

Texts, Texts, Texts: A Guide to Analyze Texts for Elementary Students

D. Ray Reutzler, Parker C. Fawson

Ms. Lucia Silva has been teaching first grade for several years and recognizes from the current English Language Arts (ELA) standards how important it is for her students to have broad exposure to different texts to both practice and refine their foundational reading skills while also deepening their knowledge of the world. Lucia is confident that as her students master the expectations of college and career readiness ELA-grade-level standards, they will be well positioned to continue to refine their reading proficiency in later years. She wants her students to have a strong foundation in how to comprehend and learn from different types of text to further develop their literacy skills along with developing depth and breadth of knowledge. Ms. Silva recalls from her teacher preparation how important it is for her to strategically select texts that she can use to address specific student learning needs during deliberate practice. She seeks to strategically apply this knowledge when she chooses texts to use for literacy instruction with her first-grade students.

Today, Ms. Silva is preparing to expand her students' abilities to read with fluency orally meaning with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression. This is an important focus for her as her students are developing stronger competency in their early foundational skills such as concepts about print, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics/decoding, and sight word recognition. She wants to now use texts to integrate the use of these reading foundational skills to help her students read connected text with increased fluency. Since she knows which ELA standard she is wanting her students to develop, fluent oral reading, she strategically identifies a text that will reinforce her instruction goal and provide deliberate practice to increase her students' oral reading fluency. With her instructional focus on oral reading fluency development, she decides to select a text that has rhythm and rhyme and uses familiar words the students know to scaffold her students' oral reading fluency practice. She decides to use the text, *Over in the Meadow* (Keats, 1971), for this lesson. Using a copy of this text with a document camera to project it on a

screen for all of her students to see, she models how to read this text with fluency, periodically stopping to point out how her reading meets the oral reading fluency requirements of accuracy, rate, and expression. She then invites the students to read the text aloud in unison with her where she also stops periodically to have students practice their use of fluent oral reading. After the modeled reading, she assigns students to partners where they take turns practicing reading with fluency. Since Ms. Silva has been explicit in her instruction in the past about what fluent oral reading is, and the fact that she deliberately selected a text today to scaffold her instructional goal of developing oral reading fluency, she was excited to see later that her informal assessments showed individual students were increasing their capacity to read this text orally with fluency.

For many decades, classroom teachers did not need to select texts for reading instruction because schools predominately used core or basal reading programs with preselected texts for teaching reading (DeWitz et al., 2009). Consequently, basal or core reading program publishers were the primary arbiters of the texts teachers would teach and students would read. Not too long ago, teachers complained about how few authentic books, especially informational books, were available for reading instruction in the elementary grades. Duke's (2000) landmark study, *3.6 Minutes per day: The scarcity of informational texts in first grade*, was a wake-up call to educators and publishers alike when it was published. Nowadays, elementary teachers enjoy access to a virtual cornucopia of young children's literature and information texts for teaching reading.

D. Ray Reutzler is a/an Senior Research Fellow at the Center for the School of the Future at Utah State University, Logan, UT, USA; email ray.reutzler@usu.edu.

Parker C. Fawson is an Emma Eccles Jones Endowed Chair of Early Education and Professor in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership. He is also the Director at the Center for the School of the Future at Utah State University, Logan, UT, USA; email parker.fawson@usu.edu.

With the adoption of the Common Core ELA state standards across the nation, CCS ELA reading anchor standard 10: *Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity* requires students to, “read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently” (National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). In preparation for careers and college, the Common Core ELA State Standards also prescribed a 50/50 ratio of literature to informational texts in elementary schools that progresses later to a 70/30 ratio of literature to informational texts in high schools. As such, CCS anchor standard 10 introduced a new requirement for elementary and secondary teachers to be able to analyze and understand the range and levels of text complexity K–12 students would be required to comprehend to prepare them for eventual careers and college.

In this article, we describe a text analysis protocol, guide, or checklist, the *Guide to Analyze Texts for Elementary Students (GATES)*, which teachers can use to examine complex texts for the purpose of determining instructional obstacles and affordances as part of standards-based reading instruction planning. We offer this guide with a degree of humility recognizing the potential shortcomings associated with the use of checklists or protocols. On the other hand, it is also a fact that many modern highly complex professions, for example, health care, aviation, engineering, etc., are guided in part by checklists and protocols to “get it right” (Gwande, 2009). So, we venture to offer a well-reasoned and practice-tested checklist or protocol to help elementary teachers thoughtfully and systematically analyze and select complex texts to support their reading instruction. In designing and presenting this protocol in the form of a checklist, we expect that it can help but not substitute for broad and deep teacher knowledge. As with any checklist, the knowledgeable practitioner must find how to use it to add the greatest value to her instructional planning. We also acknowledge this protocol, guide, or checklist is a work in progress and invite feedback from teachers who will use it. Our aim, of course, is to increase the utility and precision of the GATES over time just as other professional fields work to improve the protocols they use in everyday practice.

The Problem of Complexity

In his 2009 book, *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right*, Gwande describes the problem of extreme complexity faced by medical doctors every

day as they perform intricate surgical procedures on millions of people. Strangely, part of the answer to the question of complexity for the field of medicine came from a failed test flight of Boeing Corporation’s gleaming aluminum-alloy Model 299 plane in 1935. Newspapers at the time, following the fiery crash on the runway, dubbed this massive flying fortress as, “too much airplane for one man to fly.” As we learn more and more about the process of reading and its associated instruction, elementary teachers often feel overwhelmed by the complexity of reading. In 1999, Moats (1999) published a well-known paper for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), *Teaching Reading is Rocket Science*, arguing that expert knowledge is needed to teach reading effectively. It is little wonder then that elementary classroom teachers often find themselves overwhelmed with the complexities of teaching reading—with text complexity being just one of the many linguistic, cognitive, social, and cultural complexities layered on top of one another. Nevertheless, elementary teachers need to understand how learners acquire the ability to read texts and how to support this process through careful text analysis and selection processes.

Selecting Complex Texts: 21st Century Demands on Teacher Knowledge and Skill

Nowadays, teachers must be prepared to engage in complex text analysis to anticipate obstacles and affordances students may encounter when they process texts of varying levels of complexity (Kucan et al., 2011; Pearson & Hiebert, 2013). In several studies of the degree to which classroom teachers were prepared to effectively analyze texts for teaching reading, teachers stated or were found to have developed few if any text analysis skills for the purpose of analyzing and selecting complex texts for reading instruction (Flory, 2021; Kucan et al., 2011).

In the past, teachers were prepared to “match readers to text” by relying on various measures of text difficulty such as readability formulas (Fry, Flesch-Kincaid, Raygor Readability Formulas among others), Lexiles®, or other text difficulty leveling schemes such as Reading A-Z® or Reading Recovery 1–20®. Researchers have developed other schemes for analyzing text complexity or difficulty. These schemes are generally classified into three types: (1) Text Leveling, (2) Rubrics +Exemplars (R+E), and (3) Text Mapping (Pearson & Hiebert, 2013). In an

effort to help teachers to match texts to readers as required by CCS ELA Anchor Standard 10, publishers currently provide teachers with an estimate of text difficulty often expressed as a Lexile® level score or range. An unintended consequence of this well-intended practice by publishers is that many elementary teachers continue to remain unclear about what makes texts difficult or complex in the first place, and how they, teachers, can analyze text complexity for instructional affordances and obstacles.

To provide ELA *standards-based reading instruction*, teachers must understand what makes texts difficult, then what text elements add to text complexity, and how complex texts can be analyzed for instructional affordances and obstacles. To do this, teachers need to learn how to talk about, think about, analyze, and select complex texts to inform text- and reader-based instruction to ultimately address the task demands of the other nine CCS ELA anchor standards in reading.

Determining the Instructional Purpose of Text

An accessible model that has helped us and many elementary teachers think about the role that text plays in the reading and reading instruction process is Cartwright & Duke's (2019) DRIVE model. The DRIVE model of reading is a comprehensive explanation of how reading is deployed in varied environments, including texts as part of that varied environment. Text is analogous to the "road" in the DRIVE model as differentiated from the driver and the vehicle. Text varies, according to the DRIVE model, by type, structure, features, organizational signals, number, and content. Consequently, as teachers make text selection decisions, they are in effect determining the road their readers (driver +vehicle) will travel with all of the diversity of affordances or obstacles that different roads present to drivers and their vehicles—road types (text types), the route(s) to a destination (content), number of lanes (texts), traffic patterns (text structures), road signs (organizational signals), and other road features (text features). Teacher text selection processes must take into consideration the multiple constraints and opportunities each text offers to the reader, just as driver education teachers must consider carefully the roads students will be driving as they learn the skills, strategies, and concepts of safe and effective driving. Depending upon the purpose for driving instruction, the teacher may decide a parking lot with a cone slalom is best

for learning to make controlled turns when avoiding objects on the roadway. Determining which road variations can support, challenge, or afford instructional opportunities for young or inexperienced drivers is a vital ability to develop as a driver's education teacher. Similarly, understanding which texts can support, challenge, or afford instructional opportunities for developing readers is a crucial skill for elementary classroom literacy teachers.

We propose two broad instructional purposes for selecting texts in the elementary grades. As young children initially encounter the act of reading, selected texts can serve as instructional scaffolds to support the process of early reading acquisition and the acquisition of reading foundational skills. Once younger students can read these selected texts fluently when used as early reading scaffolds, the purpose for selecting texts shifts from providing students with supporting scaffolds for acquiring early reading foundational skills to reading challenging and complex texts as preparation for future college and career.

Texts as Scaffolds for Early Reading Acquisition: What kind of text for whom and when?

At the turn of the millennium, Brown (2000) asked the question—what kind of text for whom and when? As teachers consider which texts to select as part of a standards-based approach to early reading instruction, this seemed to us a crucial question to ask. Brown's (2000) assertion was that texts should be selected to scaffold the development of reading foundation skills such as concepts about print, phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding, word recognition, fluency, oral language development, and knowledge building. As early readers develop their reading proficiency over time, they move from "read it again" and efforts to commit text to memory, to relying heavily on illustrations to augment the print as they retell a story, and then they move onto finger point reading (Ehri & Sweet, 1991). According to Brown (2000), as early readers develop their concepts about the reading process, they are benefitted by reading patterned or sequenced texts, such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What do you see?* (Martin, 1967). As younger readers grasp the alphabetic principle (the concept that letters and sounds map onto one another), decodable books, such as *Bug in a Jug* (Starfall, 2007), can play an important role in increasing early reading power

and skill. Once early readers begin to decode words, then books called *I Can Read* books, like *Little Bear* (Minarik, 1957) and *Ranger Rick: I Wish I Was a Gorilla* (Bove, 2018), can play a vital role in reading development by balancing and controlling encounters with regularly spelled words, high-frequency sight words, and irregularly spelled words in text. Once younger readers can fluently read, *I Can Read* books, they are prepared, according to Brown (2000), to engage in reading authentic literature and informational titles such as *Never Let a Unicorn Scribble* (Alber, 2021) or *National Geographic Readers—Planets* (Carney, 2012).

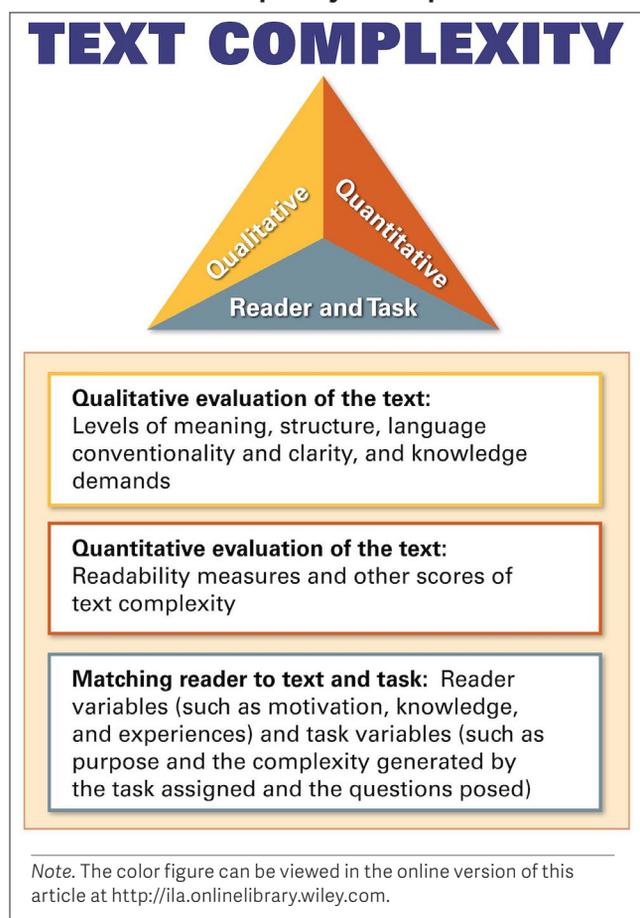
Consequently, in the earliest stages of reading acquisition, teachers do well to select texts that act as scaffolds for developing young students' reading foundation skills as well as to bolster their collective sense of self-efficacy as early readers. Once students are able to handle the reading demands of these types of texts at early grade levels (K–1), then the purpose for selecting texts shifts to more directly addressing the ELA reading standards expected for future college and career readiness.

In the early elementary grades, research indicates that the texts students read in school are sufficiently rigorous. In fact, for many students, Hiebert (2013) maintains that current texts in the elementary grades are sufficiently difficult in relation to students' reading proficiency to promote reading growth and challenge. This, of course, does not mean that there should not be effective reading instruction aimed at increasing students' proficiency to read more complex texts. What it does indicate is that the initial goal of reading instruction should be to develop proficiency with early reading texts and then steadily increase text complexity as elementary students gain the confidence and capacity needed to read more difficult and complex texts in the elementary grades (Shanahan, 2020).

Texts as Preparation for College and Career: Considering Text Complexity

The CSS ELA standards were intended to promote students' ability to comprehend and learn from complex text. Chief among these standards, Anchor Standard 10, states that students will read increasingly challenging or complex texts. The concept of "complex" texts is represented in CCSS ELA documentation as comprised of two dimensions, quantitative and qualitative (See Figure 1), that hypothetically aid in achieving the third or final dimension—a suitable reader-text match.

Figure 1
CCSS ELA Text Complexity Description



The complexity of texts is only part of the reading process as described in the DRIVE model, but nonetheless it plays a critical role in promoting reading proficiency. So then, what makes a text complex?

Quantitative dimensions of text complexity relate to the concept of text accessibility, difficulty, and challenge. Quantitative measures of text accessibility, difficulty, and challenge are often described or defined by text leveling processes such as Lexiles, Guided Reading Levels (A–Z), Reading Recovery Levels (1–20), and Readability formulas (Hiebert, 2014). Most of these measures consider two factors that predict text difficulty—syntactic and semantic complexity. Syntactic complexity is concerned with the complexity of sentences in text. The active assumption is that longer sentences are typically more complex than shorter sentences. Semantic complexity is concerned with vocabulary or word meanings. This is measured by assessing how frequently words appear in text with the active assumption that words that

appear more often are likely to be better known than words that appear less frequently.

Qualitative dimensions that render a text complex include four elements: **purpose**, **structure**, **language**, and **knowledge demands**. **Purpose** is complex when a text requires one to imply or infer the purpose of a text or the text has multiple purposes. **Structure** is complex when the organization of the text requires the reader to infer connections between ideas or the text conforms to the conventions of a specific content discipline. If text features or graphics are present in the text, they are essential for understanding the content and provide additional information not in the text. **Language** is considered complex when the text contains frequent use of abstract and figurative language, multiple and complex rhetorical devices, or irony. The language is also complex when texts contain unfamiliar, archaic, discipline-specific, or overly academic terms and the meaning is ambiguous or purposefully misleading. **Knowledge demands** render texts complex when extensive, specialized, theoretical, and discipline-specific content knowledge is needed to construct meaning from the text. References to many citations to other texts or outside ideas or theories also make texts highly complex in terms of knowledge demands.

Taken together, these elements of text complexity have been folded into the *Guide to Analyze Texts for Elementary Students (GATES)* (See Figure 2).

This guide is useful for preparing preservice and in-service teachers to take a systematic approach to analyze, select, and plan instruction for early reading and complex texts. To illustrate how to use the GATES, we provide scenarios of two teachers, one preservice kindergarten teacher, and one in-service fourth-grade teacher to demonstrate how they analyzed and selected texts using the GATES to support their students' reading development.

Using the GATES: Preservice Kindergarten Teacher

Ms. James is a teacher candidate in her student teaching semester in a public university in the Western United States and is currently assigned to teach in a kindergarten class during fall semester. Ms. James was introduced to the *Guide to Analyze Texts for Elementary Students (GATES)* framework in her university literacy methods course. She knows that not just any text will support her instructional goals.

Consequently, Ms. James accessed her GATES framework to help her analyze potential texts. The

first step in the Gates framework is to determine her instructional purpose. She will be focusing instruction on supporting her students' foundational skill to decode and spell CVC words. She notes that a text will need to be selected that will support her students' development to decode and spell CVC words. Using the GATES, she places a check in the box next to this category in Step 1. She then moves down the GATES framework and notices that since she needs to select a text to meet her student's needs for scaffolding early reading foundational skill acquisition, she does not need to move deeper into the GATES framework.

After making this determination, she selects a decodable text from the "Bobs Books, Set 1" (Maslen, 1976) entitled "Mat." She selected this text because it presents CVC words that use the short sound of the letter "a" repeatedly. She is satisfied that the text she selected will help her students practice their decoding and spelling of CVC words that appear in this decodable text.

Using the GATES: In-service fourth-Grade Teacher

Mr. Rojas has been teaching fourth grade for 7 years. He understands how important it is for his students to navigate the varied text features of books to ensure they have developed mental models to scaffold their understandings of what they read. His core standards focus this week is on helping students learn to identify the structure of ideas, concepts, or information in informational texts. Recently, Mr. Rojas was involved in a professional learning session where he was introduced to the GATES framework for analyzing and selecting text. He learned that this tool was developed to help him make sure the texts he uses for instruction will support the learning targets he establishes for his students. His recent focus in science has been exploring the human body. This week's emphasis is on the heart and how it works as an integrated organ within a complex circulatory system. He has selected the book, "The Heart: Our Circulatory System" (Simon, 1996) to use for this week's focus but he wants to make sure this text is appropriate for his instructional purposes—to identify the structure of ideas, concepts, or information in informational texts. He accesses the GATES Framework to help him make sure this text will work to reinforce his instructional purposes.

As he analyzes this text using the GATES framework, he first determines that he is using this text to teach college and career readiness anchor standards.

Figure 2
Guide to Analyze Texts for Elementary Students (GATES)

Directions: Please fill out this form for each elementary text to be used for instruction.

Step 1: Determine Instructional Purpose Based on Learner Need (Check Appropriate Box)

Scaffold Early Reading Foundation Skill Acquisition (If you check this box, do not proceed beyond the stop sign below)

- Concepts About Print
- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics/Decoding
- Word Recognition
- Fluency



Teach College and Career Readiness (If you check this box, proceed to the next steps) Reading Anchor Standard(s) To Be Taught

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Step 2: Determine Text Type (Check Only One)

- Literature/Fiction Informational/Nonfiction Poetry

Step 3: Determine Text Genre (Check Only One)

Literature: Adventure Epic Fable Fairy Tale Fantasy Folktale
 Historical Fiction Horror Humor/Satire Legend Mystery Myth
 Novel Picture books Realistic fiction Science fiction Short story
 Picture books

Information: Articles Atlas Autobiography Biography Blogs
 Broadcasts Brochure Cookbook Diary Editorials E-mail
 Encyclopedia Essays Flyer How to Books Instructional Manual
 Journal Letters Log Memoir Reference text How Things Work
 Multi-media texts Newspapers Notes Notebooks Pamphlets Position or white papers Reviews Reference text Textbook Travel book Website posting

Step 4: Determine Text Difficulty (Check as many as apply)

- A-Z Level _____
- Lexile Score/Range _____
- Readability Grade Level Equivalent _____
- Reading Recovery Level _____

Note. The color figure can be viewed in the online version of this article at <http://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

(continued)

Figure 2
Guide to Analyze Texts for Elementary Students (GATES) (Continued)

Step 5: Determine Text Content/Discipline (Check as many as apply)

- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Social Studies
- Science
- Technology
- Fine Arts

Step 6: Determine if Text Supports Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Multicultural literature representative of the diversity in the community
- Informational books representative of the diversity in the community
- Author(s) provide an insider perspective
- Cuts across major diversity categories, e.g., age, race, religion, education, work experience, national origin, gender, ethnicity, mental/physical ability, sexual orientation, language, communication skills, political belief, income, etc.,

Step 7: Analyze Knowledge Demands (Check only one)

Literary Text

- High (Sophisticated/complex themes, Multiple perspectives, Deep cultural/literary knowledge, References to other texts)
- Moderately High (Multiple themes, Experiences portrayed are not fantasy but uncommon to most readers, Moderate levels of cultural/literary knowledge, Occasional references to other texts)
- Moderately Low (Single complex theme, Common experiences, Fantasy, Some level of cultural/literary knowledge, Few references to other texts)
- Low (Single theme and perspective, Everyday experiences, Everyday knowledge of culture/literary knowledge, No references to other texts)

Informational Text

- High (Requires extensive, specialized, theoretical or discipline-specific knowledge of content and vocabulary; Many references to/citations of other texts or outside the text information.)
- Moderately High (Requires moderate levels of specialized, theoretical or discipline-specific knowledge of content and vocabulary; Some references to/citations of other texts or outside the text information.)
- Moderately Low (Everyday, practical knowledge with some discipline-specific knowledge of content and vocabulary; Few references to/citations of other texts or outside the text information.)
- Low (Only everyday, practical knowledge and familiarity with genre conventions; No references to/citations of other texts or outside the text information.)

Step 8: Determine Text Structure (Check text structure and only one level of complexity)

Literature

- Story Structure
 - High (Complex, implicit, unconventional, many shifts in point of view, frequent change in time and sequence)
 - Moderately High (Some complexity, more implicit than explicit, some unconventional, occasional shifts in point of view, several major shifts in time and use of flashbacks)
 - Moderately Low (Mostly simple structure, more implicit than explicit, mostly conventional, few shifts in point of view, some use of flashbacks, no major time shifts)
 - Low (simple, explicit, conventional, no shifts in point of view, chronological)

(continued)

Figure 2
Guide to Analyze Texts for Elementary Students (GATES) (Continued)

Informational

- Descriptive
- List
- Cause and Effect
- Problem Solution
- Compare Contrast
- Sequential/Chronological Order
- Multiple or Mixed
- High (Highly complex, implicit connections among ideas, conforms to discipline specific conventions, if used, text features, use of complex graphics necessary to understand text)
- Moderately High (Complex, some explicit connections among ideas, largely conforms to discipline specific conventions, if used, text features, less complex graphics enhance text understanding)
- Moderately Low (May be complex, mostly explicit connection among ideas, generally conforms to disciplinary conventions, if used, text feature, simple graphics are supplementary to understanding text)
- Low (Simple, explicit connection among ideas, conforms to conventions of genre, if used, text features, simple graphics are unnecessary to understand text)

Step 9: Determine Text Language Demands (Check one level of complexity)

- High (Use of abstract, figurative language, or irony, generally unfamiliar, archaic, overly academic, dense, complex, domain or discipline specific, may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading)
- Moderately High (Occasional use of use of abstract, figurative language, or irony, unfamiliar, archaic, overly academic, dense, complex, domain or discipline specific,)
- Moderately Low (Subtle use of abstract, figurative language, or irony, largely contemporary or conversational, literal, familiar, and rarely overly academic, domain or discipline specific)
- Low (Little or no use of abstract, figurative language, or irony, contemporary, clear, explicit, easy-to-understand)

Step 10: Determine Text Features (Check as many as apply)

- Table of Contents Glossary Index Photographs Captions
- Labels Graphs Tables Diagrams Maps Dialog Bubbles
- Fact/Side Bar Boxes/Insets Internet Links References Print Alterations (Bold, Italics) Bullet Point Lists Drawings or Artwork
- Pronunciation Guide Timeline Cutaways or Cross Sections Other

Step 11: Determine Organizational Signals (Check as many as apply)

- Title Headings or Sub-headings Signal words or connector terms (e.g., time order such as first, second or to begin, next, after; cause-effect such as because, for this reason, consequently; compare-contrast such as on the one hand, on the other, like, similar, different than, etc.

Step 12: List Instructional Affordances (As related to selected ELA standards, consider using this text as an exemplar in instruction):

Step 13: List Instructional Obstacles (As related to selected ELA standards, determine additional instructional scaffolds or supports necessary for learners to process this text successfully):

As a result, he skips Step 1 in the GATES and moves to Step 2. In this step, he selects the box corresponding to “Informational/Nonfiction” as the text type this book follows. He then moves to Step 3 to determine the text genre for this book. Since this is an information text, he works through the genre categories and selects the box next to the “How Things Work” category since this text describes how the human heart functions. The next decision point comes in Step 4 where Mr. Rojas identifies the Lexile score for this book as 1030. This score places the book as generally appropriate for use in fourth-grade core instruction. Moving next on to Step 5, he identifies that this text is also being used to reinforce the Science curriculum. In Step 6, he determines that this text addresses the science standard of systems that support and sustain a diversity of living organisms. In Step 7, Mr. Rojas places a check mark by the informational text “Moderately High” category since some of the terms and concepts used in this text might be new knowledge and challenging for some of his students. In Step 8, Mr. Rojas identifies the structure of this text as informational and descriptive. It is descriptive because it focuses on one idea, the heart, with supporting details. He also notes that this places a moderately high demand on his students since the text introduces complex knowledge structures that conform to discipline-specific conventions and that the graphics reinforce the text meaning for the reader. Moving on to Step 9, Mr. Rojas determines that the text’s language demands are moderately high since there is some level of complexity in concepts with less complex visual elements related to the heart. In Step 10, he notes that the text features such as detailed photographs/images, captions, and marginal notes to scaffold students’ learning are present. For Step 11, he also notes that the text has a title that acts as an organizational signal to students. In Step 12, he appreciates that this informational text clearly follows the expectations of a descriptive text by focusing on a single topic. Noting these affordances will help him to help his students to use a graphic organizer to anchor their understanding and growing knowledge about the heart. Finally, in Step 13, he notes some obstacles that he will need to address with this text. These include a lack of a Table of Contents page and headings/sub-headings in the text. These are typical features of informational texts so he will invite his students to work in small groups to develop a Table of Contents for this book along with some potential headings/subheadings for the descriptions they are reading.

Mr. Rojas is pleased he learned about the GATES framework for analyzing text. Working through the

GATES framework with this informational text, he was able to determine that he can use it to teach CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.5 anchor standard—identifying text structure. He also determined that the science vocabulary and concepts in this text support Next Generation Science Standard, 4-LS1-1. Construct an argument that plants and animals have internal and external structures that function to support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction [<https://www.nextgenscience.org/sites/default/files/4%20combined%20DCI%20standardsf.pdf>] dealing with understanding how the human body has internal and external structures that function to support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction. Noting obstacles such as no table of contents and headings/subheadings also helped him to see how he might help his students actively read this text to develop a table of contents and headings/subheadings about the various types of descriptions or supporting details they read about the human heart. Using the GATES to analyze this information text took him about 10 minutes. In so doing, he was able to systematically think about the text he was selecting and determine how or if it afforded his students the instructional opportunities to achieve the ELA standards he wanted to teach—to identify the structure of ideas, concepts, or information in informational texts. In the end, Mr. Rojas has continued to use the GATES. After many months of use, he now says it provides a mental framework for how he analyzes texts to more effectively teach the CCS ELA reading standards in his fourth-grade classroom.

In summary, the GATES provides teachers with a systematic framework for thinking about the instructional affordances or obstacles texts provide as a scaffold or as a context for learning and/or deliberately practicing college and career readiness standards. Teachers find the GATES framework to help them see more deeply into texts selected for instruction and how to plan to either take advantage of existing text affordances or to provide additional scaffolding and supports to overcome text obstacles to comprehend a variety of complex and challenging texts as students read to develop reading foundation skills or to master college and career standards throughout the elementary school grades. Again, we invite feedback on the GATES to render it more efficient, effective, and useful as a guide for helping elementary teachers to analyze texts for instructional potential and to drive a systematic and thoughtful process for matching readers with texts.

Conflict of Interest

None

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