

Guidance around Implementing Core Curriculum Materials Scholastic's *Code X*

Over the past three years, teachers across New York City have been working to integrate the Common Core instructional shifts in their classrooms. Last spring, the vast majority of schools with elementary and middle school grades decided to purchase at least one of the Core Curriculum options that the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) recommended in ELA and math. For those schools, successful implementation of these programs—either with fidelity or simply as resources to supplement other curricula—requires making instructional decisions about how to adapt these curricula to enable all students to access and learn the material. This frequently asked questions document is designed to assist principals, assistant principals, and teachers in thinking about implementation.

The Core Curriculum programs were selected because they are high-quality, Common Core-aligned options. They offer a wealth of material to use to develop units and lessons. However, no purchased curriculum can meet everyone's needs and none of these programs are intended to be followed verbatim.

For example, some literacy teachers have asked whether independent reading time, guided reading, leveled text, or other aspects of a balanced literacy program are now obsolete because of Core Curriculum. The answer is no—experiences with more challenging texts should be mixed with opportunities to read independently. Such practices can be incorporated over the course of the school day and week. Other teachers have struggled with what to do when a text is several levels above where their students are. There isn't one answer to this question. Some teachers find it is appropriate to push through, as long as there are enough scaffolds in place. In other cases, teachers are selecting just parts of the text to shorten the amount of time students are exposed to it. In this way, students have the opportunity to practice working with a "reach text," but not for so long that they hit a high frustration level. Still other times, the text is being replaced by a more accessible text that will move students closer to meeting the Common Core standards over time.

Grappling with these kinds of instructional decisions is essential to the implementation of new curricula. Teachers and teacher teams, in consultation with school administration, should engage in professional dialogue about adapting the materials to meet their students' learning needs. This can happen as part of ongoing lesson planning and/or during teacher team time.

Please see reverse for responses to other frequently asked questions from teachers about **Scholastic's *Code X***.

Frequently Asked Questions about Scholastic's *Code X*

What are the key components of *Code X*?

In *Code X*, close reading of a text is coupled with student discussions of evidence from the text in a whole class, small group, or paired environment. This allows students to use evidence to craft responses to on-demand and process writing assignments. The program also includes a comprehensive literature circles component. In literature circles, students choose books from a curated list and meet in student groups to engage in student-led discussions about the books. There are also academic language routines to develop students' vocabulary in a systematic way.

What should I be doing in addition to the *Code X* curriculum to build strong literacy practices in my classroom?

Code X is a comprehensive literacy curriculum that addresses the Common Core standards. Some schools may choose to implement with fidelity, while others use it simply as a resource to supplement other curricula. While these are fundamental skills, you should feel free to integrate strong practices that have demonstrated the most impact over the past years. For example, as you attend to your students' learning needs during these transitional years, you may choose to infuse other literacy practices to ensure that your students spend time reading at independent levels. Planning these adjustments can happen as part of ongoing lesson planning and/or during teacher team time, in consultation with school administration.

How can I adjust the *Code X* curriculum given the needs of my students while still ensuring that what I am teaching is Common Core-aligned?

Code X is Common Core-aligned, which means that the material will be a big stretch for some students during this transitional time. Since students enter your classroom at a variety of skill levels, it is expected that you will use your professional judgment to make some adjustments. There are extensive supports built into the *Code X* curriculum, including text-dependent questions, direct vocabulary instruction, instructional routines for close reading, class discussion, and writing, as well as suggestions about small-group work. In *Code X*, the whole-class texts are designed to be challenging for students. While it is encouraged that you provide multiple opportunities across the year for your students to grapple with grade-level text, you may decide that a given text is too difficult for your class. In these cases, you should still ensure that you are selecting a text that provides an opportunity for a productive struggle. To this end, the Common Core Library (schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary) has text complexity tools to help teachers evaluate qualitative elements of complexity. In addition, while the *Code X* Literature Circles texts represent a range of grade levels, teachers may want to provide additional selections in order to give students more opportunities to read books at their independent reading levels. *Code X* units are also designed to make connections to prior knowledge in the context of building content knowledge, therefore it is also encouraged that the texts you select match the theme and content of the units.

How do I effectively use assessment as part of *Code X*?

Each *Code X* unit culminates in a performance task in which students are asked to bring together the reading, writing, synthesizing, questioning, and citing skills they developed throughout the unit. *Code X* provides students step-by-step support in completing the performance task by asking students to analyze a model example and providing scaffolded support in gathering evidence, organizing their ideas, and revising and editing their drafts. These assessments should be used if appropriate in the context of your school's overall assessment strategies.

What online supports are available for *Code X*?

Resources for *Code X* Unit 1 are available at portal.nycenet.edu/TeachingLearning/CommonCore. For questions related to content, email the NYC *Code X* Coach at NYCCodeX@scholastic.com.