ELA Reporter

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YOUR PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY

New Unit Framework Guidelines in Development

Last spring the DOE began posting resources designed to assist instructors with implementing the new Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. Comprised of Curriculum Maps, standard-by-standard Teacher Guidance Documents, and sample Unit Frameworks, these resources came on the heels of multiple series of webinars and live-streaming professional learning opportunities that introduced and unpacked the standards and explicated the use of the resources themselves. It is difficult to believe that we are now nearly an entire year beyond that initial introductory offering of resources!

As spring will soon be upon us once again, the DOE is preparing newly updated and streamlined instructional materials and professional learning opportunities that will reflect the expertise we have gained throughout the year, as well as the valuable and extensive input we have received from educators throughout the state.

A newly engineered series of webcasts featuring real Georgia teachers, their student work, and instructional strategies was introduced just before the close of Fall Semester 2012, and several additional webcasts are set for publication next month in this continuing series (see page 4 for more information). Our Curriculum Maps are under review by multiple stakeholders, including RESA representatives, teachers, parents, and our statewide ELA Advisory Committee to ensure that they continue to reflect the best possible guidance for student achievement in light of everything we have learned in our initial implementation year.

Among the most noteworthy developments is the replacement of the 2012-2013 sample Unit Frameworks with newly developed offerings for 2013-14. The previous generation of sample frameworks has been archived to the ELA Wiki pages where they will remain actively available for users. Discussion threads about the units are ongoing and provide opportunities for suggested revisions and additional resources for the implementation of the initial sample units.

If you are among the users accessing those units for your entire year of instruction, we remind you to carefully review the resources and texts used as examples within those units. These units were simply offered as samples from teachers in the field, and though they provided a powerful jumpstart for CCGPS implementation, the units may not be suitable in every detail for every classroom. Please read and adhere to the guidelines provided about the resources on GSO. This initial cadre of units, enhanced by your refinements and edits, will continue to be a great starting place for creating effective instructional resources.

Writing

High School Wiki: http://elaccgps9-12.wikispaces.com/
Middle School Wiki: http://georgiaelaccgps6-8.wikispaces.com/
Elementary School Wiki: http://georgiaelaccgpsk-5.wikispaces.com/

The unit planning resources to be offered for 2013-2014 will reflect a number of important changes and we hope will provide significant guidance to those looking to enhance or redesign units of instruction for the coming year. Stayed tuned to our ELA homepage at *GeorgiaStandards.Org* and watch our Tweets for more information on the newest resources as they debut.

New GSO Page for Literacy in the Content Areas

The Common Core Georgia Performance Standards for Literacy in Science, Social Studies, and Technical Subjects now has its very own webpage on *GeorgiaStandards.Org*. Visit the link below to find specialized information, strategies, and resources for content literacy! For more information, contact Literacy Specialist Daniel Rock at drock@ela.k12.ga.us.

Do you have student work to share? Would you like to participate in creating an instructional webcast? Contact Susan Jacobs at sjacobs@doe.k12.ga.us

The "Other" Feedback   Cynde Snider

The ability of expert teachers to problem-solve, to be flexible, and to improvise ways in which students can master the learning intentions means that they need to be excellent seekers and users of feedback information about their teaching—that is of feedback about the effect that they are having on learning. Hattie, (2012), p. 26

What Is the "Other" Feedback?

Most of us can chant the feedback mantra: teachers need to provide clear, explicit, and meaningful feedback to help students move from where they are to where they need to be in their learning progressions. But feedback from teachers to students is only half of the equation. The "other" feedback, feedback from students to teachers, systematically planning ways to find out what students know and have learned and then using this information to adjust instruction, deserves at least equal attention.

Ensuring Meaningful Feedback from Classroom Assessments

As Dylan Wiliam notes, students don't always learn what we intend for them to learn (p. 75); and in order to determine what students have learned, we need to do more than simply check for correct or incorrect answers (pp. 71-73). Wiliam suggests, for example, designing at least one "hinge-point" diagnostic question into every lesson [see Figure 1].

Hinge-questions should take no longer than two minutes for all students to respond, should allow the teacher to view and interpret the responses from a class immediately, and should allow the teacher to interpret incorrect answers on the spot to determine what needs to be retaught to the entire class as well as which two or three students need additional, individualized instruction (pp. 100-104).

As with most effective instructional practices, designing this type of diagnostic/formative assessment item takes time and effort; but evidence shows that this time and effort results in improved student achievement.

Working collaboratively with others who teach the same content, we need to begin with what's doable and develop hinge or pertinent formative assessment items for one lesson at a time, taking care to ensure that correct responses from students indicate what students have learned and incorrect responses provide us with specific information about where the learning breaks down, where misconceptions and misunderstandings persist, and how we can adjust instruction to move every student from where s/h e is to where s/he needs to be.

Hattie, J. (2012). Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning. New York: Routledge.

Wiliam, D. (2011). Embedded formative assessment. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Figure 1. An Example of a Hinge-Point Question
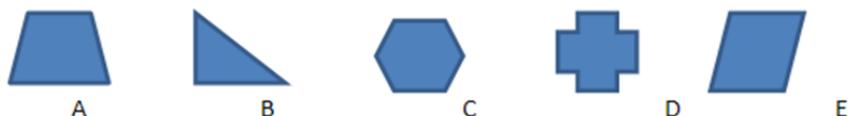
A   B   C   D   E

Toward the end of a lesson about the lines of symmetry in two-dimensional shapes, an elementary teacher displays each image (one at a time) and says, "Hold up the number of fingers to show how many lines of symmetry shape A [B, C, D, E] has." Wiliam, (2011), p.103

Cynde Snider

Young Georgia Authors 2013

The purpose of the Young Georgia Authors (YGA) writing competition is to encourage students to develop enthusiasm for and expertise in their writing, to provide a context to celebrate their writing successes, and to recognize student achievement in arts and academics. The contest is open to all Georgia public school students in grades K-12 and accepts every genre of writing from poetry to short stories to journalism to academic essays (under 5 pages in length). Only system-level winners may be submitted to the DOE. The 2013 contest deadline to receive submissions is April 5, 2013. **For more information visit the Wiki** for your grade level. Happy Writing!

Writing Resources

While Georgia's 11th graders have already completed their Georgia High School Writing Test for 2012-2013, the 3rd, 5th, and 8th graders are still preparing for their assessments. We invite you to access the extensive resources available to you at
http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Writing-Assessments.aspx
The resource booklets available there (see "resource booklet" in right hand column of this link) have 2 full weeks of writing lessons that seamlessly bridge the CCGPS and GPS writing expectations and support success on the grade-level assessments. These lessons are ideal for tutorials.

Basal Alignment Project

Do you teach reading to students in grades 3, 4, or 5? If the answer "is "yes", there is a valuable resource available just for you. The Basal Alignment Project (BAP) is an ongoing cooperative effort to revise the questions and culminating activities from texts in many of the major reading basal series so that there is an alignment to the Common Core standards. Currently, there are few, if any, published materials aligned to Common Core standards and this resource provides teachers with fully aligned instructional lessons. The lessons from the basal readers have been revised to include questions and tasks that require students to examine the written text for answers. Also included is a list of the academic vocabulary words from each story. Additionally, there are training materials for learning how to align your own resources to Common Core standards.

Many of the texts aligned and available in the BAP Edmodo group are from popular children's books such as *Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday*. Therefore, many of the lessons found in the BAP could be used even if the teacher doesn't teach from a basal program.

For those interested in learning more, you must first create an Edmodo account, search and join the Basal Alignment Project group, and then enter the code "etuyrm." Once in the group, you will see tabs across the top labeled Posts, Folders, Members, etc. Click on "Folders" and scroll down until you see the basal you use.
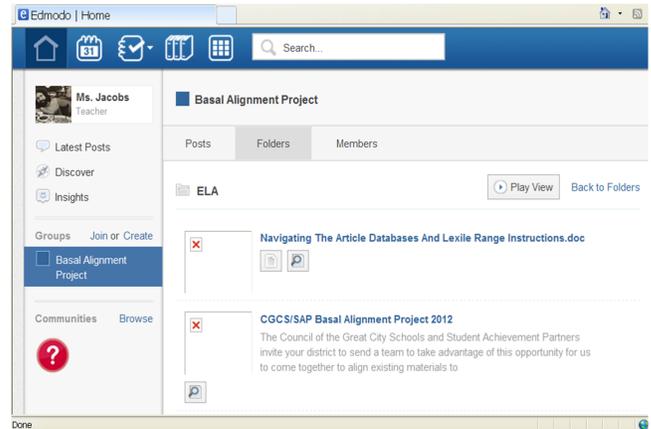

Resources We Recommend: *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading* by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, Diane Lapp

"It's time to step it up a bit and teach students to read--and read well. This starts with an understanding of text complexity" (p. 100).

As we implement new standards and prepare our students for a test of those standards, it is critical that we engage in professional learning that provides us with a deeper understanding of the instructional shifts. One of the instructional shifts resulting from the implementation of Common Core standards requires students to read increasingly complex texts. However, before we give students a harder or longer text to read, thinking we are increasing complexity, we must first understand why it is important to choose texts wisely, how to match texts to readers, and how to scaffold a student's understanding of and ability to apply the necessary strategies and skills when reading.

The latest book by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Diane Lapp, *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading*, is a perfect start for learning what it really means to increase rigor when providing texts for students to read. Understanding text complexity includes knowing why the three dimensions - quantitative, qualitative, and matching the reader and the task - are important when selecting texts for students. Analyzing texts through each component and understanding how each attributes to the complexity of the text makes planning for building student skills more relevant. The book goes into detail explaining each factor and providing application examples.
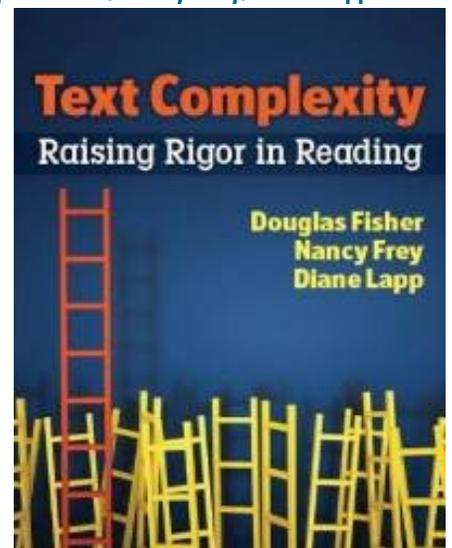
Throughout the book, diagrams and charts help the reader organize their learning, making it easier to immediately apply their new knowledge of text complexity. The "Checklist for Matching the Reader to the Text" is a valuable tool for selecting appropriate text. In the last chapter, there is a list of questions teachers can use to involve students in the discussion of a book or article.

We recommend that you check out *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading* for an easy-to-read book that is full of valuable information about increasing the complexity of reading for students.

Close Reading: More than the Flavor of the Month   Daniel Rock

"Close Reading": the newest member in the pantheon of educational jargon. It takes its place among such legends as "rigor", "differentiation", and "data driven instruction". Fear not, close reading, you are in good company.

But let's look beneath the term itself and think about how the concept applies to real world literacy instruction. Close reading does not mean spending three class periods analyzing why the author of *Because of Winn-Dixie* chose to make the dog brown instead of white. It does mean teaching students to read with a purpose. Giving students a clear and specific purpose for reading concentrates their mind on the text and focuses their attention on important details. As Chris Tovani says, "If we don't help students pull out essential information by giving them a purpose for the reading, they will often get lost in the extraneous details. When we share a clear instructional purpose, we give our students a lens through which to read the piece."(Tovani, 2004).

To read closely is to read for a purpose. Building knowledge from nonfiction requires asking specific questions that lead to deeper understanding (Pearson & Hiebert, 2013). Likewise, to analyze fiction or poetry, the reader must be armed with questions that unveil the inherent ambiguity of literature. As a teacher, how do we guide students to ask questions that will lead them to a closer reading of their texts?

One strategy teachers use are Q-cards, also referred to as task cards. These cards provide stems that scaffold the questioning skills strong readers use. The cards are organized into the primary cognitive processes we use when reading, such as determining main idea, analyzing cause and effect, and making inferences. Not coincidentally, these are also the thinking skills assessed on standardized tests.

When students use Q-Cards they read text or view media and use the cards to build questions about the texts. Next, they use those questions as their purpose for reading. One group of students might use the Q-Card to ask, "What caused Hamlet to delay killing his uncle?" Once they have written a question or two it is their job to go back into the text and find the answer or answers. They must also include textual evidence to support their answer. This can be done in groups or individually or a combination of the two. After repeating this process several times over the course of a school year, students will learn to ask and answer higher level questions independently.

Whether learning about job requirements when filling out an application or studying cell structure in biology, college and career ready graduates know how to set a purpose for reading by asking key questions that focus their attention on what they need to learn. Q-cards is one strategy to scaffold this type of active reading.

Q-Cards/Task Cards
Since these come from Florida and were developed several years ago, disregard the standard coding.
Grades 1 & 2
Grades 3 -5
Middle School
High School

Pearson, P. D., & Hiebert, E. H. (2013). Understanding the common core state standards. In L. Morrow, K. Wixson & T. Shananhan (Eds.), *Teaching with the Common Core Standards for English Language*
Tovano, C. (2004). *Do i really have to teach reading? content comprehension, grades 6-12*. Stenhouse Publishers.

Next-Generation Professional Learning Webcasts

Visit https://www.georgiastandards.org/Common-Core/Pages/ELA.aspx to see the first set of our new instructional webcasts featuring real Georgia educators, real student work samples, and workable instructional strategies. Hear your colleagues talk about how they have implemented the CCGPS in their classrooms. More webcasts coming soon!

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http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_services.aspx?PageReq=CIServEnglish