Informational Text and the CCSS: Pitfalls and Potential

Nell K. Duke

University of Michigan

Plan for Today's Webinar

- Very brief introduction to informational text in the CCSS

- Very brief summary of the potential of informational text in the CCSS

- Six possible pitfalls in addressing the CCSS for informational text

- Questions and comments

Increased Experience with Informational Text

The CCSS invoke the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) distributions for reading:

Grade	Literary	Informational
4	50%	50%
8	45%	55%
12	30%	70%

Increased Experience with Informational Text

The CCSS invoke the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) distributions for writing as well:

Grade	To Persuade	To Explain	To Convey Experience
4	30%	35%	35%
8	35%	35%	30%
12	40%	40%	20%

Increased Expectations for Informational Text

- Standards for Reading Informational Text
- Standards for Writing Persuasive and Informative/ Explanatory Text
- Standards for Informational Speaking and Listening
- Standards for Language
- Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Potential, in sum

Increased experience with informational text might:

- provide greater continuity in texts experienced across grade levels

- better prepare students for the reading and writing demands of college, career, *and citizenship*

- build greater content knowledge

- engage a greater range of students and in a greater range of situations

Possible Pitfalls

1. Going overboard
2. Disrespecting the range
3. Disregarding engagement
4. Separating the language arts
5. Abandoning some of what we know
6. Overlooking some of what's new

(And many more . . .)

Possible Pitfall: Going Overboard

- Shifting to *too much* informational text

➢ Need to be mindful of two important footnotes on page 5:

"1 The percentages on the table reflect the sum of student reading, not just reading in ELA settings. Teachers of senior English classes, for example, are not required to devote 70 percent of reading to informational texts. Rather, 70 percent of student reading across the grade should be informational."

"2 As with reading, the percentages in the table reflect the sum of student writing, not just writing in ELA settings."

Possible Pitfall: Going Overboard

- Neglecting hands-on experiences

➢ Even the standards require experiences beyond 'text':

E.g., Grade 5 Writing: "Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources."

E.g., Grade 2 Speaking and Listening: "Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences."

Possible Pitfall:
Disrespecting the Range

- The CCSS use the term "informational text" very broadly.

- Many types of text fall under "informational text."

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.

Possible Pitfall: Disrespecting the Range

- Different kinds of informational text have different purposes and features

  Thought experiment:

  - *All About Orchids*

  - *How to Care for Orchids*

  - *Save the Borneo Orchids*

  ❖ *There is no such thing as "informational text features" (at least in the broad view of "informational text").*
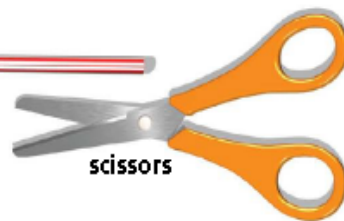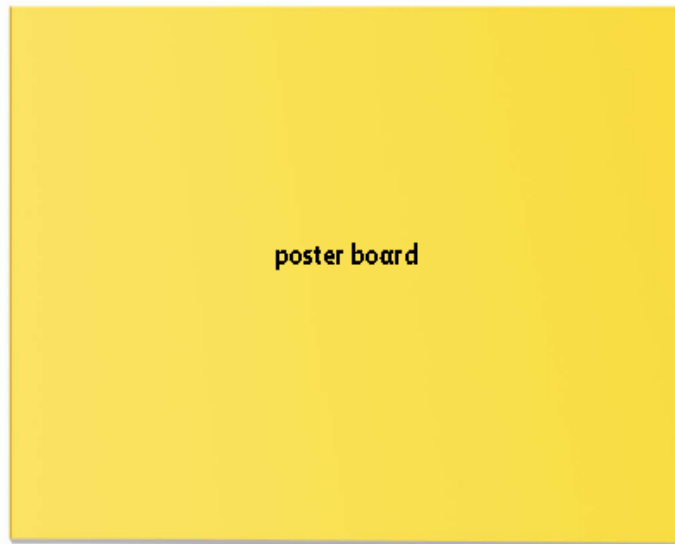
  ❖ *There is no such thing as "nonfiction text features."*
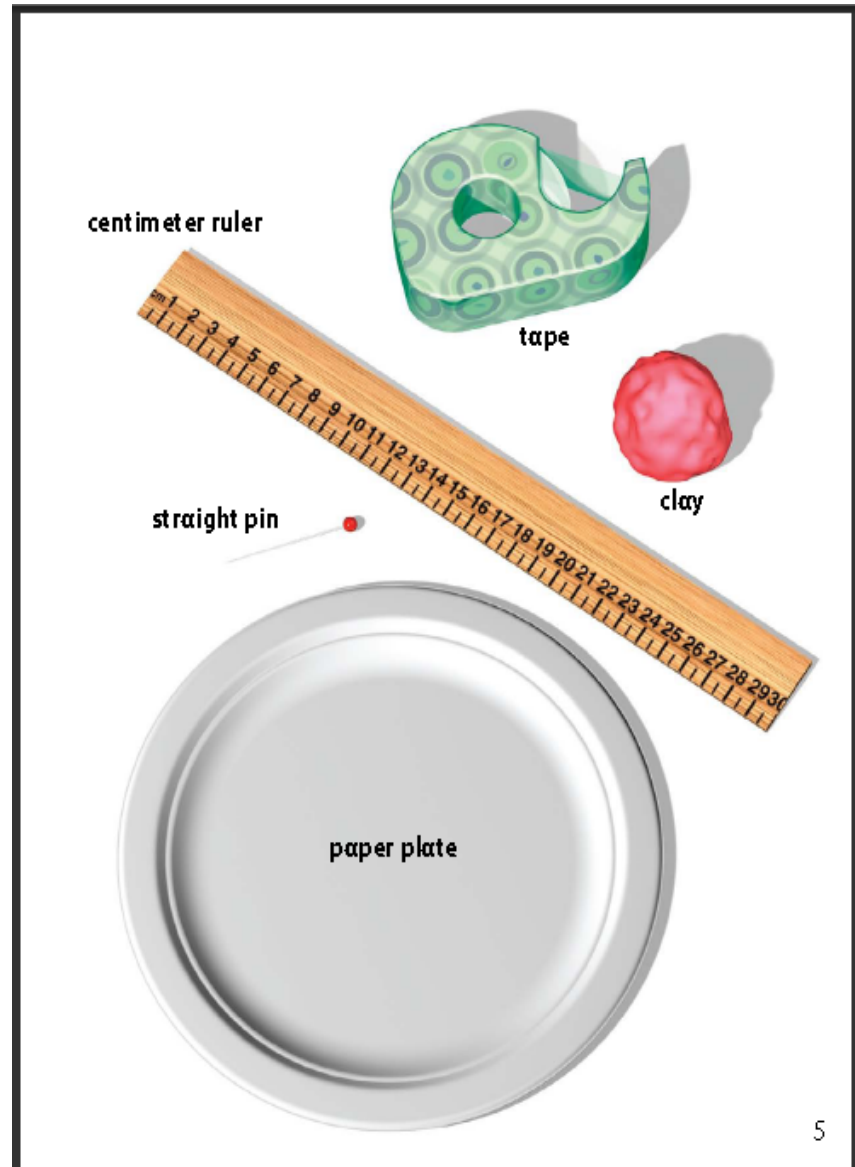
Possible Pitfall: Disrespecting the Range

- Different kinds of informational text are read and composed differently
  - E.g., Previewing
  - E.g., Role and process of research

- ➤ Students likely need experience with each type of informational text we want them to learn to read and write (Duke & Roberts, 2010).

- ➤ Teachers need to learn about the purposes, features, processes, and instructional strategies of/ for different types of text.

You can have fun making a wind vane.
Gather these materials. Then follow
each step.

poster board

sharpened pencil with an eraser

plastic straw

marker

scissors

centimeter ruler

tape

clay

straight pin

paper plate

from Kuhn, K. (2011). *How to make a wind vane: A procedural text*. Washington, DC: National Geographic School Publishing.

Possible Pitfall: Disregarding Engagement

- Engagement helps enable the hard cognitive and affective work of comprehending and composing.

- The rigor of the Common Core State Standards increases the imperative to foster engagement (see http://www.reading.org/general/Publications/blog/LRP in the month of June for posts on this topic by Guthrie and by Snow).

- More motivated and engaged readers and writers comprehend and compose better, read more, and grow faster (e.g., Guthrie, 2004; Troia et al., 2013).

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION M UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

A supporting study:

Jiménez and Duke, 2011:

- Fourth-grade students were given
  - three texts on a topic they reported they were interested in reading about
  - three texts on a topic they reported they were not interested in reading about
- When reading texts on a topic they were interested in reading about, students:
  - used more comprehension processes
  - used a greater range of comprehension processes
  - had higher recall (nearly double the score) [back]

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION **M** UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Possible Pitfall: Disregarding Engagement

- There are many things research shows can promote student engagement in literacy (e.g., Guthrie, McRae, & Klauda, 2007; Pressley, Dolezal, Raphael, Mohan, Roehrig, & Bogner, 2003).

➢ Involving students in reading and writing real-world texts for real-world purposes is one important strategy (and has other benefits; e.g., Purcell-Gates, 2011).

Type of text	Text	Purpose	Audience
Informative/ Explanatory	Magazine	To inform and entertain	Local clinic office
Procedural	Book on how to reuse household items	To help environment; to raise money	* Consumers at local farm market
Biography	Profiles of members of the school staff	To introduce to faculty/staff	Readers of school website; visitors to school
Persuasive	Proposal (presented by PowerPoint)	To persuade local government to improve local park	Official from the local government**

* Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, & Martin, 2012

** Halvorsen, et al., 2012

From the Anchor Standards for Writing:

"To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students . . . learn to appreciate that a key purpose of writing is to communicate clearly to an external, sometimes unfamiliar audience, and they begin to adapt the form and content of their writing to accomplish a particular task and purpose" (p. 18).

Possible Pitfall: Separating the Language Arts

- The CCSS separate reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.

- This could exacerbate, or at least not improve, the separation of reading and writing in many U.S. classrooms.

Possible Pitfall: Separating the Language Arts

- The standards do have important connections if we read (and then teach) across modalities. For example:
  - RIT, grade 2, standard 8: "Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text."

  - WRT, grade 2, standard 1: "Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., *because*, *and*, *also*) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section."

We Can Make Less Obvious Pairings As Well

For example, for:

RIT, grade 2, standard 2: "Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text."

WRT, grade 2, standard 1: "Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words. . ."

Information Book or Article Reviews

Create a real-world purpose and audience for the reviews (e.g., other classes, Amazon.com, http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/swyar/)

Show model book reviews for and by children

Use a common template, such as:

1. Title and author of the book or article
2. Name of the reviewer
3. Engaging opening (e.g., *Did you know that. . .?*) about interesting facts from the book or article
4. Main topic of book or article
5. Key subtopics within the book or article
6. Opinion about the book or article
7. Reasons to support that opinion

Possible Pitfall: Abandoning Some of What We Know

- Standards dictate ends, not means.

- We know that explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies using a gradual release of responsibility improves comprehension of informational text (e.g., Shanahan, et al., 2010).

- Acquisition of a number of standards seems likely to be facilitated by teaching comprehension strategies.

Possible Pitfall: Abandoning Some of What We Know

For example:

RIT, Grade 4, standard 2: Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

RIT, Grades 9 – 10, standard 3: Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

Possible Pitfall: Abandoning Some of What We Know

- Standards can't spell out everything.
- We know that effective informational writing often engages the reader and sustains engagement.

cf.:

WRT Anchor standard 2: "Write informative/ explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content."

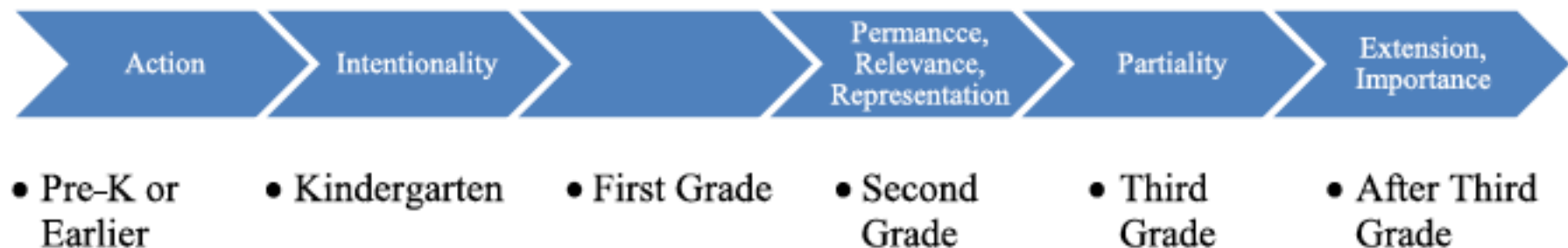# Possible Pitfall: Overlooking Some of What's New

- Something like 'standards stereotyping' is occurring.

- The standards entail many shifts.

- Some may be getting overlooked.

- Two examples are:

  - The focus on visual text and visual elements of text (e.g., reading anchor standard 7)

  - Assessing the credibility and accuracy of sources (e.g., writing anchor standard 8)

- There is much less research in some areas, but in most areas, there is at least some.

Table 1   Concepts of Graphics With Definitions

Concept	Definition
Action	Static graphics can be interpreted as dynamic action.
Extension	Some graphics provide additional information that is not present in the written text.
Importance	Some information in a graphic may be more important than other information.
Intentionality	Illustrators (who are sometimes also the authors) choose to create graphics to accomplish a communicative purpose within a larger text.
Partiality	Not everything in written text must be represented in the graphics.
Permanence	Graphics in printed texts are permanent and do not change.
Relevance	Graphics and written text are related.
Representation	Illustrations and photographs represent objects, but do not have the same physical properties as those objects.

From: Roberts, K. L., Norman, R. R., Duke, N. K., Morsink, P., Martin, N. M., & Knight, J. A. (in press). Diagrams, timelines, & tables, oh my! Concepts and comprehension of graphics. To appear in *The Reading Teacher*.

Figure 1 Grade at Which All or Nearly All Children Demonstrated Understanding of Each Concept

Action	Intentionality		Permancce, Relevance, Representation	Partiality	Extension, Importance
• Pre–K or Earlier	• Kindergarten	• First Grade	• Second Grade	• Third Grade	• After Third Grade

The WWWDOT Approach to Teaching Assessment of the Credibility of Web-based Sources

WWWDOT Approach

Who wrote it and what credentials do they have?

Why was it written?

When was it written or updated?

Does it help meet my needs?

Organization of site

To do list for the future

Zhang & Duke, 2011; Zhang, Duke, & Jiménez, 2011

Please note: We kept development in mind. For middle- or high-school students, we would likely include different factors and/or approach this differently.

The WWWDOT Approach to Teaching Assessment of the Credibility of Web-based Sources

Session 1: Introducing the topic, explaining the WWW, with examples

Session 2: Reviewing WWW, explaining DOT, looking closely at hoax website

Session 3: Evaluate three websites on the same topic using WWWDOT sheet

Session 4: Debate

- Which one of the three websites was the most trustworthy? Why?
- Which one was the least trustworthy? Why?

Potential, in sum

Increased experience with informational text might:

- provide greater continuity in texts experienced across grade levels

- better prepare students for the reading and writing demands of college, career, *and citizenship*

- build greater content knowledge

- engage a greater range of students and in a greater range of situations

Possible Pitfalls

1. Going overboard
2. Disrespecting the range
3. Disregarding engagement
4. Separating the language arts
5. Abandoning some of what we know
6. Overlooking some of what's new

(And many more . . .)

Closing thought: We have quite a lot of work to do. . .

". . . classrooms characterized by particularly successful comprehension were almost equally good at achieving this with fiction and non-fiction books. Conversely, classrooms not characterized by successful comprehension were particularly poor with comprehension of non-fiction."

(Topping, Samuels, & Paul, 2008, p. 517)

Pieces Cited

Duke, N. K., Caughlan, S., Juzwik, M. M., & Martin, N. M. (2012). *Reading and writing genre with purpose in K – 8 classrooms.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Duke, N. K., & Roberts, K. M. (2010). The genre-specific nature of reading comprehension. In D. Wyse, R. Andrews, & J. Hoffman (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of English, language and literacy teaching* (pp. 74–86). London: Routledge.

Guthrie, J. T., (2004). Teaching for literacy engagement. *Journal of Literacy Research, 36*, 1 – 29.

Guthrie, J. T., McRae, A., & Klauda, S. L. (2007). Contributions of Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction to knowledge about interventions for motivations in reading. *Educational Psychologist, 42*, 237–250.

Halvorsen, A., Duke, N. K., Brugar, K. A., Block, M. K., Strachan, S. L., Berka, M. B., & Brown, J. M. (2012). Narrowing the achievement gap in second-grade social studies and content area literacy: The promise of a project-based approach. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 40*, 198-229.

Pieces Cited

Jiménez, L., & Duke, N. K. (2011). *Interest matters: Fourth-graders reading multiple high- and low-interest texts.* Unpublished manuscript, Michigan State University.

Purcell-Gates, V. (2011) *Real-life literacy instruction, K–3: A handbook for teachers.* Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia. Retrieved August 4, 2011, from www.authenticliteracyinstruction.com/img/HandbookK3.pdf.

Pressley, M., Dolezal, S. E., Raphael, L. M., Mohan, L., Roehrig, A. D., & Bogner, K. (2003). *Motivating Primary-Grade Students*. Guilford Press: New York.

Roberts, K. L., Norman, R. R., Duke, N. K., Morsink, P., Martin, N. M., & Knight, J. A. (in press). Diagrams, timelines, & tables, oh my! Concepts and comprehension of graphics. To appear in *The Reading Teacher*.

Topping, K. J., Samuels, J., & Paul, T. (2008). Independent reading: The relationship of challenge, non-fiction and gender to achievement. *British Educational Research Journal, 34*, 505–524.

Pieces Cited

Troia, G. A., Harbaugh, A. G., Shankland, R. K., Wolbers, K. A., & Lawrence, K. A. (2013). Relationships between writing motivation, writing activity, and writing performance: effects of grade, sex, and ability. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 26,*17–44.

Zhang, S., & Duke, N. K. (2011). The impact of instruction in the WWWDOT Framework on students' disposition and ability to evaluate websites as sources of information. *The Elementary School Journal, 112,* 132–154.

Zhang, S., Duke, N. K., & Jiménez, L. J. (2011). The WWWDOT approach to improving students' critical evaluation of websites. *The Reading Teacher, 65,* 150-158.