>
<td>Students build knowledge about the world (domain/content areas through TEXT rather than the teacher or activities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift 3: Staircase of Complexity</td>
<td>Students read the central, grade appropriate text around which instruction is centered. Teachers are patient, create more time and space and support in the curriculum for close reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shift 4: Text-based Answers</td>
<td>Students engage in rich and rigorous evidence based conversations about text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shift 5: Writing from Sources</td>
<td>Writing emphasizes use of evidence from sources to inform or make an argument.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shift 6: Academic Vocabulary</td>
<td>Students constantly build the transferable vocabulary they need to access grade level complex texts.</td>
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What is the Rationale for Shift 3, Staircase of Complexity?

- There is a reported decline in high-school level texts (ACT, 2006); while at the same time, there is an increase in the text difficulty of college and career texts (Hayes & Ward, 1992; Milewski, Johnson, Glazer, & Kubota, 2005).
Staircase of Complexity

- What is text?
- What is text complexity?
- What is text complexity across the continuum of learners?
Text Complexity defined (CCSS/ELA)

“The inherent difficulty of reading and comprehending a text combined with consideration of reader and task variables; in the Standards, a three-part assessment of text difficulty that pairs qualitative and quantitative measures with reader-task considerations.”

CCSS Appendix A
The Staircase Begins at the Top

- Common Core Standards begin with the College and Career Readiness Standards and backmap through each of the grades.
- There are strong progressions from grade level to grade level; each grade level requires a “step” of growth on the staircase.
- The progressions are connected across reading, oral language and writing.
Reading Standard 10

- “Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.”

Progression of Reading Standard 10

- Grade Bands
- **Scaffolding needs:** Students at the beginning of the grade band read and comprehend complex text *with scaffolding as needed*. Students at the end read and comprehend *independently and proficiently* within the band.
Model of Text Complexity

- Three Step Model for Measuring Text Complexity
  - Quantitative
  - Qualitative
  - Reader and Task Considerations
# Quantitative Dimensions: Lexile Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Complexity Grade Band</th>
<th>Original Lexile Ranges</th>
<th>Recalibrated Lexile Ranges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>450-725</td>
<td>450-790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>645-845</td>
<td>770-980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>860-1010</td>
<td>955-1155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>960-1115</td>
<td>1080-1305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-CCR</td>
<td>1070-1220</td>
<td>1215-1355</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Lexile levels are based on sentence length and word frequency.

Adapted from Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, p. 8.
Quantitative Dimensions

- Often best measured by computer software.
  - Readability measures predict comprehension, NOT learning. (Timothy Shanahan)
  - Readability estimates do not reveal why a text is difficult.
Qualitative Dimensions

- Qualitative measures – levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands often best measured by an attentive reader
  - Meaning
  - Structure
  - Language
  - Knowledge Demands
Reader and Task Considerations

- Reader Considerations
  - Cognitive capabilities
  - Reading Skills
  - Motivation and Engagement with the Task
  - Prior Knowledge and Experience

- Task Considerations
  - Reader’s Purpose
  - Type of Reading
  - Intended Outcome: What is the complexity of associated tasks?
A rubric available in the Common Core Library, NYC Department of Ed identifies a range of qualitative factors that contribute to overall complexity:

- Layout
- Purpose and meaning
- Text structure
- Language features
- Knowledge demands
Qualitative Analysis of Text

- Individually, read “Exile Eyes”, Agate Nesaule.
- With a partner, assess the text by using the rubric.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Meaning</th>
<th>Structure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Prior Knowledge</td>
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</table>

- Whole group shares assessment of the text.
# Complexity of Text: Informational Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Complex Text</th>
<th>More Complex Text</th>
<th>Qualitative Dimensions</th>
<th>Instructional Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple or supplementary</td>
<td>Sophisticated or essential graphics</td>
<td>Layout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single level of meaning; clear, explicitly stated purpose</td>
<td>Multiple, implicit, ambiguous</td>
<td>Purposes and Meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple, conventional</td>
<td>Complex, unconventional</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal, clear, conversational</td>
<td>Figurative language, academic or domain specific vocabulary</td>
<td>Language Features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single perspectives; everyday knowledge</td>
<td>Multiple perspectives, specific content knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge Demands</td>
<td></td>
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Adapted Books

- Work with a partner to review one of the Adapted Books. This should take five minutes.
- Where does this text reside within the Gradient for Text Complexity?
## Extending the Parameters of Complex Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Pre-Conventional” Object as Text</th>
<th>“Pre-Conventional” Picture of Object as Text</th>
<th>“Pre-Conventional” Symbol of Object as Text</th>
<th>“Pre-Gradient” Word as Text</th>
<th>Layout</th>
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</thead>
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For struggling readers, increased access to complex text is

- NOT increased by setting higher text levels and expecting to read them.

- Increased by providing support to students to mediate their learning.
Scaffolds

- Non-text sources
- Supplemental texts/apprentice texts
- Direct instruction in key words and concepts
- Instructional scaffolding
- Notetaking; annotation
- Explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies: previewing texts, using prior knowledge, setting purpose, monitoring comprehension, asking questions, summarizing, visualizing
- Repeated reading with different purposes
Carousel of Challenges

- How do we respond to our staff/colleagues who are resistant to the instructional shift, Staircase of Complexity?

  When we hear __________________________
  We respond with __________________________

- My students all passed the ELA assessment. They don’t need this work.
- My students cannot even read on an Emergent level. This shift does not apply to what I do in the classroom.
- I follow the pacing maps that our school uses. I don’t have time to include additional texts into the day.
Close Reading: Progression of Questions (Complexity of Task)

- Institute for Learning Patterned Way of Reading
  - Read to get the gist
  - Reread to find significant moments
  - Read again to interpret the ideas in the text
  - Read again differently to analyze the author’s methods
Question 1:
What do we know about the women and girls waiting inside the beauty shop?
Question 2:

The text refers to several different locations including Europe after WWII, Vietnam, Baltic countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Siberia, Rwanda, and Chile. How are these different locations relevant to the experiences of the women and girls inside the beauty shop?
Close Reading: “Exile Eyes”

- **Question 3:**
  What can we glean from the information in the third paragraph regarding the shop owner waiting “patiently” and also the author’s description of the women’s hair as “crudely chopped-off tresses”? 
Question 4:

The author devotes considerable time to describing the eyes of the women and girls Bosnia and other countries across the globe. What is the significance of their eyes for the author and how does she use this imagery to move this story forward?
Meeting the Challenges

Central
- Citywide Instructional Expectations
- Children First Intensive Achievement Institutes
- K-5, 6-12 Literacy Seminars
- Common Core Fellows
- Common Core Library

District
- Administrator Institutes on Common Core Reading/ELA Standards
- Professional development for teachers/teacher teams on Common Core Learning Standards and text complexity
- District 75 development of Common Core-aligned Units of Study
- Text Complexity Summit
- Resources for schools: Functional Libraries – Informational Text for Students in Alternate Assessment
- Curriculum Initiative for staff to adapt books, including Functional Library books

School
- School-based coaches
- District coaches assigned to schools (ELA, Alternate Assessment, Technology, Assistive Technology/UDL)
- Collaborative teams of teachers work on reviewing texts for students
- Teachers write adapted books to ensure access for all students to informational texts
- Looking at Student Work protocols
Actions that Teachers Can Take Right Now: Text Complexity

- Elfrieda Hiebert, Text Project and the University of California
  - Focus on Knowledge
  - Create Connections (KNOWS)
  - Activate students’ passion
  - Develop vocabulary
  - Increase volume
  - Build up stamina
  - Identify benchmarks

As leaders, what systems can we put in place to ensure that we support the teachers in helping students read complex texts?
# TEMP$: Systems Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on Knowledge</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Resource$</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create Connections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activate Passion</td>
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<td>Vocabulary Development</td>
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<td>Increase volume</td>
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<td>Increase stamina</td>
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<td>Identify benchmarks</td>
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