

Department News

Scope and Sequence: The draft of the Scope and Sequence for grade K-3 is finished. Many of you received this at the fall inservice. If you need an additional copy, I post the grade level scope and sequence and also the whole K-3 scope and sequence on Concept's Department of Elementary Education site.

Spelling Bee: Concept Schools Spelling Bee is open to all 3rd grade teachers. The deadline for registration is November 7th. Teachers should begin printing flyers and organizing classroom/school spelling bees. For more information, click on the following link:
<http://english.conceptschools.org/concept-spelling-bee/>

History Heroes: The Concept program History Heroes is designed to promote success in and out of the classroom. We want to recognize students acting as civics leaders in their communities or schools, and students who are going above and beyond in their social studies classrooms. To nominate a student go to <http://socialstudies.conceptschools.org/history-hero/>.

Curriculum Updates

SIS Updates:

The Concept Department heads are continuing to work with our Concept SIS department to improve some of the features.

Interdisciplinary Units:

Interdisciplinary Unit 3 for Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd are finished and posted in Concept SIS. Unit 3 for 3rd grade will be posted shortly and an e-mail with the attached unit outline will go out to each grade level as they are finished.

Free?!

Super Duper Handy Handouts: There is a TON of great articles you can print off and send home. (It's also a great site to brush up on important education related topics.) Many of these articles are also available in Spanish.

<http://www.superduperinc.com/Handouts/Handout.aspx>

Plickers: This great tool allows teachers to collect real-time formative assessment data (a quick snapshot of student understanding.) Students hold up a card with their answer and the teacher briefly scans the room with a smart phone. Information is then received and posted online.

<https://www.plickers.com/>

Plum Landing: This site was recommended by Mr. Coach, Director of Science Education, as a source of great early elementary science videos about animal habitats.

<http://pbskids.org/plumlanding/>

Read Works:

Looking for texts? Read Works offers a HUGE amount of reading passages (fiction and information) for free! You can search by topic, subject, grade-level and lexile. Read Works also has paired texts and lesson plans that target specific comprehension strategies.

Readworks.org

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Using Complex Text

By Jennifer Sajovec

Common Core State Standards are asking teachers to change the texts they use to teach reading. The words Text Complexity are thrown around when talking about the standards and selecting texts but what does that really mean?

For years, elementary teachers have been teaching reading skills through leveled texts. That is, we teach students how to read through carefully selected texts that match each student's reading level. This is a crucial component of guided reading and in moving students through the developmental reading stages. One problem—students at a reading level lower than grade-level appropriate were not exposed to many “complex texts” or in other words, texts at and above grade-level.

Now Common Core is asking us to regularly expose students to complex texts. Yet, many of our readers will struggle to even read a few sentences of the new mentor texts. We have avoided reader frustration for years as there is no easier way to shut down an emerging reader than by having them hunt and peck around a too difficult text.

So what's the solution? Let's strike a balance in the middle of both paradigms.

Shared Reading (different from read aloud): For many years, read-alouds were the sole version of our classroom shared reading experience. We started bringing in other types of text than the classic early elementary fiction read aloud. We can continue to expand on what the new standards are asking of text complexity by having our students INTERACT with the shared reading text; they should be able to (up-close and personal) be able to look at and read the text. CLOSE reading activities are great! Students hear the text read aloud and then are encouraged to try it out themselves. They can partner read or read in small groups with the same text. Don't forget that websites, magazine articles, poems and even advertisements are all forms of text!

Guided Reading: We should continue a regular practice of meeting with guided reading groups and having students work on foundational skills at or near their instructional level. However, we can infuse some more complex texts occasionally into the groups to work on comprehension and other skills. Students who have a difficult time with the text can be read to orally or choral read through the text. A few times a school year, group students by interest in guided reading groups. Students who are highly interested in a topic (football, being a veterinarian, etc.) are more willing to work on a complex text.

Be Creative: Could your guided reading groups work on similar texts about a focus topic and then present complex text in shared reading? What about recording audio versions of the text to use for students who labor during the shared reading experience? Can any vocabulary be taught ahead of time (possible ELL, Title 1 or SPED teachers)? Accessing complex text is all about scaffolding. Develop a scaffold plan for each text and try it out!