

Excerpts from ***Publishers' Criteria for the common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades K-2***,  
by David Coleman and Susan Pimentel

... These guidelines are not meant to dictate classroom practice but rather ensure that teachers receive effective tools.

At the heart of these criteria is the belief that reading – in this case, learning to read --- is central. In the early grades, this includes due attention to the foundations of reading. The goal for readers of all ages is to be able to understand and learn from what they read and to express such knowledge clearly through speaking and writing about text. Encouraging this expectation from the start is vital to **developing purposeful readers who expect what they read to make sense to them.**

...The Common Core State Standards offer specific guidance on reading foundations that should be observed in curriculum materials to prepare students to **decode automatically and read with fluency** by the time they finish 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The standards articulate a well-developed set of skills and habits that taken collectively lay the foundation for students to achieve competence in reading comprehension.

...Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards need to provide **repeated, regular exposure to and practice opportunities for the full range of foundational** skills in and out of classroom settings (**through take-home or after school activities**) that are woven into a clear developmental progression.

**Materials must meet the needs of a wide range of students**, reinforcing key lessons in concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions of the English writing system. Students come to school unevenly prepared, so materials must have the capacity to meet a wide range of needs. Materials need to **incorporate better designed and more powerful practice.**

**...In particular, by the end of kindergarten, students should be comfortable recognizing and writing letters of the alphabet and know the primary sound/symbol relationship for every letter.**

...Learning about irregularly spelled words should be distributed across grades in accordance with the language demands of children's texts. Their introduction should **begin in kindergarten with very high-frequency grammatical words**, including articles, prepositions, and common irregular verbs such as is and do. Finally, by the time they complete 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, students should be decoding automatically and reading with fluency.

Because students differ widely in how much exposure and repetition they need to master foundational skills, materials also need to incorporate **high-quality parallel activities for those students who are able to reach facility with less repetition.** Approaching remediation and extension activities in this parallel way will help teachers resolve one of the central dilemmas of the early elementary classroom – meeting the needs of all learners. Instructional materials should be designed to provide systematic development and practice in these foundational skills without depriving any students of full access to rich complex text.

**Fluency should be a particular focus** of materials prepared for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. Materials should also provide ample opportunities for repeated oral reading...

...Instructions should also require students to follow along while text is read aloud by the teacher to achieve fluency. **By the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, it is essential that students be able to read independently with automaticity and flow to ensure that their focus can be freed for comprehension.**

Materials develop academic vocabulary prevalent in complex texts throughout reading, writing, listening, and speaking instruction. When they enter school, students differ markedly in their vocabulary knowledge. **Materials must address this vocabulary gap early, systematically, and aggressively,** or it will expand and accelerate.

...Of particular importance is building students' academic vocabulary or Tier 2 words...

**...materials should also use games, jokes, puns, and other forms of word play to enhance instruction and develop a sense of excitement about words.**

**...remedial materials must be flexible and straightforward** enough to be used in alternative settings and times: before and after school, at home, or in after-school programs. In most cases, the persons working with students in such settings will not have as much experience as the primary classroom teachers, and materials must accommodate that fact.

**Text selections are worth reading and re-reading.** The standards maintain that **high-quality text** selections should be consistently offered to students because they will encourage students and teachers to spend more time on them than they would on low-quality material. **Texts selected for inclusion should be well written and, as appropriate, richly illustrated...**

**...Materials include a greater volume of informational text.** The common Core State Standards call for a much greater emphasis on informational text. Specifically, they call for elementary curriculum materials to be recalibrated to reflect a mix of **50 percent informational and 50 percent narrative text...**

**...Additional materials markedly increase the opportunity for regular independent reading of texts that appeal to students' interests to develop both their knowledge and joy in reading...**

Materials offered in support of reading comprehension should assist teachers and students in staying focused on the primary goal of instruction: developing proficient decoders and fluent readers so that students are able to read closely and gain knowledge from texts independently. **The aim is for students to understand that thinking and reading occur simultaneously.** Curricula should focus classroom time on text and text-dependent questions and omit that which would otherwise distract from achieving those goals.

**...Students' initial exposure to a text should engage them directly with the text so they can begin to make meaning for themselves.**