Reading to Learn (RtL)

Cross-Content Reading in the Era of The Common Core State Standards

Maine Association for Middle Level Education
Annual Conference

October 17-18, 2013

Kevin Perks
kperks@wested.org

Participant Agenda

Intended Outcomes

- To have a foundational understanding of the Process for Reading to Learn (RtL).
- To be able to explain to others why it is important to have a common framework to support content reading.
- To use the RtL framework to analyze a example of an effective text-based lesson.

Agenda

Activities

Introduction

- Welcome
- Review intended outcomes and agenda
- Prompt: What do you hope to get out of today's workshop?

Rationale for an RtL Process

- Think-Pair-Share: What is a text?
- Review excerpts from *Appendix A* of the CCSS and *Text Complexity*
- From the students
- Prompt: In your own words...?

Introducing the Process

- Prompt: What might be some important parts of a process for reading to learn?
- The Reading Process: Text-based activity
- Strategy Jigsaw
- Debrief

Applying Initial Understand

- Scenario Analysis

Wrap-Up

- Debrief - Final Prompts
- Related workshops
- Evaluations

Prompt Page

What do you hope to learn from today's workshop?

When you think of reading (and writing) what types of texts come to mind?

In your own words, explain why it might be important to have a common framework to support the reading of challenging content-specific texts.

What stands out for you about the RtL Process?

How could a collaborative group of teachers, like a CPT, use a process like RtL to support their work and student learning?

What questions do you have about the process?

College, Careers, and Citizenship:
Steady or Increasing Complexity of Texts and Tasks

Research indicates that the demands that college, careers, and citizenship place on readers have either held steady or increased over roughly the last fifty years. The difficulty of college textbooks, as measured by Lexile scores, has not decreased in any block of time since 1962; it has, in fact, increased over that period (Stenner, Koons, & Swartz, in press). The word difficulty of every scientific journal and magazine from 1930 to 1990 examined by Hayes and Ward (1992) had actually increased, which is important in part because, as a 2005 College Board study (Milewski, Johnson, Glazer, & Kubota, 2005) found, college professors assign more readings from periodicals than do high school teachers. Work-place reading, measured in Lexiles, exceeds grade 12 complexity significantly, although there is considerable variation (Stenner, Koons, & Swartz, in press)...

Furthermore, students in college are expected to read complex texts with substantially greater independence (i.e., much less scaffolding) than are students in typical K–12 programs. College students are held more accountable for what they read on their own than are most students in high school (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). College instructors assign readings, not necessarily explicated in class, for which students might be held accountable through exams, papers, presentations, or class discussions. Students in high school, by contrast, are rarely held accountable for what they are able to read independently (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007). This discrepancy in task demand, coupled with what we see below is a vast gap in text complexity, may help explain why only about half of the students taking the ACT Test in the 2004–2005 academic year could meet the benchmark score in reading (which also was the case in 2008–2009, the most recent year for which data are available) and why so few students in general are prepared for postsecondary reading (ACT, Inc., 2006, 2009).

K–12 Schooling:
Declining Complexity of Texts and a Lack of Reading of Complex Texts Independently

Despite steady or growing reading demands from various sources, K–12 reading texts have actually trended downward in difficulty in the last half century. Jeanne Chall and her colleagues (Chall, Conard, & Harris, 1977) found a thirteen- year decrease from 1963 to 1975 in the difficulty of grade 1, grade 6, and (especially) grade 11 texts. Extending the period to 1991, Hayes, Wolfer, and Wolfe (1996) found precipitous declines (relative to the period from 1946 to 1962) in average sentence

length and vocabulary level in reading textbooks for a variety of grades. Hayes also found that while science books were more difficult to read than literature books, only books for Advanced Placement (AP) classes had vocabulary levels equivalent to those of even newspapers of the time (Hayes & Ward, 1992). Carrying the research closer to the present day, Gary L. Williamson (2006) found a 350L (Lexile) gap between the difficulty of end-of-high school and college texts—a gap equivalent to 1.5 standard deviations and more than the Lexile difference between grade 4 and grade 8 texts on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Although legitimate questions can be raised about the tools used to measure text complexity (e.g., Mesmer, 2008), what is relevant in these numbers is the general, steady decline—over time, across grades, and substantiated by several sources—in the difficulty and likely also the sophistication of content of the texts students have been asked to read in school since 1962.

There is also evidence that current standards, curriculum, and instructional practice have not done enough to foster the independent reading of complex texts so crucial for college and career readiness, particularly in the case of informational texts. K–12 students are, in general, given considerable scaffolding—assistance from teachers, class discus- sions, and the texts themselves (in such forms as summaries, glossaries, and other text features)—with reading that is already less complex overall than that typically required of students prior to 1962.3 What is more, students today are asked to read very little expository text —as little as 7 and 15 percent of elementary and middle school instructional reading, for example, is expository (Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, & Hoy, 1994; Moss & Newton, 2002; Yopp & Yopp, 2006)— yet much research supports the conclusion that such text is harder for most students to read than is narrative text (Bowen & Roth, 1999; Bowen, Roth, & McGinn, 1999, 2002; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), that students need sustained exposure to expository text to develop important reading strategies (Afflerbach, Pear- son, & Paris, 2008; Kintsch, 1998, 2009; McNamara, Graesser, & Louwerse, in press; Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhill, 2005; van den Broek, Lorch, Linderholm, & Gustafson, 2001; van den Broek, Risden, & Husebye-Hartmann, 1995), and that expository text makes up the vast majority of the required reading in college and the workplace (Achieve, Inc., 2007). Worse still, what little expository reading students are asked to do is too often of the superficial variety that involves skimming and scanning for particular, discrete pieces of information; such reading is unlikely to prepare students for the cognitive demand of true understanding of complex text.

From Appendix A of the Common Core Standards, pp. 2-3.

The Case for Struggle

When reading gets hard, readers slow down and consciously use strategies to try to make sense of the text... It's not that the reader slows down so much that he or she gets lost but that the reader slows down enough to become strategic. Yet, being strategic is not the goal of reading. Deep comprehension is the primary goal. Reading requires automaticity—the systematic and automatic deployment of cognitive behaviors to make meaning of the text. When readers deploy cognitive strategies automatically, they are considered skilled readers. As Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) point out, "reading skills operate without the reader's deliberate control or conscious awareness … [t]his has important, positive consequences for each reader's limited working memory" (p. 368). Strategies, on the contrary, are "effortful and deliberate" and occur during initial learning, when the text is more difficult for the reader to understand (p. 369). Table 1.2 summarizes the differences between skills and strategies. Strategies become skills with instruction and practice. The challenge is to apply these skills to increasingly complex and diverse texts. In doing so, readers will generalize their skills and become proficient readers who can read widely. This requires readers to struggle a bit as they apply their skills in new situations.

Table 1.2 Comparing Skills and Strategies

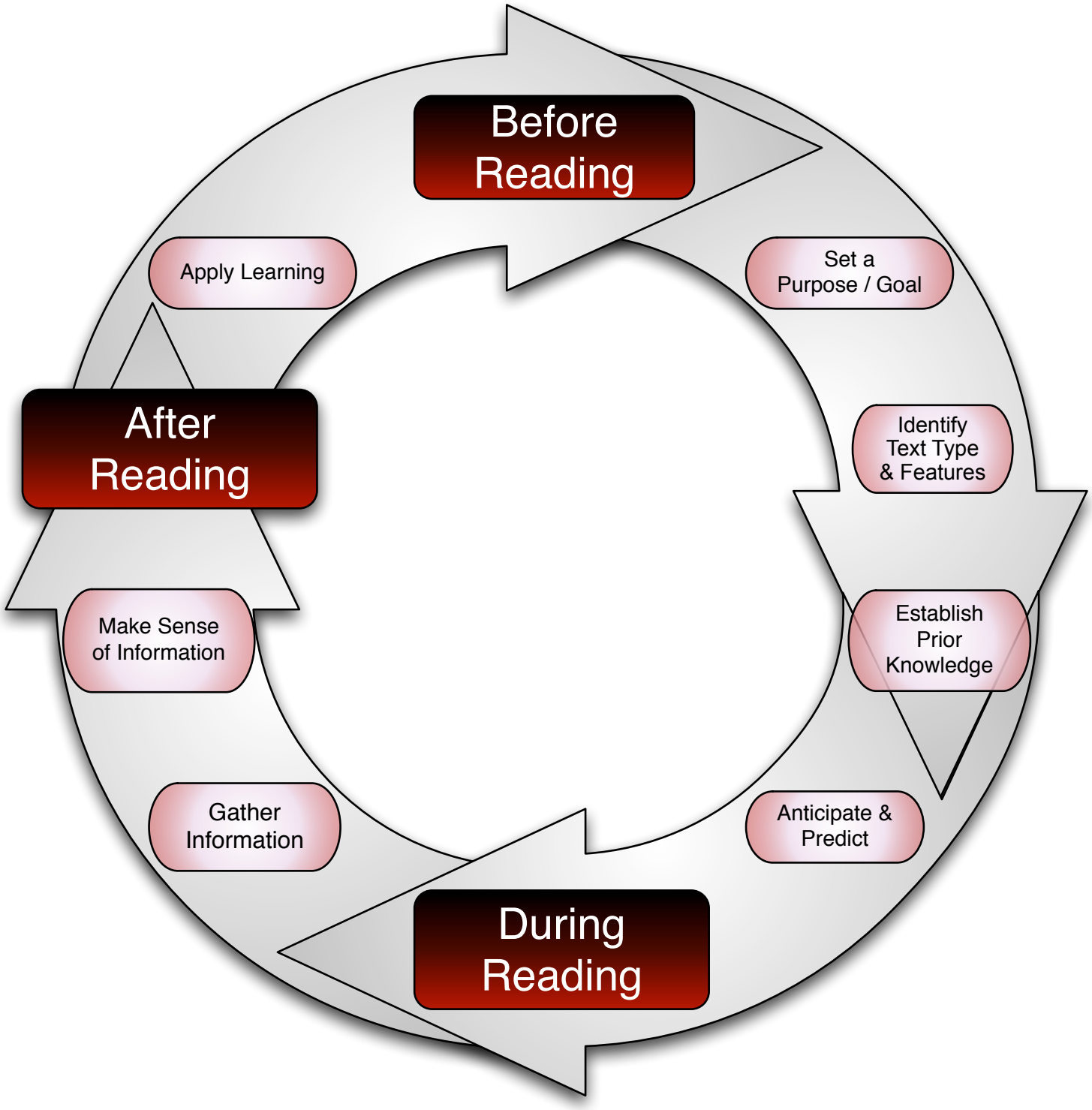
Strategy	Skills
A conscious plan under the control of the reader.	An automatic procedure that readers use unconsciously.
Requires thought about which plan to use and when to use them.	Do not require thought, interpretation, or choice.
Are process-oriented, cognitive procedures the reader uses, generally unobservable in nature.	Are observable behaviors, found on taxonomies, skills tests, or answers to questions.
Instruction focuses on the reasoning process readers use as they interact with text.	Instruction focuses on repeated use until it becomes habitual.

Note. From *Good Habits, Great Readers: Building the Literacy Community* (p. 9), by N. Frey, D. Fisher, and A. Berkin, 2009, Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Copyright 2009 by Pearson. Reprinted with permission.

Perhaps one of the mistakes in the past efforts to improve reading achievement has been the removal of struggle. As a profession, we may have made reading tasks too easy. We do not suggest that we should plan students' failure but rather that students should be provided with opportunities to struggle and to learn about themselves as readers when they struggle, persevere, and eventually succeed.

Lapp, Diane; Frey, Nancy; Fisher, Douglas (2012). Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading (Kindle Locations 346-355). International Reading Association. Kindle Edition.

Reading to Learn



Two-Column Notes

KEY POINTS	QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONSIDERATIONS
Setting A Purpose	
Identifying Text Types & Features	
Establishing Prior Knowledge	
Predicting and Anticipating	

Two-Column Notes

KEY POINTS	QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONSIDERATIONS
Gathering Information	
Making Meaning	
Applying Knowledge	
Additional Information	

Scenario #1 - English Language Arts

In Mrs. Sullivan's 8th grade English class, the students are reading part of the short story "Night Drive" by Will F. Jenkins. This story is a suspenseful thriller about revenge. Mrs. Sullivan has divided the text into four parts. The students are beginning to read the second part as class begins. In this part of the story, the female protagonist realizes she might have a serial killer in her car.

At the beginning of class, Mrs. Sullivan speaks to the students. "As you know, we need to warm up before we start reading. So let's review our purpose for today." She scans the room and looks at a quiet boy in the middle of the room. "Johnny, remind us why we are reading "Night Drive"."

Johnny pauses for a moment and says, "We are looking for examples of how the author builds suspense."

Mrs. Sullivan smiles. "Excellent. Tell me a little more. Why will this be useful?"

Johnny thinks for a moment. "Because you want us to use some of the same strategies in the stories we are writing."

Mrs. Sullivan nods her head in approval. "Well done Johnny." Looking at the class she says, "Yesterday we identified ways the author starts to build suspense. What were some of the strategies Jenkins uses?" Once again, Mrs. Sullivan scans the room. Many hands are raised, but she calls on an attentive student in the back of the room. "Jessica."

Jessica opens a notebook on her desk. She considers it for a moment and then responds. "We identified four strategies. Descriptions of nervousness. Eery details. Details that don't fit or seem out of place. And, references to a past mystery."

Mrs. Sullivan looks pleased. Walking towards the front of the room she says, "That was a very complete answer, Jessica. Thank you." She points to a prompt written on the white board. "Please open your writer's notebooks. You have five minutes to respond to the following prompts: Describe what you anticipate will happen in the next section of the story. Also, predict what strategies you think Jenkins will use to build suspense. He will use some of the strategies you have already noticed. He will also show you some new ones. What do you think these will be?" When she is finished, Mrs. Sullivan looks at the clock on the wall. "You have five minutes. Go." She pauses for a second. "Remember, use all of the time to write!"

As the students write, Mrs. Sullivan walks around the room. She frequently stops to read what a student is writing and whisper feedback or encouragement in his or her ear. After the five minutes are over, Mrs. Sullivan asks a few students to read what they wrote. She then asks them to take out their stories and to divide into their reading pairs.

Once the students are with their partners, Mrs. Sullivan explains the reading task. "Today you will be doing what you did yesterday. You will underline sentences or passages in the second section of the story. You will also code the text. However, yesterday you put an 'S' in the margins to indicate a passage that builds suspense. Today I want you to be more specific. I have created a legend based on yesterday's observations. As you see, I would like you to put an 'FN' next to lines that indicate feelings of nervousness. For eery or scary details put an 'ED' in the margins. If you think Jenkins is referring to a past mystery, write 'PM'. And, write 'ODD' for details that seem odd or out of place. You can still put an 'S' for suspense if you think Jenkins is using a strategy we have not described or coded yet." She looks at the room. "Any questions?" The students look like they are ready to begin reading. "Okay, you may begin. You have twenty minutes to finish reading and coding Section Two.

As the students read softly in pairs, Mrs. Sullivan walks around the room occasionally chatting students. The students in each group take turns reading. Each pair also stops every few minutes to discuss and code passages that build suspense. When the twenty minutes is over, most of the students are finished. A few pairs are still reading. Mrs. Sullivan tells the students who are finished to record the new strategies that Jenkins uses.

When all of the students have finished reading and coding the text, Mrs. Sullivan asks the students to describe the new strategies that Jenkins uses to build suspense. She lists these on the white board. After doing this, she asks the students to turn in their stories so she can review their work and give feedback. She then gives them fifteen minutes to work on the mysteries they are writing. She reminds them to use strategies for building suspense. Once again, as the students work, Mrs. Sullivan walks around the room holding mini conferences with students.

Just before the bell rings, Mrs. Sullivan returns to the front of the room. She points to the homework assignment on the board. "Before you leave, make sure you have tonight's homework assignment written down. Make sure to go on the website to complete the entry ticket for tomorrow. Please let me know how 'coding the text' is helping you understand what Jenkins is doing to engage or hook the reader. The ticket will also ask you to explain which strategies you are including in your own stories. As always, just be thoughtful." As the bell rings, she yells above the din, "Have a good day! See you all tomorrow. Excellent work today!"

In sum, the anecdotes suggest that practice does not always make perfect. Although it might sound odd, most of us already know this intuitively. Think about experiences in your life where practicing was very effective. Also consider times when you did not improve as much as you would have liked. What factors contributed to the success and lack of success?

Scenario #2 - Mathematics

The students in Mr. White's sophomore algebra class just completed the warm-up word problem in their math journals. After they put close their journals, Mr. White asks them to take out their textbooks. When everyone is ready, he says, "We are going to begin lesson eight point five today. I would like to someone to remind the class what we do when we begin a new lesson." Mr. White selects a popsicle stick from a can on his desk and reads a name on it. "Max. Can you tell us what we do?

A brown-haired boy in the front row answers. "We scan the lesson in the textbook to preview what we will be learning."

Mr. White smiles and places the popsicle stick back in the can. "That's right! So, I would like everyone to scan lesson eight point five now. I want you to pay attention to two things as you scan. First, as always, figure out the purpose of the lesson. I also want you to notice how many sections are in this chapter and what they are called. You have five minutes to do this. Go!"

Mr. White walks in between the desks as the students preview the lesson. Occasionally a few students start chatting and Mr. White quietly reminds them to work by themselves. After five minutes, Mr. White tells the students to discuss with each other in pairs what they found during their preview. He listens for a couple of minutes and then addresses the entire class.

"Okay. So, what is the purpose of this lesson?" he asks. Mr. White selects another stick from the can and reads a name. "Sandy."

A petite girl in the middle of the room answers. "We are going to multiply polynomials."

Mr. White smiles. "How did you figure this out?"

Sandy glances at the textbook and responds with a humorous smirk. "It is written on the first page where it says 'objective'." A few students laugh at Sandy's ‘Isn’t it obvious?’ tone.

Mr. White smiles good-naturedly. "Excellent Sandy." He puts the popsicle stick back and pulls out another one from the can. Before he reads the name on the stick he asks, “How many of you are not sure what it means when we say we will be learning to multiply two binomials?” Almost half of the students in the class raise their hands. Mr. White nods his head when he looks at the hands. He looks back at the popsicle stick in his and and reads the name on it. "Charlene. How many sections are in this chapter?"

A girl two seats down from Sandy replies, "There are three sections."

"What are they?" presses Mr. White.

"There is the introduction, a bunch of examples, and then the problems at the end."

"Well done Charlene."

Mr. White turns again to the entire class. "Yes. The focus of purpose of today's lesson will be to learn how to multiply two binomials. There is a name for the process that helps with this. It is called 'FOIL." Mr. White writes "FOIL" in large capital letters on the white board. “Now, that you have had time to scan the lesson, what do you think might be the trickiest part of this lesson? I would like you to write your respond in your journal entry for today. Feel free to review the chapter once more if you are not sure what might be the trickiest part of today’s lesson.”

Many students open their math journals and begin writing. Others take a minute or so to look at the first few chapters of the lesson in the textbook. Mr. White circles the room and takes note of what the students are writing in their journals. When he returns to the front of the room, he grabs a pile of sheets from his desk.

“A lot of you wrote down that this chapter has a lot of big words in it. I agree with you. There is a lot of technical vocabulary. So, before you read, I want to make sure you are familiar with some of the important concepts in this chapter. You should all be familiar with knowledge rating guides. Please take five minutes to fill this out. Remember, you should be able to teach someone what a word means if you check that you know it well. Also, if you check that you have seen it before, write down what you think the word means.”

When the students receive the knowledge rating guide, they begin reading the words on the list and indicate how well they know each word. The list contains the following terms: *binomial, polynomial, trinomial, FOIL*, and *distributive property*. After a few minutes, Mr. White asks the students to share their results with a neighbor. When all the students have had time to assess their understanding of the words, he asks for volunteers to quickly define each term.

After going over the vocabulary terms, Mr. White speaks again. “Now let’s get down to business. I am going to demonstrate a process for multiplying two binomials called FOIL.” He spends the next ten minutes demonstrating how to use FOIL. When he is finished, he answers a few questions.

Mr. White looks addresses the entire class again. “Okay, now it is your turn. I would like you to read the three examples in your text book. I just demonstrated a problem that is like the first example. Examples Two and Three are a little different. So this is what I want you to do.” He points to directions he has written on the white board. First, read each example and give it a name. I did the first one for you. I call it Multiplying Two Binomials.” He points to a section of the white board where the following is written:

Example 1 - Multiplying Two Binomials

Example 2 -

Example 3

What is a good name for the next two examples? Write these in your journal.”

“Second, I want you to number your journals from one to eight for each of the practice problems. Leave enough room to do your work and to write the answer.

“Third, before you complete the problems, look at each practice problem and determine which example will help you solve it. Next to the number of each practice problem write down a one, two, or three to show which example the practice problem connects to. If you are not sure, raise your hand and I will help you.”

“Finally, when you have connected each practice problem to the appropriate example, you may go ahead and work on the problems. If you do not finish in class, please do so for homework. Any questions?”

Mr. White answers a couple clarifying questions and then tells the students to begin. As they work, he walks around and helps individual students.

RPA & CCSS Coding Sheet

Directions
Read the Anchor Standards for Reading and Writing in History/Social Studies, Science, and the Technical Subjects. Using the codes and tables below, identify the parts of the reading process that support each standard. You may put more than one code in a box.

Codes

1 - SP	Set Purpose
1 - PK	Establish Prior Knowledge
1 - TT	Identify Text Type & Features
1 - AP	Anticipate & Predict
2 - GI	Gather Information
2 - MM	Make Meaning
3 - AL	Apply Learning

CCSS	Code
RI.x.1	
RI.x.2	
RI.x.3	
RI.x.4	
RI.x.5	
RI.x.6	
RI.x.7	
RI.x.8	
RI.x.9	
RI.x.10	

CCSS	Code
W.x.1	
W.x.2	
W.x.3	
W.x.4	
W.x.5	
W.x.6	
W.x.7	
W.x.8	
W.x.9	
W.x.10	

Observations

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

The grades 6–12 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade span. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.*
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

*Please see "Research to Build and Present Knowledge" in Writing for additional standards relevant to gathering, assessing, and applying information from print and digital sources.

Note on range and content of student reading

Reading is critical to building knowledge in history/social studies as well as in science and technical subjects. College and career ready reading in these fields requires an appreciation of the norms and conventions of each discipline, such as the kinds of evidence used in history and science; an understanding of domain-specific words and phrases; an attention to precise details; and the capacity to evaluate intricate arguments, synthesize complex information, and follow detailed descriptions of events and concepts. In history/social studies, for example, students need to be able to analyze, evaluate, and differentiate primary and secondary sources. When reading scientific and technical texts, students need to be able to gain knowledge from challenging texts that often make extensive use of elaborate diagrams and data to convey information and illustrate concepts. Students must be able to read complex informational texts in these fields with independence and confidence because the vast majority of reading in college and workforce training programs will be sophisticated nonfiction. It is important to note that these Reading standards are meant to complement the specific content demands of the disciplines, not replace them.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

The grades 6–12 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade span. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Text Types and Purposes*

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

*These broad types of writing include many subgenres. See Appendix A for definitions of key writing types.

Note on range and content of student writing

For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt. To be college and career ready writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately. They need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing. They have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. They must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality first-draft text under a tight deadline and the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it. To meet these goals, students must devote significant time and effort to writing, producing numerous pieces over short and long time frames throughout the year.