

Text Complexity & the Common Core: Moving into Action with Confidence

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Standard #10 of the Common Core State Standards: English/Language Arts

- By the time they complete high school, students must be able to read and comprehend independently and proficiently the kinds of complex texts commonly found in college and careers.

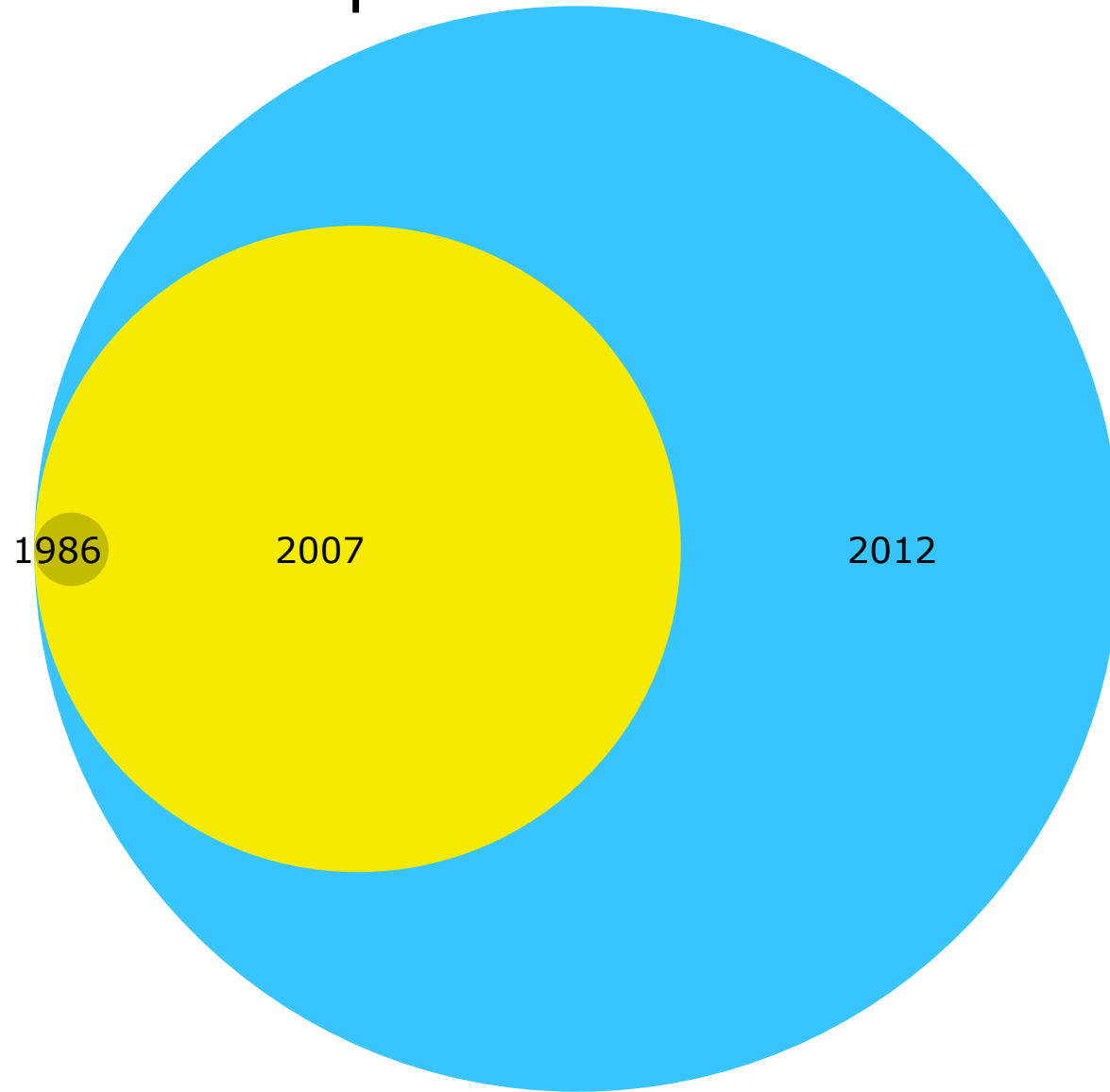
- 
1. What makes a text complex for students at your grade level? What are some examples of complex text at your grade level?
 2. What are the best ways to “grow” the capacity of students to read complex text?
 3. What are the ways in which teachers can “scaffold” complex texts for struggling/beginning readers?
 4. What proportion of a school day should be spent reading? What should the distribution of complex to less complex text be during this reading? The distribution of informational to narrative text?

Focus of Today's Session

- WHY an emphasis on text complexity now?
- WHAT makes texts complex?
- HOW do teachers support students' capacity with complex text?

1. WHY an emphasis on text complexity now?

(a) Information explosion

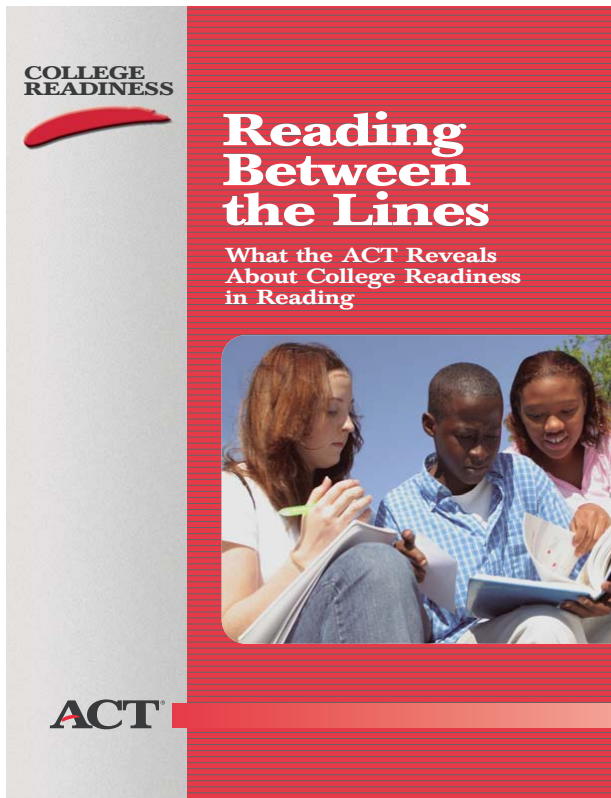


Reading is where vocabularies and concepts are extended & developed

Comparison of Spoken & Written Language

(from Hayes & Ahrens, 1988)

<u>Printed Text</u> Popular Magazines Children's Books	Rare Words per 1,000 65.7 30.9
<u>Television Texts</u> Popular adult shows	22.7
<u>Adult Speech</u> College graduates to friends	17.3

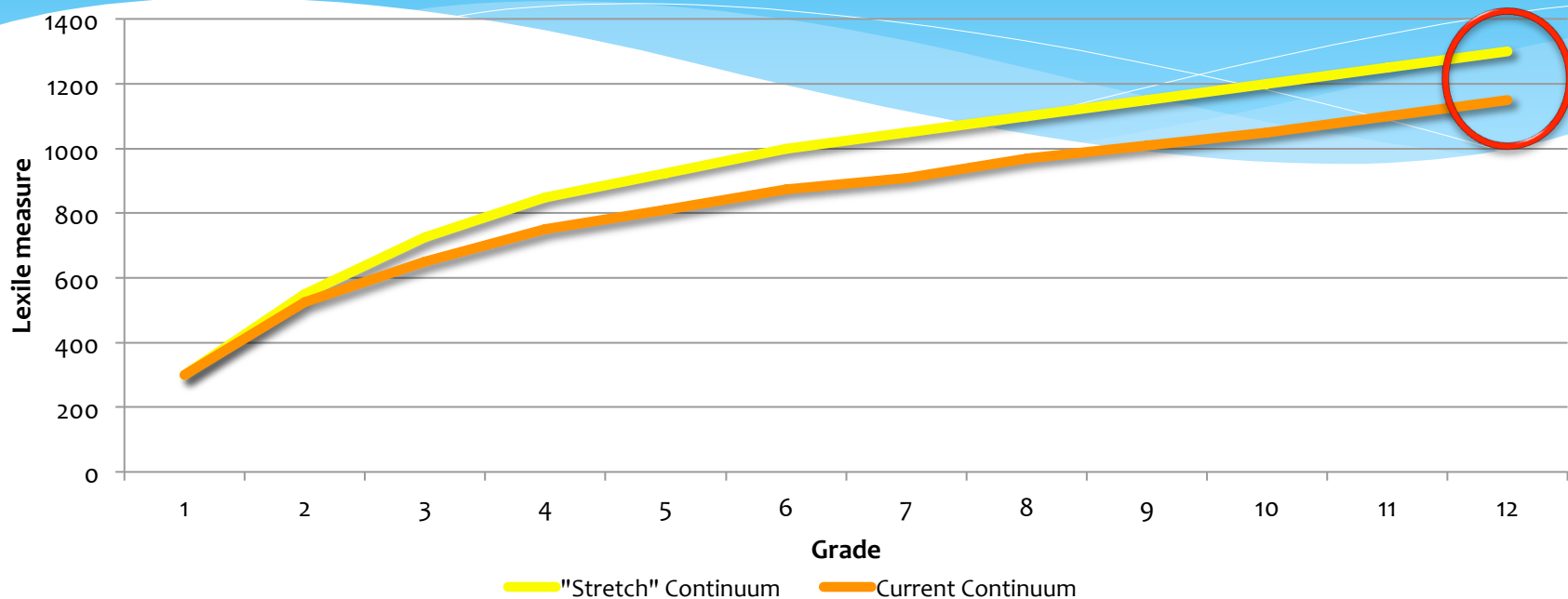


(b) REPORTS OF DECLINING TEXT LEVELS

Reading Between the Lines (2006)

Only 51 percent of 2005 ACT-tested high school graduates are ready for college-level reading—and, what's worse, more students are on track to being ready for college-level reading in eighth and tenth grade than are actually ready by the time they reach twelfth grade.

Discrepancy in High School & College Texts (2010)



Sourced from:

SAT I, ACT, AP

Military

Citizenship

Workplace

Community College

Online Reference Articles

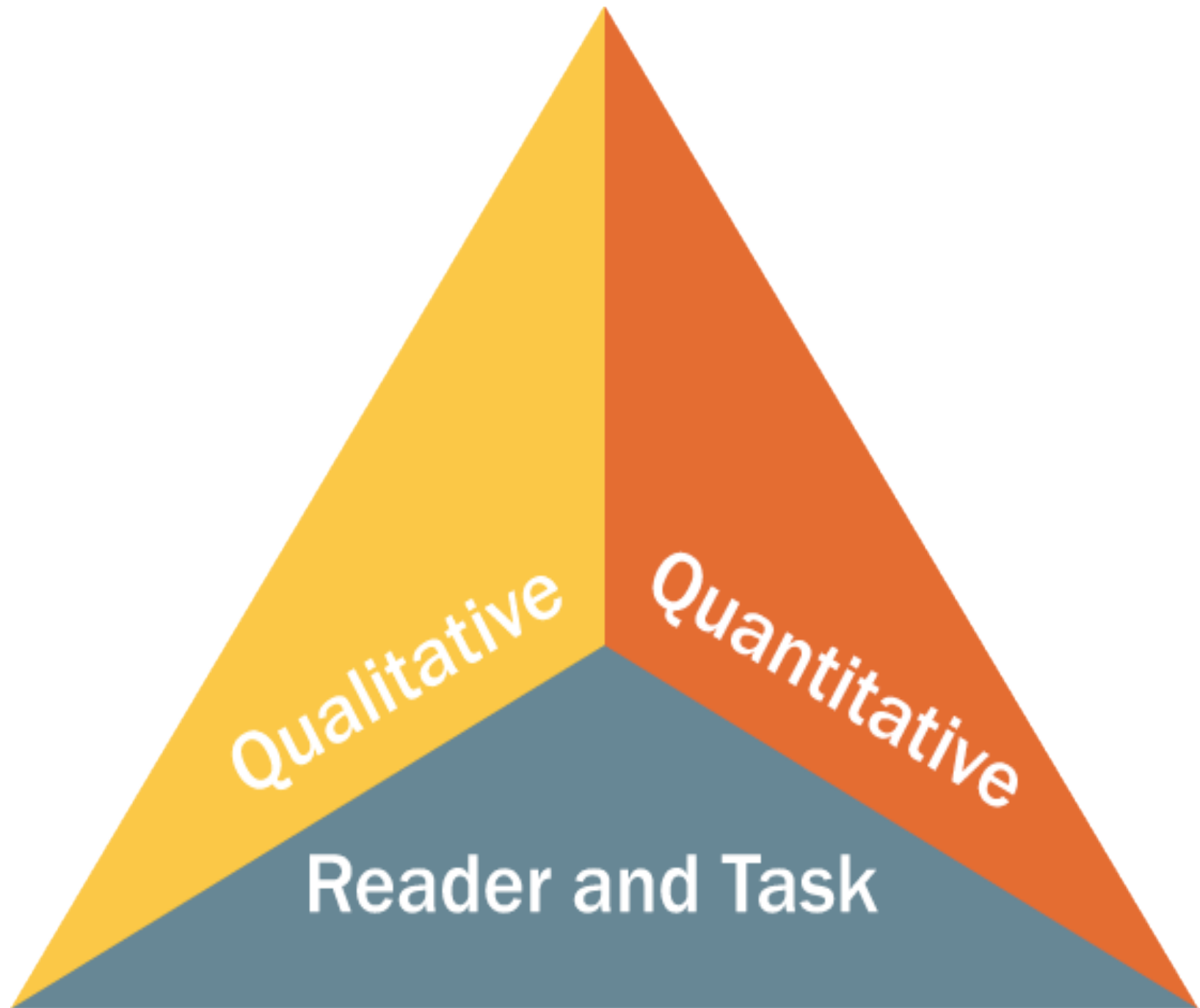
Online Worldwide Newspapers

University

Graduate Record Exam

Stenner, A. J., Koons, H., & Swartz, C. W. (2010). *Text complexity and developing expertise in reading*. Chapel Hill, NC: MetaMetrics, Inc.

2. WHAT Makes a Text Complex?



Qualitative Dimensions of Text Complexity Chart

Band: 6th – 8th

Reviewer: _____

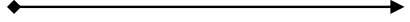
Name of Text: _____

Narrative/Poetry/Hybrid/Informational/other _____

Quantitative Measure: _____

Quantitative range for this band: _____

Link to Coh-Metrix profile for this piece

Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Where to place within the band?				
		NOT suited to band	Low end of band (6 th)	Middle of band (7 th)	High end of band (8 th)	NOT suited to band
Structure: (both story structure or form of piece)						
Language Demands and Conventions (including vocabulary load and sentence structure)						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)						
Levels of Meaning/ Purpose						
Overall placement:	Justification (what trumped– what factor weighed most heavily)					
	Instructional level:  Independent level: 					

upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself.* Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845.

Figure 5: Annotation of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Qualitative Measures	Quantitative Measures
Levels of Meaning While the apparent aim of the text is to convince readers of the day of the evils of slavery, there are other aims as well; among the latter, not fully revealed in the excerpt, are Douglass's efforts to assert his own manhood (and that of other black men) and to create an extended analogy between his own literal rise to freedom and a spiritual awakening.	Various readability measures of the <i>Narrative</i> are largely in agreement that it is of appropriate complexity for grades 6–8. A Coh-Metrix analysis calls attention to this excerpt's complex syntax and the abstractness of some of the language (e.g., hard-to-define concepts such as <i>slavery</i> and <i>freedom</i>). Helping to balance out that challenge are the text's storylike structure and the way the text draws clear connections between words and sentences. Readers will still have to make many inferences to interpret and connect the text's central ideas, however.
Structure The <i>Narrative</i> uses a fairly simple, explicit, and conventional story structure, with events largely related chronologically by a narrator recounting his past. There are some philosophical discussions that may, to the reader just looking for a story, seem like digressions.	Reader-Task Considerations These are to be determined locally with reference to such variables as a student's motivation, knowledge, and experiences as well as purpose and the complexity of the task assigned and the questions posed.
Language Conventionality and Clarity Douglass's language is largely clear and meant to be accessible. He does, however, use some figurative language (e.g., juxtaposing literal <i>bread</i> with the metaphorical <i>bread of knowledge</i>) and literary devices (e.g., personifying <i>freedom</i>). There are also some now-archaic and unusual words and phrasings (e.g., <i>choice documents</i>).	Recommended Placement Both the qualitative and quantitative measures support the Standards' inclusion of the <i>Narrative</i> in the grades 6–8 text complexity band, with the understanding that the text sits at the high end of the range and that it can be reread profitably in later years by more mature students capable of appreciating the deeper messages embedded in the story
Knowledge Demands The <i>Narrative</i> discusses moderately sophisticated themes. The experiences of slavery Douglass describes are obviously outside students' own experiences, but Douglass renders them vivid. The text is bound by Douglass's authoritative perspective. General background knowledge about slavery and race in mid-nineteenth-century America is helpful, as is knowledge of Christianity, to which Douglass makes frequent reference throughout the excerpt and the work as a whole.	

The CCSS Staircase of Text Complexity

	450-600	600-750	750-900	900-1,050	1050-1200	1200-1350
2-3	Blue		Red			
4-5		Blue	Blue	Red		
6-8				Blue	Blue	Red
9-10					Blue	Red
11-CCR					Blue	Red

Blue	Old Metrics recommendations
Red	CCSS Recommendations

Hiebert, E.H. (October, 2010). *Anchoring Text Difficulty for the 21st Century: A Comparison of the Exemplars from the National Assessment of Educational Assessment and the Common Core State Standards* (Reading Research Report 10.02). Santa Cruz, CA: TextProject, Inc.

Student Achievement Partners (writers of CCSS):

- * Text Complexity is a term used to describe both the richness and range of the readings (texts) ... students encounter in the classroom. Basically, it is a description of how much is going on inside the text: how unusual and demanding is the vocabulary, how complicated are the sentences, paragraphs and whole piece? How simple or abstract are the ideas in the text?

M. Liben (2012). *The Text Complexity Primer*. New York, NY: Student Achievement Partners

- 
- * In the beginning was the Word (-50L)
 - * I think; therefore I am. (40L)
 - * Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (120L)
 - * To be or not to be, that is the question (300L)
 - * Beauty is truth, truth beauty (390L)

A Working Definition of Text Complexity

- The complexity of a text is a function of the reader's proficiency. There are complex beginning reading texts, there are complex middle-grade texts, etc.
- Numerous features can make a text complex.
- Typically: Complex texts have complex ideas and, usually, complex ideas are conveyed with rare and infrequent vocabulary. Vocabulary is a “forecaster” of text complexity.

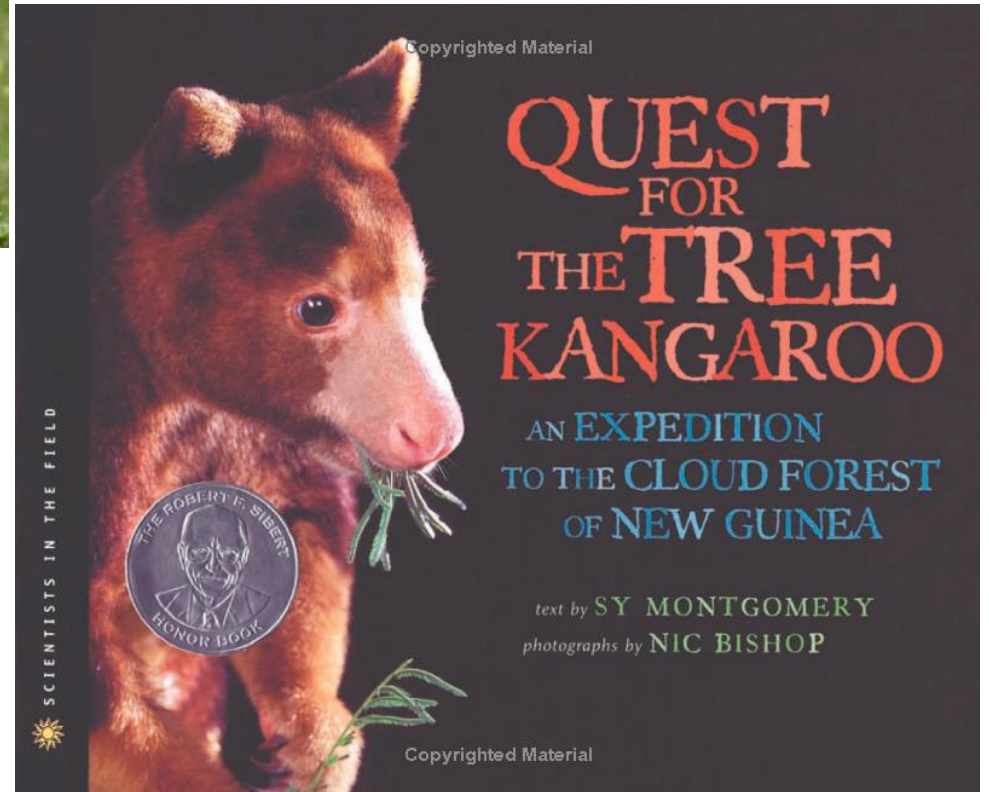
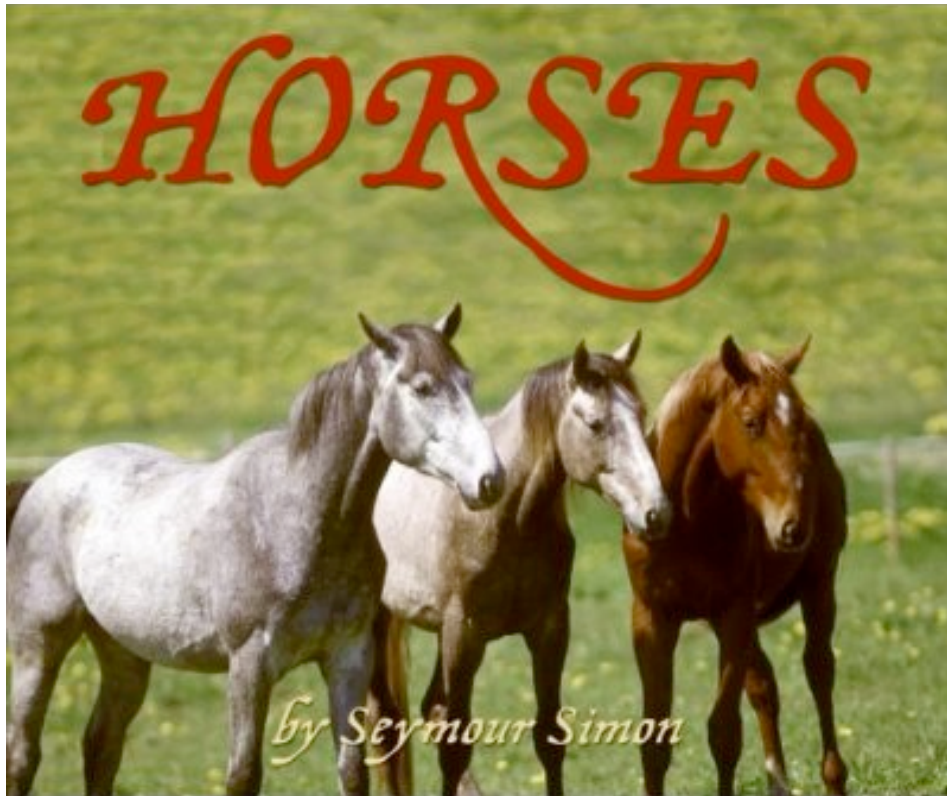
3. HOW can teachers support students' capacity with complex text?

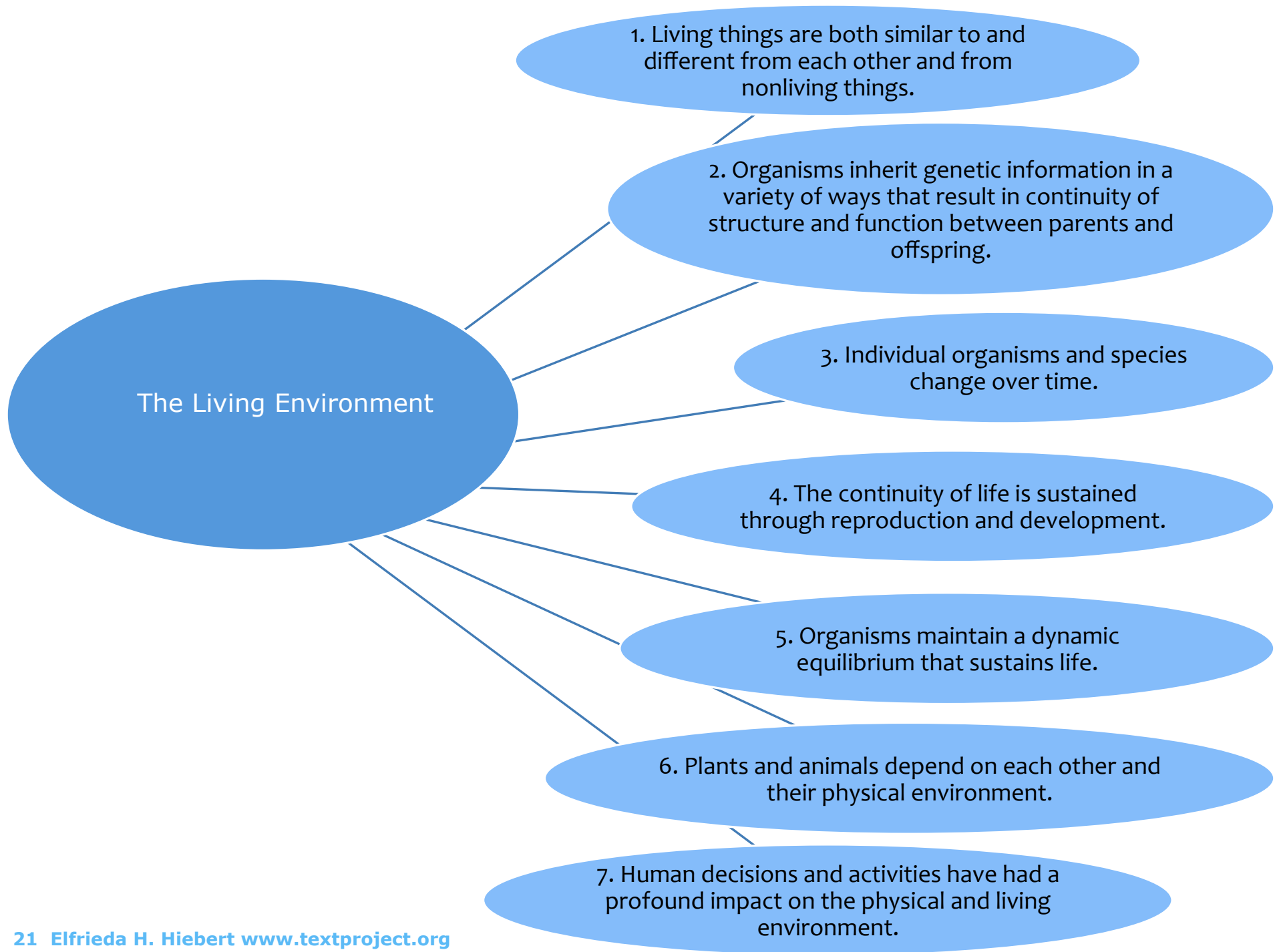
a. Knowledge

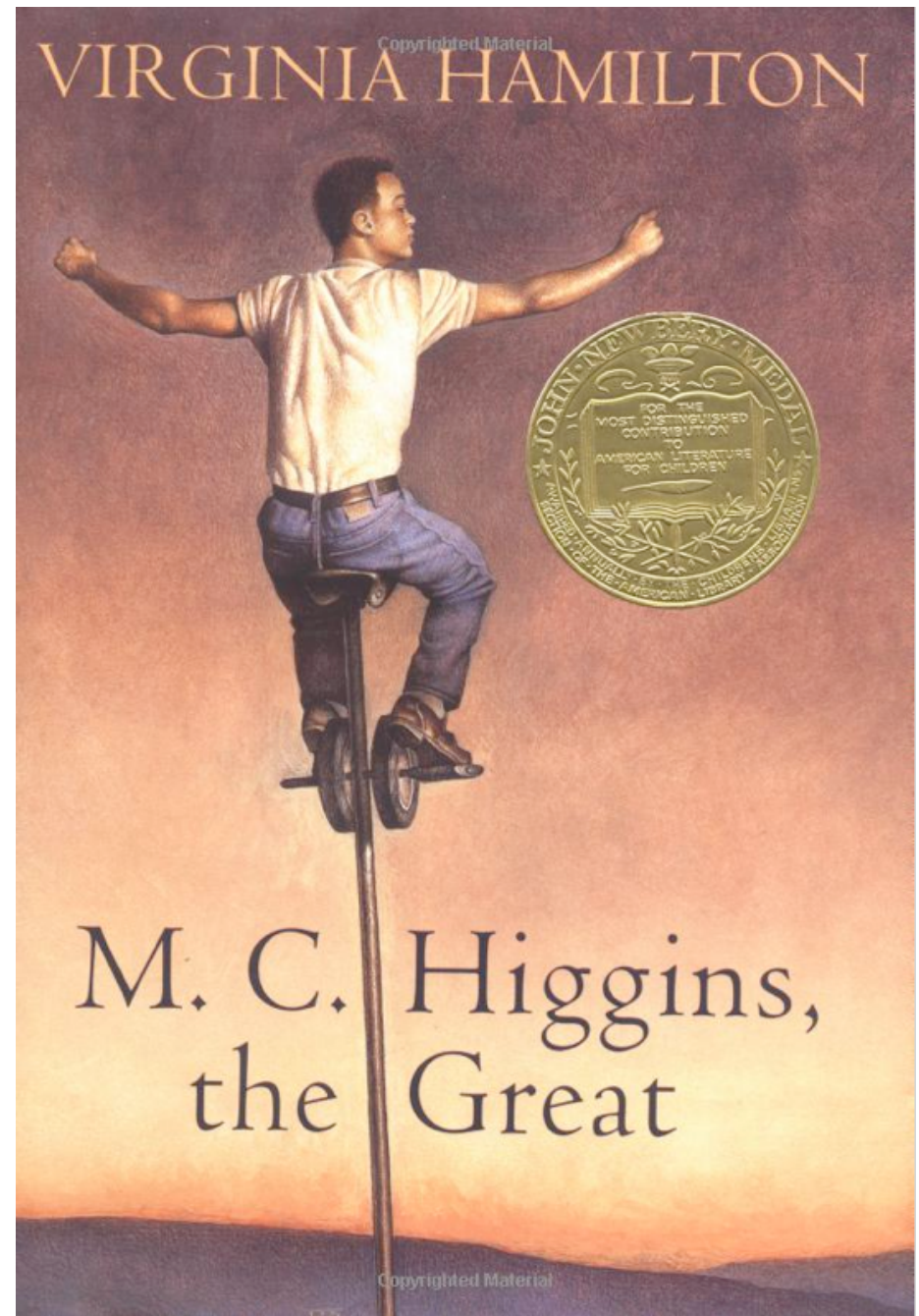
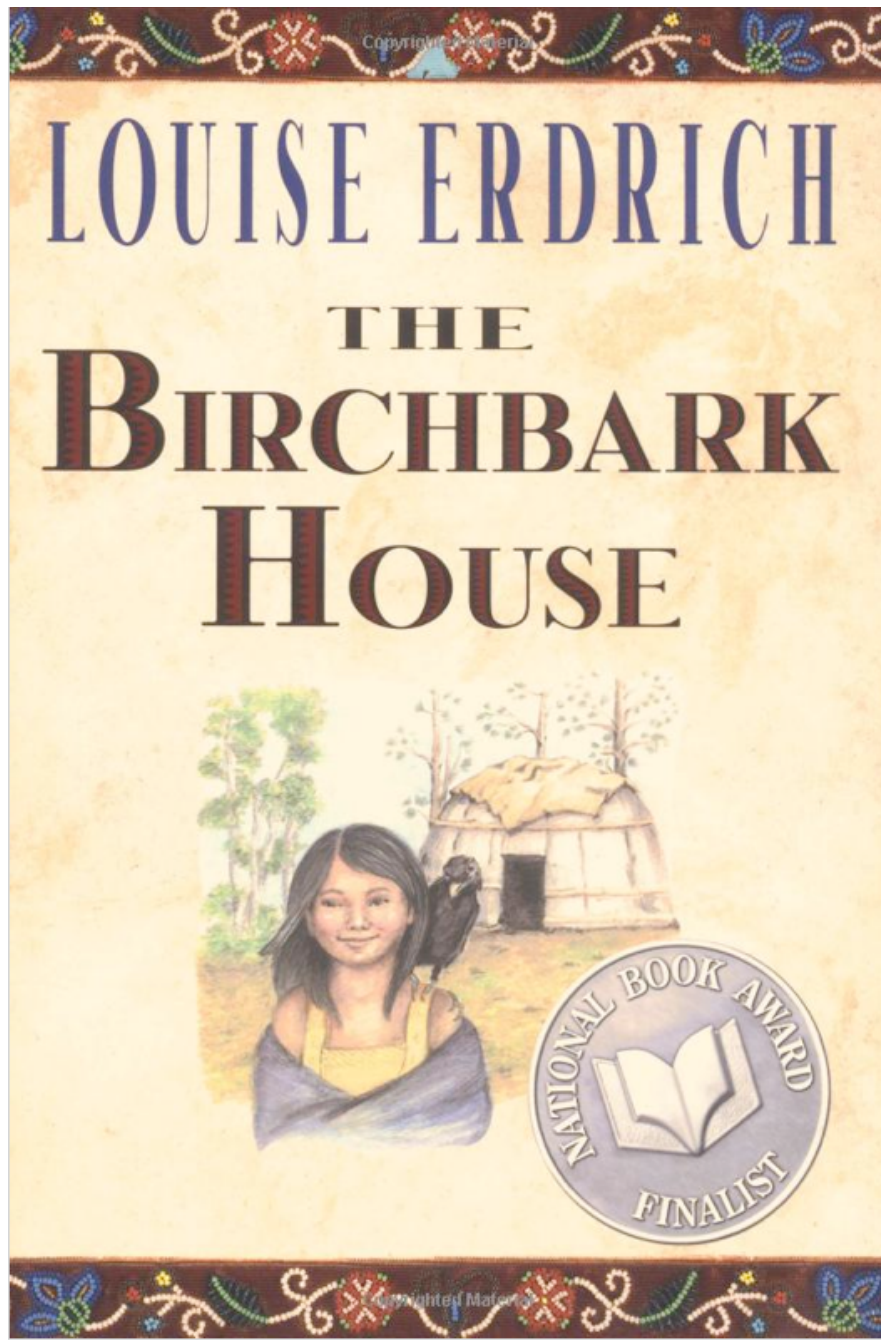
b. Vocabulary

c. Volume

a. *Developing KNOWLEDGE*

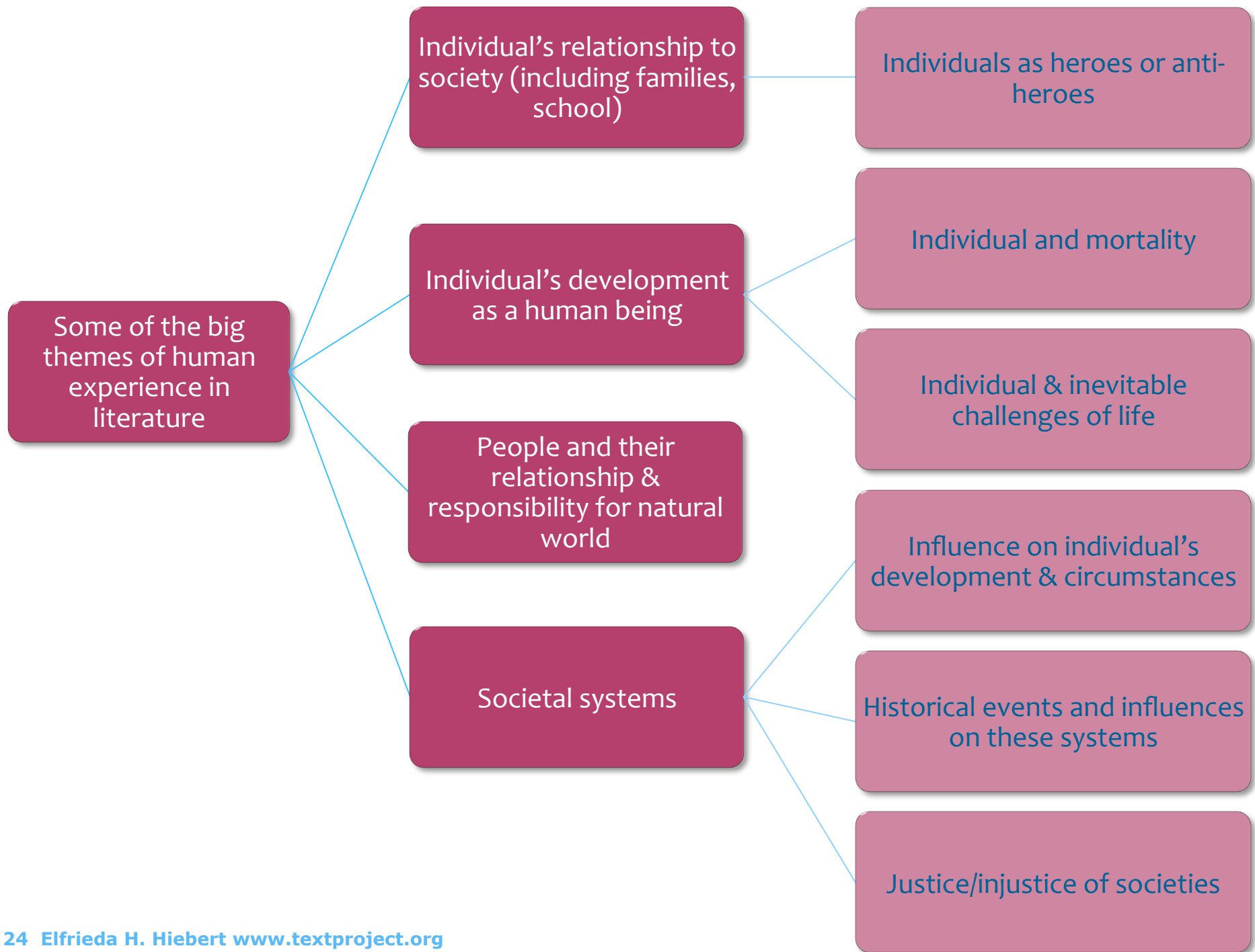






Critical Vocabulary

Content Area	Sample Words
Civics	abuse of power, campaign, elected representative, geographical representation, individual liberty, Labor Day, national origin, patriotism, school board, Uncle Sam, welfare
English Language Arts	abbreviation, capitalization, e-mail, genre, illustration, learning log, paragraph, reading strategy, table, verb
Geography	billboards, discovery, fall line, harbor, Japan, land clearing, national capital, Pacific rim, rain forest, technology, vegetation region
Mathematics	addend, capacity, equation, gram, improbability, mass, obtuse angle, quotient, sample, unit conversion
Science	bedrock, Earth's axis, gases, inherited characteristic, magnetic attraction, ocean currents, recycle, technology, water capacity





A Symphony of Whales



by STEVE SCHUCH Copyrighted Material illustrated by PETER SYLVADA

Levels of Meaning: 1

- * How was Glashka helpful? Have you ever been helpful?
- * How did Glashka's gift help to save the whales? Have you ever been in a situation like Glashka?

Levels of Meaning: 2



[http://
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=MxU8yqZhbh0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxU8yqZhbh0)

Supporting Students' Development of Funds of Knowledge



Funds of Information

 Stories about Heroes	Music
 Tales: Old & New	Math
Animals in the Wild	 History & Geography
How People Live	Your Choice!

Stories about heroes		• <i>Joan of Arc</i> (Diane Stanley) • <i>Martin Luther King, Jr.</i> (Rosemary L. Bray) • <i>Seven Brave Women</i> (Betsy Hearne) • <i>She's Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head!</i> (Kathryn Lasky)
Music		• <i>I Like Music</i> (Leah Komaiko) • <i>The Philharmonic Gets Dressed</i> (Karla Kuskin) • <i>Moses Goes to a Concert</i> (Isaac Millman)
Tales: New & Old		• <i>The Huckabuck Family and How They Raised Popcorn in Nebraska and Quit and Came Back</i> (Carl Sandburg) • <i>The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales</i> (Virginia Hamilton) • <i>Rapunzel</i> (Paul O. Zelinsky)
Math		• <i>Math Curse</i> (Jon Scieszka) • <i>Grandfather Tang's Story</i> (Ann Tompert) • <i>A Very Improbable Story: A Math Adventure</i> (Edward Einhorn)
Animals in the Wild		• <i>Manatee Blues (Vet Volunteers)</i> (Laurie Halse Anderson) • <i>Animals and the Seasons</i> (Susanne Riha) • <i>Amazing X-Rays: Wild Animals</i> (Jacquelin A. Ball)
History & Geography		• <i>Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes</i> (Eleanor Coerr) • <i>The Scrambled States of America</i> (Laurie Keller) • <i>Shaka: King of the Zulus</i> (Diane Stanley)
How People Live	Fashion	• <i>I Want to be a Fashion Designer</i> (Stephan Maze) • <i>My Wonderful World of Fashion: A Book for Drawing, Creating, and Dreaming</i> (Nina Chakarabarti) • <i>Frankly, Frannie: Fashion Frenzy</i> (AJ Stine)
	Sports	• <i>The World's Greatest Soccer Players</i> (Matt Doeden) • <i>The Wild Soccer Bunch: Kevin the Star Striker</i> (Joachim Masannek) • <i>A Beautiful Game: The World's Greatest Players and How Soccer Changed Their Lives</i> (Tom Watt)

Action 1

- * What could I do in my classroom for the remainder of this school year to support “Text as a source of Knowledge Acquisition”?

b. *Extending Vocabulary*

Teaching distinctions in the Anglo-Saxon & Romance layers of English

Greek/Latin

Specialized words
used mostly in
science

EX: thermometer,
geography

New Words through compounding
of word parts:
thermosphere, geopolitical

Romance

1066 (Norman Conquest)-1399 (Henry IV, a native
Anglo-Saxon speaker assumes throne): French is
spoken by upper classes; English by lower-classes.
French loan words remain.

EX: frigid, perspiration, soil

New Words through derivations: frigidity,
frigidness, refrigerator

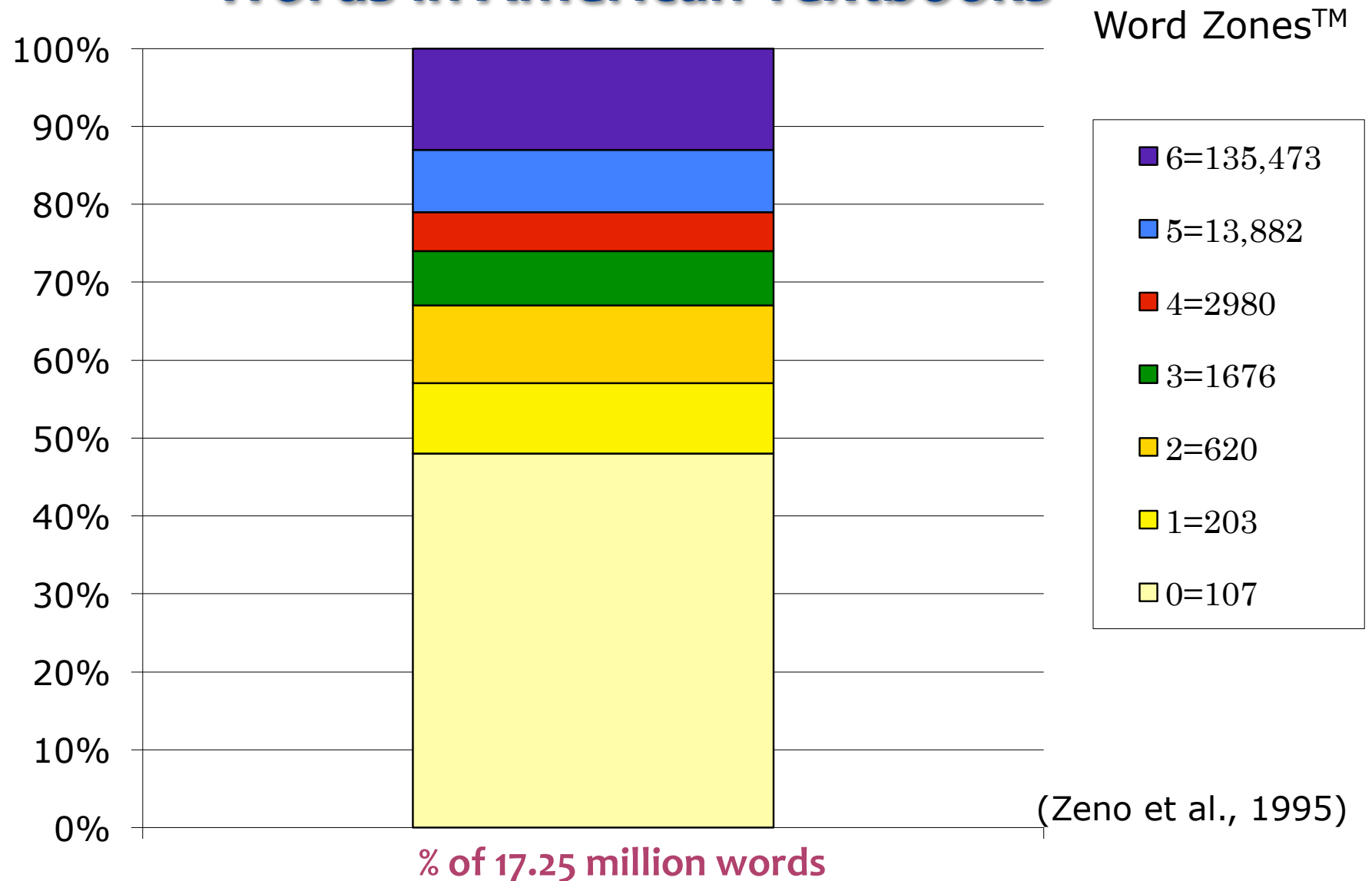
Anglo-Saxon

Common, everyday, down-to-earth words

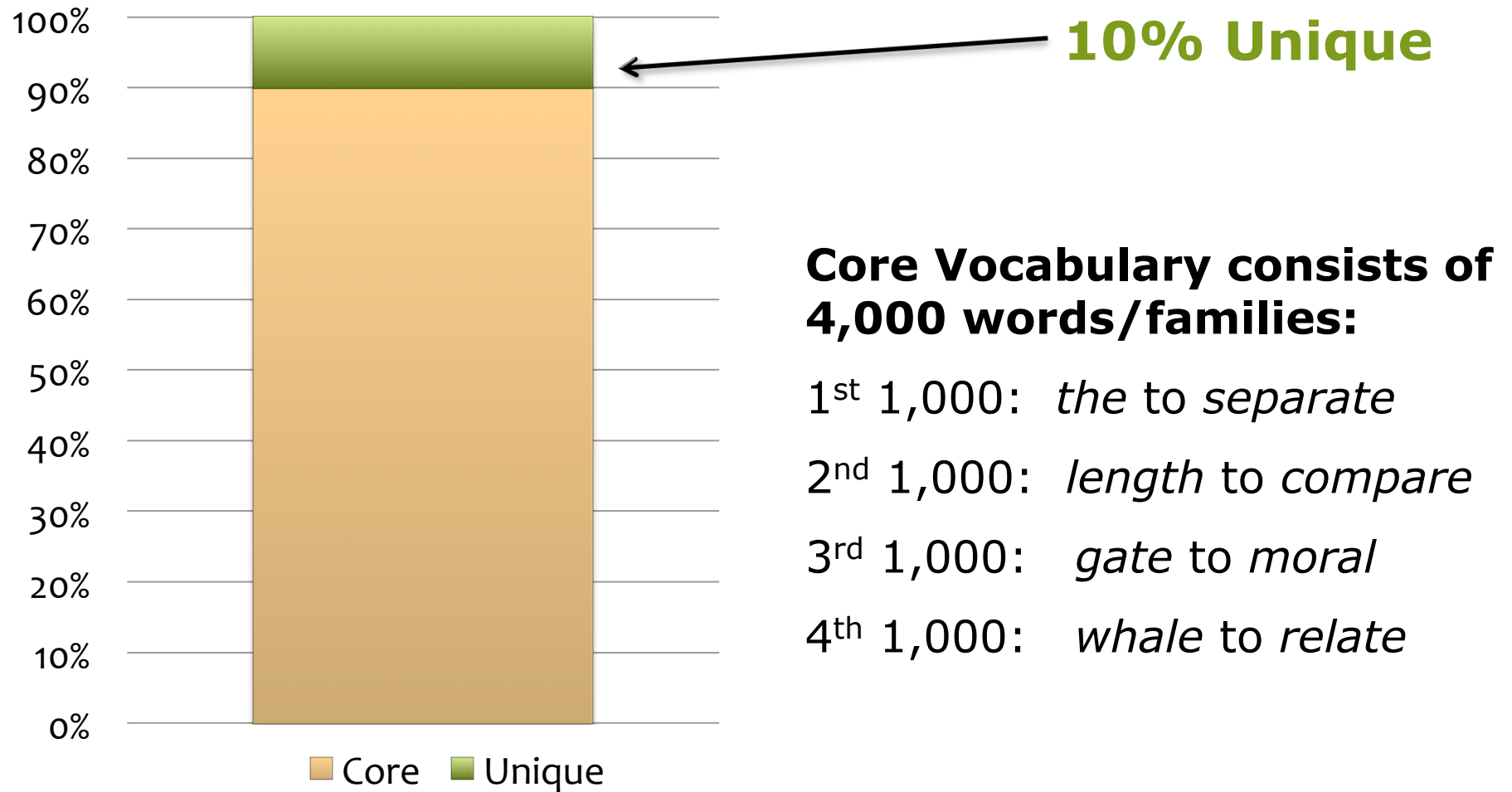
EX: cold, sweat, dirt

New Words through compounding: cold-blooded, cold-natured, cold-
drink, cold-running

Core and Extended Vocabularies: Words in American Textbooks



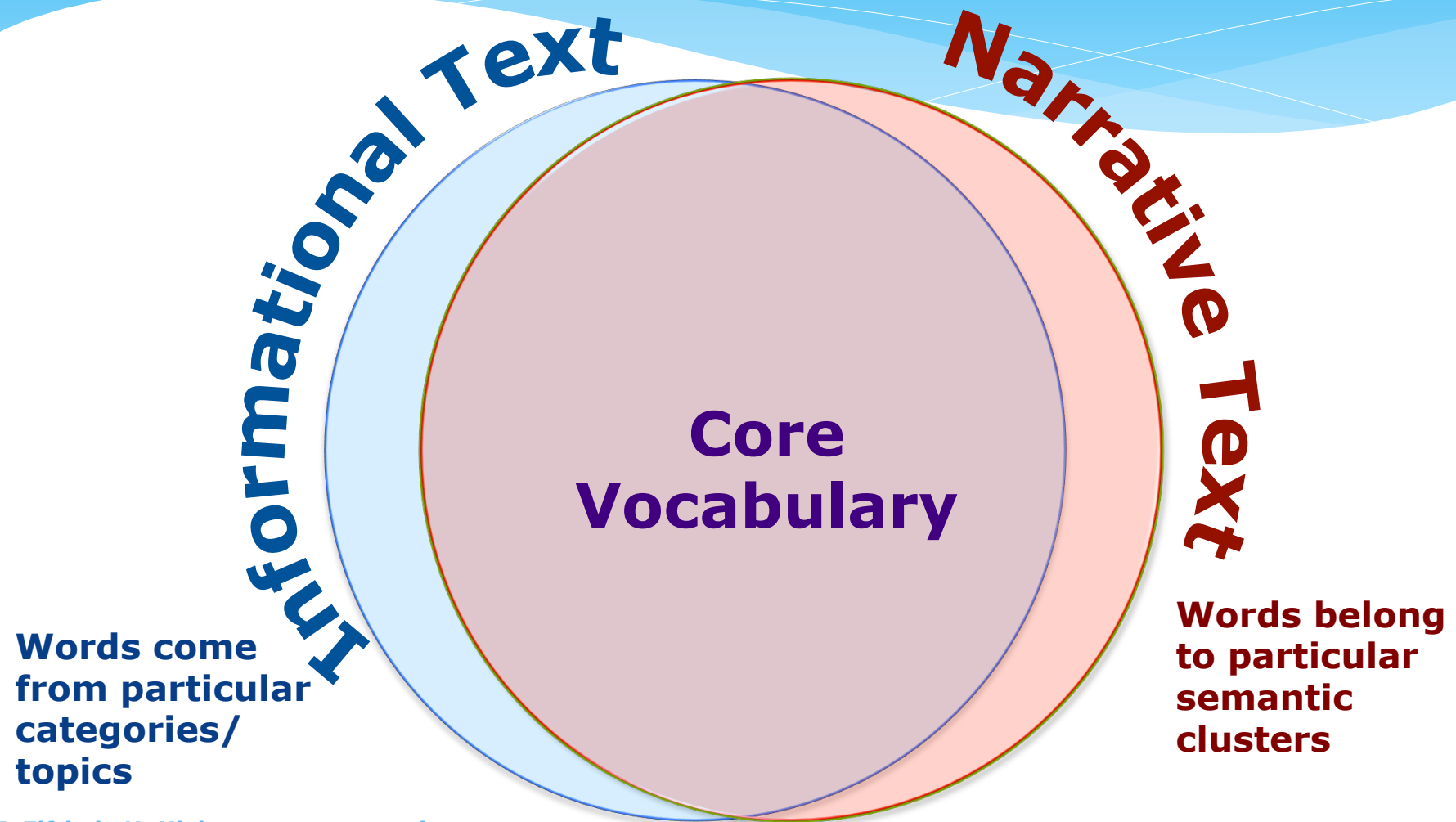
Proportion of Vocabulary



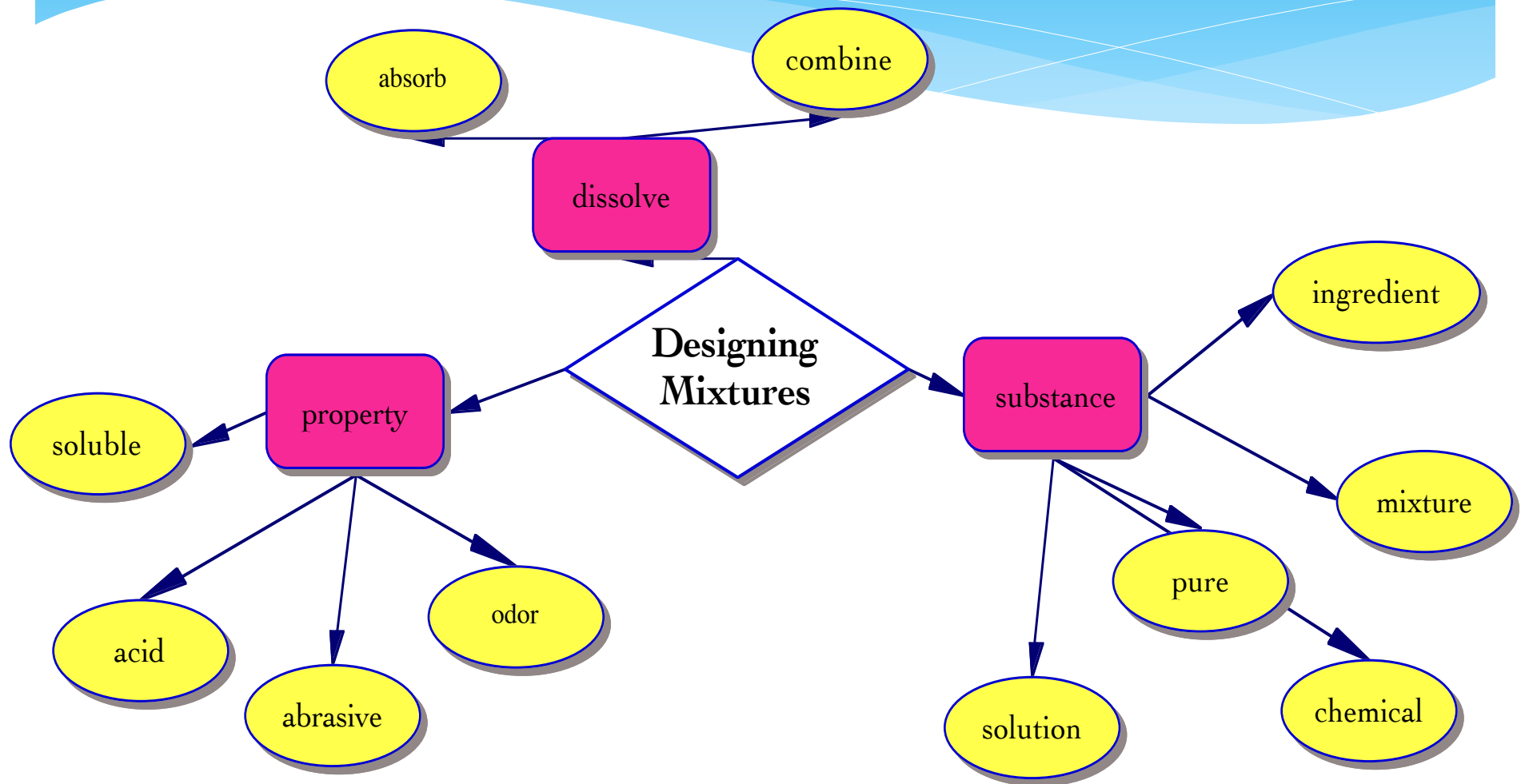
Mean Proportions of CORE Vocabulary within Exemplars of CCSS

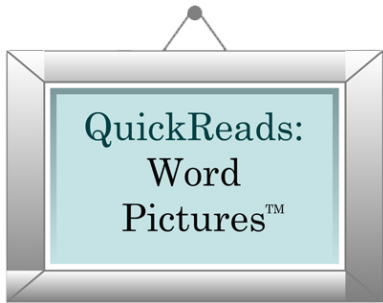
Grade	Narrative	Informational
2-3	.93	.92
4-5	.92	.91
6-8	.93	.87
9-10	.89	.91
11-CCR	.89	.87

Vocabularies of informational & narrative texts



Teaching CONCEPT Vocabulary: An Illustration





Natural Resources & the Economy



Left Photo: Typical rocky shores. September, 2009. ©2009 by Petritap in en:wikimedia. Some rights reserved CC-BY-SA-3.0 (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en).

Middle: Refilling a 18L water jug. Released into public domain by Myke2020 in en:wikimedia.

Right: A child drinks water from a well built by Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 40 in Shant Abak.

Corresponds to QuickReads Level D, book 2, Geography and Economics, *Natural Resources & the Economy*

Resources

Definition: Something such as land, mineral, or natural energy that exists in a country and can be used in order to increase its wealth

Example: Trees are a natural *resource* that humans use to make paper.



Left Photo: New beech leaves. March, 2005. ©2007 by Malene Thyssen. Some rights reserved CC-BY-SA-2.5 (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/deed.en). Right: Two A7 notebook. January, 2011. ©2011 by Mk2010 in en:wikimedia. Some rights reserved CC-BY-SA-3.0(www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en).

Teaching the Words of Stories

Story Word	Cluster	Examples of Words in Cluster (Beyond Story)
amazed	Emotions/Feelings/Happy Excitement	surprised jubilant ecstatic dumbfounded
fascinated		
marveled		
baffled	Communication/Mental Actions/Confused	confused bewildered mystified perplexed confounded
bewildered		
stumped		
humble	Traits/Shyness/Meek	reluctant retiring self-effacing
timid		

Talk



Talk as in a conversation (noun)

- conversation
- chat
- discussion
- slang
- dialogue
- chatter
- lecture
- address
- speech
- meeting
- conference
- summit
- utterance
- gossip
- comment
- debate

Talk as in to speak casually (verb)

- chat/chatter
- scuttlebutt
- gossip
- comment
- smooze
- mention
- say
- utter
- remark

Talk as in to speak (verb)

- speak
- verbalize
- converse
- vocalize
- articulate
- communicate
- confer
- dialogue

Talk as in to speak in a specific way (verb)

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| • whisper | • slur |
| • flirt | • bay |
| • snap | • jabber |
| • shout | • chant |
| • yell | • preach |
| • orate | • boast |
| • lecture | • debate |
| • pontificate | • enunciate |
| • address | • pronounce |
| • drone | • question |
| • stammer | • ask |
| • bark | • declare |



Talk

COMMON PHRASES

- Talk to me
- Talk back
- Talk over
- We need to talk

IDIOMS

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Talk a mile a minute | • Small talk |
| • Spit it out | • Speak of the devil |
| • Talk big | • Sweet talk |
| • Talk sense | • Talk your ear off |
| • Dance around the topic | • Talk in circles/riddles |
| • Speak up | • Talk shop |
| • Talk it up | • Walk the talk |
| • Talk down | • Talk your way out of a paper bag |
| • Talk is cheap | • Talk until your blue in the face |
| • Talk it over | • You're a fine one to talk |
| • Talking to a brick wall | • Shooting the breeze |
| • Talk of the town | |

THE SPANISH CONNECTION

- conversation / conversación
- discussion / discusión
- to discuss / discutir
- dialogue / diálogo
- to have a dialogue / dialogar
- comment / comentario
- to comment / comentar
- to mention / mencionar
- to verbalize / verbalizar
- to converse / conversar
- to communicate / comunicar
- communication / comunicación
- pronounce / pronunciar
- to debate / debatir
- debate / debate
- enunciate / enunciar
- pronounce / pronunciar
- declare / declarar



Action 2

- * What might I do for the remainder of this school year to support systematic vocabulary experiences in my classroom?

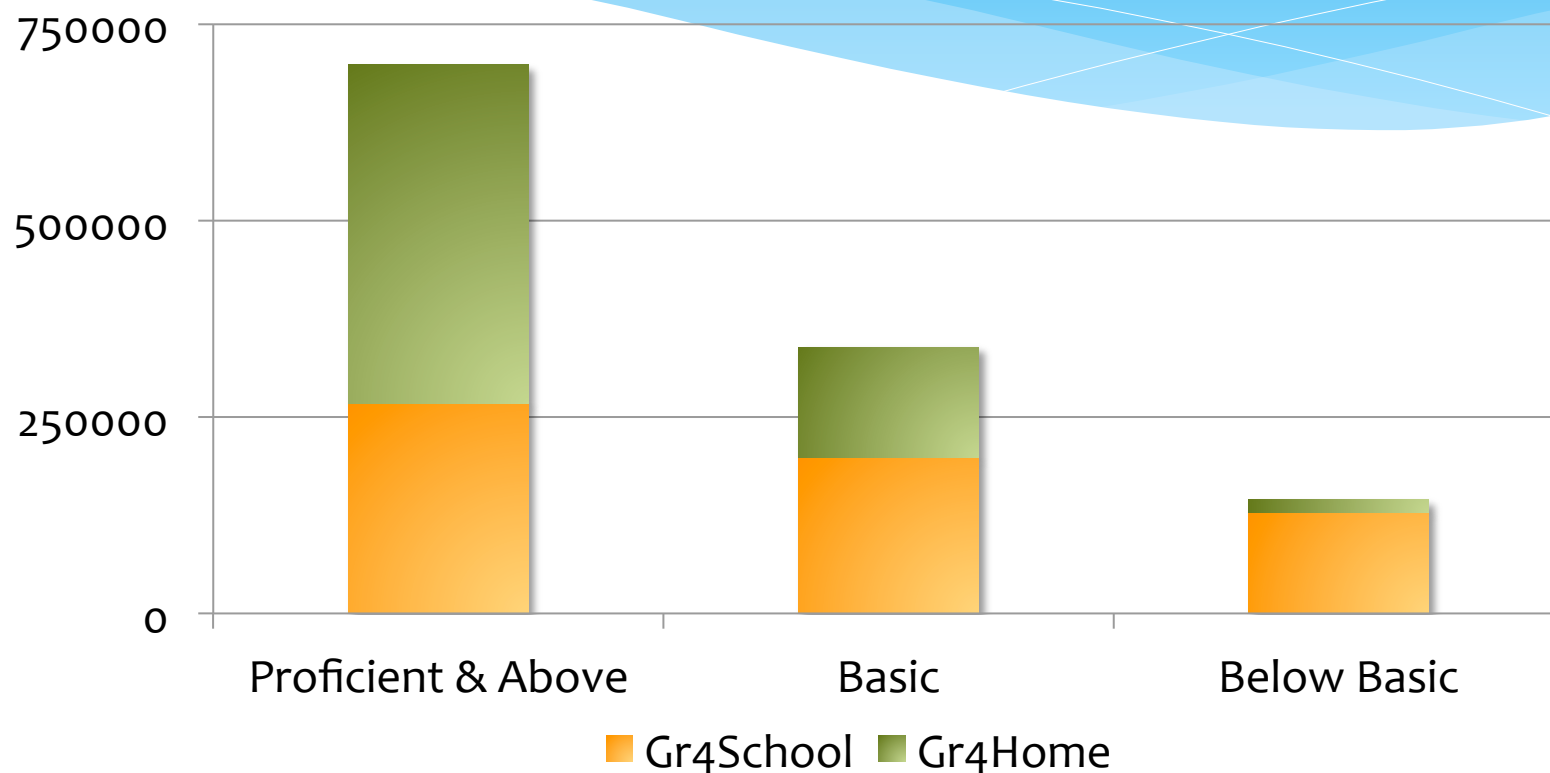
c. *Increasing (Reading) Volume*

Data from Reading 1st Classrooms

- * Time spent on reading instruction increased by 100%
- * Time spent on students with “eyes on text” increased by about 15%

[Brenner, Hiebert, & Tompkins, 2009]

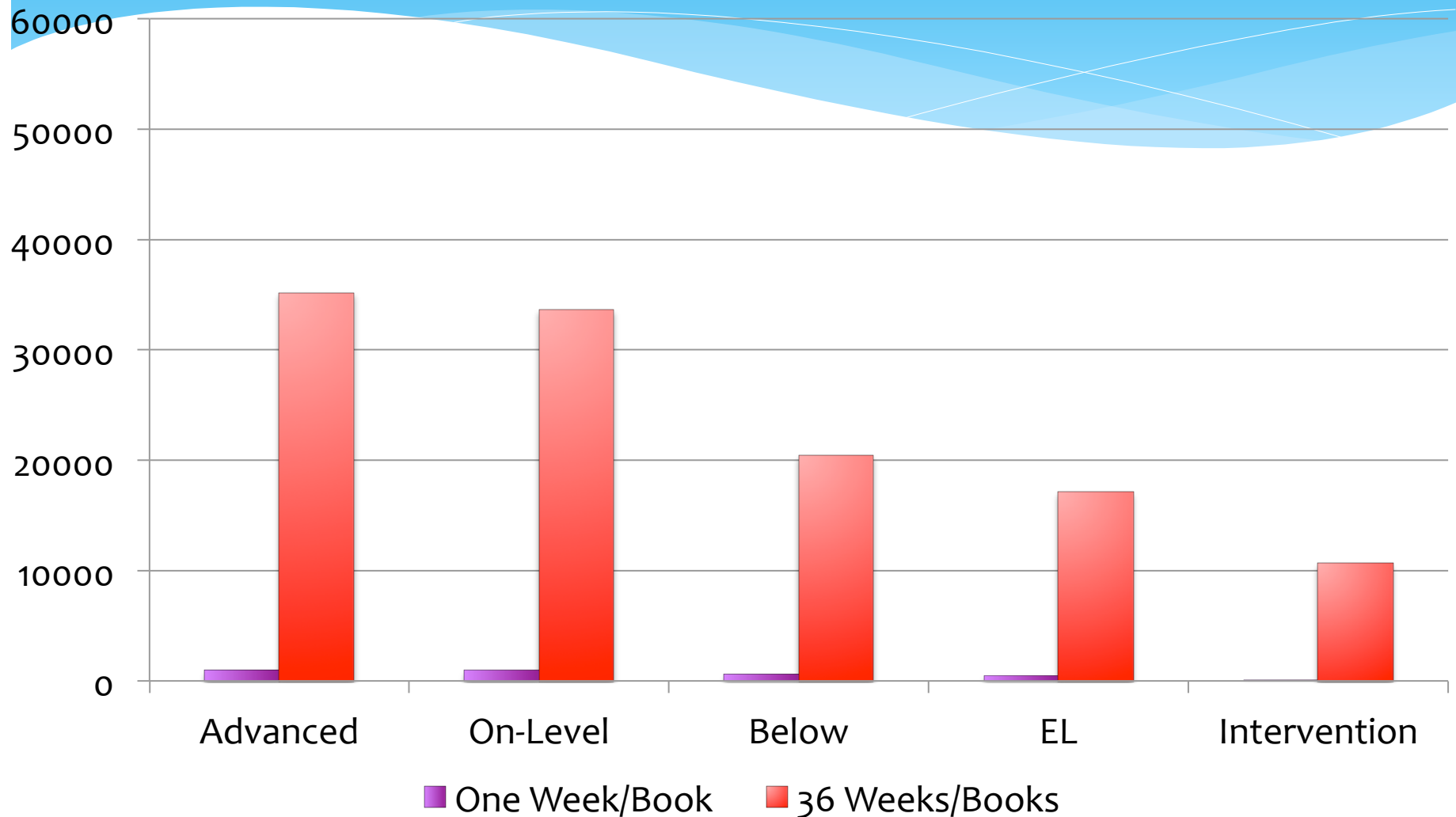
Typical Amounts Read in School & at Home



Home: Anderson, R.C., P.T. Wilson, and L.G. Fielding. 1988. Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. *Reading Research Quarterly* 23(3):285-303.

School: Guthrie, J.T., Schafer, W.D., Huang, C.W. (2001), Benefits of opportunity to read and balanced instruction on the NAEP. *Journal of Educational Research*, 84, 145-162.

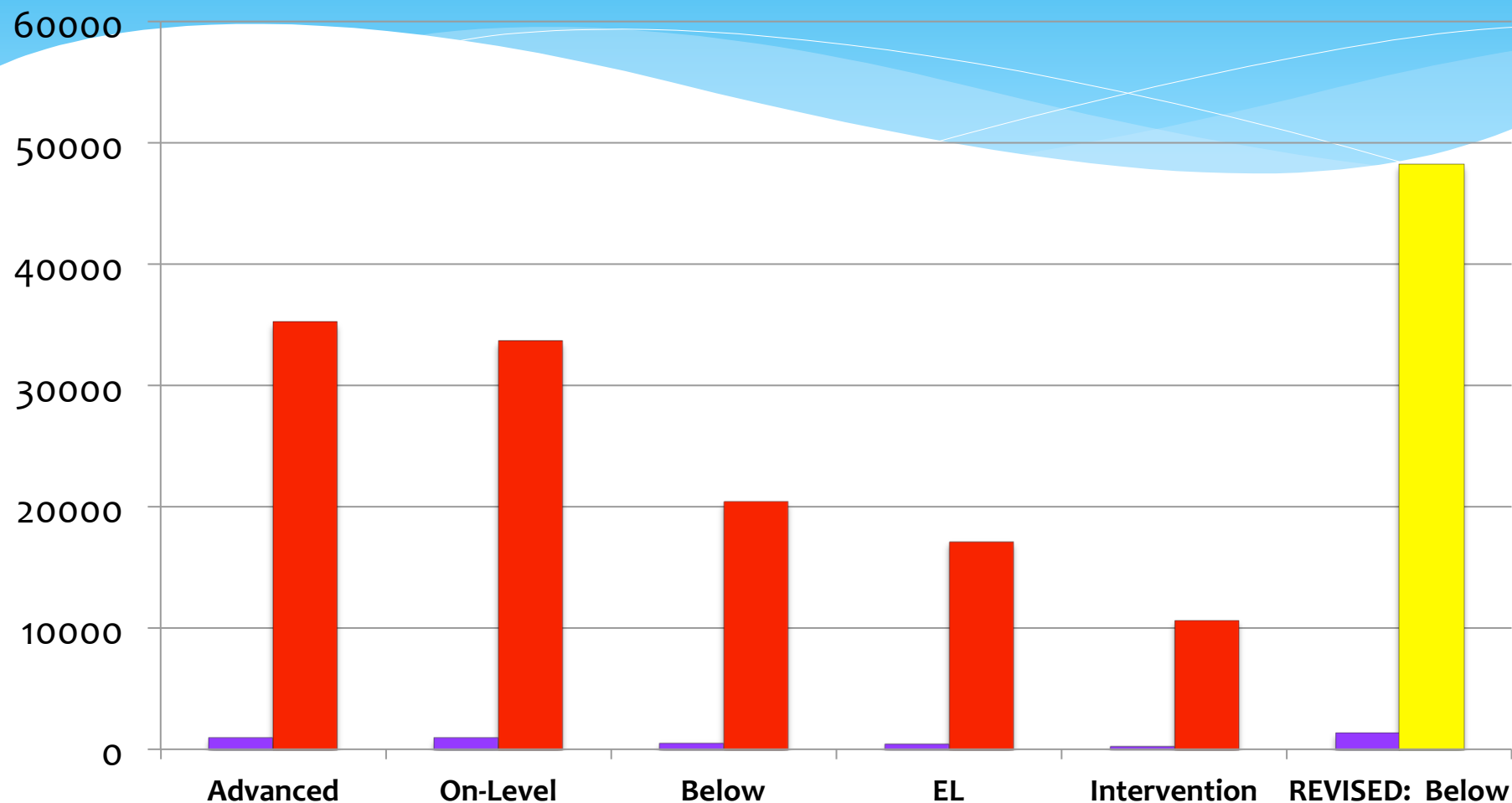
Amounts of Text in a Core Reading Program



What 7 Minutes of Extra Reading Mean

- * Kuhn & Schwanenflugel (2009): Data from the seven classes most successful in increasing reading rate were compared to 7 least successful classes: students in former read 7 minutes more daily than students in latter.
- * Average 3rd grader:
 - * 127 words per minute x 7 minutes x 180 school days: **160,020 additional words**
 - * Using Hayes & Ahren's (1988) data (31 rare/new words per 1,000): **5,000 new words**

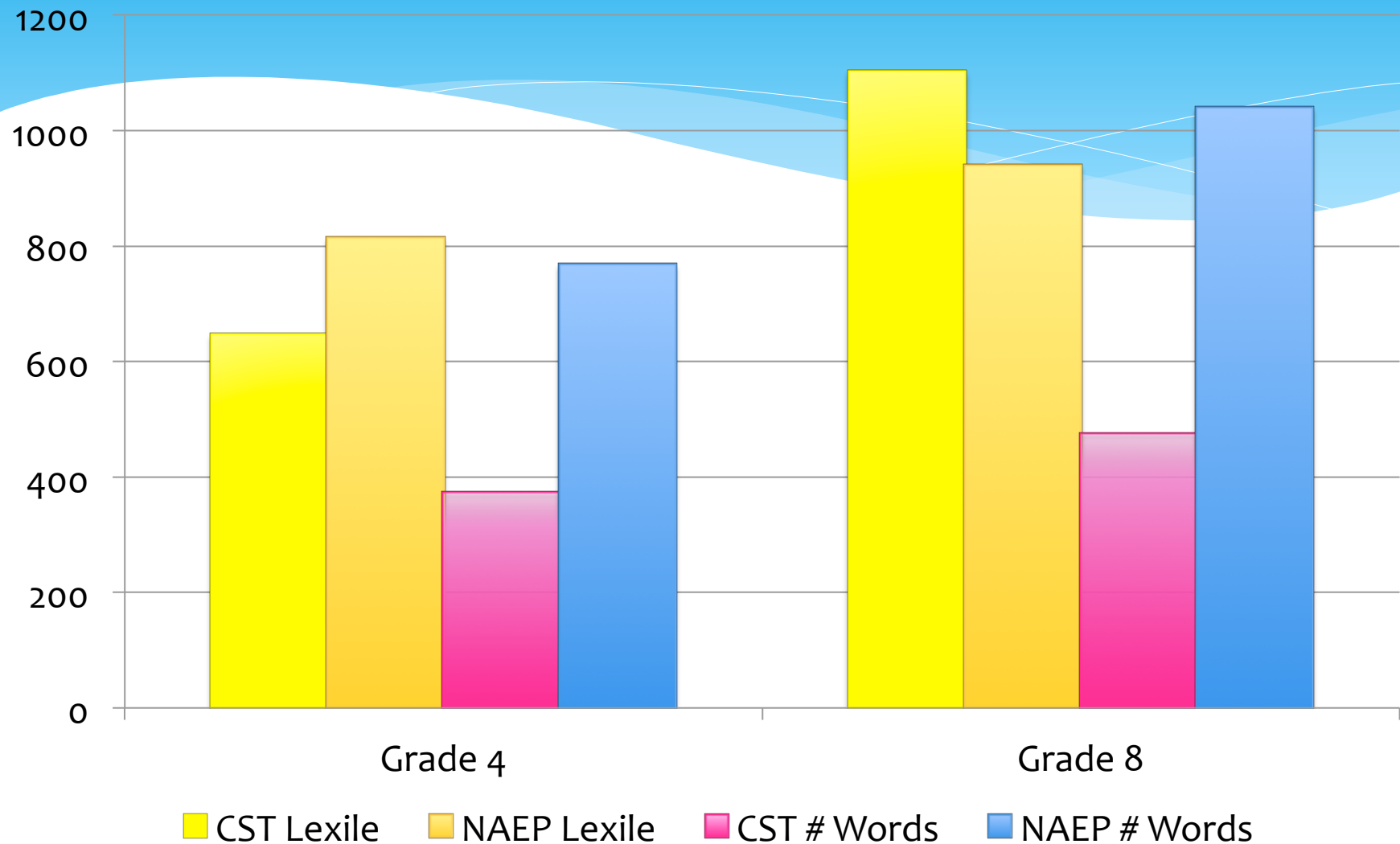
When Below-Level Readers Read 772 more words a week*



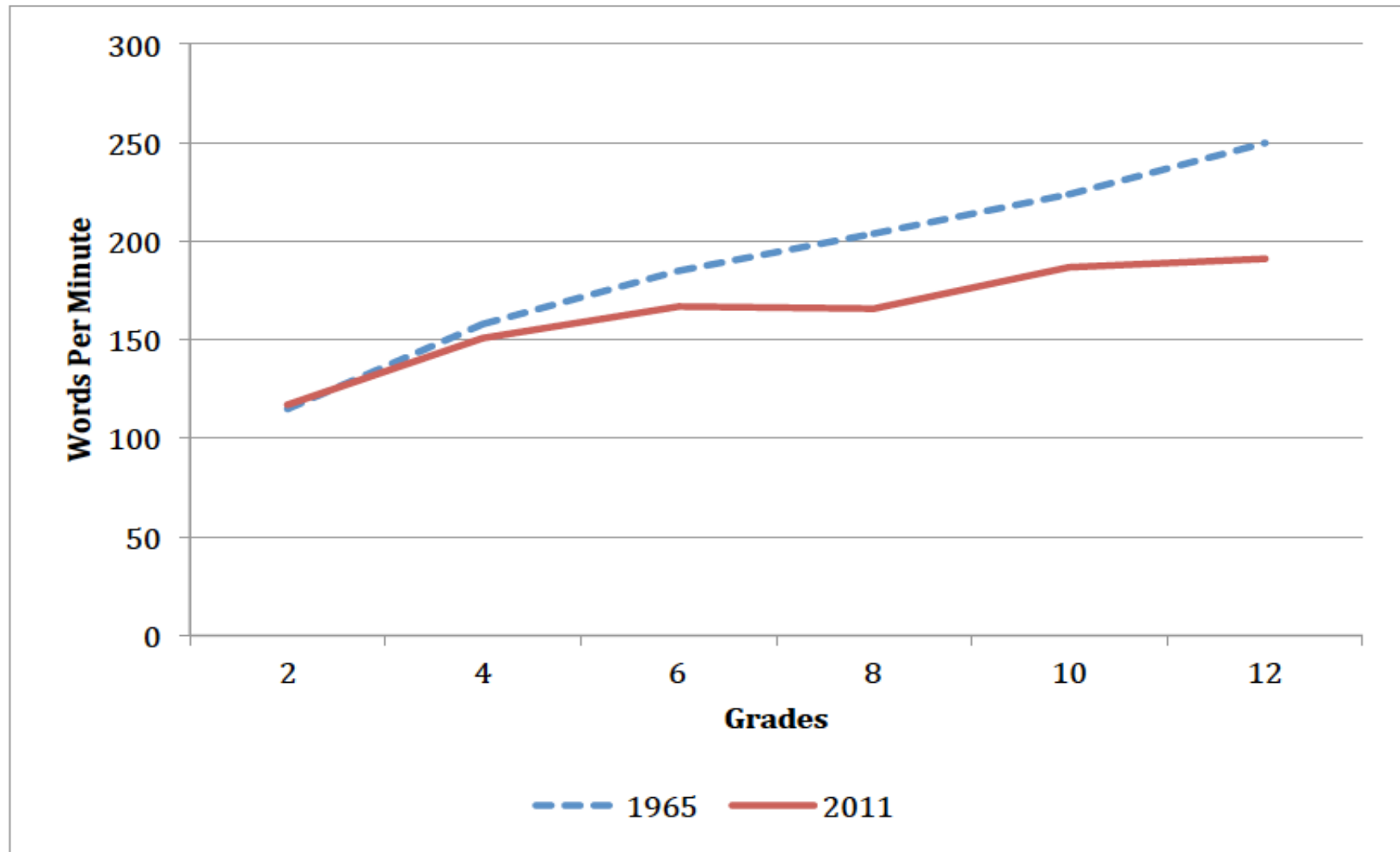
■ One Week/Book ■ 36 Weeks/Books

***1,339 (3 books) =
567 (1 book): 772**

Comparison of CST & NAEP



Comprehension-Based Silent Reading Rates (CBSRR): 1965 and 2012



Action 3

- * What might I do in my classroom over this school year to increase the volume of students' reading and their *stamina* as readers?

Focus of Today's Session

- WHY an emphasis on text complexity now?
- WHAT makes texts complex?
- HOW do teachers support students' capacity with complex text?
 - ✦ Knowledge
 - ✦ Vocabulary
 - ✦ Volume

7 Actions that Teachers Can Take Right Now: Text Complexity

Elfrieda H. Hiebert

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A separate standard for text complexity in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) means that this feature of reading development is at the center of many conversations among educators. How this standard translates into classroom instruction is less clear. Even with current texts, teachers can take some important actions to support their students on the staircase of text complexity—right now!

With the introduction of CCSS, it's easy to think that text complexity is a new way to look at text. But this is not the case. It has been around for almost a century as part of readability formulas by governmental and educational agencies. It's just that text levels weren't explicitly identified. Statements were made that "students should recognize figurative language in a grade-level text" but grade level was never specified. The situation has changed with the

CCSS. An entire standard is devoted to increases in students' ability to read complex text over the school years to the point of college and career readiness.

It should be noted that there are no clear paths for how this standard translates into classroom instruction. Compounding the issue is the text itself. Many teachers purchase books to read aloud or for special units but textbook pur-

chases usually occur at the school or even district and state levels. There are also many questions about assumptions of the CCSS's construct of text complexity such as how far texts can be stretched before students' comprehension breaks down. Until researchers answer such questions and until educators and publishers determine how text complexity will be measured, most teachers have the texts that they have.



For more information about Text Matters, visit www.textproject.org/text-matters
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www.textproject.org



TextProject

TextProject aims to bring beginning and struggling readers to high levels of literacy through a variety of strategies and tools, particularly the texts used for reading instruction.

TextProject Topics



Common Core State Standards

Beginning Reading

Morphological Awareness

Content & Story Words

Silent Reading & Reading Stamina

Reading Automaticity & Fluency

Summer Reading

Upcoming Events

Sep 12, 2012
Pearson Webinar September 2012

Sep 29, 2012 In Ogden, UT
Utah Council of the International Reading Association, 2012

Oct 11, 2012
Pearson Webinar October 2012

Oct 20, 2012 In San Diego, CA
California Reading Association, 2012

Nov 1, 2012
Pearson Webinar November 2012



16 Aug 2012 TextProject has always supported teachers with research and practical advice about how to provide readers the right kinds of texts, with special focus on text complexity. Now, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represents the first time that a standards document has paid special attention to text complexity. Our Text Matters series introduces teachers to text complexity's key concepts, presented in an accessible, magazine-style format. The series launches with five articles, all available to read online or download in PDF format:

- 7 Actions that Teachers Can Take Right Now: Text Complexity
- Core Vocabulary: The Foundation for Successful Reading of Complex Text
- Readability and the Common Core's Staircase of Text Complexity
- The Text-Complexity Multi-Index
- Unique Word Require Unique Instruction: Teaching Words in Stories and Informational Books

TEXT Products

TextProject creates reading programs based on our TExT model of text complexity.



Among the leading classroom reading programs based on TExT are QuickReads and ZipZoom.



SummerReads is TextProject's free summer reading program, based on the TExT model, that helps at-risk readers avoid the summer slump.



For Fall 2011, TextProject launches our new BeginningReads program to support bringing children into reading by connecting their oral language knowledge with written words.

Talking Points for Kids is a prototype program that aims to increase meaningful discussion with students.

Teacher Support

TextProject helps teachers who want to improve their students' reading achievement.



Reading activities promote fluency and

vocabulary, including the popular E4: Exceptional Expressions for Everyday Events and QuickReads Word Pictures. Free to download and use in your classroom!

Professional development



provides new and veteran teachers knowledge and practical advice. New for Fall 2012, the Text Matters series of accessible articles and Teacher Development Series explore how to make the most of the CCSS focus on text complexity.

Benchmark Texts: Stepping Up Complexity is a set of contemporary benchmark books that complements those already identified by Jeanne Chall and the CCSS.

Word lists, such as the popular WordZones™ for 4,000 Simple Word Families, focus on the vocabulary needed for middle- and high-school success.

Research

TextProject's new Reading Research Report series documents innovations in reading education.



The latest report explores the use of multiple measures of text complexity under the guidelines of the CCSS.

The TextProject Library contains a decade's worth of research articles, presentation slides and more from founder Elfrieda H. Hiebert and her colleagues. Including the most recent addition, presentation slides on 7 Actions Teachers Can Take to Increase Students' Capacity with Complex Text.

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