ELA Reporter

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YOUR PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY

Unit Framework Revisions and Task Submission

Each month we update our readers on the status of ELA resources available from the DOE. There are currently two specific initiatives underway to enhance and augment the CCGPS instructional resources available for instructional planning in 2013-14. The first focuses on the initial Sample Unit Frameworks produced last spring. Through the constructive feedback of hundreds of Georgia educators who have implemented the units or used their basic templates as planning guides, we have been able to identify several avenues for improvement to these resources. The second initiative entails soliciting individual tasks and lessons from teachers that their peers can use individually or to construct unique units.

The first initiative, the Sample Framework Unit review and revision, will be conducted by contracted ELA educators from around the state who have been recommended by their peers and administrators. The teams will meet onsite for a series of days in May and June to conduct precision reviews aimed at

- providing enhanced continuity to the units
- augmenting the vocabulary, grammar, conventions, and foundational reading skills instruction in the units
- enhancing the standards alignment
- creating an "at-a-glance" cover sheet for each
- checking links and resources

To facilitate an effective review and to ensure that Georgia's instructional materials are aligned in scope, purpose, and quality with those of other outstanding CCSS partner states, reviewers will be basing their review in large part on the Tri-State Rubric, created by the Tri-State Collaborative.

The Tri-State Collaborative (so-called because it was created by educational leaders from Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island and facilitated by Achieve) has developed criterion-based rubrics and review processes to evaluate the quality of lessons and units intended to address the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and ELA/Literacy. The rubric is available at: http://engageny.org/resource/tri-state-quality-review-rubric-and-rating-process

Because many users have already purchased texts to align to these units, we will not change the Extended Text Choice except in the cases of a very small number of texts (2 or 3 out of the 52) that have proven to be extremely incompatible with the grade/purpose or otherwise unacceptable.


The second initiative will entail the solicitation of original, teacher-created lessons and tasks for which the DOE will pay a small stipend. Tasks accepted for this project will be sorted and aligned to enable teachers to link them together to create units of instruction or to enhance existing units with interesting and rigorous tasks.

We will provide detailed parameters for the scope, quality, format, and content of sample tasks through future newsblasts to our listserv, on our Wiki and GSO website, and in the April edition of the *ELA Reporter*.

We look forward to providing new and improved instructional resources to facilitate our continued success in raising the bar for student achievement.
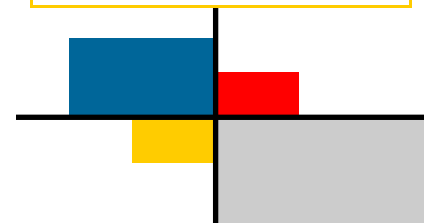
Georgia Department of Education
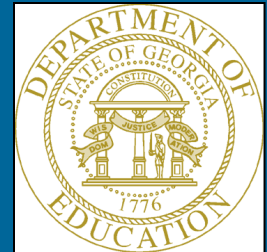
**Dr. John D. Barge,
State School
Superintendent**

*"Making Education
Work for All Georgians"*

Inside this issue:

Yes, We Still Teach Reading in the Primary Grades!

Research has well documented the necessity for systematic, explicit, and direct reading instruction. Most people remember the National Reading Panel's seminal publication in 2000 that brought reading instruction to the front and center of what should be included in classrooms across the nation. Programs such as Georgia's Reading First, and later the national Reading First program, helped focus the attention on the importance of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The history of how best to teach reading has long been controversial. In 1955, Rudolph Flesch published *Why Johnny Can't Read*, triggering a large debate on phonics vs. the"look-say" method of reading. In the 1960s Jeanne Chall began a research project that evaluated current practices and provided a synthesis of reading research. This resulted in *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*, published in 1967 and updated in 1983. Then, in 1990, Marilyn Jager Adams' research took a strong look at the effects of synthetic phonics instruction as opposed to whole language approach at the time with her publication: *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print*. Adams' work is still highly respected. In fact, Adams served as one of the initial writers of the Common Core standards.

Common Core standards don't neglect the foundational skills. Yes, we hear a great deal about the major shifts that include reading and analyzing more complex text, learning academic vocabulary, and reading and understanding informational texts. We have sample framework units that focus on the reading informational and literary standards, writing, listening and speaking, and language. Where are the foundational skills, you ask? In grades K-2, these foundational skills must be the most important part of the reading instructional period. Without the effective decoding skills necessary for reading accurately and fluently, students won't be able to read the texts necessary for meeting the more rigorous standards.

There are many resources that can assist and support your dedicated time for teaching the foundational skills during the reading block. Looking at the standards across grade levels can help teachers determine an instructional timeline and develop an appropriate progression of skills.

Comprehensive Reading Solutions is a state website funded through the Striving Readers grant. This website has modules that address the key areas of beginning reading instruction. You can access this site through the grade level wikis or at *comprehensivereadingsolutions.com* The Center on Instruction has a wealth of professional development resources, teaching tools, and resources for teachers. One of the most helpful documents in their library is one that shares the sub-skills students need to achieve the Foundational Skills. Grade level charts targeting print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency give teachers several suggestions of activities and assessments to use when working with students to ensure their acquisition of the standards. Additionally, there are multi-grade charts showing a developmentally appropriate sequence of instruction. This and many other resources can be accessed at http://www.centeroninstruction.org/topic.cfm?k=L.

In order for students to be able to read the more complex texts, teachers in the primary grades must be committed to making sure their students can read the print on the page. Review the research on reading instruction. Teach skills in a systematic manner. Assess often for progress. Make sure your instruction includes a good foundation of print concepts and phonological awareness prior to decoding words in print. Make sure your classroom is a print-rich environment. Read aloud often and talk about words. Don't move so fast through the sequence of skills that students haven't achieved the automaticity and fluency of decoding they need for reading independently.

The units for the primary grades are not intended to teach foundational skills. They do include suggested texts, assessments, and tasks that address basic vocabulary, writing, speaking and listening, and comprehending texts read aloud. At the DOE, we receive many questions about the importance of foundational skills in the primary grades. Please know that they are critical to the success of the students in future grades. Continue your direct instruction of those beginning reading skills!

New Common Core Tools Webcasts Posted

If you are a regular reader of the ELA Reporter, you already know the Georgia DOE English Language Arts team recently began publishing new professional learning webcasts that were designed based on the feedback we received on our previous webinar series. Webcast production is now in full swing, ,and completed episodes are available for viewing on our ELA CCGPS page at GeorgiaStandards.Org (https://www.georgiastandards.org/Common-Core/Pages/ELA.aspx).

The Webcasts and hundreds of other great resources are also available for viewing on our grade-level Wikis. Visit us at:
High School Wiki: http://elaccgps9-12.wikispaces.com/

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

Check out our newest webcasts!

COMMON CORE TOOLS GRADE 2
by Georgia DOE on 21 February 2013
♻ Reusable

MORE COMMON CORE TOOLS GRADE 2
by Georgia DOE on 21 February 2013
♻ Reusable

Resources We Recommend ~ *Learning Targets: Helping Students Aim for Understanding in Today's Lesson* by Connie M. Moss and Susan J. Brookhart

In *Learning Targets*, Connie M. Moss and Susan M. Brookhart contend that improving student learning and achievement happens in the immediacy of an individual lesson--what they call "today's lesson"--or it doesn't happen at all.

The key to making today's lesson meaningful? Learning targets. Written from students' point of view, a learning target describes a lesson-sized chunk of information and skills that students will come to know deeply. Each lesson's learning target connects to the next lesson's target, enabling students to master a coherent series of challenges that ultimately lead to important curricular standards.

Drawing from the authors' extensive research and professional learning partnerships with classrooms, schools, and school districts, this practical book:

♦ Situates learning targets in a theory of action that students, teachers, principals, and central-office administrators can use to unify their efforts to raise student achievement and create a culture of evidence-based, results-oriented practice.

♦ Provides strategies for designing learning targets that promote higher-order thinking and foster student goal setting, self-assessment, and self-regulation.
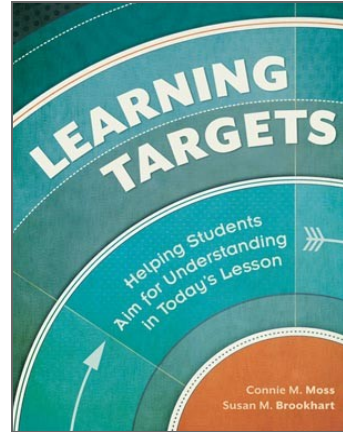
♦ Explains how to design a strong performance of understanding, an activity that produces evidence of students' progress toward the learning target.

♦ Shows how to use learning targets to guide summative assessment and grading.

Learning Targets also includes reproducible planning forms, a classroom walk-through guide, a lesson-planning process guide, and guides to teacher and student self-assessment.

What students are actually doing during today's lesson is both the source of and the yardstick for school improvement efforts. By applying the insights in this book to your own work, you can improve your teaching expertise and dramatically empower all students as stakeholders in their own learning.

The above review is provided by the publisher, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

Identifying Learning Targets Within the Standards

Clear Learning Targets shift us away from what we, as teachers, are covering...
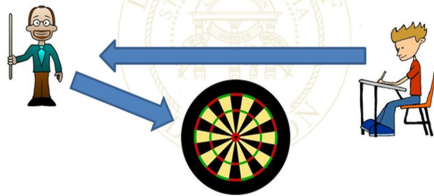
towards what our students are learning.

Each grade level standard can be broken down into meaningful learning targets. Begin by identifying some of the specific skills within a standard:

ELACC7RL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

Engage the students in translating these skills into student-friendly "I Can" statements:

♦ I can figure out what an unknown word in a text means

♦ I can tell the difference between literal, concrete language and language that is meant to be figurative, or symbolic

♦ I know what alliteration is and can spot examples of alliteration in a text (etc....)

Learning targets are observable! Students can articulate exactly what they are trying to achieve in the classroom hour or block and how they will demonstrate that learning. Learning targets should be clear and appropriate; identified at the beginning and end of a lesson. Finally, remember that individual learning targets always have a meaningful place in a larger trajectory of learning. The standard above is a good example. Though separate lessons may find the students attacking any one of the specific skills within the standard, the overarching goal for the year (the objective) will be mastery of the standard regarding nuances of language.

Interpreting and Employing Lexile

How do I raise student reading ability? Research and observation have documented the increase in the number of students who struggle to read and comprehend text in the college and career worlds. Teachers struggle with the tasks of developing appropriate grade level reading skills, making sure students are prepared to read and understand formal assessment text, and ignite student desire to read. We know that students must read, read, and read some more in order to attain the proficient reader profile necessary for success in mastering the Common Core Standards and reaching college and career readiness. The level of text must steadily increase in complexity as students progress through school. The question then becomes how do we achieve all goals in support of the successful student?

Grade Band	Current Lexile Band	"Stretch" Lexile Band*
K–1	N/A	N/A
2–3	450L–725L	420L–820L
4–5	645L–845L	740L–1010L
6–8	860L–1010L	925L–1185L
9-10	960L–1115L	1050L–1335L
11–CCR	1070L–1220L	1185L–1385L

How do you judge a book? Common Core guidance details a three-part model for measuring text complexity. One should look at qualitative dimensions of text or those aspects measurable by "an attentive human reader, such as levels of meaning or purpose; structure; language conventionality and clarity; and knowledge demands" (Common Core Appendix A). A s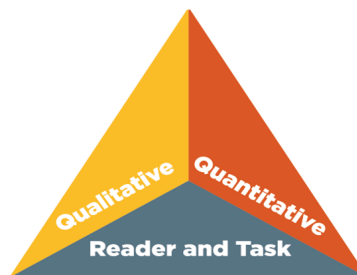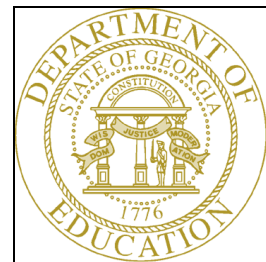econd measure looks at quantitative dimensions. The Lexile® Framework as designed by MetaMetrics provides valuable insights into student readiness as it measures both text complexity and reader ability on the same developmental scale. Lexile measures are a widely used reading metric because they allow for students to be matched with materials that provide the right level of challenge for their ability and goals, but Lexile should always be considered only as a single, albeit important, part of a three part system of text complexity evaluation. Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* should not be read in 3rd grade even though it is measured at 680, Conversely, it should certainly never be excluded from high school literature classes because of the same measurement.

The Lexile Framework has been aligned to match the Common Core Standards' text complexity grade bands. These Common Core "stretch" bands of the Lexile Framework show an upward trajectory of reading comprehension development through the grades to detail increasing text complexity understanding of all students as they move toward college and career readiness no later than the end of high school. The Lexile bands displayed above (and which is also available on the DOE website and at http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf can be used as a guide to help teachers and parents identify appropriate texts for each grade band and also texts that would stretch literacy skills and provide gains in reading ability. Students must have successful experience reading and comprehending texts within the appropriate Common Core "stretch" Lexile band each year. This will be essential to successful formal assessment scores and passage to the end goal of college and career ready.

The third part of the Common Core model for measuring text complexity would take into account the reader's motivation, knowledge, and experience as well as the identified task. Qualitative measures and the individual reader are other factors that should be considered in the choice of texts. Newer research has combined quantitative and qualitative information regarding texts.   Recognize that the level of support provided during reading and reader motivation have an impact on the reading experience. We also know that students motivated to read about a topic are often able to read text at a higher level than would be forecasted by the reader's Lexile measure. Conversely, a high Lexile score does not mean that a student would be able read and comprehend the text at that level.   In order to achieve the overarching goal of getting students to read on their own, there has to be a mix of appropriate Lexile leveled texts, personal interest, and choice of subject matter to support cross curricular areas and standards.