



Webinar Guide 4

Informational Text and the CCSS: Pitfalls and Potentials

Webinar Presented by **Nell Duke** (May 30, 2013)

Guide by **Thomas DeVere Wolsey & Elfrieda H. Hiebert**

Overview

Listen and Learn

View the webinar (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RcDHVlpr6k>) while consulting the webinar slides (<http://www.textproject.org/library/presentations/informational-text-and-the-ccss/>)

Reflect and Respond

Explore terms and definitions
Consider questions for discussion or written response

Analyze and Apply

Articles and resources for additional reading, writing, and discussion

Background

The prominence of informational text in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has great potential to foster greater engagement, deepen content knowledge, strengthen literacy skills, and better prepare students for later schooling and life. However, there are also many pitfalls to avoid: humdrum informational texts and tasks, overemphasis on text to the exclusion of hands-on content learning experiences, insufficient teacher knowledge about features of and strategies for reading specific kinds of informational text, and many others. With examples from elementary classrooms throughout the U.S., Duke suggests ways to capitalize on the potential and avoid the pitfalls that accompany the extensive use of informational text.



Key Terms

National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP]: As CCSS writers note (CCSS, 2012), the content of the CCSS is aligned with the Frameworks for the NAEP, which is a congressionally mandated project. Since 1969, nationally representative assessments have been conducted periodically on how American students perform in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. history, and starting in 2014, in Technology and Engineering Literacy. (National Assessment of Educational Progress, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/> 2012, para #1).

Persuasive writing: The NAEP identified three types of writing for testing in 2011. These include communicative purposes to convey experience, to explain, or to persuade. The purpose of persuasive writing is "...to change the reader's point of view or affect the reader's action" (National Assessment Governing Board <http://www.nagb.org/content/nagb/assets/documents/publications/frameworks/writing-2011.pdf>, 2010, p. 11).

Argumentation: The art of supporting an assertion logically using evidence. Argumentation is often associated with persuasive speech and writing (cf. Toulmin, 2003).

The Activities

Listen and Learn

Dr. Duke's webinar is available for viewing on TextProject's YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RcDHVlpr6k>. Be certain that you have a copy of the slides (available in TextProject's online library at <http://www.textproject.org/library/presentations/informational-text-and-the-ccss/>) on which to write notes and questions.

Purpose-Setting Questions

- ▶ The CCSS offer many potential benefits to students and their teachers. According to Dr. Duke, how are those potentials being realized across the states that have adopted the CCSS?
- ▶ Though standards offer broad guidance, there are also possible pitfalls that teachers should watch for, and avoid. What potential pitfalls can you identify as schools move to increase attention to the information gained from texts?

Reflect and Respond

1. Literary texts communicate knowledge about the human experience (e.g., family relationships, human challenges, adventure). What ways can you identify a commitment to high-quality literary texts, while increasing students' involvement with informational texts?
2. Dr. Duke discusses the issue of “respecting the range” as a way to ensure that informational text does not become a huge catch-all category for any text that is not fiction. Slides 11 and 12, reproduced below, illustrate the range of text types or genres. Note that not all types of text are appropriate for every content area or grade. For example, biographies will be less frequently read in mathematics than in social studies (although *Blockhead: The Life of Fibonacci* shows that some biographies of mathematicians are available for even younger students). Review a unit's or week's worth of lessons that include reading tasks and determine how many different types of informational text students will read. Describe changes that might be made to the unit, or set of lessons, to ensure that a range of text types/genres is addressed appropriately.

What Is Included in “Informational Text” Grades K to 5*

“Biographies” and “autobiographies”

“Books about history, social studies, science, and the arts” [informative/explanatory text, I assume, and other text types too?]

“Technical texts, including directions [I would call this procedural or how-to text], forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps”

“Digital sources on a range of topics”

* This is somewhat different than what falls under “informational text” in the NAEP 2009 Framework.

What Is Included in “Informational Text” Grades 6 to 12*

“Includes the subgenres of exposition, argument, and functional text in the form of personal essays, speeches, opinion pieces, essays about art or literature, biographies, memoirs, journalism, and historical, scientific, technical, or economic accounts (including digital sources) written for a broad audience.”

* This is somewhat different than what falls under “informational text” in the NAEP 2009 Framework.

3. There appear to be different views of how to describe writing and reading texts for the purpose of refuting, forming, or changing views. NAEP refers to persuasive texts and writing tasks (and eliminated the term “to argue” from its 2011 Reading Framework). The CCSS (2010) refers to opinion writing (sometimes from sources) and argumentation, not persuasive writing. From Dr. Duke’s webinar and your knowledge of these terms, describe the terms that you use with students to describe the reading and writing that effectively refutes, forms or changes views.
4. As the rigor and complexity of texts students will be asked to read increases, what are ways in which students’ engagement in reading tasks can be fostered?

Analyze and Apply

1. View the remainder of the webinar starting at time index 36 min, 28 sec (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RcDHVlpr6k&t=36m28s>) with the aim of identifying additional resources and pointers from Dr. Duke in ensuring that informational text is used appropriately in classrooms.
2. Read the article *It’s Not Just Informational Text That Supports Knowledge Acquisition: The Critical Role of Narrative Text in the Common Core State Standards* by E.H. Hiebert (<http://textproject.org/frankly-freddy/the-critical-role-of-narrative-text-in-the-common-core-state-standards/>). Determine the knowledge that is communicated in several available narrative texts such as *The Secret Garden* (available at Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/113>)) and *Miss Rumphius*, *Madeline*, or *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (available at <http://www.wegivebooks.org> Free registration required).

3. View the webinar *Building Funds of Information with Read-Alouds* by E. H. Hiebert (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drIhDrbmJH8>). Then examine *Read-Aloud Favorites* at TextProject (<http://textproject.org/teachers/read-aloud-favorites/>). What books seem appropriate for a particular unit or topic that you teach or are interested in teaching?
4. Two sets of texts at TextProject have been created to support students' acquisition of knowledge through texts—*FYI for Kids* (<http://textproject.org/students/fyi-for-kids/>) and *Talking Points for Kids* (<http://textproject.org/students/talking-points-for-kids/>). ReadWorks.org is another resource for magazine-like texts is where 1,400 texts aimed at students in K-8 are available for free download (<http://www.readworks.org/books/passages>). Identify a group of texts from these websites (or others) that would extend, or even provide background knowledge for, a unit or topic that you plan to teach.

Reference

- Common Core State Standards [CCSS]. (2010). Common Core State Standards for English language arts & literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf
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