Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3–12

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INTRODUCTION

Developed by the authors of the Common Core State Standards, these criteria are designed to guide publishers and curriculum developers as they work to ensure alignment with the standards in English language arts (ELA) and literacy for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

The criteria articulated below concentrate on the most significant elements of the Common Core State Standards and lay out their implications for aligning materials with the standards. These guidelines are not meant to dictate classroom practice but rather to ensure that teachers receive effective tools. They are intended to direct curriculum developers and publishers to be purposeful and strategic in both what to include and what to exclude in instructional materials. By underscoring what matters most in the standards, the criteria illustrate what shifts must take place in the next generation of curricula, including paring away elements that distract or are at odds with the Common Core State Standards.

At the heart of these criteria are instructions for shifting the focus of literacy instruction to center on careful examination of the text itself. In aligned materials, work in reading and writing (as well as speaking and listening) must center on the text under consideration. The standards focus intently on students reading closely to draw evidence from the text and are emphatic about students reading texts of adequate range and complexity. The criteria outlined below therefore revolve around the texts that students read and the kinds of questions students should address as they write and speak about them.

The standards and these criteria sharpen the focus on the close connection between comprehension of text and acquisition of knowledge. While the link between comprehension and knowledge in reading science and history texts is clear, the same principle applies to all reading. The criteria make plain that developing students' prowess at drawing knowledge from the text itself is the point of reading. Reading well means gaining the maximum insight or knowledge possible from each source. Student knowledge drawn from the text is demonstrated when the student uses evidence from the text to support a claim about the text. Hence evidence and knowledge link directly to the text.

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This document has two parts: The first articulates criteria for ELA materials in grades 3–12 and the second for history/social studies, science, and technical materials in grades 6–12. Each part contains sections discussing the following key criteria:

I. Text Selection

1. Text Complexity
2. Range and Quality of Texts

II. Questions and Tasks

1. High-Quality Text-Dependent Questions and Tasks
2. Cultivating Students' Ability To Read Complex Texts Independently

III. Academic Vocabulary

IV. Writing to Sources and Research

1. Writing to Sources — a Key Task
2. Extensive Practice with Short, Focused Research Projects

The criteria for ELA materials in grades 3–12 have one additional section:

V. Additional Key Criteria for Student Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking

1. Reading Complex Texts with Fluency
2. Increasing Focus on Argument and Informative Writing
3. Engaging in Academic Discussions
4. Using Multimedia and Technology Skillfully
5. Covering the Most Significant Grammar and Language Conventions

ELA Curricula, Grades 3–12

I. Text Selection

1. **Text Complexity:** The Common Core State Standards require students to read increasingly complex texts with increasing independence as they progress toward career and college readiness.

   A. ***Texts for each grade align with the complexity requirements outlined in the standards.*** Reading Standard 10 outlines the level of text complexity at which students need to demonstrate comprehension in each grade. (Appendix A in the Common Core State Standards gives further information on how text complexity can be measured.)[1] Research makes clear that the complexity levels of the texts students are presently required to read are significantly below what is required to achieve college and career readiness. Far too often, students who have fallen behind are given only less complex texts rather than the support they need to read texts at the appropriate level of complexity. The Common Core State Standards hinge on students encountering appropriately complex texts at each grade level to develop the mature language skills and the conceptual knowledge they need for success in school and life. Instructional materials should also offer advanced texts to provide students at every grade with the opportunity to read texts beyond their current grade level to prepare them for the challenges of more complex text.

   B. ***All students, including those who are behind, have extensive opportunities to encounter and comprehend grade-level text as required by the standards.*** Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards must provide extensive opportunities for all students to engage with sufficiently complex text, although some will need more scaffolding to do so. Curriculum developers and teachers have the flexibility to build progressions of more complex text within grade-level bands that overlap to a limited degree with earlier bands (e.g., grades 4–5 and grades 6–8). In addition to classroom work on texts at their own grade level, some students may need further instruction, which could include approaches such as guided reading instruction on grade-level texts, fluency practice, vocabulary building, and additional practice with texts from the previous grade band. However, this additional work should not replace extensive classroom practice with texts at or above grade level, and all intervention programs should be designed to accelerate students rapidly toward independent reading of grade-level text.

   C. ***Shorter, challenging texts that elicit close reading and re-reading are provided regularly at each grade.*** The study of short texts is particularly useful to enable students at a wide range of reading levels to participate in the close analysis of more demanding text. The Common Core State Standards place a high priority on the close, sustained reading of complex

[1] A working group is developing clear, common standards for measuring text complexity that can be consistent across different curricula and publishers. These criteria, due out in summer 2011, will blend quantitative and qualitative factors and will be widely shared and made available to publishers and curriculum developers. It is likely that the measurement of some narrative fiction as well as poetry and drama for the time being will have to depend largely on qualitative judgments that are based on the principles laid out in Appendix A and are being further developed and refined.

text, beginning with Reading Standard 1. Such reading emphasizes the particular over the general and strives to focus on what lies within the four corners of the text. It often requires compact, short, self-contained texts that students can read and re-read deliberately and slowly to probe and ponder the meanings of individual words, the order in which sentences unfold, and the development of ideas over the course of the text.

D. ***Novels, plays, and other extended readings are also provided with opportunities for close reading as well as research.*** Students should also be required to read several longer texts each year. Discussion of extended or longer texts should span the entire text while also creating a series of questions that demonstrate how careful attention to specific passages within the text provide opportunities for close reading. Students should also be required to demonstrate that they can read larger volumes of material and extract knowledge and insight.

E. ***Additional materials markedly increase the opportunity for regular independent reading of texts that appeal to students' interests to develop both their knowledge and joy in reading.*** These materials should ensure that all students have daily opportunities to read texts of their choice on their own during and outside of the school day. Students should have access to a wide range of materials on a variety of topics and genres. These texts should enable students to read broadly and widely to build their knowledge and experience. Materials will need to include texts at students' own reading level as well as texts with complexity levels that will challenge and motivate students. In alignment with the standards and to acknowledge the range of students' interests, these materials should include informational texts and literary nonfiction as well as literature. A wide variety of formats can also engage a wider range of students, such as high-quality newspaper and magazine articles as well as information-rich websites.

2. **Range and Quality of Texts:** The Common Core State Standards require a greater focus on informational text in elementary school and literary nonfiction in ELA classes in grades 6–12.

A. ***Grades 3–5: Literacy programs include texts that are 50 percent literature and 50 percent informational.*** Achieving the appropriate balance between literary and informational text in the next generation of materials requires a significant shift in early literacy materials and instructional time so that equal time and weight are given to scientific and historical text and to literary text. (See p. 31 of the standards for details on how literature and informational texts are defined.) In addition, to develop reading comprehension for *all* readers, as well as build vocabulary, the selected informational texts should build a coherent body of knowledge both within and across grades. (The example of "The Human Body" on p. 33 of the Common Core State Standards offers one approach.)[2]

[2] The note on the range and content of student reading in K–5 (p. 10) states: "By reading texts in history/social studies, science, and other disciplines, students build a foundation of knowledge in these fields that will also give them background knowledge to be better readers in all content areas in later grades. Students can only gain this foundation when the curriculum is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades."

B. ***Grades 6–12: ELA programs include substantially more literary nonfiction.*** The Common Core State Standards require aligned ELA curriculum materials in grades 6–12 to include a blend of literature (fiction, poetry, and drama) and a substantial sampling of literary nonfiction, including essays; speeches; opinion pieces; biographies; journalism; and historical, scientific, or other documents written for a broad audience. (See p. 57 of the standards for more details.) Most ELA programs and materials designed for them will need to increase substantially the amount of literary nonfiction they include. The standards emphasize arguments (such as those in the Founding Documents) and other literary nonfiction that is built on informational text structures rather than narrative literary nonfiction that is structured as stories (such as memoirs or biographies). Of course, literary nonfiction extends well beyond historical documents to include the best of nonfiction written for a broad audience on a wide variety of topics, such as science, contemporary events and ideas, nature, and the arts. (Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards provides several examples of high-quality literary nonfiction.)

C. ***Quality of the suggested texts is high — they are worth reading closely and exhibit exceptional craft and thought or provide useful information.*** Given the emphasis of the Common Core State Standards on close reading, the texts selected should be worthy of close attention and careful re-reading for understanding. To become career and college ready, students must grapple with a range of works that span many genres, cultures, and eras and model the kinds of thinking and writing students should aspire to in their own work. (See Appendix B of the standards for grade-specific examples of texts.)

D. ***Specific texts or text types named in the standards are included.*** At specific points, the Common Core State Standards require certain texts or types of texts. In grades 9–12, the Founding Documents, selections from American literature and world literature, a play by Shakespeare, and an American drama are all required. In early grades, students are required to study classic myths and stories, including works representing diverse cultures. Aligned materials for grades 3–12 should set out a coherent selection and sequence of texts (of sufficient complexity and quality) to give students a well-developed sense of bodies of literature (like American literature or classic myths and stories) as part of becoming college and career ready.

E. ***Within a sequence or collection of texts, specific anchor texts are selected for especially careful reading.*** Often in research and other contexts, several texts will be read to explore a topic. It is essential that such materials include a selected text or set of texts that can act as cornerstone or anchor texts that repay careful study. These anchor texts provide essential opportunities for students to spend the time and care required for careful reading and to demonstrate in-depth comprehension of a specific source or sources.

II. Questions and Tasks

1. **High-Quality Text-Dependent Questions and Tasks:** Among the highest priorities of the Common Core State Standards is that students be able to read closely and gain knowledge from texts.

   A. ***A significant percentage of questions and tasks are text dependent.*** Aligned curriculum materials should include rigorous text-dependent questions that require students to demonstrate that they not only can follow the details of what is explicitly stated but also are able to make valid claims that square with all the evidence in the text. Text-dependent questions can be answered only by careful scrutiny of the text and specifically by referring to evidence from the text itself to support the response. They do not require information or evidence from outside the text or texts; they establish what follows and what does not follow from the text itself. Eighty to 90 percent of the Reading Standards in each grade require text-dependent analysis; accordingly, aligned curriculum materials should have a similar percentage of text-dependent questions. A text-dependent approach can and should be applied to building knowledge from multiple sources as well as making connections between texts and learned material, according to the principle that each source be read and understood carefully.

   B. ***High-quality sequences of text-dependent questions elicit sustained attention to the specifics of the text and their impact.*** The sequence of questions should cultivate student mastery of the specific ideas and illuminating particulars of the text. High-quality text-dependent questions will often move beyond what is directly stated to require students to make nontrivial inferences based on evidence in the text. Questions aligned with Common Core State Standards should demand close attention to the text to answer fully. An effective set of questions might begin with relatively simple questions requiring attention to specific words, details, and arguments and then move on to explore the impact of those specifics on the text as a whole. Good questions will often linger over specific phrases and sentences to ensure careful comprehension. Effective question sequences will build on each other to ensure that students learn to stay focused on the text so they can learn fully from it.

   C. ***Questions and tasks require the use of textual evidence, including supporting valid inferences from the text.*** The Common Core State Standards require students to become more adept at drawing evidence from the text and explaining that evidence orally and in writing. Aligned curriculum materials should include explicit models of a range of high-quality evidence-based answers to questions — samples of proficient student responses — about specific texts from each grade. Questions should require students to demonstrate that they follow the details of what is explicitly stated and are able to make nontrivial inferences beyond what is explicitly stated in the text to what logically follows from the evidence in the text. Evidence will play a similarly crucial role in student writing, speaking, and listening, as an increasing command of evidence in texts is essential to making progress in reading as well as the other literacy strands.

D. ***Questions and tasks require careful comprehension of the text before asking for further connections, evaluation, or interpretation*.** The Common Core State Standards call for students to demonstrate a careful understanding of what they read before engaging their opinions, appraisals, or interpretations. Aligned materials should therefore require students to demonstrate that they have followed the details and logic of an author's argument before they are asked to evaluate the thesis or compare the thesis to others. When engaging in critique, materials should require students to return to the text to check the quality and accuracy of their evaluations and interpretations. Students can and should make connections between texts, but this activity must not supersede the close examination of each specific text. Often, curricula surrounding texts leap too quickly into broad and wide-open questions of interpretation before cultivating command of the details and specific ideas in the text. Productive connections and comparisons should bring students back to careful reading of specific texts.

E. ***Questions and tasks attend to analyzing the arguments and information at the heart of informational text in grades K–5 and literary nonfiction in grades 6–12.*** As previously stated, the Common Core State Standards emphasize the reading of more informational text in grades K–5 and more literary nonfiction in grades 6–12. This emphasis mirrors the Writing Standards that focus on students' abilities to marshal an argument and write to inform or explain. The shift in both reading and writing constitutes a significant change from the traditional focus in ELA classrooms on narrative text or the narrative aspects of literary nonfiction (the characters and the story) toward more in-depth engagement with the informational and argumentative aspects of these texts. While the English teacher is not meant to be a content expert in an area covered by the text, curriculum materials should guide teachers and students to demonstrate careful understanding of the information developed in the text. For example, in a narrative with a great deal of science, teachers and students should be required to follow and comprehend the scientific information as presented by the text. Likewise, it is just as essential for teachers and students to follow the details of an argument and reasoning in literary nonfiction as it is for them to attend to issues of style.

2. **Cultivating Students' Ability To Read Complex Texts Independently:** Among the highest priorities of the Common Core State Standards is a requirement that students be able to demonstrate their independent capacity to read at the appropriate level of complexity and depth.

A. ***Scaffolds enable all students to experience the complexity of the text, rather than avoid it.*** Many students will need careful instruction — including effective scaffolding — to enable them to read at the level of text complexity required by the Common Core State Standards. However, the scaffolding should not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students or telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading the text; that is, the scaffolding should not become an alternate, simpler source of information that diminishes the need for students to read the text itself carefully. Effective scaffolding aligned with the standards should result in the reader encountering the text on its own terms, with instructions providing

helpful directions that focus students on the text. Follow-up support should guide the reader when encountering places in the text where he or she might struggle. Aligned curriculum materials therefore should explicitly direct students to re-read challenging portions of the text and offer instructors clear guidance about an array of text-based scaffolds. When productive struggle with the text is exhausted, questions rather than explanations can help focus the student's attention on key phrases and statements in the text or on the organization of ideas in the paragraph.

B. ***Rather than focusing on general strategies and questions disconnected from texts, strategies should be cultivated in the context of reading specific texts.*** Far too much of existing curriculum focuses on either decontextualized strategies or preloading instructions for reading. Practices such as framing a big question in advance of reading or previewing a text may in fact rob students of the rich discoveries and intellectual joy of encountering the way an author sets the agenda and unfolds ideas as well as details. Discussion of specific reading techniques should occur when and if they illuminate specific aspects of a text. They should be embedded in the activity of reading the text rather than being taught as a separate body of material**.** By reading several challenging texts, students should build an infrastructure that enables them to approach new challenging texts with confidence and stamina.

C. ***Design for whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction cultivates student responsibility and independence.*** It is essential that questions, tasks, and activities are designed to ensure that all students are actively engaged in reading. Writing about text is an effective way to elicit this active engagement, so reading materials should provide effective ongoing prompts for students to analyze texts in writing. Instructional materials should be designed to devote sufficient time in class to students encountering text without scaffolding, as they often will in college- and career-ready environments. A significant portion of the time spent with each text should provide opportunities for students to work independently within and outside of class on analyzing the text because this independent analysis is required by the standards.

D. ***Instructional design cultivates student interest and engagement in reading rich text carefully.*** A core challenge in developing instructional materials is to construct questions and tasks that motivate students to read inquisitively and carefully. Questions should focus on illuminating specifics of the text that "pay off" in a deeper understanding, rewarding careful reading. Questions should not be random but should build toward deeper understanding. Questions also should not be overly general or schematic — they should show attention to the specifics of the work and cultivate student appreciation for what is beautiful, insightful, or special in a piece of writing that makes it worth reading carefully.

E. ***Materials make the text the focus of instruction by avoiding features that distract from the text.*** Teachers' guides or students' editions of curriculum materials should highlight the reading selections. Everything included in the surrounding materials should be thoughtfully considered and

justified before being included. That is, the text should be central, and surrounding materials should be included only when necessary, so as not to distract from the text itself. Instructional support materials should focus on questions that engage students in becoming interested in the text. Rather than being consigned to the margins when completing assignments, close and careful reading must be an absolutely essential and central part of classroom activities. Given the focus of the Common Core State Standards, publishers should be extremely sparing in offering activities that are not text based. Existing curricula will need to be revised substantially to focus classroom time on students and teachers practicing reading, writing, speaking, and listening in direct response to high-quality text.

III. Academic Vocabulary

Materials focus on academic vocabulary prevalent in complex texts throughout reading, writing, listening, and speaking instruction. Academic vocabulary (described in more detail as Tier 2 words in Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards) includes those words that readers will find in all types of complex texts from different disciplines. Often, curricula ignore these words and pay attention only to the technical words that are unique to a discipline. Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should help students acquire knowledge of general academic vocabulary because these are the words that will help them access a wide range of complex texts.

Aligned materials should guide students to gather as much as they can about the meaning of these words from the context of how the words are being used in the text, while offering support for vocabulary when students are not likely to be able to figure out their meanings from the text alone. As the meanings of words vary with the context, the more varied the context provided to teach the meaning of a word is, the more effective the results will be (e.g., Texas was admitted to the union; he admitted his errors; admission was too expensive). In alignment with the standards, materials should also require students to explain the impact of specific word choices on the text.

IV. Writing to Sources and Research

1. **Writing to Sources — a Key Task:** The Common Core State Standards require students not only to show that they can analyze and synthesize sources but also to present careful analysis, well-defended claims, and clear information through their writing. Several of the Writing Standards, including most explicitly Standard 9, require students to draw evidence from a text or texts to support analysis, reflection, or research. Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should give students extensive opportunities to write in response to sources throughout grade-level materials.

2. **Extensive Practice with Short, Focused Research Projects:** Writing Standard 7 emphasizes that students should conduct several short research projects in addition to more sustained research efforts. Materials should require several of these short research projects — typically taking roughly a week and occurring at a minimum quarterly — to enable students to repeat the research process many times and develop the expertise needed to conduct research independently. A progression of shorter research projects also encourages students to develop

expertise in one area by confronting different aspects of the same topic as well as more complex texts and source materials on that topic.

V. Additional Key Criteria for Student Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking

1. **Reading Complex Text with Fluency:** Fluency describes the pace and accuracy with which students read — the extent to which students adjust the pace, stress, and tone of their reading to respond to the words in the text. Often, students who are behind face fluency challenges and need more practice reading sufficiently complex text. Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should draw on the connections between the Speaking and Listening Standards and the Reading Standards on fluency to provide opportunities for students to develop this important skill (e.g., rehearsing an oral performance of a written piece has the built-in benefit of promoting reading fluency).

2. **Increasing Focus on Argument and Informative Writing:** While narrative writing is given prominence in early grades, as students progress through the grades the Common Core State Standards increasingly ask students to write arguments or informational reports from sources. As a consequence, less classroom time should be spent in later grades on personal writing in response to decontextualized prompts that ask students to detail personal experiences or opinions. The Common Core State Standards require that the balance of writing students are asked to do must parallel the balance assessed on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):

   - In elementary school, 30 percent of student writing should be to argue, 35 percent should be to explain/inform, and 35 percent should be narrative.
   - In middle school, 35 percent of student writing should be to write arguments, 35 percent should be to explain/inform, and 30 percent should be narrative.
   - In high school, 40 percent of student writing should be to write arguments, 40 percent should be to explain/inform, and 20 percent should be narrative.

   These forms of writing are not strictly independent; for example, arguments and explanations often include narrative elements, and both informing and arguing rely on using information or evidence drawn from texts.

3. **Engaging in Academic Discussions:** In accordance with the Speaking and Listening Standards, materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should show teachers how to plan engaging discussions around grade-level topics and texts that students have studied and researched in advance. Speaking and listening prompts and questions should offer opportunities for students to share preparation, evidence, and research. Materials should highlight strengthening students' listening skills as well as their ability to respond to and challenge their peers with relevant follow-up questions and evidence.

4. **Using Multimedia and Technology Skillfully:** The Common Core State Standards require students to compare the knowledge they gain from reading texts to the knowledge they gain from other multimedia sources, such as video. The Standards for Reading Literature specifically require students to observe different productions of the same play to assess how each production interprets evidence from the script. Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards therefore should use multimedia and technology in a way that

engages students in absorbing or expressing details of the text rather than becoming a distraction or replacement for engaging with the text.

5. **Covering the Most Significant Grammar and Language Conventions:** The Language Standards provide a focus for instruction each year to ensure that students gain adequate mastery of the essential "rules" of standard written and spoken English. They also push students to learn how to approach language as a matter of craft so they can communicate clearly and powerfully. In addition to meeting each year's grade-specific standards, students are expected to retain and further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades. Thus, aligned materials should demonstrate that they explicitly and effectively support student mastery of the full range of grammar and conventions as they are applied to increasingly sophisticated contexts. The materials should also indicate when students should adhere to formal conventions and when they are speaking and writing for a less formal purpose.

CONCLUSION: EFFICACY OF ALIGNED MATERIALS

Curriculum materials must have a clear and documented research base. It can be surprising which questions, tasks, and instructions provoke the most productive engagement with text, accelerate student growth, and deepen instructor facility with the materials. The most important evidence is that the curriculum accelerates student progress toward career and college readiness. A great deal of the material designed for the standards will by necessity be new, but as much as possible the work should be developed and refined through actual testing in classrooms. Publishers should provide a clear research plan for how the efficacy of their materials will be assessed and improved over time. Revisions should be based on evidence of actual use and results with a wide range of students, including English language learners.

Curriculum offered as an excellent match for the Common Core State Standards should produce evidence of its usability and efficacy with a full range of students, including English language learners.

History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects Literacy Curricula, Grades 6–12

INTRODUCTION

This brief addendum to the publishers' criteria for ELA grades 3–12 focuses on the portions of those criteria most relevant to materials in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. In the list that follows, we restate several of the key points from the ELA criteria as they relate to these content areas and add others that are particularly significant. As was the case with ELA, what follows is not an exhaustive list but the most significant elements of the Common Core State Standards to be mindful of when revising and developing aligned materials.

Meeting the demands of the Literacy Standards requires substantially expanding the literacy requirements in history/social studies as well as in science and technical subjects. The adoption of the Literacy Standards in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects therefore requires several significant shifts in these curricula. Specifically, in alignment with NAEP, the standards require that in grades 6–12, student reading across the curriculum must include a balance of texts that is one-third literary, one-third history/social studies, and one-third science. Specific standards (pp. 60–66) define the actual literacy skills for which history/social studies, science, and technical teachers are responsible. (Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards contains a sampling of texts of appropriate quality and complexity for study in these disciplines.)

I. Text Selection

1. **Text Complexity:** The Common Core State Standards require students to read increasingly complex texts with increasing independence as they progress toward career and college readiness.

   A. ***Texts align with the complexity requirements outlined in the standards*.** Reading Standard 10 outlines the level of text complexity at which students need to demonstrate comprehension in each grade. (Appendix A in the Common Core State Standards gives further information on how text complexity can be measured.)[3] Research makes clear that the complexity levels of the texts students are presently required to read are significantly below what is required to achieve college and career readiness. Far too often, students who have fallen behind are given only less complex texts rather than the support they need to read texts at the appropriate level of complexity. The Common Core State Standards hinge on students encountering appropriately complex texts at each grade level to develop the

[3] A working group is developing clear, common standards for measuring text complexity that can be consistent across different curricula and publishers. These criteria, due out in summer 2011, will blend quantitative and qualitative factors and will be widely shared and made available to publishers and curriculum developers. It is likely that the measurement of some narrative fiction as well as poetry and drama for the time being will have to depend largely on qualitative judgments that are based on the principles laid out in Appendix A and are being further developed and refined.

mature language skills and the conceptual knowledge they need for success in school and life. Instructional materials should also offer advanced texts to provide students at every grade with the opportunity to read texts beyond their current grade level to prepare them for the challenges of more complex text.

B. ***All students, including those who are behind, have extensive opportunities to encounter and comprehend grade-level text as required by the standards.*** Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards must provide extensive opportunities for all students to engage with sufficiently complex text, although some will need more scaffolding to do so. Curriculum developers and teachers have the flexibility to build progressions of more complex text within grade-level bands that overlap to a limited degree with earlier bands (e.g., grades 4–5 and grades 6–8). In addition to classroom work on texts at their own grade level, some students may need further instruction, which could include approaches such as guided reading instruction on grade-level texts, fluency practice, vocabulary building, and additional practice with texts from the previous grade band. However, this additional work should not replace extensive classroom practice with texts at or above grade level, and all intervention programs should be designed to accelerate students rapidly toward independent reading of grade-level text. Materials for students' independent reading within and outside of school should include texts at students' own reading level, but students should also be challenged to read on their own texts with complexity levels that will stretch them.

2. **Range and Quality of Texts:** The Common Core State Standards require a keen focus on informational text.

A. ***Curricula provide texts that are valuable sources of information.*** Informational texts in science, history, and technical subjects may or may not exhibit literary craft, but they should be worth reading as valuable sources of information to gain important knowledge. It is essential that the scientific and historical texts chosen for careful study be focused on such significant topics that they are worth the instructional time for students to examine them slowly and deliberately to develop a full understanding. To encourage close reading, these texts should be short enough to enable thorough examination on a regular basis. Students should also be required to assimilate larger volumes of content-area text to demonstrate college and career readiness. Discussion of extended or longer texts should span the entire text while also creating a series of questions that demonstrate how careful attention to specific passages within the text provides opportunities for close reading. Students should also be required to demonstrate that they can read larger volumes of material across sources and extract knowledge and insight.

B. ***Curricula include opportunities to combine quantitative information derived from charts, graphs, and other formats and media with information derived from text.*** An important part of building knowledge in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects is integrating information drawn from different formats and media. For example, the

Reading Standards require students to integrate the knowledge they gain from quantitative data with information they gain from words either within a single text or across several sources. For example, materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should require students to compare their own experimental results to results about which they have read and integrate information from video or other media with what they learn from text.

II. Questions and Tasks

1. **High-Quality Text-Dependent Questions and Tasks:** Among the highest priorities of the Common Core State Standards is that students be able to read closely and gain knowledge from texts.

   A. ***Curricula provide opportunities for students to gain knowledge through careful reading of a specific text or texts.*** As in the ELA Reading Standards, the large majority of the Literacy Standards for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects require that aligned curricula include high-quality questions and tasks that are text dependent. Such questions should encourage students to “read like a detective” by prompting relevant and central inquiries into the meaning of the source material that can be answered only through close attention to the text. The Literacy Standards therefore require students to demonstrate their ability to follow the details of what is explicitly stated, make valid inferences that logically follow from what is stated, and draw knowledge from the text. Materials should design opportunities for close reading of selected passages from extended or longer texts and create a series of questions that demonstrate how close attention to those passages allows students to gather evidence and knowledge from the text. This text-dependent approach can and should be applied to building knowledge from the comparison and synthesis of multiple sources in science and history. Each source must be read and understood carefully before moving to additional sources. It bears noting that science includes many nontext sources such as experiments, observations, and discourse around these scientific activities. These sources deserve an analogous ”close reading” in themselves as integrating knowledge from each careful reading of such sources generates important knowledge in science.

   B. ***All activities involving text require that students demonstrate increasing mastery of evidence drawn from text.*** The Common Core State Standards require students to become more adept at drawing evidence from the text and explaining that evidence orally and in writing. Aligned curriculum materials should include explicit models of a range of high-quality evidence-based answers to questions — samples of proficient student responses — about specific texts from each grade. Questions should require students to demonstrate that they follow the details of what is explicitly stated and are able to make nontrivial inferences beyond what is explicitly stated in the text to what logically follows from the evidence in the text.

C. ***Questions and tasks require careful comprehension of the text before asking for further connections, evaluation, and interpretation*.** The Common Core State Standards call for students to demonstrate a careful understanding of what they read before engaging their opinions, appraisals, or interpretations. Aligned materials should therefore require students to demonstrate that they have followed the details and logic of an author's argument before they are asked to evaluate the thesis or compare the thesis to others. Before students are asked to go beyond the text and apply their learning, they should demonstrate their grasp of the specific ideas and details of the text.

D. ***Scaffolds enable all students to experience the complexity of the text, rather than avoid it.*** Many students will need careful instruction — including effective scaffolding — to enable them to read at the level of text complexity required by the Common Core State Standards. However, the scaffolding should not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students or telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading the text; that is, the scaffolding should not become an alternate, simpler source of information that diminishes the need for students to read the text itself carefully. Effective scaffolding aligned with the standards should result in the reader encountering the text on its own terms, with instructions providing helpful directions that focus students on the text. Follow-up support should guide the reader when encountering places in the text where he or she might struggle. Aligned curriculum materials therefore should explicitly direct students to re-read challenging portions of the text and offer instructors clear guidance about an array of text-based scaffolds. When productive struggle with the text is exhausted, questions rather than explanations can help focus the student's attention on key phrases and statements in the text or on the organization of ideas in the paragraph.

E. **Cultivating Students' Ability To Read Complex Texts Independently:** The Common Core State Standards emphasize that college- and career-ready work must be independent. It is essential that curriculum provide opportunities for work within and outside of class to cultivate that independence. Aligned materials therefore should guide teachers to provide scaffolding and support to students but also gradually remove those supports by including tasks that require students to demonstrate their independent capacity to read and write in every domain at the appropriate level of complexity and sophistication.

III. Academic (and Domain-Specific) Vocabulary

The Common Core State Standards require a focus on academic vocabulary that is prevalent in more complex texts as well as domain-specific words**.** Academic vocabulary (described in more detail as Tier 2 words in Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards) includes those words that readers will find in all types of complex texts from different disciplines. Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should help students acquire knowledge of general academic vocabulary in addition to domain-specific words because these words will help students access a range of complex texts in diverse subject areas.

IV. Writing to Sources and Research

1. **Writing to Sources — a Key Task:** Crafting an argument frequently relies on using information; similarly, an analysis of a subject will likewise include argumentative elements. While these forms are not strictly independent, what is critical to both forms of writing is the use and integration of evidence. In historical, technical, and scientific writing, accuracy matters, and students should demonstrate their knowledge through precision and detail.

2. **Extensive Practice with Short, Focused Research Projects:** Writing Standard 7 emphasizes that students should conduct several short research projects in addition to more sustained research efforts. Materials should require several of these short research projects — typically taking roughly a week and occurring at a minimum quarterly — to enable students to repeat the research process many times and develop the expertise needed to conduct research independently. A progression of shorter research projects also encourages students to develop expertise in one area by confronting different aspects of the same topic as well as more complex texts and source materials on that topic.