Common Core State Standards

“Part of the motivation behind the interdisciplinary approach to literacy promulgated by the Standards is extensive research establishing the need for college and career ready students to be proficient in reading complex informational text independently in a variety of content areas” (CCSS, p. 5).

The CCSS Call for Lots of Time with Informational Text

They invoke the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) distributions.

For reading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Literary</th>
<th>Informational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>To Persuade</th>
<th>To Explain</th>
<th>To Convey Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Falls Under “Informational Text” in the CCSS Grades K - 5

- “Biographies” and “autobiographies”
- “Books about history, social studies, science, and the arts” (expository informational text)
- “Technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps”
- “Digital sources on a range of topics”

What Falls Under “Informational Text” in the CCSS Grades 6 - 12

“Includes the subgenres of exposition, argument, and functional text in the form of personal essays, speeches, opinion pieces, essays about art or literature, biographies, memoirs, journalism, and historical, scientific, technical, or economic accounts (including digital sources) written for a broad audience.”

Informational Text in the CCSS

Standards involving informational text are found in all four major strands of the English Language Arts standards for both K – 5 and 6 – 12:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking and Listening
- Language

(and also in the sections on “Standard 10: Range, Quality, and Complexity of Student Reading”)

“Informational Text” in the CCSS

- I strongly urge you to approach the CCSS not in terms of the broad category “informational text” but in terms of the specific types of text named within that.

- Why?
  - Some of these texts have very different purposes.
  - Some have very different features.
  - They require different strategies and processes.
  - It is not clear that proficiency with one will lead to proficiency with another.
In this book, we focus on:
- narrative genres
- expository genres
- procedural genres
- persuasive genres
- dramatic genres

Five Principles for Teaching Genre

1. Design compelling, communicatively meaningful environments.
   - Students reading and writing a genre for the same reasons people read and write that genre outside of a schooling context
   
   For example:
   - Reading informational text for the primary purpose of obtaining information one wants or needs to know
   - Writing informational text to convey information one knows to someone who wants or needs to know that information

2. Provide exposure and experience.
3. Explicitly teach genre features.
4. Explicitly teach genre-specific or genre-sensitive strategies.
5. Offer ongoing coaching and feedback.

(Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, Martin, 2012)

1. Design compelling, communicatively meaningful environments.

   Theory: Genres come from and are defined by specific rhetorical situations (Miller, 1984). We teach genre best when we create those situations in our classrooms.

   Research: Second and third graders in classrooms in which informational text and procedural text reading involved more real-world texts for real-world purposes showed higher growth on several measures (Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). Contexts like these may also have benefits for motivation and engagement (e.g., Guthrie, McRae, & Klauda, 2007).
### 1. Compelling, Communicatively Meaningful Environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Reading and Writing NOT because</th>
<th>But rather, because</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You told them to</td>
<td>They want to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You said it’s important for them to learn this</td>
<td>They see it as important or interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That way they can get a grade or pass a class</td>
<td>That way they can accomplish their purpose(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If they do, they’ll get a sticker on a chart</td>
<td>If they do, they will have succeeded with communicating with a real author or audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genres</th>
<th>Primary Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive genres</td>
<td>To influence the target audience’s ideas or behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository informational genres</td>
<td>To convey information about the natural or social world to people who want or need to know that information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural genres</td>
<td>To teach people how to do something they don’t know how to do and want or need to do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, & Martin, 2012

### From the CCSS

“To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students . . . learn to appreciate that a key purpose of writing is to communicate clearly to an external, sometimes unfamiliar audience, and they begin to adapt the form and content of their writing to accomplish a particular task and purpose” (p. 18).

### Procedural Genres

- We read procedural text to learn how to do something we want or need to know how to do
- We write procedural text to teach others how to do something we know how to do and they want or need to know how to do

From the CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

#4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

2. Provide exposure and experience.

- We have to provide exposure to and experience with the specific genres of text we want students to be able to read and write.
  - (e.g., Duke & Kays, 1998; Kamberelis, 1999; Park, 2008)
- Model texts are powerful tools in developing speaking and writing.
  - (Dean, 2008; Dressel, 1990; Hillocks, 2007)
- Modeling comprehension processes through think-alouds appears to be a powerful tool for developing comprehension.
  - (Kucan & Beck, 1997)

2. Provide exposure and experience.

In the zoo guide project children:
- read letters from the head veterinarian at the zoo and sent her letters in return
- emailed questions to zoo personnel and interviewed them in person
- listened to presentations by zoo personnel
- listened to factual books that were read aloud to them
- observed animals and took notes or drew pictures of what they saw
- gathered information from books and websites about animals (with help from mentors).

(Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, & Martin, 2012)

2. Provide exposure and experience.

Through:
- The classroom library
- Classroom walls and other surfaces
- Digital devices
- Classroom experiences
  - Read-aloud, guided and shared reading, independent reading
- Outside-of-school-time/space experiences
Informational Text* Characteristics, cont.

Some characteristics of informational text (from Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007 -- unless otherwise noted):

Content Characteristics
• Information about the natural or social world
• Information that is true or purports to be true

Navigational Features
• Table of contents
• Headings and subheadings
• Numbered pages
• Index

* More narrowly defined than in the CCSS.

Informational Text Characteristics, cont.

Structural Characteristics
• Opening statement or general classification (e.g., “Dragonflies are a type of insect.”)
• Description of attributes or components of the subject (e.g., “Dragonflies have six legs and two pair of wings.”)
• Characteristic events (e.g., “Dragonflies eat flies and other small insects.”)
• Compare/contrast, classification, enumerative (lists), sequential, problem-solution, cause-effect, and cause-effect (Duke & Kays, 1998; Meyer & Rice, 1984)
• Final summary (Pappas, 2006) and general statement or closing (e.g., “There is so much to learn about this amazing insect.”)

Informational Text Characteristics, cont.

Language Characteristics
• Frequent repetition of the topic of the text (Duke & Kays, 1998)
• Generic noun constructions and timeless verb constructions and generic noun constructions (e.g., “Dragonflies lay eggs.” rather than “Daisy Dragonfly laid her eggs.”)
• Denotative rather than connotative language (e.g., “Most dragonflies are between one and four inches long,” rather than “Dragonflies are small creatures.”)
• Specialized or technical vocabulary (e.g., thorax, wingspan, larva)
• Definitions in running text and/or glossary

Graphical Characteristics
• Boldfaced and italicized vocabulary
• Graphical devices, such as:
  • Timelines
  • Surface diagrams
  • Cross-section diagrams
  • Flowcharts
  • Tables
  • Insets
  (Roberts, Norman, Morsink, Duke, Martin, & Knight, 2011)

* Any given informational text is unlikely to, and needn’t, have all of these characteristics.
3. Explicitly teach genre features.

- Explicitly teaching these features is not necessarily effective (Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007).
- Decisions about what to teach when should be informed by:
  - Students’ own writing
  - The needs of the audience
  - State or national standards
- Focus should be on what the feature does for the reader.

Example CCSS related to this principle

_in the craft and structure strand, grade two_

- Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in text efficiently.

3. Explicitly teach genre features.

Example Instructional Strategy: Improve-a-text

- During read aloud or guided reading, engage children in noticing a feature missing from a published text that would make that text better, for example:
  - Add explanation of a word likely to be unfamiliar to readers
  - Add a entire glossary
  - Add a navigational feature (e.g., index, headings)
  - Add captions to photos or illustrations

(Duke, Halladay, & Roberts, invited, submitted)

3. Explicitly teach genre features.

Instructional Strategy: Improve-a-text

- With students, identify a feature missing from a published text that would make that text better, for example:
  - Add explanation of a word likely to be unfamiliar to readers
  - Add a entire glossary
  - Add a navigational feature (e.g., index, headings)
  - Add captions to photos or illustrations

(Duke, Halladay, & Roberts, invited, submitted)
Craft and Structure

- Be sure that the ‘improved’ texts are available to children in the classroom library or elsewhere in the room so that they can admire and use their handiwork at a later date (and so that there is a real purpose and audience for their work).

(Duke, Halladay, & Roberts, invited, submitted)

4. Explicitly teach genre-specific or genre-sensitive strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genres</th>
<th>Example Genre-Specific Strategies for Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive genres</td>
<td>Research the target audience; generate appeals to pathos and ethos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural genres</td>
<td>Conduct procedure yourself, taking notes; have someone else try procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational genres</td>
<td>“Octopus approach” to research; page layout planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The “Octopus Approach”

Informational author Stephen R. Swinburne, as quoted in Robb (2004), explains:

“I have what I call an “octopus” or “multi-armed” approach to research. I get in lots of field time [for observing]. I read books and magazines. I check references in the library. I surf the Internet. I telephone experts and scientists. I interview people. I rely on all these sources to give me a foundation of fact on my subject.” (p. 82)
5. Offer ongoing coaching and feedback.

- Limited availability of assessments
- Teachers will need to look carefully at students’ reading and writing.
- Teachers will need deep understanding of genre.
In Sum

- Informational genres play an enormous role in the Common Core State Standards.
- When designing instruction to meet the CCSS for informational genres (or any genres), I urge you to follow five principles:
  1. Design compelling, communicatively meaningful environments.
  2. Provide exposure and experience.
  3. Explicitly teach genre features.
  4. Explicitly teach genre-specific or genre-sensitive strategies.
  5. Offer ongoing coaching and feedback.

References Cited
