Text Complexity

**Appropriate Achievement**

Students select and read independently a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts. Texts include:

- a variety of topics, ranging from familiar to less-known; content that at times introduces cultural or historical perspectives
- familiar themes which introduce more complex issues/feelings (e.g., responsibility, loyalty), usually with a clear message
- a variety of longer, simple sentences and compound sentences with diversity in the placement of adjectives, adverbs, phrases and subject/verbs and compound sentences; greater use of complex sentences with clauses
- some uncommonly used words and phrases, or new meanings for familiar words as well as content-specific words defined in text or illustrations; stronger (more specific) descriptive words (adjectives and adverbs) and a few examples of figurative language (e.g., simile, idiom)
- many multi-syllabic words (including words with suffixes and simple prefixes) most of which are in the readers' decoding control and/or can be understood through context
- chapter books with few illustrations; illustrations/photographs that represent and extend print in nonfiction
- many lines of print on a page, organized in paragraphs; predominantly standard-sized font with varied line-spacing and layout within same text

**Nonfiction (Informational, Biography)**

Texts are characterized by:

- several topics/explicit ideas within a text, linked by categories, presented through clear structures (e.g., description, compare/contrast, sequence, problem/solution, cause/effect); increased amount of information supported by clear relationships and transition words
- usually one idea or item per section or chapter; sections signalized by font style or headings/subheadings; usually written in short paragraphs with a clear topic sentence
- prominent illustrations/photographs elaborate print information; print that must be read to support illustrations/photographs; variety in layout, not always linear
- variety of graphics, usually fully explained; some graphics with information requiring interpretation to supplement print
- headings/subheadings, captions, charts/diagrams, cutaways, index, glossaries, sidebars, and maps which add information important to understanding
- multiple events related to a single plot, often arranged in chapters that require sustained reading over a period of time
- plot that proceeds in time-order with expanded events; details important for understanding
- easily defined characters (e.g., good/bad) that develop over time; factors related to character development are explicit and obvious; characters revealed through dialogue, actions, thoughts and/or other’s perspectives
discussion, actions, thoughts and/or other’s perspectives
- dialogue variety, both assigned and unassigned; some opportunities to reveal characters’ perspectives and "voice"
- settings (i.e., time and place) that may be unfamiliar and are important to understanding plot, characters and/or theme

**Fiction (Realistic, Simple Fantasy, Traditional, Historical Fiction, Mysteries)**

Texts are characterized by:

- the need for students to take on unfamiliar perspectives to understand a topic
- the inclusion of themes and main ideas slightly more abstract than texts at lower levels
- the requirement to interpret characters' feelings, story events or ideas to understand the author’s message
- the addition of more difficult content-specific words, usually explained by text, illustrations or a glossary, as well as multi-syllabic words that may be challenging to decode
- characters in narrative texts acting in unexpected ways, requiring the reader to infer reasons for their actions
- the inclusion of many small pieces of information per section in nonfiction texts supported by headings/subheadings and a variety of graphics as well as simple keys and legends that may require interpretation

**Strong Achievement**

Students demonstrating strong achievement select and read independently texts as described above, as well as, some texts at a higher level of difficulty. The increase in text complexity is often created by:

- the need for students to take on unfamiliar perspectives to understand a topic
- the inclusion of themes and main ideas slightly more abstract than texts at lower levels
- the requirement to interpret characters' feelings, story events or ideas to understand the author’s message
- the addition of more difficult content-specific words, usually explained by text, illustrations or a glossary, as well as multi-syllabic words that may be challenging to decode
- characters in narrative texts acting in unexpected ways, requiring the reader to infer reasons for their actions
- the inclusion of many small pieces of information per section in nonfiction texts supported by headings/subheadings and a variety of graphics as well as simple keys and legends that may require interpretation

Reading Strategies and Behaviours

**Appropriate Achievement**

Students demonstrating strong achievement apply strategies and exhibit behaviours described at the appropriate level in an increasingly efficient and independent manner. They also:

- monitor reading and self-correct when meaning is lost; identify problems and employ “fix-up” strategies (e.g., reread, read on)
- combine meaning, word structure (e.g., roots, compounds, contractions), language structure (word order and language patterns), and phonics (e.g., vowel patterns; onset and rime; common spelling patterns) to solve many unknown words
- read a wide variety of words with automatically
- read familiar passages fluently with phrasing and expression to convey sense of text to audience; may hesitate occasionally with unfamiliar words
- use context clues, prior knowledge/experience and knowledge of text forms to verify and adjust predictions while reading
- use text features (e.g., table of contents, headings/subheadings, index, charts/diagrams) to preview and locate information, may require prompting with features requiring interpretation

**Strong Achievement**

Students demonstrating strong achievement apply strategies and exhibit behaviours described at the appropriate level in an increasingly efficient and independent manner. They also:

- solve a variety of words rapidly
- acquire new sight vocabulary while reading
- question and predict based on attention to relevant textual details
Comprehension Responses

**Literal Response**

*Reading “the lines”*

- respond accurately to most literal questions by locating specific details; reread and skim small amount of text to gather appropriate information
- identify most story elements (e.g., setting, characters, events, problem/resolution, and, when clearly stated, overall theme/lesson) of narrative text, and provide some supporting details; may include unimportant details; graphic organizers may be used
- identify most main ideas and supporting details; graphic organizers may be used, with support, to categorize and sort information

**Inferential/Interpretive Response**

*Reading “between the lines”*

- make straightforward inferences about a character (his/her actions, feelings or personality) and story events, referring to obvious textual details
- interpret clear relationships among ideas to draw conclusions (e.g., cause/effect; sequence) or make comparisons, using some supporting textual details
- use context clues and background knowledge to explain the meaning of new vocabulary, as well as some simple descriptive/figurative words and sentences
- use text features (e.g., captions, charts/diagrams, font, glossaries) to gain additional information from the text, demonstrating a general understanding of their purpose; may have difficulty interpreting some visual information

**Personal/Critical/Evaluative Response**

*Reading “beyond the lines”*

- make obvious personal connections, relate relevant prior knowledge, and make logical text-to-text comparisons; connections tend to be straightforward, supported with a general explanation
- express preferences for, and simple opinions about texts, authors, and illustrators and provide some supporting details or examples; explanations may be general
- recognize some elements of an author’s style/technique (e.g., descriptive language), explain how they help the reader by stating personal preference and/or a general example
- distinguish between fact and opinion and identify author’s point of view, using some details from the text
- can identify a variety of text forms (e.g., narrative, report, instructions, biography), including basic text characteristics (e.g., sequence), and know a form’s general purpose

Sample Questions/Tasks

The following types of questions/tasks may be used to assess students’ comprehension.

**Literal Response**

- Skim this part to find _____ (information/topic) and tell me about it.
- Find the part that tells _____.
- What happened in the story? Tell about the events in the order they happened.
- Tell about the important parts of the story in your own words.
- What lesson do you think the author wants us to learn?
- What did the author tell you about (topic)?

**Inferential/Interpretive Response**

- What can you tell me about _____ (name of character)? How do you know that?
- Why do you think (character) acted this way? What information helps you to know that?
- What happened at the end of the experiment? What caused that?
- How are schools today different from schools of long ago? How are they the same?
- What does this word mean? How do you know?
- What does this expression (i.e., simile or idiom) mean?
- Show me the glossary. How can you use it to help you understand what you are reading?
- What can you learn from this diagram?

**Personal/Critical/Evaluative Response**

- Do any of the characters remind you of anyone you know? How?
- Have you heard information like this before? Where?
- Do you like the way this story ends? Why or why not?
- Did you find this book interesting? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the author used these descriptive words? How do they help you when you read?
- What did the author do to help you learn about (topic)? Did the author do a good job? Why or why not?
- Do you agree with the author? Is this (idea from book) always true? Why or why not?
- How would the story be different if the main character was ____ (e.g., an adult instead of a child)?
- Is this book fact or fiction? How can you tell?
- Why is it important to have the steps in order?
- How can you find the important information on this page?
- Why do you think the author told us about whales in an information book instead of in a story? What do you notice about how this report is organized? How does that help you?

**Strong Achievement**

Students demonstrating strong achievement respond to questions/tasks described at the appropriate level with overall accuracy. They also read some longer texts and therefore must search for information in a variety of places.

- provide responses that go beyond the obvious and support these with textual details

**Appropriate Achievement**

Students demonstrating appropriate achievement respond to a variety of comprehension tasks in the manner described below. Students

- respond accurately to most literal questions by locating specific details; reread and skim small amount of text to gather appropriate information
- identify most story elements (e.g., setting, characters, events, problem/resolution, and, when clearly stated, overall theme/lesson) of narrative text, and provide some supporting details; may include unimportant details; graphic organizers may be used
- identify most main ideas and supporting details; graphic organizers may be used, with support, to categorize and sort information

**Strong Achievement**

Students demonstrating strong achievement respond to questions/tasks described at the appropriate level with overall accuracy. They also read some longer texts and therefore must search for information in a variety of places.

- provide responses that go beyond the obvious and support these with textual details