



Instructional Implications of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

Text-Dependent Questions, Grades K – 5

Session Description

Participants will become familiar with the increased emphasis on close reading and textual evidence in the Common Core State Standards and classroom practices that foster these.

Expected Outcomes

- Become familiar with the emphasis on reading instruction that stays close to the texts.
- Understand the important place argument and evidence has in the CCSS.
- Identify some examples and non-examples of classroom practices that encourage students to return to the text for text-dependent questions and evidence.

Agenda

- Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
- Text-dependent questions; classroom practices that foster close reading (20 minutes)
 - Partner activity – Planning for close reading (10 minutes)
- Reflection (10 minutes)
 - Partner activity – How did we do?
 - Suggested follow-up activities
 - Reflection

Time

- 45 minutes

Audience

- Designed to be used with groups of K – 5 leaders and teachers working with grade level or cross-grade level partners.

Materials

- Handout copy of PowerPoint slides
- Handout Informational Text for Grades K – 5

Resources/References

- Appendix A, Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf
- Appendix B, Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf
- Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf

Slide 1

Welcome participants, and introduce the subject for today.

Suggest that participants sit in small groups with others who teach the same grade level(s).

Check to see that everyone has the handouts.

Explain that one of the instructional implications of implementing the CCSS will be an increased emphasis on close reading and text-dependent questions.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“The Common Core State Standards set expectations for students to read text carefully, attend to details, follow the line of arguments, and cite details from the text to support their conclusions

Students who are college and career ready value evidence:

- They cite specific evidence when offering an oral or written interpretation of a text;
- They use relevant evidence when supporting their own points in writing and speaking, making their reasoning clear to the reader or listener;
- And they constructively evaluate others’ use of evidence.

Let’s look at how this is reflected in the elementary level standards.”

Slide 2

Go over the expected outcomes for this session.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Today we will consider close reading and textual evidence, and we will look at some of the classroom practices that encourage this, as well as the prominent place that argument and evidence have throughout the CCSS.

Slide 3

Explain that two of the inclusive Reading and Writing Anchor Standards directly address textual evidence.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“The shift toward text-dependent questions requires student to become more adept at drawing evidence from the text and explaining that evidence orally and in writing. Teachers should make sure that classroom experiences stay deeply connected to the text and that students develop habits for making evidentiary arguments based on the text. Teachers should ensure students develop habits of reading closely and backing up their claims with text-dependent questions, in class discussion and writing, to assess their comprehension of text.

Here are two CCSS Anchor Standards which set expectations for students to cite specific evidence from literary and informational texts to support their inferences, conclusions, analyses, reflections, and research.”

Slide 4

Explain that argument and evidence are important threads that run through the Common Core State Standards.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Understanding argument and evidence – both from a reader’s perspective as well as a writer’s/speaker’s perspective, are important threads that run through the CCSS. Students are expected draw upon text-dependent evidence to support their comprehension and evaluations of an author’s argument, as well as to marshal text-dependent evidence in support of their own conclusions and positions.

It is important that teachers ensure that students experience a wide range of text types in addition to the narrative.”

Slide 5

Explain that these are several classroom practices that keep reading instruction closely connected to the text and allow students to generate their own conclusions and inferences, supporting them with text-dependent questions.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Here are some classroom practices that support text-dependent reading instruction:

First, “think aloud” teacher modeling is a powerful instructional strategy and useful for demonstrating careful reading.

Selection of the works is important: The literary and informational texts merit the close attention and time devoted to them.

Scaffolding and pre-teaching vocabulary and essential background makes the text accessible to students; it does NOT pre-teach the content of the text.

Students have rich and rigorous conversations which are dependent on students reading a central text.

Among the myriad related activities possible, the teacher chooses ones that stay closely connected to the text.

Finally, all students should have the opportunity to formulate answers to questions and draw upon specific details in the text to support their conclusions when responding to questions and engaging in text-dependent conversations in class.”

Slide 6

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“The purpose of the ‘think aloud’ modeling strategy is to explicitly show students how to remain close to the text while reading. The text selection on this slide is included as an exemplar in Appendix B of the CCSS at the 2nd to 3rd grade level of text complexity.

Here’s one way a teacher might model the skill of reading closely to the text:

The title is *From Bats: Creatures of the Night*. So I know it is going to be about bats. But “from bats” doesn’t make sense. Oh, I see. *From* is in a different font. I think that means that this is just a little bit from a longer book. *No one has lived on this farm for years*. I know that on a farm there are going to be fields, probably trees and crops. There will be buildings like barns and sheds, and probably an empty house, too. The farm might be abandoned, with overgrown weeds and falling down fences. Or maybe it is still being taken care of, but the people just live somewhere else. But it says *for years*, so I know that people used to live there, so there’s a house. *The barn looks empty*. Sounds like nobody is around anymore. *But it isn’t!* Something’s in the barn, but the way the author put an exclamation point, I’ll bet it isn’t an ordinary thing, like a sheep or something. She makes it sound exciting. *Strange creatures are sleeping in the loft*. That would be bats! I know they roost up high, kind of hanging down. And they are strange. And the title calls the bats ‘creatures.’ *As the sun goes down, they take to the air*. “Take to the air” is kind of a funny way to say it. But it makes it sound more interesting than if she just said “They fly away when it gets dark.”

Slide 7

Point out the differences between text-dependent classroom instruction that draws the student deeper into the text and practices that replace the text or draw the reader away from it.

For instance, the teacher might say,

“What distinguishes classroom practices that engage students in close reading and citing evidentiary text from those practices that do not?”

First, scaffolding strategies and pre-reading activities to support students should not convey the content in advance, essentially replacing the reading.

First, scaffolding strategies and pre-reading activities to support students should not convey the content in advance, essentially replacing the purpose of reading for information. Readers should experience the text as the author unfolds, preserving the rewarding aspects of reading high-quality writing. We don’t want to pre-empt the discovery of what is interesting, challenging, beautiful, surprising in a text selection. We sometimes see these in the introductory summaries in reading textbooks and in examples of “hooks” for kids. For instance, a website offers this example: ‘If you were reading *Where the Wild Things Are*, tell them that Max is going to a forest full of monsters. Then ask the students what they would do if they found themselves surrounded by monsters. This will let your students identify with the protagonist, making them empathize with him.’ But it also takes away the fun and magic of *discovering* that Max is going to a forest full of monsters.

Just as important, discussions and activities after reading should stay deeply connected to the text, allowing students to draw conclusions on their own, encouraging the reader to engage with the author and what the author is trying to say.”

Slide 8

Explain that it is important to differentiate between learning activities that are aimed at building content knowledge and those that are aimed at building independent reading proficiency.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“It is helpful and important to keep in mind the distinction between learning activities that are designed primarily to help students’ acquire content knowledge and those that are designed to build students’ ability to read complex text independently. These practices will differ. Ultimately, to be college and career ready, students need to be able to read informational text with enough proficiency and independence to build their knowledge base with little or no teacher support.

So, the sequence of presenting content in classroom activities *first*, before the student reads the chapter or work, may be very appropriate if the objective is mastery of highly complex content that requires scaffolding. However, it is important that, in addition, other instructional time and activities be dedicated primarily to supporting students’ ability to read complex material.”

Slide 9

Invite participants to read the text, which is included in the handout.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Let’s look at a concrete example. This excerpt is included in the CCSS Appendix B as an example of high quality informational text at the 4th – 5th grade level of text complexity.

As you read this to yourselves, try to be aware of what questions students might have as they read, and which ones you would want to clarify before reading. Think about the structure of the text as well as the point of view presented.

And after you have finished reading the excerpt, we will examine instructional practices that support text-dependent reading of this selection and those that do not.”

[Allow a few minutes for participants to read the passage.]

Slide 10

Explain the examples of practices that do not support text-dependent instruction.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Let’s start with a few negative examples -- practices that we want to avoid. Here’s what we do not want to do:

In the first non-example, we are telling the students in advance what we would like them to come up with themselves. Deriving the main ideas from texts is critical, and this obviously precludes students’ opportunity to practice the skill themselves and limits the possibility that they will see the text a bit differently.

The second non-example takes away much of the ‘punch’ of a piece in advance.

Helping students make connections between the text and themselves, other texts, and the world has been an important part of getting students engaged with the text and making meaning from it. The caution here is that the connections should be central to the meaning of the text and should lead students *more deeply into* the text, not away from it, which the third non-example does not do.

Finally, the fourth non-example is not text-based. While activities designed to build content knowledge or writing skill may not be text dependent, *reading activities* always bring the students back to the text for a close read and text-dependent questions to support conclusions.”

Slide 11

Explain that these are examples of classroom practices that allow the text to unfold to the reader.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Let’s look at some scaffolding and pre-reading activities that would be appropriate, enabling students to experience the complexity of the text, rather than avoid it.

The passage has a number of words that may be unfamiliar to students, like *racket*, or that have a meaning specific to the context, like *decent*. The teacher might select a few other academic words, such as *unrestricted*, to teach in depth.

The teacher will probably want to explain in advance that the author creates a first-person “everyman” narrator to tell the history, since students are unlikely to be able to pick that up from the excerpt.

Some historical background knowledge of the context of this time period might help students understand the passage.

“Also, with excerpts, pre-reading may need to include providing some background information to supplement the text. It is important that this practice simply ‘sets the stage’ for the passage rather than summarize it or what happened as a result of it. For instance, if the teacher wishes students to understand the relationship between crime and the owners of the Negro League teams, then background on why the author titles the chapter “Racket Ball” would be important. Or, if the teacher wishes to point out the paradox that the poor treatment of black players by some owners actually propelled them to the emerging, more advantageous status of free agents, then more background would be needed.

Advanced organizers, such as one based on the detail in the next slide, could help selected students navigate the structure of this passage.”

Slide 12

Present the example of an advance organizer.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Here is an example of a detail from a note-taking worksheet that might be given to selected students, before or after the first reading. It is reproduced on the handout with details the students might pick out.

It is important to ensure that all students demonstrate a careful understanding of what they read before engaging their opinions, appraisals, or interpretations. Before students are asked to go beyond the text and apply their learning, they should demonstrate their grasp of the specific ideas and details of the text.

Close reading often focuses on the importance or role played by specific sentences, phrases, or words. For instance, students might be asked to consider how the meaning or impact might change if the author had chosen a different word, key detail, order or pattern of presentation, etc.

Slide 13

Explain that teachers can craft advance organizers for selected students that will help them focus on specific aspects of text included in the Reading Standards. These standards will, in turn, guide the text-dependent questions that will lead students back to the text for closer attention.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Let’s revisit several of the Reading Anchor Standards that describe ways in which we want students to be able to interact with the text. Each one, of course, is translated slightly differently as each grade-specific content standard.

A teacher might use the note-taking advance organizer in the previous slide to prepare selected students to respond to questions about central ideas (Reading Anchor Standard 2).

Or, in preparing students to analyze the structure of texts (Reading Anchor Standard 4), the teacher might set up an advance organizer for selected students that causes them to note parallel beginnings of the paragraphs (Para 1 – *most of the owners*; Para 2 – *some of the owners*; Para 3 – *a few of the owners*) and supply supporting details.”

Slide 14

Explain that these are examples of specific questions that are responsive to the Reading Anchor Standards and invite students to formulate conclusions that they can support with textual evidence.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Here are some example prompts that a teacher might use to encourage students to closely examine the text prior to drawing conclusions, making comparisons across texts, or other text analysis activities.

Struggling readers may benefit from having copies of the text so they can make notations on the text itself.”

Slide 15

Explain that several Reading Standards can be addressed with a single complex activity if the sequence allows students to read closely and demonstrate their understanding of the text first, then go on to comparative analyses.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“In planning instruction that includes audio, video, or multimedia versions of the text, the teacher can preserve the opportunity for initial close reading and text-dependent evidence by having students first experience the text and demonstrate that they follow the details of what is explicitly stated as well as inferred. After the multimedia version is viewed/heard, then students return to the text for their comparative analysis. This gives a second opportunity for students to formulate positions and support them with text-dependent questions.”

Slide 16

Invite participants to read one of the other text examples on the handout and identify examples and non-examples of classroom practices that encourage close reading and elicit text-dependent questions. Allow time to work.

Invite participants to share.

Slide 17

Invite participants to turn to partners to answer the questions.

Slide 18

Suggest the activities listed as possible follow-ups to this session.

Invite participants to fill out the Reflections page.