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What Literacy Teacher Educators Need to Know about Supporting Teachers in Understanding
Text Complexity Within the Common Core State Standards

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Abstract

This article explores the requirements of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as they apply to literacy teacher educators and suggests strategies for literacy methods courses for teacher candidates and practicing teachers at the elementary level. The article answers the question: what do teacher candidates need to know about text complexity and reading comprehension as defined by the CCSS? Five teaching modules are provided for teaching these concepts based on a cycle of inquiry to identify and answer driving questions about text complexity and the CCSS.

What Literacy Teacher Educators Need to Know about Supporting Teachers in Understanding Text Complexity Within the Common Core State Standards

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) have been instrumental in guiding a state-led initiative in identifying a shared set of standards across states. At the present time, two consortia are working on assessments based on the CCSS—PARCC and Smarter Balance. States will begin to use these assessments in the 2014-2015 school year. Clearly, teacher educators and teacher preparation programs must prepare to address these standards.

The new standards emphasize a staircase of increasingly complex texts (with an emphasis on non-fiction genres) which students are expected to climb over their school careers, beginning at the earliest elementary grades. The standards for grades K-11 were created with the end-goal of high school graduates attaining college and career readiness standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, language, and mathematics. These, in turn, are aligned with college and work expectations, to include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills. Top-performing countries in international studies served as a reference point for the CCSS's goal of preparing students to succeed in a global economy and society.

The CCSS's emphasis on college and career readiness strongly reflects the results of a 2006 report, *Reading between the lines* (ACT 2006). On an assessment resembling college entrance examinations, those students who achieved benchmark scores (about 50% of the sample) were distinguished by their performance on *complex texts*. A recommendation of this report calls for high school students reading more complex texts. This is not a new observation

in the digital-global age where demands for reading levels are high. In the face of these increased demands for high reading levels in college and the workplace, the complexity of school texts as measured by the Lexile Framework (Smith, Stenner, Horabin, & Smith, 1989) appears to have declined (Williamson, 2008). The pattern of a decline in text complexity does not hold for the primary grades (Hiebert, 2012a) but it is evident across high school. The CCSS writers identify a view of instructional scaffolding among American educators as a contributing factor to this decline. When teachers provide their students with too much support in reading texts, students have few occasions to read complex texts independently. As a result, students are not ready to do the large amounts of independent reading of complex texts, which is a characteristic of college courses and careers (including military service). In addition, CCSS writers based the standards on their conclusions of a paucity of expository (non-fiction) texts in K-12 classrooms. Further, when reading of expository texts occurs, expectations appear to be low. Students are more likely to be skimming and scanning texts than grappling with fundamental premises and content within extended texts independently.

New teachers (as well as practicing teachers) need to understand the standards and what they imply about text selection and use. The demands of the standards will figure heavily into reading instruction and assessment over the next years. In this article, we describe the background for a set of modules, which address issues of text complexity. All of the materials—including background readings and student texts for teachers to analyze—are available in a single location for free download in the form of the Text Complexity Project (TCP) at textproject.org. These materials include guides for those conducting teacher preparation courses, graduate teacher education courses, or professional development in schools and school districts. All of the materials will not be replicated here but the rationale behind each of the modules will

be described and the primary activities within the modules will also be presented in this article. The guides for teacher educators provide substantially more information—including guiding questions, which are not replicated here. This article aims to give teacher educators an overview of the content of the modules and the underlying research on which the modules are based. Specifically, the modules address the following five questions: (a) what is text complexity within the CCSS? (b) what are the advantages and disadvantages of conventional readability formulas? (c) what are differences between narrative and informational texts? (d) what are differences in text features for beginning and struggling readers? And (e) what are alternative ways to measure text complexity?

The information represented in the five modules is research-based. Each of the modules uses an inquiry process, which draws heavily on Internet resources, primarily located at the TextProject site (textproject.org). Space constraints make it impossible to present all of the content and activities for all five modules. Our aim here is to describe the rationale for all of the modules (i.e., the research base) to give teacher educators background on *why* certain topics were chosen and are important. One module—the first one (*What is text complexity?*)—is developed in more depth. This module was chosen as an exemplar for two reasons. First, this module sets the stage for the entire project. Second, it makes explicit the inquiry process and the use of Internet resources, which are used across the modules.

All of the modules probably won't be used in a single course but they might be useful for teacher educators to acquire the background needed for working with teacher candidates and practicing teachers on the construct of text complexity. In addition, there is an urgent call for professional development for teachers in districts and states where the CCSS have been adopted—at this writing, 46 of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. While the focus group

for the modules is teacher educators who work in university teacher preparation programs and graduate programs, teacher leaders who work in professional development at school, district, county, and state levels hopefully will find the information and resources useful as well. Accordingly we use the terminology “teacher educator” to mean all who work to convey professional knowledge to teachers. We also use the term “teacher candidates,” but this can mean novice or practicing teachers in addition to students in teacher preparation courses.

We strongly recommend a “prequel” on the overall content and goals of the CCSS prior to using any one or more of these modules. For example, the Center for the Advancement of Reading (CAR; 2011), which supports teacher educators within the California State University system, has developed a PowerPoint presentation on the CSS for use in teacher education courses. This presentation is accessible for free download on the Internet.

Our focus in this article is on the construct of text complexity because it is *the* distinguishing component of the CCSS from the previous standards of states and national organizations. Pearson and Hiebert (in press) have identified four areas where treatment by CCSS writers is either new or uniquely treated from most previous standards documents of states or national organizations: (a) close/critical reading, (b) connections across language arts and between language arts and disciplines, (c) integration of research and media, and (d) text complexity. In a very real sense, we use all of these emphases of the CCSS within these modules—encouraging critical reading of information, using a variety of language forms—writing, speaking, listening, reading—to respond and reflect on information, and, most importantly, encouraging substantial amounts of research and media to explore the content of the five topics in the modules. But in identifying growth in comprehending increasingly more

complex texts over students' school careers as a unique standard, the CCSS attend to text complexity uniquely relative to previous standards documents.

Teachers educators will want to go through the modules as learners, prior to using the activities and content in their courses. Going through this process assists the teacher educator to identify which of the components is the most critical. Parts of the modules have been field-tested in university courses and were well received by teacher candidates.

Teacher educators should not feel pressure to use all five modules in a single course. Rather, this article and the TCP materials should be used to deepen teacher candidates' understanding of the role of text complexity in these new standards. With increased awareness and information, teacher educators may choose particular dimensions as a focus of activities and others as a source for presentation and discussion. When an entire module is used, we recommend dividing each module into three parts for use during class sessions or completing it over several sessions of the class. Before delving into the content of the modules, we describe the overall vision of the project and the fundamental components of inquiry used across the modules.

Background: TextProject and the Inquiry Process

TextProject

The analysis of texts requires access to texts and also procedures for analyzing those texts. For individual teacher educators and staff development leaders, access to such texts can be unwieldy and prohibitive at times. Texts need to be chosen, copyright permissions need to be obtained, and analyses need to be conducted to establish text features. The TCP is aimed at supporting teacher leaders in providing hands-on experiences with texts and eliminating the various obstacles of obtaining and analyzing texts. The TCP is one of the projects of TextProject, a not-for-profit

organization formed in 2011 to support educators in dealing with issues of text complexity.

TextProject offers a number of resources—student texts, teacher resources, and research. All of these resources come together in the TCP. There are many advantages for having all of the resources in one place. Further, once the materials have been placed on the website, teacher educators can be confident of their accessibility and availability.

The Instructional/Learning Process of the Modules

The theme of each module is developed through three activities:

Read & Learn: This activity begins with a short article, typically from the *Text Matters* magazine on the TextProject website. Questions to guide reading accompany the article.

Reflect & Respond: The second activity involves teacher candidates in reflecting on what they have read with a hands-on activity, typically with texts from the exemplar list of the CCSS provided in Appendix B. Teachers are guided to think about particular features of texts with a series of questions.

Analyze & Apply: Finally, teachers are asked to apply information—comparisons of sets of texts, identification of vocabulary within texts, or analysis of challenging content.

Five Modules on Aspects of Text Complexity

The materials for the modules are substantial in number and all of the activities for every module cannot be described here. But to give teacher educators a sense of what is available in the TCP, we describe one of the modules in depth—the first module. For the other modules, we provide background from research for teacher educators and summarize the components of the module in a table.

Module 1: What is Text Complexity?

Text levels have typically been addressed indirectly within past generations of standards documents. For example, a standard might describe fifth graders as needing to identify figurative language in “grade-level” but grade-level text was not defined. By contrast, Standard 10 of the CCSS turns the spotlight of the English/Language Arts standards to ensuring an increase in students’ ability to comprehend more and more complex text across their school careers.

Why would this become a priority? First, there is the undeniable recognition of the substantial reading demands of the digital-global age, greater than any previous time in history. Second, there has been a downward trend in the difficulty of the texts used in schools over the course of several decades, at least at the middle- and high-school levels (Hayes, Wolfer, & Wolfe, 1996; Williamson, 2008).

The centrality of text complexity to the CCSS is evident in the content of both appendices accompanying the standards with both focusing on aspects of text complexity. The first appendix describes the construct of text complexity and its measurement. The second appendix provides a list of exemplary texts, which the CCSS writers identified for different types of reading and different grade bands. The goal of the first module is for teacher candidates to understand Standard 10 and its rationale (i.e., the gap in complex text between high school and college).

Read and Learn. The activities of this module begin with teacher candidates reading sections on text complexity within the CCSS (pages 2-15) and a portion (pp. 1-27) of *Reading Between the Lines* (ACT, 2006). The latter report served as an impetus for the Standards’ emphasis on college and career readiness. Many questions could be asked to set the purpose for

reading these two texts but the aim of this module is for teacher candidates to direct their attention to what makes texts complex for readers, including for themselves.

1. How do the CCSS standards define text complexity?
2. What does the “text complexity band” mean?
3. What are the three factors for “measuring” text complexity?

Reflect and Respond. Following reading of the text, teacher educators will want to have teacher candidates share their responses to the three purpose-setting questions. Teacher educators are strongly encouraged to model and use the strategy of close reading—one of the central proficiencies emphasized within the Standards--during this post-reading discussion. Close reading is characterized by the use of evidence from the text to support conclusions or views of texts. For example, responses to the definition of text complexity would begin with a reference to the place in the text where the term is defined. [Teacher educators will want to use this strategy often, not simply for these modules. By labeling the process and identifying the procedure, teacher educators can support teacher candidates in learning to use a critical part of the approach to comprehension and learning from text within the CCSS.]

A follow-up activity is for teacher candidates to consider the complexity of the two texts they have just read. How complex did the teacher candidates find *CCSS Appendix A: Reading between the lines*? Did the teachers find particular sections more challenging to comprehend than other sections? Where do the teacher candidates believe these two texts fall on the staircase of text complexity on page 8 of the *CCSS Appendix A*? How does the complexity of these texts compare to the complexity to other articles or books in their recent professional reading?

Once teacher candidates have made their hypotheses, they are invited to read an article on text complexity written for teachers: *7 actions that teachers can take right now: Text*

Complexity (Hiebert, 2012b). How is the information on text complexity in the *7 actions* article the same/different from the information in the CCSS? What features of the *7 actions* article make it “easier” than the CCSS and *Reading between the lines* documents? Are there any ways in which *7 actions* is harder than the other two documents?

Table 1 provides information on the difficulty of these texts. Have teacher candidates compare these figures to those of the grade bands on page 8 of Appendix A of the CCSS. Hiebert modeled the *7 actions* after magazines such as *Educational Leadership*, which have a commitment to making educational research accessible to educators. What is gained by making texts more readable for readers? Are there commensurate losses?

Analyze and Apply. The previous exercise will have supported teacher candidates in understanding how texts can vary in their complexity, even for proficient readers like themselves. This *Analyze and Apply* activity extends this understanding to texts read by their students. The means of studying these demands are considered in comparisons of texts identified in Appendix B of the CCSS as exemplary at different grade levels. Texts for two grade levels representing distinctive periods of reading and thinking development are the focus: one set for Grades 4-5 and another set for Grades 9-10. Readability information for the two texts for each grade band is given in Table 2.

A teacher leader might choose to have everyone in a group examine the same pair, sub-groups look at one set, or all participants might examine the sets sequentially. The point of the exercise is for teacher candidates to identify how particular features of text can influence students’ access to the ideas in a text. What proficiencies do readers need to have to comprehend these texts? What proficiencies might teachers want to teach with these texts to support students’ increasing capacity to read complex texts?

A second activity is to do comparisons between the texts within the same grade level. What are the differences in the demands of the texts for readers? Are the texts at a grade level equally complex? What features of a text might challenge readers.

Once teachers have identified distinguishing features of texts, the information in Table 2 might be used for discussion. The *Gift of the Magi* is in the Grade 9-10 exemplar list but its readability scores place it closer to the Grade 4-5 band. What might contribute to this quantitative designation? This question serves as an excellent segue to the next module—the consideration of the pros and cons of readability formulas.

Module 2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative measures of text difficulty?

Often in education, the form of measurement sets parameters for how a phenomenon is viewed. This is particularly the case with text complexity. The CCSS described a tripartite system for establishing text complexity: (a) qualitative dimensions of text complexity (e.g., levels of meaning or purpose; structure; language conventionality and clarity; and knowledge demands) which, at least at present, depend on human judgment and evaluation for analysis; (b) quantitative dimensions of text difficulty (e.g., word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion) which can be quantitatively assessed; and (c) reader (e.g., motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and task variables (e.g., purpose, complexity of the task assigned, and nature of questions) which, according to the CCSS, are best evaluated by teachers employing their professional judgment, experience, and knowledge of their students and subject matter content.

When the CCSS went to press, it described qualitative descriptions and reader/text descriptions, but provided no fully fleshed out systems. For the quantitative measurement, the Lexile Framework (Smith et al., 1989) was described and presented in a table on page 8 of

Appendix A. Lexile levels were recalibrated from previous recommendations by Metametrics, the publishers of the Lexile Framework, to support students' acquisition of proficiencies to read college- and career-level texts by high school graduation.

The history of readability formulas in the United States is long—with almost a century of work (Klare, 1984). As with previous earlier readability formulas which were manually computed, current digital systems typically base readability on a formula where sentence length serves as the measure of syntactic complexity and the number of syllables in words or the frequency of the vocabulary serves as the measure of semantic complexity. These two features—sentence length and vocabulary—can take different forms in different genres and, consequently, can affect readability levels.

Readability formulas often underestimate the difficulty of narrative texts because stories frequently have dialogue and people typically speak in short sentences. With informational texts, on the other hand, writers use content-specific words repeatedly (e.g., *photosynthesis* or *representational government*). These content-specific words are often rare. Every time they occur, the computer counts the word as a hard or rare word, even though research has shown the benefit of several repetitions of a word on readers' recognition and understanding (Finn, 1978). When readability formulas count each repetition of a word in their computation of text complexity, the difficulty of informational texts is frequently overestimated.

The activities for this module are summarized in Table 3. The focus is on teacher candidates seeing how syntactic changes to a classic text move it from college-career ready level to first-grade according to the CCSS's staircase of text complexity (Appendix A, page 8). The *Analyze and Apply* activity involves them in manipulating another classic text—

Pride and Prejudice—and comparing and contrasting how changes in syntax and vocabulary influence text complexity levels.

Module 3: What features influence text complexity for beginning and struggling readers?

The CCSS is explicit in expecting all students to be held to the same standard. From the perspective of the CCSS, it is the responsibility of states and local districts to design instruction for students who either fall below or above expected grade levels. The CCSS is also explicit in defining the expected grade levels. For example, students in the beginning grade of a two or three-year band (e.g., grades 2-3 form a band) should be asked to read the more challenging text associated with a grade band but with support or scaffolding from teachers. By the end of a grade band, students are expected to read the most challenging texts independently. But many American students have failed to achieve proficient reading standards (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The texts used on these assessments are at levels of complexity, which now fall below the CCSS's accelerated text recommendations. Many students will need to develop a fundamental reading proficiency, if they are to scale the staircase of text complexity.

This module supports teacher candidates in understanding the role of a core vocabulary in proficient reading. Approximately 4,000 words and related words (i.e., word families) account for from 92% (in grades 2-3) to 89% (in grades 9-10) of all of the words in the exemplar texts of the CCSS (Hiebert, 2012a). As shown in Table 4, the primary tasks of this module involve teacher candidates in examining the core vocabulary and then using this vocabulary to study the demands of different texts.

Module 4: What do differences in narrative and informational texts mean for text complexity?

There are a variety of differences between narrative and informational texts, such as the structures of texts and the purposes for which the texts were written. Vocabulary contributes to

the complexity of texts. Unlike text features such as levels of meaning, the distinctions in the vocabularies of narrative and informational texts are readily identifiable and understandable to teacher candidates. The activities in Module 4, which are summarized in Table 5, are aimed at using vocabulary as means for introducing teacher candidates to differences in the complexity of texts.

The basic theme of this module can be illustrated from the findings of a study conducted by Hiebert and Cervetti (2012). The study considered the vocabularies of two sets of texts: a unit of stories from an English/Language Arts program of a large textbook publisher and a unit of informational text from the science textbook program of the same publisher. The researchers classified the vocabulary on a number of dimensions (including length of word and the familiarity of the word according to *The Living Word Vocabulary* (Dale & O'Rourke, 1976)). Several features in the two vocabularies were different at a statistically significant level, including the length of the words (the informational words were somewhat longer than narrative words) but two differences were particularly strong and make clear the uniquenesses of the two vocabularies.

The first was the greater conceptual complexity of the vocabulary in the informational texts. The definition of conceptual complexity drew on the work of Nagy, Anderson, and Herman (1987). They compared student comprehension as a function of numerous text features. Of these features, only conceptual difficulty of vocabulary was significantly related to learning from context. The complexity of words was classified according to the following four categories (with the first the least complex and the last the most complex): (a) known concepts with one-word synonym (e.g., *altercation*=fight); (b) known concepts expressed in a familiar phrase (e.g., *apologize*=to say you're sorry); (c) unknown concepts which can be associated with available

experiences & information (e.g., *naïve*); and (d) unknown concepts which require new factual information or depend on knowing a related system of concepts (e.g., *divide* as “boundary between drainage basins” requires knowing about river systems). When texts had numerous words in the fourth category, texts were considerably more difficult.

In the Hiebert and Cervetti analysis, the informational texts had substantially more conceptually complex words than the narrative ones. For example, in a narrative about two characters, Mike and Bill, a description of their interaction as an altercation can be referred to as a fight. Further, if the fight resulted from Mike’s unwillingness to apologize to Bill about one thing or another, a teacher can interject the phrase “Mike wouldn’t say ‘I am sorry to Bill.’ which led to the altercation.” By contrast, the definition of a conceptually complex word often contains one or more conceptually complex words. For example, an understanding of the properties of substances benefits from knowing abrasive and acidic.

In the Hiebert and Cervetti (2012) analysis, the second primary difference between the sets of vocabularies was the frequency of the words. Unlike the popular conception, the narrative vocabulary--not the informational vocabulary--had the most infrequent words. Further, these infrequent words in the narrative texts were rarely repeated, which was not the case with the rare words in the informational texts. A writer of narrative texts typically does not use the same adjective or verb to describe characters and their actions. For example, the character may be described as meandering down the road in one sentence and sauntering in the next sentence. As a result, the unique vocabulary of narrative texts tends to be populated with more words and often these words are not the “everyday” words of English. By contrast, writers of informational texts are concerned with communicating particular concepts and they use words related to those concepts repeatedly to support readers’ precise understanding of concepts.

Through examinations of vocabularies from exemplar texts identified within the CCSS, teacher candidates are supported in understanding the critical distinctions between the vocabulary of narrative and informational texts, with a focus on how these differences influence the complexity of texts for readers.

Module 5: What alternatives are there to quantitative only systems for establishing text complexity?

The final module of this standards-based unit deals with alternative ways of establishing the complexity of texts. The CCSS model of text complexity was based on a tri-partite model. The purpose of all three sides of the triad is to support teachers in understanding the features of texts in order for them to support students' facility with complex texts. The purpose is not to simply put a label on texts as "complex" or "simple." When publishers or even state agencies (e.g., Copeland, Lakin, & Shaw, 2012) begin to assign ratings along the order of "simple" or "complex," teachers' understandings of what features need to be taught to increase students' capacity are not enhanced. A rating of a text as moderately complex, similar to designation on a set of levels (e.g., "M") or on a numeric scale (e.g., 650 Lexile or 3.5 ATOS), tells teachers little about what features of the text contributed to the rating. A text such as *Tops and Bottoms* (Stevens, 1985) and *Keep the light burning, Abbie* (Roop & Roop, 1987) both have a qualitative rating of M on guided reading levels (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009) but the texts are quite different in their text structures. *Tops and Bottoms* follows the structure of a traditional trickster tale—a potentially new genre for many second graders--while *Keep the light burning, Abbie*, is a fairly straightforward narrative. What does differentiate *Keep the light burning, Abbie* from *Tops and Bottoms* is the length of the text—the former is a "chapter" book, the latter is not. The degree to which length demands affect young readers' comprehension has not been documented but ability

to retain ideas in short-term memory over an extended text could affect comprehension. What is certain, however, is the differences in the text structures, with *Tops and Bottoms* presenting a potentially unfamiliar text type but *Keep the light burning, Abbie* using a fairly familiar text type.

One of the ways in which teacher candidates can be supported in looking at the features of text is through experiences with *anchor* texts. Anchors have been used extensively to support teachers in developing expertise in students' written compositions (DiPardo, Storms, & Selland, 2011). As one of the last projects of a long and illustrative career as a reading researcher, Jeanne Chall (Chall, Bissex, Conard, Harris-Sharples, 1996) developed a qualitative system of analyzing text complexity in which anchor texts were central. As can be seen in the activities for this module (Table 6), this module uses a similar procedure with texts from the CCSS Exemplar list. By developing an understanding of anchor texts, teacher candidates develop first-hand knowledge of how different features of texts contribute to text complexity.

This knowledge—with the anchors available to consult—becomes the basis for analyzing additional texts. After teacher candidates have been led through the anchoring process, they have the opportunity to determine how six additional texts relate to the anchors.

Discussion

Once the materials in the TCP are posted at textproject.org (in mid-summer of 2012), will remain at the site permanently. But the aim is not for these materials to remain static. The bulk of the activities and materials in the TCP modules have been used with teachers and teacher candidates but, as teacher educators use the materials in their courses in many additional contexts, we anticipate revisions, elaborations, and extensions of the present activities and creation of additional modules. The plan is to have mechanisms at the TCP site for teacher educators to share their suggestions and to contribute to the creation of new content. Numerous other

dimensions of text complexity could become the focus of additional modules. Examples of potential additions include the manner of developing stamina with text (which has been proposed to be one of the major obstacles for many American students in their performances on national assessments (Hiebert, Wilson, & Trainin, 2010) and the ways of instructing and of designing tasks with complex texts.

Finally, we invite teacher educators to create modules for other aspects of the CCSS. One topic crying out for attention currently is the role of background knowledge in teaching with complex texts. The guidelines for publishers written by two of the CCSS writers (Coleman & Pimenthal, 2011a, 2011b) raise questions about how their vision of close reading fits with prominent findings from an extensive research base on discussion (Murphy, Wilkinson, & Soter, 2011) and comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

The questions raised by the CCSS are many, as are opportunities. Our financial resources at TextProject, at present, are few as we build a not-for-profit organization devoted to dissemination and research on text. However, the expertise and commitment within the teacher education community are substantial. We welcome partners as we work to develop new ways of supporting new teachers in developing a solid foundation in the standards. When teachers enter the profession with an understanding of text complexity, their capacity for supporting the next generation of students in creating a solid foundation in the literacies necessary for the global-digital age will be greatly enhanced.

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Roop, P., & Roop, C. (1987). *Keep the light burning, Abbie*. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press.

Table 1.

Features of Texts for Teachers on Text Complexity

Text	Lexile	Average Sentence Length	Average Word Frequency
Common Core, Appendix A, pages 2-15	1640	28.74	3.04
<i>Reading between the Lines</i> (pp. 1-27)	1520	25.25	3.11
7 actions that teachers can take right now: Text Complexity	1240	19.43	3.33

Table 2

Readability Features of Exemplar Texts from the Common Core: Grades 4-5 and 9-10

Exemplars from CCSS	Grade Band	Lexile	Average Sentence Length	Average Word Frequency
Gift of Magi	9-10	880	13.3	3.5
Metamorphosis	9-10	1360	26.1	3.6
The Black Stallion	4-5	690	10.24	3.53
Secret Garden	4-5	1190	16.52	3.15

Table 3.

Activities for Module 2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative measures of text complexity?

<i>Read & Learn</i>	<i>Reflect & Respond</i>	<i>Analyze & Apply</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What Reading Teachers Know About Readability, <i>Text Matters</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Discuss & write about the nature of changes which, when made to a classic text, move it from college-career level to first grade (<i>The Wind in the Willows</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Make two types of changes to excerpt from <i>Pride & Prejudice</i> & consider effects on readability: (a) sentence length and (b) vocabulary

Table 4.

Activities for Module 3: What features influence text complexity for beginning and struggling readers?

<i>Read & Learn</i>	<i>Reflect & Respond</i>	<i>Analyze & Apply</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Core Vocabulary, <i>Text Matters</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Compare and contrast words within the 4,000 words/families which account for 90% of the words in most texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examine the <i>rare</i> words from two different texts & determine their complexity for beginning &/or struggling readers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Grs 2-3: <i>My Father’s Dragon & Spring</i> •Grs 4-5: <i>The Secret Garden & Should Music be taught in school?</i>

Table 5.

Activities for Module 4: What do differences in narrative and informational texts mean for text complexity?

<i>Read & Learn</i>	<i>Reflect & Respond</i>	<i>Analyze & Apply</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unique Words <p>Require Unique Instruction, <i>Text Matters</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Compare/contrast unique/extended vocabulary in two texts from Common Core Exemplar list: <li style="padding-left: 20px;">--Grs 2-3: <i>Boy, were we wrong about dinosaurs & My Father's Dragon</i> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">--Grs 4-5: <i>Hurricanes & The Secret Garden</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify how critical words in the texts just analyzed could be taught

Table 6. What are alternatives to overall measures of text complexity?

<i>Read & Learn</i>	<i>Reflect & Respond</i>	<i>Analyze & Apply</i>
<p>•Text Complexity Multi Index, <i>Text Matters</i></p>	<p>•Sort 3 exemplar texts from Common Core as “anchors” of complexity across grades 4-5: <i>Black Stallion, The Secret Garden, & Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland</i></p>	<p>•Match following texts with the three Gr. 4-5 anchors: <i>Tiger, Tiger, The Wizard of Oz, The Velveteen Rabbit, The Railway Children, Jupiter & his mighty company, & The Fox & the Horse</i></p>