

Text Complexity and the Common Core State Standards: A Quick View

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

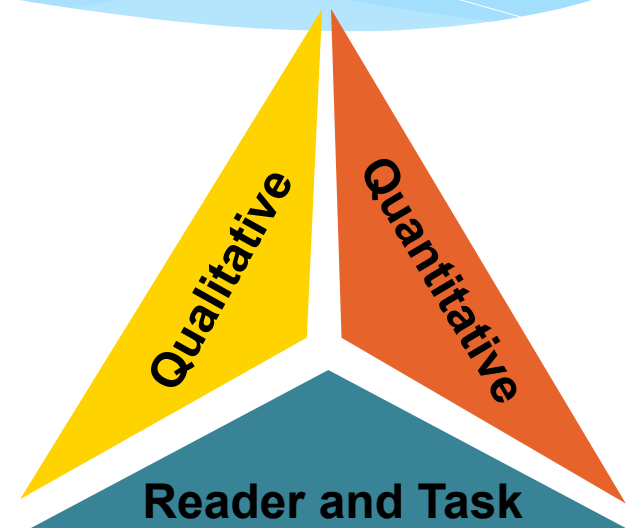
- By the time they complete high school, students must be able to read and comprehend independently and proficiently the kinds of complex texts commonly found in college and careers.

Two Guidelines on Text Complexity for Educational Leaders

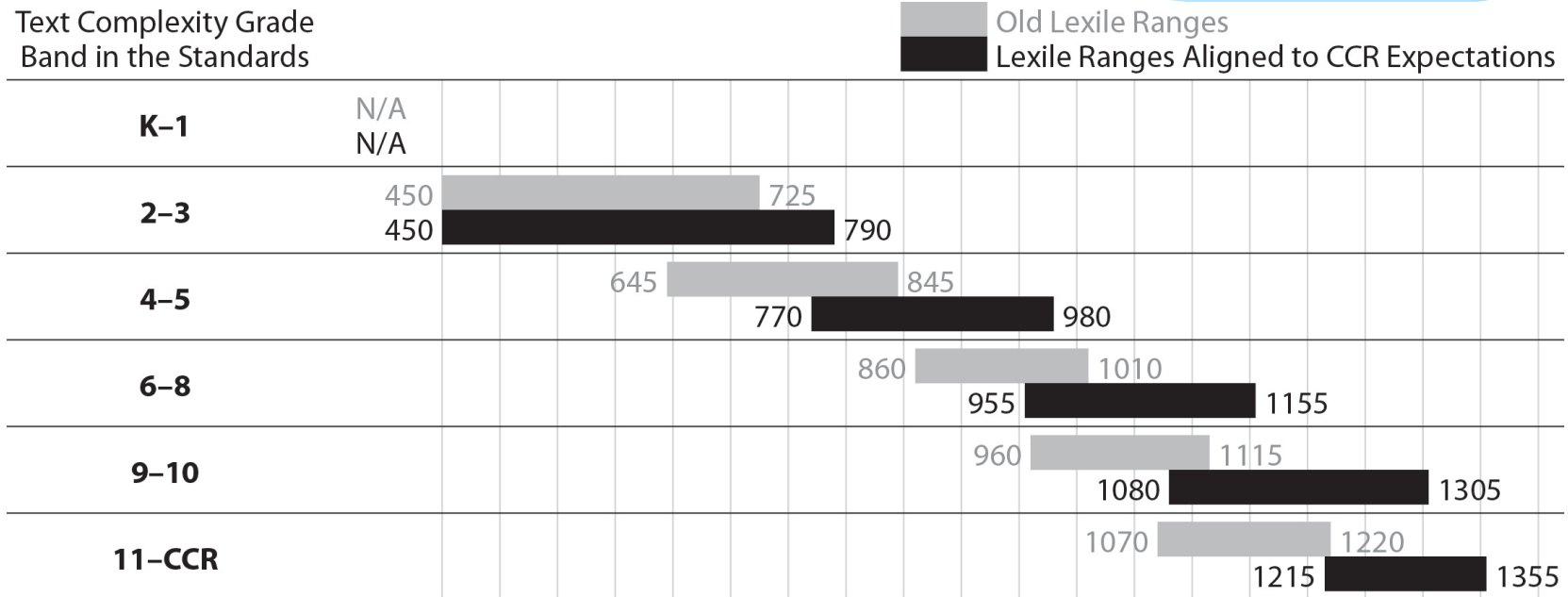
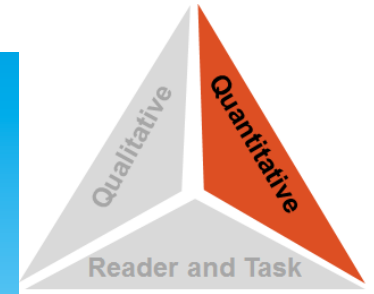
1. Know about the uses (and misuses) of the three systems of text complexity to lead teachers in informed instruction
2. Communicate research-based understandings of students' capabilities in relation to new assessments

Text Complexity Model

1. **Quantitative measures** – readability and other scores of text complexity often best measured by computer software.
2. **Qualitative measures** – levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands often best measured by an attentive human reader.
3. **Reader and Task considerations** – background knowledge of reader, motivation, interests, and complexity generated by tasks often best determined by educators employing their professional judgment.



The CCSS Staircase of Text Complexity



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.

Wind in the Willows: Form A

The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms.

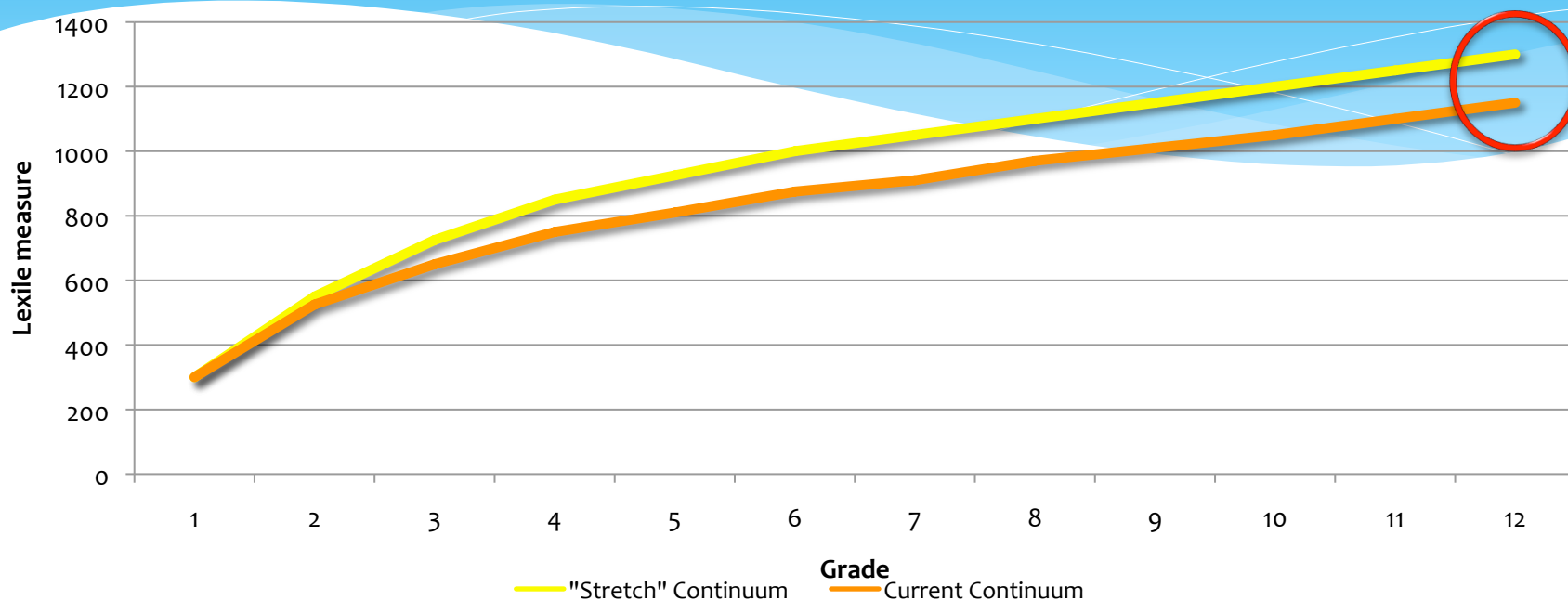
Wind in the Willows: Form B

The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, ^ He was spring
cleaning his little home. First ^ he used ~~with brooms, then with~~ ^ and dusters;
^ Then ^ he got on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of
whitewash; ~~till~~ ^ Soon he had dust in his throat and eyes, ~~and~~ ^ He had
splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, ~~and~~ ^ He had an aching back
and weary arms.

Wind in the Willows

	Form A	Form B
Sentence Length (Average)	22.5	7.13
Word Frequency (Average)	3.71	3.70
Lexile	1200	360
Position on Text Complexity Staircase	End of Grade 10	3rd Trimester of Grade 1

Discrepancy in High School & College Texts (2010)



Sourced from:

SAT I, ACT, AP

Military

Citizenship

Workplace

Community College

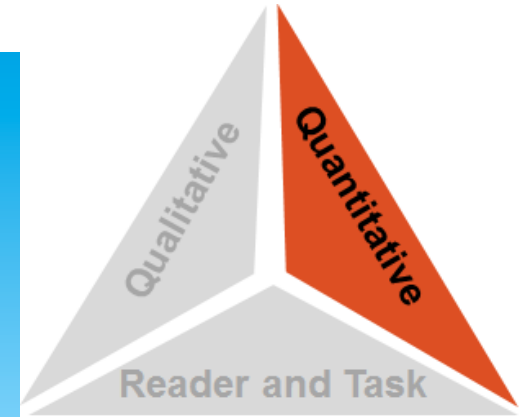
Online Reference Articles

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.



Advantages	Disadvantages/Questions
• “Omnibus” quantitative information is useful in sorting large groups of texts. • Specific quantitative information on a text can provide glimpses into potential instructional foci.	• Omnibus quantitative systems provide little, if any, insight into what needs to be taught or learned. • The staircase of text complexity in Appendix A is based on projections, not on empirical data.

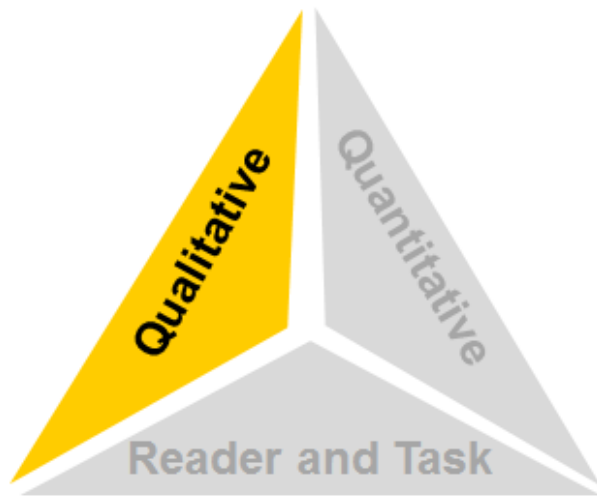


Figure 2: Qualitative Dimensions of Text Complexity

Levels of Meaning (literary texts) or Purpose (informational texts)

- Single level of meaning → Multiple levels of meaning
- Explicitly stated purpose → Implicit purpose, may be hidden or obscure

Structure

- Simple → Complex
- Explicit → Implicit
- Conventional → Unconventional (chiefly literary texts)
- Events related in chronological order → Events related out of chronological order (chiefly literary texts)
- Traits of a common genre or subgenre → Traits specific to a particular discipline (chiefly informational texts)
- Simple graphics → Sophisticated graphics
- Graphics unnecessary or merely supplementary to understanding the text → Graphics essential to understanding the text and may provide information not otherwise conveyed in the text

Language Conventionality and Clarity

- Literal → Figurative or ironic
- Clear → Ambiguous or purposefully misleading
- Contemporary, familiar → Archaic or otherwise unfamiliar
- Conversational → General academic and domain-specific

Knowledge Demands: Life Experiences (literary texts)

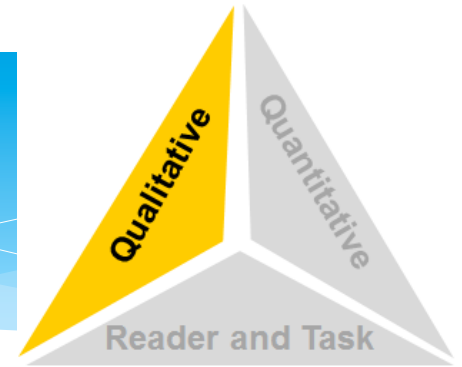
- Simple theme → Complex or sophisticated themes
- Single themes → Multiple themes
- Common, everyday experiences or clearly fantastical situations → Experiences distinctly different from one's own
- Single perspective → Multiple perspectives
- Perspective(s) like one's own → Perspective(s) unlike or in opposition to one's own

Knowledge Demands: Cultural/Literary Knowledge (chiefly literary texts)

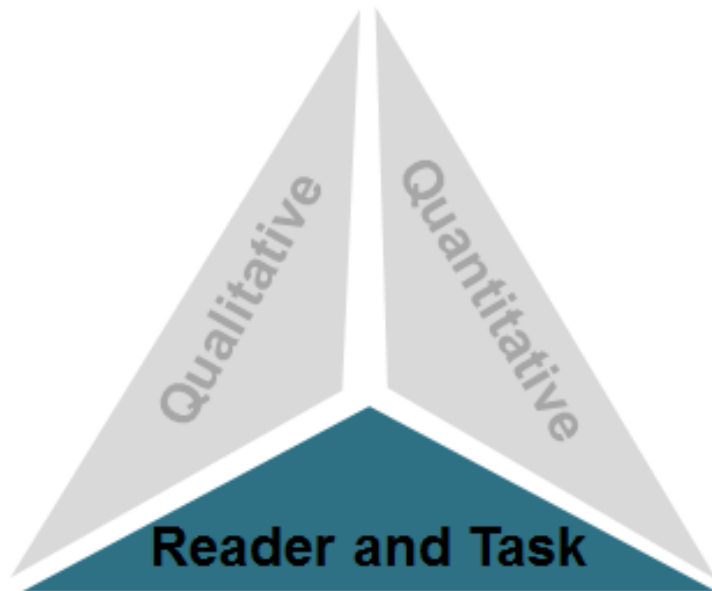
- Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required → Cultural and literary knowledge useful
- Low intertextuality (few if any references/allusions to other texts) → High intertextuality (many references/allusions to other texts)

Knowledge Demands: Content/Discipline Knowledge (chiefly informational texts)

- Everyday knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions required → Extensive, perhaps specialized discipline-specific content knowledge required
- Low intertextuality (few if any references to/citations of other texts) → High intertextuality (many references to/citations of other texts)

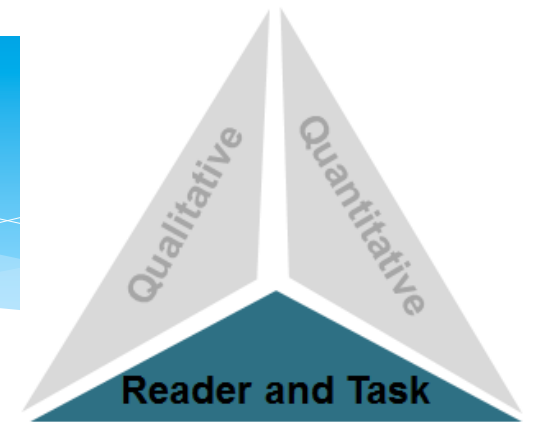


Advantages	Disadvantages/Questions
Looking at specific features of texts from the perspective of a group of students can uncover valuable insight into the elements of texts that require instruction and focus.	- These analyses are frequently “outsourced,” leaving teachers with little specific information about the critical features of texts. - These outsourced evaluations have often produced omnibus evaluations (e.g., “complex,” “simple”), leading to the expectation that texts are uniform on different features.



While the prior two elements of the model focus on the inherent complexity of text, variables specific to particular readers (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and to particular tasks (such as purpose and the complexity of the task assigned and the questions posed) must also be considered when determining whether a text is appropriate for a given student.

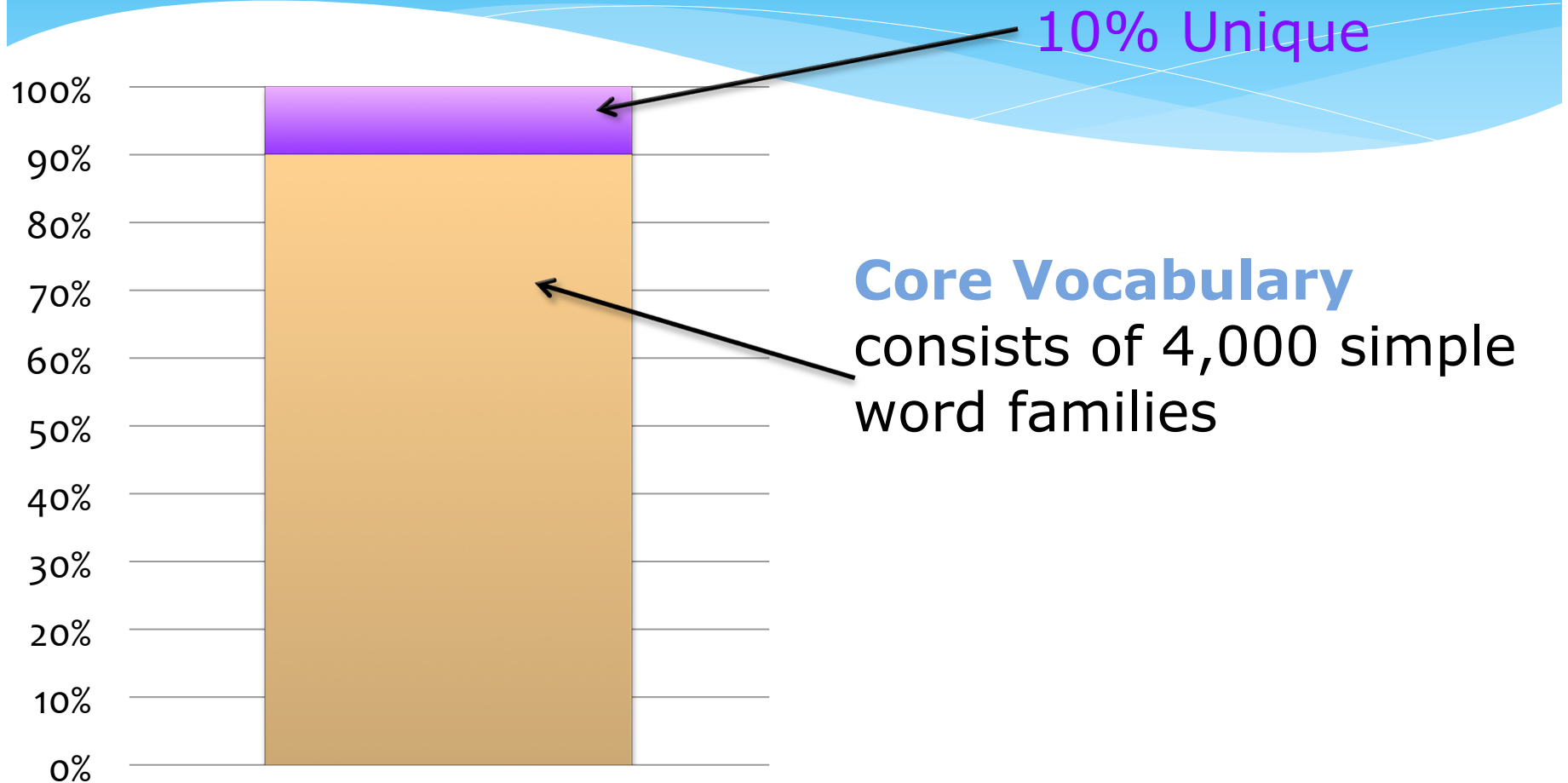
Such assessments are best made by teachers employing their professional judgment, experience, and knowledge of their students and the subject. (CCSS Appendix A, page 4)



Advantages	Disadvantages/Questions
Differentiation for readers, tasks, and contexts is an essential part of instruction. The issue is not <i>if</i> this dimension is essential but <i>how</i> teachers can be guided.	Guidance within the standards is vague as to adaptations by reader, task, and context. Detailed cases are needed of how tasks and contexts have been adapted as a function of reader features and with different texts.

Looking forward to new assessments

Proportion of Vocabulary



“Authentic Text”: Common Core Exemplars

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

DIBELS: TEXT FEATURES

Text level	Core Vocabulary
2.3	97%
4.3	96%
6.3	92%

I read a story about people who met because of a message inside a bottle. A man put the message inside the bottle and tossed it in the ocean.

2.3

Two hundred years ago when Maria Mitchell was born, most girls did not get a formal education. Instead, they learned how to cook, sew, and run a house.

4.3

On the day of the race, Lamont awoke early and checked all the equipment on his bicycle one final time. He had owned several bikes over the years.

6.3

DIBELS Norms: Bottom Half (End of Grade 2)

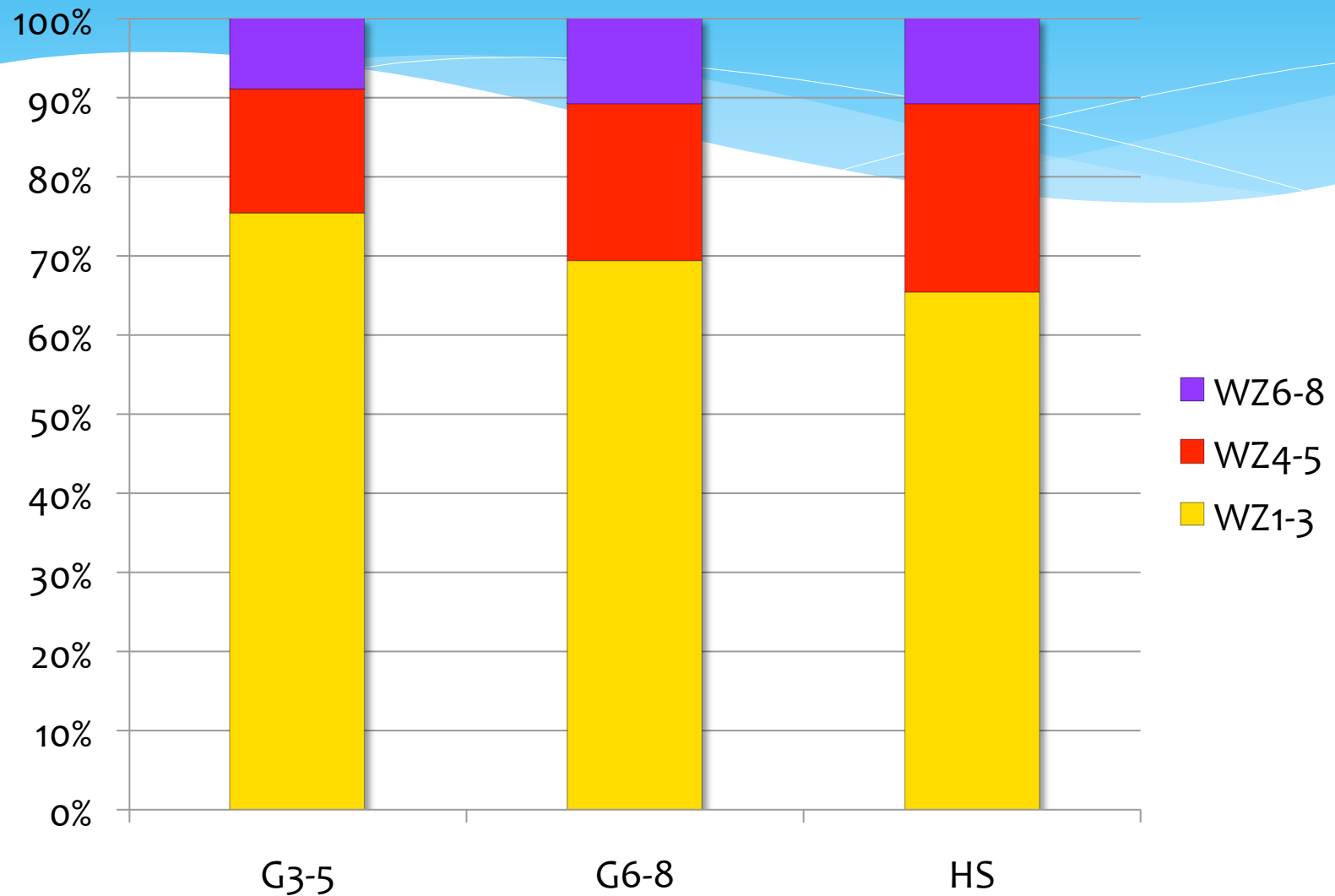
Once upon a time a woman was frying some pancakes. As she turned a cake in the pan, she said to her little boy, “If you were a little older, I would send you to the sawmill with some of these cakes for your father's^{/10} dinner. But as it is, he must wait till supper for them.” “Oh, do let me take them,” said the^{/20} boy, whose name was Karl. “Do let me go.” And he begged and^{/30} begged, till at last his mother selected the brownest^{/40} and crispest pancakes. She put them on a^{/50} plate with a napkin over them and bade her son take them to the mill.

Robinson, H.M., Monroe, M., Artley, A.S., Huck, C.S., & Jenkins, W.A. (1964). The Plate of Pancakes in *More Roads to Follow* (The New Basic Readers). Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, & Co.

How are students doing with the core vocabulary?

Grade	Percentile group	#words read
2.3	25 th	72
	50 th	95
4.3	25 th	99
	50 th	122
6.3	25 th	119
	50 th	142

Distributions of Word Zones: Smarter Balanced Sample Items



Grades 3-5

I went back into my grandma's room and wrapped the ball back up in paper, just like I'd found it. Except now it looked dirty and used, like a good baseball should.

Grades 6-8

On her 16th birthday, Kelly set a world record. She became the youngest African American female to fly four different fixed-wing aircraft in one day. Naturally, that inspired Kimberly to brainstorm ways to top her sister's achievement.

High School

Diamonds are so common throughout the universe because they are a pure form of one of the universe's most common elements: carbon. Diamonds have a number of amazing properties: they are extremely hard and transparent, and can withstand radioactivity, corrosive acids, and other powerful forces.

Text Length





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

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

Oct 22, 2012 in Atlanta, GA
Scholastic Book Summit 2012

Nov 1, 2012

Pearson Webinar November 2012



TextProject
TEACHER
DEVELOPMENT
SERIES

TextProject Teacher Development Series Addresses Text Complexity and the CCSS

To help teachers, whether veterans or candidates for certification, acquire the knowledge and skills needed to make the most of the new CCSS standards, TextProject introduces our first-ever product line aimed at teacher education and professional development environments. The TextProject Teacher Development Series on Text Complexity and the Common Core State Standards is a series of five modular lessons, each with guidance for teacher leaders, teacher educators or staff development leaders as well as activities for participants, all available now for free download.

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.

Beginning Reads 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' Take to Increase Students' Capacity with Complex Text**.

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Teacher Development Series

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