National Writing Project
National Reading Initiative

Keywords Project

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New York City Writing Project
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Introduction

During the National Reading Initiative’s launch meeting in March 2004, many participants expressed a need for a shared vocabulary as we talked about reading. We imagined this shared vocabulary as enabling us to clarify a number of concepts that affect how we think about reading, what the underlying frameworks are that we call upon, and the pedagogic meaning we attach to them. What, for example, do any two of us mean when we are discussing reading strategies or being competent as a reader? We saw direct consideration of some of these concepts in the field of reading as important in developing our knowledge base, uncovering the conflicts and convergences in the field, and probing the policy initiatives that have affected classrooms and schools. An examination of the ways in which we understand the keywords in reading seemed crucial for pulling together the intellectual underpinnings of the initiative.

These concerns led to the NRI Keywords Project. We borrowed the idea of “keywords” from Raymond Williams, the British cultural historian and literary critic, whose book, Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society (1983), explores how the political and social values of a culture are expressed in its language. Williams introduces his book as the record of an inquiry into a vocabulary: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions, in English, of the practices and institutions which we group as culture and society. Every word which I have included has at some time, in the course of some argument, virtually forced itself on my attention because the problems of its meanings seemed to me inextricably bound up with the problems it was being used to discuss.

We took this introduction as our inspiration to identify and examine some of the keywords in reading. Judith Rodby, coordinator of the National Reading Initiative, extracted some potential keywords from the writing done by participants at the end of the March launch—the words or terms they thought needed some discussion and definition—and then invited the group to add others during our first summer institute in the following July.
During the summer institute Susan Kajiwara-Ansai, teacher-consultant, Chicago Area Writing Project, and I invited the group to choose a few of the words we had collected and conduct, in writing, a mini-inquiry into those words. Our aim was to capture the multiple meanings and “implied contention around the words,” as Boston Writing Project’s Steve Gordon put it. Specifically, we asked everyone to consider the associations they have with the word, questions that come up for them, the issues that complicate the word for them, and their working definitions of the word. Participants had the choice of selecting words that they felt confident in defining or words that seemed more elusive to them.

To assist participants with this activity, we developed a grid to capture their thinking in each of the four areas.

We returned to this work at various points throughout the summer institute, with opportunities for groups to share and discuss their grids. At these meetings, we asked groups to consider the following questions:

- Where is there agreement across the sheets?
- Where is there conflict or contention?
- What would you add in order to elaborate this term?
- How would you synthesize one quadrant for this term?
- Why is this word important to wrestle with?
- What would you bring back to your site in relation to keywords?

Each of the NRI sites chose two or three keywords to work on over the year, and took back home all of the grid sheets for those words. Later that fall, using the keyword assessment, we developed a model narrative that synthesized information across all of the grid sheets for that word and distributed this to sites along with some directions for writing up their chosen keywords.

During the following summer, NRI participants continued their exploration of these keywords by working with the collection of draft write-ups written from the grid sheets. Within site groups, participants identified those keywords that stood out as having been important or problematic.
within their NRI work over the past year, and then selected a couple of the keywords write-ups to read and respond to. Once they had made their choices, we asked them to

• read and annotate the write-ups from the words they had chosen
• discuss their annotations
• discuss what it was like to annotate: what they noticed about the word, their response to it, what was missing from the write-up, where their view of the word differed, etc.

When we reconvened, a representative from each site reported back to the large group, describing what he or she had learned from their discussion and highlighting one or two issues or provocations.

The grids, narratives, and subsequent discussions enabled many of us, as Reading Initiative participants, to interrogate political, social, epistemological, and pedagogical perspectives that shape the teaching of reading. In an experiential way, the process increased our collective understanding of the reasons why the language of the field has been a focus of debate for many years.

Part II of this resource includes the grid template, the model grid and narrative, and the work each site produced for one keyword: the draft narratives created from the grids and the grids themselves. These are meant as entry points into discussion of these words at writing project sites. None of these should be viewed as objective, correct, final analyses. Each is provocative for what it contains, for its internal consonances and dissonances, and for what it omits. Some, like reading, text, and literature, comment on each other in illuminating ways. Within each grid and narrative, keywords other than the one being explored are written in blue type.

Part III gives a list of possible applications for the keywords process, to help sites in thinking about ways to make this work usable in other professional-development contexts. We hope that the keywords process is useful to others as a resource and invite you to share your observations and comments.

Work Cited:
II. Grid Template and Examples
NWP Reading Initiative

Keywords Project: Grid Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: _________________________________</th>
<th>Site: _________________________________</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keyword: _______________________________</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:</th>
<th>Associations you have with this term:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Your working definition for this term:</th>
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## Model Grid and Description

### Keyword: Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:</th>
<th>Associations you have with this term:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are techniques for gathering good assessment data that are user friendly?</td>
<td>• High-stakes testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How to organize assessment data to get a clear picture of the learner?</td>
<td>• Fear and loathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why do we assess almost as much as we teach?</td>
<td>• Looking for the mistakes instead of the successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why are we assessing such an intangible so concretely?</td>
<td>• Big Brother is watching you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is it a test?</td>
<td>• Teacher-catcher—why didn’t I do a better job?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What assessment types are there?</td>
<td>• At our school we have done a book study on Dufour and have embraced many concepts: identical finals, identical midterms, identical curriculum organizers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Does it tell me anything about what a student has learned?</td>
<td>• Grades, failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What ways can you have accountability without squashing motivation?</td>
<td>• Ways of judging teachers and schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which assessments are valued by students?</td>
<td>• Portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How can I match an assessment tool to what I really want to see?</td>
<td>• Exclusionary, segregated hierarchies of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is assessment reliable? Is it valid? Is it consistent with other assessments?</td>
<td>• Assessment is linked to standards, which have some political ties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluation, consequences, something formal and academic, stress, endless meetings, scores, data, interpretations.</td>
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</table>
**Keyword: Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your working definition for this term:</th>
<th>Issues that complicate this term for you:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| * Assessment provides opportunities for students to demonstrate what they can do.  
* As the teacher observes, notices what a child can do, decisions about what needs to be taught can be made.  
* Trying to find out what the child needs next.  
* A way of measuring what your students can do based on what you have been teaching in class.  
* Any way of getting a picture of someone’s abilities from multiple sources.  
* Assessment means to measure. | * What does a competent reader/writer look like?  
* Funding, socioeconomic background, family beliefs  
* Administrators’ needs  
* No Child Left Behind  
* What to do with the results  
* Teacher training  
* Everyone buying in to the assessment chosen  
* The need (very often) to associate grades, passing or failure to it.  
* Accountability is its sister. We all should be accountable for our students’ development as learners, but often the tests are at odds with what teachers see themselves as accountable for.  
* What is “acceptable” progress, benchmarks  
* You think you’re assessing one thing, but that is clouded by another issue. |
When we think of reading assessment, we think of data, interpretation, formal evaluation, but we also think of portfolios, looking at student work over time, and students showing what they have learned through projects. We associate some school reforms with assessment.

When we think of reading assessment, some of our associations focus on judgment and consequence: high-stakes tests, grades and failure, looking for mistakes instead of successes. The judgments are not just about students—some of us see assessment as the “teacher catcher” or as “Big Brother,” a way of judging teachers and schools, or of setting schools in a hierarchy. Assessments cause us to wonder, “Why didn’t I do a better job?” We have emotional associations as well: fear and loathing, stress, the frustration borne of “endless meetings” to discuss results or score exams.

Our definitions for assessment explore a tension between classroom-based and external assessments. We define assessment as a standardized way of looking at a school’s performance compared to state and local norms, but also as:

• providing opportunities for students to demonstrate what they can do. As the teacher observes, notices what a child can do, decisions about what needs to be taught can be made.
• trying to find out what a child needs next.
• measuring what your students can do based on what you have been teaching in class.
• getting a picture of someone’s abilities from multiple sources.

Two additional definitions, “to measure,” and “a way of assigning value to work,” present “objective” views. Yet embedded in these definitions are many of our questions:

• How and what should we measure?
• Who assigns value?
• What is the work being assessed? And further: What assessment types are there?
• What are techniques for gathering and organizing good assessment data to get a clear picture of the learner?
• How can I match an assessment tool to what I really want to see?
• Do tests tell me anything about what a student has learned?
Keyword: Assessment

• Which assessments are valued by students?
• What does “authentic” assessment mean?
• What is the value of formal vs. informal assessment?
• Is assessment reliable? Is it valid? Is it consistent with other assessments?

Other questions suggest the impact that standardized assessments have on many students:

• Why do we assess almost as much as we teach?
• Why are we assessing such an intangible so concretely?
• What ways can you have accountability without squashing motivation?

Finally, the issue of assessment is complicated by a number of concerns. First, we are concerned about the nature, use, and consequences of standardized tests. We note the political implications of linking assessment to standards and, in the context of No Child Left Behind, question what counts as “acceptable” progress or benchmarks. We believe that we all should be accountable for students’ development as readers, but see many tests as being at odds with our own criteria for accountability.

We are concerned as well about the ways in which socioeconomic factors impact on student achievement and the high-stakes nature of tests for vulnerable learners.

Second, we are concerned that the assessment needs of multiple stakeholders at the policy and school levels compete with each other. State and local policymakers need cost-effective assessments that reveal achievement trends at the district and school levels, school administrators must be able to demonstrate their schools’ progress or success, and teachers need reliable and quick information to help them plan for the variety of learners who enter their classrooms each day. We note that the purposes of assessment are at odds with one another—we are in the position of having to negotiate classroom- and performance-based assessments with state-mandated ones.

And looking at portfolios opens a floodgate: so many questions arise about student learning, about what teachers value in student work, about curriculum. How can we encourage the careful review that portfolios require while at the same time preparing our students for high-stakes exams?
### Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:

- Should this level of mastery be a goal teachers set for all students? Is it attainable for all students?
- Do standards set the goal for (and encourage) competency or excellence?
- Does competency change per group?
- How stable is competence?
- Is there a baseline? If so, what does it look like?
- What does a statement like "she can read" mean? I assume this statement implies "she is competent."
- Who gets to decide?
- What do students consider to be minimum achievement?

### Associations you have with this term:

- Standards
- Being considered literate
- For struggling students, being labeled competent is laudable.
- For stronger students, competency is a minimum.
- Competency hearing (court)
- It's such an insult, in some circumstances.
- Adequacy
- Not too bad
- Good enough
- "What do I need to do to pass?"
**Keyword: Competent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your working definition for this term:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Level of mastery that is adequate/satisfactory, but not outstanding or deficient to the point of requiring reteaching—passable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Able to do something with others, with instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowing how to accomplish something—how to get the help—tools, technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Minimum mastery of skills associated with a particular task or field.</td>
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<td>• More than “just barely” but not “really good at.”</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Issues that complicate this term for you:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Competency has emotional overlays related to self-esteem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being called incompetent doesn’t just denote non-mastery. It denotes inability to ever gain mastery—lack of aptitude as much as lack of achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The cultural/schooling bias that competence is individual and stable and a part of the person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It is way too subjective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How can this be quantified?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Does it need to be quantified?</td>
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When we think of the word *competent*, we think of teachers’ competency in their subject area as well as teacher competency in how to best teach the content. We also think of student competency in the different content areas. This also brings to mind the competency of parents, administrators, and policymakers—those stakeholders involved in the education of our children.

Questions arise in connection with this term.

- What determines competency for teachers and students? Is it a national test for teachers or high-stakes assessments for students?
- Do national proficiency levels and adequate yearly progress determine the competency of a school? Should this level of mastery be a goal that teachers set for all students? Is it attainable for all students?
- Is there a baseline of competence? If so, what does it look like? Who gets to decide?

The word *competence* leads us to think about adequacy, which leads us to the requirement in No Child Left Behind of AYP (adequate yearly progress). This thought leads to another question. Is competence adequate, not too bad, or just good enough? Another association relates to competency as it is used in standards (state and national). Again, the question remains, “What determines competency?” We also associate the keyword *competent* with its antonym, *incompetent*. If one is not competent, is he or she incompetent?

We define the term *competent* as a level of mastery that is adequate/satisfactory but not outstanding or deficient to the point of requiring reteaching—in other words, passable. To further expand on this definition, we would add that *competent* relates to a minimum mastery of skills associated with a particular task or field.

A number of issues complicate this term for us. Competency has emotional overlays which relate to self-esteem. It can be subjective in nature. What one person or group determines as competent within a particular context may be considered as incompetent by others. Finally, we are concerned about the cultural/schooling bias that suggests that competence is individual, stable, and part of the person.
Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:

- What is engagement?
- What questions, thoughts, or issues are in the reader’s head as a result of engagement?
- How do we demonstrate that we value engagement?
- In what ways do we help students engage in the text through activating prior knowledge?
- How do we do this in curriculum areas that are traditionally not as engaging?
- What proof do we have of engagement with reading?
- Does engagement aid a reader’s understanding of the text? How can we tell?

Associations you have with this term:

- Interest level
- A joining together, an enmeshment that signifies a moment of sharing and concern
- Tongues sticking out
- Bent heads
- Pages turning laboriously
- Personal reaction
- The beginning of an unpredictable journey, a choice of paths between text and reader
## Keyword: Engagement

### Your working definition for this term:

- Motivation.
- Involves choice and interest in selection of the reading material.
- Student purposes are met in the reading.
- Sustained, active participation with the text.
- A commitment by the reader to becoming one with the text.
- Meaning-making by the reader that draws on knowledge/experiences outside of the text.

### Issues that complicate this term for you:

- Does engagement with a text automatically mean that a student is personally interested in the text and in the subject matter?
- Students may be engaged with a text because the purpose of their reading is to seek knowledge and pass a test.
- Curriculum requirements.
- Demands for course rigor, assigned texts.
- How do we foster and measure engagement?
- Student attitudes and personal interests.
- Students' ability to read longer texts.
- How do we engage every student?
Our definitions for engagement explore:

a) the role of readers’ motivation. Has s/he had choice in the selection of the reading material? Does s/he see value in the text? Is there a sincere interest in reading these particular words? Are his/her own purposes being met?

b) the need for sustained, active participation with the text; a commitment by the reader to becoming “one with the text.”

c) meaning-making by the reader that draws on knowledge/experiences outside of the text. If the text is either too easy or too hard, if it has no connection to the reader whatsoever, will the reader remain engaged?

Some questions that come up for us in connection with engagement relate to how we define, promote, and assess it.

• What is engagement? Is it simply being highly interested in a piece or is it a melding of the world of the text with the world of the reader?
• What are the questions, thoughts, or issues swirling in the reader’s head as a result of engagement?
• How do we demonstrate that we value engagement?
• In what ways do we help students engage in the text through activating prior knowledge especially in curriculum areas that are traditionally not as engaging?
• What proof do we have of a reader’s engagement with the text?
• Does engagement aid a reader’s understanding of the text? How can we tell?

The issue of engagement is complicated by the debate as to whether or not engagement with a text automatically means that a student is personally interested in the text and in the subject matter. Students may be engaged with a text because the purpose of their reading is to seek knowledge and pass a test. While we recognize that matching our students’ interests with our reading assignments encourages engagement, we know that curriculum, demands in course rigor, and assigned texts serve
to complicate this process. Since engagement is such a personal reaction of reader to text, how do we as outsiders foster and measure this experience? Subject matter, personal interests, student attitudes, and reading lengths vary greatly. If we acknowledge that each reader’s conditions for engagement may be different, then our teaching goals and our practical responsibilities become quite complicated indeed.

When we think of engagement, some of our associations focus on interest level and how our interests motivate us. In order to be truly engaged with text we feel that there must be a joining together, an enmeshment that signifies a moment of sharing and concern. These moments of connection, this meeting of things rich in possibilities, is illustrated by the tongues that stick out showing focus, or by the hand eagerly turning pages, the bent head absorbed in personal reaction. Engagement is like the beginning of an unpredictable journey, a choice of paths between text and reader.
Table 1: Questions and Associations for Expository Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:</th>
<th>Associations you have with this term:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why don’t students enjoy reading them as much as they do fiction?</td>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you engage students with reading these texts when some prior knowledge is needed for most?</td>
<td>Not false</td>
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<tr>
<td>What different reading/writing maneuvers are necessary when working with this type of text?</td>
<td>Real life</td>
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<td>History, science texts</td>
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<td>Biographies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Autobiographies</td>
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<td>Students tend not to be drawn to them</td>
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**Keyword: Expository Text**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your working definition for this term:</th>
<th>Issues that complicate this term for you:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Any text based on facts/real-life experiences</td>
<td>- Students don’t read enough of them.</td>
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<td>- Text that gives information</td>
<td>- Teachers don’t assign enough of them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Difficulty level is usually higher than that of fiction.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- How can you develop a student’s sense of purpose for using this kind of text?</td>
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<td>- There is a wide range of this kind of text – can there ever be a set/uniform way of approaching them?</td>
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<td>- Can expository text be thought of as literature?</td>
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When we think of expository text, we think of content-area textbooks, nonfiction, biographies, and autobiographies. We also think of newspapers, magazines, encyclopedias, almanacs, and cookbooks. Some of our associations focus on the types of text such as editorials, letters to the editor, literary analysis essays for scholarships, and college entry essays. We also feel that many students are not drawn to this type of text.

Our definition for expository text is text that is written with the express intent to teach or pass on information. It may also be

- text with a clear audience
- text which delivers a message to that audience by use of logic and evidence
- text that explains, informs, guides, and defines
- text that can also include fiction books (for example, The Magic School Bus books by Joanne Cole)
- texts based on facts/real-life experiences.

Embedded in these definitions are many questions:

- How can reading instruction be a part of content (expository text) instruction?
- Why do we read about 90% fiction in most of our language arts courses when expository is the primary form we ask students to write?
- Why don’t we recognize the expository texts students read by choice out of class?
- What happens to students’ ability to read exposition after they explore deeply the organization and structure of such texts?
- Why don’t students enjoy reading expository texts as much as fiction?

Other questions suggest the teacher’s role in working with expository text. These include

- How can teachers include more expository text in ELA classes?
- How do you engage students in reading this form of text when some prior knowledge is needed for most?
- How do we find interesting expository text that is appropriate to use in the content areas, especially in the middle schools?
- Since 40% of our standardized testing in the elementary schools involves reading expository text, how are K–5 teachers preparing their students to deal with this?
Finally, the issue of expository text is complicated by a number of concerns. First, teachers need to use expository text in all curricular areas. If teachers use only basal readers, students will not encounter much expository text. Teachers have to be researchers in all areas in order to find interesting and appropriate expository text for instructional purposes. Next, everyone is interested in different topics—it’s tough to find expository pieces that appeal to everyone. The exposition that students encounter in typical social studies and science textbooks can be predigested and bland. Finally, students in elementary schools spend a great deal of time reading fiction. They come to middle school lacking strategies for comprehending difficult expository text.

In conclusion, it is our challenge to engage students frequently in reading expository text. We also need to supply them with the tools they need to read, comprehend, and apply this information. We as educators are challenged each and every day to give students what they need in order to be successful citizens.
Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:

- Is it the same as research?
- Are there "rules" for "doing" it?
- How can we use inquiry to help students maximize their reading ability?
- Is it the best way to teach reading skills?

Associations you have with this term:

- Research
- Questions—answers???
- Exploring
- Inquiry-based instruction
- Inquiry about the best teaching strategies

Your working definition for this term:

- Exploring real-world information to seek answers to questions we have
- Student choice and voice
- Finished product
- Depth of research

Issues that complicate this term for you:

- Who can do inquiry?
- How do we know when it's finished?
- Direct instruction
A working definition for inquiry might be “exploring real-world information to seek answers to questions we have.” Inquiry is asking questions, looking into the what, the why, the how. It is research. It is exploration of a topic or an idea. Inquiry goes deeper than the surface of things: it requires looking at topics or issues from multiple angles, and involves asking harder, deeper, more significant questions.

Within an inquiry approach to learning, teachers and students investigate questions related to topics of interest and develop projects to be organized and presented in class or to a broader public. The process and outcomes thus provide some degree of motivation and purpose for students and teachers alike. Inquiry allows for reading to be integrated or embedded within an investigation, and can incorporate a variety of texts with real-world connections. It opens the door for reading that is authentic and purposeful. It also involves talking to each other to explore ideas and ask more questions that further the investigation. Inquiry evolves over time as students pose more questions; it can continue indefinitely.

Inquiry is about student choice and student voice. Students get the opportunity to choose specific topics and hence choose diverse texts to read. It is a shift from direct teacher instruction to student-generated active learning using multiple literacy skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and, ultimately, thinking and learning through the process. Inquiry projects are a powerful way to teach reading comprehension and to work on specific reading skills and strategies.

Just as students can carry out inquiries in classroom settings, teachers can conduct inquiries into their own practice within a professional development seminar. In such a setting teachers can engage in inquiry-based instruction led by a colleague and can inquire into the best teaching strategies to use in the classroom, or particular issues related to the learning of a class or an individual student. Teachers can take an inquiry stance and continually ask themselves questions about their practice. So inquiry can also lead to self-examination and a willingness to change and get better at what you do.

We raised the following questions about inquiry and doing inquiry projects in the classroom:

- How can I cover the standards given the time I have?
- What themes can I focus on in my content area to engage students in personal inquiry?
Keyword: Inquiry

• What is the best way to set up and run an inquiry project?
• How can I get my students to ask the right questions or questions that go deeper than the surface?
• If students are English language learners, how can they read for information and purpose with limited facility in English and limited experience in this country?
• How can I model more effectively an inquiry stance for my students?

The complications for inquiry may surface in a variety of ways. There may be limited access to multiple real-world texts in a classroom or school setting. Teacher classroom libraries, Internet access, or school libraries may be limited. Money and time constraints can be complications. Teachers knowing what kinds of texts kids should access can be an issue. Finally, it may be a challenge for teachers (and students) to break away from traditional models of classroom instruction.
### Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:

- What is literature to me?
  - to students?
  - to NY Times?
  - to William Bennett?
  - to parents?
  - to religious right/new conservatives?
  - U.S. Supreme Court?
  - Louise Rosenblatt?
  - ACLU?
- What "counts" as literature?
- What texts represent "good" literature?
- Is "good" literature only the classics?
- Why do so many high school teachers rely on the "canon" as their platform for instruction?

### Associations you have with this term:

- Pleasant
  - Living in a new world, different world
  - Meeting new people
  - Meeting new ideas
  - Relatively easy to do
- Beauty of language
  - Scary - can't figure out the symbol, the image, the concept.
- Sharing - book club, classmates, students, websites, reviews
  - The classics
  - Difficult texts
  - Fiction
  - Multicultural
### Keyword: Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your working definition for this term:</th>
<th>Issues that complicate this term for you:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* That’s our question!</td>
<td>* Prize winners I hate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Literature is fiction that covers a variety of genres.</td>
<td>* Folks who can’t/won’t read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Folks who want to censor ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Different definitions of literature – it’s not good if it’s easily understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* High school and middle school teachers often disagree on this term.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When we think of literature, many associations come to mind. We think of fiction, of difficult texts and the eternal search for one elusive meaning, of the “classics,” and of multicultural literature. We think of the growing popularity of young adult literature. We think of how we teach and talk about literature in the classroom, how we help children improve comprehension through recognizing story grammar (such as character, plot, setting, theme). While new forms of literature continue to evolve, it is often the traditional genres that appear in classrooms around the country.

We have pleasant associations: living in a new or different world, meeting new people and new ideas, and enjoying the beauty of language. We see reading literature as pleasant because it is relatively easy to do. We also have scary associations with literature: the moments in school when we could not figure out the symbol, the image, the concept, the theme. Finally, we associate literature with sharing: through face-to-face book clubs, with friends or students, and, lately, with internet-based book sharing.

Some of us define literature as “imaginative writing that covers a variety of genres.” We wonder about a definition of literature that suggests that a work is not “good” if it is easily understood. Others of us resist defining it at all, and instead pose many questions:

• What counts as literature?
• What is literature to me?
• To students?
• To the New York Times?
• To William Bennett?
• To parents?
• To the religious right and neo-conservatives?
• To the U.S. Supreme Court?
• To Louise Rosenblatt?
• To the A.C.L.U.?
• Are there certain texts that represent “good” literature?
• Why do so many high school teachers rely on the canon as their platform for instruction?
• How can you truly define something that is constantly changing and evolving?

A number of issues complicate our understanding of literature. High school and middle school teachers often disagree on this term. We associate literature with English classes where students
must search for hidden or multiple meanings within the unfamiliar language of the text. The onset of reader response theory and other interpretive frames have added complication to the meaning of works as well. How much does one value the reader's response as opposed to academic interpretation? The political implications and consequences of literature remain a concern. What risks do writers take in creating provocative works of literature, and what risks do teachers take in inviting students to read texts that others might view as objectionable?
Mississippi State University Writing/Thinking Project
Mississippi State, Mississippi

**Keyword: Motivation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:</th>
<th>Associations you have with this term:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What is motivation?</td>
<td>• Getting kids interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How do you motivate?</td>
<td>• Accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is unmotivated?</td>
<td>• Reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where does it come from?</td>
<td>• Teachers saying kids just aren’t motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is it something you have or don’t?</td>
<td>• Working hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does it come in levels?</td>
<td>• Demonstrating enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What encourages or discourages it?</td>
<td>• Laziness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How do I motivate my students?</td>
<td>• Lack of ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What will motivate them?</td>
<td>• Horizons broadened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How do I motivate myself to do what I need to when often all else fails?</td>
<td>• Propels into action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Should it be intrinsic or extrinsic?</td>
<td>• Can change everything when a student is motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What provides motivation for students to read and get it?</td>
<td>• Eagerness, excitement, engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation.</td>
<td>• Productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does it matter?</td>
<td>• Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does one type of motivation lead to deeper comprehension than the other?</td>
<td>• “Getting it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working smart—doing “hard things”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keyword: Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your working definition for this term:</th>
<th>Issues that complicate this term for you:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Motivation is to give reason and purpose to a particular activity.  
• Desire  
• Choosing to do something voluntarily.  
• Self-directed.  
• Often characterized by outward behaviors—acting engaged.  
• (What does engaged mean?)  
• The desire to do something.  
• The desire to know more about something new.  
• The innate desire to accomplish something. | • How to do it successfully in the classroom?  
• How to sustain it?  
• Why do some people do it naturally?  
• There seem to be assumptions that motivation is just a given, like eye color—something teachers can’t do anything about. I don’t buy this, but I struggle with this. If my teaching gets students excited about a unit and they do good work, have I affected their motivation, or have I simply been motivated to make learning interesting?  
• You never know what will motivate a student.  
• It can become an excuse for everyone about why a student doesn’t do what is asked in a class.  
• Is it the student or the teacher? That is, can motivation be caused? If so, is it about the teacher mostly or can anyone motivate students with the right “strategy?” |
The majority of associations we have with motivation stem from “attitude.” We think of students becoming and remaining interested; we think of hard work and dedication accompanying motivation; we believe that a result of motivation and hard work is accomplishment, which often inspires further motivation. Motivation provides a purpose, a focus for the learner, thus moving toward the attainment of a goal. It is that attainment of the goal that, for many, justifies the means. Hence, motivation: the “why” of doing.

We are also capable of placing a negative connotation on motivation. A lack of motivation among students is often attributed to “laziness,” or “not caring,” or “no desire to broaden one’s horizons.” Additionally, minimal family support is often cited as a reason for low motivation.

Our definitions for motivation are closely related to our associations. We define motivation as a desire to know or do something, a reason or purpose for doing, an innate desire for accomplishment, and choosing to do something voluntarily. Interestingly, we also noted that motivation can be characterized by the outward behavior of “acting” engaged, which leads to the question, what does engagement mean?

Other questions that arise in connection with motivation are:

• Where does motivation come from?
• Is it something you have or you don’t?
• Does it come in levels?
• What encourages or discourages motivation?
• What is “unmotivated”?

We also raised questions related to the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to read. We wondered which is preferable and which is the more effective of the two, leading to deeper and longer-lasting comprehension? Another question dealt with the motivation of teachers, who ask, “How do I motivate my students?” and “How do I motivate myself to do what I need to do when often all else fails?”

Finally, the issue of motivation is complicated by many concerns and issues. We are concerned with the issue of “how” to motivate a student, and knowing “what” will motivate a student. Also
causing concern is the idea that often “lack of motivation” can be used as an easy answer to explain why a student doesn’t do what is asked of him in class, without the reflection or analysis required to understand the circumstances. This concept brings up the issue, whose job is it to motivate? To what degree is a teacher or mentor required to motivate a student? Another related concern: is it the teacher or the teaching strategy that can motivate a student, or is it a bit of both?

Our concerns, like our questions, touched on the area of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. This issue can be debated forever, with the final answer often being, “Whatever works.” Another concern is the teacher’s purpose for motivating students. Is the teacher motivating the student to learn or is the teacher’s motivation based solely on making the lesson interesting? One other concern that raises a great many questions deals with the student. Is the student lazy or misunderstood? Often what is taken for lazy and rebellious is acting out that comes from a student either slipping through the educational system’s cracks or literally being “left behind.”

We agree that motivation and its origin are indeed mysteries, enigmas that many times cannot be explained. We agree that in order for true and lasting learning to take place, motivation must be present. We also agree that it is a responsibility of the teachers to provide access to an array of activities, readings, and resources that allow students to take motivation for their own.
**Chicago Area Writing Project**  
**Chicago, Illinois**

**Keyword: Reading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:</th>
<th>Associations you have with this term:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>· What is reading?</td>
<td>· Reading across the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· What does one do when reading?</td>
<td>· Pleasure reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Who determines the &quot;quality&quot; of what is read?</td>
<td>· Reading between the lines</td>
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<td>· Reading a person</td>
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<td></td>
<td>· Reading disability</td>
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<td>· Reading class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>· Independent reading, shared reading, guided reading, partner reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td>· Reading with a writer’s eye</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Books, newspapers, magazines</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Non-fiction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Talks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Plays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Pictures, charts, graphs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Keyword: Reading

#### Your working definition for this term:
- Reading is a process in which a person interacts with the text to construct (re-construct?) an author's meaning.
- It is a communication process—one that involves both a sender and a receiver.
- Knowledge acquisition

#### Issues that complicate this term for you:
- How do personal perceptions enhance and/or interfere with the construction of an author's message?
- How to know whether the reader is in fact constructing text?
- Should there be a balance between constructing meaning and personal connections to the text? Does one supersede the other?
- Reading viewed simply as decoding.
- Flexibility of reader to meet challenges presented in different contexts
- Student motivation
- Difficult texts
- Helping content area teachers learn more strategies.
### Keyword: Reading

When we think of *reading*, we think of the act and purposes of reading, the *motivation* to read, and reading as a process that we teach. Depending on the purpose and a person’s proficiency with the process or topic, reading can either bring enjoyment or frustration. While reading is an act that may be performed by an individual, we acknowledge that reading is not an isolated activity but one that involves communication—or a transaction—between an author and a reader. “Reading” as a school subject may hold different meanings for administrators, teachers, students, and the general public.

When we think of reading, we think of both positive and negative experiences. Positive experiences involve reading material that is entertaining and that captures our interest. Some of us recall memorable times going to the library or bookstore and walking away with a pile of books. We note how reading also teaches us, satisfies our need to learn, and prompts our thinking and questioning. Reading is a mental exercise. We associate reading with the forms that it takes—books, newspapers, magazines, and genres of *literature*. As educators, we associate reading with materials and instructional contexts—reading across the curriculum, guided reading, partner reading, reading-writing connections, trade books, and *textbooks*.

Negative associations tend to be ones that are related to school in some way. Some of us wrote about “reading disability” and the responsibility in teaching reading. One person commented, “Everyone in school situations seems to think it is someone else’s job to teach reading, but not theirs.”

We define reading as a process of constructing the meaning that is embedded in written representation. A form of communication, it implies a sender and a receiver of a message. One person observed that meaning is affected by the context, the purpose, and the experiences of both the author and the reader: “Reading is the construction of meaning from text at a given place and time and for a given purpose. Our understanding of the same text will change even at the same time and place if we read for a different purpose.”

| Grid Template and Examples | 36 |
The idea that reading is the construction of meaning raises the questions of the existence of the meaning. There exists a tension between the intended and received message. We wonder,

• “How do personal perceptions enhance and/or interfere with the construction of an author’s message?”

• “Should there be a balance between constructing meaning and personal connections to the text?”

• Does one supersede the other?”

Other issues that complicate this term involve the teaching of reading.

• How do we teach students to construct meaning and how can we determine if students are in fact constructing meaning?

• Can standardized test scores represent the construction of meaning?

• We also wonder about who possesses expertise in the teaching of reading? How does the information needed to teach reading well get to the general education classroom teacher?
### Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:

- Which strategies really help and when?
- When are strategies out of context?
- If you want to teach students some learning strategies, is there a “best practices” way to approach this?
- How do people learn strategies and become independent users of them? (Explicit vs. implicit?)
- How is a strategy different from a skill?
- Does something become a skill once it’s automatic?
- Do students from different communities resist certain strategies (i.e., students who do not believe in questioning as something valuable)?
- How can we better enable our students to select and use helpful strategies when reading a wide variety of texts?

### Associations you have with this term:

- Breaking something down
- Using a tool to achieve a goal
- Based on elementary principals
- Sports
- Reading
- Books of instructional strategies
- Specific strategies such as rereading, visualizing, prediction, using different reading pace for different types of text
- Teaching strategies
- Reading strategies
- Learning strategies
- Everyday living strategies
Keyword: Strategy

Your working definition for this term:

- A way to get at meaning
- A plan of attack for getting something done
- You know what to try for a given situation.
- Flexibility
- Something that supports the reading of text and has application to more than one particular text or reading.
- A way to figure out something unknown.
- A way to make learning more meaningful and/or easier

Issues that complicate this term for you:

- Some strategies may be overused.
- Some strategies may be oversimplified.
- If reading is complex, or students are reading complex texts, can one or two strategies help the student understand?
- In education, we talk about cognitive strategies (ways we approach things in our heads) and instructional strategies (things teachers do). These get confused and lumped together under the term strategy.
- So we say kids need “strategies” (like predicting, questioning, etc.) and then we say we address strategies by using things like KWL (which, I think, is an instructional strategy—something we do—that may or may not prompt and reinforce cognitive strategies).
- Students demonstrate differing abilities to use strategies successfully.
- Teachers teaching texts instead of strategies.
- Teachers not teaching reading strategies.
- Teachers not modeling reading strategies.
Nearly every recent book on reading instruction uses the word strategy. Strategies, we are told, are important tools for readers in comprehending text. When we think of strategies, we think of lists: predicting, questioning, summarizing, and evaluating; or KWL charts, question trees, and concept maps.

Some of our associations with the term strategy come from areas outside reading instruction. We tend to think of sports and coaching, where the purpose of using strategies is winning. We also think of other metaphors, especially scaffolding. Some of our other associations point to a connection between reading and writing. We tend to see strategies as being flexible, somehow similar to our understanding of writing process.

Our simplest definition for strategy is just a plan for success. This implies some level of metacognitive awareness—a strategy is something consciously applied, at least at first. A strategy is a way to approach a subject, a plan of attack to deal with challenges. A strategy is a means to an end.

Some of us see this as a relatively rigid process—a step-by-step logical plan—whereas others view a strategy as a much more fluid, recursive process of trial and error.

The word strategy alone seems easy to define. However, problems come up as soon as the word is used in a phrase like reading strategies. We see the term reading strategies referring to various things. Sometimes it refers to the cognitive processes readers use—such as predicting, questioning, or evaluating. Sometimes, however, reading strategies refers to instructional techniques that teachers employ to strengthen student comprehension—such as the use of graphic organizers. We may say we are teaching reading strategies, but we wonder whether we can map a relationship between our use of instructional strategies and the degree to which students internalize cognitive strategies for being successful with text. In other words, when students are successful with comprehension, how much is due to the teacher’s plan of attack, and how much is due to the students’ making plans for success? We wonder about the transference...
of strategies: how to make students independent users of effective strategies, how to facilitate the transfer of strategies to different readings and content across the curriculum.

There is also discussion about the degree to which strategies are conscious or unconscious. We seem to agree that a conscious plan to enable comprehension is a strategy, but when the same thinking process is more automatic, is it still a strategy or has it become a skill? We are sometimes unclear about the difference between a strategy and a skill. We believe that in teaching students to become strategic readers, there are several levels of knowledge. Students must learn how to perform a particular strategy, and also when it would be most helpful.

Finally, we raise some questions about strategy.

- Are some strategies more effective than others?
- How does a student, or teacher, know when to try a particular strategy?
- How do teachers introduce strategies and move students toward using them more independently?
- How many strategies should be taught?
- Should strategies be taught explicitly or implicitly?
- How do we evaluate a student’s use of strategies?
- Are some strategies appropriate for different grade levels or subject areas?
- If good readers use many different strategies, how do we know which to teach first: is it valuable to isolate and separately teach these strategies at all?
Questions that come up for you in connection with this term:

- What are the boundaries of text?
- Can anything be a text?
- How do we define text?
- How broadly do we think of the term?
- How does the meaning of this term change in different contexts?
- How does the definition change your world view?
- Does a “technical sounding” word like text hold less magic than “books”?
- What do we mean by a text-rich environment?
- Are most texts in classrooms textbooks?
- Are texts static?
- Why aren’t more teachers using multiple texts?
- How do we keep the weighty implications of the text from overwhelming and discouraging kids?
- Why are many school textbooks scraped down to politically correct emptiness?
- How can I help students see the text value of the novels and plays we read while having them keep the sense of pleasure the stories give?

- Who decides what interpretation of a text is valid?
- What was the first text?
- How can we facilitate access to texts?
- Why don’t people see through textbooks and worksheets as texts?
- Doesn’t it need clarification in context?
- Does textbook steal the word?
- How far can this word be stretched? Film? Photos? Sounds?
- How dense is it?
- Is it instructional?
- Who does/doesn’t see text as more than just print?
**Keyword: Text**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associations you have with this term:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Current theory terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Books, magazines, newspapers, art,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photographs, documents, signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A classroom text—especially used by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content area teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meaning making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heavy tomes carried by small middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school students in backpacks weighing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than they do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using multiple texts in the content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>area classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Dryness—a dry difficult piece of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing that one must labor to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teaching jargon</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Anything in printed language or</td>
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<tr>
<td>written language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Text on text</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Text books</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Basal readers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reading materials used by students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All or part of a written document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Words or letter symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Text-based discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The relationship of text and image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The benefits to classrooms of using</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multiple texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Text to self, text to text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intertextuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Schoolbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The written part of a publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(newspaper, yearbook)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informational writing that is meant to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be studied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A large book inside of which I hid the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>novel I wanted to read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading, writing, manuscripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Written means of conveying information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Religious texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Essays, letters, diaries, journals,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poetry, email, media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Literacy vs. orality</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Literate societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Oral cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Historical documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keeper of history</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Scribes, scholars</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gutenberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reading the word/world</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cuneiform, print, alphabet</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Braille</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Text messaging</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Texts translated to oral languages to</td>
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<tr>
<td>facilitate missionary work and imperialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heavy hitting, dense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The universe of things explored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education publishers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading closely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Going back to the text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Keyword: Text**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your working definition for this term:</th>
<th>• A medium by which ideas are communicated, subject to interpretation by the reader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Range of written or visual material that is to be comprehended or interpreted by a “reader”</td>
<td>• Something that’s perused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anything that can be read, not necessarily print</td>
<td>• The written word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Videos, pictures, the world (Freire), gazes, gestures, e-messages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Body of information in written form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Any writing, image or object that demands or invites interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Any symbol system that can be used to communicate/from which meaning is derived, traditionally written</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A book of information or knowledge used to study a particular subject</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Generally refers to material that is to be read</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Any object in culture that can be read for meaning—books, magazines, film, billboards, comics, the body, music, poetry, dance, gesture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The writing contained in the yearbook exclusive of captions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A document written in an alphabet system that is comprehensible to a group</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Keyword: Text

## Issues that complicate this term for you:

- Referring to too many types of printed material, so broad
- Overuse by educators
- When we think of text, we always think about print.
- Need to expand that definition of reading and literacy
- Many things other than written documents in terms of descriptive/writerly activities
- Writing and the body of knowledge
- The symbol representation of ideas (abstract) as well as the actual articles (concrete) that comprise an environment
- Jargon
- Implies literal letters and yet so much more
- Has it become meaningless?
- Used in place of the word books
- Gives the impression of dryness, strung together facts that need to be plowed through
- Power inherent in texts
- Infinitely variable form
- Every form has its own quirks for reading
- As literature, instructional tome—hard to separate the word text

## Ambiguous

- Education publishers homogenizing language, thought, meaning
- If it's printed, it means something
Keyword: Text

When we think of text, we think of the printed word, of books, magazines, newspapers, photographs, documents, and signs. We associate the word text with anything to do with printed language or written language. We use the word text to refer to all or part of a written document. We associate it with reading, writing, and manuscripts, with any written means of conveying information.

The word has many associations for us with the practice of teaching. It suggests academic reading. It can refer to any informational writing that is studied closely. We think of strategies such as text on text, exploring contexts, using textbooks, text-based discussions, using multiple texts in content-area classrooms, making connections—text to self, text-to-text, intertextuality. We think of basal readers. Any reading material used by students in the classroom is a text. We associate text with reading closely, and going back to the text. The word also reminds us of educational publishers—their heavy tomes carried by small middle-school students in backpacks that weigh more than the children do. The word suggests dryness—a dull, difficult piece of writing that one must labor to understand. We associate text with densely written material. One of us associated text with the large book inside of which he hid the novel he wanted to read.

There are socio-historical connotations of this word. We think of literate societies and oral cultures, historical documents, and the keepers of history—scribes and scholars. We think about cuneiform and Gutenberg. We think of texts translated to oral languages to facilitate missionary work, to support public health initiatives, or to enable imperialism.

We define text very broadly and also narrowly. We associate the word text with theory. In this context it is extended to encompass art, images, and objects—in fact, the universe of things explored. For example, when we speak of text we refer to the range of written or visual material that is to be comprehended or interpreted by a “reader.” Text is anything that can be read—videos, pictures, the world (Freire), graces, gestures, instant messages, books, magazines, film, billboards, comics, the body, music, poetry, dance—and not just print. But we also define text as a book of information or knowledge used to study a particular subject. We think of text as the written word.
A number of issues complicate this term. Text is used broadly and can take many different forms. Yet in school we tend to limit our view of text to print. On one hand we talk of needing to expand the definition of reading and literacy to include a variety of print and graphic forms, and on the other hand we talk of the term as being overused by educators, as jargon. We question whether the term has become meaningless.

Finally, the term raises many questions for us in terms of instruction. Used in connection with instruction we pose these questions:

• Why aren’t more teachers using multiple texts?
• What do we mean by a text-rich environment?
• How do we keep the weighty implications of the text from overwhelming and discouraging kids?
• Why are many school textbooks scraped down to politically correct emptiness?
• How can I help students see the text value of the novels and plays we read while having them keep the sense of pleasure the stories give?

• How to facilitate access to texts?
• Who decides what interpretation of a text is valid?
• Why don’t people see through textbooks and worksheets as texts?

In terms of our understanding of the term in its broadest sense, we had these questions:

• What are the boundaries of text?
• Can anything be text?
• What happens when you expand this definition?
• How does it change your worldview?
• How do we define text?
• Does a “technical sounding” word like text hold less magic than books?
• Are texts static?
• How broadly do we think of the term?
• How far can this word be stretched? Film? Photos? Sounds?
• Who does/doesn’t see it as more than just print?
• How does the meaning of the word change in different contexts?
• What was the first text? Was it instructional?
III. Possible Applications of the Keywords Process
### Possible Applications of the Keywords Process

#### Within Summer Institutes and Continuity Meetings

- Use the grid to develop a shared vocabulary in a content-area institute.
- Use the grid with summer institute fellows to explore the keyword *inquiry* as an introduction to demonstrations.
- In a summer institute, brainstorm words related to *writing*, use grids to explore these, and discuss. Continue adding words.
- Use the grid as a way to explore key concepts in articles on theory or research.
- Use the grids to help participants in teacher inquiry groups to unpack and examine their inquiry questions.
- The narratives from the keywords process can be created on a site-based wiki, where teacher-consultants can keep adding to or revising the description of the word.
- Have teacher-consultants review specific words in the keywords document and have big-paper conversations on some of them.

#### Professional Development Work in Schools

- Use the grid to introduce and reflect on a topic within a Writing Project professional development series. Possible applications include explorations of grammar and group work, just to name two of myriad possibilities. Small groups can produce summaries for publication.
- Demonstrate the grid with content-area teachers, who can then use it with their students to explore key concepts (e.g., revolution, nationalism, hero, big bang).
- Use the grid and narratives within professional development in reading to consider the keywords *strategy, motivation, engagement, inquiry*.
- Use the definitions quadrant as a conversation starter with school groups.
- Use the prompts (without grid boxes) for a guided freewrite to unpack keywords used in summer institute demonstrations.
- The grid and subsequent summaries can support interdisciplinary teams to develop thematic units.
- School leaders can use the grid as a tool for working with their staff.