



Critical Elements of ELA HS Curriculum Design

Setting the Foundation: Selecting Your Texts

Selecting Your Texts	Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose Anchor/Central Texts Select texts strategically: where practical, include a selection of informational and literary texts. Consider the use of each to build background knowledge, depth, and engagement. Determine the quantitative and qualitative complexity levels of your texts. Ensure there is a range of texts at different levels, with different elements of complexity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you address <i>CCSS Shift #3: Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction</i>? Have you consulted with your media specialist(s) to help guide your text(s)? Do your text selections offer multiple and diverse perspectives? Do students carry background knowledge from other content areas? Are your texts from reputable sources? (e.g., Library of Congress, novelny.org, NY Times) Do all students have access to text they can read? Do all students have access to grade-appropriate complex text?
<p>Study the text closely; align texts to specific standards or “bundles” of literacy standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What standards, in addition to reading standards, do these texts provide an opportunity to address? What skills do students need support in that are not directly connected with these texts?

Standards and Shifts: Selecting the Focus of Instruction

Action	Question
Read the actual standards closely; unpack them, paraphrase them, translate them	How proficient are your students with the skills outlined in these standards?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align the standards to long-term targets Contextualize the CCSS to unit-level assessments and product/performance assessments. The goal is not to cram all the standards into one unit or lesson; addressing four standards in a lesson instead of two does not necessarily make it a better lesson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would mastery of the standards look like at the end of the course? At the end of the Module? At the end of each unit? Mid-unit? <i>With the texts you are considering?</i> What would be the evidence of mastery?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an assessment map for the unit/module. Remember assessments are the structural walls of the module and unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What could the assessments look like? How would assessments build in complexity throughout the lessons/unit/module? What mastery are my students working toward?

Texts: Mapping Instruction

Action	Question
Based on the standards, text, and task, decide when to move fast and when to go slow:	When students do slow down and reread,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deeper reading + analytic reading + complex vocabulary = slowing down Know when NOT to go slow: keep close reading in balance with reading to follow the narrative, volume of reading, etc. <p>Remember: designing close reading lessons requires skill with analyzing texts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the text deep, complex, rich, and engaging enough for multiple reads? Are the selections of texts for a close-read worthy of analysis?
<p>Routines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and maintain reading routines: masterful reads, multiple reads, group, paired and independent reads, focus on academic vocabulary. Develop and maintain high-leverage vocabulary routines embedded in reading: personal journals, annotations, tasks that involve use of the acquired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do my routines provide access for all students to engage? Are my routines timely and efficient? Do students take responsibility for their learning within the routines?

Action	Question
vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and maintain routines to increase student volume of reading: Students will read independently and regularly for homework; Accountable Independent Reading will happen most nights, and students will quickly develop habits of mind around this practice. 	

Tasks: Working Backward

Action	Question
Plan Backwards from a Literacy-rich Performance Task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vary your assessments: performance tasks are not as formal (since heavily scaffolded) as timed-blind assessments, but all are critical. Across the year, strike a balance between large assessments and performance tasks that tap W.1, W.2, or W.3 (see Standards and Shifts). 	Are the assessments relevant and meaningful, assessing beyond basic comprehension of text?
Design Standards-Aligned Assessments to provide the structure of the lessons, building as they progress through the unit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Backward plan scaffolding (anchor charts, graphic organizers, and modeling to support mastery). Be sure students are taught, practice, and get feedback on all aspects of a standard before assessed. Include rubrics and prompts that connect directly to part 2 and 3 of the ELA Regents (Common Core.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the texts I have selected lend themselves to the assessments I am creating? (See Passage Selection Guidelines) Do the assessments I have created require students to work with text-based evidence that is concrete or analytical? (Do the students have to synthesize?) If I am not using rubrics from the state assessments, are my students familiar with the language of the rubrics?
“Writing is not just its own subject – it’s a way to build and show understanding.”¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide explicit writing instruction and scaffolding where appropriate Distinguish reading to build content knowledge from rereading to write. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the writing tasks fit the lessons, units, and modules? Is the grammar instruction, where necessary, embedded in content? Do students ever develop their own graphic organizers?

¹Joey Hawkins, Vermont Writing Collaborative.

Action	Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider Writing Opportunities, Instruction, and Assessment • Create lesson cycles that integrate reading and writing • Develop writing routines around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Types” or “patterns” of lessons that can be repeated (for efficiencies). ○ Types of activities that can be repeated ○ Note-taking ○ academic writing daily/weekly (i.e., short-constructed responses, paragraphs, extended responses). ○ Explicit writing instruction and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do students work together in various stages of writing?