

IMPROVING COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION OF LITERARY TEXTS IN AN  
ELEMENTARY-LEVEL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

by

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An executive position paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of  
Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Education in Educational Leadership

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research demonstrates that advanced learners require different instruction in addition to the regular classroom instruction to meet their academic needs. Therefore, many school districts offer enrichment programs to meet the needs of these advanced learners. With the emergence of the Common Core State Standards and new state assessments, there is a more intense focus on meeting the needs of all learners. This paper examines the reading comprehension instruction of literary texts from the enrichment program in the Hartman School District. A content analysis was conducted on the core reading programs used in the regular classroom and in the enrichment program to answer the questions: (a) Is the reading instruction in the enrichment program at Klima Elementary School aligned with the classroom teacher's reading instruction? (b) Is the reading program used in the enrichment program aligned with the Common Core State Standards? and (c) Is the reading program used in the regular education classroom aligned with the Common Core State Standards? Results revealed that there were several gaps in instruction between the enrichment program and the regular classroom reading instruction. Further, the content analysis revealed that both the enrichment reading program and the regular classroom reading program were not fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Recommendations are made for enrichment teachers to improve the reading instruction within their program to better align with the classroom reading instruction and the Common Core State Standards.

## Chapter 1

### **INTRODUCTION TO AN ENRICHMENT PROGRAM**

#### **Background**

No Child Left Behind (2001) defines gifted students as:

Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.

The majority of decisions regarding gifted education are developed at the state and local level; therefore the federal definition is considered only a guideline. For example, according to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2013), 34 states require districts to identify gifted students and 29 states require districts to provide appropriate services. Disturbingly, only a handful of states (6) mandate classroom teachers receive training in gifted education. Additionally, many states do not offer state-level criteria for identifying gifted students. Rather school districts are responsible for choosing appropriate identification measures. These may include: achievement test scores, grades, student performance, intelligence testing, and/or teacher recommendations (NAGC, 2013).

The state of Delaware defines giftedness as:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who, by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided



by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society (Title 14, Delaware Code, 1975, 1993).

According to data collected from the Delaware Department of Public Instruction (NAGC, 2013) 7,371 students were identified as gifted in Delaware public schools during the 2008-2009 academic year. Currently, the state does not mandate the identification of or the services for gifted and talented students. The state also does not require general education teachers to have training on effective instruction of gifted students. The state has recognized the need to provide additional guidance and accountability for addressing the needs of this special population. A task force has been set up to develop standards in identifying gifted and talented students and to establish a framework for the development, implementation and progress monitoring of programs for gifted and talented students.

The project described in this Executive Position Paper (EPP) examined the enrichment program in the Hartman School District. The program is designed to offer high-ability learners the opportunity to increase academic development beyond what is offered in the regular classroom. A close examination of the program's resources and teachers' instructional practices highlighted a particular need in the area of comprehension development. Specifically, this Executive Position Paper shares insight uncovered through the process as well as recommendations for enrichment teachers to strengthen comprehension instruction of literary texts.

### **Hartman School District's Enrichment Program**

The Hartman School District is located in Delaware and Klima Elementary is one of its 18 elementary schools. The district implemented enrichment services (the district's title for gifted education) as part of its 2011-2013 Strategic Plan for

Excellence under the goal of providing excellence and equity for *every* child in every classroom. These services are designed to offer enrichment and talent development in an effort to provide differentiation in programs and grouping for students who are working above grade level. As stated in Hartman's Enrichment Services Handbook (2012), the enrichment services program goals are: to provide challenging learning experiences beyond the regular curriculum, to develop and promote high level thinking and problem solving skills, and to provide opportunities for sharing and exchanging ideas in a supportive environment.

Each school within the Hartman School District has one full or part time enrichment teacher. Part time enrichment teachers are split between two schools within the district. Enrichment teachers are supervised under the administration of their building/s and by the district's Director of K-12 Services. In the three years that I have been in this position, we have had three people serve as the Director of K-12 Services. Half-day meetings are scheduled by the Director of K-12 Services intermittingly throughout the year for district enrichment teachers. These meetings are reserved for staff development on a variety of topics, including integrating technology in instruction and problem based learning. There is not time set aside for enrichment teachers to collaborate in their instructional planning. However, there is an expectation of continuity throughout the district's enrichment program evident in the Enrichment Services Handbook (2012).

The Hartman School District invites students to participate in the enrichment program based on three measures: report card grades, teacher recommendations, and student scores on the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS). DCAS is a statewide, standardized testing program tied to the Delaware content standards,

which define the knowledge and skills required for children to succeed beyond high school. DCAS is designed to help schools and districts determine whether children are making progress on meeting grade level standards and help the state learn how schools and districts are ensuring that children are meeting the standards. Each school in the Hartman School District is directed to select approximately the top 10% of the top scoring students for Grades 3-5 to participate in the enrichment program. Students may be selected for reading enrichment, math enrichment or both, depending on their DCAS scores for each subject. Just as school populations vary across states, schools within the district have differing populations. Thus, students eligible to participate in one of the district's elementary school enrichment programs may not be identified as eligible for the enrichment program in another school and vice versa.

The enrichment program is offered during the school day to engage students in skills, strategies, and content above and beyond the scope of grade level work. The program offers enrichment services in language arts, mathematics education, science and district sponsored competitions. District sponsored competitions include: University of Delaware's Stock Market Game, University of Delaware's Meaningful Economics, Numbers Bee, math league, writing contests, etc. Enrichment students are offered the opportunity to participate in these competitions in an effort to enhance and extend problem solving, collaboration and communication skills. The project described in this EPP focuses on the language arts curriculum.

It is important to note that beginning with the 2013 – 2014 school year, the Hartman School District fully adopted the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). In the past, teachers have been expected to align their instruction with the district's mandated curricula. The district provided

pacing guides for each unit from the reading program so that teachers could plan their instruction and assessments accordingly. These pacing guides left little, if any, room for teachers to instruct with supplemental materials. However, with the adoption of the CCSS, the curriculum is not fully aligned with all of the standards. Teachers must be aware of the gaps, and they must seek out additional resources to supplement when the core programs do not suffice. As classroom reading instruction is beginning to align with the CCSS, the current state assessment (DCAS) is not. Beginning next year (2014 – 2015), a new assessment (Smarter Balanced), designed to align with the CCSS, will be implemented.

### **Klima Elementary School Enrichment Program**

For the last three years I have worked as the enrichment teacher at Klima Elementary School in the Hartman School District. This program at Klima Elementary exclusively follows a pull out model. That is, my planning, instruction, and student assessing are all completed in isolation. I am the only enrichment teacher in the building, pulling students from seven different classrooms (three third grades, two fourth grades and two fifth grades).

The enrichment program at Klima Elementary School is organized in a small group setting consisting of 10-13 students for grades 3-5. During this 2013 - 2014 academic year, I work with a total of 42 students from grades 3-5, 20 boys and 22 girls. The students receive whole group language arts instruction with their homeroom teacher and are then pulled from their homeroom classes for 40-45 minutes, four days a week for language arts enrichment. Enrichment students are expected to master the assigned work from their homeroom teachers as the homeroom teachers assign report card grades. If students are unable to keep up with their regular class work, they may

be dismissed from the enrichment program. These decisions occur when students consistently show slowed academic progress on classroom reading assessments. Both the enrichment teacher and classroom teachers are impacted by the student growth and achievement of all enrichment students through the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS) evaluations. If students do not meet their “growth targets” (based on pre- and post- test scores and DCAS scores), teachers’ performance ratings decrease. Together, the teachers are held accountable for enrichment students’ academic achievement and growth.

As stated earlier, the 2013 – 2014 school year is the first year our school has fully implemented the Common Core State Standards. The focus of this shift in standards has been on using complex texts and in designing ‘close read’ activities of these texts. We meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) one time per week for 90 minutes. This time is set aside for school-wide book studies. This year, with the school-wide focus being implementation of the CCSS, we have read and discussed *The Core Six: Essential Strategies for Achieving Excellence with The Common Core* (Perini & Silver, 2013) and are in the midst of reading *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). District leaders chose these texts and every teacher in our building is required to read them.

#### Enrichment Materials

The Hartman School District’s enrichment program utilizes the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary language arts program (2011) with third through fifth graders. The district adopted this curriculum in 2009 at the request of the enrichment teachers in the district. Before that time, the enrichment

teachers followed the School-wide Enrichment Model (SEM), (Renzulli, 1976). The SEM is a model for gifted and talented instruction that works to meet the needs of all students by developing above average ability, creativity, and task commitment behaviors. Although the SEM is research-based and widely used, enrichment teachers stated they felt there was a lack of consistency and continuity throughout the district and requested a reading program. The William and Mary language arts program is a well-known enrichment curriculum used throughout enrichment and gifted programs nationally. It is designed for high-ability learners in grades 3-8 and is based on the Integrated Curriculum Model (ICM) for gifted learners (VanTassel-Baska, 1987). The ICM is a comprehensive and cohesive framework that considers the features of the disciplines under study and is differentiated for gifted learners. This model uses enrichment approaches comprised of three dimensions that are responsive to the gifted learner. The three main dimensions of this model are emphasizing advanced content knowledge; providing higher-order thinking and processing; and organizing learning experiences around major issues, themes, and ideas (VanTassel-Baska & Wood, 2010).

Enrichment opportunities in the William and Mary language arts curriculum-units focus on comprehension of literary texts using higher, advanced grade level standards, advanced graphic organizers, and higher level questioning. The teachers' edition provides curriculum-units focusing on literary text structures such as poetry, folktales, and novel units. Lessons provide teachers with teaching strategies (i.e., questions and graphic organizers) intended to teach literary text structures and to develop students' critical thinking skills. In order to satisfy the need for accelerated content, the language arts curriculum uses advanced literature selections that are one

to two years beyond grade reading level (based on the lexile ranges aligned to the CCSS) and uses advanced vocabulary. Activities in the units are organized around concepts. For example, the concept of *change* was chosen as a theme for many of the curriculum-units.

A literature search did not identify any independent research studies on the William and Mary program's efficacy. However, several studies (mentioned below) measuring the effectiveness of the William and Mary program were conducted by one or more author(s) of the program, a clear conflict of interest. The studies resulted in demonstrated effectiveness and acceptance by teachers (e.g., VanTassel-Baska, Johnson, Hughes, & Boyce, 1996; VanTassel-Baska, Zuo, Avery, & Little, 2002). For instance, findings from Van-Tassel-Baska, Queck, Bai, & O'Neill's (2005) six-year longitudinal study, which examined the effects over time of using the William and Mary language arts curriculum in a suburban school district, showed that gifted students in grades 3 to 5 improved levels in critical reading. Repeated exposure over a 2 to 3 year period demonstrated increased achievement patterns as well as teachers reporting the curriculum to be beneficial and effective.

### **Personal Experience Teaching In The Klima Elementary Enrichment Program**

I began my position as the enrichment teacher at Klima Elementary in December 2011, after the previous enrichment teacher accepted another position within the district. In the three years that I have held this position, I have worked with students from the same regular classroom teachers (3 third grade teachers, 2 fourth grade teachers and 2 fifth grade teachers). Unfortunately, my planning time during the school day coincides only with the fourth grade teachers' and that time is used for teachers to score assessments, enter data, and prepare for that day's lessons.

Therefore, very little time is spent planning or collaborating with the regular classroom teachers. When I am given the chance to communicate with teachers on teacher in-service days, that time is spent reviewing data from recent test scores.

According to homeroom teachers' report card grades and students' DCAS scores, the majority of my enrichment students are proficient in strategies to comprehend content at a literal level. However, throughout my experience as an enrichment teacher, I have observed that students require additional support with these strategies when engaged with the high quality literature with deep, thought-provoking ideas in the William and Mary program. The literature engages students in text one – two reading levels above their current grade level. Because of the high quality of literature, I have noticed enrichment students continue to need strategy instruction and the William and Mary program offers little support and guidance to the teacher in how to do so. The primary reading instructional strategy offered in the program is a graphic organizer to focus student attention on key words, feelings, ideas, images/symbols, and structure. The William and Mary program also provides questions (literary analysis, interpretation and reasoning) for discussion to support students' reading comprehension on some of the reading material; however, there are many lessons where no guiding questions are provided. For example, in the Grade 4 curriculum-unit, lesson 3 the program suggests that students read chapters 3 through 14 of *The Secret Garden* by lesson 14 (approximately 12 weeks). Then, it is suggested in Lesson 12 that students be assigned an independent project about *The Secret Garden* and write a persuasive essay about the novel. Using the curriculum teachers' guide, students are to complete the majority of the novel unit independently without support and/or class discussions.



I have struggled to find the appropriate support in teaching comprehension through the use of the recommended enrichment program. Tomlinson (2005) recommends that teachers should be vigilant so that advanced students understand and can apply what they learn, not that they are simply completing work independently. Further, teachers need to be aware of gaps in knowledge, understanding, or skill that can result from moving at an advanced pace. These gaps do not necessarily indicate that the pace of study should be slowed but instead that students receive the proper guidance and support in that instruction. There is evidence that pacing of curriculum and instruction to match the needs of students is a successful way to ensure that good curriculum and instruction is appropriately adapted to challenge highly able students (Tomlinson, 2005).

In summary, my concerns include the fact that the enrichment program lacks sufficient support for reading instruction, the enrichment program is not aligned with the classroom teacher's reading instruction, and neither the enrichment reading program nor the core basal reading program are fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards. With the newly adapted Common Core State Standards, teachers must have supplemental resources to provide appropriate instruction beyond the current reading programs. Additionally, teachers should be collaborating to align their instruction using instructional strategies that are supported by research in teaching these standards.

### **Organization of EPP**

A four-step process was followed to complete this project and the results are presented in the following chapters. Below is an overview of the EPP's organization.

**Step one.** I began this project by conducting a literature review to explore and understand the complexities associated with reading comprehension and to identify recommended research-based instructional practices to support comprehension of literary texts. Further, I wanted to explore the Common Core State Standards and how they address reading comprehension of literary texts. Finally, I wanted to explore the role of reading programs in terms of comprehension instruction in both regular education classrooms and in enrichment programs. The main sources of information for the literature review were gleaned from the following databases: Education Full Text, ERIC, and PsycINFO. Some of the publications specifically researched were: *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, and *Gifted Child Quarterly*. This literature review is presented in Chapter 2.

**Step two.** I collected and analyzed four types of data in order to clearly define the problem to be addressed in this EPP and identify an improvement goal. Below are short descriptions of the data sources. Data collection, analysis procedures, and subsequent findings are presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

***Survey of enrichment teachers.*** One data source was a survey of the district enrichment teachers' perspectives of the enrichment reading program and student achievement in their classrooms. The teachers surveyed included all enrichment teachers in the district; each teacher services a different building within the district. This information was helpful for several reasons. First, the district elementary schools service a diverse student population, requiring teachers to implement the program differently. I wanted to see how each teacher was implementing the program to help understand teachers' perspectives of the program strengths and weaknesses. Second,

since there is disconnect between district enrichment teachers (as each building has only one enrichment teacher and communication between buildings is limited), this survey information was analyzed to find where there was alignment in instructional practices and material use. When the enrichment teachers do meet, many have voiced concerns over the lack of suggested instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension through the district approved reading program. Finally, examining teachers' perspectives of the enrichment reading program shed light on the benefits and challenges of implementing it in different district schools.

***Survey of classroom teachers.*** A second data source was a survey of the regular classroom teachers' understandings of comprehension instruction in their classroom. These teachers are grades 3 – 5 classroom teachers from Klima Elementary School. These data were useful because they provided an overview of the classroom teachers' approaches to whole class reading instruction, including what examples of materials, techniques and activities they utilized. This is important since my enrichment students spend their whole group reading time with their classroom teachers.

***Analysis of the core reading program.*** The third type of data collected was an analysis of the core reading program. Specifically, I examined the program's alignment to the Common Core State Standards in reading comprehension of literary text. These data were useful in illuminating the strategies the enrichment students were taught in their regular classroom reading instruction as well as which standards were addressed.

***Analysis of the enrichment program.*** The fourth data source was an analysis of the enrichment program. I followed the same procedure from the analysis of the

core reading program in examining the program's alignment to the Common Core State Standards in reading comprehension. These data were useful in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of this program as it relates to the Common Core State Standards. Also, these data were compared to the data from the analysis of the core reading program to distinguish strengths and or weaknesses from both programs.

***Overview of findings.*** The findings from these data uncovered gaps between comprehension instruction of literary texts implemented in the regular classroom and comprehension instruction of literary texts implemented in the enrichment program. Further, the content analyses revealed gaps between both reading programs and the Common Core State Standards. These gaps indicated enrichment students are not receiving sufficient comprehension instruction in certain Common Core State Standards related to literary texts and enrichment students' reading instruction is not aligned with the reading instruction of their homeroom classes.

**Step three.** Once I identified the two problems stated above, I used my understanding of the data, relevant literature, and my own professional experience as an enrichment teacher to design a tool kit for enrichment teachers. The purpose was to provide enrichment teachers with recommendations that could strengthen their comprehension instruction of literary texts. The tool kit includes information such as:

- definitions of key reading terms
- books with lexile levels
- competitions for advanced learners
- communication logs to share information between classroom and enrichment teachers

- websites for meeting the CCSS
- descriptions of research-based discussion frameworks

Additionally, the tool kit includes a model lesson illustrating how to engage students in using multiple strategies through reciprocal teaching, a research-based discussion framework (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). An overview of the tool kit is its entirety is described in Chapter 5 and presented in the Appendices.

**Step four.** The last step of this EPP was reflecting upon the project and what I learned from this process. Through this process, I uncovered several limitations of our current enrichment program. I also discovered there was little or no alignment between the classroom teachers' and enrichment teachers' instruction of reading comprehension. Furthermore, I realized a large disconnect between research and practice within reading comprehension instruction. Finally, I was able to reflect on my own teaching and instructional practices. Through this, I am able to improve on my own instruction, as well as the instruction of my colleagues. These reflections are presented in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 2

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To help refine my problem statement and formulate possible solutions, I conducted a literature review of related research. Specifically, I examined literature to explore and understand the complexities associated with reading comprehension and to identify recommended research-based instructional practices to support comprehension of literary texts. Further, I wanted to explore the Common Core State Standards and how they address reading comprehension of literary texts. Finally, I wanted to explore the role of reading programs in terms of comprehension instruction in both regular education classrooms and in enrichment programs.

The main sources of information for the literature review were gleaned from the following databases: Education Full Text, ERIC, and PsycINFO. Some of the publications specifically researched were: *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, and *Gifted Child Quarterly*.

#### **The Complexity of Reading Comprehension**

Educators and researchers have realized the relationship between improved reading comprehension and overall school achievement for many years (Anderson, et al, 1988; Chall & Conard, 1991). However, according to data from the 2007 administration of the NAEP, only 25% of fourth graders are “able to demonstrate a strong understanding of the text... to extend the ideas in the text by making inferences,

drawing conclusions, and making connections to their own experiences,” and just 8% were able to “judge texts critically... and explain their judgments... make generalizations about the point of a story and extend its meaning by integrating personal experiences and other readings” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2007, p.24). In response, many educators are now attending to critical literacy, literacy that goes beyond the simple decoding of text or basic determination of meaning (Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, & Alexander, 2009). However, before we can look into *what* to teach for reading comprehension, we must first understand *how* reading comprehension is developed.

Despite nearly 50 years of researchers theorizing about reading, there is not a unified theory. Researchers and psychologists have developed several theoretical underpinnings that describe differing perspectives in developing reading comprehension. For example, cognitive psychologists examine thinking, knowledge, and metacognition to frame their perspectives. They believe that students need to be active learners, orchestrating many strategies in order to construct and make meaning of the text. This view of reading comprehension emphasizes the knowledge students bring to the text while reading and the strategies students use to make meaning (Dole et al., 1991). Examples are schema theory (Anderson, 1984), and the discourse comprehension theory now termed construction-integration theory (Kintsch 2004).

Sociocultural theorists argue that reading is a function of the activity, context, and culture. Given a sociocultural perspective, focus shifts from individual cognition to cultural norms. Sociocultural researchers contend that outsider perspectives construct literacy differently from insider perspectives. Together, the cognitive and sociocultural theories have influenced sociocognitive theories of learning and

development (Vygotsky, 1986), where learning is thought to be a cognitive process embedded in social contexts, and both social and cognitive factors influence the outcomes of learning processes (Wilkinson & Anderson, 1995). These theories have greatly influenced and impacted classroom practices and reading research. They will be discussed further as they relate to the research and instruction described in this paper.

### **Research In Developing Reading Comprehension**

In 1997, the National Reading Panel (NRP) was formed in an attempt to assess the effectiveness of different approaches used to teach children to read. In April 2000, the panel issued its report “Teaching Children to Read,” which summarized research in areas relating to literacy instruction, including text comprehension instruction. They defined comprehension as an active process that requires thoughtful and purposeful interaction between the reader and the text, a cognitive theoretical perspective. Readers are able to make meaning from text when they engage in intentional, problem solving thinking processes. Text comprehension is enhanced when readers actively relate the ideas represented in print to their own knowledge and experiences and construct mental representations in memory (NRP, 2000).

In fall 1999, the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) asked RAND to examine how OERI could improve the quality and relevance of education research. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decision-making through research and analysis. The RAND Reading Study Group (RRSG) was charged with developing a research framework to address the most pressing issues in literacy. One focus of the RRSG was reading comprehension instruction: How can we best promote the



development of proficient reading and prevent reading comprehension difficulties?

The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) defined comprehension as:

The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading. The RRSg developed a heuristic to show how these elements interrelate in reading comprehension, an interrelationship that occurs within a larger sociocultural context that shapes and is shaped by the reader and that interacts with each of the elements iteratively throughout the process of reading (p xiii).

Figure 1 (below) is a representation of this process.

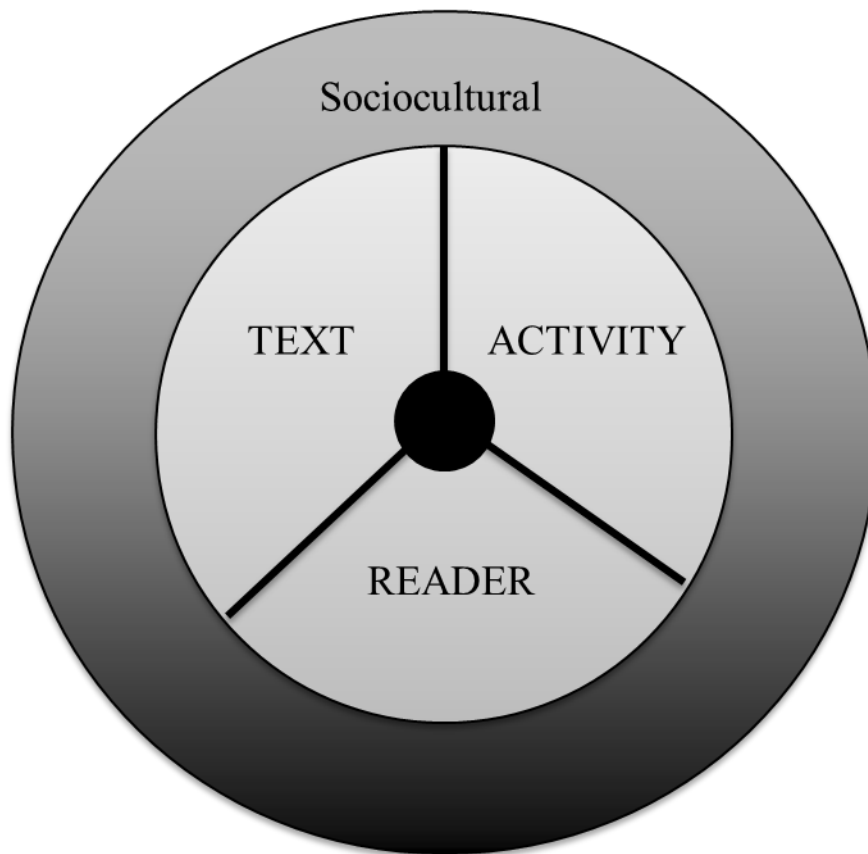


Figure 1 A Heuristic for Thinking About Reading Comprehension

## The Reader

In discussing the role of the reader, the report goes on to say:

The reader brings to the act of reading his or her cognitive capacities (attention, memory, critical analytic ability, inferencing, and visualization), motivation (a purpose for reading, interest in the content, self-efficacy as a reader), knowledge (vocabulary, domain, and topic knowledge, linguistic and discourse knowledge, knowledge of comprehension strategies), and experiences. (p. x-xii)

These attributes vary among readers and vary even within an individual reader depending on the text and the activity. As shown in figure 1 (above), the three elements of reading comprehension are interrelated. Also, a sociocultural context shapes the reader and interacts with all of the elements (reader, text and activity) of reading comprehension. However, when considering the reader's attention, memory, critical analytic ability, inferencing and visualization, a cognitive perspective should be taken. This supports the theoretical perspective of sociocognitive theorists in that both the reader's mental capacity and their surroundings contribute to their reading comprehension abilities.

Additionally, when considering the aspect of the reader in reading comprehension, it is important to remember that reading comprehension is a growth construct, meaning a reader can never really master it (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008). In contrast, a mastery construct (such as alphabet knowledge) can be mastered. However, we can always become better at a growth construct; another indication of what makes understanding reading comprehension development so complex.

## The Text.

The text itself has a large impact on comprehension. Several factors can influence a text's difficulty, including: vocabulary, sentence structure, pictures (or lack

of), concepts, organization, and structure. An added dimension of difficulty is added when considering the reader. The reader constructs various representations of the text that are important for comprehension. These representations include the exact wording of the text, ideas representing the meaning of the text, and the way information is processed for meaning (Fox, 2009).

Genres of texts can vary from narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive. However, this may not encompass all texts in today's society, as there are a wide variety of content, reading levels and genres, including multimedia and electronic options available. The number of reading choices along with text features can make it difficult for teachers to select appropriate texts for individual readers. Another added difficulty in text selection is the expectation in the newly adopted Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010) for all students to be engaged in "complex works of literature" (English Language Arts, 2012, p.1). This comes after a number of years where teachers were told to only instruct students at their instructional level (Betts, 1946).

#### The Activity.

Reading is done for a purpose, in which students are involved in an activity to achieve an end result. A reading activity involves one or more purposes, cognitive operations to process the text, and the outcomes of the activity. The outcomes of reading are part of the activity. They can include an increase in knowledge, a solution to a problem, or engagement with the text. However, the initial purpose for the activity can change as the reader reads and is influenced by motivation (interest, prior knowledge). That is, a reader may encounter information that raises new questions and makes the original purpose irrelevant. If students fail to see the activity as

relevant, they may not fully comprehend the text. Teachers must carefully choose research-based instructional approaches that resonate with their students.

### The Reader, the Text, and the Activity.

These three elements come together within a larger sociocultural context (see Figure 1) that shapes and is shaped by the reader and their interactions with each of the three elements. The cognitive abilities of readers, the texts that are available and valued in their environment and the activities in which readers are engaged with those texts are all influenced by the sociocultural context. The sociocultural context influences students' experiences, just as students' experiences influence the context. Reader, text, and activity are interrelated in ways that vary across pre-reading, reading, and post-reading. The process of comprehension changes as the reader develops cognitively, increasing experience with more challenging texts, and benefitting from instruction.

Understanding how children learn, particularly how they read and make meaning of the text, influences the theoretical frameworks that teachers use when planning instruction. Teachers must use the underpinnings of these instructional theoretical frameworks to guide their research-based approaches to teach reading. Researchers have developed several instructional approaches that are recommended to increase students' comprehension.

### Recommended Instructional Approaches

RAND and NRP both found that when readers are given cognitive strategy instruction, they make significant gains on measures of reading comprehension (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000). Eight

categories of instruction have a firm scientific basis for concluding that they improve comprehension in normal readers. These strategies are comprehension monitoring (where readers learn how to be aware of their understanding of the material), cooperative learning (where students learn reading strategies together), graphic and semantic organizers including story maps (where readers make graphic representations of the material to assist comprehension), question answering (where readers answer questions posed by the teacher and receive immediate feedback), question generation (where readers ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story), story structure (where students are taught to use the structure of the story as a means of helping them recall story content in order to answer questions about what they have read) and summarization (where readers are taught to integrate ideas and generalize from the text information). In addition, many of these strategies have also been effectively used in the category “multiple strategies,” where strategies are used in combination as readers and teachers interact over texts (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

Instruction can and should be effective in providing students with appropriate strategies that promote comprehension monitoring and foster comprehension. Research has identified several practices that can facilitate comprehension, including providing students with essential background knowledge, key concepts, and vocabulary (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). An important goal of comprehension instruction is to help students learn how to become self-regulated, active readers who use a variety of strategies for comprehension. These comprehension strategies should be procedures that readers themselves apply across a number of different texts (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000). Meaning must be

actively constructed; therefore, students must monitor their understanding and apply strategic effort. We know that students who are good at comprehending read for a purpose and actively monitor whether that purpose is being met (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). For example, teachers may build prerequisite background knowledge or present students with key concepts and vocabulary critical to an upcoming text. Also, teachers may teach students to activate their own background knowledge, to draw inferences as they read, or to restate information in the text. Activities such as story structures or graphic organizers should be used to provide scaffolding for improved comprehension of a selected text (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

It has been recognized that as readers develop, they should be exposed to a variety of genres and content that create challenges for readers (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Any reader can be considered high-need depending on how challenging the text is (i.e., the text is poorly written, dense, or contains a number of unfamiliar ideas) or depending on the way the reader is asked to respond to his or her understanding of the text (e.g., recall, reasoning, application, or evaluation). Since the text may be difficult for students, teachers should use various instructional strategies and techniques that support reading. Teachers should teach comprehension explicitly and formally as this type of instruction has been shown to be highly effective in enhancing understanding (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

As described earlier, the NRP evidence suggests that teaching such reading strategies as questioning, summarizing, comprehension monitoring, and using graphic organizers facilitates reading comprehension. For example, effective teachers ask

high-level comprehension questions that require students to make inferences and to think beyond the text. Also, effective teachers help readers make connections between texts they read and their personal lives and experiences. They use small-group instruction to meet the individual needs of their readers and provide their readers with practice reading materials at their appropriate reading level (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

By fifth or sixth grade, comprehension monitoring and effective use of other comprehension strategies are strong predictors of reading comprehension (Wilson & Rupley, 1997). A study carried out by Cain, Oahill, and Bryant (2004) examined the relationship of reading comprehension and the ability to make inferences, knowledge of story structure, and comprehension monitoring. They observed positive relationships between reading comprehension and each of these abilities with third grade students. Cain et al.'s (2004) study also focused on the later elementary grades, where findings showed that the ability to make inferences, knowledge of story structure, and comprehension monitoring all predicted an increase in reading comprehension. Similarly, Paris and Jacobs (1984) found that 8- and 10- year olds who reported students' awareness of previewing and rereading strategies correlated with better results on tests of reading comprehension.

#### Discussion-Based Instructional Approaches.

According to Alvermann & Guthrie (1993), social interactions are vital for reading development. Considerable evidence exists in that conducting classroom discussions to include specific features can improve students' comprehension skills. The list of discussion features that has been shown to promote comprehension includes: establishing a purpose for reading, activating relevant background

knowledge, posing open-ended questions that require deep processing, responding to student initiatives and promoting peer interaction (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). The theoretical rationales sought to explain the role of discussion in promoting students' reading comprehension originate largely from sociocognitive and sociocultural theory.

Applebee, et al. (2003) conducted a study to analyze the relationship between discussion-based approaches to challenging academic work in a diverse set of classrooms. They hypothesized that an emphasis on discussion-based approaches, coupled with high academic demands, is positively related to literacy performance. Their measures of discussion-based activities focused not on specific techniques, but on the presence and extent of discussion and related activities used in these classrooms. They found that discussion-based approaches were significantly related to performance across a range of situations, for students of varying academic ability, grade levels, and race/ethnicity. All approaches relied on the sociocognitive theories of reading. The approaches that contributed most to student performance were those that used discussion to develop comprehensive understanding, encourage exploration and interpret multiple perspectives rather than focusing on correct interpretations and conclusions. The positive results obtained suggest that the scaffolding or support for developing ideas during these types of open discussions is a powerful tool for student learning. This conclusion parallels one for the NRP review of comprehension instruction which found strength in approaches that involved multiple strategy use within the natural flow of classroom discussion of difficult texts.

Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) is a research-based strategy grounded in the principles of sociocognitive theories. In Reciprocal Teaching,



students discuss literature around four comprehension strategies: prediction, clarification, summarization, and questioning. Originally designed with seventh graders, reciprocal teaching has shown to be an effective teaching practice in a variety of settings, by several researchers (Alfassi, 2004; Marks et al., 1993; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). Palincsar & Brown (1984) used reciprocal teaching in two studies of seventh grade students, comparing reciprocal teaching practices with those of typical classroom practices. Reciprocal teaching led to significant improvement in the quality of summaries, questions and overall comprehension. In another study, Marks et al. (1993), found the reciprocal teaching framework successful in increasing students' comprehension and motivation at three different grade levels: grade 1, middle school and high school. Although the researchers and teachers in this study modified some elements of the original reciprocal teaching model (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), they used the same four strategies and incorporated peer-led reading groups. Further, Alfassi (2004) carried out a comparative study of reciprocal teaching and traditional literacy instruction with typical high school freshman students. Results revealed a significant difference for the reciprocal teaching groups on reading assessments and standardized tests.

Another instructional discussion strategy, similar to Reciprocal Teaching, is Transactional Strategy Instruction (TSI) developed by Pressely, et al. (1992). TSI is a research-based instructional process that teaches students to use multiple comprehension strategies flexibly and interactively through gradual release of responsibility, cooperative learning, and extensive interaction. This approach is consistent with the sociocognitive theory of reading development. Brown, et al.

(1996) conducted a quasi-experiment with second-grade, low-achieving students using either TSI or more conventional second-grade reading instruction. They found clear evidence of greater strategy awareness and strategy use, greater content knowledge of material read, and higher results on standardized reading tests by the TSI students. Other TSI studies showed greater gains on comprehension subtests (Anderson, 1992) and significant improvement from pre- to post-test on a standardized comprehension test (Collins, 1991).

Murphy et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis examining the effects of classroom discussion on measures of teacher and student talk and on student comprehension and critical thinking. To qualify for their review of research, an approach to discussion had to be research based and show consistency of application. The approaches identified were Collaborative Reasoning (CR; Anderson, Chinn, Waggoner, & Nguyen, 1998), Paideia Seminar (PS; Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002), Philosophy for Children (PfC; Sharp, 1995), Instructional Conversations (IC; Goldenberg, 1993), Junior Great Books Shared Inquiry (JGB; Great Books Foundation, 1987), Questioning the Author, (QtA; Beck & McKeown, 1996), Book Club (BC; Raphael & McMahon, 1994), Grand Conversations (GC; Eeds & Wells, 1989), and Literature Circles (LC; Short & Pierce, 1990). The purpose of their meta-analysis was to examine the effects of those nine discussion approaches on students' comprehension of text. Results revealed that several discussion approaches showed an increase in the amount of student talk and decrease in teacher talk, as well as improvement in text comprehension. Many of the approaches were effective at promoting students' comprehension (i.e., QtA, IC, and JGB), while some of the approaches were effective at promoting students' critical thinking, reasoning, and

argumentation (i.e., CR, QtA, JGB), in multiple-group design studies. Teacher-talk decreased for most of the approaches (the exception was QtA). Their meta-analysis revealed that not all of the classroom discussion approaches have the same effects.

From their meta-analysis, Murphy, et al (2009) found few approaches to be effective at increasing critical thinking and reasoning about text; however, discussion seemed to play an important role in text-based comprehension. The researchers concluded that discussion is a means and not an end. They suggest that teachers pay careful attention to the goals of an approach in influencing student comprehension to ensure that students' engagement translates into significant learning. Just assigning students into groups and encouraging them to talk is not enough to enhance comprehension and learning.

Sandora, et al. (1999) compared two discussion strategies on students' interpretation and comprehension of complex literature. The Great Books approach (Great Books Foundation, 1987), which involves discussion after students have read a selection, was compared to Questioning the Author (Beck et al., 1996), which involves students discussing a selection during the course of reading it. In their study, students read and discussed four selections, with one group of students using the Questioning the Author approach, and the other group using the Great Books approach. After reading, students were asked to give a recall of the story and to respond to several open-ended questions. Means for scores on both the recalls and the responses to the open-ended questions were higher for the students who participated in the Questioning the Author discussions than the students who participated in the Great Books discussions. Their analysis revealed students in the Questioning the Author discussion provided longer recalls, which included more of the story elements than students in the

Great Book discussions. The results of this study show that student discussion can facilitate students' comprehension and interpretation of complex literature.

Another relevant discussion feature is that of Collaborative Reasoning (Anderson et al., 1998). Collaborative Reasoning promotes argumentation by introducing engaging topics, questions or dilemmas based on stories read. The discussions take place in peer groups, guided by teachers in prompting students to state their positions clearly, challenging students with counterarguments, summing up good student arguments, and modeling good reasoning processes. The authors took a sociocognitive perspective on small-group lessons where the social context influenced individual talking, thinking, and learning. Research shows that there are positive effects of student participation when student discussion includes complex reasoning and collaborative reasoning procedures (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001).

Resnick & Hampton (2009) found that literature circles, a well-documented instructional discussion strategy (Daniels, 2002; Short & Pierce, 1990), creates opportunities to discuss books as they emphasize rich student discourse and provide tools for teachers to help students maintain productive discussion. Daniels (2002) promoted the use of four basic student roles; however, some have found assigning roles stilted discussions and prevented a genuine give-and-take of ideas (Lloyd, 2004; Babbitt, 1996). Daniels (2002) concurred that, "in some classrooms, the roles did become a hindrance, a drain" (p. 13) and concluded that the role structure could undermine the goal of student directed discussions. Yet he defended the roles as at least a temporary support to get the discussions started.

Research supports the claim that when students have extended time for engaged conversations about texts, they are likely to better comprehend what they

read, and to build upon their comprehension skills (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999; Stein & Beed, 2004). These discussion formats give students opportunities for rich discussion. Evidence shows these practices support and strengthen student literacy in struggling readers (Marshall, 2006).

#### The Role of Motivation and Interest in Comprehension.

In order for students to be effective at comprehension, they must have motivation, self-efficacy, and ownership in their strategies and purposes for reading (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). An important aspect of strategy development is enabling students to become self-initiating; students who independently apply an effective strategy will improve their comprehension (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

Students' motivation to read and comprehend text increases when teachers give students choices, challenging tasks, and collaborative learning structures. For students from grade 1 to grade 12, classroom activities that enable and encourage them to take responsibility for their reading increase their reading achievement (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Turner (1995) found, through extensive observations of classroom instruction for primary students, that when teachers provide challenging passages for reading, students exert effort and persistence. Also, when students have a limited, but meaningful, choice about the learning activity, such as which part of a text to read, they invest greater energy in learning than when the tasks are always prescribed by the teacher (Turner, 1995). Similarly, Reeve, Bolt, & Cai (1999) found, through quasi-experimental studies, that teachers who provide meaningful choices and independence increase students' effort and motivation to read. Students become more active learners when teachers provide high interest topics and texts and choice in

activities and strategies for learning, all of which leads to high comprehension (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

Another important influence on students' reading comprehension development is interest in reading (Duke & Carlisle, 2011). In a national survey, McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) found that students' interest overall in all reading largely dropped off across the elementary years, including modest declines among the high ability readers. The overall negative trend in reading attitude can be explained, in part, by poor reading ability in the upper grades; however, the study also suggests that reading experiences affect students' attitude about reading.

Guthrie, et al. (2007) found allowing students' choice of reading material and research topics promotes interest and motivation in reading, which then promotes students' reading comprehension. They investigated reading motivation and comprehension in the later elementary years through pre- and post- interview data, motivation self-reports and reading comprehension scores. From student responses to interviews, they found collaboration as a motivation included (a) sharing or talking about books with friends or family, (b) reading together with friends or family, (c) borrowing books from friends or family, (d) talking about books with peers in class, (e) sharing writing about books with others, (f) talking with the teacher about reading, and (g) expressing enjoyment of reading books recommended by others. Some students also expressed positive feelings regarding collaborating with others on reading or sharing books with others. The most collaborative students read daily with their parents and friends, usually outside of school. Evidence suggests that discussions about and around text have the potential to increase student comprehension, meta-

cognition, critical thinking, and reasoning, as well as students' ability to state and support arguments (Guthrie et al., 2007; Reznitskaya et al., 2001).

As discussed, motivation is an important component of reading comprehension in the later elementary grades. In several studies (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), collaboration and social interaction during reading was seen as motivation. Similar to findings in Brown's (1997) investigations, students enjoy participating in group activities for reading, work effectively with others on reading tasks, and enjoy talking about reactions to books. These collaborations are associated with students' reading grades (Sweet et al., 1998) and test scores (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). This perspective proposes that when children are motivated to read, they are more likely to be engaged in reading and, therefore, comprehend better. Wang & Guthrie (2004) investigated whether reading motivation and reading comprehension relate to each other, and whether growth in one of these areas predicts growth in the other. Findings indicate the correlation of reading motivation and reading achievement is well established for students in the later elementary grades.

### **Common Core State Standards Initiative**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed by The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) together with representatives from participating states, a wide range of educators, content experts, researchers, national organizations, and community groups. The final standards also include feedback from the general public, teachers, parents, business leaders, states, and content area experts and are informed by the standards of other high performing nations (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

The college- and career-readiness standards have been incorporated into the Common Core's K-12 standards. The authors of the CCSS claim that the criteria that was used to develop the college- and career-readiness standards, as well as the CCSS standards are: aligned with college and work expectations; include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills; build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards; and, evidence and/or research-based (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

The Common Core State Standards for Language Arts and Literacy are explicit in their focus on what students are to learn, and not on how that content is to be taught. They are grade specific and are intended to influence each school's current curricula. They are designed to provide a common framework for instruction; however, they are not designed to tell teachers *how* to teach those standards. Teachers are expected to use their professional judgment and experience to develop lesson plans and tailor instruction to their individual students. For example, a fourth grade English Language Arts standard (RL.4.1) states, "refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text." (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 5). The standard does not direct districts or teachers how to meet that standard. Because the current curricula are not yet aligned with the CCSS, teachers must be aware of the gaps and they must seek out additional resources to supplement when the core programs do not suffice.

The standards increase the complexity of what students must be able to read; they require the progressive development of reading comprehension so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from what they read. Through reading diverse literature as well as challenging informational texts in all subjects,



students are expected to build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden perspectives. Since the standards are intended to be the foundation for successful classrooms, they were written with the recognition that teachers, school districts and states need to decide on appropriate curricula used to meet the standards. The standards do mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, U.S. documents, American literature, and Shakespeare. The standards leave additional decisions about what and how to teach to states, districts, and schools (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

Porter, McMacken, Hwang, & Yang (2011) compared the CCSS with current state standards and assessments as well as with reports from a sample of teachers from across the country describing their own practices in an effort to determine how much change these new standards represent and the nature of that change. The authors conducted an analysis of the types of content in the CCSS and in each state's existing standards through an intersection of topics (vocabulary, reading comprehension, reading fluency, etc.) and cognitive demands (memorize, generate, analyze, evaluate, etc.). Their purpose in comparing the CCSS and existing state standards was to describe how they are alike and how they are different to determine the amount of change that lies ahead for states adopting the Common Core.

In aligning the Common Core Reading Standards to the state of Delaware's existing standards, there is a .15 alignment in grade 4, well below the mean alignment score. This alignment index assessed the extent in which the two documents (the CCSS and each state's existing standards) had the same content message. In comparison, the state of Ohio's alignment was more than double (.37) than that of the

state of Delaware for grade 4. These alignments indicate the amount of change the CCSS represents for each state's content standards.

The authors (Porter et al., 2011) found that the CCSS puts greater emphasis on “analyze,” where the states put greater emphasis on “perform procedures” and “generate,” revealing a shift toward greater emphasis on higher order cognitive demand. Porter, et al. (2011) suggests that the CCSS represents a change for the better from existing state standards if we are to move toward a greater emphasis on higher order cognitive demand.

Porter, et al. (2011) found that the CCSS represent considerable change from what the current states' standards call for and in what they assess. Further, the authors report that the CCSS are considerably different from what current U.S. teachers report they are teaching. Existing materials, curriculum, and standards are far from aligned to the CCSS; adoption of the CCSS will require considerable change, especially at specific grade levels but even across ranges of grade levels (Porter et al., 2011).

Beach (2011) found the lack of alignment (using the mean alignment score of all states) between the states standards' focus on expository writing and the CCSS focus on argumentative writing represents one of many areas that will require major curriculum changes over the next few years, especially considering teachers' current familiarity with their state standards. Although this speaks to writing instead of reading, it is relevant to this topic because it exemplifies a lack of alignment. Unfortunately, if teachers do not receive the resources and professional development support for making this transition, the proper implementation of these new standards will be sacrificed.

As the standards are just being implemented, we do not yet know if the CCSS will actually result in changes in classroom instruction. There is considerable value for further alignment research on classroom implementation, especially on how teachers are translating the CCSS into practice (Beach, 2011).

### Common Core State Standards and Assessment

Porter et al.'s (2011) finding of lack of alignment between CCSS and state standards has major implications for the development of common formative and summative assessments. Two consortia, the Smarter Balanced Consortium (Smarter Balanced) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), are currently developing comprehensive, technology-based assessment systems to measure students' achievement of the CCSS (Center for K-12 Assessment & Performance Management, 2010). The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing (CRESST) reported on the status of Smarter Balanced and PARCC Assessment Consortia, indicating that the assessments will represent many goals for deeper learning. Students will need to use cognitive strategies proficiently related to complex thinking, communication, and problem solving (Herman & Linn, 2013). Since these assessments are based directly on the CCSS, a strong alignment between the CCSS and these assessments is presumed. However, there could be issues of alignment between these assessments and teachers' curriculum, instruction and evaluation methods (Beach, 2011).

### **Role and Evaluation of Reading Programs in Terms of Comprehension Instruction**

Several things should be in place at a school in order for students to achieve proficiency in reading, including instructional materials (i.e., reading programs) that

are consistent with the standards on reading instruction. When a solid reading program is implemented through effective instruction, valid and reliable assessments, and high-quality professional development, students have a better opportunity to learn to read. Effective instructional tools for teachers are an important step to improving students' reading achievement (Kusanovich et al., 2008).

The teachers' manual from core basal reading programs provides teachers with guidelines for the comprehension skills and strategies to be presented in specific grade levels. Additionally, core basal reading programs often serve as the primary reading program for schools. The expectation is that teachers in the primary grades will use the core programs as the base of instruction (Simmons & Kame'enui, 2003). Basal reading programs include a scope and sequence as an organizational system of skills and strategies for each grade level. Various skills and strategies are taught through a series of stories and activities. These programs make up the reading approach found in 80% of elementary classrooms (Simmons & Kame'enui, 2003). In a landmark study, Chall (1967) studied the differences between two basal reading programs in the areas of story content, instruction, practice of new words, background preparation, and teacher presentation. She concluded that core basal reading programs provide an important means of instruction for children learning to read.

Several studies challenge the effect of using core basal reading programs with all learners. For example, Aldrich and McKim (1992) and Aldrich (1996) found that all of the basal texts lacked in sufficient challenge for gifted learners. Their data showed that even the best students' achievement was lower than it was 20 years ago. The National Assessment of Educational progress (NAEP, 1999) pointed to similar declines in students at all levels. The groups' report also highlights practices within

classrooms such as the use and reliance of workbooks and skill-sheet assignments, the infrequency with which students are asked to examine their understanding of reading by writing or discussion, and the prevalent use of a single basal text for a whole class. These findings held true for all classes, including those of high ability students.

Durkin (1981) conducted an examination of teacher's manuals from five core basal reading programs, kindergarten through sixth grade. In four of the five programs, questioning was the predominant instructional method used to teach comprehension. The other program's main instructional methods included modeling and providing practice. Core basal reading programs provided teachers with a scope and sequence indicating when to teach specific skills and strategies. These programs also provided the teacher with lesson plans in the general components of reading, specifically comprehension strategy instruction.

Afflerbach and Walker (1992) conducted an analysis of three commercial reading series to examine the relationship between main idea instruction and reading comprehension theory. Their analysis revealed that commercial reading programs did not include explicit main idea strategy instruction. Instructional activities in two of the three programs did not progress from less advanced to more advanced tasks. They required students to "construct" the main idea without explicit instruction or guided practice. Also, findings showed that the programs did not prompt students to monitor their strategy use and regulate their thinking as they constructed main ideas from texts. In summary, the results of Afflerbach and Walker's (1992) analysis indicated that there were "significant differences between instructional practices suggested by instructional research and main idea strategy instruction" (p. 25).

In another program study with a focus on main idea instructional practices, Jitendra, Chard, Hoppes, Renouf, & Gardill (2001) evaluated four commercial reading programs at the second, fourth, and sixth grade levels. The purpose of the Jitendra et al. (2001) study was to evaluate strategy instruction on identifying the main ideas in texts in four widely used commercial reading programs. The four programs reviewed included explicit instruction of strategies for identifying the main idea of a reading selection; however, it was found that less than half of the lesson objectives could be identified in the teacher's edition of the texts. Additionally, none of the programs reviewed provided the teacher with a method to correct errors during main idea instruction, instead using a reactive approach to student difficulties. Few lessons across grade levels and across programs prioritized main idea instruction despite research that states students benefit from multiple opportunities of instruction of main idea. Further, not one of the reviewed programs followed an instructional sequence where students first learned how to identify a main idea for a passage and later progressed to the more difficult task of constructing the main idea of a passage.

The authors (Jitendra et al., 2001) suggest that findings indicate a need to address the quality of instruction in other reading programs to successfully teach main idea analysis as an important comprehension strategy. This study illustrates the discrepancies between research findings on main idea instruction and main idea instructional practices recommended by commercial reading programs. Results of this study show the need for teachers to consider the research literature on main idea instruction when selecting textbooks for classroom instruction as well as when designing lessons focusing on main idea.

Most relevant to this EPP, Dewitz, Jones & Leahy (2009) conducted a curriculum analysis of comprehension instruction in the five most widely used core reading programs. The recommended comprehension instruction in grades 3, 4, and 5 was examined to answer four questions: (1) What skills and strategies are recommended to be taught? (2) How are these skills and strategies recommended to be taught? (3) What instructional designs do the programs employ? And (4) how do the spacing and timing of comprehension skills and strategy instruction in core programs compare with how these skills were taught in original research studies?

The first concern in their analysis was the amount of content included in comprehension instruction. The curricula in core reading programs cover more skills and strategies than are recommended in the research literature (NRP, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Walsh, 2003), with the number of skills and strategies varying from 18 to 29 per program per year. The National Reading Panel (2000) recommends seven strategies plus multiple-strategy instruction. Additionally, Dewitz et al. (2009) found that core programs do not clarify between what is a comprehension skill and what is a strategy. The programs do not acknowledge when students are acquiring a new strategy that needs deliberate and thoughtful use and when a strategy has become an automatic skill (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2003).

There is more direct explanation of comprehension skills and strategies than found in the past; however, that instruction still lacks in explicitness. The most frequently missing parts of direct instruction are a focus on the thinking process that underlies a strategy and knowledge, stressing when and why a skill or strategy is important. All of the programs included modeling of skills and strategies by teachers, but very rarely are students asked to use the skills and strategies themselves. Also

missing in most programs was that of guided practice; students are not guided to acquire and try out the strategies. Independent practice was found to be limited to less than 10% of the instructional time. Further, the core programs still need to find ways to help students interact with texts in ways that go beyond questioning. None of the programs suggest the reciprocal teaching practices promoted by Palincsar and Brown (1984) or Brown, Pressley, Van Maeter & Schuder (1996).

Additionally, it was found that none of the programs cover comprehension skills and strategies with the intensity used by the original researchers. In most cases, students received far fewer instructional lessons than researchers used to originally validate strategy instruction for narrative structure, making inferences, or summarizing. The claim that these core programs are research-based is based more on the teaching of the same skills and strategies found in the research than on the use of the instructional methods or the intensity of instruction (Dewitz et al., 2009)

The results of the authors' analysis revealed that core reading programs recommend teaching many more skills and strategies than the researchers recommend which may result in diluting the emphasis on critical skills and strategies. In addition, the comprehension strategy instruction does not include the explicit instruction recommended in many research studies. Further, the disconnected structure of the curriculum leaves students and teachers unsure of how skills and strategies relate to one another or how acquiring these skills can lead to becoming a better reader. Core programs should be a resource for teachers *and* students (McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic, & Zeig, 2006), helping both understand how readers develop. Finally, Dewitz et al. (2009) found that core programs do not provide sufficient support or scaffolding so that students can move to independent use of these skills. Too often the



instructional lessons leave out guided practice, moving straight from teach to question or assess.

#### Program Fidelity.

Shelton (2010) examined the impact of mandated instruction and fidelity to a scripted reading program in two third-grade classrooms. An analysis of the teaching of reading in the classrooms revealed that there was a strong degree of fidelity to the program; yet there was limited instruction. Fidelity to the program resulted in what the program recommended- presentation of information, round-robin oral reading of text passages, and completion of comprehension tasks. The scripted questions in the program guided the factual recall of the texts, but did not personalize the learning for students. The students in the classrooms studied were asked literal, scripted questions that rarely elicited personal interpretation or connections. The teachers did not ask additional questions or engage in conversations with individual or groups of students. There was also little or no evidence that students enjoyed reading; they did not engage in book or story discussions, and made no personal connections to reading.

Findings suggest the need for reconsideration of mandating fidelity to scripted programs that spend little time developing reading comprehension strategies. Core programs should provide a more clear rationale for what is taught, when it is taught, how it will be taught, and how often it will be reviewed. If comprehension instruction makes sense to teachers, then it is more likely to make more sense to students. Core programs can more closely reflect the research base on comprehension instruction, but schools should allow for teacher judgment and innovation in comprehension instruction. (Shelton, 2010)

## **Enrichment Programs**

The National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) states that the learning needs of gifted students often differs from those of other students and should be addressed through differentiation, and a modification of curriculum and instruction. Further, the National Reading Panel (2000) stated that in order for students to achieve growth in reading skills and ensure later school success, teachers must provide *all* students with appropriately challenging instructional materials. However, a study conducted by the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (2003) of instructional strategies in Grade 3 reading classrooms suggested that when classroom teachers had advanced books or resources available in their classrooms, these materials went largely unused. High ability readers received little differentiation for reading in most of the classrooms observed. Instead, students who read above grade level usually received instruction and curricular materials identical to those of students who read at grade level and even those who were below grade level. In response, there are several reading programs designed specifically for gifted and talented students in an effort to provide guidance to help teachers evaluate which instructional strategies and ideas will maximize the learning of their gifted students (Bates, 1984). These programs are reviewed in the following section.

Van-Tassel-Baska (2005) focused on the necessary components of gifted programs, emphasizing the importance of differentiated curriculum, instruction, materials, and assessments. The term ‘differentiation’ included acceleration and grouping as part of gifted programs, in which a curriculum base that is advanced, in-depth, complex, creative, and challenging is offered. Special class grouping using a pull-out program focus is one of the most common ways differentiated curriculum is delivered to high ability learners in the elementary grades. An appropriate curriculum

for gifted learners should be a research based design that links general curriculum principles to subject matter features and gifted-learner characteristics.

Tomlinson (2005) argues that a quality education for highly able students begins with good curriculum and instruction; curriculum and instruction that is meaning-making, rich, and high level. From there, appropriate modifications for highly able learners should be made, typically involving adaptive pacing, determining an appropriate degree of challenge, and providing opportunities to develop interests. If we expect advanced learners to continue to show growth, it is likely that they will need curriculum and instruction that is more challenging than we would expect of less advanced learners. A reader who is advanced beyond age expectations often needs to read and interact with advanced materials.

Tomlinson (2005) recommends that teachers should be vigilant that advanced students understand and can apply what they learn, not that they are simply completing work independently. Further, teachers need to be aware of gaps in knowledge, understanding, or skill that can result from moving at an advanced pace. These gaps do not necessarily indicate that the pace of study should be slowed but instead that students receive the proper guidance and support in that instruction. There is evidence that pacing of curriculum and instruction to match the needs of students is a successful way to ensure that good curriculum and instruction is appropriately adapted to challenge highly able students.

In a study to understand the differences in preferred teaching methods between gifted students and students of regular education, Stewart (1981) found that the gifted prefer independent study and discussion, whereas other students prefer lecture and group projects. She concluded that gifted students prefer instructional methods that

emphasize independence and less structure. These findings provide a picture of the gifted learner that show they prefer discussions over lectures and a flexible structure over the traditional classroom setting. Considering student's choices and preferences can have a positive effect on their motivation and interest in learning (Turner, 1995; Reeve, Bolt, & Cai, 1999).

#### Differentiated Instruction for Gifted Students.

Differentiated reading instruction includes vocabulary study, exposure to quality materials of fiction and non-fiction at the appropriate level of difficulty, and activities that involve students' problem-solving and creative abilities (Bailey, 1996). Instruction designed to develop and apply higher level thinking skills through content that engages a reader, questioning strategies, discussion, written assignments, and sharing ideas with students of similar skills and interests are important components of appropriate instruction (Bailey, 1996).

Westberg and Archambault (1997) conducted a multi-case study of classrooms that were considered exemplary in differentiating instruction of high-ability students. Several factors were found to successfully teach gifted learners, including teachers' advanced training and knowledge, their willingness to change and collaborate, their beliefs and strategies for differentiating instruction for gifted students, their leadership, and their autonomy and support through the changes.

Reis, et al. (2004) conducted multiple observations in 12 third-and seventh-grade reading classrooms focusing on whether talented readers received differentiated reading curriculum and/or instructional strategies. The authors considered examples of differentiation as teachers providing selections of high-quality literature reflecting the students' level, rather than age; gearing instruction toward the students' strengths and

interests; providing students with advanced content that enables them to interact with depth and complexity; and focusing on developing higher level comprehension skills. Results indicated that talented readers received some differentiated reading instruction in 3 of the 12 classrooms; however, in the remaining classrooms no challenging reading material or advanced instruction was provided for these students during regular classroom reading instruction. Appropriately challenging books were rarely made available for talented students in their classroom, and they were seldom provided with challenging work. Differentiation of reading instruction for talented readers was limited; most teachers had difficulty translating knowledge of differentiation practices into effective classroom teaching strategies. The use of higher level questioning and opportunities to incorporate prior knowledge into their reading experience is important as it allows readers to build upon previous strengths. Book discussion groups are an example of one way to provide talented readers with the opportunity to interact with peers of similar ability and to discuss their ideas in greater depth (Reis, 2004).

High ability readers should have opportunities to work together and engage in critical reading and analysis, advanced vocabulary development, challenging tasks, such as comparing themes across fiction and nonfiction, and consistent advanced reading opportunities. However, a common finding that has emerged from the research on instructional practices for talented readers is that regular reading instruction is often too easy for talented readers (Chall & Conard, 1991). Reis, et al. (2004) suggested several strategies that can be used to differentiate instruction and curricula for talented readers. Table 1 lists those strategies.

Table 1      Suggested Strategies Used to Differentiate Instruction and Curriculum for Talented Readers

Curriculum Compacting	Reis, Burns & Renzulli, 1992
Acceleration	Dooley, 1993; Durkin, 1966
Substitution of regular reading material with more advanced trade books or basal material	Durkin, 1990; VanTassel-Baska, 1996
Appropriate use of technology and the Web	Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Leu, 2001
More complex assigned reading	Baskin & Harris, 1980
More complex assigned writing	Dean, 1998
Independent reading choices	Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000
Independent writing options	Davis & Johns, 1989
Independent study opportunities	Feldhusen, 1986
Grouping changes (within class or across class)	Kulik & Kulik, 1991
Thematic instructional changes for talented readers	Kaplan, 2001
Independent project choices based on student interests	McPhail, Pierson, Freeman, Goodman, & Ayappa, 2000
Substitution of regular reading instructional strategies with other options	Reis & Renzulli, 1989
Great Books or Literature Circles	Daniels, 1994
Readers' and or Writers' workshop	Graves, 1994
Time spent in the gifted program instead of regular reading class	Reis, Burns, & Renzulli, 1992
Advanced questioning skills	Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956
Interest assessment and interest-based reading opportunities	Renzulli, 1977

Van-Tassel Baska, (2005) suggests that curriculum modification can and should occur in several ways: acceleration of content, the addition of depth and complexity through required tasks, the use of creative tasks, and the examination of major concepts or themes that cut across disciplines. Educators should find sources

beyond the prescribed curriculum to provide acceleration and enriched content experiences for gifted learners (Van-Tassel Baska, 2005). Once the resources are found, educators should assist high ability students with the utilization of those resources. Many times educators believe that gifted students have the necessary skills to utilize resources leaving these students to learn independently once resources are provided. However, oftentimes educators must provide the scaffolding, instruction and feedback for gifted students using appropriate resources. Although gifted students should be taught to work independently, if they rarely need teacher support to complete assignments, a re-examination of the difficulty of the assignment may be needed, as more depth and complexity or more difficult resources may need to be considered.

In differentiating instruction, educators need time to adjust the curriculum, find the needed resources, and cooperatively work with teams of educators (Van-Tassel Baska, 2005). Often, planning time for teachers is taken up in team meetings or other group sessions where instructional planning is not included for discussion. Educators of gifted students should have planning time individually but also time with other educators to discuss learning options to coordinate learning and appropriately accelerate the content (Van-Tassel Baska, 2005).

### Curricular Adjustment

Kulik and Kulik (1992) reviewed meta-analytic findings focusing on five instructional programs that separate students by ability: multilevel classes, cross-grade programs, within-class grouping, enrichment classes for the gifted and talented, and accelerated classes. The reviews showed that effects are related to program type. Programs that adjusted curriculum to match ability, such as cross-grade and within

class programs, produced clear positive effects. Programs of enrichment and acceleration, which usually involve a great amount of curricular adjustment, had the largest effects on student learning. Enriched and accelerated classes are classes in which material is adjusted to the needs of the students in the groups. In enriched classes, the emphasis is on giving students a richer and more varied education experience than they would receive in regular classes. Twenty-two of the 25 studies found that talented students achieved more when they were taught in these types of programs.

Archambault et al. (1993) used the Classroom Practices Survey, where approximately 4,000 third- and fourth- grade teachers rated the frequency with which they used (a) questioning and thinking, (b) providing challenges and choices, (c) reading and written assignments, (d) curricular modifications, (e) enrichment centers, and (f) seatwork in their regular classrooms. A multivariate analysis indicated that regular classroom teachers reported making only slight changes in their instruction to meet the needs of gifted students. Few teachers made an effort to eliminate material students had already mastered, and gifted students were not given more opportunities than average students to pursue their own interests. Further analysis showed that the more gifted students there were in a classroom, the more enhanced learning opportunities were made available to the entire class. However, the overall results indicated that little differentiation in instruction or curriculum is provided to the majority of the gifted and talented students. The assumption is that the failure to alter teacher practice in these classrooms has a negative influence on the learning outcomes of gifted students.



### Collaboration with Regular Education Teachers.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) issued a policy statement regarding the collaboration between gifted and general education programs stating the importance of collaboration among gifted, general, and special education programs, and the need to provide support for these efforts. The NAGC believes that good collaboration does not do away with the need for services associated with gifted education programming but instead redefines the roles of educators in the overall education for these students. They state that collaboration should be a part of the services provided to meet the unique educational needs of gifted students. Strategies recommended as a necessary support for the collaboration process include: policies that outline the procedures and guidelines for collaboration in the school district, redefining the roles of educators for gifted education programs, cooperative planning time among general and gifted programs staffs, and resources that support collaborative efforts.

Tomlinson, et al. (1996) conducted interviews of regular classroom teachers, gifted education teachers, district level administrators, and principals to gather broad ideas concerning collaboration between gifted education and general education. The message that prevailed throughout the interview was the need for communication, cooperation and/or collaboration between the fields. Interviewees presented three rationales for developing a collaboration between gifted education and general education: (1) collaboration between the two fields would facilitate balancing the roles of equity and excellence to the benefit of all students, (2) collaboration would reinforce that many of the same goals are shared, and (3) collaboration would maximize the strengths of both generalists and specialists to the benefit of the total community. Some suggestions that authors provide based on the results from the

analysis of their surveys were the following: promote collaboration between specialists in gifted education and regular education as a means of addressing and supporting differentiation for more students in more settings, create and share specific models of flexible grouping in the regular classroom, and in special classes for the gifted, be sure those specialists differentiate instruction rather than assuming all eligible students should fit a single mold.

Kane and Henning (2004) conducted a case study to describe how a fourth grade teacher and a gifted and talented teacher collaborated to improve services for high ability learners. Collaboration is important as pull-out programs are limited in time for meeting students' needs. Advanced students should be engaged in a challenging curriculum all day, every day, a goal that is beyond the scope of a pull-out program (Landrum, 2002). Most gifted education teachers cannot provide ongoing, daily instruction for all advanced learners due to scheduling conflicts, time constraints, and student numbers.

In their study, Kane and Henning (2004) describe the nature of the interactions between the gifted teacher and a classroom teacher who were collaborating to improve services to advanced learners. They also describe the impact of their collaboration on differentiating the curriculum and describe any practical, philosophical, or attitudinal differences of their collaboration. They found that the collaboration between the fourth-grade teacher and the gifted teacher demonstrated some of the most essential components for effective collaboration. They (a) co-planned lessons, discussing the characteristics of advanced learners and the appropriate strategies to meet their needs; (b) employed collaborative teaching, where they conducted separate, but complementary lessons; and (c) developed a close rapport, a key component to

developing common goals. They did, however, find that most of their limited planning time was used to address immediate needs, leaving little time to identify needed changes or to improve practice. They found the reality of budgets, resource constraints, time, space and personal issues to be the most limiting factors. Despite these restraints, both teachers saw instructional benefits and positive student achievement results from their collaborative process.

Landrum (2001) evaluated an enrichment program designed to create consultation and collaboration between a classroom and enrichment teacher. The purpose of this evaluation was to investigate the effects of student performance, teacher competencies, and the effectiveness of the collaboration process toward gifted education. In this program, the general education teachers and enrichment teachers consulted and collaborated with one another to provide differentiated educational opportunities to gifted learners. Teachers spent time preparing lesson materials and sharing the resources and information. The collaborative activities noted during site visits included co-planning, co-teaching, providing differentiated instruction, linking gifted and general education curricula, sharing responsibility for student assessment, and gathering and distributing educational resources. Teachers met on a regular basis to collaboratively plan for differentiated educational opportunities for gifted learners, which led to the linking of general education and gifted education curricula. Modifications were made to the general curricula in an effort to develop differentiated curricula and instructional practices for gifted learners. Co-teaching efforts involved team teaching, demonstration teaching, providing supportive learning activities, and complementary teaching. Some of the instructional strategies included independent studies, the use of higher order thinking skills, curriculum compacting, problems-

based approaches, extending and/or increasing the depth of the general education curriculum, and research assignments. Strategies used to differentiate curricula included advanced content, acceleration in advanced classrooms, use of supplemental curricula, problem-solving programs, and the development of curricula. The most interesting characteristic of the collaborative lessons was that they reflected an integration of general and gifted education programs, offering students a bridge between programs to facilitate a transfer of learning.

Overall, this model led to diverse and more frequent services to high ability learners, resulting in differentiated instruction to gifted students. Educational services provided to both gifted and regular education students in the general classroom were enhanced by the use of a variety of effective instructional practices. The findings of this pilot project demonstrate how collaboration turns differentiated education for gifted learners and regular education students away from the exclusive provision of services frequently seen in pull out programs. Overall, the school developed a culture of shared responsibility and a collaborative atmosphere. These effects can help bridge gifted and general education programs, and provide otherwise unavailable resources to some students.

### **Summary Of Literature**

Research supports the implementation of the Common Core State Standards as a foundation for successful classrooms. However, it is up to school districts and teachers to decide on appropriate curriculum to meet the standards. There is a place for reading programs in schools, although districts and teachers need to be aware of their limitations in order to make informed decisions in designing instruction. Findings from the studies mentioned suggest the need to reconsider mandating fidelity

to scripted programs. The CCSS supports this notion as the standards themselves do not recommend the use of one program or strategy for any group or groups of students.

The CCSS and the NRP suggest the use of appropriately challenging materials for all students, including gifted students. One way to ensure that gifted students are appropriately challenged is through enrichment programs. Enrichment programs should include differentiated instruction, curricular adjustment, and collaboration with regular education teachers. Teachers of gifted students, including both gifted and regular education teachers, should be informed on the best research based practices used to advance gifted students. These practices include curriculum compacting, acceleration, more complex assigned reading, independent reading choices, grouping changes, advanced questioning skills, and discussions to improve reading comprehension.

Comprehension plays a critical role in developing successful readers. All readers should be exposed to a variety of genres and content that challenges them. Teachers should use various research-based instructional strategies and techniques that support reading instruction. Research shows that explicit strategy instruction can make significant gains on a student's reading comprehension. Further, the role of oral discourse has been shown to also make significant gains on students' reading comprehension as well as their motivation, interest and self-efficacy.

## Chapter 3

### **DATA FROM KLIMA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

I collected two types of data from the Klima Elementary School, a survey of grades 3 – 5 classroom teachers and a content analysis of the core basal reading program used by these same teachers. The importance and purposes of these data, data collection procedures and a data analysis are described below.

#### **Classroom Teacher Survey**

A total of 373 students in grades K-5 were enrolled in Klima Elementary School for the 2012-2013 academic year. The school employs 31 instructional staff and has a student per teacher ratio of 14:1. More than half of the general education teachers hold a master's degree or above (55.6%) and 7.1% hold National Board certification. Forty-three percent of instructional staff has 5-9 years of teaching, 21% have 15-20 years and only 7% have 4 years or less. The percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers is 100%.

I chose to survey all 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom teachers (N=7) to better understand reading instruction practices in the regular classroom at Klima Elementary School. I surveyed only these teachers since these are the grades I work with in the enrichment program. I felt these self-report data would shed light on how classroom teachers interpreted the core reading program and literacy instruction in general. Moreover, survey results would provide glimpses of the materials, strategies, and skills emphasized. To this end, I administered a revised version of the Bauman,

Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, & Ro (2000) survey (see Appendix A). This 55-question survey incorporated a range of question types including Likert-scale and open-ended items. I chose to administer this survey because it was designed to give an overall picture of reading instruction. Since I was curious about the regular classroom teachers' overall reading instruction, this survey was a good fit. However, I revised the survey by deleting some of the questions. I included only 20 questions that were relevant to this project; I did not add or change any of the questions. All questions and a summary of all results from this survey can be found in Appendix A (attached).

I analyzed the survey data by calculating frequencies of responses and through qualitative analysis of open-ended questions. My qualitative analysis procedure consisted of response sorting, where I looked for patterns throughout the open-ended responses of the survey and developed categories based on these patterns. I looked for patterns of instructional beliefs, practices, and strategies taught throughout the school. I was also looking for teachers' usage of strategies aligned with the CCSS that were found missing from the core basal reading program based on the content analysis described later in this paper. Below, I provide a summary of my findings from the teacher survey.

#### Data Analysis of Teacher Survey

All seven third through fifth grade classroom teachers took part in the teacher survey. These teachers reported having between 14 – 26 regular education students in their classroom and between 2 – 10 special or exceptional students. Three teachers went on to report that 14% of their students are above average readers; while one teacher reported only 8% of her class is above average readers. The remaining four teachers had between 30 – 50% of the class as above average readers. The enrichment

students would fall into this last category; however, I pull the top 10% of kids. Therefore, there are many above average readers remaining in their regular classrooms for reading instruction who may need to be further challenged than the core basal reading program provides. This supports the need for enrichment and classroom teachers to work collectively and collaboratively.

The amount of time teachers spent for reading instruction varied. Teachers reported spending between 30 – 90 minutes daily specifically for reading instruction (e.g., reading skill or strategy lessons, teacher-guided reading of selections), 45 – 70 minutes daily for applying, practicing, and extending reading instruction (e.g., reading aloud, independent reading, student-led response groups, and cooperative reading activities) and 30 – 120 minutes daily for language arts instruction and practice (e.g., writing workshop, response journals, oral language activities). Teachers reported spending the most amount of time on reading vocabulary, reading strategies instruction and comprehension and the least amount of time in literature discussion groups (where five teachers reported spending “little” time).

Teachers reported various perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs toward the teaching and learning of reading. For example, six of the seven teachers reported that they believe in a balanced approach to reading instruction, which combines skills development with literature and language-rich activities. Further, five of the seven teachers also reported that they have an “eclectic” attitude toward reading instruction, which means that they would draw from multiple perspectives and sets of materials when teaching reading. Only one teacher described herself as a “traditionalist” when it comes to reading materials and methods, where the teacher focuses on skills development in a lecture format.



Six of the seven teachers surveyed reported using basal reading materials as the foundation of their reading program, where they structure their instruction around the core basal reading program but they incorporate trade books beyond what the program provides. Only one teacher reported using the basal reading materials as the only reading instructional materials in their classroom. Three of the seven teachers reported predominately using the basal reading series and all seven teachers reporting that they used the literature anthologies at least moderately (three said they used it predominately and one said they used it exclusively). Most teachers (five) reported that they supplement the basal program by teaching additional skills not covered well or at all in the basal. Six teachers reported using flexible reading groups in their classrooms and two reported teaching reading as a whole class activity.

Teachers reported regularly using a variety of materials, techniques, or activities in their classrooms. The following table (Table 2) represents their responses.

Table 2 Results of Teacher Survey Regarding Materials, Techniques, or Activities Likely to be Found in Classrooms (N=12)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Responses (n)</b>	<b>Percentage of Responses</b>
Strategy Instruction	7	100
Comprehension Monitoring	6	86
Instruction in literary elements	6	86
Literature response activities	6	86

Discussion Groups	2	29
Trade Books	4	57
Basal Readers	5	71
Nonfiction Trade Books	3	43
Content Area Reading Instruction	6	86
Reading Workshop	0	0
Writing Workshop	5	71
Critical Reading Lessons	4	57

All seven teachers reported that they are likely to be found teaching comprehension strategy instruction (e.g., making inferences, drawing conclusions), six reported that they instruct students in comprehension monitoring (e.g., self-questioning, applying “fix-up” strategies such as rereading) and in literary elements (e.g., characterization, mood, setting, narrative structure). Five of the seven reported using the basal readers instructionally. Only two teachers responded to using literature discussion groups (e.g., book clubs, literature circles) as a reading instruction technique or activity.

Teachers reported several challenges they face as they work toward improving the quality of reading instruction. The table below (Table 3) outlines their responses.

Table 3 Results of Teacher Survey Regarding Challenges in Improving Instruction (N=12)

Category	Number of responses (n)	Percentage of responses
Lack of support for struggling readers	3	43
Lack of support for high ability learners (not in enrichment)	4	57
Flexible Grouping	1	14
Changes in programs	5	71
Planning and Preparation	3	43
Materials	2	29
District's policy of fidelity to reading program	4	57

In summary, the teacher survey provided a general sense of the materials, activities, and techniques used in the classroom reading instruction. Several general categories were identified, including teachers feeling the need to supplement the core basal reading program. However, there seems to be little continuity between the regular classroom teachers' classroom instruction, evident in the fact that very few survey questions elicited a similar response by all seven teachers. Most teachers (five out of seven) considered themselves as having an "eclectic" attitude toward reading instruction, although they aren't necessarily drawing from similar perspectives and sets of materials similar to other teachers in the building. Further, most teachers are

not engaging students in conversations and discussions when instructing reading comprehension.

Based on the results from this survey, I decided to conduct a content analysis of the core basal reading program used in classroom teachers' instruction. Many teachers reported feeling the need to supplement the core basal reading program despite the district's policy on fidelity to the program. With the adaptation of the CCSS, it is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the core basal reading program as compared to these new standards. The findings from my content analysis will be useful to classroom teachers in supporting their need to supplement the program and will give them guidance on which standards require additional materials. The findings will also be useful to enrichment teachers to demonstrate which standards are addressed during the classroom reading time so that enrichment teachers can fill in gaps through their reading instruction. The following section details the procedures, data and findings of the content analysis.

### **Content Analysis: Core Basal Reading Program**

Klima Elementary School uses Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's *Journeys* (2012) as the core basal reading curriculum. Given my concerns about my enrichment students' comprehension skills coupled with the inconsistent reading practices reported by the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, I decided to conduct a content analysis of the program's comprehension instruction in an effort to understand the program's scope and sequence as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, I was interested to find out how well the core basal reading program was aligned with the CCSS rigor to determine the quality of the curriculum. The call for higher standards for all students echoes a similar call for high-quality curricula for gifted students (VanTassel-Baska,

Zuo, Avery, & Little, 2002). Determining which comprehension strategies are taught to enrichment students during their regular education reading instruction could be used to strengthen the instruction conducted in the enrichment program.

For the purposes of this proposal, I completed a content analysis of the Grade 4 core basal reading program. Content analysis has been identified as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1969, pg. 14). Content analysis allows researchers to systematically look through large amounts of data (Weber, 1990). A reliance on coding and categorizing the data makes the content analysis technique meaningful. Weber (1990) defines a category as “a group of words with similar meaning or connotations” (p. 37). *A priori* approach to coding data was used in this project to establish categories based on the CCSS prior to the analysis. The categories then were applied to the data as they were coded (Weber, 1990).

### Content Analysis Process

The process of collecting and analyzing data was framed using the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards for Grade 4. Specifically, I looked at all reading comprehension standards. I formulated the coding questions to match the reading comprehension common core standards (see Appendix B). I began with the English Language Arts Standards for Reading Literature (Grade 4). Most standards are written as is; however, some standards originally written as one standard are divided into two for the purpose of the content analysis. For example, the standard RL.4.1 (Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text) was split into two separate codes, RL.4.1.a (Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text

says explicitly) and RL.4.1.b (Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text). The split is noted with the letters (a and b) at the end of the code.

As I began the content analysis on the reading program, I looked through each teacher's manual for the structure of the program in its entirety. Figure 2 gives a comprehensive outline of the specific components of the *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Journeys* Teacher's Manual.

- A. Six units of instruction for five weeks, for a total of thirty weeks of instruction
- B. Each unit is built around a specific theme
- C. Within each week's lesson, six main components of general reading are presented:
  - a. oral language
  - b. vocabulary
  - c. comprehension
  - d. fluency
  - e. decoding
  - f. language arts (spelling, grammar, writing)
- D. Each week's lesson is broken into two sections: whole group and small group
- E. At the end of each unit, a section on Teacher Resources provides the teacher with:
  - a. Strategic interventions
  - b. Support for English Language Learners
  - c. Study skills
  - d. Word lists
  - e. Rubrics for retelling, summarizing, presentations and writing

Figure 2 Components of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Journeys teacher's manual

I took notes in a research log notebook about how many curriculum-units it contained, how many weeks per curriculum-unit of instruction, whether or not the

curriculum-unit was theme-based, and the breakdown of each lesson. I decided to focus on reading comprehension of literary texts during whole group instruction. The purpose of this narrowed approach is because whole group instruction is the time my enrichment students are in their regular education classroom for reading instruction. I focused on only literary texts since The William and Mary program utilized in the enrichment program only uses literary text.

*Journeys* (2012) is Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's K-5 core basal reading program. The fourth grade program has six units of instruction, each of which encompasses 5 weeks, for a total of 30 weeks of instruction. Each unit is built around a specific theme. For example, the theme for Unit 4 is *There is more than one secret to success*. Each week of Unit 4 builds on the theme of success through the main selections. Each week has a different essential question based on the theme. For example, *What traits do successful people have in common?* or *What steps can you take toward success?* Each day's lesson begins with a whole group vocabulary activity, including learning the target vocabulary for the week. Also, included as part of the whole group instruction are comprehension skills, strategies, and an author's craft for the main selection (usually narrative) and a paired selection (usually expository, drama or poetry). Each week, fluency, decoding, grammar, spelling, writing and listening and speaking are part of daily whole group instruction as outlined in Table 4. The teacher's manual does not suggest how the stories during whole group reading should be read. Teachers may decide to read them aloud, listen on tape, partner read, etc.

Table 4 A Week of Skills and Strategies From the Core Basal Reading Program

Unit Day	Vocabulary	Reading Comprehension	Fluency/Decoding	Grammar, Spelling, Writing
Day 1	Introduce Vocabulary through read aloud	Read aloud, Preview target skill: compare & contrast through questioning	Fluency model rate	Adjectives, spell words with /k/, /ng/, /kw/, analyze model of descriptive paragraph
Day 2	Target vocabulary in context	Introduce comprehension skill: compare & contrast with graphic organizer, discuss with a partner, Read narrative story, model strategy monitor/clarify through think alouds	Fluency teach rate	Adjectives, word sort, writing focus: ideas
Day 3	Target vocabulary, Develop background knowledge with short story	Reread narrative story (as whole group, with partners or silently), deepen comprehension skill with questions and Venn diagram, model strategy monitor/clarify, class discussion of essential question	Fluency practice rate using narrative from whole group comprehension lesson, sound/spelling changes	Word families, proofreading practice, pre-write
Day 4	Target vocabulary review,	Read expository text, develop comprehension through questions, model target skill: compare/contrast, make text to self, text to text and text to world connections using graphic organizer	Fluency practice rate using narrative from whole group comprehension lesson.	Connect spelling to writing, review adjectives, draft descriptive paragraph
Day 5	Target vocabulary, compound words	Deepen comprehension by comparing and contrasting details from narrative using graphic organizer, questioning and a 2 paragraph writing	Fluency progress monitoring	Spelling assessment, proofreading practice, revise writing for ideas



Each day's reading comprehension emphasis is on the week's target strategy and skill. Day 1 focuses on listening comprehension as the teacher reads a short story aloud. Students are then asked questions about the story they heard as a preview to the target skill. In the example case (described above) the target strategy is compare and contrast. The next day, students review the target skill and are introduced to the target strategy (for example, monitor/clarify) through an introduction to the main selection, usually a narrative story. Students are guided through the selection through the use of questioning and think alouds. After reading, they complete graphic organizers supporting the target skill. Day 3 consists of a reread of the main selection from the day before and focus on developing and deepening comprehension through independent use or cooperative learning activities on the target skill and strategy. On day 4, students are introduced to a new text, usually a different genre (e.g., drama or poem). The target skill and strategy is practiced through teacher questioning. Also, students are beginning to make connections with this story and the narrative read earlier in the week. Finally, on day 5, students are given the opportunity to compare and contrast the stories read earlier in the week. They are encouraged to apply what they learned through a partner discussion and/or a quick writing assignment.

After a careful analysis and documentation in the research log regarding the organization and design of the program, I began to read each day's whole group lesson looking for specific comprehension instruction aligned with the CCSS. I created the attached spreadsheet (Appendix B) where each CCSS was converted into a question, which became the heading for each code. Alongside each question, a column labeled 'evidence' is provided. I read through each instructional directive in the teachers' edition of the core basal reading program for evidence of each reading comprehension

CCSS. All instructional directives were considered the unit of analysis. An instructional directive is defined as a sentence (or sentences) from the teacher's edition of the reading series that guide the teacher in developing students' comprehension. Often an instruction move is contained in one sentence, for example, "Why did Herman Nickerson say he would also introduce the bill if he were elected?" (*Journeys*, Unit 5, p. T102). A short paragraph might contain two or more instructional moves: "Describe the author's tone when she writes about the bill being signed into law. What text features support your answer?" (*Journeys*, Unit 5, p. T102). In the first example, the teacher asks a question; in the second example the teacher asks the students to give a description and then asks them to support their answer with evidence from the text. If a paragraph or segment included more than one instructional move, each instructional move was noted and coded. Some instructional moves included student activities/materials. For example, "Work with students to complete the Inference Map by adding three details of the character's traits and behaviors." (*Journeys*, Unit 6, p. T147). In these cases, I included an evaluation of the activity/material as part of the instructional move.

Any instructional directive that addressed a CCSS was considered evidence. When (and if) evidence of each CCSS was found, a "Y" was placed in the 'evidence' column. If no evidence of the standard was found, or if there were no examples of students being asked to meet that CCSS, I wrote an "N" in the column. In the last section for comments, anecdotal notes were used to detail examples, strengths, questions, etc. At the end of the review process, notes in the comments column helped me reach decisions about a program's strengths and weaknesses based on the CCSS. Strengths were noted for any and all standards where instructional directives

demonstrated that a standard was taught. However, weaknesses were noted for any CCSS that were not addressed or minimally addressed in the core basal reading program.

Next, I evaluated each instructional directive (unit of analysis) in the first volume of the fourth grade teacher's editions for the total number of CCSS addressed and the reading strategy used. As I read each lesson, I created and used the attached spreadsheet (Appendix C) to identify how many times each CCSS was addressed through each instructional move within the teacher's manual. Additionally, when a CCSS was addressed through an instructional move, I evaluated which reading strategy was used to achieve each CCSS. I coded each instructional move within the whole group comprehension lesson using *a priori* categories from research-based reading strategies (NRP, 2000). *A priori* categories include: answering questions, generating questions, summarizing, using graphic organizers, monitoring comprehension, recognizing story structure, using cooperative learning, and using multiple strategies. The coding sheet was used to represent that a CCSS was addressed and if so, how many times and using which reading strategy (Appendix C).

A tally mark was used to represent which CCSS was addressed and through which strategy. If an instructional directive included more than one standard, or strategy, two (or more) tally marks were made for that instructional directive. For example, in Unit 5 on page T19, teachers are instructed to guide students through an Inference Map (graphic organizer) for a short story read earlier in the week. The Inference Map asked for students to list an example of the characters' thought, actions, and ways characters change. Those three details are combined to infer the theme of the story. This instructional directive received three tally marks, one tally mark for

three different CCSS {‘Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text’ (RL.4.1.b), ‘Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text (RL.4.2.a), and ‘Describe a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a characters’ thoughts, words, or actions’ (RL.4.3)}.

After the coding system was established and the first unit complete, I explained the coding system to two fourth grade teachers. After practicing together, I asked them to independently code a week’s worth of lessons from Unit 1 to establish inter-rater reliability. There were a total of 33 instructional directives in the week’s lesson. I established the criteria for inter-rater reliability as having an 80% or higher overall agreement amongst the ratings. Overall agreement reflects when each rater agreed with my initial coding. Once completed, we spent our ‘professional learning community’ (PLC) time to compare our codes. I established an 82% inter-rater agreement with the first rater; there were 27 direct “agrees” and 6 “disagrees.” The second rater and I established an 85% inter-rater agreement; there were 28 direct “agrees” and 5 “disagrees.” When discrepancies were encountered they were resolved through discussion and agreement.

After inter-rater reliability was established with the fourth-grade team, I evaluated each instructional directive in curriculum-units 2 through 6 of the teacher’s editions for the total number of CCSS addressed and the reading strategies used. Tally marks were placed on form 2 to indicate CCSS and the reading strategies used. Once all volumes were evaluated, all tally marks were totaled to find which CCSS were addressed and how often and which were not. Several CCSS were met within the

whole group comprehension section of the lessons. Table 5 shows the total number of instructional directives included in all units (1-6) and which CCSS is addressed.

Table 5      Breakdown of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) addressed in the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Journeys Core Basal Reading Program (N=1,035)

English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (Grade 4):	Number of times presented (n)	% of times meeting the CCSS
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly? (RL.4.1.a)	300	29
Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text? (RL.4.1.b)	289	28
Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text? (RL.4.2.a)	77	7
Summarize the text? (RL.4.2.b)	81	8
Describe a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions)? (RL.4.3)	149	14
Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose? (RL.4.5.a)	0	0
Refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues) when writing or speaking about text? (RL.4.5.b)	31	3
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third- person narrations? (RL.4.7.a)	1	.1
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text? (RL.4.7.b)	0	0
Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g. opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events? (RL.4.9)	58	6
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly? (SL.4.1)	41	4
Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion? (SL.4.1a)	0	0
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion)? (SL.4.1b)	4	.4
Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others? (SL.4.1c)	0	0
Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion? (SL.4.1d)	4	.4

Table 6 shows the breakdown for the number of overall times each reading strategy was used within the instructional directives to meet the above CCSS (N=868).

Table 6 Breakdown of Reading Strategies Used Within Instructional Directives

Reading Strategy	Overall number of times presented (n)	% of total reading strategies addressed
Answer Questions	443	51
Generate Questions	16	2
Summarize	34	4
Use Graphic Organizers	150	17
Monitor Comprehension	44	5
Recognize Story Structure	74	9
Use Cooperative Learning	101	11
Use Multiple Strategies	6	1

Below I summarize the findings of the content analysis of the fourth-grade whole group literary reading lessons. Specifically, I describe the CCSS standards that are addressed in the core basal reading program and the CCSS standards that are not addressed in the core basal reading program. A complete content analysis can be found in Appendix D.

#### Summary of Content Analysis Findings

From the results of this content analysis, I conclude that the *Journeys* reading program does not completely align with the CCSS. The most obvious standards missing from the program are those that involve discussions around literature. These

standards are listed under the heading: English Language Arts Standards, Speaking and Listening, Comprehension and Collaboration. They are SL.4.1, SL.4.1a, SL.4.1b, SL.4.1c, and SL.4.1d. The first standard, SL.4.1 (Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly), was accomplished only through teacher questioning. Through my own experience, it is often difficult to engage students in a collaborative discussion solely through asking questions. Often times, a student answers the question and the group moves on. There were no examples of research-based discussion strategies. This is just one example of where teachers must modify their instruction to elaborate upon the curriculum to meet the CCSS. There are also needs for modifications on comparing and contrasting genres, themes, point of view and different versions of text (see Table 10). It is clear that classroom teachers must modify their instruction to go beyond that of the core basal reading program (Dewitz et al., 2009).



## Chapter 4

### **DATA FROM HARTMAN SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ENRICHMENT PROGRAM**

I collected two types of data from the Hartman School District's Enrichment Program, a survey of the enrichment teachers in the district and a content analysis of the reading program used by these same teachers. The importance and purposes of these data, data collection procedures and a data analysis are described below.

#### **Enrichment Teacher Survey**

I administered an initial survey to the enrichment teachers (N=12) in the Hartman School District, to find if others were noticing similar findings using the William and Mary program. Specifically, I wondered if other enrichment teachers found little instructional support from the program. Further, I wondered if other enrichment teachers found the reading program's materials to be difficult for their students and if they were supplementing their instruction in any way. I developed ten survey questions; two were open-ended, seven were closed-choice where respondents could choose only one answer and one question provided choices where respondents could choose 'all that apply.' All questions were designed to glean insight into their teaching experiences, experiences with the William and Mary program and types of instruction used beyond the William and Mary program, if any. The ten survey questions are listed in Appendix E (attached).

In analyzing the data, I calculated frequencies and used qualitative analysis of open-ended questions. My qualitative analysis procedure consisted of response

sorting, where I looked for patterns throughout the open-ended responses of the survey and developed categories based on these patterns. Seventy-five percent of the respondents reported using the William and Mary curriculum along with other supplemental materials. Further, many teachers reported the need for additional support and scaffolding for their students, beyond what is provided by the curriculum. Four out of the twelve respondents reported their students are unable to complete the assignments without teacher support and/or scaffolding. The other eight reported students requiring at least some teacher support while no teachers felt that their students are able to complete assignments without teacher support. Ten of the twelve respondents reported the desire for additional teacher support in teaching the novels from the William and Mary curriculum. Ninety percent of the enrichment teachers use the suggested novels from the William and Mary curriculum. This information combined with the fact that most teachers felt the need for supplemental material leads me to believe that enrichment teachers need more support for teaching the materials in this program. One teacher responded,

“Although I love the William and Mary materials, I find the teacher edition materials to be vague at times. I would like to see more examples of what they would find acceptable for a response. Additionally, their novel studies need more stopping points for discussion, and I’d like to see a greater focus on writer’s craft when reading the novels.”

Another reported,

“I find there is little teacher support for instruction in the novels from the William and Mary program. I often search the internet for background on novels and/or support for scaffolding the lessons.”

Five teachers included the phrase “teachers manuals are vague” in their responses.

All respondents reported using literature circles and sixty-three percent report using Socratic seminars as instructional tools during novel studies. Only eighteen percent of the respondents reported using questioning the author (QtA) or reciprocal teaching and only nine percent use collaborative reasoning as an instructional tool. There is an inconsistency in how and what enrichment teachers are teaching during their reading time, despite the fact that there is a consistent reading program.

### **Content Analysis of William and Mary Program**

After collecting and analyzing data from my content analysis of the core basal reading program (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's *Journeys*) used in the regular education classrooms at my school, I conducted a content analysis on the enrichment reading program (William and Mary Program's *Literary Reflections*) used in all enrichment classrooms throughout the district. The purpose of this content analysis was two-fold. First, I was interested to find out how well this reading program was aligned with the CCSS. Further, I was interested to find out if this program covered the same CCSS as the core basal reading program, as well as if this program covered more or less of those standards. The results of this content analysis compared with the results from the core basal reading program content analysis will provide information that can be used to align the two programs.

### **Content Analysis Process**

The process of collecting and analyzing data was the same process used in my content analysis of the Houghton Mifflin *Journeys* core basal reading program described in Chapter 3. I collected and analyzed data using the Grade 4 reading comprehension standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State

Standards. I formulated the coding questions to match the reading comprehension common core standards (see Appendix B). I began with the English Language Arts Standards for Reading Literature (Grade 4). Most standards are written as is; however, the same standards that were divided into two for the purpose of the core basal content analysis are also divided into two here. For example, the standard RL.4.1 (Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text) was split into two separate codes, RL.4.1.a (Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly) and RL.4.1.b (Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text). The split is noted with the letters (a and b) at the end of the code.

As I began the content analysis on the reading program, I looked through the teacher's manual for the structure of the program in its entirety. The teacher's manual is organized in six sections. The first two sections give the teacher information on the curriculum framework and teaching tips. The next section includes all lesson plans, including materials needed and suggested implementation. The last three sections are teacher references and materials. The Figure 3 gives a comprehensive outline of the organization of the William and Mary Program *Literary Reflections* teacher's manual.

- A. Section 1: Unit Introduction and Curriculum Framework
- B. Section 2: Teaching Tips and Implementation of Unit
- C. Section 3: Lesson Plans, 24 total lessons
- D. Section 4: Grammar Study
- E. Section 5: Bibliographies
- F. Section 6: Appendices
  - a. Alternate novels and related activities
    - b. Novel lexile measure information
    - c. The concept of change
    - d. Novel assignment
    - e. Black-line masters

Figure 3      Organization of William and Mary's Literary Reflections teacher's manual

I took notes in a research log notebook about how many lesson plans it contained, the suggested time frame for each lesson of instruction, whether or not the lesson plan was theme-based, and the breakdown of each lesson. I continued the focus on reading comprehension of literary texts since this is the focus of my enrichment reading instruction and the William and Mary program only uses them in instruction.

*Literary Reflections* (2012) is William and Mary's language arts unit for Grade 4, designed by the staff at The College of William and Mary's Center for Gifted Education for use with high-ability students. The fourth grade program has 24 lesson plans, each of which has a suggested lesson length of approximately 60 minutes to 240 minutes. Since I have my fourth grade enrichment group for 45 minutes, four times a week, each lesson could take anywhere between 2 class periods and 6 class periods. The unit is intended to represent a semester's work in language arts for high ability learners. However, it is suggested that the unit be taught across a two-hour language arts block. Since I am unable to allot this time frame, and because my students require

more scaffolding, modeling and instruction than is suggested from the teacher's manual, the unit represents a full year's worth of reading comprehension, along with teacher selected supplemental novels and short stories.

There are seven teaching models that are used consistently throughout the unit, The Taba Model of Concept Development, Literature Web Model, Vocabulary Web Model, Hamburger Model for Writing, The Reasoning Model, The Writing Process Model and The Research Model. The Taba Model of Concept Development is used early in the unit and focuses on the creation of generalizations. The Literature Web Model is used to encourage students to consider aspects of a reading selection for deeper understanding: key words (important, interesting, surprising or unknown to the reader), feelings (those of the reader, characters or author), images or symbols, ideas, and structure of writing (anything you notice about how the piece is written, such as dialogue, rhyming, short sentences). The Vocabulary Web Model is used to enable students to gain an in-depth understanding of words. The Hamburger Model for Writing is a graphic organizer used to aid students in developing a properly written paragraph or essay with evidence and elaborations. The Writing Process Model shows the stages that writers use to develop a written composition. The Reasoning Model is used to help students to develop a research project based on the eight elements of reasoning: goal, question, points of view, evidence, concepts and ideas, assumptions, inferences, and implications.

Each lesson in the unit contains the following information to help teachers plan: alignment with unit goals, materials, assignment overview, teaching models, extensions, homework and assessment. The alignment with unit goals allows teachers to identify which major unit goals are met in each lesson. There are six unit goals in

the program, to develop analytical and interpretive skills in literature (Goal 1), to develop persuasive writing skills (Goal 2), to develop linguistic competency (Goal 3), to develop listening/oral communication skills (Goal 4), to develop reasoning skills in language arts (Goal 5), and to understand the concept of change in the language arts (Goal 6). Each goal has several student outcomes that frame each lesson. For example, the outcomes of Goal 4 (to develop listening/oral communication skills) are as follows, to discriminate between informative and persuasive messages, organize oral presentations, evaluate an oral presentation, given a rubric of specific criteria, and develop skills of argument formulation. The materials section includes a list of the items the teacher will need for the lesson, including teacher resources, student activity pages, reading selections and other necessary supplies. The assignment overview summarizes the major activities of the lesson, as well as provides an estimated time frame. The teaching models section provides information regarding the teaching models (described above) used in the lesson. The extensions section gives a preview of all extension activities, which are optional activities offered to accommodate expanded schedules. The homework section lists assignments along with reminders about ongoing assignments. The assessment section provides opportunities for formative and summative assessments including rubrics and sample responses.

All lessons are built around the theme of *change*. Specifically, that *change* affects people and their relationships as well as the world around them. The literature selections (short stories, poems and novels) of the unit illustrate this theme for students. The unit begins with an introduction to the concept of *change*. In this lesson, students are introduced to five generalizations about change through The Taba Model of Concept Development; these generalizations are referred back to throughout the

unit. There are questions in the teacher's guide after each literature lesson regarding *change*. For example, in lesson 3 students are instructed to read chapters one and two of the novel *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. After reading, the following questions are asked: *How does Mary's environment change in the first two chapters? How does Mary change in the first two chapters? And How does the story so far relate to the generalizations about change?*

After a careful analysis and documentation in the research log regarding the organization and design of the program, I began to carefully read each lesson within the unit looking for specific comprehension instruction aligned with the CCSS. I used the same spreadsheet used in the core basal content analysis (Appendix B) where each CCSS was converted into a question, which became the heading for each code. Alongside each question, a column labeled 'evidence' is provided. I read through each teacher instructional directive in the teachers' edition of the William and Mary *Literary Reflections* language arts program for evidence of each reading comprehension CCSS. All directives of teacher instruction were considered the unit of analysis. For example, one teacher directive on page 160 of the teacher's manual, says to, "Continue the discussion of Emily Dickinson's poems as a class by asking, 'What are the secrets a century keeps?'" Any directive that addressed a CCSS was considered evidence. When (and if) evidence of each CCSS was found, a "Y" was placed in the 'evidence' column. If no evidence of the standard was found, or if there were no examples of students being asked to meet that CCSS, I wrote an "N" in the column. In the last section for comments, anecdotal notes were used to detail examples, strengths, questions, etc. At the end of the review process, notes in the comments column helped me reach decisions about a program's strengths and



weaknesses based on the CCSS. Strengths were noted for any and all standards where teacher instructional directives demonstrated that a standard was expected to meet. Weaknesses were noted for any CCSS that were minimally (less than five times) or not addressed in the William and Mary language arts program.

Next, I evaluated each teacher instructional directive (unit of analysis) in the teacher's editions for the total number of CCSS addressed and the reading strategy used. As I read each lesson, I used the attached spreadsheet (Appendix C) to identify how many times each CCSS was addressed through each instructional directive within the teacher's manual. Additionally, when a CCSS was addressed through an instructional directive, I evaluated which reading strategy was used to achieve each CCSS. I coded each instructional directive within each lesson using *a priori* categories from research-based reading strategies (NRP, 2000). *A priori* categories include the same categories included in my core basal content analysis: answering questions, generating questions, summarizing, using graphic organizers, monitoring comprehension, recognizing story structure, using cooperative learning, and using multiple strategies. The coding sheet was used to identify that a CCSS was addressed and if so, how many times and using which reading strategy (Appendix C).

A tally mark was used to represent which CCSS was addressed and through which strategy. If an instructional directive included more than one standard, or strategy, two (or more) tally marks were made for that instructional directive. For example, in lesson 6, students are asked to work in groups to complete a literature web (graphic organizer) for a poem. In completing their literature web, students are asked to list key words, feelings, main ideas, and images from the poem and to provide evidence from the text for their responses. This instructional directive received three

tally marks, one tally mark for three different CCSS {‘Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text’ (RL.4.1.b), ‘Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text (RL.4.2.a), and ‘Describe a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a characters’ thoughts, words, or actions’ (RL.4.3)}.

After the coding system was established and the first lesson complete, I explained the coding system to two enrichment teachers in other district elementary schools. After practicing together, I asked them to independently code lesson 1 to establish inter-rater reliability. There were a total of 19 instructional directives in the week’s lesson. I established the criteria for inter-rater reliability as having an 80% or higher direct agreement amongst the ratings. That is, overall agreement reflects when each rater agreed with my initial coding. Once completed, we compared our codes. The first rater and I established an 84% inter-rater agreement, with 16 direct “agrees” and 3 “disagrees.” The second rater and I established an 89% inter-rater agreement, with 17 direct “agrees” and 2 “disagrees.” When discrepancies were encountered they were resolved through discussion and agreement.

After inter-rater reliability was established with the other enrichment teachers, I evaluated each instructional directive in lessons 2 through 24 of the teacher’s edition for the total number of CCSS addressed and the reading strategies used. Tally marks were placed on form 2 to indicate CCSS and the reading strategies used. Once all lessons were evaluated, all tally marks were totaled to find which CCSS were addressed and how often and which were not. Table 1 shows the total number of instructional directives included in all lessons (1-24) and which CCSS is addressed.

In the section below, I will discuss the following: (1) the general components of the William and Mary language arts program, (2) the CCSS standards that are addressed in the core basal reading program and (3) the CCSS standards that are not addressed in the core basal reading program.

#### Components of the Lesson Plans.

This section will provide information detailed information about the lesson plans in the *William and Mary's Literary Reflections* teacher's edition used for 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Figure 4 gives a comprehensive outline of the specific components of the each lesson in the *William and Mary's Literary Reflections* Teacher's Manual.

- A. The section is divided into twenty four lessons
- B. All lessons of instruction are designed for 60 minutes – 240 minutes per lesson
- C. All lessons are built around the specific theme of 'change'
- D. Throughout all lessons, six major unit goals are met:
  - a. Literary Analysis and Interpretation
  - b. Persuasive Writing
  - c. Linguistic Competency
  - d. Oral Communication
  - e. Process: reasoning
  - f. Concept: change
- E. Each lesson provides a materials section, an assignment overview, teaching models, extensions, homework and assessment.

Figure 4      Components of the Lesson Plans from William and Mary's Literary Reflections Teacher's Manual

*Literary Reflections* (2012) is William and Mary's fourth grade language arts program. The fourth grade program has twenty-four lessons of instruction, each of which encompasses between 60 – 240 hours of instruction. All lessons are built around the theme of 'change.' For example, in lesson 7, students are asked to

complete a graphic organizer from five poems or stories they read, recording ‘internal changes in characters’ as well as ‘changes in relationships with others throughout the story or poem.’ Also, throughout each literature piece, students are asked ‘change’ questions. One example of a ‘change’ question, from lesson 7, is ‘*What does the poem “The Habit of Movement” show about changing attitudes toward traveling and moving from place to place?*’ All lessons met at least one of the programs six core goals: (1) to develop analytical and interpretive skills in literature, (2) to develop persuasive writing skills, (3) to develop linguistic competency, (4) to develop listening and oral communication skills, (5) to develop reasoning skills in the language arts and (6) to understand the concept of change in the language arts. Each goal has several student outcomes that frame each lesson. For example, Goal 1 (to develop analytical and interpretive skills in literature), the most relevant goal to my project, expects students to describe what a selected literary passage means, cite similarities and differences in meaning among selected works of literature, make inferences based on information in given passages, and create a title for a reading selection and provide a rationale to justify it. A ‘unit planner’ is available for each lesson, as outlined in Table 7, with unit goals, materials, assignment overview, teaching models, extensions and assessments.

Table 7 Unit Planner of Lesson 6 from William and Mary Reading Program

Unit Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 1: Literary Analysis and Interpretation</li> <li>• Goal 2: Persuasive Writing</li> <li>• Goal 5: Reasoning</li> <li>• Goal 6: Concept of Change</li> </ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Resource 6A, 6B</li> <li>• Student Activity Pages 6A – H</li> <li>• “The Power of Light” by Isaac Bashevis Singer (Student Guide</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>p. 17)</li> <li>The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett</li> </ul>
Assignment Overview	<i>Lesson Length: Approximately 120 minutes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Concept Webs for The Secret Garden and “The Power of Light”</li> <li>Revise a persuasive paragraph</li> </ul>
Teaching Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taba Model of Concept Development</li> <li>Hamburger Model</li> <li>Writing Process Model</li> </ul>
Extensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect to Social Studies</li> </ul>
Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Concept Web</li> <li>Finish revising a paragraph</li> <li>Continue the novel assignment</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-Review of Writing</li> <li>Peer Review of Writing</li> <li>Teacher Review of Writing</li> </ul>

All lessons incorporate at least one unit goal, at least one ‘teaching model’, teacher resource pages, student resource and activity pages, and an assessment. Some lessons offer extensions as optional assignments (Ex: read additional books about a topic, collect information about the location and time period of a novel, etc.), and optional homework assignments. Unit vocabulary lists are provided as well as a glossary of literary terms at the end of Section 3.

### **William and Mary Language Arts Program and CCSS**

Several CCSS were met within each of the lessons. Table 8 shows the total number of teacher instructional directives included in all lessons (1-24) and which CCSS is addressed.

Table 8 Breakdown of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Addressed Through Instructional Directives (N) in the William and Mary Literary Reflections Reading Program (N=309)

English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (Grade 4):	Number of times presented (n)	% of times standard was presented
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly? (RL.4.1.a)	28	9
Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text? (RL.4.1.b)	91	29
Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text? (RL.4.2.a)	72	24
Summarize the text? (RL.4.2.b)	23	7
Describe a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a characters' thoughts, words, or actions)? (RL.4.3)	32	10
Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose? (RL.4.5.a)	0	0
Refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues) when writing or speaking about text? (RL.4.5.b)	10	3
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third- person narrations? (RL.4.7.a)	15	5
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text? (RL.4.7.b)	3	.9
Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g. opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (RL.4.9)	12	4
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly? (SL.4.1)	18	6
Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion? (SL.4.1a)	1	.3
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion)? (SL.4.1b)	0	0
Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others? (SL.4.1c)	0	0
Explain their ideas and understanding in light of the discussion? (SL.4.1d)	4	1

Table 9 shows the breakdown for the number of overall times each reading strategy was used within the instructional directives to meet the above CCSS.

Table 9 Breakdown For the Number of Reading Strategies Addressed Within Instructional Directives (N) in the William and Mary Program (N=94)

Reading Strategy	Overall number of times presented (n)	% of times each strategy was addressed through all instructional directives
Answer Questions	194	64
Generate Questions	5	2
Summarize	12	4
Use Graphic Organizers	75	25
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	6	2
Use Cooperative Learning	8	3
Use Multiple Strategies	4	1

The full, detailed content analysis of the William and Mary *Literary Reflections* language arts program can be found in Appendix F.

### **Summary Of William And Mary *Literary Reflections* Language Arts Program**

From the results of this content analysis, I can conclude that not surprisingly, the *Literary Reflections* language arts program does not completely align with the CCSS. Similar to the core basal reading program, many of the Speaking and Listening (SL) standards are either not met or minimally met through the William and Mary language arts program. For example, the standard SL.4.1-1 ('to engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts')

was only addressed in 18 instructional directives (out of the 309) or 6% of the instructional directives. Further, CCSS SL.4.1-2 ('to build on others' ideas and express their own clearly in collaborative discussion') was not addressed in this program. The most common strategy used to accomplish the above mentioned CCSS (S.L. 4.1-1) was through the use of graphic organizers. This may not be the best strategy to accomplish the second part of this standard (SL.4.1-2) as these standards are listed together as one standard in the CCSS.

Two other of the Speaking and Listening standards were not met at all {'follow agreed-upon rules for discussions' (SL.4.1b) and 'ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to remarks of others' (SL.4.1c)}. The other two Speaking and Listening standards {'come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required materials; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion' (SL.4.1b) and 'explain their ideas and understanding in light of the discussion' (SL.4.1d)} were met only one and four times, respectively. There were also two Reading and Listening standards that were not addressed through the Literary Reflections teacher's manual, 'explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose' (RL.4.5a) and 'Compare and contrast the treatment of similar patterns of events' (RL.4.9.b).

In analyzing the research-based strategies used to address the standards, I found that answering questions was the most prominent strategy used, 194 times out of 304. Using graphic organizers was the next most frequent strategy used 75 times out of 304. Monitoring comprehension was never a suggested strategy and using multiples strategies was only suggested four times. I was surprised to find that



generating questions was a strategy only mentioned five times throughout the language arts program.

In an effort to align instruction to the shifts of the Common Core State Standards as well as to align my instruction with classroom teachers, it is clear that enrichment instruction must be modified to elaborate upon the current programs. In the next section, I will compare and contrast the core basal reading programs and the William and Mary language arts program in an effort to analyze how best to align instruction.

### **Comparative Analysis**

Following the content analyses of the Houghton Mifflin Program and the William and Mary program, I conducted a comparative analysis of these two programs. The purpose of this analysis was to evaluate the strengths of both programs combined, in terms of meeting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and also in their strategy usage. This allowed insight and understanding as to which CCSS students are taught and which strategies are used. Also, this analysis shed light on the CCSS not addressed (or minimally addressed) through both programs. This information will inform the instructional unit designed to bridge a gap between the two reading programs as well as address standards not taught and strategies not used. This will also help to provide an alignment in enrichment instruction with the classroom teachers' instruction to best meet the reading comprehension needs of enrichment students.

I began this analysis with illustrating the percentages (Table 9 below) that each Common Core State Standard was addressed through both reading programs (the Houghton Mifflin reading program used in the regular education classroom and the

William and Mary reading program used in the enrichment classroom). Then, I highlighted standards in red to indicate standards met less than 2% of the time. The CCSS do not have a suggested amount of time to be spent on each standard and the Hartman School District does not give recommendations regarding the amount of time spent teaching each standard. I decided that any standard met below 2% of the time or less was considered to be met insufficiently, indicated by red highlighting. All other standards were addressed at least 5% of the time through a combination of both reading programs. Table 10 (below) illustrates my findings.

Table 10 Percentage Each Reading Program Meets the CCSS

CCSS	% from HM	% from WM
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly? (RL.4.1.a)	29	9
Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text? (RL.4.1.b)	28	29
Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text? (RL.4.2.a)	7	24
Summarize the text? (RL.4.2.b)	8	7
Describe a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions)? (RL.4.3)	14	10
Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose? (RL.4.5.a)	0	0
Refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues) when writing or speaking about text? (RL.4.5.b)	3	3
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations? (RL.4.7.a)	0.1	5
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text? (RL.4.7.b)	0	0.9
Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g. opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (RL.4.9)	6	4
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly? (SL.4.1)	4	6
Come to discussions prepared having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information	0	0.3

known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion? (SL.4.1a)		
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion)? (SL.4.1b)	0.4	0
Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others? (SL.4.1c)	0	0
Explain their ideas and understanding in light of the discussion? (SL.4.1d)	0.4	1

The purpose for this part of the analysis was to gain insight into which CCSS were being met and how often (through either program). From this, I was able to glean an understanding into which CCSS my students were receiving instruction and whether it was from their homeroom reading instruction (through the Houghton Mifflin program) or through enrichment reading instruction (through the William and Mary program).

Next, I analyzed how often the reading strategies were used in both programs. I highlighted using the same method as described above. Again, research does not specify how often each strategy should be used or if specific strategies should be used more often than others. Therefore, I decided to use the same percentage range as described above (2% or less) to indicate a lack of use (color coded in red). All other strategies were taught a total of at least 8% of the time. This analysis is detailed below in Table 11.

Table 11 Percentages to indicate strategy use through both reading programs.

Reading Skills and/or Strategies	% from HM	% from WM
Answer Questions	51	64
Generate Questions	2	2
Summarize	4	4
Use Graphic Organizers	17	25
Monitor Comprehension	5	0
Recognize Story Structure	9	2
Use Cooperative Learning	11	3
Use Multiple Strategies	1	1

The purpose of this analysis was to understand which strategies students are taught throughout both reading programs. Findings indicate that only two strategies are taught consistently (answer questions and using graphic organizers). Three of the strategies are at least touched upon (summarizing, recognizing story structure, and using cooperative learning). However, the last three strategies, generating questions, monitoring comprehension and using multiple strategies, were addressed only 2% or less of the time. The exception being ‘monitoring comprehension’ taught 5% of the time through the Houghton Mifflin program but not taught at all through the William and Mary program.

### Summary of Comparative Analysis Findings

In summary, my comparative analysis revealed that many of the Common Core State Standards are being taught through the Houghton Mifflin reading program, the William and Mary reading program, or through the use of both programs. However, there are some CCSS not addressed or minimally addressed through both

programs. The CCSS RL.4.5.a ('explain major difference between poems, drama, and prose) and RL.4.7.b ('compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third- person narrations) were taught less than 1% of the time. Further, all of the Speaking and Listening standards were taught less than 2% of the combined time.

These findings also show that the strategies of 'asking questions' and 'using graphic organizers' are presented consistently through both programs. Surprisingly, though, 'summarizing', 'recognizing story structure', and 'using cooperative learning' are all presented less than 14% of the time through both programs combined. Also surprising was the fact that 'using multiple strategies,' was used 2% of the combined time and 'monitoring comprehension' and 'generating questions' less than 5% of the combined time. All of the above strategies are research-based and promoted by the National Panel of Reading (NPR) as discussed in the literature review above.

It is unknown if the intention of the CCSS is for all standards to be taught equally; however, we do know that all of the standards should be presented to students in some capacity. Findings from the data analyses indicate a gap between several reading comprehension standards and instruction provided in both the core reading program and enrichment programs. This is especially concerning given what we know about the complexities associated with reading comprehension (RAND, 2002). For example, listening and speaking skills are vital to successful comprehension, indicating the need to provide students with supplemental opportunities to build these skills. Research-based instructional practices such as Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) and Collaborative Reasoning (Anderson et al., 1998) are designed to

strengthen students' abilities in these areas, supporting the importance of addressing these standards during comprehension instruction.

The following recommendations are based on the data revealed in this comparative analysis. These recommendations will assist teachers in seeking out additional resources to supplement when the core reading programs do not suffice in addressing the CCSS. They are for district enrichment teachers to be used when planning for reading comprehension instruction.

## Chapter 5

### RECOMMENDATIONS

I address this section of my executive position paper specifically to the project's enrichment teachers from Hartman School District. The purpose of making specific recommendations in this chapter is to help the enrichment teachers and fourth-grade classroom teachers in the Hartman School District align their instruction with each other and with the Common Core State Standards. The following recommendations are based upon best practices reflected in current research findings and the results of my data analyses. They are meant to be a reference source, which the teachers are encouraged to use to their benefit. Based upon the recommendations offered in this chapter, I have designed a *Teacher's Toolkit* for each participant's use in her classroom. Elements of the *Teacher's Toolkit* are described throughout this chapter. The entire toolkit itself can be found in Appendix F.

#### Recommendation # 1

*All teachers should have an understanding of key literacy words and phrases for comprehension instruction.*

Teaching reading to children of all ages and ability levels is a large responsibility. Research shows that as teachers improve their reading instruction through effective professional development programs, higher achievement was noted by their students (NRP, 2000). Anders (2002) contends that one factor contributing to the difficulty of translating research into classroom practice may be that reading

comprehension means different things to different people, even within the literacy research community. In order to improve reading instruction, educators must understand best practices and the terminology used in reading programs and instructional strategies.

With the new Common Core State Standards taking precedence this year, there are several new terms presented to teachers (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). These terms may be unfamiliar to teachers or teachers may have different translations in implementing the CCSS into practice (Beach, 2011). Further, reading programs use reading terms; however, they do not specify the meanings of these terms. For example, core programs do not clarify between what is a comprehension skill and what is a strategy (Dewtiz, et al., 2009).

During the process of my content analyses, I was surprised to find that neither reading program provided a glossary of terms. Many educational, instructional and technical terms were used; however, they were not explained or defined anywhere in the teacher's manuals. Teachers not only need to understand reading terms but teachers within a building or district should have a common understanding of these terms.

I addressed this issue in the first section of the *Teacher's Toolkit*, which contains a list of reading terms and phrases commonly seen in teacher's manuals and other instructional texts. The list is designed to be an easy reference for finding definitions of key reading terms that teachers may encounter in their reading curricula and professional interactions.



## **Recommendation # 2**

*Teachers should use additional resources beyond what is provided in core reading programs.*

### **Using Complex Text.**

Research has found that teacher's fidelity to reading programs resulted in presentation of information with limited instruction, round-robin oral reading of text passages, and factual recall of texts (Shelton, 2010). There was little or no evidence that students enjoyed reading, and they did not engage in book or story discussions. Further, when conducting my content analyses, it became evident that neither reading program was fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2011) that teachers are to be addressing in their instruction.

Leaders in gifted education identified the principles of quality instruction as including more complex and abstract concept or theme-based curriculum, problem solving, decision making, and reflection and understanding of self and the learning process (Clark, 1993; Feldhusen, 1989; Maker, 1982; Van-Tassel-Baska, 1988). Teachers should expand students' thinking by using questions, problems, and conceptual issues while building relationships and connections (VanTassel-Baska, 1998).

Educators should find resources beyond the prescribed curriculum to provide differentiation, acceleration and enriched content experiences for gifted learners (Van-Tassel Baska, 2005). Differentiated instruction should include exposure to quality materials of text at the appropriate level of difficulty and activities that capitalize on students' problem-solving and creative abilities (Bailey, 1996). In doing so, teachers need to understand how to choose texts at appropriate levels of complexity for their

students. One way to do this is to compare student lexile levels (student state test scores include lexile levels) with text lexiles, using the new lexile ranges aligned to the CCSS (CCSS, Appendix A, pg. 8).

Thompson (1996) argued for the use of classics as the basis of a strong literature program. Classics are defined as “the rich body of authentic past and contemporary international literature that is, for various reasons, timeless, and that forms for all of us our sometimes tacit and sometimes explicit sense of good reading.” (p. 59). He argued that through classical literature, students could have intelligent experiences, develop their vocabularies, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and develop values. Van-Tassel, et al. (1996) agreed that teachers should use classic and exceptional contemporary literature as reading and discussion materials. They also suggested that teachers read these aloud to students of all ages and abilities, as well so that all students are exposed to the language, vocabulary and complexity of these texts (NAEP, 1990; Robinson, 1986; Van-Tassel-Baska, Johnson, Hughes, & Boyce, 1996).

In an effort to aid teachers in choosing appropriate texts for their students, I have included a list of literature categorized by classics, genre, and author. The lexile level of each selection is also included. Further, lexile levels are also included on the CCSS for each grade level. Suggested websites available to teachers for recommended texts can be found at the bottom of that attachment. Teachers may also use this resource to allow for student interest and choice in reading texts (McPhail et al., 2000).

### **Recommendation # 3**

*Enrichment students should be engaged in additional educational opportunities beyond what is offered in the regular classroom.*

#### **Competitions.**

One of the current offerings of the district's enrichment services program are district sponsored competitions. District sponsored competitions include: University of Delaware's Stock Market Game, University of Delaware's Meaningful Economics, Numbers Bee, math league, writing contests, etc. Enrichment students are offered the opportunity to participate in these competitions in an effort to enhance and extend problem solving, collaboration and communication skills. These competitions are examples of problem-based learning, which has been shown to have a positive effect on students' skills and knowledge (Dochy et al., 2003). Further, participation in these events allows for student choice and interest (McPhail, Pierson, Freeman, Goodman, & Ayappa, 2000) while also allowing opportunities for students to develop talent and confidence in their abilities (Goldstein & Wagner, 1993; Shore & Delcourt, 1996). Van-Tassel-Baska (2005) recommends the addition of creative components that incorporate advanced learning with the synthesizing of information. Also, connecting major generalizations about concepts across disciplines can be used to challenge students. Involving students in competitions is one way to accomplish these suggestions. A list of available competitions is provided in the *Teacher's Toolkit*.

#### **Recommendation # 4**

*Enrichment teachers should collaborate with classroom teachers to build on the strengths and areas of needs of their students, programs and instruction.*

An appropriate curriculum for gifted learners should be a research based design that links general curriculum principles to subject matter features while differentiating instruction (Van Tassel-Baska, 2005). In differentiating instruction, educators need time to adjust the curriculum, find the needed resources, and cooperatively work with teams of educators. Educators of gifted students should have planning time individually but also time with other educators to discuss learning options to coordinate learning and appropriately accelerate the content (Van-Tassel Baska, 2005). Collaboration is important as a significant limitation of pull-out programs is that advanced students need to receive services throughout the school day (Landrum, 2002).

Research tells us that teachers who collaborate see instructional benefits and positive achievement results from their collaborative process (Kane & Henning, 2004) and a teachers' willingness to change and collaborate are crucial factors in successfully teaching gifted learners (Westburg & Archambault, 1997). However, from my own experience and from the data from my classroom teacher survey, collaboration between the enrichment teachers and classroom teachers is not happening. A little over half of the classroom teachers surveyed (57%) reported a lack of support for their high ability learners.

In an effort to build collaboration, there are available websites in the *Teachers' Toolkit* as a reference for both district classroom and enrichment teachers. These websites give specific information on how to align reading instruction with the CCSS using best practices. This is one step in creating a collaborative environment between

the regular education program and the enrichment program. Another resource to help achieve this goal is a communication log designed for weekly communication between the enrichment teacher and regular classroom teacher. Teachers will share standards, instructional practices and strategies as well as assessment data on each student. The communication log can also be found in the attached *Teachers' Toolkit*.

### **Recommendation #5**

*Students should have opportunities to use multiple strategies and engage in peer discussions.*

#### **Using Multiple Strategies**

Research suggests that teachers teach comprehension explicitly and formally as this type of instruction has been shown to be highly effective in enhancing understanding (NRP, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Both RAND and NRP found that when readers are given cognitive strategy instruction, they make significant gains on measures of reading comprehension. In addition, 'multiple strategy' instruction was found to have the most impact in comprehension gains. Many areas of the curriculum should provide strategy lessons and strategy application (Pearson & Duke, 2002; Pressley, 2002; Reutzel et al., 2005; Taylor & Frye, 1992; Van-Tassel-Baska, 1998). All strategies suggested by the NRP and RAND are detailed in the glossary section of the *Teacher's Toolkit*. Also, these strategies are utilized in multiple strategy instruction in the instructional unit also included in the *Teacher's Toolkit*.

## Peer Discussions

Although 95% of educators say that it is valuable for students to participate in peer discussion (because it offers them new ways to learn about literature), and 77% indicate their interest in using peer discussions, only 33% of these same educators report using peer discussions with students (Almasi, Arya, & O'Flahavan, 2001). Research suggests that teachers should create a curriculum that provides complexity and deep thinking opportunities, such as seminars and other discussion techniques (Thompson, 1996; Beck & McKeown, 1999; Applebee et al., 2003; Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Anderson et al., 1998; Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002). Teachers should encourage open discussion and active learning, and give supportive and specific feedback to students (Van-Tassel-Baska, 1994). Dixon (2000) suggests that teachers provide students with opportunities such as debate and substantive discussion. Additionally, Dixon (1993) found that the seminar approach to reading instruction, with open discussions about relevant high-quality literature, is an effective mode of instruction for gifted students. Opportunities for developing and applying higher level thinking skills through questioning strategies, discussion, and sharing of ideas with students of similar skills and interests are important pieces of appropriate instruction (Bailey, 1996).

The list of discussion features that have been shown to promote comprehension includes posing open-ended questions that require deep processing, responding to student initiatives and promoting peer interaction (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). The CCSS includes several Speaking and Listening Standards as part of reading comprehension, which can be addressed through classroom discussions.

The data from my content analyses revealed that the core basal reading program did not incorporate discussion strategies and the reading program used in enrichment used discussions minimally. Also, in analyzing the data from the results of my classroom teacher survey, only 27% of the teachers surveyed reported holding any type of discussion group as part of their reading instruction. In an effort to address these issues, the *Teacher's Toolkit* includes a detailed instructional unit using a heavily research based discussion framework, and steps to introducing several other research based discussion frameworks, and many teacher and student handouts. The detailed instructional unit is discussed in the next section.

After reviewing the literature on instructional discussions (i.e., collaborative reasoning, reciprocal teaching, literature circles, etc.) and strategy instruction, I developed a comprehension instructional unit of literary texts for district enrichment teachers. The purpose of this instructional unit is to give enrichment teachers a model unit in aligning their instruction with the classroom teachers' instruction as well as aligning instruction with the Common Core State Standards. The goal of this instructional unit is to build upon students' strategy use (with a focus on 'using multiple strategies') through instructional discussions. Instructional discussion frameworks are research-based (Brown, 2008; Chinn, Anderson & Waggoner, 2001; Gilroy & Moore, 1988; Klinger & Vaughn, 1996; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Lysynchuk, Pressley, & Vye, 1990; Marshall, 2006; Murphy et al., 2009; Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Paratore & McCormack, 1997; Pressley et al., 1992; Reis et al., 2004; Sandora, Beck & McKeown, 1999; Soter et al., 2008; Wilkinson & Son, 2011) and meet all five of the Speaking and Listening CCSS under reading comprehension for fourth grade.

The learning objective for this unit is to increase students' reading comprehension through the discussions and multiple strategy use. The following paragraphs detail the five sessions included in this instructional unit. Detailed lesson plans can be found in the 'Teachers Toolkit' in Appendix F. The Common Core State Standards addressed throughout all five units include: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.10, SL.4.1, SL.4.1.a, SL.4.1.b, SL.4.1.c, and SL.4.1.d.

This instructional unit uses Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) as the framework for an instructional discussion. I chose this model for several reasons. Reciprocal Teaching is used to teach students how to use multiple strategies: predicting, clarifying, generating questions, and summarizing. While working in small groups, the students are taught to use these strategies while engaging in a discussion. The purpose of the discussion is to construct and enhance one another's understanding of the text. Reciprocal Teaching has been demonstrated as an effective teaching practice in many settings (Gilroy & Moore, 1988; Lysynchuk, Pressley & Vye, 1990; Klinger & Vaughn, 1996; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992). Further, research supports teaching students to use multiple strategies while reading (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996; Pearson & Duke, 2002; Pressley, 2002; Reutzel, Smith, & Fawson, 2005; Taylor & Frye, 1992). Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) is a research-based instructional procedure that incorporates multiple strategy instruction. After analyzing the results of my content analyses and comparative analyses, it was clear that this type of instruction was not incorporated in either the core basal reading program or the reading program used with enrichment students. However, students were taught single use strategy instruction (mostly through the core basal reading program) and they were taught one of the five



Speaking and Listening CCSS (through the use of the Enrichment reading program). Therefore, the use of Reciprocal Teaching was the perfect instructional method to bridge the gap between these two programs.

### Instructional Unit

The following instructional unit modifies Reciprocal Teaching to accommodate fourth graders, since this strategy was originally designed for seventh grade students. Modifications include: teacher modeling and scaffolding through think alouds, cue cards, evaluating discussions, strategy instruction on questioning, rotating roles, and whole class work. Although the instruction was modified from the original version, the core principles of the original strategy remain.

Several texts are used within this instructional unit. The first four texts are used during scaffolding activities to give students models and practice in understanding the rules and roles in Reciprocal Teaching. These texts include the fables *Androcles* and *The Lost Wig* and the myths *Arachne and Athena* and *The Myth of Hercules*. All stories were taken from *Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program, Grades 4-5* (Prufrock Press, 2009). I chose these texts for several reasons: all district enrichment teachers have access to them, the Common Core State Standards specifically state the use of fables and myths (CCSS, 2013, p. 31) and all three stories showed to be 'moderately complex' using the Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric found at <http://www.achievethecore.org/text-complexity>.

Once students are familiar with the reciprocal teaching process through teacher modeling and the scaffolding of the first few sessions, a new story is introduced, *The Power of Light* by Isaac Bashevis Singer. At this point in the unit, students should be prepared to take a more independent role in the reciprocal teaching process. This story

is part of the William and Mary reading program used in the enrichment program. One of the strengths of the William and Mary program, found through the content analysis, was the use of complex text. This is an important shift in the CCSS. The same measure of text complexity as mentioned above (Text Complexity: Qualitative Measure Rubric) was used to ensure this text met the measures to qualify as a complex text for fourth graders. It was found to be ‘very complex’ on the aforementioned rubric.

The instructional unit consists of five sessions. Each session can last several days or can be completed within a 45-minute block, depending on the students’ needs, background in instructional discussions, and in using multiple strategies.

Session one. The first lesson begins with establishing rules and conventions interactions during instructional discussions (Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Arya, 2001). This is important as rules should reflect the unique strengths and needs of each group, rather than using a generic set of rules (Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Arya, 2001). Students need to be taught how to engage in productive dialogue with one another, so that they know how to contribute effectively. They need to be taught to actively listen to group members’ ideas and questions and to respond and/or elaborate on those ideas and questions before moving on to other topics (Berne & Clark, 2006).

From my content analyses, I found that the curriculum did not call for instructional discussions within the reading comprehension instruction. Further, upon analysis of data from surveys administered to classroom teachers and enrichment teachers, I found that only 18% of enrichment teachers have used the reciprocal teaching strategy and only two classroom teachers reported using instructional discussions as a means to increased comprehension. Therefore, there is the need to

understand what these discussions look and sound like. Students will also analyze an instructional conversation and take notes on the strengths and areas of needs for this conversation. This lesson meets the following CCSS: SL.4.1.b.

Session two. The second session in the instructional unit teaches the rules and roles of Reciprocal Teaching in a whole class discussion (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The teacher begins the lesson by introducing the four strategies/skills used in the reciprocal teaching process: predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarizing. These strategies/skills are familiar to students since they have received instruction of each strategy in isolation through their core basal reading program. Once the strategies have been introduced and discussed, the teacher will read aloud a short story. While the teacher is reading aloud, she will model the use of multiple strategies through think alouds (Kucan & Beck, 1997). As the teacher is modeling the strategies, students should be asked questions to extend on the teacher modeling (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Palincsar, 1986). Examples of questions are, “Was there more important information?” or “Does anyone have anything more to add to my prediction?” The lesson meets the following CCSS: SL.4.1.b

Session three. The third session focuses on generating questions, with a focus on the question/answer relationship (QARs) (Ezell et al., 1996; Raphael & McKinney, 1983; Raphael & Wonnacott, 1985). This strategy of generating questions was taught in an isolated focus lesson as students were not taught the process of question/answer relationships through either the core basal reading program or reading program used during enrichment). They have received instruction on generating questions (through both reading programs); however, understanding the relationships between questions and answers was not taught. In this lesson, the teacher will model question generating

through a read aloud using think alouds. Then, the class will work together to classify those questions into three different categories: questions that signal confusion, questions that can be answered from the text, and questions that will start a discussion where there is no right or wrong answer but require text support. These questions will then be used to begin a class discussion about the story. Next, the class will read another short story silently with the assignment to generate questions as they read. Then, students will sort their questions using the same categories described above. A class discussion will follow using the questions generated by the students. This lesson meets the following CCSS: RL.4.1, R.L.4.10, SL.4.1, SL.4.1.a, SL.4.1.b, SL.4.1.c, SL.4.1.d.

Session four. The fourth session gives students a chance to participate in a Reciprocal Teaching conversation through the rotation of roles. All students will have a chance to use each strategy of the reciprocal teaching process; however, they will focus on one strategy at a time throughout this lesson. The purpose for this lesson is to continue scaffolding the instruction (Kucan & Beck, 1997) to be sure students are properly using each strategy before they are asked to use them in combination. The teacher should continue modeling through think alouds and provide students with guided assistance as they carry out the strategies at the level they are capable. The teacher should support each student's response through feedback, praise, prompting, additional modeling, and explanations (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Bereiter & Bird, 1985; Almasi, McKeown, & Beck, 1996). This session should continue until there is a shift from the teacher doing much of the work to the students taking on the major responsibilities of the roles. Once the teacher becomes more of a supportive observer, the students should move to the next session. If teachers need to spend more time on

this session, they may need to refer to the book list in the teacher's toolkit to add additional text and follow the format of this session. This lesson meets the following CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, R.L.4.10, SL.4.1, SL.4.1.a, SL.4.1.b, SL.4.1.c, SL.4.1.d.

Session five. The final session allows students the opportunity to take on full responsibility for a Reciprocal Teaching discussion in a small group setting. In this lesson, students are working in groups of four or five using all four strategies to comprehend the text. The text is divided into stopping points; each group will have a discussion after each stopping point to discuss their strategies in an effort to extend their reading comprehension. They will read silently each section of the text planning for the discussion by taking notes on their use of all four strategies. The teacher may continue providing instruction during discussions on why, where, and when these strategies might be applied (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). However, these discussions should be peer-led so that students are expressing themselves, exploring topics of interest, and recognizing and resolving conflict on their own (Almasi, 1995). The teacher can collect students' note-taking paper as an assessment of strategy use. This lesson meets the following CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.10, SL.4.1, SL.4.1.a, SL.4.1.b, SL.4.1.c, and SL.4.1.d.

The detailed lessons can be found in the *Teacher's Toolkit* (Appendix F).

## Chapter 6

### REFLECTIONS

The Executive Position Paper presented here has been devoted to investigating how to improve reading comprehension instruction in the enrichment program within the Hartman School District. After careful analyses of two core reading programs, surveys of enrichment teachers and regular education teachers, and a thorough literature review, I was able to draw several conclusions. First and foremost, the reading programs used in both enrichment and regular education classrooms are not fully aligned with the CCSS. Further, reading instruction in the enrichment program was not aligned with reading instruction in the regular education classrooms. Based on these conclusions along with relevant research, I made several recommendations to both enrichment and regular education classroom teachers regarding reading comprehension instruction of literary texts.

The process of writing this paper brought out several limitations of our current enrichment program. First, there is a wide disconnect between the identification process used to select students into the enrichment program and the materials used in the program. Further, these materials are not fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards. These two issues support the research that there is no “one program fits all” and that teachers should be supplementing materials and instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students. The attached *Teachers’ Toolkit* is designed as a reference for teachers to begin this process in a cohesive manner across the district.

Also, there is little or no alignment and collaboration between the classroom teachers' and the enrichment teachers' instruction. This is evident from my own experience and also through the data from the comparative analysis on both reading programs. This is an important finding as many gifted and talented researchers recommend collaboration as an approach to best practices. I have addressed this issue through my recommendations to enrichment and classroom teachers. I began these recommendations for enrichment teachers, but then realized sharing these same recommendations with classroom teachers would be one way to begin a collaboration process between the two groups. I expect these recommendations along with the *Teachers' Toolkit* to bring about instructional change in enrichment classes and well as regular education classes. I plan to share these documents through SharePoint, a web application on the district's website where teachers, administrators and district leaders can share documents, websites and information. Also, I will present my findings and recommendations at the end-of-the- year Mentoring Program for new teachers in the Hartman School District. Further, I will share my findings with the publishers of both reading programs.

Also, I would be remiss if I did not discuss the district's assessment process as it relates to the current enrichment program. All students are required to take the state test (DCAS) at the beginning and the end of the year. Classroom teachers' evaluations are, in part, based on the growth of their students' DCAS scores. However, enrichment teachers' evaluations are based on a pre- and post- test scores given by the enrichment teacher at the beginning and the end of the year. As evident through a recent district presentation of DCAS data, the top achieving students in the Hartman School District are not making the same gains compared to top achieving students in

other districts across the state of Delaware. This validates the collaboration process suggested throughout this paper.

Additionally, there is a new assessment (Smarter Balanced) that is being piloted this year at Klima Elementary for 3rd grade and will be rolled out for all students in the 2014 – 2015 school year. This assessment is aligned with the CCSS and goes beyond the current multiple-choice questions on DCAS to include extended response and performance tasks that allow students to demonstrate critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. An analysis of this assessment information was beyond the scope of this paper. However, a possible next step is to set up a study to follow one of the recommendations of this paper and compare test results to those of the preceding year.

Another step following the findings from this paper is to continue using the instructional unit described in the *Teacher's Toolkit* in my own teaching. As I do this, I will make modifications and revisions, as needed. This unit was designed for fourth graders, but can be modified and used for other grades as well. Some changes may include different story selections, longer time spent on the earlier sessions (where the concepts of Reciprocal Teaching are introduced) and also longer sessions with high teacher support, modeling and scaffolding. Also, as the toolkit becomes available to other teachers, I will ask for feedback from them on any additions or revisions they felt necessary.

In addition, another possible further course of action is to develop specific lessons and units designed to meet the CCSS that were not addressed in either reading program (RL. 4.5.a, RL.4.7.b). Specific lessons were not designed in the teachers' toolkit to meet those standards as they were beyond the scope of this paper. However,



the discussion frameworks can be used to address these standards; although, other lessons designed specifically to address those standards may be warranted.

Finally, I was surprised to find, through both content analyses and the teacher surveys, such a large disconnect between research and practice. With the strong research base of discussion instructional frameworks to increase reading comprehension, it was disconcerting to find that these practices are not suggested in core reading series. Further, teachers reported using few discussion frameworks for instruction. As I delved into the research to improve comprehension strategies, I was surprised to find the wealth of research-based strategies not mentioned in either core basal reading series or within current teachers' practices. This confirms findings that teachers must be convinced to use supplement resources with additional research based strategies that best meet the needs of their students and also meet the standards that drive their instruction. My hope is that this paper demonstrates that need to Hartman district enrichment teachers.

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## **Appendix A**

### **CLASSROOM TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS**

**Question 1** How many full time regular education students do you have in your classroom? Do not include here children identified as special or exceptional students. (Write in number of students)

All teachers reported having between 14 – 26 regular education students in their class. It is important to note that the fourth grade classrooms have a larger class size than normal, both classes have 30 students. The fifth grade classrooms have exceptionally small class sizes (17 students in each) and third grade numbers are considered average (between 22-24 students in each of the three classes).

**Question 2** How many children identified as special education or exceptional students are “included” or “mainstreamed” in your classroom on a full-time or part-time basis (e.g., learning disabled, gifted, emotionally/behaviorally disordered students)? (Write in number of students)

Two teachers reported having two children identified as special/exceptional students in their class; this was the lowest number. The other teachers reported having three, five, seven and ten.

**Question 3** What is your assessment of the overall reading achievement level of all regular and special/exceptional students in your classroom? (Estimate the percentage of students who fit within each classification. Use 0 if you have no students within a particular classification. The combination of your answers should total 100%).



Only two teachers reported similar findings with 30% students above average readers, 50% on average and 20% below average readers. A separate teacher reported 8% above average readers, 46% average readers and 46% below average readers. This was the highest percentage of below average readers reported (and lowest percentage of above average readers). Conversely, another teacher reported 50% above average readers, 30% average and 20% below average (the highest reported above average and lowest reported below average). The remaining three teachers all reported 14% above average readers, with 50%, 5%, and 60% average readers and 36%, 6% and 25% below average readers (respectively)

**Question 4.** The following statements represent various perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs toward the teaching and learning of reading. (Choose all that apply)

The majority of teachers (6 out of 7) view themselves as having a balanced approach to reading instruction, which combines skills development with literature and language-rich activities. Five out of the seven teachers surveyed also viewed themselves as having an “eclectic” attitude toward reading instruction, which means that they would draw from multiple perspectives and sets of materials when teaching reading. Only one teacher saw herself as a “traditionalist” when it comes to reading materials and methods.

**Question 5.** The following statements represent various goals or objectives that teachers might have for a reading instructional program. (Check all that apply to you personally).

There were no categories where all seven teachers had the same goal or objective for their reading instructional program. Six of the seven teachers did choose

the category ‘it is my goal to develop readers who are skillful and strategic in word identification, fluency, and reading comprehension’ and ‘it is my goal to develop readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.’ Five of the seven teachers chose the categories ‘it is my goal to develop readers who are independent and motivated to choose, appreciate, and enjoy literature’ and ‘it is my goal to develop readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.’ Only one teacher commented that there was an additional goal, that of developing her students to “love the language.”

**Question 6.** Estimate the total average time (in minutes) you spend each school day for the following reading and language arts activities (Note: These three numbers should reflect an estimate of the total amount of time you spend each day for literacy-related instruction and activities).

Two teachers reported spending 30 minutes daily specifically for reading instruction, two reported 40 minutes, the three remaining teachers reported 45 minutes, 60 minutes and 90 minutes for reading instruction.

Three teachers reported 45 minutes daily for applying, practicing, and extending reading instruction while three others reported 60 minutes for this same category. One teacher reported 70 minutes for applying, practicing and extending reading instruction.

Finally, two teachers reported 30 minutes daily for language arts instruction and practice, four teachers reported 45 minutes and one reported 120 minutes. The

total instructional reading time was as follows: 105 minutes, 90 minutes, 220 minutes, 165 minutes, 170 minutes, 120 minutes and 150 minutes.

**Question 7:** How much time do you devote to the development of the following components or activities within your classroom reading language arts program?

There were no categories where all seven teachers agreed on the time devoted to the development of components or activities within their classroom reading language arts program. However, six of the seven teachers noted that they spend a ‘considerable’ amount of time on developing students’ comprehension. A follow up interview question will be to ask how they are developing students’ comprehension. Similarly, six of the seven teachers noted that they spend ‘little’ time on study skills as part of their classroom reading language arts program. Most relevant to this paper, only one teacher spends a ‘considerable’ amount of time on literature circles, book clubs and/or discussion groups, one teacher spends a ‘moderate’ amount of time and five of the seven teachers spend ‘little’ time on those activities. This category had the second highest standard deviation (.79), only after the category of process writing/writing workshop (.82).

**Question 8:** What reading instructional materials do you use in your classroom?

One teacher reported using exclusively literature anthologies, another teacher reported using exclusively chapter books and another reported using exclusively fiction trade books. The other teachers did not report using one instructional material exclusively. Three teachers reported predominately using a single basal reading series, three reported predominately using literature anthologies and two reported using

predominately nonfiction trade books. Most teachers reported moderately using several instructional materials, including literature anthologies, fiction trade book, non-fiction trade books, picture books and chapter books. Five of the seven teachers reported infrequently using magazines and newspapers. Surprisingly, one teacher reported never using a single basal reading series.

**Question 9:** How do you use the basal reading materials and trade books in your classroom reading program? (Check one)

Regarding the use of reading materials used in the classroom reading program, only one teacher noted that they ‘use basal reading materials as the only reading instructional materials in my classroom; that is, I use no trade books to teach reading’. The other six teachers described their use of materials as ‘I use basal reading materials as the foundation of my reading program; in other words, my reading program is structured around the basal, but I incorporate trade books within the basal program. No teachers chose the last two categories of using trade books as the foundation or as the only reading instructional materials. An important follow up question for the teacher interviews will be to ask how trade books are used to supplement their classroom reading program.

**Question 10:** How, if at all, do you teach reading skills and strategies in relation to reading instructional materials?

In response to this question, teachers were instructed to check all of the given statements that apply to them. Five of the seven teachers reported that they ‘supplement the basal program by teaching additional skills not covered well or at all in the basal.’ Four teachers reported that they ‘use the basal as a general guide for teaching skills and strategies, but they adapt or extend instruction from the basal

significantly.’ Three teachers reported that they ‘teach the skills and strategies as presented in the basal program’ and ‘select skills and strategies from the basal program, teaching only those skills that I feel my students need to learn.’ This is another question that will be elaborated upon in teacher interviews. I am still interested to know which skills and strategies from the basal program do teachers feel that their students still need to learn and which are omitted.

**Question 11:** The following statements describe various ways to organize classroom reading instruction. Check all of the following statements that describe organization plans you employ regularly in your classroom. (Check all that apply).

Two teachers reported using ability grouping to teach reading, two reported teaching reading as a whole class activity and six reported using flexible reading groups. No teachers reported teaching reading as an individualized activity.

**Question 12:** Which of the organizational structures described in item 11 do you use as the primary or most frequent structure in your classroom reading program? (Check only one)

Most teachers (five) reported using flexible groups as the primary instructional structure. The remaining two teachers reported using whole-class instruction as the primary instructional structure.

**Question 13:** Select the following statement that best characterizes your overall approach to classroom reading assessment (Check only one).

Three teachers reported that they rely primarily on conventional assessment measures, such as district-administered texts. Another three teachers reported using a mix of conventional assessment measures along with some informal assessment

measures. Only one teacher reported moving toward adopting various forms of alternative reading assessment and/or portfolio approach to assessment.

**Question 14:** How would you rate your overall school reading program on the following criteria, giving your school a grade of A, B, C, D or F for each.

Five teachers rated their school a 5 and two teachers rated their school a C for developing readers who are skillful and strategic in word identification, fluency, and reading comprehension. Four teachers rated their school a C for developing readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live. The others rated their school with a B, D and F. In developing readers who are independent in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature, two teachers rated a B, three, a C, and two a D. One teacher rated their school an A for developing readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures. Four other teachers rated their school a B and two a C for this criteria.

**Question 15:** How would you rate your overall classroom reading program on the following criteria, giving yourself a grade of A, B, C, D or F for each.

One teacher rated herself an A for developing readers who are skillful and strategic in word identification, fluency, and reading comprehension. Five rated themselves a B and one rated herself a C for that same criteria. One teacher rated herself an A for developing readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live. Two teachers gave the criteria mentioned above a B and four gave a C. This criteria had the highest mean of 2.43. All seven teachers rated themselves a B (five teachers) or C (two teachers) for

developing readers who are independent in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature. All seven teachers collectively rated themselves a B for developing readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures. Interestingly, no teacher rated themselves as a D or F for any criteria.

**Question 16:** Which of the following materials, techniques, or activities are likely to be found in your classroom regularly?

This question addressed materials, techniques and activities that are regularly found in classroom teachers reading instruction. All seven teachers noted that comprehension strategy instruction (e.g., making inferences, drawing conclusions) are likely to be found in their classrooms regularly. Six out of the seven teachers responded using instruction in comprehension monitoring (e.g., self-questioning, applying “fix-up” strategies such as rereading), instruction in literary elements (e.g., characterization, mood, setting, narrative structure) and literature response activities (e.g., written responses to literature), and teaching reading strategies along with content subjects. However, only two teachers responded that they regularly use literature discussion groups (e.g., book clubs). Further, only four of the seven teachers noted using critical reading lessons or activities regularly.

**Question 17:** Have you made any major changes or innovations in your reading instructional program over the past several years?

Four teachers responded yes while the three others responded no.

**Question 18:** If you marked yes to the preceding, please respond to the following questions by telling about the most important or significant changes you have made. What was the nature of the change? Who initiated the change and what

was the reason for the change? Evaluate the sources of the change or innovation. How is the change process proceeding?

All four teachers who marked 'yes' to the preceding question, replied that changes were ongoing based on district mandated curriculum changes. One teacher also remarked that changes take place in her instruction as she evaluates her students' growth. She was the only teacher whose comment reflected change based on assessment. Another teacher added that her changes have taken place in incorporating reading comprehension strategies into all subject areas due to the new CCSS.

**Question 19:** As you work toward improving the quality of reading instruction in your classroom, what are the greatest challenges you face?

Many teachers (5 out of 7) reported that their biggest challenge was support for the different needs of their students. One teacher wrote, "My greatest challenge is a lack of ongoing support with regard to student success" while another teacher commented, "The greatest challenge I face is meeting the needs of all students with larger classroom sizes."

One teacher reported that her biggest challenge was using the basal reader to meet the CCSS. She stated that "many of the stories in the anthology and the basal leveled readers are uninteresting to the students and do not have enough depth to allow deep analysis and rich conversations about the text and literature in general." She adds,

"The movement toward CCSS is contrary to the district reading requirements and although some district reading leaders encourage teachers to "adapt" the curriculum maps and use higher level novels and other text instead of the anthologies, they contradict themselves because two weeks later they are asking you where you are in the pacing guide, what reading story you are on, whether or not you are "fully" implementing the curriculum maps AND if you say you are



adapting the maps (something the district leaders encouraged not long before) or partially implementing the maps AND that you are off the pacing guide; then teachers receive the third degree for not following the guide and for using actual literature instead of a 7 page long, flat, boring story.”

This comment reflects the need for the content analysis from this paper to be shared with district curriculum specialists in support of allowing teachers to modify the core basal reading program to effectively meet the CCSS.

**Appendix B**  
**CODING QUESTIONS**

<b>Common Core State Standards:</b>	<b>Evidence (Y/N)</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
<b>Are students asked to:</b> refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly? (RL.4.1.a)		
refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text? (RL.4.1.b)		
determine a theme of a story, drams, or poem from details in the text? (RL.4.2.a)		
summarize the text? (RL.4.2.b)		

explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose? (RL.4.5.a)		
Refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues) when writing or speaking about text? (RL.4.5.b)		
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third- person narrations? (RL.4.7.a)		
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text? (RL.4.7.b)		

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly? (SL.4.1)		
Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion? (SL.4.1a)		
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion)? (SL.4.1b)		
Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others? (SL.4.1c)		
Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion? (SL.4.1d)		

**Appendix C**  
**CODING SHEET**

<b>Common Core State Standards:</b>	Answer Questions	Generate Questions	Summarize	Use Graphic Organizers	Monitor Comprehension	Recognize Story Structure	Use Cooperative Learning	Use Multiple Strategies
<b>Are students asked to:</b> refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly? (RL.4.1.a)								

determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text? (RL.4.2.a)								
summarize the text? (RL.4.2.b)								
describe a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text(e.g., a characters' thoughts, words, or actions)? (RL.4.3)								

explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose? (RL.4.5.a)								
Refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues) when writing or speaking about text? (RL.4.5.b)								
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third- person narrations? (RL.4.7.a)								

<p>Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text? (RL.4.7.b)</p>								
<p>Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g. opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events? (RL.4.9)</p>								



Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly? (SL.4.1)								
Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion? (SL.4.1a)								

Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion)? (SL.4.1b)								
Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others? (SL.4.1c)								

## Appendix D

### CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CORE BASAL READING PROGRAM

In the section below, I will detail the data analysis of my content analysis with the core basal reading program. I will discuss in detail (1) each specific CCSS standard that is addressed in the core basal reading program, (2) each specific CCSS standard that is not addressed in the core basal reading program and (3) the strategies used to address each CCSS.

I began with the standard asking students to ‘refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text’ was split into two parts as mentioned above: ‘refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly’ (RL.4.1.a) and ‘refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text’ (RL.4.1.b). Both standards were used frequently across all units. The first part of this standard (RL.4.1.a) is met through all of the research-based reading strategies (NRP, 2000) except ‘using multiple strategies.’ Table 1 shows the breakdown for the instructional moves that met this standard and which reading strategy was used. Table 2 shows the breakdown for standard RL.4.1.b.

Table 12 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.1.a ‘refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly’ (N=300)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a
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	presented (n) in program	was presented in program
Answer Questions	185	62
Generate Questions	10	3
Summarize	26	9
Use Graphic Organizers	39	13
Monitor Comprehension	16	5
Recognize Story Structure	16	5
Use Cooperative Learning	14	5
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

Teacher questioning was used the majority of the time to address this standard. For example, in Unit 1, week 1, the teacher's edition asks the questions, *How did Miss Franny become a librarian?* (p. T26), *In what way do all three main characters deal with the problem of loneliness?* (p. T28). Other reading strategies were used, however; much less frequently. In Unit 6, students are asked to refer to details in a text through monitoring comprehension and cooperative learning. Students are asked to turn to a partner to share how they monitored their comprehension and tell how they clarified things that didn't make sense to them (p. T103). This was done after adding facts and opinions from the story to a graphic organizer.

Table 13 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.1.b 'refer to details and examples in a text when drawing details from the text' (N=289)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	211	73
Generate Questions	2	.7
Summarize	2	.7
Use Graphic Organizers	39	13

Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	8	3
Use Cooperative Learning	35	12
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

Again, students were asked to make inferences through teacher questioning most often. For example, Why do you think that the part of the story Miss Franny will never forget is when the bear took the book? (p. T26) and Why does Miguel understand how Tia Lola is feeling? (p. T170). Students were also given graphic organizers, such as a column chart (p. T315), to list details and examples from the story to form an inference. Also, cooperative learning was used for students to discuss with a partner their inference.

For example, in Unit 2, teachers are instructed to:

Have partners discuss how they could help make a newcomer feel comfortable in your school or town. What would they do? What would they say? Ask students to refer to examples from the story of how Aunt Nanette and Uncle Romie made James feel comfortable.

The next standard, ‘determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text’ (RL.4.2.a) was met 77 times throughout the reading series, most often through the use of the essential question noted at the beginning of each week. See Table 3 for the breakdown of this standard.

Table 14 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.2.a ‘determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text’ (N=77)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in
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		program
Answer Questions	59	78
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	14	18
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	8	10
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

For example, in Unit 1, students are asked to complete a graphic organizer using setting, characters, and characters' actions to determine the theme of the drama (p. T239). A separate graphic organizer asks students to list important details from the story to develop the theme (p. T19). Also, the teacher is guided to ask the question *What message might the author be trying to give about the importance of community programs? Why do you think so?* (p. T240). Further, they are asked, *What ideas do Ileana and her friends consider to raise money? What do the fund-raising ideas tell you about friends?* (p. T241). All units included an essential question for each week that addressed the theme of the story or stories read that week.

Another standard addressed in the core basal reading program is that of asking students to summarize the text (RL.4.2.b). The program guided teachers to teach this standard through the use of answering questions, using graphic organizers, monitoring comprehension, and using cooperative learning. See Table 4 for the breakdown of this standard.

Table 15 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.2.b 'summarize the text' (N=81)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was
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	program	presented in program
Answer Questions	11	14
Generate Questions	1	1
Summarize	4	5
Use Graphic Organizers	18	22
Monitor Comprehension	12	15
Recognize Story Structure	20	25
Use Cooperative Learning	10	12
Use Multiple Strategies	5	6

For example, in Unit 5, students are asked to summarize a reading selection using a graphic organizer to list the character's thoughts, actions and changes to develop a summary of the story (p. T18). Also, students are asked summarize the story through teacher questioning. For example, the students are asked, *What are the main events that lead Mara to declare, "This is the case of the missing turtle and eggs?"* (p. T197). On pg. T199, during reading, students are asked, *Can you recall the most important details about where the events are taking place?* and *What are the most important events?* to summarize.

Students were also often asked to 'describe a character, setting or story in a drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a characters thoughts, words, or actions)' (RL.4.3). This standard was most often addressed with answering questions, story structure and using graphic organizers. The breakdown of this standard is listed in Table 5.

Table 16 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.3 ‘describe a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a characters thoughts, words, or actions’ (N=149)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	74	50
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	31	21
Monitor Comprehension	14	9
Recognize Story Structure	28	19
Use Cooperative Learning	2	1
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

For example, in Unit 1, students are given a story structure graphic organizer to list the characters, setting and characters’ actions as part of the plot (p. T23). Further, the teachers ask the following questions (p. T22), *What is the setting of this selection? Who are the main characters? What are some possible reasons that Opal spends so much time at the library? and Why might Opal teach Winn-Dixie to look in the library window?* Also, from Unit 4, students are asked to visualize through questions about the characters actions. (p. T 317, *Which ideas on pages 509 and 510 help you form mental images of Sacagawea’s first meeting with the Shoshone people? and How do these images help you picture the main idea of these pages?*)

CCSS RL.4.5 (refer to the structural elements of poems {e.g., verse, rhythm, meter} and drama {e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues} when writing or speaking about text) was addressed through 31 instructional directives. See Table 6 for the breakdown of strategies used.



Table 17 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.5.b ‘refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues) when writing or speaking about text’ (N=31)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	28	90
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	2	4
Use Graphic Organizers	0	0
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	1	3
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

The majority of the instructional directives for this standard were addressed through students answering questions. For example, in Unit 6, students are asked to analyze rhyme through the use of teacher questions, (p. T112) *What kind of rhyme does this poem have? Give an example of rhyme in the poem.* Also, in Unit 6, students are asked, *What do the stage directions (Turning around) tell us about what is taking place in this scene?* (p. T154) when referring to a drama.

The standard ‘compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events’ (RL.4.9) was addressed 58 times. The strategies used were answer questions, use graphic organizers, and cooperative learning. Table 7 shows the breakdown totals.

Table 18 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.9 ‘compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events’ (N=58)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	40	69
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	8	14
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	10	17
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

In Unit 2, students are asked to use a venn diagram to compare and contrast the events and experiences of two characters as they visit New York City for the first time (p. T327). Also in Unit 2, the students are asked to compare and contrast the week’s reading selections using the teacher prompt, *Do the characters in this week’s selections express themselves clearly? Explain why or why not* (p. T262). Also, in Unit 5, students are asked to ‘share and compare texts’ through cooperative learning. On p. T334, the teacher directions state:

Have students use evidence from two or more of this week’s texts to make connections. Use these discussion points: How have advances in technology helped us? Are technological advances always a good thing? Using evidence from the texts you read this week, explain what schools and classrooms in the future might look like.

The last CCSS that the basal reading program addresses is ‘engaging students in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and

texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.’ See table 8 for the breakdown of strategies.

Table 19 Breakdown of the CCSS SL.4.1 ‘engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly’ (N=41)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	17	41
Generate Questions	2	5
Summarize	1	2
Use Graphic Organizers	1	2
Monitor Comprehension	1	2
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	19	46
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

The basal reading program touches on this standard as it often suggests that students hold discussions with partners, share responses with the class, and participate in guided discussions. For example, in Unit 5 (p. T259), students are asked to work with a partner to discuss and complete comprehension questions. Also, volunteers are asked to share ways some of their own friendships are similar to or different from the friendship between the characters in the story. Each weekly lesson has a ‘deepen comprehension’ section where students are asked to share and discuss (usually with a partner) as an application of their comprehension. However, these ‘deepen comprehension’ sections are always on Day 5, at the end of the suggested week. This is the only place in the program where discussions are suggested. The program

includes an abundance of material and often there are not five-day weeks during the school year, due to holidays, professional days, field trips, state assessment testing, etc. It will be important to find out (through interviews and surveys) how often teachers include these ‘deeper comprehension’ components in their weekly lessons. Even if they are included as suggested by the reading program, they only touch upon the CCSS being addressed.

#### CCSS not addressed in the core basal reading program

There were several CCSS not addressed or minimally addressed in the core basal reading program including ‘reading and comprehending literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently.’ The CCSS initiative places a strong emphasis on the role of text complexity. When determining text complexity, three important components of text complexity are considered: qualitative dimensions of text complexity, such as levels of meaning, structure, and language conventionality; quantitative measures of text complexity, such as word frequency and sentence length; and reader and task considerations, such as students' knowledge, motivation and interests (Smith, 2013).

Brenner and Hiebert (2010) recently conducted a study to determine the amount of text available to students for reading practice in core reading programs. They reviewed six programs’ third-grade manuals, specifically searching for the amount of text and the amount of opportunities suggested for reading practice. They analyzed three weeks of instruction from each program. All activities suggested for students to read any connected text were examined and included in the analysis. The findings showed that the opportunities for students to practice reading and the number of words available for students to read would provide an average of 15 minutes a day.

This was based upon “the most generous stance possible, assuming that students would read every word in every text made available” (p. 359). The method in which a teacher implements the reading practice can change the amount of time spent reading. The findings of this analysis, although focused on volume of reading and not text complexity, offers insights into text availability in core reading programs.

In an effort to determine text complexity within the core basal reading program, I examined lexile ranges to determine qualitative and quantitative measures. The lexile range aligned to the CCSS for grades 4-5 is 740-1010L (Common Core State Standards, 2010). I used the website [www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com) to determine the lexile range from the narratives (stories, dramas, and poetry) used in the core reading program. Many of the stories in the core basal reading program fell below this recommended level.

The Common Core State Standards that require students to compare and contrast genres, materials, and/or point of view were also not addressed in the core basal reading program. Table 9 shows the breakdown of instructional directives that address these standards.

Table 20 Breakdown of CCSS RL.4.5.a (‘explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose’), R.L.4.7.a (‘compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third- person narrations’) and R.L. 4.7.b (‘make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions in the text’).

Reading Strategies:	CCSS RL.4.5.a (N=0)	CCSS RL.4.7.a (N=1)	CCSS RL.4.7.b (N=0)
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Answer Questions	0	1	0
Generate Questions	0	0	0
Summarize	0	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	0	0	0
Monitor Comprehension	0	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0	0
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0	0

Specifically the following standards were not aligned with the suggested instruction in the reading program: (1) compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations (RL.4.5.a); (2) explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., cast of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text (RL.4.7.a); and (3) make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text (RL.4.7.b).

Lastly, several standards that incorporate discussions as part of comprehension were not fully aligned in the reading program. Table 10 displays the breakdown of these standards.

Table 21 Breakdown of CCSS S.L.4.1.a ('come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information about the topic to explore ideas under discussion'), S.L.4.1.b ('follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion'), S.L.4.1.c ('ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others'), and S.L.4.1.d ('explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion').

Reading Strategy:	CCSS SL.4.1.a (N=0)	CCSS SL.4.1.b (N=4)	CCSS SL.4.1.c (N=0)	CCSS SL.4.1.d (N=4)
Answer Questions	0	0	0	2
Generate Questions	0	1	0	0
Summarize	0	0	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	0	0	0	0
Monitor Comprehension	0	1	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	2	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0	0	2
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0	0	0

As mentioned earlier, students are asked to engage in discussions when responding to questions or completing a graphic organizer; however, they are not effectively engaged in a range of collaborative discussions that build on ideas as the CCSS suggests. Further, they are not asked to come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material and to explicitly draw on that preparation and other information about the topic to explore ideas. Additionally, they are not asked to pose and respond to specific question to clarify or follow up on information, make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others, or review key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion. Lastly, the reading program does not provide agreed-upon rules for

discussion or assigning roles as part of a discussion, as spelled out in the grade 4 common core speaking and listening standards under comprehension and collaboration.



**Appendix E**  
**ENRICHMENT TEACHER SURVEY**

1. How long have you been an enrichment teacher?
  - 1 -2 years
  - 2 – 5 years
  - 5 – 10 years
  - 10+ years
2. Which best describes your teaching situation?
  - Full time at a suburban school
  - Full time at a city school
  - Split between two or more city schools
  - Split between two or more suburban schools
  - Split between a city and suburban school
3. On average, how often do you meet with your grades 3-5 groups for reading?
  - 1 time/week for 45 minutes or more
  - 1 time/week for less than 45 minutes
  - 2 times/week for 45 minutes or more
  - 2 times/week for less than 45 minutes
  - 3 times/week for 45 minutes or more
  - 3 times/week for less than 45 minutes
  - 4 times/week for 45 minutes or more
  - 4 times/week for less than 45 minutes
  - 5 times/week for 45 minutes or more
  - 5 times/week for less than 45 minutes
4. How closely do you follow the William and Mary language arts curriculum?
  - I use only the William and Mary curriculum
  - I use a mix of the William and Mary curriculum along with other supplemental materials/strategies
  - I use only other materials/strategies

5. Check the sentence that best describes the alignment between your students and the William and Mary curriculum.
  - My students are able to complete all assignments with no teacher support and/or scaffolding
  - My students are able to complete all assignments with little teacher support and/or scaffolding
  - My students are able to complete all assignments with much teacher support and/or scaffolding
  - My students are unable to complete the assignments without teacher support and/or scaffolding
6. On average, how many novels for each grade level (3-5) do you assign per year?
  - None
  - 1 – 2
  - 3 – 4
  - 5 – 6
  - More than 6
7. How do you select the novels your students will read?
  - Suggested titles from the William and Mary curriculum
  - Suggested titles from the Christina School District
  - Suggested titles from the Common Core State Standards
  - Suggested titles from other teachers
  - Personal selections
8. Please list novels you assign, if any, in addition to the William and Mary suggested titles.  
(Please provide titles and grade levels in the space below).
9. What are some instructional strategies you use to engage students in a novel study (if any)?
  - Curriculum guide questions
  - Teacher created questions
  - Student generated questions
  - Questioning the Author (QtA)
  - Reciprocal Teaching
  - Literature Circles
  - Book Clubs
  - Socratic Seminars
  - Instructional Conversations

- Collaborative Reasoning
- Other (please specify)

10. Please describe any instructional difficulties related to the reading curriculum you have encountered as the enrichment teacher.

## **Appendix F**

### **CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ENRICHMENT READING PROGRAM**

After collecting and analyzing data from my content analysis of the core basal reading program (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's *Journeys*) used in the regular education classrooms at my school, I decided to conduct a content analysis on the enrichment reading program (William and Mary Program's *Literary Reflections*) used in all enrichment classrooms throughout the district. The purpose of this content analysis was two-fold. First, I was interested to find out how well this reading program was aligned with the CCSS. Further, I was interested to find out if this program covered the same CCSS as the core basal reading program, as well as if this program covered more or less of those standards.

In the section below, I will detail the data and findings of my content analysis with the enrichment reading program. I will discuss in detail (1) each specific CCSS standards that are addressed in the core basal reading program, (2) each specific CCSS standards that are not addressed in the core basal reading program and (3) the strategies used to address each CCSS.

The standard asking students to 'refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text' was split into two parts as mentioned above, 'refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly' (RL.4.1.a) and 'refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text' (RL.4.1.b). Both standards were used frequently across all lessons. The first part of this standard (RL.4.1.a) is met

mostly through ‘answering questions’ although there were a few examples of using graphic organizers and writing. Table 1 shows the breakdown for the instructional moves that met this standard and which reading strategy was used. Table 1 shows the breakdown for standard RL.4.1.b.

Table 22 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.1.a ‘refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly’ (N=28)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	25	87
Generate Questions	1	4
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	2	8
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

Teacher questioning was used the majority of the time to address this standard. For example, in lesson 1, the teacher directive suggests teachers ask students *What important decisions do the characters in the story make?* Other reading strategies were used, however; much less frequently. In lesson 6, students are asked to complete a graphic organizer to describe characters and their changes throughout the story.

Table 2 illustrates the breakdown of standard RL.4.1.b, ‘refer to details in a text when drawing inferences for the text.’ There were 91 instances of this standard as detailed below.

Table 23 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.1.b ‘refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences from the text’ (N=91)

Reading Skill and/or Standard:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	74	81
Generate Questions	2	2
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	11	14
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	2	2
Use Cooperative Learning	1	1
Use Multiple Strategies	1	1

Again, questioning was the most often used strategy to achieve this standard. For example, in lesson 4, students are asked, ‘*Why do they make the choices they do?*’ ‘*Why does Mary begin to feel lonely in these chapters? What events make her feel lonely?*’ Students were also given graphic organizers, such as a T-chart to list details and examples from the story to form an inference.

The next standard, ‘determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text’ (RL.4.2.a) was met 72 times throughout the reading program. This standard was often used to accomplish the program’s Goal 6 (to develop the concept of change). See table 3 for the breakdown of this standard.

Table 24 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.2.a ‘determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text’ (N=72)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	42	58
Generate Questions	1	1
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	21	36

Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	2	3
Use Multiple Strategies	1	1

For example, in lesson 3, students are asked to complete a graphic organizer to record notes about changes they identified in their novel. A separate graphic organizer asks students to list ‘internal changes in characters’ and ‘changes in relationships with other characters’ to develop the theme. Also, the teacher is guided to ask the questions *How do these poems relate to the generalization that change may be positive or negative? Are there changes described in the poems absolutely positive or negative, or are they positive or negative depending on the point of view of an individual?* All lessons included ‘change’ questions in teacher directive statements in an effort to engage students in determining a theme of a story, drama or poem.

Another standard addressed in the *Literary Reflections* program is that of asking students to summarize the text (RL.4.2.b). The program guided teachers to teach this standard through the use of answering questions, using graphic organizers, and summarizing. See Table 4 for the breakdown of this standard.

Table 25 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.2.b ‘summarize the text’ (N=23)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	5	22
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	12	52
Use Graphic Organizers	6	26
Monitor Comprehension	0	0

Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

For example, in lesson 15, students are asked to include key words, feelings, main ideas, and images/symbols in completing a graphic organizer of a Chinese folktale. In lesson 16, after reading a poem, they are asked *What feeling is the poet trying to express in each poem? What evidence in the poem supports your response?* Also, in lesson 19, students are asked to write a book review of their novel stating and explaining their point of view about the novel and providing specific details about why they would or would not recommend this book to other readers.

Students were also occasionally asked to ‘describe a character, setting or story in a drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a characters thoughts, words, or actions)’ (RL.4.3). This standard was most often met with answering questions and using graphic organizers. The breakdown of this standard is listed in Table 5.

Table 26 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.3 ‘describe a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a characters thoughts, words, or actions)’ (N=32)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	15	47
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	13	41
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	2	6
Use Cooperative Learning	1	3
Use Multiple Strategies	1	3



For example, in several lessons students are given a story structure graphic organizer to list the characters, setting and characters' actions. Further, the teachers guide asks the following questions, *Why do you think Mary is so curious about Dickon? Why is Mary nervous about telling Dickon about the garden? How does he help Mary? Why is Colin not afraid to have Mary look at him?* These questions exemplify describing a character or event in a story drawing on specific details in the text. In another example, from lesson 1, students are asked to write a letter to a character describing their feelings about the character's actions in the story. The last example uses writing as the strategy to achieve this standard.

CCSS RL.4.5 (refer to the structural elements of poems {e.g., verse, rhythm, meter} and drama {e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues} when writing or speaking about text) was addressed through 10 instructional directives. See Table 6 for the breakdown of strategies used.

Table 27 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.5.b 'refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogues) when writing or speaking about text' (N=10)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	8	80
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	0	0
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	2	20
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

The majority of the instructional directives for this standard were addressed through students answering questions. For example, lesson 19 asks, *How did the setting of each story contribute to its plot? In which of the two stories was the setting more significant? Why?* In another example, from lesson 16, students are asked to fill in the story structure section of their literature webs. An example answer might include ‘poem with 2 stanzas, 4 lines each; second and fourth lines in each stanza rhyme; personification of berry, rose, maple, field; and first person’.

The standard ‘compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third- person narrations’ was addressed 15 times. The strategies used were answer questions and use graphic organizers. Table 7 shows the breakdown totals.

Table 28 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.7.a ‘compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third- person narrations’ (N=15)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	13	87
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	2	13
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

Thirteen of the sixteen examples from this standard are addressed through answering questions, such as Why is Mary nervous about telling Dickon about the garden? What is the poet's point of view about fame and privacy? What would be another point of view? If you were to rewrite one of the novels from a different point of view, whose point of view might you choose? What would you have to change in the story in order to show the other point of view? There are a couple examples of using graphic organizers to accomplish this standard, for example, completing a venn diagram comparing the thoughts and actions of two characters (lesson 18).

The standard 'compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events' (RL.4.9) was addressed 12 times. The strategies used were answer questions and use graphic organizers. Table 8 shows the breakdown totals.

Table 29 Breakdown of the CCSS RL.4.9 'compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events' (N=12)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	8	67
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	4	33
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0

In lesson 2, students are asked to discuss whether they think the changes from the beginning to the end of the story are orderly or random, or both. In lesson 7, students are asked, *How do these poems relate to the generalization that change may be positive or negative?* Also, in lesson 2, students are brainstorming generalizations about change and using a graphic organizer to list examples of each generalization from the story.

Another CCSS that the William and Mary language arts program addresses is ‘engaging students in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly’ (SL.4.1). See table 9 for the breakdown of strategies.

Table 30 Breakdown of the CCSS SL.4.1 ‘engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly’ (N=18)

Reading Strategy:	Number of times presented (n) in program	% of times CCSS RL.4.1.a was presented in program
Answer Questions	3	17
Generate Questions	1	6
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	9	50
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	4	22
Use Multiple Strategies	1	6

The William and Mary program touches on this standard as it often suggests that students hold discussions with partners, share responses with the class, and participate in guided discussions. For example, in lesson 3, it is suggested that

students are given time to meet in small groups and discuss their novels. Further, in lesson 19, teachers are instructed to move students into discussion groups to share literature webs and change matrices (graphic organizers) to guide their discussions.

The last CCSS addressed in the William and Mary Language Arts curriculum was ‘reading and comprehending literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently.’ The CCSS initiative places a strong emphasis on the role of text complexity ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)). When determining text complexity, three important components of text complexity are considered: qualitative dimensions of text complexity, such as levels of meaning, structure, and language conventionality; quantitative measures of text complexity, such as word frequency and sentence length; and reader and task considerations, such as students' knowledge, motivation and interests ([www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com)).

In an effort to determine text complexity within the William and Mary reading program, I examined lexile ranges to determine qualitative and quantitative measures. The lexile range aligned to the CCSS for grades 4-5 is 740-1010L (Common Core State Standards, 2010). I used Appendix B from the William and Mary program where information regarding lexile measures can be found. The lexile range for these stories was 730 - 1070, falling within the lexile range suggested by the CCSS.

CCSS not addressed in the core basal reading program.

There were several CCSS not addressed or minimally addressed in the core basal reading program including the Common Core State Standards that require students to compare and contrast genres, materials, and/or point of view were also not addressed in the William and Mary language arts program. Table 10 shows the breakdown of instructional statements that address these standards.

Table 31 Breakdown of CCSS RL.4.5.a ('explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose'), and R.L. 4.7.b ('make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions in the text.')

Reading Strategy:	CCSS RL.4.5.a (N=0)	CCSS RL.4.7.b (N=3)
Answer Questions	0	0
Generate Questions	0	0
Summarize	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	0	3
Monitor Comprehension	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0
Writing	0	0

Specifically the following standards were not aligned with the suggested instruction in the reading program: (1) compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations (RL.4.5.a); and (2) make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text (RL.4.7.b).

Lastly, several standards that incorporate discussions as part of comprehension were not fully aligned in the reading program. Table 11 displays the breakdown of these standards.

Table 32 Breakdown of CCSS S.L.4.1.a ('come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information about the topic to explore ideas under discussion'), S.L.4.1.b ('follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion'), S.L.4.1.c ('ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others'), and S.L.4.1.d ('explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion').

Reading Strategy:	CCSS SL.4.1.a (N=1)	CCSS SL.4.1.b (N=0)	CCSS SL.4.1.c (N=0)	CCSS SL.4.1.d (N=4)
Answer Questions	0	0	0	1
Generate Questions	0	0	0	0
Summarize	0	0	0	0
Use Graphic Organizers	1	0	0	3
Monitor Comprehension	0	0	0	0
Recognize Story Structure	0	0	0	0
Use Cooperative Learning	0	0	0	0
Use Multiple Strategies	0	0	0	0
Writing	0	0	0	0

As mentioned earlier, students are asked to engage in discussions when responding to questions or completing a graphic organizer; however, they are not effectively engaged in a range of collaborative discussions that build on ideas as the CCSS suggests. Further, they are not asked to come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material and to explicitly draw on that preparation and other information about the topic to explore ideas. Additionally, they are not asked to pose and respond to specific question to clarify or follow up on information, make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others, or review key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion. Lastly, the reading program does not provide agreed-upon rules for

discussion or assigning roles as part of a discussion, as spelled out in the grade 4 common core speaking and listening standards under comprehension and collaboration.



## **Appendix G**

### **STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION OF LITERARY TEXTS**

#### **Introduction**

Dear Teachers,

This teachers' toolkit represents my findings, conclusions and recommendations based on a year-long quest to improve reading comprehension of literary texts in an enrichment program. Conversations with educators, teacher feedback, my own classroom experiences, research, and a thorough analysis of reading programs are the foundations for each piece of the toolkit. Within each document, you will find a title page describing why I created that document, what research says, and how it might be used to improve your comprehension instruction. I hope you will find the toolkit valuable and useful in supporting your reading instruction. I encourage you to share resources included here with colleagues. Please feel free to revise, edit and make additions to any documents to best meet your needs.

Sincerely,

Jen Klima

## **KEY READING TERMS**

Attached, you will find a list of reading related terms and their definitions. Research tells us that in order to improve reading instruction, educators must understand the terminology used in reading programs and instructional strategies (Anders, 2002). With the new Common Core State Standards put in place, there are several new terms presented to teachers (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). These terms may be unfamiliar to you or may have different translations. It is important that we all use the terms appropriately, especially when implementing the CCSS into practice (Beach, 2011). This list is designed as an easy reference for finding definitions of key reading terms that you may encounter in your reading curricula, planning and professional interactions.

## KEY READING TERMS

*Characterization* – the author’s expression of a character’s personality through the use of action, dialogue, thought, or commentary by the author or another character.

*Conflict* – the struggle within the story. Character divided against self, character against character, character against society, character against nature. Without it, there is no story.

*Cooperative learning* – readers work together to learn strategies in the context of reading.

*Comprehension monitoring* –the reader learns how to be aware or conscious of his or her understanding during reading and learns procedures to deal with problems in understanding as they arise.

*Dialogue* – an exchange of ideas in which there is not intention to reach a decision.

*Discussion* – an exchange of ideas in which there is an intention to reach a decision or conclusion.

*Debate* – An interplay wherein one idea is proved correct and all opposing viewpoints

are undermined.

*Graphic organizers* –allows the reader to represent graphically (write or draw) the meanings and relationships of the ideas that underlie the words in the text.

*Imagery* – figurative descriptions or illustrations used in text to form a reader's mental images. Used to evoke atmosphere, mood, and tension.

*Multiple-strategy instruction* – the reader uses several of the procedures in interaction with the teacher over the text. Multiple-strategy teaching is effective when procedures are used flexibly and appropriately by the reader or the teacher in naturalistic contexts.

*Point of view* - the vantage point from which the author presents action of the story. Who is telling the story? Point of view is often considered the technical aspect of fiction which leads the critic most readily into the problems and meanings of the story.

*Reading Skills* – automatic actions of a skilled reader.

*Reading Strategies* – any and all conscious, deliberate and systematic plans of working toward a reading goal (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008). For example, using graphic organizers, reciprocal teaching and finding the main idea are all considered strategies.

*Scaffolding* – temporary guidance or assistance provided to a student by a teacher, another adult, or a more capable peer, enabling the student to perform a task he or she otherwise would not be able to learn to do alone, with the goal of fostering the student's capacity to perform the task on his or her own.

*Story Structure* – from which the reader learns to ask and answer who, what, where, when, and why questions about the plot, conflict and climax in a story. In some cases, story structure maps out the timeline, characters, and events in the stories.

*Summarization* – the reader attempts to identify and write the main or most important ideas that integrate or unite the other ideas or meanings of the text into a coherent whole.

*Symbol* – related to imagery. It is something which is itself, yet it stands for or means something else. It tends to be more singular, more fixed than imagery.

*Tone* – suggests an attitude toward the subject that is communicated through the words the author chooses. Part of the range of tone includes playful, somber, serious, casual, formal, and ironic. It designates the mood and effect of a work.

*Question answering* – the reader answers questions posed by the teacher and is given

feedback on the correctness.

*Question generating* – the reader asks himself or herself what, when, where, why, and what will happen, how and who questions.

*Text Complexity* – The inherent difficulty of reading and comprehending a text combined with consideration of reader and task variables; in the CCSS, a three-part assessment of text difficulty that pairs qualitative and quantitative measures with reader-task considerations (CCSS, pp. 31, 57; Reading, pp. 4 – 16).

## **BOOK LISTS WITH LEXILE LEVELS**

The following book lists are organized by genre and author and include all lexile levels, when available. When lexile levels were not available, suggested grade level ranges are provided. This list was compiled based on recommendations from the Common Core State Standards as well as from personal lists gathered through over 20 years of teaching experiences. Also included here are available website resources for children's literature selections. With the implementation of the CCSS, it is important that we challenge our students with appropriate text complexity both in their independent reading and also in our instruction of reading.

## BOOK LISTS WITH LEXILE LEVEL

### Classics

Classic children's literature is literature that has endured over time. Not all of the books on this list are strictly children's literature, but may be appropriate for young readers who are reading at a high level of proficiency. Many of the authors have written additional books that would also be appropriate for younger readers.

<b>Title and Author</b>	<b>Lexile Level</b>
<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> by Mark Twain	950
<i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> by Arthur Conan Doyle	1080
<i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> by Lewis Carroll	890
<i>Anne of Green Gables</i> by Lucy Maud Montgomery	990
<i>A Bear Called Paddington</i>	750
<i>Black Beauty</i> by Anna Sewell	900
<i>The Borrowers</i> by Mary Norton	780
<i>A Christmas Carol</i> by Charles Dickens	1080
<i>Charlotte's Web</i> by E.B. White	680
<i>The Count of Monte Cristo</i> by Alexander Dumas	930
<i>The Cricket in Times Square</i> by George Selden	780
<i>Diary of a Young Girl</i> by Anne Frank	1080
<i>Frankenstein</i> by Mary Shelley	940
<i>The Gift of the Magi</i> by O. Henry	940
<i>Gone With the Wind</i> by Margaret Mitchell	1100
<i>Gulliver's Travels</i> by Jonathan Swift	1210
<i>The Legend of Sleepy Hollow</i> by Washington Irving	770
<i>The Little Prince</i> by Antoine de Saint-Exupery	710
<i>Little House in the Big Woods</i> by Laura Ingalls Wilder	930
<i>Little Women</i> by Louisa May Alcott	1300
<i>My Friend Flicka</i> by Mary O'Hara	960
<i>The Old Man and the Sea</i> by Ernest Hemingway	940
<i>Peter Pan</i> by J.M. Barrie	920
<i>Pippi Longstocking</i> by Astrid Lindgren	870
<i>Rebecca</i> by Daphne Du Maurier	880
<i>The Red Pony</i> by John Steinbeck	810
<i>Robinson Crusoe</i> by Daniel Defoe	1070
<i>The Secret Garden</i> by Frances Hodgson Burnett	970



<i>The Story of Doctor Doolittle</i> by Hugh Lofting	580
<i>Swiss Family Robinson</i> by Johann Wyss	910
<i>Treasure Island</i> by Robert Louis Stevenson	1070
<i>Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</i> by Jules Verne	1030
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> by Harper Lee	870
<i>The Hobbit</i> by J.R.R. Tolkien	1000
<i>The House at Pooh Corner</i> by A.A. Milne	830
<i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> by Victor Hugo	1340
<i>The Indian in the Cupboard</i> by Lynne Reid Banks	780
<i>Ivanhoe</i> by Sir Walter Scott	1410
<i>Johnny Tremain</i> by Esther Forbes	840
<i>The Jungle Book</i> by Rudyard Kipling	1140
<i>The Velveteen Rabbit</i> by Margery Williams	820
<i>The War of the Worlds</i> by H.G. Wells	1170
<i>White Fang</i> by Jack London	970
<i>The Wind in the Willows</i> by Kenneth Grahame	1140
<i>The Witch of Blackbird Pond</i> by Elizabeth George Speare	850
<i>The Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i> by L. Frank Baum	1000
<i>The Yearling</i> by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings	750

The following books are listed by genre. The genres were chosen based on the recommendations of the Common Core State Standards. When a Lexile level was unavailable, grade levels are given.

<b>Myths &amp; Legends</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>Andy and the Lion</i>	James Henry Daugherty	740
<i>Ariadne Awake!</i>	Doris Orgel	4-6 grades
<i>Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the Iliad</i>	Rosemary Sutcliff	1300
<i>Celtic Gods and Heroes</i>	John Green	2-5 grades
<i>The Gods and Goddesses of Ancient China</i>	Leonard Everett Fisher	960
<i>The Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt</i>	Leonard Everett Fisher	960
<i>The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus</i>	Aliki	2-5 grades
<i>The Golden Fleece and the Heroes Who Lived Before Achilles</i>	Padraic Colum	980

<i>Greek Gods and Goddesses</i>	Robert Graves	990
<i>King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table</i>	M.C. Hall	390
<i>The Mists of Avalon</i>	Marion Zimmer Bradley	1120
<i>The Norse Myths</i>	Kevin Crossley-Holland	830
<i>The World of King Arthur and His Court</i>	Kevin Crossley-Holland	1200

<b>Fairy Tales/Fables/Folklore</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>Aesop's Fables</i>	Jerry Pinkney	760
<i>Alladin and Other Tales from the Arabian Nights</i>	J.J. Dawood	970
<i>Arrow to the Sun: A Pueblo Indian Tale</i>	Gerald McDermott	480
<i>The Complete Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales</i>	Wilhelm Carl Grimm & Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm	4-6 grades
<i>Dragonology: The Complete Book of Dragons</i>	Dugald A. Steer	1220
<i>Giants, Monsters and Dragons: An Encyclopedia of Folklore, Legend and Myth</i>	Carol Rose	4-6 grades
<i>The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses</i>	Paul Goble	670
<i>Hans Anderson's Fairy Tales</i>	Hans Christian Anderson	1060
<i>Little Firefly: An Algonquin Legend</i>	Terri Cohlene	490
<i>Perrault's Fairy Tales</i>	Charles Perrault	4-6 grades
<i>Tales of Brothers Grimm</i>	Retold by Peg Hall	400
<i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</i>	Jon Scieszka	570
<i>Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China</i>	Ai-Ling Louie	840

<b>Historical Fiction</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>The Adventures of Robin Hood</i>	Howard Pyle	1270

<i>Beyond the Divide</i>	Kathryn Lasky	900
<i>Bull Run</i>	Paul Fleishman	810
<i>Caddie Woodlawn</i>	Carol Ryrie Brink	890
<i>Catherine, Called Birdy</i>	Karen Cushman	1170
<i>Egyptology</i>	Emily Sands	1180
<i>A Lion to Guard Us</i>	Clyde Robert Bulla	360
<i>Listening for Lions</i>	Gloris Whelan	900
<i>The Midwife's Apprentice</i>	Karen Cushman	1240
<i>Morning Girl</i>	Michael Dorris	980
<i>My Brother Sam is Dead</i>	James Lincoln Collier & Christopher Collier	770
<i>Skylark</i>	Patricia MacLachlan	470
<i>Summer of My German Soldier</i>	Better Greene	800
<i>Torchlight</i>	Carol Otis Hurst	640
<i>Working Cotton</i>	Sherley Anne Williams	600

<b>Biography</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>Different Like Coco</i>	Elizabeth Matthews	4-6 grades
<i>First Flight: The Story of Tom Tate and the Wright Brothers</i>	George Shea	460
<i>Hatshepsut, His Majesty, Herself</i>	Catherine Andronik	1080
<i>Helen Keller</i>	Margaret Davidson	520
<i>I am Scout: The Biography of Harper Lee</i>	Charles J. Shields	4-6 grades
<i>Lady Liberty: A Biography</i>	Doreen Rappaport	2-5 grades
<i>Lincoln: A Photoiography</i>	Russell Freedman	1110
<i>Living Up the Street</i>	Gary Soto	1140
<i>Mother Teresa: Sister to the Poor</i>	Patricia Reilly Giff	720
<i>Odd Boy Out: Young Albert Einstein</i>	Don Brown	2-5 grades
<i>A Picture Book of Jackie Robinson</i>	David Adler	890
<i>A Restless Spirit: The Story of Robert Frost</i>	Natalie Bober	6-7 grades
<i>Run, Boy, Run</i>	Uri Orlev	570

<i>Shark Lady: True Adventures of Eugenie Clark</i>	Ann McGovern	750
<i>Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps</i>	Andrea Warren	820

<b>Autobiography</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>26 Fairmont Ave.</i>	Tommy DePaola	760
<i>Bad Boy: A Memoir</i>	Walter Dean Myers	970
<i>A Dog's Life: The Autobiography of a Stray</i>	Ann M. Martin	870
<i>Lemony Snicket: The Unauthorized Autobiography</i>	Lemony Snicket	1270
<i>The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain</i>	Peter Sis	6-8 grades
<i>Rosa Parks: My Story</i>	Rosa Parks	970
<i>Through My Eyes</i>	Ruby Bridges	860
<i>Up From Slavery: An Autobiography</i>	Booker T. Washington	1320

## Authors

There are many authors whose writing is diverse and appeals to young readers. A few of my favorite authors are listed here, along with some of their work. Note that some authors write books on a range of reading levels.

<b>Angela Johnson</b>			
Angela Johnson writes about the African American experience through narratives and prose. Her books are written for different age audiences and explore family relationships as well as historical events			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>Bird</i>	710	<i>Looking for Red</i>	740
<i>A Cool Moonlight</i>	1060	<i>Maniac Monkees on Magnolia Street</i>	650
<i>The First Part Last</i>	790	<i>One of Three</i>	460
<i>Heaven</i>	790	<i>A Sweet Smell of Roses</i>	710
<i>Just Like Josh Gibson</i>	920	<i>Wind Flyers</i>	710

**Gordon Korman**

Gordon Korman's books are often humorous. Students will relate to the friendships in his books and enjoy the adventures in the trilogies.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>Dive Trilogy</i>	750	<i>Kidnapped Trilogy</i>	760
<i>Everest Trilogy</i>	710	<i>Maxx Comedy: The Funniest Kid in America</i>	770
<i>Island Trilogy</i>	620	<i>No More Dead Dogs</i>	610
<i>Jake, Reinvented</i>	800	<i>Son of the Mob</i>	690

**Lois Lowry**

Lois Lowry typically writes using strong characters on a journey to discover real meaning or truth.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>All About Sam</i>	670	<i>Gooney Bird Greene</i>	590
<i>Anastasia Krupnik</i>	700	<i>Number the Stars</i>	670
<i>Autumn Street</i>	700	<i>The Road Ahead</i>	670
<i>Gathering Blue</i>	680	<i>A Summer to Die</i>	860
<i>Gossamer</i>	660	<i>The Woods at the End of Autumn</i>	710

**Walter Dean Myers**

Walter Dean Myers writes books for children and young adults. He writes narratives, biographies, short stories and poetry. He often uses African American characters with struggles and triumphs.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>Autobiography of My Dead Brother</i>	830	<i>Me, Mop, &amp; the Moondance Kid</i>	640
<i>Bad Boy: A Memoir</i>	970	<i>My Name is America Series</i>	920
<i>Fallen Angels</i>	650	<i>Slam!</i>	750
<i>Game</i>	790	<i>Somewhere in the Darkness</i>	640

**Jerry Spinelli**

Jerry Spinelli creates likeable characters and shows them through the typical joys, trials, and tribulations of growing up. Many characters show courage or other admirable traits.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>The Bathwater Gang</i>	420	<i>Maniac Magee</i>	820
<i>Crash</i>	560	<i>Night of the Whale</i>	650
<i>Jason and Marceline</i>	620	<i>Star Girl</i>	590
<i>Knots in My Yo-Yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid</i>	980	<i>Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?</i>	600
<i>Loser</i>	650	<i>Wringer</i>	690

<b>Laurence Yep</b>			
Laurence Yep's stories represent a large range of genres (fantasy, realistic fiction, science fiction) and draw on different cultural traditions, mostly Chinese-American.			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>American Dragons</i>	990	<i>The Lost Garden</i>	1110
<i>Child of the Owl</i>	920	<i>Mia</i>	
<i>Dragon's Gate</i>	730	<i>The Rainbow People</i>	680
<i>The Earth Dragon Awakes</i>	510	<i>The Serpent's Children</i>	770
<i>Hiroshima</i>	660	<i>Tiger's Apprentice</i>	740

<b>Katherine Paterson</b>			
Katherine Patterson creates strong characters that often face difficulties. The characters, often loners, learn to overcome their difficulties or learn to adapt to their circumstances.			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>Bridge to Terabithia</i>	810	<i>The King's Equal</i>	780
<i>The Great Gilly Hopkins</i>	800	<i>Lyddie</i>	860
<i>Jacob Have I Loved</i>	880	<i>Of Nightingales that Weep</i>	950
<i>Jip: His Story</i>	860	<i>The Same Stuff as Stars</i>	670

<b>Poetry/Prose/Verse</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Lexile/Grade</b>
<i>Blue Lipstick: Concrete Poems</i>	John Grandits	2 – 6
<i>Brown Angels: An Album of Pictures and Verse</i>	Walter Dean Myers	K - 5
<i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i>	Robert Louis Stevenson	K – 3
<i>Frenchtown Summer</i>	Robert Cormier	1380
<i>Jabberwocky</i>	Christopher Meyers	4 – 6
<i>Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices</i>	Paul Fleischman	2 – 5

<i>I'm in Charge of Celebrations</i>	Byrd Baylor	700
<i>The Light in the Attic</i>	Shel Silverstein	K – 5
<i>Love that Dog</i>	Sharon Creech	1010
<i>Nonsense Verse of Lewis Carroll</i>	Lewis Carroll	K - 6
<i>Poetry for Young People: Langston Hughes</i>	David Roessel & Arnold Rampersad	4 – 6
<i>Science Verse</i>	Jon Scieszka	K – 3
<i>The Tell Tale Heart and Other Writings</i>	Edgar Allen Poe	1350
<i>Walking on the Boundaries of Change</i>	Sara Holbrook	6+
<i>A Writing Kind of Day: Poems for Young Poets</i>	Ralph Fletcher	3 – 6
<i>The Light in the Attic</i>	Shel Silverstein	K – 5

### Websites for Children's Literature Reviews

Organization	Website
American Library Association	<a href="http://www.ala.org/alsc">www.ala.org/alsc</a> (2014 Notable Children's books)
Author Cynthia Leitich Smith's website	<a href="http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com">www.cynthialeitichsmith.com</a> (a wealth of children and young adult literature resources)
The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents	<a href="http://alan-ya.org/index.php?option=com_magazine&amp;Itemid=9999">http://alan-ya.org/index.php?option=com_magazine&amp;Itemid=9999</a>
International Reading Association	<a href="http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_childrens.html">http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_childrens.html</a> (Children's choices)  <a href="http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_teachers.html">http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_teachers.html</a> (Teachers' choices)  <a href="http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_youngadults.html">http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_youngadults.html</a> (Young Adults' Choices)
Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)	<a href="http://www.acrl.org/ala/yalsa/booklistsawards/bestbooksya/bestbooksyoung.cfm">http://www.acrl.org/ala/yalsa/booklistsawards/bestbooksya/bestbooksyoung.cfm</a> (Best Books for Young Adults)

## **COMPETITIONS FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS**

Below is a list of possible competitions for students to take place in an effort to increase students' problem solving skills, collaboration and communication skills while also allowing for student choice and interest. Also, since the Hartman School District requires enrichment students to participate in at least three competitions per year, this list will expand their choices. Regular education students should also be encouraged to participate in the ones that interest them.

### **Word Masters Challenge**

<http://www.wordmasterschallenge.com/>

A word analogy competition for grades 3 – 8 that encourages growth in vocabulary and verbal reasoning. Students compete in three yearly contests and can choose the Blue Division (challenging) or the Gold Division (more challenging). Over 4,500 school teams from 50 states participated last year.

### **National Mythology Exam**

<http://www.etclassics.org/>

The exam is offered to students in grades 3 – 9. The format of the exam is multiple choice and includes a 30-question section on Greek and Roman mythology which is required for all students in grades 5-9. Students in grade 6 are required to complete a literary subtest on either Native American myths or African myths.

### **Young Poets Contest**

<http://www.stonesoup.com/main2/contests.html>

Creative Communications awards over \$70,000 to young poets each year and brings recognition to young writers by sponsoring poetry contests twice a year for students in K-12.

### **Cricket (Literature and Art magazine by Cobblestone Publishing)**

[www.cobblestonepub.com](http://www.cobblestonepub.com)



High quality fiction and nonfiction magazine written by the best children's authors. Each issue offers a contest on either story or poetry writing, on art or photography. Submissions must be accompanied by a statement signed by a teacher or parent assuring originality and that no help was given.

### **National Geographic Society National Geographic Bee**

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geographybee/>

This yearly competition for students in grades 4-8 culminates in a national contest every May/June. Participating schools use materials prepared by the National Geographic Society. The contest is designed to encourage teachers to include geography in their classrooms and to spark student and public interest in the subject.

### **National History Day**

<http://nationalhistoryday.org/>

The National History Day program is a year-long education program that culminates in a national contest every June. The program engages students in grades 6 – 12 in the examination of historical topics related to an annual theme. Students produce dramatic performances, exhibits, multimedia presentations, and research papers based on research related to the theme. These projects are then evaluated at local, state, and national competitions.

### **Future Problem Solving Program**

<http://www.fpsp.org/>

The Future Problem Solving Program engages students in creative problem solving. The program features curricular competitive, and non-competitive activities that stimulate critical and creative thinking skills and encourage students to develop a vision for the future.

### **Odyssey of the Mind**

<http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/>

The OM program fosters creative thinking and problem-solving skills. It features an annual competition component at local through international levels. Students solve problems in a variety of areas, from building mechanical devices to giving their own interpretation of a literary classic. In working with others as a team, students learn to evaluate ideas, make decisions, and create solutions.

### **Lego Robotics Competition**

<http://www.usfirst.org/index.html>

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Lego League, modeled after the Robotics Competition, sponsors a Junior Robotics program for 9 – 14 year olds in conjunction with the LEGO company. The goal of FIRST is to ensure that “children have the opportunity to discover the excitement and rewards of science, math, and technology.”

### **PTA Reflections Program**

Each year, participating PTA programs sponsor the Reflections contest in schools. The theme changes from year to year, and students may submit writings, musical compositions, or art work from a variety of mediums. Students who participate are honored at their local schools, and winning entries are forwarded to the regional level for further judging.

## **COMMUNICATION LOG**

The following communication log was designed for weekly communication between the enrichment teacher and the homeroom teacher or grade level team. Each week, both the enrichment teacher and the homeroom teacher or team should complete the log and share the information at a weekly meeting. The information shared pertains to instructional plans and student progress. Weekly meetings between the enrichment teacher and the regular classroom teachers are highly recommended; however, if weekly meetings are not possible, the communication logs will be helpful in creating a collaborative environment. This is valuable as research shows the importance of collaboration between gifted and general education programs (Tomlinson et al., 1996; Kane & Henning, 2004; Lundrum, 2001).

## COMMUNICATION LOG

To: Teacher's name

From: Teacher or team name (if completing as a grade level)

Week of: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Genre Focus</b> (narrative, non-fiction, poetry, etc.)
<b>Stories/Books we will read</b>
<b>Strategy focus</b> (list all that apply)
<b>Instructional practices</b> (Reciprocal Teaching, Question and Answer sessions, etc.)
<b>Assessments Given</b>
<b>Additional Information</b> (upcoming field trips, parent conferences, etc.)

<b>Progress Update (Discuss strengths, areas of improvement, assessment grades, etc.)</b>
Student name:
Student name:
Student name:
Student name:
Student name:
Student name:
Student name:

**WEBSITES**  
**References to the Common Core State Standards and Lesson Plans**

The following is a list of useful websites to get information regarding the CCSS and how to implement those standards appropriately in your instruction. Included is a description of each website. These websites are listed as resources so that you can supplement your instruction to better align with the CCSS.

<b>Website:</b>	<b>Description:</b>
<a href="http://www.corestandards.org">www.corestandards.org</a>	This is the official website to the CCSS. Teachers can find all the ELA and Math standards listed here along with the Appendices. The ELA standards come with 3 appendices (A, B and C). These are helpful resources that include research, key elements of the standards, a glossary of terms, access to lexile levels, text exemplars, sample performance tasks, and samples of student work.
<a href="http://www.achievethecore.com">www.achievethecore.com</a>	This website is full of free content designed to help educators understand and implement the CCSS. It includes practical tools designed to help students and teachers see their hard work deliver results. Teachers can individualize information by position, subject and/or grade levels. Resources range from ELA/Literacy, math, and leadership tools.
<a href="http://www.readworks.org">www.readworks.org</a>	ReadWorks provides teachers with research-proven tools and support to improve the reading comprehension of their students. Teachers can find research-based units, lessons, and authentic, leveled non-fiction and literary passages for free. The ReadWorks curriculum is aligned to the CCSS.

<a href="http://www.thecurriculumcorner.com">www.thecurriculumcorner.com</a>	The Curriculum Corner was created by educators for educators to find creative and meaningful resources that weave the CCSS into their curriculum. Teachers can access five sub-sites through this site: a primary site (grades 1-3), an intermediate site (grades 4 – 6), a kindergarten site, a family site and a research site.
<a href="http://www.learnzillion.com">www.learnzillion.com</a>	This is a free site available to teachers to find exemplar lessons that align with the CCSS. The lessons are organized by grades and subject areas. Each lesson is a 'core lesson' using a short video clip designed to teach a standard. Teachers can use these video clips as introductory lessons, review lessons or for individual practice. The site also provides a 'Common Core navigator' that organizes the lessons for each standard and grade level.
<a href="http://www.engageny.org">www.engageny.org</a>	This site offers resources to assist schools with the implementation of the CCSS. Teachers can find the creation of curriculum resources, instructional materials, professional development materials and assessment materials.
<a href="http://cc.betterlesson.com/mtp">cc.betterlesson.com/mtp</a>	This is a brand new website launched on Jan. 15, 2014. This site, where teachers share what works in the classroom, features more than 3,000 classroom-ready lessons that are easily accessible and can be integrated into any curriculum. The site was built around the CCSS and features lessons at every K-12 grade level for math and English Language Arts.

## **DISCUSSION FRAMEWORKS**

The following is a list of research-based discussion frameworks along with steps in creating lessons that can be used with all texts and with all types of learners. Each framework varies in its approach; however, they all meet the four CCSS for Speaking and Listening Reading Comprehension.

The first discussion framework is that of Reciprocal Teaching (RT). RT is a research based strategy (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) that teaches students to work in small groups discussing literature around four comprehension strategies: prediction, clarification, summarization, and questioning. This strategy has led to significant improvements in the quality of summaries, questions and overall comprehension in a variety of settings.

Reciprocal Teaching combines multiple strategy instruction and student discussions. Students use the four strategies mentioned above (predicting, summarizing, clarifying and questioning) as they read to prepare for a discussion. I recommend beginning the year with this lesson as once your students have a solid foundation for engaging in productive discussions and using multiple strategies while reading, they will be better equipped to engage in the other lessons discussed here. In the page that follows, you will find an outline of the steps in creating a RT lesson.

Also, I have developed a unit on Reciprocal Teaching that you will find at the end of this toolkit. There are several sessions in the lesson; it is up to you how much time to spend on each lesson. This will depend on your grade level, how often your students have previously been involved in small group discussions and their level of



comfort in using and reflecting on strategies while reading. For more information on Reciprocal Teaching, refer to the following article:

Hashey, J. & Connors, D. (2003). Learn from our journey: Reciprocal teaching action research. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(3) 224 – 232.

### Reciprocal Teaching

Steps in creating a Reciprocal Teaching lesson:

- Teacher divides the text up into sections for students to read.
- A leader is chosen for each section.
- At the beginning of each section, the reader has the students predict what that section may be about. Students are to predict from what they have learned in the previous sections, titles, subtitles, pictures.
- Everyone then reads the section silently, or the leader may read it aloud.
- After everyone has finished reading the leader asks a question. Students should have had several lessons on how to ask good questions, not just factual questions. (See the attached instructional unit)
- Students discuss.
- Leader then asks if anyone needs to clarify something. (Students comment on text, maybe make connections, comparisons, ask questions)
- Leader then summarizes the paragraph.
- Process starts over until text is completed.

The teacher's job after this process has been modeled several times is to keep everyone on track. Also, teacher should be observing discussions and noting the types of questions students are asking. Teacher's instruction should be guided based on these observations.

The discussion framework you will find in the following section is Questioning the Author (QtA). QtA (Beck et al., 1996) is another research-based discussion framework that is designed to engage students with text through discussions revolving around interpretations of the author's meaning. The teacher's role is to guide the students through the text, helping to focus on making sense of the author's words. This strategy has been shown effective in promoting students' comprehension. The following article describes the process in a QtA lesson and provides an example of what a QtA discussion should look like.

McKeown, M.G., Beck, I.L., & Worthy, M.J. (1993). Grappling with text ideas:

Questioning the author. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(7), 560 – 566.

### Questioning the Author

Steps in creating a Questioning the Author lesson:

- Prior to introducing the strategy, the teacher should select a passage in the text that students will find interesting and that will create a good discussion.
- After selecting an appropriate passage, decide on stopping points here you think students need to stop, think, and gain a deeper understanding of the text.
- Create questions that can be asked of the students at each stopping point to encourage higher order thinking (inferences, connections, categorizing, synthesizing, evaluating)
- Examples:
  - What do you think the author is trying to say here?
  - Why do you think the author chose to use this phrase or wording in this specific spot?
  - Did the author explain this clearly?
  - Did the author tell us why?
  - Why do think the author tells us this now?
  - How do things look for this character now?

- How has the author let you know that something has changed?
- How is the author making you feel right now about these characters?
- What is the author telling us with this conversation?
- How has the author worked this out for us?
- What is the author's message?
- What questions do you still have?
- What questions will remain unanswered?
- Does the author tell us why?
- Why did the author write the book the way s/he did?
- Once teacher preparation is complete, display the chosen passage to students, along with one or two of the questions that were created (you may choose to project this for the class to see, point students to a passage in the text, or have the passage posted on the board).
- Model for the students how one should read the passage and think through the questions through a think aloud. Share some immediate thoughts or ideas about the passage and questions with students.
- Remember that the role of the teacher during this strategy is to facilitate the discussion and keep it moving among the students – not to lead it by taking charge and “lecturing.” Teachers can keep the conversation moving and to teach students how to talk about books by:
  - Naming the strategies that students use and the ones they need to work on, the social skills they exhibit, and the social skills they need to work on.
  - Fill in background information when it's obvious students don't have it but need it in order to function
  - Summarize what has happened so far. Then, move the group to the next question.
  - Relate seemingly unrelated comments to the conversation by explaining how the comment connects or by asking the students to explain how it relates.
  - Point out concepts that emerge in conversation and relate them to the reading.
  - Ask students for evidence to support their comments.
  - Encourage students to talk to one another, answer each other's questions, and say that their questions either did or did not get answered.
  - Assess student progress through anecdotal notes.
  - Teach students to use discussion social skills, if necessary. (See Session 1 of attached instructional unit)

Collaborative Reasoning (Anderson et al., 1997) is the next discussion framework that is outlined in the following section. Collaborative Reasoning (CR) has three main characteristics: using text that lends itself to multiple perspectives, using both the text and students' experiences as part of the discussion, and emphasizing understanding students' perspectives and how they reached them instead of a "right" answer. Therefore, it is important that teachers carefully choose texts when designing a CR lesson. Also, teachers must carefully plan a central question for students to discuss. These questions should be designed to elicit different perspectives with evidence from the text. See the following article for further guidelines and examples of CR instruction.

Waggoner, M., Chinn., C., Yi, H., Anderson, R. (1995). Collaborative reasoning about stories. *Language Arts*, 72(8), 582 – 589.

### Collaborative Reasoning

Collaborative Reasoning discussions are designed to create a place for children to listen to one another and think out loud as they learn to engage in reasoned argumentation. There are seven basic steps:

- After the class reads a story (or chapter), small groups come together for a discussion
- The teacher poses a central question concerning a dilemma faced by a character in the story.
- Students freely explain their positions on the central question.
- They expand on their ideas, adding reasons and supporting evidence from the story and everyday experience.
- They challenge each other's thinking and ways of reasoning.
- At the end of the discussion, a final poll is taken to see where everyone stands.

- Finally, the teacher and students review the discussion and make suggestions on how to improve future discussions.

The teacher's role:

- Facilitate the development of their students' skills in reasoned argumentation.
- Encourage open discussion.
- Establish rules beforehand:
  - Stick to the topic
  - Do not talk while others are talking
  - Try to look at both sides of the issue
  - Make sure everyone has a chance to participate
  - Respond to the idea and not to the person
- During discussions, teacher should monitor and take anecdotal notes for informal assessments.
- 

Transactional Strategy Instruction is the last discussion framework addressed in the next section of this toolkit. Transactional Strategy Instruction (TSI) is a complex instructional process for teaching students to use multiple comprehension strategies flexibly and interactively around text. Once all strategies are explicitly taught, teachers gradually release responsibility to students over time. TSI involves cooperative learning and extensive interaction through group discussions. In TSI, as with most of these instructional discussions, teachers are encouraged to stay away from repetitive cycles of teacher questioning, student responding, and teacher evaluating that is common among most classrooms. Teachers should encourage interpretive discussions by asking, "What are you thinking?" and letting students support and challenge one another using text evidence instead of evaluating students' responses for accuracy. The following article describes the TSI process and gives recommendations on proper implementation.

Brown, R. (2008). The road not yet taken: A transactional strategies approach to comprehension instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(7), 538 – 547.

## Transactional Strategy Instruction

Steps in a TSI lesson:

- Teacher begins with teaching all seven comprehension strategies explicitly one at a time:
  - Activating prior knowledge
  - Text structure
  - Prediction
  - Questioning
  - Visualizing
  - Monitoring
  - Summarizing
- Before Reading
  - Teacher determines stopping points in the text for applying comprehension strategies and discussing the text.
  - Teacher activates students' background knowledge about topic or theme using a graphic organizer
  - Teacher models predicting and invites students to predict, recording predictions on the teaching graphic organizer.
  - Teachers and students record questions to guide their reading.
- During Reading
  - Students read the text through various methods (pair reading, silent reading, etc.)
  - Teacher and students stop to review predictions for corrections, talk about answers to questions, visualize the text, or monitor their comprehension at predetermined points.
- After Reading
  - Return to predictions. Teacher models how to check predictions using the graphic organizer.
  - Teacher invites students to ask and discuss their answers to questions.
  - Teacher models summarizing and then guides the students in creating a summary.
  - Class reflects on the usefulness of the strategies.

### **Instructional Unit: Reciprocal Teaching**

The following instructional unit incorporates research-based Reciprocal Teaching practices (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) for a fourth grade classroom. I created this unit to supplement the current reading program in an effort to align instruction with the Common Core State Standards. The CCSS met throughout this unit include: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.10, SL.4.1, SL.4.1.a, SL.4.1.b, SL.4.1.c, and SL.4.1.d.

There are a total of five sessions, each lasting 1 -3 days, depending on your students, their level of experience with instructional discussions, the text that you choose, and the time allocated for reading instruction. Text is suggested for each session; however, other texts can be used in place of those suggested. I suggest you use this unit at the beginning of the year to set up an environment conducive to discussions for the entire year.

## **Fourth Grade Instructional Unit: Reciprocal Teaching**

### **Session 1: Creating a safe environment**

#### **Summary of Activities**

The goal of this lesson is to establish discussion etiquette to be posted in the classroom at all times. Students and teacher together should brainstorm discussion elements found in a productive classroom discussion (i.e., active listening, active participation, asking questions for clarification, piggybacking off others' ideas, disagreeing constructively, focused on discussion, supporting opinions with evidence, encouraging others.) As the students are coming up with ideas, they should be recording them on the worksheet titled 'Discussion Etiquette' (below). The teacher should also record on this sheet using a projector camera or SMART board, so the class can follow along. If any of the above mentioned discussion etiquettes are not mentioned, the teacher should add them. Once these (or similar) elements have been mentioned, students should work together to fill in descriptors under "looks like" and "sounds like" for each particular discussion element. Students should keep these papers in their reading binders for future reference.

Next, the teacher should show the video "Watch a Small Group Conversation to See Students Tracing A Theme" from Columbia University's *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project* ([www.vimeo.com/55950554](http://www.vimeo.com/55950554)). As students watch the video, they should take notes on the sheet titled "Evaluating Discussions"(below). Afterwards, the class should discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the video discussion based on the discussion etiquettes. New discussion elements can be added, if needed.



### Handout: Discussion Etiquette

Discussion Elements	Looks Like	Sounds Like
Active Listening	Eyes on speaker Hands still	Speakers' voice only
Active Participation	Sit up straight Mind is focused Facing speaker	Inside voices One voice at a time Responses that are relevant to conversation
Asking Questions	Eyes on speaker Hands still Talking one at a time	Appropriate answers Follow off other ideas Positive comments
Extending ideas	Listening intently Paying attention	Positive answers Polite manners
Disagreeing with manners	Polite facial expressions	Polite responses Inside voices No criticisms
Focused on discussion	Eyes on speaker Hands still Sitting up Facing speaker Mind is focused	Speakers voice only Appropriate responses Inside voices
Supporting answers with text evidence	One person talking at a time Attention to the speaker	One voice Using ideas from the text to support your answers
Encouraging others	Ask questions Invite others to join discussion	Positive responses

### Handout: Evaluating Discussions

Directions: As you watch the video of students involved in an instructional conversation, use the areas below to comment on the strengths and areas of improvement of the conversation.

<b>Verbal Behaviors</b> (Ex: “Nice job” (+) “that’s not right” (-)	<b>Nonverbal Behaviors</b> (Ex: making eye contact (+), turning away from the speaker (-)	<b>Listening Skills</b> (Ex: active listening (+), disruptive comments (-)
<b>Asking Questions</b>	<b>Extending Ideas</b>	<b>Supporting answers with evidence from text</b>

## Session 2: Rules of Reciprocal Teaching

### Summary of Activities

Introduce the four strategies/skills used in the reciprocal teaching process: predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarizing using the handout ‘Using Reciprocal Teaching Strategies’ (below). Once the strategies have been introduced and discussed, the teacher should introduce the story *Androcles*. Students will read the story silently and then the teacher will read aloud the short story *Androcles*. While the teacher is reading aloud, she should model the use of each Reciprocal Teaching Strategy using think alouds. Use the following text as a guide.

Exemplar Text: Androcles	Think alouds
<p>A slave named Androcles once escaped from his master and fled to the forest.</p> <p>As he was wandering there he came upon a lion lying down moaning and groaning. At first he turned to flee, but finding that the lion did not pursue him, he turned back and went up to him. As he came near, the lion put out his paw, which was all swollen and bleeding, and Androcles found that a huge thorn had got into it, and was causing all the pain. He pulled out the thorn and bound up the paw of the lion, who was soon able to rise and lick the hand of Androcles like a dog.</p> <p>Then the lion took Androcles to his cave, and every day brought him meat for his survival. But shortly afterward both Androcles and the lion were captured, and the slave was sentenced to be thrown to the lion, after the latter had been kept without food for several</p>	<p><i>Before reading:</i> (Predicting) I read the title Androcles and I predict that this is the name of a main character in the story.</p> <p><i>During Reading:</i></p> <p>Q What happened to the lion?</p> <p>Q Why was he lying down moaning and groaning?</p> <p>P The lion is hungry and he is going to try to eat Androcles.</p> <p>P The lion did not pursue him so I think the lion is hurt.</p> <p>Q How did the lion get a huge thorn in him?</p> <p>P The lion and Androcles will become friends.</p> <p>Q Who captured them?</p> <p>Q What will the lion do when he sees Androcles after not eating for several days?</p>

<p>days.</p> <p>The Emperor and all of his court came to see the spectacle, and Androcles was led out into the middle of the arena. Soon the lion was let loose from his den, and rushed bounding and roaring towards his victim. But as soon as he came near to Androcles he recognized his friend, and fawned upon him, and licked his hands like a friendly dog. The Emperor, surprised at this, summoned Androcles to him, who told him the whole story, whereupon the slave was pardoned and freed, and the lion let loose to his native forest.</p>	<p>C What does the author mean “sentenced to be thrown to the lion?” I have heard “sentenced” before when people are in trouble and going to prison. Maybe this is Androcles punishment for escaping as a slave.</p> <p>S: So far, Androcles is an escaped slave who finds a hurt lion. Instead of running from the lion, Androcles risks his life to help him. Then, they become friends until one day they are both captured and Androcles is going to be thrown to the lion after the lion hasn’t been fed for several days.</p> <p>Q - Why doesn’t the lion eat Androcles?</p> <p>Q - What is the moral of this fable?</p>
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## **Handout: Using Reciprocal Teaching Strategies**

In Reciprocal Teaching, everyone in the class will take turns assuming the “teacher” role as the “discussion director”. This person is in charge of keeping the conversation going, making sure everyone is on task and assigning the types of reading.

We will use four comprehension strategies (summarizing, clarifying, questioning and predicting) to organize our discussion.

To prepare for the class discussion, you will read text and compose questions and/or comments in each of the following areas:

Read through each of the strategies and related prompts to familiarize yourself with the expectations.

### **Predicting**

- Use the language of prediction such as
  - I predict...
  - I think...
  - I bet...
- Tell what you think will happen next.
- Use clues from the text to help form predictions and evidence from the text and/or illustrations to support predictions.
  - I predict \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Use prior knowledge about the topic or from experience to help make logical predictions.
  - I predict \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Check predictions after reading to see if they make sense.
- What effects will events that you read have on the story or the characters?

### **Questioning**

- Use the language of questioning with question words such as who, what, when, where, why or how.
- Ask logical “wonders” before reading based on clues from the text.
  - I wonder...
- Ask different types of questions
  - Questions of fact
    - Focus on details from the text.
    - Ask about people, places, and things.
    - Choose surface questions for others to answer.
  - Questions of interpretation

- Focus on meanings that the text communicates.
- Ask about symbols, themes, and underlying messages.
- Choose deeper questions for others to answer.
- Questions that are open ended
  - Focus on moving beyond the text.
  - Ask about future effects and implications.

Choose open-ended questions for others to answer.

### **Clarifying**

- Use the language of clarifying.
  - I didn't get \_\_\_\_\_, so I \_\_\_\_\_.
- Identify words that are difficult to pronounce or understand.
- Use a variety of strategies to understand the words, including finding “chunks” you know, sounding out the words, using syllables, and rereading.
- Tell how you clarified a difficult word or phrase.
- Identify sentences, pages, or ideas that need clarifying.
  - What was confusing?
- Use a variety of strategies to understand the parts, such a rereading, reading on, or talking to someone to figure out the parts of the text that confused you.

During the group conversation, identify confusions (words, parts, or ideas) and the strategies that you used to repair comprehension.

### **Summarizing**

- Use the language of summarizing.
  - The part is about...
  - The most important ideas in this text are...
- Reread to summarize main events or important ideas from the text.
- Include only main events or important ideas.
  - What happened?
  - What is essential to tell?
  - What is the outcome?
  - Who is involved?
  - Why does this happen?
  - What is the main point?
  - What does the author want me to remember from the passage?
- Tell main events or important ideas in order.
- Use some vocabulary from the text.

### Session 3: Generating Questions

#### Summary of Activities:

This lesson begins with the teacher modeling different types of questions through a think aloud mini-lesson. Using the story, *The Myth of Hercules*, the teacher will use a similar instructional model as Session 2's lesson; however, in this session, the focus is solely on generating questions. See below for the text and think alouds.

Exemplar Text: The Myth of Hercules	Exemplar Questions to use during think aloud
<p>Hercules was the son of the god Zeus. When he was a baby, the goddess Hera was jealous of the attention he was given; she sent two serpents to his crib to kill him. Shortly after the serpents were sent, Hercules was found babbling happily with a strangled serpent in each hand. This event was the first clue of Hercules' superhuman strength.</p> <p>As he grew older, Hercules became a champion marksman and wrestler. Unfortunately, he was driven mad by Hera and in a frenzy of anger killed his own children. To atone for this terrible deed, Hercules was charged with completing 12 tasks, or labors, for his cousin, King Eurystheus. The 12 labors were thought to be impossible; everyone believed Hercules would die trying to accomplish them.</p> <p>The first labor Hercules was given was to slay the lion Nemean. This lion was no ordinary lion. Arrows or spears could not penetrate his skin. Hercules defeated the lion by blocking the entrance to his den and killing him with his bare hands. When Hercules returned carrying the defeated Nemean, everyone, including Eurystheus, was in awe of his strength.</p> <p>One of the more exciting tasks for Hercules was to slay the much-feared Hydra. No one is entirely sure how many heads the Hydra had; some believe it was 8 or 9, while others claim that Hydra had 10,000 heads! There was agreement, though, about the Hydra's ability to regrow two heads for every one that was cut off. As if many heads were not frightening enough, the Hydra's breath was lethal to mere mortals. Fortunately for Hercules, he was not a mere mortal. With the help of his nephew, Ialous (who just happened to be waiting in the chariot), Hercules cut</p>	<p>Who was the main character in this story?</p> <p>What does 'driven mad by Hera' mean?</p> <p>What does <i>atone</i> mean?</p> <p>What caused Hercules to be tasked with the 12 labors?</p> <p>What effects did being tasked with those 12 labors have on his life?</p> <p>What does <i>penetrate</i> mean?</p> <p>How did Hercules defeat Nemean?</p> <p>What does mere mortals mean?</p> <p>Why was Hercules not considered a 'mere mortal'?</p>

<p>off each of the Hydra's heads while Ialou seared the would, making it impossible for another head to grow.</p> <p>Hercules' final task was to bring back Cerberus from the Underworld, the land of the dead. His first obstacle was getting across the River Styx, the most famous river of the Underworld where all of the dead souls congregated. Hercules could not pay the bribe to Charon the Boatman, nor was he dead; both of these were prerequisites for entering the Underworld. Hercules had to use his superhuman strength to frighten Charon into taking him across the River Styx. Once in the Underworld, Hercules was confronted with Cerberus and his razor-sharp teeth and venomous snake tail. Luckily, Hercules was wearing the armor he made from the lion Nemean that he had slain during the first labor. The lion's skin was impenetrable to the Cerberus' teeth or tail. Hercules eventually succeeded to this labor as well.</p> <p>Many years later after many more adventures, Hercules died from wearing a tunic tainted by poison, much to the dismay of his beloved wife Deianara.</p>	<p>What does 'could not pay the bribe' mean?</p> <p>How would you describe Hercules? Why?</p> <p>What was ironic about the way Hercules died?</p> <p>What was the main idea of this myth?</p>
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Then, students will read *The Lost Wig* and generate their own questions to write on sticky notes. Next, students will categorize those questions into the following categories: questions of fact (focus on details from the text, ask about people, places and things, surface questions for others to answer), questions of interpretation (focus on meanings that the text communicates, ask about symbols, themes, and underlying messages, deeper questions), or questions that are open ended (focus on moving beyond the text, ask about future effects and implications, no right or wrong answer). Students will write their questions on sticky notes with page numbers and then sort those sticky notes on the handout titled Categorizing Questions (below). Groups of students will work together to discuss the story through the questions that they asked. At the end of the lesson, teachers can collect the Categorizing Questions to assess student-generated questions. Some exemplary questions to look for are: *Why did the lion bow? What was the effect of his actions? What are some characteristics of the lion? Which characteristics do you think are the most important and why? What do you think the lion expected would happen when he bowed and why? What do you think the moral to this fable is and why? What do you think might happen next in the fable?*

I have attached two additional handouts at the end of this lesson. The first one is a teacher handout designed to help you formulate test dependent questions. If you



choose to continue this lesson with additional stories, use this handout to develop questions to model. Also attached is a student handout to assist students in developing questions. This handout can be used for this session or any others, when a student is having trouble developing questions that elicit a class discussion.

### **Handout: Categorizing Questions**

<b>Questions of Fact</b> (Focus on details from the text, ask about people, places and things, questions that are answered from the text)	<b>Questions of Interpretations</b> (Focus on meaning, ask about symbols, themes, and underlying messages, deeper questions)
<b>Questions that are Open Ended</b> (Focus on moving beyond the text, ask about future effects and implications, open-ended questions)	

## Teacher Handout

### Creating Text Dependent Questions

Use this handout as you follow the steps above in creating text dependent questions.

1. What are the key ideas of the text?

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2. Record your text dependent questions below. Ask yourself:
  - How can I frame a key idea in a way that familiarizes students to the text?
  - How can I frame a key idea in a way that is specific enough so that more difficult questions can be answered later?
  - What would a reader wonder about?

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3. What previous understandings do students need to answer the question?

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4. Based on that previous understanding, what questions could you ask that break down the text dependent question into simpler questions that scaffold students toward understanding? List them.

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5. What up-take could be used to encourage students to clarify or elaborate?

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## Student Handout

### Conversation question starters

Conversation Skills	Prompting	Responding
Explain	What is the key idea in...? What are examples of ...? What are the characteristics of ...? How did this come about? Why is this so? What caused ...? What are the effects? How might we prove...? How is ____ connected to ____? What might happen if ...? What are the common misconceptions about...?	The main ideas are... Some examples are... This happened because... The cause was... The effect was... We can prove this by...
Interpret	What is the meaning of ...? What are the implications of ...? What does ____ reveal about ____? How is ____ like ____? How does ____ relate to me/us? Why does it matter?	The meaning is... This tells us... These are alike because... These are different because... It matters because...
Perspective/Point of View	What are the different points of view about...? How might this look from ____'s perspective? How is ____ similar to/different from ...? What are the other possible reactions to...? What are the strengths and weaknesses of ...? What are the limits of ...? How would ____ view this? How would this look to a ...? What would someone with the opposite opinion think?	Another perspective might be... They think alike because... They think differently because... Their strengths are... Their weaknesses are ...
Elaborate and Clarify	Can you elaborate on...? What do you mean by...?	I think it means that... In other words...

	<p>Can you tell me more about...?</p> <p>What makes you think that?</p> <p>Can you clarify the part about...?</p> <p>Can you be more specific?</p> <p>How so?</p> <p>How/Why is that important?</p> <p>I'd love to hear more about...</p> <p>How does that connect to...?</p> <p>I wonder if...</p> <p>How so?</p> <p>Can you unpack that for me?</p> <p>I am a little confused about the part...</p>	<p>I believe that...</p> <p>An analogy for this might be...</p> <p>It is important because...</p> <p>It's similar to when...</p>
Paraphrase	<p>I'm not sure that was clear...</p> <p>Can I hear what you heard?</p> <p>How can we relate what I said to the topic/question?</p> <p>What do we know so far?</p> <p>What is your take on what I said?</p> <p>Did that make sense?</p> <p>What are you hearing?</p>	<p>So, you are saying that...</p> <p>Let me see if I understand you...</p> <p>Am I right in hearing you say that...?</p> <p>In a nutshell, you are arguing that...</p> <p>In other words...</p> <p>What I am hearing is...</p> <p>Essentially you think that...</p> <p>It sounds like you are saying that...</p>
Support Ideas with Examples	<p>Can you give an example from the text?</p> <p>Can you show me where it says that?</p> <p>What are some examples from other texts?</p> <p>What is a real-world example?</p> <p>What is an example from your life?</p> <p>Are there any cases of that?</p> <p>What is the evidence for that?</p> <p>Like what?</p> <p>Why do you say that?</p> <p>How do you justify that?</p> <p>What does that look like?</p> <p>Such as?</p> <p>What would illustrate that?</p>	<p>For example...</p> <p>In the text, it said...</p> <p>One case showed that...</p> <p>An example from my life is...</p> <p>For instance...</p> <p>According to...</p> <p>An illustration of this could be...</p> <p>On one occasion...</p> <p>In this situation...</p> <p>To demonstrate, ...</p> <p>In fact, ...</p> <p>Indeed, ...</p> <p>Have you ever... ?</p>

	Why is that a good example?	
Build on and/or challenge a Partner's Ideas	<p>What do you think about the idea that...?</p> <p>Can you add to this idea...?</p> <p>Do you agree?</p> <p>What might be other points of view?</p> <p>What are other ideas?</p> <p>How does that connect to the ideas...?</p> <p>I'm not sure if this is relevant, but...</p> <p>How can we bring this back to the question of...?</p>	<p>I would add that...</p> <p>I want to expand on your point about...</p> <p>I want to follow up on your idea...</p> <p>Then again, I think that...</p> <p>Another way to look at this could be...</p> <p>Yet I wonder also if...</p> <p>If ____, then ____</p> <p>What struck me about what you said...</p>
Synthesize Conversation Points	<p>What have we discussed so far?</p> <p>How should we synthesize what we talked about?</p> <p>How can we bring this all together?</p> <p>What can we agree upon?</p> <p>What main points can we share?</p> <p>What was our original question?</p> <p>What key idea can we take away?</p>	<p>We can say that...</p> <p>The main theme/point seems to be...</p> <p>As a result of this conversation, we think that we should...</p> <p>How does this sound... ?</p> <p>What if we ...?</p> <p>The evidence seems to suggest that...</p>

## **Session 4: Rotating Roles**

### **Summary of Activities**

The lesson begins with introducing the myth *Arachne and Athena*. Next, students are assigned one of five roles: predictor, questioner, clarifier, summarizer, and discussion director. Students reread story stopping after each paragraph; paragraphs are numbered in the text for student reference. After students read each section they apply their assigned role to that text. Students should take notes in the ‘stopping points and notes’ section of the text handout (below). Then, they pass their role sheets to the right. All students read the next section of text with their newly assigned role. Each participant should follow the “Steps to Rotating Roles” (below) handout. Teacher should rotate around classroom and provide feedback as needed.

### Handout: Text and Stopping Points

Exemplar Text: Arachne and Athena	Stopping points and notes
<p>1. Arachne, who lived in Greece during ancient times, was famous for her incredible talent in weaving cloth. She could make the most beautiful cloth in the entire land. However, Arachne was not a modest girl. She would walk through the city boasting about her incredible talents. Arachne would even tell people that she was better at weaving than the revered goddess Athena.</p> <p>2. Athena was not pleased by Arachne's boasting. One day, Athena knocked on Arachne's door. Arachne opened the door to find an old lady dressed in ragged clothes. She did not know she was really looking at Athena in disguise. The old lady pretended to be interested in buying some of Arachne's cloth. Arachne let the old lady enter. Immediately, Athena, disguised as the old lady, started criticizing Arachne's weaving, saying she could do much better. Insulted, Arachne challenged the old lady to a weaving contest.</p> <p>3. After accepting the challenge, Athena emerged from her disguise. Arachne was not at all frightened by the prospect of a weaving competition with Athena; Arachne was completely convinced she would win!</p> <p>4. Both Arachne and Athena spent hours weaving beautiful cloth. Athena's cloth was spectacular. She had woven a picture of the gods performing their many wonderful deeds. Arachne's cloth also portrayed the gods and was equally stunning. However, Arachne's cloth portrayed the gods at their weakest moments, displaying their worst behavior. Athena was furious. She could not believe Arachne had the audacity to insult the gods.</p> <p>5. Athena complimented Arachne on her amazing weaving talent and told her she would be justly rewarded for her gifts. Arachne felt her head begin to shrink and watched in horror as six furry legs sprouted from her body. Athena told her to enjoy spending the rest of her days weaving all she wished.</p>	

## Handout: Steps to Rotating Roles in Reciprocal Teaching Literature Circles

Roles: predictor, questioner, clarifier, summarizer, and discussion director

1. Each participant takes a role sheet.
2. The predictor begins by giving a prediction.
3. The discussion director decides on the type of reading for the passage.
  - Silent reading
  - Reading aloud
  - Reading with partner
  - Choral reading
  - Reading by paragraph or by page

After reading, the discussion director calls on or takes volunteers from the other roles – summarizer, questioner, and clarifier – in any order.

4. After a set number of pages, the discussion director calls “pass” and the literature circle participants pass their role sheets to the right.
5. The process begins again.

### Role Sheets:

Predictor

- Use the language of prediction such as
  - I predict...
  - I think...
  - I bet...
- Tell what you think will happen next.
- Use clues from the text to help form predictions and evidence from the text and/or illustrations to support predictions.
  - I predict \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Use prior knowledge about the topic or from experience to help make logical predictions.
  - I predict \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Check predictions after reading to see if they make sense.
- What effects will events that you read have on the story or the characters?



### Questioning

- Use the language of questioning with question words such as who, what, when, where, why or how.
- Ask logical “wonders” before reading based on clues from the text.
  - I wonder...
- Ask different types of questions.
  - Questions of fact
    - Focus on details from the text.
    - Ask about people, places, and things.
    - Choose surface questions for others to answer.
  - Questions of interpretation
    - Focus on meanings that the text communicates.
    - Ask about symbols, themes, and underlying messages.
    - Choose deeper questions for others to answer.
  - Questions that are open ended
    - Focus on moving beyond the text.
    - Ask about future effects and implications.
    - Choose open-ended questions for others to answer.

### Clarifying

- Use the language of clarifying.
  - I didn’t get \_\_\_\_\_, so I \_\_\_\_\_.
- Identify words that are difficult to pronounce or understand.
- Use a variety of strategies to understand the words, including finding “chunks” you know, sounding out the words, using syllables, and rereading.
- Tell how you clarified a difficult word or phrase.
- Identify sentences, pages, or ideas that need clarifying.
  - What was confusing?
- Use a variety of strategies to understand the parts, such a rereading, reading on, or talking to someone to figure out the parts of the text that confused you.
- During the group conversation, identify confusions (words, parts, or ideas) and the strategies that you used to repair comprehension.

### Summarizing

- Use the language of summarizing.
  - The part is about...

- The most important ideas in this text are...
- Reread to summarize main events or important ideas from the text.
- Include only main events or important ideas.
  - What happened?
  - What is essential to tell?
  - What is the outcome?
  - Who is involved?
  - Why does this happen?
  - What is the main point?
  - What does the author want me to remember from the passage?
- Tell main events or important ideas in order.
- Use some vocabulary from the text.

#### Discussion Director

- Begin with the predictor making a prediction.
- Assign the type of reading for the selection.
- Once everyone is finished reading, have the questioner ask a question.
- As students discuss, be sure everyone is focused and participating.
- Then, ask the clarifier to discuss what they needed help with and how they figured it out. If they still need help, allow others to discuss.
- Last, have the summarizer give a short summary of the main idea from the selection.

### Session 5: Intro story, read, begin Reciprocal Teaching discussions

#### Summary of Activities:

Students will begin reading the text assigned for their independent Reciprocal Teaching conversations, *The Power of Light* by Isaac Bashevis Singer. The teacher will provide students with background knowledge necessary for the story (i.e., showing a map of Warsaw, Poland; facilitating a quick discussion on World War II, Nazis, concentration camps, etc...;) The teacher will purposefully use vocabulary from this selection during this conversation. Also, teacher will provide students with a vocabulary list including definitions for some of the difficult words from the text. Before reading, teachers will handout the worksheet titled 'Preparing for Discussions.' The teacher will go over directions for note taking as students read, referring to assignments from previous Sessions. Before students begin to read, they should make predictions about the story. Next, students are asked prepare stopping points throughout the story to read and discuss. As they read, they should take notes on their handout demonstrating their strategy use and to prepare for their class discussion. Once all members of the groups have completed that section of the reading, they should begin their conversations based on their notes. One student will be assigned to 'Discussion Director' to lead the conversation.

Next, the students will repeat this process with the following sections of the text. The 'Discussion Director' role will be rotating through each section of the text.

The Text: *The Power of Light* by Isaac Bashevis Singer

Exemplar Text	Vocabulary
During World War II, after the Nazis had bombed and bombed the Warsaw ghetto, a boy and girl were hiding in one of the ruins- David, fourteen years old, and Rebecca, thirteen.	Warsaw ghetto
It was winter and bitter cold outside. For weeks Rebecca had not left the dark, partially collapsed cellar that was their hiding place, but every few days David would go out to search for food. All the stores had been destroyed in the bombing, and David sometimes found stale bread, cans of food, or whatever else had been buried. Sometimes bricks and mortar would fall down and he could easily lose his way. But if he and Rebecca did not want to die from hunger, he had to take the risk.	
That day was one of the coldest. Rebecca sat on the ground wrapped in all the garments she possessed; still, she could not get warm.	

<p>David had left many hours before, and Rebecca listened in the darkness for the sound of his return, knowing that if he did not come back nothing remained to her but death.</p> <p>Suddenly, she heard heavy breathing and the sound of a bundle being dropped. David had made his way home. Rebecca could not help but cry “David!”</p> <p>“Rebecca!”</p> <p>In the darkness they embraced and kissed. Then David said, “Rebecca, I found a treasure.”</p> <p>“What kind of treasure?”</p> <p>“Cheese, potatoes, dried mushrooms, and a package of candy- and I have another surprise for you.”</p> <p>“What surprise?”</p> <p>“Later.”</p> <p>Both were too hungry for a long talk. Ravenously they ate the frozen potatoes, the mushrooms, and part of the cheese. They each had one piece of candy. Then Rebecca asked, “What is it now, day or night?”</p> <p>“I think night has fallen,” David replied. He had a wristwatch and kept track of day and night and also of the days of the week and the month. After a while Rebecca asked again, “What is the surprise?”</p> <p>“Rebecca, today is the first day of Hanukkah, and I found a candle and some matches.”</p> <p>“Hanukkah tonight?”</p> <p>“Yes.”</p> <p>“Oh, my God!”</p> <p>“I am going to bless the Hanukkah candle,” David said.</p> <p>He lit a match and there was light. Rebecca and David stared at their</p>	<p>ravenously</p> <p>Hanukkah</p>
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<p>hiding place- bricks, pipes and the uneven ground. He lighted the candle. Rebecca blinked her eyes. For the first time in weeks she really saw David. His hair was matted and his face smeared with dirt, but his eyes shone with joy. In spite of the starvation and persecution David had grown taller and he seemed older than his age and manly. Young as they both were, they had decided to marry if they could manage to escape from war-ridden Warsaw. As a token of their engagement, David had given Rebecca a shiny grouch he found in his pocket on the day when the building where both of them lived was bombed.</p>	persecution
<p>Now David pronounced the benediction over the Hanukkah candle, and Rebecca said, "Amen." They had both lost their family and they had good reason to be angry with God for sending them so many afflictions, but the light of the candle brought peace into their souls. That glimmer of light, surrounded by so many shadows, seemed to say without words: Evil still has not yet taken complete dominion. A spark of hope is still left.</p>	benediction
<p>For some time David and Rebecca had thought about escaping from Warsaw. But how? The ghetto was watched by the Nazis day and night. Each step was dangerous. Rebecca kept delaying their departure. It would be easier in the summer, she often said, but David knew that in their predicament they had little chance of lasting until then. Somewhere in the forest there were young men and women called partisans who fought the Nazi invaders. David wanted to reach them. Now, by the light of the Hanukkah candle, Rebecca suddenly felt renewed courage. She said, "David, let's leave."</p>	afflictions
<p>"When?"</p>	dominion
<p>"When you think it's the right time," she answered.</p>	Nazis
<p>"The right time is now." David said. "I have a plan."</p>	
<p>For a long time David explained the details of his plan to Rebecca. It was more than risky. The Nazis had enclosed the ghetto with barbed wire and posted guards armed with machine guns on the surrounding roofs. At night searchlights lit up all possible exits from the destroyed ghetto. But in his wanderings through the ruins, David had found an opening to a sewer which he thought might lead to the other side. David told Rebecca that their chances of remaining alive</p>	

<p>were slim. They could drown in the dirty water or freeze together. Also, the sewers were full of hungry rats. But Rebecca agreed to take the risk: to remain in the cellar for the winter would mean certain death.</p> <p>When the Hanukkah light began to sputter and flicker before going out, David and Rebecca gathered their few belongings. She packed the remaining food in a kerchief, and David took his matches and piece of lead pipe for a weapon.</p> <p>In moments of great danger people become unusually courageous. David and Rebecca were soon on their way through the ruins. They came to passages so narrow they had to crawl on hands and knees. But the food they had eaten, and the joy the Hanukkah candle had awakened in them, gave them the courage to continue. After some time David found the entrance to the sewer. Luckily the sewage had frozen, and it seemed that the rats had left because of the extreme cold. From time to time, David and Rebecca stopped to rest and listen. After a while they crawled on, slowly and carefully. Suddenly they stopped in their tracks. From above they could hear the clanging of a trolley car. They had reached the other side of the ghetto. All they needed now was to find a way to get out of the sewer and to leave the city as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Many miracles seemed to happen that Hanukkah night. Because the Nazis were afraid of enemy planes, they had ordered a complete blackout. Because of the bitter cold, there were fewer Gestapo guards. David and Rebecca managed to leave the sewer and steal out of the city without being caught. At dawn they reached a forest where they were able to rest and have a bite to eat.</p> <p>Even though the partisans were not very far from Warsaw, it took David and Rebecca a week to reach them. They walked at night and hid during the days- sometimes in granaries and sometimes in barns. Some peasants stealthily helped the partisans and those who were running away from the Nazis. From time to time David and Rebecca got a piece of bread, a few potatoes, a radish, or whatever the peasants could spare. In one village, they encountered a Jewish partisan who had come to get food for his group. He belonged to the Haganah, an organization that sent men from Israel to rescue Jewish refugees from the Nazis in occupied Poland. This young man brought David and Rebecca to the other partisans who roamed the forest. It was the last day of Hanukkah, and that evening the</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>Gestapo</p> <p>partisans</p> <p>peasants</p>
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<p>partisans lit eight candles. Some of them played dreidel on the stump of an oak tree while others kept watch.</p> <p>From the day David and Rebecca met the partisans, their life became like a tale in a storybook. They joined more and more refugees who all had but one desire- to settle in the land of Israel. They did not always travel by train or bus. They walked. They slept in stables, in burned-out houses, and wherever they could hide from the enemy. To reach their destination, they had to cross Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. Somewhere at the seashore in Yugoslavia, in the middle of the night, a small boat manned by a Haganah crew waited for them, and all the refugees with their meager belongings were packed into it. This all happened silently and in great secrecy, because the Nazis occupied Yugoslavia.</p> <p>But their dangers were far from over. Even though it was spring, the sea was stormy and the boat was too small for such a long trip. Nazi planes spied the boat and tried without success to sink it with bombs. They also feared the Nazi submarines which were lurking in the depths. There was nothing the refugees could do besides pray to God, and this time God seemed to hear their prayers, because they managed to land safely.</p> <p>The Jews of Israel greeted them with a love that made them forget their suffering. They were the first refugees who had reached the Holy Land, and they were offered all the help and comfort that could be given. Rebecca and David found relatives in Israel who accepted them with open arms, and although they had become quite emaciated, they were basically healthy and recovered quickly. After some rest they were sent to a special school where foreigners were taught modern Hebrew. Both David and Rebecca were diligent students. After finishing high school, David was able to enter the academy of engineering in Haifa, and Rebecca, who excelled in languages and literature, studied in Tel Aviv- but they always met on the weekends. When Rebecca was eighteen, she and David were married. They found a small house with a garden in Ramat Gan, a suburb of Tel Aviv.</p> <p>I know all this because David and Rebecca told me their story on a Hanukkah evening in their house in Ramat Gan about eight years later. The Hanukkah candles were burning, and Rebecca was frying potato pancakes served with applesauce for all of us. David and I were playing dreidel with their little son, Menahem Eliezer, named</p>	<p>dreidel</p> <p>refugees</p> <p>emaciated</p>
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<p>after both of his grandfathers. David told me that this large wooden dreidel was the same one the partisans had played with on that Hanukkah evening in the forest of Poland. Rebecca said to me, “If it had not been for that little candle David brought to our hiding place, we wouldn’t be sitting here today. That glimmer of light awakened in us a hope and strength we didn’t know we possessed. We’ll give the dreidel to Menahem Eliezer when he is old enough to understand what we went through and how miraculously we were saved.</p>	
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**Handout: Preparing For Class Discussion**

Directions: Complete the form for each section of the reading. Be sure to put page numbers next to your notes.

Predictions:

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Questions:

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Clarifying:

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Summary:

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Note: At the end of Session 5, your students should have a solid understanding of using reciprocal teaching in order to increase reading comprehension. From here, you may want to continue a few more reciprocal teaching lessons before moving on to other instructional discussion discussed in the frameworks above.

**Assessments**

You should be assessing students' discussions through anecdotal notes and observations. Also, you may collect any handouts or notes used to prepare for discussions. These assessments should be used to guide your instruction and amount of scaffolding needed in proceeding sessions.