

## The Common Core State Standards and Reading: Interpretations and Implications for Elementary Students with Learning Disabilities

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The K-5 reading standards within the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards provide guidance to teachers about grade level expectations for students. Though the authors of the standards acknowledge that some students may experience difficulty reaching the rigorous expectations, they explain that the standards outline a pathway to proficiency for all students, including those who struggle with literacy. Students with learning disabilities, who often have significant literacy difficulties, may face particular challenges when their instruction is framed by these standards. This article unpacks the complex K-5 reading standards and provides a discussion of the implications for students with learning disabilities and their general and special education teachers. Examples from K-5 lessons and recommendations for teachers and researchers are provided.

The common core state standards (CCSS) in reading provide several fundamental themes for directing instruction that are likely to be familiar to most elementary reading teachers, and several themes that are likely to require adjustments in instruction and materials for these same teachers. The purpose of this article is to define both the familiar and unfamiliar themes and to describe the implications of these standards for students with learning disabilities (LD).

Instructional practices and standards that may be familiar include previously identified research practices in reading in the key reading skills of phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). Schools nationwide have offered professional development and adopted curricular materials that support explicit and evidence-based literacy instruction, and these endeavors are likely to continue as schools transition to the CCSS. Because students with learning disabilities have been increasingly included in both general education instruction in reading as well as state level assessments, there has been increased focus on strengthening literacy instruction for students with LD and those at risk for academic difficulties (e.g., IDEA, 2004; NCLB, 2001).

*The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects* (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010) outlines the grade-level expectations

for students in the essential areas of literacy (reading, writing, speaking and listening) through grades K-12. Specifically in this article, we address the K-5 standards and refer to them as the K-5 Common Core State Standards (K-5 CCSS). This common standards initiative, described throughout this special issue, provides a roadmap of the essential literacy skills by grade level that will lead to college and career readiness, using anchor standards for college and career readiness as a guiding framework. At each grade level, the standards describe the minimum competency level expected for students to finish the K-12 years ready for college and career. In this article, we examine the expectations set forth for K-5 reading instruction and consider the challenges these may pose for students with learning disabilities and their teachers. Finally, we provide suggestions for practice and future research.

### WHAT EXPECTATIONS ARE SET FORTH IN THE K-5 CCSS?

The CCSS writing team included standards only when they were determined to be research-based, aligned with college and work expectations for adults, and internationally benchmarked. The emphases in the K-5 CCSS document are to develop the ability to read widely across a range of texts, with increasing levels of complexity through the grades. In grades K-5, teachers have a primary mission of providing students with the foundational reading, writing, listening and speaking skills that lead to being able to learn from multiple genres of text. There is a strong emphasis on engaging in

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deep analysis of text, responding to it in writing and speaking, reading extensively, and in general, engaging in close reading of text. The standards document states:

*Students can only gain this foundation when the curriculum is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades. Students also acquire the habits of reading independently and closely, which are essential to their future success (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010; p. 10).*

To unpack the K-5 standards, we outline in Table 1 the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards. The anchor standards frame each set of grade-specific minimum competency expectations that support developing the anchor skills. There are anchor standards for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Table 1 also defines the anchor standards in each area of literacy. In examining the K-5 anchor standards, it becomes apparent that the authors of the CCSS intended to communicate high expectations for students, including engaging in, learning from, and responding to a variety of texts.

How different are the K-5 CCSS from previous versions of states' standards? It is likely that many of K-5 CCSS elements have been present to some degree in states' Reading/Language Arts standards. What is notable in the K-5 CCSS documentation is the increased focus on college and career readiness from the early grades forward. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are integrated throughout and students are expected to draw upon multiple resources to engage with increasingly challenging concepts and vocabulary across multiple disciplines. Engaging with different types of text, media and technology are also emphasized across grades, and there is a greater emphasis on reading informational text. In summary, a key consideration and likely difference between previous state standards and the CCSS is that the grade level texts students are expected to read will be more difficult and will likely represent informational and expository text, as well as more traditional narrative texts. Furthermore, while the focus remains on reading for understanding, there is a shift away from a strategy-based reading comprehension instruction and toward "close reading" of text, which includes rereading, interpreting perspective, and providing additional text sources as evidence to support ideas. All of these expectations are noteworthy and will require carefully scaffolded instruction if students with LD are to meet them. For example, rather than just asking students with LD to read a section of text again, students will benefit when the teacher models the reading of the text, provides them an opportunity to read with feedback, and then asks them to read independently.

Standards in the early grades outline what is called Foundational Skills. The early foundational skills describe familiar areas of instruction included in most previous versions of state standards. Derived from research documenting the essential early reading skills (e.g., National Reading Panel, 2000), the grade-level expectations in the early grades describe the developmental process of acquiring concepts of print, the alphabetic principle (including phonemic awareness and phonics), and other basic conventions that are part of learning to read and write in English. Additionally, the K-5 CCSS outline the development of reading fluency that pro-

motes accurate reading of appropriate grade-level text with expected rate and expression to indicate understanding. By the end of second grade, students are expected to read and comprehend grade level text independently. Throughout the early grades, students should develop increasingly sophisticated vocabulary knowledge, including content and academic vocabulary appropriate for their grade level and strategies to identify unfamiliar vocabulary words. The guidelines specify that teachers will use assessment opportunities that measure students' progress in reading and that these assessments will inform instructional decision-making.

What may be new to teachers in K-5 CCSS is the increased emphasis on integrating literacy skills, systematically reading increasingly more challenging texts throughout the grades, focusing on close reading and analysis of text, and intentional preparation to meet the high level demands of reading within college and career settings by the end of high school. Teachers are expected to include multiple genres in their text choices and their selections are expected to be valuable for reading and rereading. An important feature of the K-5 CCSS is the increased exposure to informational text—by 4th grade it is expected that 50 percent of the selections students read will be expository texts.

### WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES?

The intent of the CCSS document is to outline a rigorous course of study that will best prepare America's youth for the global economy. Certainly, college and career readiness is an important long-term goal for students with LD. Yet, it is widely known that literacy—particularly reading and writing—are areas of serious difficulty for the majority of students with learning disabilities. Increasing the rigor of K-12 expectations is likely to present increased challenges for students with LD and their teachers.

The rigorous grade-level expectations, particularly the emphasis on increasing the amount and complexity of text and the application of deep analysis to text, set a high benchmark that raises questions about how teachers can best support students with LD in reaching them. The CCSS guidelines suggest that educators may provide accommodations and supports, but offer very limited information about *how* to ensure success for students experiencing difficulty, including students with LD. We agree with the argument that the CCSS are not designed as an instructional tool to provide specific procedures to teachers about how to make instructional accommodations for students, yet, there is an understanding that students who demonstrate significant reading difficulties and are struggling to read the current text will somehow be better able to access the more difficult text. We do not think the CCSS are responsible for resolving this issue but the lack of attention devoted to the ways in which demanding reading of more difficult text could lead to greater problems for many students, including those with LD, is disappointing.

In the following sections, we illustrate how teachers might consider the features of the K-5 CCSS in designing instruction for students with LD. Given the recent implementation of the K-5 CCSS, we are not able to identify any current

TABLE 1  
K-5 Anchor Standards for Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking

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**Anchor Standards for Reading**

*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, and 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 media and formats, 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

**Anchor Standards for Writing**

*Text Types and Purposes (including subgenres)*

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
1. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
2. 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*

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

*Research to Build and Present Knowledge*

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

*Range of Writing*

9. 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

**Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening**

*Comprehension and Collaboration*

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

*Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas*

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate

**Anchor Standards for Language**

*Conventions of Standard English*

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing

*Knowledge of Language*

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

*Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
  5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
  6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.
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studies specifically focused on students with LD and the CCSS. Therefore, we summarize research in general that focuses on supporting students with LD in acquiring basic literacy skills. Two main elements of instruction are likely to be needed: extensive support in accessing foundational skills that will support wide reading across content areas, and strategies specific to accommodations in the general education setting.

### Features of the Common Core Standards in Reading and Implications for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities

#### *The K-3 Foundational Skills*

The Foundational Skills are ones that likely are most familiar to practicing teachers because they align with previous descriptions of the key elements of learning to read (National Reading Panel, 2000). We provide examples of the Foundational Skills grade-level standards because students with LD are likely to first experience difficulty with these skills, and their difficulties may extend beyond the primary grades in which typical curricular materials would emphasize such skills. We reiterate that this portion of the standards is not likely to be different from previous state standards, and the expectation that students with LD are likely to need supplemental explicit instruction and extended support beyond the early grades is not a new concept for educators. Our greatest concern with regard to the Foundational Skills is that, in efforts to plan and implement instruction that covers other areas of the standards that are new to the early grades—such as close reading and deep analysis of text, increased use of informational text, and wide reading across genres—teachers may overlook the critical importance of providing high quality, explicit instruction in the foundational skills. A greater emphasis on these other areas may result in less planning and limited instructional time focusing on the critical phonemic awareness, decoding and fluency skills that typically pose challenges for students with LD in grades K-5. Though all students will benefit from explicit and well-designed instruction in the foundational skills, some students, including those with reading-related learning disabilities, will require specific interventions and additional practice to master these skills (e.g., Hudson, Torgesen, Lane & Turner, 2012; Stanovich, Siegel & Gottardo, 1997; Torgesen et al., 2001).

Extensive research documents the importance of explicit instruction in these foundational skills in the early grades, particularly for students showing early signs of difficulty (e.g., Blachman et al., 2003; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider & Mehta, 1998; Foorman & Torgeson, 2001). Students with learning disabilities in particular are likely to need high quality explicit early instruction in foundational skills as well as reading intervention beyond the point at which these skills occur in the CCSS (Hudson et al., 2012; Torgesen et al., 2001).

Instruction to build the foundational skills involves two critical elements in the context of the K-5 CCSS. General and special education teachers can carefully integrate explicit instruction in foundational skills within lessons that have

a broader literacy developmental focus. Figure 1 gives an example of a first grade teacher capturing an opportunity for explicit instruction in *print concepts* within the context of a read-aloud designed to integrate opportunities for students to develop an appreciation of literature, develop sophisticated vocabulary and respond to text.

The second critical element is explicit supplemental instruction for students who may later be identified as having learning disabilities when they demonstrate early signs of difficulty, based on early progress monitoring assessments, to *prevent* significant deficits in these skills to the extent possible, and to *remediate* deficits as long as needed. In the primary grades, early intervention may be provided in the context of general education as schools are widely implementing intervention in a Response to Intervention framework. However, as students with LD move through the elementary grades, they may need extended intervention or even very intensive, explicit instruction to address severe reading-related learning disabilities as outlined by IEP goals. Thus, both general and special education teachers require expertise in providing explicit instruction in the Foundational Skills. Figure 2 illustrates a small group lesson designed to provide more intensive supplemental instruction in the Foundational Skill area of phonemic awareness involving segmenting and blending sounds.

#### Reading for Meaning in Grades K-5

Within the K-5 CCSS, there are several strands that build through the grades emphasizing reading for meaning. A brief summary of each of these strands follows with implications for teaching students with learning disabilities.

*Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity.* “Key Ideas and Details” refers to students demonstrating that they grasp key ideas and can express them in spoken or written communication (e.g., about characters, events, or themes) and provide the details that support these key ideas. For very beginning readers (kindergarten), an example would be that students would be able to ask and answer questions about key text ideas when prompted by the teacher. For students in grade 2, the expectation is that students would be able to demonstrate that they understand the key ideas and details of text by both asking and answering various question types (e.g., who, what, when, where, why, how). As students proceed with reading development, the expectations for understanding key ideas and details expand and, by 4th grade, students are expected to refer to details and examples in text when explaining what text says explicitly and inferentially. The goal is that students view text as a source of enjoyment and information, understanding the key ideas and details in text that initially are read aloud to them and then as their own reading develops, with sentences and paragraphs they read. While there are many ways teachers can embed questions and activities in all of their reading activities to promote understanding of key ideas and details, Table 2 provides guidelines for teacher read-aloud activities.

“Craft and Structure” refers to how students increasingly acquire proficiency in the variation of text types,

**Anchor Standard:** 1a: Recognize the distinguishing features of a sentence (e.g., first word, capitalization, ending punctuation)

**Text:** Lobel, Arnold. “Frog and Toad Together.” New York: HarperCollins, 1971. From *The Garden*.

**Materials Needed:** Big book of *Frog and Toad Together*, pointing stick, two colors of sticky notes cut in the shape of arrows.

**Activity:** Read-Aloud and Teacher Questioning

Seat the children in a semi-circle, where they can see the big book and easily come to the front.

1. **Modeling.** After a first reading of the story, focusing on vocabulary and comprehension incorporate print concepts instruction into the second reading.
  - a. Read the title page. Point to each word as you read it, using a long stick pointer. Point out text features such as title, author and illustrator.
  - b. Read the first page. Point to each word as you read, using a long stick pointer. After reading, point to each word of the first sentence as you read, “*Frog was in his garden.*”
    - i. “The first word is ‘frog.’ What do you notice about the first letter of this word (capital letter)? The author uses a capital F because it is the first word of a sentence. This is a signal to the reader that a sentence is beginning here.” Place a sticky paper arrow of one color under the F to mark the capital letter.
    - ii. “What do you see at the end of the sentence (period, or, a little dot)? The author uses this dot- called a period—to show us that this is the end of the sentence.” Place a sticky paper arrow of a different color under the period.
    - iii. “I am going to read this sentence again and I want you to listen to how the words make a sentence.” Reread while pointing.
    - iv. Repeat for the remaining sentences on the first page.

FIGURE 1 Read-aloud lesson integrating concepts of print instruction.

interpretation of perspectives and character in text, and understanding of word meanings and use in text. For example, in the beginning, students would be expected to recognize common types of text (e.g., storybooks and poem). In 2nd grade, they would be able to recognize differences in points of view of characters including demonstrating voice change when reading the words of characters. By the time students are in 4th grade they would be expected to determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in text.

“Integration of Knowledge And Ideas” refers to how students make connections early between illustrations and the text presented and then later being able to identify and describe key ideas across texts. For example, a beginning reader would be expected to view an illustration in text and to determine how the illustration relates to the story, whereas, a 2nd grader would be expected to identify the reasons an author gives for supporting points in text. As students become more mature readers they are expected to use multiple texts

2. **Scaffolded Practice.** Read the next page, pointing to words as you read. Ask students to notice the beginning and ending of sentences.
  - a. Ask a student to come up and place a sticky paper arrow on the beginning of the sentence. Ask for a choral response to the following question: “*What is our signal that a sentence is beginning?*” (A capital letter)
  - b. Repeat the above process focusing on the ending of the sentence (a period).
  - c. Using a sentence with a question mark, follow the above procedure to introduce the question mark as ending punctuation.
3. **Systematic Review.** On subsequent days, build in review of this skill by asking students to point out capital letters at the beginning of sentences and ending punctuation. Suggestions include having students use colored highlighters to mark the capital letters and ending punctuation, continuing to use the sticky paper arrows, and writing sentences on the white board or chart paper.

FIGURE 1 Continued.

(starting with two text types) and compare and contrast the main ideas in each of these text types. Students with disabilities will need considerable practice in using and integrating multiple text types. Graphic organizers have been useful resources for students with LD to facilitate their access and understanding of multiple text types (Kim, Vaughn, Wanzek & Wei, 2004).

“Range Of Reading And Level Of Text Complexity” refers to students reading and understanding increasingly complex texts that address history, social studies, science, and technical topics at their grade level and beyond. For example, the expectation is that beginning readers would read with purpose and understanding whereas older students (grades 2–5) would be able to read texts including information texts (e.g., history, social studies, science) at their grade level and above with support. Since many students with disabilities are likely to need “support” to read at their grade level, an essential consideration for students with LD is how the instruction will be organized to provide students with intensive interventions. Considerable research reveals that students with learning disabilities in reading will make progress when provided intensive interventions (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007), but are unlikely to close the gap between their reading performance and grade level expectations—particularly after 3rd grade (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012; Vaughn et al., 2010). Thus, intensive interventions are likely to be required over time—perhaps throughout the school years.

Table 3 provides guidelines for addressing the range and complexity of reading texts and Table 4 provides a sample list of high-utility vocabulary words.

## GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

What is an appropriate role for special education teachers as it relates to the K-5 CCSS? Special education teachers will need to develop a thorough understanding of the K-5 CCSS in order to facilitate access for students with disabilities within general education classroom, to assist classroom teachers in making appropriate adaptations and accommodations, and to design interventions that best prepare students to achieve competency across a wide range of literacy skills. Following are suggestions to keep in mind as schools move forward with implementation of the standards framework.

1. *Develop a thorough understanding of the grade-level expectations and general education curriculum and determine needed adjustments for students with learning disabilities.* Seek out professional development that will provide the depth of knowledge you will need to advocate for your students as they access general education instruction. You will also need this knowledge base to design your specialized instruction to meet students’ standards-based IEP goals. Consider whether students are provided adequate opportunities for intensive interventions in reading to promote their access to both foundation skills as well as text-based comprehension.
2. *Establish a plan in collaboration with general education teachers and other professionals to ensure appropriate instruction for students with LD.* The best

**Anchor Standard:** 2d: Isolate and pronounce phonemes in single-syllable words.

**Lesson Objective:** Students will segment single-syllable words into phonemes.

**Materials Needed:** colored tiles or markers, such as those used in math for counting, pictures of words to be used in the activity

**Activity:** Segmenting Three-Sound Words

1. **Modeling:** “I am going to show you a picture and say a word. Then, I am going to say each sound in the word. I am going to break the word into its parts by saying each sound.”
  - a. Show a picture of a man and say, “*Man. M—a—n.*” Showing the pictures reinforces that these are real words in our language.
  - b. “*Repeat after me. Man. M—a—n.*”
  - c. “*Now I am going to do it again and this time, I am going to use a colored marker to show each sound.*” Use magnetic shapes or color tiles to demonstrate as students sit in small-group around the teacher. (Note that we generally do not use letters at the early stages of phoneme segmenting so that students can just focus on segmenting the sounds rather than the letter-sound relationships.)
  - d. Repeat the above procedures with three more words: tack (t—a—k), shoe (sh—oo), and gate (g—ay—t). (Note that the words do not need to be CVC patterns, but rather all have two or three phonemes. Again, the focus is not on spelling the words, but rather on discerning the sounds and being able to isolate them.)
2. **Scaffolded Practice.** Ask students to segment words using one tile to represent each sound. Offer praise and corrective feedback as needed.
  - a. Words and pictures to use: cat (c—a—t), cup (c—u—p), nose (n—oh—z).
  - b. Have students practice individually, giving praise and feedback.
  - c. Use additional words as needed. Make sure that words selected are one syllable with two or three sounds only, and do not contain any confusing sounds such as r-controlled vowels or vowel diphthongs.
3. **Systematic Review.** On subsequent days, build in review of this skill by asking students to segment two- or three-sound words, using fingers to represent the sounds.

FIGURE 2 Explicit small-group instruction in phonemic awareness.

way to ensure that your students will have access to the challenging standards is to establish a concrete plan for how and when students with disabilities will be included in general education English Language

Arts instruction and what they may need beyond that. Advocate for time to collaborate with your general education colleagues to make an initial plan as well as structured ongoing planning time and procedures

TABLE 2  
Guidelines for Read-Alouds that Focus on Range and Complexity of Text

While the ultimate goal for students with disabilities is that they are able to independently read text, reading aloud effectively can promote access to high level vocabulary and background knowledge, opportunities to build comprehension through listening to text, and access to a fluent reading model. Following is one example of how reading-aloud might be used to promote access to text for students with disabilities.

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1. *Select Read-Aloud Texts that represent a range of genres.*  
Remember that the common core supports students acquiring literary genres, poetry, and access to knowledge through information texts. Many teachers provide an excessive amount of their read-aloud time on narrative texts.
  2. *Select Read-Aloud Texts that represent a range of levels including reading levels above grade level.*  
Why should teachers select both grade level and above grade level texts for read-alouds? Many students with reading disabilities can understand text above their grade level when it is read aloud to them even though they would not be able to read the book themselves. Students enjoy knowing that the teacher is reading an above grade level text.
  3. *Select Read-Aloud Texts that support learning in social studies and science.*  
The common core standards promote a view of reading comprehension that cuts across the curriculum and integrates reading knowledge and skills across text types. Teachers can support implementation of the common core standards by selecting science and social studies texts that align with the knowledge being taught in these content areas.
  4. *Select Read-Aloud Texts that support Tier 2 vocabulary development and academic vocabulary.*  
Tier 2 words are the words that occur in relatively high frequency and are usually found across domains (e.g., the word “equal” is a high frequency word in math and social studies). The common core standards identify Tier 2 words as important because they communicate ideas and help students learn and understand. Table 4 provides a sample list of words.
  5. *Use “interactive” read-alouds to promote students’ listening and responding to text ideas and details.*  
Read aloud a designated passage, approximately 3–4 minutes. Ask students a question about an idea from the text and a question about a detail from the text. Support students’ responses. Ask students to listen while you read the text again. Tell them that you are going to ask them to tell you the answers to the same questions. Ask students the questions and encourage and support their using responses from the text to answer the questions.
  6. *Choose read-aloud texts that will support or enhance students’ independent reading.*  
Select read-aloud texts deliberately that enhance students’ knowledge and understanding about what they are learning. For example, if students are learning about “living and nonliving” things, then select texts for read-aloud that expand on these concepts so that you broaden their knowledge, vocabulary, and understanding of what they are learning.
  7. *Keep read-aloud sessions relatively brief (less than 20 minutes) and use them with a common core purpose in mind.*  
Teacher read-alouds are most effective when they are relatively brief, have a specific purpose related to the common core, and are previewed by the teacher so that key vocabulary and questions about ideas and details related to the text are considered.
  8. *Ask Questions that start with all of the Ws (Who, What, When, Where, Why) and an “H” (How).*  
Students need to learn to respond with different information based on the question stem that is used. For example, we expect students to provide a different answer to “Who” than to “Where.” Some question types are easier for students to learn than others. Begin with easier question types such as “Who,” “When,” and “Where,” and then proceed to more challenging question types such as “What.” After students become proficient with answering these types of questions, introduce them to question types that start with “why” and “how.” Help students to listen for the question type and to frame their answer to respond to it.
  9. *Teach students to retell the 4–5 minute teacher read-aloud.*  
Scaffold students’ responses after the story is read aloud by asking them to retell the key ideas in the story. Teachers provide every student in the group an opportunity to take the lead in the retell – at least two times each week. This provides an opportunity for every student in the class to lead the retell rather than continually allowing stronger students to take the lead. Ask students to retell the main idea (or ideas) of what they heard. Use their language with appropriate extensions to craft the story retell. The teacher can use story-boards, white boards, or chart paper to write the key information students provide. This information can be used to prompt students to extend the story retell and to cue students to use new vocabulary.
  10. *Provide students with opportunities to identify the main characters in the story and to discuss what they know about the characters.*  
Whether students are listening to narrative genres or information texts it is likely that they will encounter characters. Initially, it is important for students to be able to identify the characters in the teacher read-aloud including animal characters and human characters. Students can also be provided with opportunities to determine who the “main” or most important characters are and what they are learning about these characters. Reread sentences and paragraphs about characters and ask students to describe what they are learning about them.
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for assuring that students are provided the specific and intensive interventions needed as well as the appropriate differentiated instruction required

3. *Use the K-5 CCSS in Foundational Skills to guide small-group instruction to meet students’ individualized needs.* Use appropriate assessment tools to identify your students’ specific needs within the Foundational Skills and group students strategically to provide targeted skills-based instruction. As you examine students’ data, use the Foundational Skills standards as a guide in selecting curricular materials and lesson planning. Teach toward mastery of the needed skills.

4. *Provide opportunities for guided practice in integrated lessons.* Your students are likely to experience English Language Arts lesson that are multifaceted and integrate several skills within the context of a particular lesson focus. These lessons will more often involve informational text from science, social studies or other technical subjects and are likely to promote problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills. Students with LD will more often be required to produce complex written or oral responses to text. It may be beneficial for your students to provide them with opportunities to practice the types of listening, speaking, reading and writing activities they will

TABLE 3  
Range and Complexity of Text Reading for Students with Learning Disabilities

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1. *Provide texts for students to read that represent a range of genres.*  
The common core requires students to acquire reading proficiency in a range of literary genres, poetry, and access to knowledge through information texts.
  2. *Select texts for students to read that represent a range of reading levels including reading levels above grade level.*  
Students are expected to read texts that are on their grade level and above. Students with reading disabilities will require opportunities to read text they can read successfully. This is likely to mean off-level text. Additionally, when required to read text that is too difficult for them, teachers can promote their access to this difficult text by:
    - (a) Reading the segment aloud first and then asking them to read,
    - (b) Preteaching difficult words and reading the sentences with these words with the student before they read the passage, and
    - (c) Providing a better reader to support their reading.
  3. *Select Texts that support learning in social studies and science.*  
Students are expected to have opportunities to read texts that cut across genres including narrative, story, poetry and also information text that relates to building background knowledge and academic vocabulary. Special education teachers can support implementation of the common core standards by selecting science and social studies texts that align with the knowledge being taught in these content areas and using these as sources for students' reading.
  4. *Select Texts that support Tier 2 vocabulary development and academic vocabulary.* Tier 2 words are words that are important, useful in the immediate future to read and understand text, require instruction to learn, and will help the student understand the concept or idea in the text. See Figure 4 for Sample Tier 2 words.
  5. *Encourage students to ask questions and respond to questions while reading.*  
Ask students to read a designated sentence or passage. Select the length of text to be relatively brief initially and then longer as the students' reading skills develop. Ask students a question about an idea from the text and a question about a detail from the text. Support students in locating the words or sentences from text that support their answer.
  6. *Teach students to develop questions related to text.*  
A critical element of successful reading involves learning how to use text as a source for answering questions. As students advance as readers, they are also expected to use text as a source for asking questions. Most experienced teachers recognize that learning to formulate a question related to text is difficult for many students and will be particularly challenging for students in second and third grades.
  7. *Provide students with opportunities to identify the main characters in the story and to discuss what they know about the characters.*  
Students are likely to encounter characters in both information and narrative texts. Initially, students can learn to tell the main character and later to describe the character. Be sure to encourage students to use the text as support for their answers about the character.
  8. *Read texts that give students opportunities to determine characters' responses to events and challenges.*  
Through both teacher read-alouds and student independent reading, assure students encounter texts that include characters who are responding to critical events and life challenges. Ask students to identify the challenge or event. Ask them to use text as a source to describe how the character responded. Use graphic organizers to demonstrate who the main characters are, what the challenge is, and how each character responded to the challenge.
  9. *Read texts that describe or imply characters' traits, motivations, and feeling.*  
Ask students to describe the "traits" of characters in their texts. Encourage them to find the words in the text that explicitly tell them about a character. Also, guide them to locate words that "infer" traits about a character. Learning more about characters also means learning about their motivations and intentions. Encourage students to consider what the character is trying to accomplish. Ask students if they can determine the characters' goals. Graphic organizers are available focusing on characters.
  10. *Describe and Compare and Contrast characters, settings or events from text.*  
When students read information text they have many opportunities to describe in detail the settings or events that are relevant to understanding the text. For example, using the text as a source to answer such questions as:
    - (a) What details are used to describe the setting and how does this influence the action in the story?
    - (b) What traits do the two key characters have that make them alike?
    - (c) What traits do these characters have that make them different?
    - (d) How do these traits influence what they do?
    - (e) What is the key event in the text and how does the author describe it?
- 

encounter in the general education environment, using text that is at an accessible level. This may represent a divergence from "business as usual" special education instruction that is often solely targeted on isolated skills.

### **GUIDELINES FOR GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS**

1. *Maintain a focus on continuing high impact practices associated with improved reading outcomes in Tier 1*

*and Tier 2 instruction.* Assure that the effective practices you are currently implementing that are effective for Tier 1 instruction as well as for intervention (Tier 2) are continued. Many of the essential foundation skills in reading (e.g., phonics, fluency, vocabulary) that have been previously addressed are maintained in the K-5 CCSS and can be emphasized.

2. *Provide all students with appropriate instruction so that you minimize skills gaps for students who may later be assessed and placed into special education.* Students with LD are often identified beyond the primary grades, but their need for supplemental support

TABLE 4  
Representative Tier 2 Words for 4th and 5th Grades

Access	Accomplish	Achievement	Address
Altitude	Analyze	Appropriate	Assist
Astound	Attractive	Avalanche	Beverage
Bland	Blizzard	Budge	Capable
Captivity	Challenge	Circular	Compose
Coax	Companion	Confident	Crafty
Crave	Debate	Declined	Demonstrate
Deprived	Desire	Detect	Develop
Disclose	Document	Eager	Endanger
Entrance	Envy	Escalate	Evade
Exert	Exhibit	Extraordinary	Exulting
Focus	Frantic	Generosity	Guardian
Hardship	Hazy	Humble	Impact
Impressive	Increase	Independent	Invisible
Lacked	Manufacture	Master	Mature
Mischief	Mistrust	Monarch	Oasis
Overthrow	Pastures	Peers	Plead
Plentiful	Portable	Portion	Practice
Realistic	Reassure	Recent	Reign
Release	Reliable	Resembles	Resist
Retain	Route	Slither	Sole
Source	Sturdy	Suffocate	Summit
Survive	Suspend	Terror	Threat
Tragic	Translate	Variety	Vast
Visual	Withdraw		

is often evident earlier. Strong prevention and intervention programs may minimize the negative effects of falling far behind grade-level peers for student with LD.

3. *Work collaboratively with colleagues to plan and implement grade-level standards in a way that allows for differentiating instruction for any students needing support.* General education classrooms are increasingly diverse and teachers need to be knowledgeable of strategies for differentiating instruction, not just for students with LD, but for varying student needs. Building in time for small-group instruction allows teachers to re-teach difficult concepts or provide extra support in skills needed to successfully master the grade-level expectations.
4. *Work with special education teachers and other support personnel to create seamless support structures for students with LD.* General and special education teacher collaboration is not a new concept, but the K-5 CCSS may present more complexity in the task of ensuring optimal access to the curriculum for students with LD. Considering students' strengths and needs within the context of increasingly complex literacy tasks will be important to ensure that students are meaningfully engaged in the classroom.
5. *Build flexibility into class activities that allow for multiple ways for students to respond or demonstrate their knowledge.* Consider how students with LD and others who are struggling with literacy skills may utilize different formats for demonstrating competency. Peer support, assistive technology, alternate assignments or

modes of presenting are some of the research-based ways that general education teachers generally provide options for students.

6. *Provide students with a range of text types to assure students spend adequate time reading texts that they can read successfully.* While high level texts for each grade are required and examples of such are provided, students with learning disabilities will not make adequate progress in reading unless they have ample opportunity to read passages that they can read successfully. This means that while students with LD, are likely to be expected to read very difficult passages with support from their teacher, they will also need adequate time to read passages at their reading level.

## CHALLENGES AND A CALL TO ACTION

The K-5 CCSS establish a high benchmark for competency across multiple literacy skills. These standards are established at each grade level to assure that all students meet the type of standards necessary for success in future grades and post secondary education. Simply setting higher standards does not ensure that students with LD, or other struggling learners, will meet them. It will take concentrated effort to plan, implement, refine and create strategies to maximize students' access to the standards. In the hope of moving more students to proficiency in global standards, students with LD may flounder without planned and systematic support. Furthermore, since these students are currently challenged to read grade level texts, making these texts more difficult will increase their challenges. We need to assure that while providing scaffolds to access grade level texts is a priority, providing students opportunities to read with feedback texts they are able to read is also essential to their reading success.

The K-5 CCSS require students to access increasingly complex text, across multiple genres, with a higher proportion of informational text. For many students with LD who are several grade levels behind in reading and writing skills, research-based practices that will ensure their success are unspecified or underdeveloped. We are left with the task of applying existing evidence-based practices to these efforts, often resulting in trial-and-error, hit-or-miss approaches.

In this new environment of increased exposure to information text, it is important for both general and special educators to make extra efforts to build students' background knowledge about the content of the texts encountered. This will involve instruction to increase students' knowledge of the vocabulary, concepts, and context of the texts to be read. Pre-teaching and preparing students for reading will be essential.

Are there evidence-based practices specifically designed for assisting students with LD to read and respond to text that is multiple grade levels beyond their current reading levels with increased conceptual density? We think not. The strategies and skills that teachers currently have in their repertoire are going to be necessary but insufficient to ensure student success in this new instructional climate. However, it is necessary for us to consider how we can facilitate resources and personnel to provide access to CCSS. In addition to the efforts

needed by the practice community, we encourage the research community to consider ways to study implementation of the CCSS for students with LD that might be productive. Furthermore, it is essential for policy-makers and school leaders to recognize the colossal need for professional development, planning and support for both general education and special education teachers as we move forward with implementation.

The challenges posed for general and special education teachers in supporting students experiencing difficulty highlight the need for assessment tools that will not only measure annual performance, but will also provide useful information about students' interim progress. We have an extensive research base on the types of assessments that identify struggling students in the early stages of reading development, providing opportunities to provide supplemental support and monitor their progress. Fully implementing a seamless, comprehensive early reading screening and intervention plan seems newly important as we consider the consequences of being left behind at the starting gate.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Many educators will look at the complex and rigorous standards and experience a reality check, thinking it may be impossible to teach everything to every student, and they may be right. However, moving away from isolated skills instruction into a more integrated and comprehensive view of literacy that is focused on preparing students for the life-tasks of college and career may create more engaging learning environments for students with LD, who typically disengage during content instruction without appropriate supports.

A promising approach is for teachers to examine the standards at hand and consider what elements are *most important* to teach, to ensure that students will be prepared for the demands of the classroom and beyond. With these essential elements in mind, teachers should make every effort to ensure that *all* students achieve proficiency with these essential skills and knowledge. The next step is to consider *how* students will acquire these essential skills and knowledge. It is reasonable to think that some of these skills and knowledge can be acquired within mainstream (Tier 1) instructional settings. It is also reasonable to think that students may require more intensive (Tier 2, 3) interventions to acquire the skills and knowledge. Another consideration is *who* will provide the knowledge and instruction (general education teacher, special education teacher, teaching assistant). Finally, considering ways in which the knowledge and skill acquisition will be monitored to assure that all students acquire proficiency

and that instruction is adjusted when adequate progress is not documented is essential. With these considerations, teachers identify an instructional plan for all students with LD including the knowledge and skills related to the CCSS, where and how these CCSS will be acquired, who is primarily responsible for instruction, and how progress will be monitored.

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