

# COMING TO TERMS WITH THE COMMON CORE IN K-12

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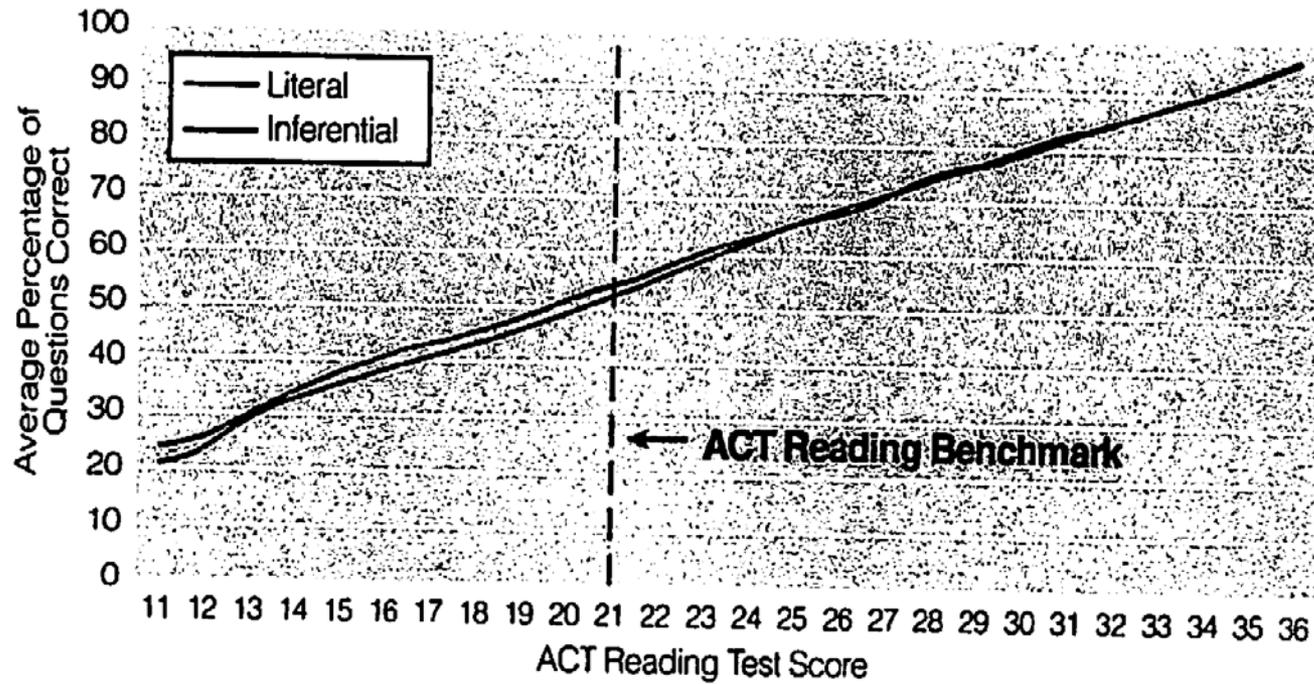
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# Common Core State Standards Changes

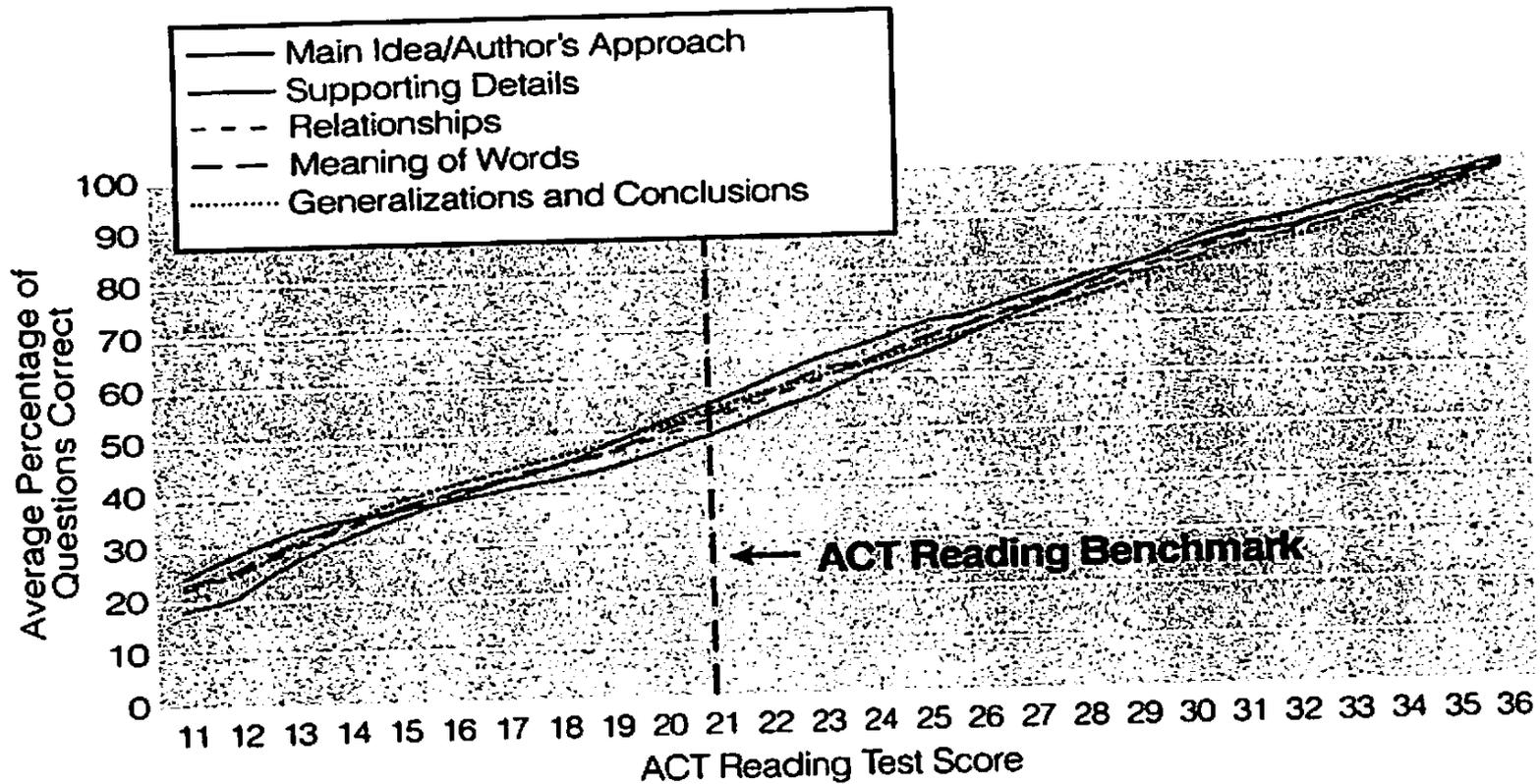
- Challenging text
- Close reading
- Disciplinary literacy
- Informational text
- Infused technology
- Multiple texts
- Writing from sources

# Challenging Text

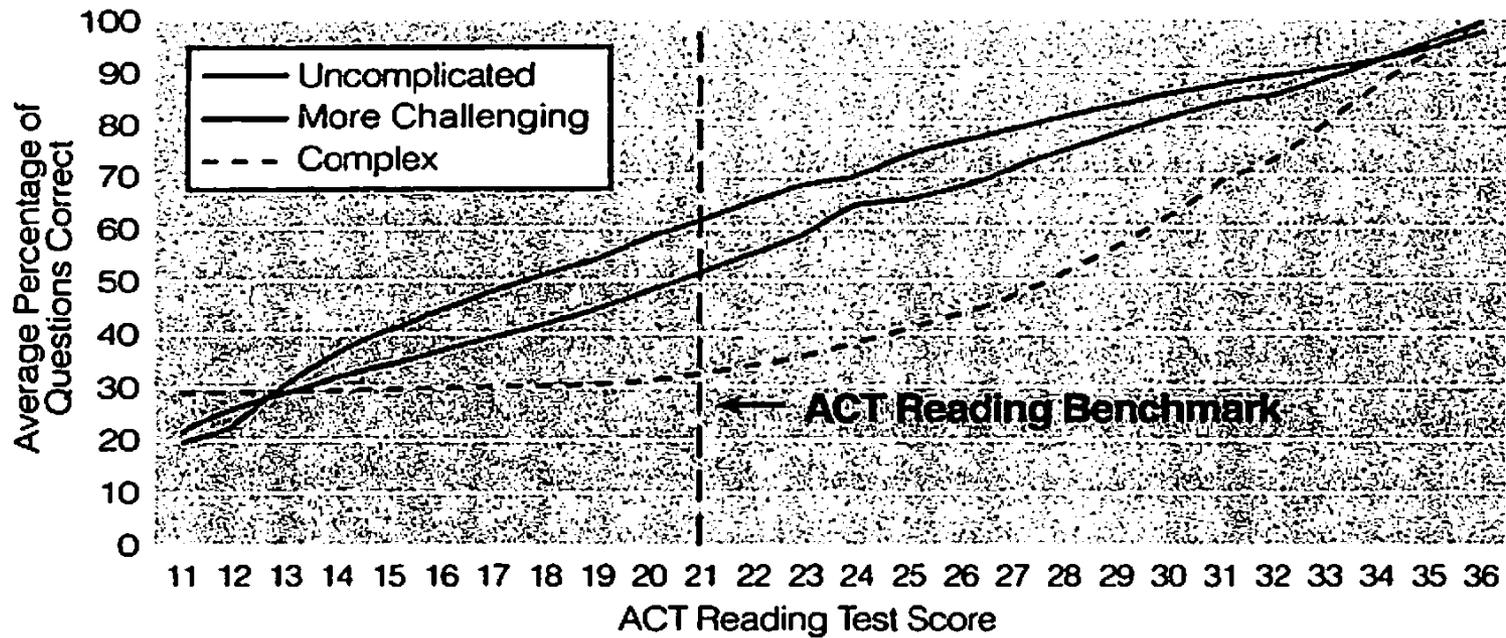
- Past standards focused on cognitive skills and ignored text difficulty
- Common core: Text difficulty is central to learning
- Specific cognitive skills have to be executed, but with texts that are sufficiently challenging (Item 10).



*Figure 10: Performance on the ACT Reading Test by Comprehension Level  
(Averaged across Seven Forms)<sup>9</sup>*



*Figure 11: Performance on the ACT Reading Test by Textual Element  
(Averaged across Seven Forms)*



*Figure 12: Performance on the ACT Reading Test by Degree of Text Complexity (Averaged across Seven Forms)*

# Challenging Text (cont.)

- Quantitative factors: Readability formulas that predict comprehension from vocabulary and sentence complexity
- Includes ATOS, Degrees of Reading Power, Flesch-Kincaid, Lexiles, Reading Maturity, Source Reader
- Set higher than in the past”

	Flesch-Kincaid	The Lexile Framework®
2nd – 3 <sup>rd</sup>	1.98 –5.34	420 – 820
4th – 5 <sup>th</sup>	4.51 –7.73	740 – 1010
6th – 8 <sup>th</sup>	6.51 –10.34	925 – 1185
9th – 10 <sup>th</sup>	8.32 –12.12	1050 – 1335
11th –CCR	10.34 –14.2	1185 – 1385

# Instructional Level

- Betts (1946) theory of instructional level (independent, instructional, frustration and a system for measuring them)
- Claimed research had shown that learning was optimized if students were placed in text with appropriate difficulty levels
- Independent (fluency 99-100%; comprehension 90-100%)
- Instructional (fluency 95-98%; comprehension 70-89%)
- Frustration (fluency 0-92%; comprehension 0-50%)

# Source of Betts' Criteria?

- Betts claimed instructional level was validated in Killgallon study
- But, Killgallon didn't do the study, nor did anyone else (Shanahan, 1983)
- Text difficulty's role in facilitating learning has been more a matter of lore than empirical research
- Readability measures predict reading comprehension, not learning

# Powell Criteria

- William Powell challenged Betts' criteria during the 1960s
- He put forth the idea of “mediated levels”
- PP-2: fluency 87-93%; comprehension 55-80%
- Grades 3-5: fluency 92-96%; comprehension 60-85%
- Grade 6: fluency 92-97%; comprehension 65-90%
- Students placed in harder texts 50% of time

# Betts' Instructional Level Theory

- Claims learning is facilitated by ensuring students can read the text with relatively good comprehension

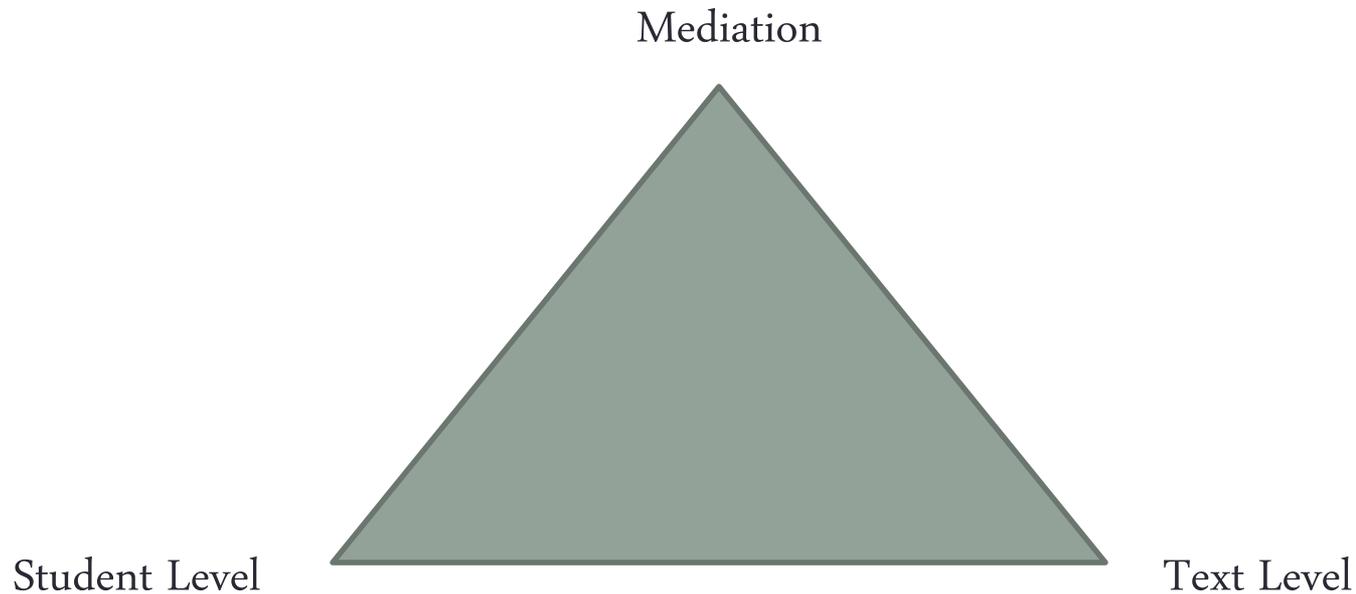
Reader Level

Text Level



# Powell's Mediated Text Theory

- Claims that learning is best from harder texts because teaching facilitates comprehension



# Evidence Text Should Be Harder

Morgan, Wilcox, & Eldredge (2000)

- Varied text difficulty for three groups
- Had groups study in the same way for the same amount of time
- Measured impact on growth in reading comprehension
- Traditionally frustration-level placement led to greatest gains
- Lack of descriptive data

# More Evidence for Harder Text

- Textbook publishers/school districts strove to reduce levels of texts since early 1940s
- Studies show that 3-12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks have gotten easier
- Decline in text levels has presaged the declines in student performance levels

Chall, Conrad, & Harris, 1977

Hayes, Wolfer, & Wolfe, 1996

## We've Been Here Before

- 1980s “whole language” debacle (unadapted text):  
Teacher response was to read *to* students
- Well documented in upper grades that teachers stop using text when the text is challenging
- Hard text led to an over-reliance on “guided reading”
- It is not enough to place students in challenging text
- Teachers (and publishers) need to select texts that include sufficiently challenging language (the CCSS bands), but they also need to consider the qualitative reasons why text is challenging and scaffold student interactions with a text

# Scaffolding Challenging Text

## Scaffolding Text Features

- Complexity of ideas/content
- Match of text and reader prior knowledge
- Complexity of vocabulary
- Complexity of syntax
- Complexity of coherence
- Familiarity of genre demands
- Complexity of text organization
- Subtlety of author's tone
- Sophistication of literary devices or data-presentation devices

## Other Approaches

- Provide sufficient fluency
- Use stair-steps or apprentice texts
- Teach comprehension strategies
- Motivation

# Resources

Shanahan, T., Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2012), March. The challenge of challenging text. *Educational Leadership*.

# The physical fitness metaphor

- If reading and physical exercise are similar, then text complexity is akin to weight or distance
- Students need to practice reading with multiple levels of difficulty and for varied amounts (these variations can even occur within a single exercise session)
- Guiding students to read text with support is like spotting for someone during weight lifting (you have to be careful not to do the exercise for them and you have to avoid dependence)
- Do not always head off the challenges, but always be ready to respond and support

## 16-Week Marathon Training Schedule

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
1	3	Rest	4	3	Rest	5	Rest	15
2	3	Rest	4	3	Rest	6	Rest	16
3	3	Rest	4	3	Rest	7	Rest	17
4	3	Rest	5	3	Rest	8	Rest	19
5	3	Rest	5	3	Rest	10	Rest	21
6	4	Rest	5	4	Rest	11	Rest	24
7	4	Rest	6	4	Rest	12	Rest	26
8	4	Rest	6	4	Rest	14	Rest	28
9	4	Rest	7	4	Rest	16	Rest	31
10	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	16	Rest	34
11	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	17	Rest	35
12	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	18	Rest	36
13	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	20	Rest	38
14	5	Rest	8	5	Rest	9	Rest	27
15	3	Rest	5	3	Rest	8	Rest	19
16	3	Rest	3	Walk 2	Rest	26.2	Rest	34.2

# Close Reading

- Past standards based on theories of reading comprehension drawn from cognitive science (reader, text, context)
- CCSS depend heavily upon literary theory, specifically “New Criticism”
- In New Criticism all of the reading emphasis is on the text

# So what is close reading?

- It starts with the Protestant Reformation  
(no, really)
- Martin Luther dueled with the Church about whether priests had to interpret the Bible or whether people could read it themselves
- In the 1920s and 30s English Departments were dominated by Scholasticism; that is professors/teachers taught the meanings of the texts
- New Criticism (Brooks & Warren, etc.): The meaning is in the text and text must be read closely to get it to give up its meaning

# Close reading

- Great books (challenging books) need to be read and reread
- Each reading should accomplish a separate purpose
- The first reading of a text should allow the reader to determine what a text says
- The second reading should allow the reader to determine how a text works
- The third reading should allow the reader to evaluate the quality and value of the text (and to connect the text to other texts)

# Close Reading

- All focus on text meaning
- Minimize background preparation/explanation (and text apparatus)
- Students must do the reading/interpretation
- Teacher's major role is to ask text dependent questions
- Multi-day commitment to texts
- Purposeful rereading (not practice, but separate journeys)
- Short reads

# Text dependent questions

- Close reading requires close attention to the ideas expressed and implied by the author and to the author's craft
- Often comprehension questions allow students to talk about other things besides the text (How do you think people felt about the Emancipation Proclamation? If you were a slave how would you feel about it?)
- Questions are text dependent if they can only be answered by reading the text (the evidence must come largely or entirely from the text and not from elsewhere)

# Close Reading (cont.)

## Implications”

- Students will need to engage to a greater extent in deep analysis of the text and its meaning and implications
- Less emphasis on background information, comprehension strategies, picture walks, etc. (though these still can be brought in by teachers)
- Greater emphasis on careful reading of a text, weighing of author’s diction, grammar, and organization to make sense of the text
- Rereading will play a greater role in teaching reading

# Writing about Text

- Past standards have emphasized writing as a free-standing subject or skill
- Students have been expected to be able to write texts requiring low information (or only the use of widely available background knowledge)
- The common core puts greater emphasis on the use of evidence in writing
- Thus, the major emphasis shifts from writing stories or opinion pieces to writing about the ideas in text

# Writing about Text (cont.)

- Summarizing text
- Writing texts based on text models
- Analyzing and critiquing texts
- Synthesizing texts

# 5. Writing about Text (cont.)

## Implications

- Writing will need to be more closely integrated with reading comprehension instruction
- The amount of writing about what students read will need to increase
- Greater emphasis on synthesis of information and critical essays than in the past

# Conclusion

- These are just three of the many differences
- The standards are based upon very different theories and conceptions of teaching than current standards are
- Teacher preparation, textbooks, and supervision are based on theories and approaches that are (somewhat) inconsistent with those supporting the CCSS
- Changing instructional practices to better support the standards will require a major professional development for teachers and principals and program transformation