K-3 Literacy Pilot
MoMEntum 2017

Common Literacy Professional Learning
Session 3
Text Complexity and Reading Diet
Learning Intentions

To build an understanding of text complexity and the impacts on student learning.

To build an understanding of the importance connected to a varied reading diet and the impacts on student learning.

To examine texts for complexity and reflect upon current reading diet.
Engagement

- Developing readers need regular exposure to more complex texts so that they can experience acceptable levels of struggle.

- Reading requires automaticity – the systematic and automatic deployment of cognitive behaviors to make meaning of a text.

- Selecting texts based only on the quantitative score is a form of censorship.

- When a reader reads a text that is consistent with his or her language usage, the text is easier; when a reader reads a text that contains variations from the language that he or she uses, the text is harder.

- What people think of as “normal” varies, based on experience and expertise. A teacher who has worked with affluent high-preforming students may rate a text differently than a teacher who has supported struggling readers.
Text Complexity Matters

• While the reading demands of college, workforce training programs, and citizenship have held steady or risen over the past fifty years or so, K–12 texts have, if anything, become less demanding. This finding is the impetus behind the Standards’ strong emphasis on increasing text complexity as a key requirement in reading.

• CCSS See Appendix A (p. 2-16)
Text Complexity Matters
Complexity and the CCSS

**Standard 10:** By the end of the grade level, students will read and comprehend text (literary and informational) of appropriate complexity independently and proficiently.

This requirement raises the bar—all students need to be engaging with increasingly complex text.
Do you think most of the students in your classroom experience texts of appropriate complexity for their grade level?
Learning How To Assess Texts

Quantitative measures
Qualitative values
Task and Reader considerations
Text Complexity Components

According to the CCSS for ELA, text complexity is composed of three primary components:

Quantitative information helps determine the approximate readability grade span for the text—provides a starting point.

Qualitative information helps determine where in the grade span the text would fall, or if the text actually falls outside the grade span.

Reader/Task considerations further guide text selection by teachers.
The Common Core Standards’ Model of Text Complexity
Text Complexity
Quantitative Considerations

Factors that are difficult if not impossible for a human reader to evaluate efficiently, especially in long texts, and are typically measured by computer software.

Quantitative dimensions considered by these measures include:

- Word length
- Sentence length
- Word frequency
- Word difficulty
- Syllabication
- Text cohesion
Text Complexity
Qualitative Considerations

These aspects of text complexity are best measured by an attentive human reader.

Factors such as:
- levels of meaning or purpose;
- text structure;
- language features; and
- knowledge demands.

Tools to Measure
Rubrics
- Literary
- Informational

Fountas and Pinnell text gradient characteristics
Text Complexity
Reader and Task Considerations

Educators will employ professional judgment to match texts to particular students and tasks.

**Reader:**

- cognitive capabilities (attention, memory, critical analytic ability, inferencing, visualization);
- motivation (a purpose for reading, interest in the content, self-efficacy as a reader);
Reader and Task Considerations

- knowledge (vocabulary and topic knowledge, linguistic and discourse knowledge, knowledge of comprehension strategies);

- and experiences.
Reader and Task Considerations

Task

• Reader’s purpose (which might shift over the course of reading),

• type of reading being done, such as skimming (getting the gist of the text) or studying (reading the text with the intent of retaining the information for a period of time), and

• intended outcomes, such as increased knowledge, a solution to a real-world problem, and/or engagement with the text.
### Example of Text Complexity Using CCSS Definition

(Based on *Text Project* by Elfrieda Heibert)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Sarah Plain and Tall</th>
<th>Henry and Mudge</th>
<th>Fire Cat (Similar to <em>Frog and Toad</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative</strong></td>
<td>Lexile 430</td>
<td>Lexile 460</td>
<td>Lexile 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative</strong></td>
<td>Mid-Grade 3</td>
<td>Mid-Grade 2</td>
<td>End-Grade 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative Dimensions</strong></td>
<td>Numerous levels of meaning; high knowledge demands, straightforward narrative structure, some unique words</td>
<td>Single level of meaning; low knowledge demands, straightforward narrative structure, simple vocab</td>
<td>Single level of meaning; low knowledge demands, straightforward narrative structure, simple vocab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reader and Task</strong></td>
<td>Teacher led discussions</td>
<td>Repeated and independent reading</td>
<td>Repeated and independent reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Turn and Talk

What quantitative, qualitative and reader tasks measures do you consider when selecting texts for your students?
Reading Approaches
Gradual Release of Responsibility Model, Pearson & Gallagher 1983

- Reading To /Writing For
  - High Teacher Support
- Shared
- Guided
- Independent
  - High Student Participation

To  With  With  By
Reading Diet

ChooseMyPlate.gov
Scholastic News
Decodable
Text Complexity Components

Tools to Determine the Complexity of Texts

http://maine.gov/doe/ela/professional/module-two/index.html
Qualitative Measures: Literary Texts

TEXT COMPLEXITY MEASUREMENT: LITERARY TEXTS

Qualitative Measures

**LEVELS OF MEANING**

**HIGH**
Multiple Levels of Complex Meaning
- **Purpose:** Implicit or subtle, is sometimes ambiguous and revealed over the entirety of the text
- **Theme:** Implicit or subtle, is often ambiguous and is revealed over the entirety of the text

**MEDIUM HIGH**
Multiple Levels of Meaning
- **Purpose:** Implicit and may be revealed over the entirety of the text
- **Theme:** Implicit or subtle and may be revealed over the entirety of the text

**MIDDLE LOW**
Single Level of Complex Meaning
- **Purpose:** Tends to be revealed early in the text, but may be conveyed with some subtlety
- **Theme:** Is clear and revealed early in the text, but may be conveyed with some subtlety

**LOW**
Single Level of Simple Meaning
- **Purpose:** Usually stated explicitly in the title or in the beginning of the text
- **Theme:** Is obvious and revealed early in the text

**STRUCTURE & LAYOUT**

**HIGH**
- **Narrative Structure:** Complex, implicit, and unconventional
- **Narration:** Many shifts in point of view
- **Order of Events:** Not in chronological order
- **Use of Illustrations:** Minimal illustrations that support the text
- **Layout:** Very long passages of uninterrupted digital or non-digital text that may include columns or other variations in layout (e.g. non-linear or hybrid texts such as digital media, poetry or graphic novels) often with small, densely packed print

**MEDIUM HIGH**
- **Narrative Structure:** Some complexities, more implicit than explicit, some unconventional
- **Narration:** Occasional shifts in point of view
- **Order of Events:** Several major shifts in time, use of flashback
- **Use of Illustrations:** Few illustrations that support the text
- **Layout:** Long passages of uninterrupted digital or non-digital text that may include columns or other variations in layout, often with smaller, more elaborate font

**MIDDLE LOW**
- **Narrative Structure:** Largely simple structure, more explicit than implicit, largely conventional
- **Narration:** Few, if any, shifts in point of view
- **Order of Events:** Occasional use of flashback, no major shifts in time
- **Use of Illustrations:** Includes a range of illustrations that support selected parts of the text
- **Layout:** May have longer passages of uninterrupted digital or non-digital text, often plain font

**LOW**
- **Narrative Structure:** Simple, explicit, conventional
- **Narration:** No shifts in point of view
- **Order of Events:** Chronological
- **Use of Illustrations:** Includes extensive illustrations that directly support and help interpret the written text
- **Layout:** Consistent placement of text in digital and non-digital formats, regular word and line spacing, often large, plain font

**A variable to consider when evaluating the layout of the text is the variety of adjustments (such as font size) available through digital devices. Also see Reader & Task.**
# Qualitative Measures: Informational Texts

## TEXT COMPLEXITY MEASUREMENT: INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

### Qualitative Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS OF PURPOSE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>MEDIUM HIGH</th>
<th>MIDDLE LOW</th>
<th>LOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Implicit, subtle, or difficult to determine and may include the examination/evaluation of complex, sometimes theoretical and contested information</td>
<td>Implied, but fairly easy to infer and may include the explanation or interpretation of information</td>
<td>Implied, but easy to identify based upon context or source, and may convey a range of more detailed information</td>
<td>A single or simple purpose that is explicitly stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
<td>Intricate with abstract, theoretical elements</td>
<td>Includes more complex concepts and a higher level of detail</td>
<td>More involved with a broader focus</td>
<td>Clear and concrete with a narrow focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STRUCTURE & LAYOUT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS OF PURPOSE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>MEDIUM HIGH</th>
<th>MIDDLE LOW</th>
<th>LOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization of Main Ideas and Details</strong>:</td>
<td>Highly complex; not explicit, must be inferred by the reader</td>
<td>Complex and largely implicit; may exhibit traits common to a specific subject or discipline</td>
<td>May be complex, but clearly stated and generally sequential</td>
<td>Clearly stated and sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Features</strong>:</td>
<td>If used, are essential in understanding content</td>
<td>If used, greatly enhance the reader’s understanding of content</td>
<td>If used, enhance the reader’s understanding of content</td>
<td>If used, help the reader navigate and understand content but are not essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Graphics</strong>:</td>
<td>Sophisticated graphics, essential to understanding the text, may also provide information not otherwise conveyed in the text</td>
<td>Some sophisticated graphics, may occasionally be essential to understanding the text</td>
<td>Largely simple graphics, supplementary to understanding of the text</td>
<td>Use of simple graphics, unnecessary to understand text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Layout</strong>:</td>
<td>Very long passages of uninterrupted text that may include columns or other variations in layout, often small, densely packed print</td>
<td>Longer passages of uninterrupted text that may include columns or other variations in layout, often smaller more elaborate font.</td>
<td>May have longer passages of uninterrupted text, often plain font</td>
<td>Consistent placement of text, regular word and line spacing, often large, plain font</td>
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*A variable to consider when evaluating the structure and layout of the text is the variety of adjustments (such as font size) available through digital devices. Also see Reader & Task.
**Text Complexity Components**

**Text Complexity Analysis of**

by

**Text Type:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Description</th>
<th>Recommended Complexity Band Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantitative Measure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Measure of the Text:</th>
<th>Range:</th>
<th>Associated Band Level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Qualitative Measures**

**FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CONSIDERATION, PROVIDE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT YOUR CLAIM**

**Text Structure:** (Briefly describe the structure, organization, and other features of the text.)

**Language Features:** (Briefly describe the conventions and clarity of the language used in the text, including the complexity of the vocabulary and sentence structures.)

**Meaning/Purpose:** (Briefly explain the levels of meaning (Literary Text) or purpose (Informational text.)

**Knowledge Demands:** (Briefly describe the knowledge demands the text requires of students.)

**Socio-Cultural Considerations:** (briefly describe elements of the text which are specific to a culture, region, or understanding of society)
Reader and Task Considerations
Guiding Questions

What aspects of the text will likely pose the most challenge for my students?

• Content or theme concerns or challenges?
• Text structure challenges?
• Language feature challenges?
• Knowledge and experience demands?
• Motivation for interest in the text?

What Common Core State Standards should I focus on when teaching this text?

• What are natural areas of focus for this text?
• With what standards do my students need the most practice?

What supports do I need to provide so that all of my students (even those who are struggling readers) can access the text?
Application

Select a text/ Epic

Determine quantitative features ([lexile.com](http://lexile.com))

Determine qualitative features (levels of meaning, text structure, language features)

Consider the reader and the task

Which instructional context would you use this text? (high teacher support/read a loud - low teacher support/ independent reading)

Do you think most of the students in your room classroom experience text of appropriate complexity for their grade level?
A Word About Text Levels

What messages do leveled texts send to students?

- I think of you as a reader in terms of your reading level, rather than as what you can and are learning to do.
- I trust reading levels absolutely—not what you bring to reading.
- You might think you can read that higher level book, but you can’t.

Rather than being used as a tool to help teachers examine texts for quantitative and qualitative dimensions, levels come to define students’ reading diets.

Perception Shifts

- Focus more attention on how students read rather than only where in the gradient they read.
- Ensure that all students get to experience appropriately complex grade level text regularly.
Debrief/Closure

Debrief: A key understanding about text complexity and reading diet.

Closure: How did we work as a community of learners today?

• Was everyone able to contribute?
• Did we have enough collaborative talk time?
• Were we respectful of everyone’s contributions?