



Formative Assessments
and the Common Core:
Text Complexity to Task Complexity

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Overview

Situating assessment and the Common Core

Models of reading and reading assessment

Text complexity and task complexity:
Examining a Common Core State Standard and
determining reading assessment focus

Why formative assessment is a key in helping students
meet the Common Core State Standards

Conclusions

Situating Assessment and the Common Core State Standards

The curriculum and assessment dance: Who is leading?

Building a plane while flying it

The NCLB hangover

“Unskewing” the frequency and weight of summative tests

Formative assessment provides detailed,
instructionally useful information,
and can communicate caring

Are working in students’ best interests if we
maintain an exclusive focus on cognitive development?

If millions of students have trouble meeting the “basic”
reading level described by NAEP, how will they aspire to,
and reach, the higher bar of CCSS?

How well we know assessment should be reflected in how well we assess.

How well we know reading should be apparent in how well we assess reading.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of particular assessments?

‘Saved by a Fly’

What is the main idea of the story?

1. A moose drinks all the water from a river
2. A group of animals is afraid of a big moose
3. A fly gets rid of a troublesome moose
4. A group of animals is always quarreling

(Maryland State Assessment, 2006)

‘The Report Card’

What do you think Johnny did next?

1. hid his report card
2. sneaked away
3. scolded his mother
4. showed his report card to his parents

(Nelson Denny Reading Test, 1966)

Models of reading and reading assessment

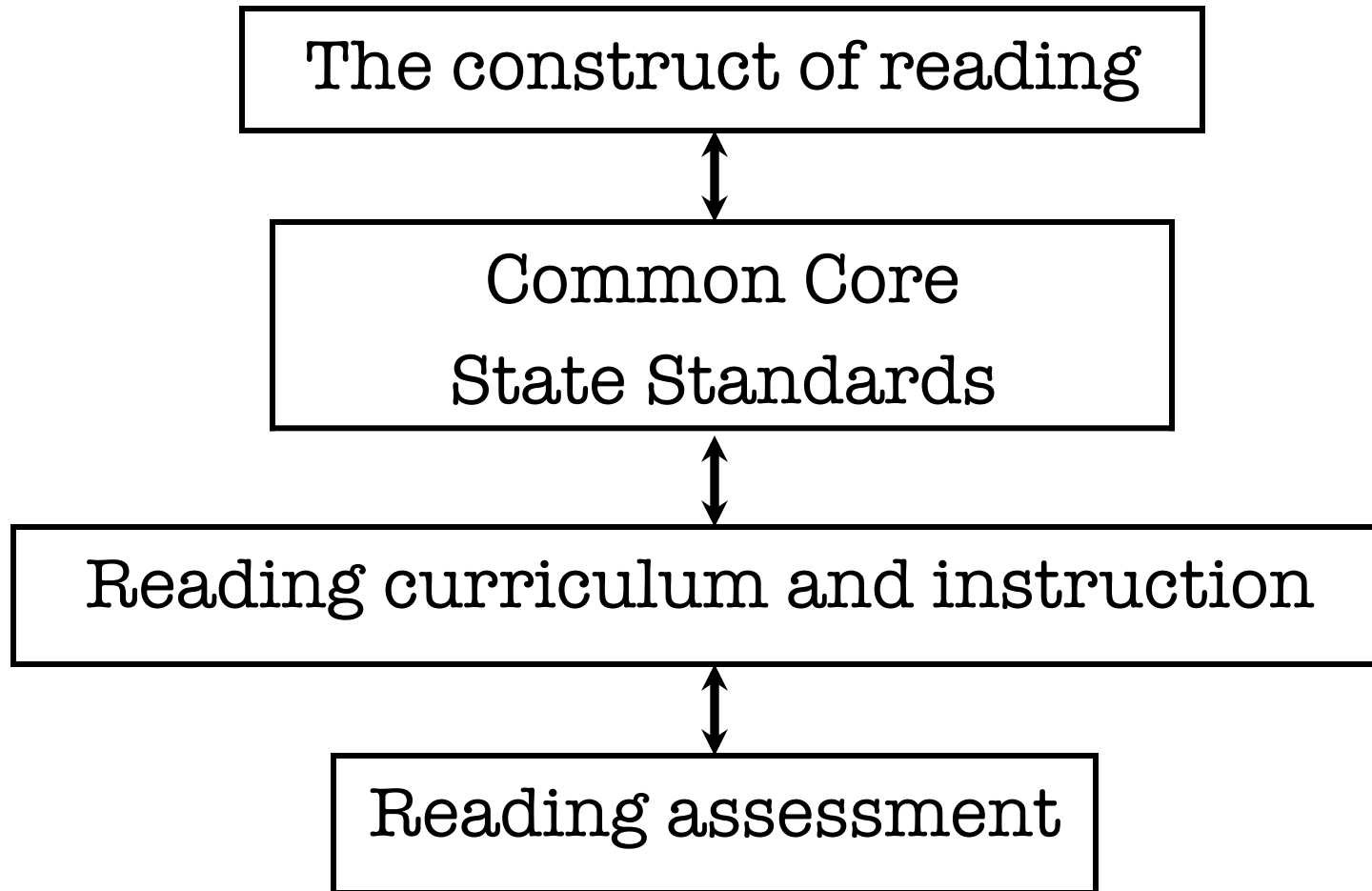
First, a definition of reading...

Reading is an active and complex process that involves:

- Understanding written text
- Developing and interpreting meaning
- Using meaning as appropriate to type of text, purpose and situation

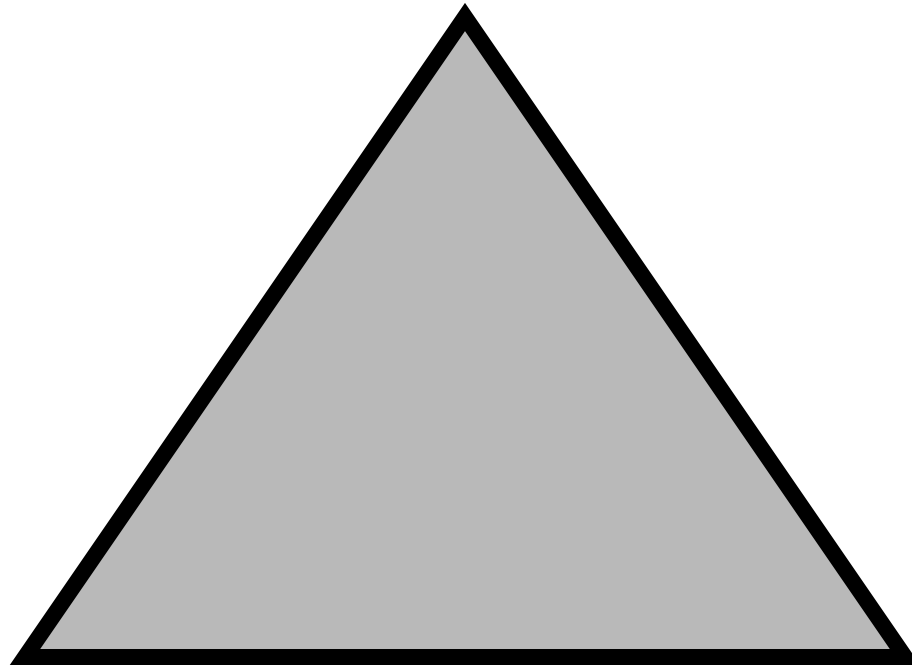
The 2009 Framework of the NAEP
(National Assessment of Educational
Progress)

Necessary alignments for useful reading assessment:



An example of construct validity: Summarization

What does it mean to summarize a
challenging history text?

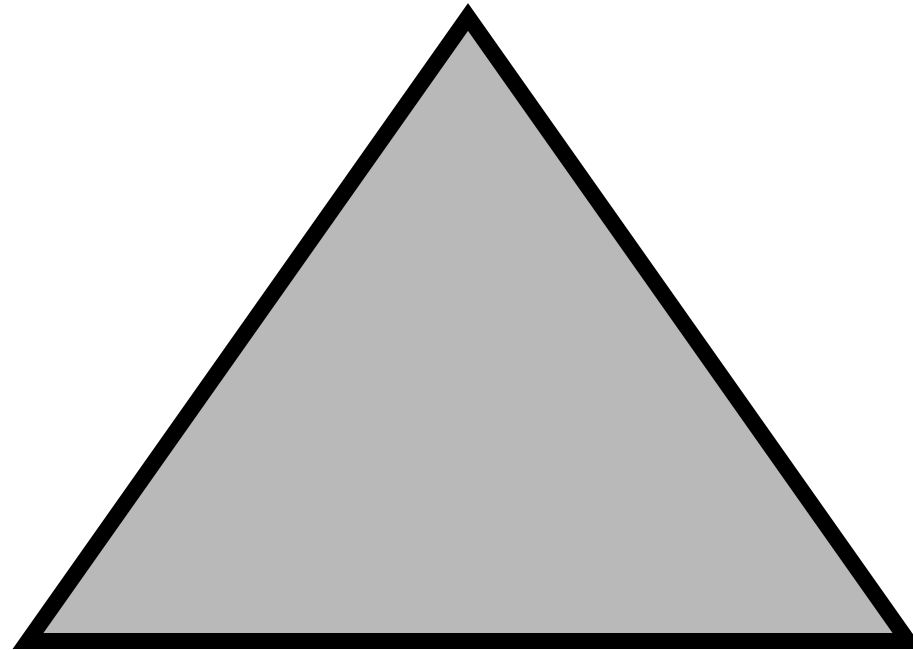


Assessment of
summarization

Accuracy and
confidence in our
inferences

An example of construct validity: Summarization and CCSS

What does it mean to summarize a challenging history text and then critically compare three text summaries for information accuracy and trustworthiness?



Assessment of
summarization

Accuracy and
confidence in our
inferences

Students who meet the *Standards* readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and online. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic.

Common Core State Standards, 2010

For students to do all that stuff, and
to do all that stuff well, lots of
top-notch formative assessment
is needed.

Examining a Common Core State Standard
and determining reading assessment focus:
Text complexity and task complexity

(Please note the toned-down nature
of text complexity in the example...)

Common Core State Standard
for Informational Text/
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

*Explain how specific images
(e.g., a diagram showing how a machine
works) contribute to and clarify a text.*

“Explain how specific images contribute to and clarify a text...”



Bridges

People build bridges to save time. Many bridges are built across water. There are many types of bridge made of stone, steel, or wood. Bridges can carry people, cars, and trains.

A task analysis indicates that
students who meet this
Common Core State Standard
engage in complex thinking.

To demonstrate achievement in
a related performance
assessment, students must:



Bridges

People build bridges to save time. Many bridges are built across water. There are many types of bridge made of stone, steel, or wood. Bridges can carry people, cars, and trains.

- construct meaning from the text
 - comprehend a related image
- compare the two related understandings
 - analyze the two for their separate and joint contributions to understanding



Bridges

People build bridges to save time. Many bridges are built across water. There are many types of bridge made of stone, steel, or wood. Bridges can carry people, cars, and trains.

- explain (through writing or speaking) how the two comprehended parts relate to one another
- describe how the image helps comprehension
 - use metacognition to coordinate these skills and strategies, and to guide the entire reading process.

“Explain how specific images contribute to and clarify a text...”



Bridges

People build bridges to save time. Most times, bridges are built across water. There are many types of bridge made of stone, steel, or wood. Bridges can carry people, cars, and trains.

Please note that the above is a
2nd grade CCS Standard...

Consider the assessment that is required
for providing detailed, instructionally useful
information in relation to this Common Core
State Standard...

For the student reader, each of these seven facets of the CCS Standard represent significant learning and achievement.

Each facet is a necessary focus of formative assessment and instruction that helps students take on increasingly complex texts and tasks.

Can we imagine all 2nd grade readers undertaking and succeeding at this CCS Standard, one that includes text complexity and task complexity, without the benefits of ongoing formative assessment and related teacher feedback and instruction?

Why formative assessment is a key in helping students meet the Common Core State Standards

Characteristics of Formative Assessment

- an ongoing process that teachers use to obtain information about students' reading development and reading achievement
- conducted in the midst of teaching and learning
 - information enables teachers to continually update their understanding of student's reading strengths and needs

(IRA Formative Assessment Position Paper)

Characteristics of Formative Assessment

- directly informs teaching and learning
- contributes to students' continuous reading growth
- is prominent in successful classrooms, schools, and districts.

(IRA Formative Assessment Position Paper)

An orderly and effective formative and summative reading assessment system:

$$F1 + F2 + F3 + F4 + F5..... = S1$$

Where:

F = Formative assessments *focused on student development in relation to*
Common Core State Standards

S = Summative assessment *focused on student achievement of*
Common Core State Standards

Accountability is judged with
high-stakes summative tests,
but accountability is created
by useful formative assessments.

How are formative assessment
and
summative assessment related?

A non-CCSS example...

Formative assessment

-ball control

-kicking

-passing

-vision

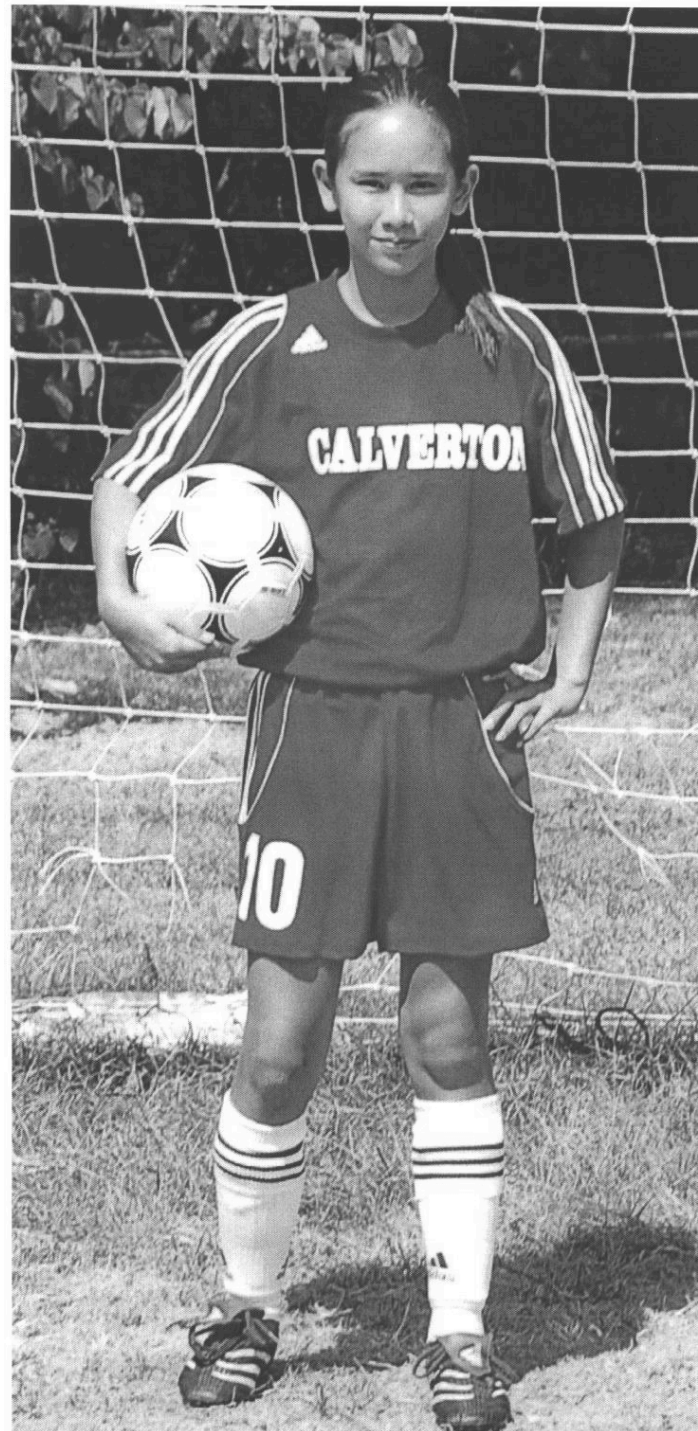
-resilience

-position

-speed

-perseverance

-creativity



Summative assessment

-score at end of
game

-team standing at
end of season

-personal
improvement
from season
to season

This may be unique
to Malcolm's system,
but careful attention to
formative assessment
led to good news
on most
summative assessments.

Formative assessment

- vocabulary
development
- comprehension
- fluency
- phonics
- higher order
thinking
- content area
learning
- complex tasks



Summative assessment

- accomplished
reading
- test scores
- performance
assessment
geared to the
CCSS
- reading growth
from year to year

Detailed assessment information is necessary for each of the facets of performance (as well as the coordination of these facets) for students to approach competency at the performance.

Formative assessment of student development in relation to both text and task:

“Describe how the image helps comprehension”

Be introduced to > Get familiar with > Practice > Meet Standard

Formative assessment at the center of successful teaching and learning

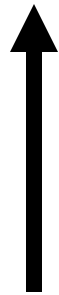
Student's next level of competency and achievement



Where our best teaching happens

Zone of proximal development

Where accountability is created



Student's current level of competency and achievement

The “what” of teaching can be strategy, skill,
content domain knowledge, task knowledge...

The “Sweet Spot” of Teaching and Formative Assessment

How does assessment figure in determining
students’ zones of proximal development?

What kind of detail, and what kind
of assessment is needed?

How does assessment figure in teaching
that helps students move through
zones of proximal development?

Formative Assessment Helps As We Support Students' Reading Development

When we think of our greatest teaching successes,
do we think of students who scored well on tests?

Do we think of students who went from reluctant
readers to enthusiastic readers?

Do we think of students who evolved from easily
discouraged readers to readers whose motivation
helped them persevere through challenges?

Do we remember students who avoided reading at
all costs evolving into students who learned to love
reading?

“The Matthew Effect”

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer...

- Motivation and engagement
- Self-concept and self-esteem
- Agency and volition
- Attributions for success and failure

Success with the Common Core is not only about skills and strategies!

If we think of our student readers as
strategy and skill users,
then we use formative assessment to check on
their strategy and skill development.

If we think of our student readers as
content area knowledge builders,
then we use formative assessment to check on
how much they are learning in the content areas.

If we want our students to be motivated and
engaged readers with high self-efficacy, then
shouldn't we conduct related
formative assessment?

Conclusions

As we develop effective systems of reading assessment in relation to the Common Core State Standards, we must attend to:

- formative assessment and summative assessment working together ♪
- assessment that informs us of student learning and progress with increasingly complex texts and tasks

Conclusions

Formative reading assessment that focuses on both text complexity and task complexity is a high priority.

Such assessment can inform our instruction in relation to:

Students constructing meaning from text

Students using that meaning in related tasks

Thank you! 🎵



Questions about this presentation:

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