



ELA REPORTER

YOUR PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY

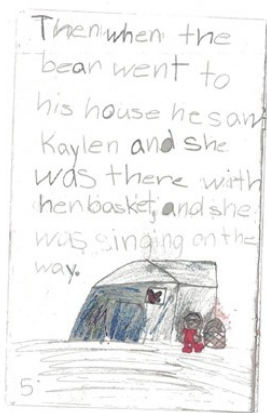
Ready, Set, Write! Young Georgia Authors Gears Up for 2012

WHY: The purpose of the Young Georgia Authors Writing Competition is to encourage students to develop writing that represents their best efforts. The contest provides a context for schools to support and celebrate the writing successes of all students and to encourage and recognize student achievement in writing throughout Georgia.

WHAT: Any type of student writing is permissible. Entries may be short stories, poetry, essays, journals, personal narratives, reports, or any other original student writing. All entries submitted must be the student's original work. The writing entry should be either typed or neatly handwritten on 8 1/2 X 11 inch paper. Exceptions to paper size are allowed for kindergarten and first grade entries. Students should

write on one side of the paper only. Writing entries are limited

The Mystery of the Valentine's Chocolate Candy



2011 First Grade Winner
Kaylen Aguilar

to five pages. If typed, entries must be double-spaced with a minimum of a 12 point font. Dic-

tated stories will not be accepted.

WHO: All students currently enrolled in Georgia public schools, kindergarten through twelfth grade, may submit writing entries for the system level competition; however, the maximum number of writing entries any local system may submit to the state competition is one per grade level.

WHEN: All winning writing entries for each grade level from the school system level of competition are due to Kim Jeffcoat, Georgia Department of Education, 1754 Twin Towers East, 205 Jesse Hill Jr. Dr., SE, Atlanta, Georgia 30334. They should be received by Friday, April 13, 2012.

ELA Resource Update

Georgia Public Broadcasting Live-Streaming Professional Learning on implementation of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards:

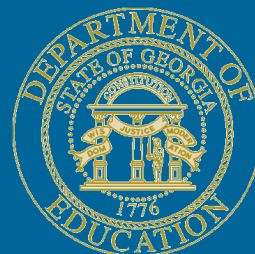
Grade 5	March 13, 2012	10:00 am— 12:00 noon
Grades 9-10	March 13, 2012	2:00 pm— 4:00 pm
Grade 8	March 14, 2012	10:00 am— 12:00 noon
Grade 1	March 14, 2012	2:00 pm — 4:00 pm

For archived GPB presentations for grades 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 11-12, and a wealth of other materials, visit us at

<https://www.georgiastandards.org/Common-Core/Pages/ELA.aspx>



Georgia
Department
of Education



Dr. John D. Barge,
State School
Superintendent

*"Making Education
Work for All Georgians"*

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ci_services.aspx?
PageReq=CIServEnglish](http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_services.aspx?PageReq=CIServEnglish)

“It is what you
read when you
don't have to that
determines what
you will be when
you can't help it.”

~ Oscar Wilde

Get the 411: All about Informational Text in the CCGPS

Why Informational Text?

One of the key requirements of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards is that all students must be able to comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity as they progress through school. By the time they graduate, students must be able to read and comprehend independently and proficiently the kinds of complex texts commonly found in college and careers.

In brief, while reading demands in college, workforce training programs, and life in general have held steady or increased over the last half century, K-12 texts have actually declined in sophistication, and relatively little attention has been paid to students' ability to read complex texts independently.

These conditions have left a serious gap between many high school seniors' reading ability and the reading requirements they will face after graduation. The need for our students to increase the complexity of their reading material is particularly great in the case of informational texts. K-12 students are, in general, given considerable scaffolding—assistance from teachers, class discussions, and the texts themselves (in such forms as summaries, glossaries, and other text features)—with reading that is already less complex overall than that typically required of students prior to the 1960s.

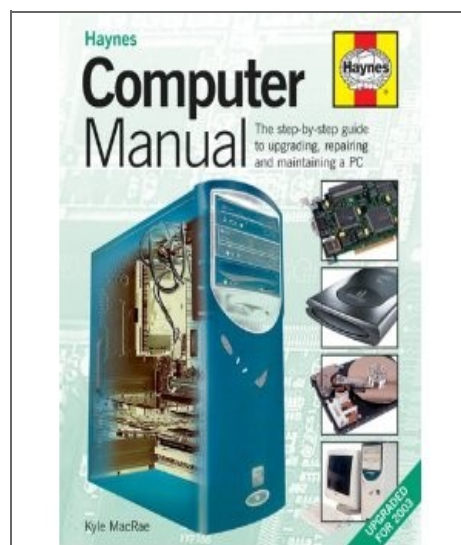
What is more, students today are asked to read very little expository text—as little as 7 to 15 percent of elementary and middle school instructional reading, for example, is expository—yet much research supports the conclusion that such text is harder for most students to read than is narrative text and that students need sustained exposure to expository text to develop important reading strategies. Expository text makes up the vast majority of the required reading in college and the workplace.

Worse still, what little expository reading students are asked to do is too often of the superficial variety that involves skimming and scanning for particular, discrete pieces of information; such reading is unlikely to prepare students for the cognitive demand of true understanding of complex text.

Excerpted from:
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf

Which Texts Should I Choose?

In general, when teaching a unit with a literary text focus, try to choose informational texts that have a strong thematic connection to the subject matter and context of the extended literary text. For example, if you were teaching the novel *Holes* in middle school, you might choose short informational pieces on digging for buried treasure, desert survival, or the juvenile justice system. One of the dangers of planning these mixed-genre units is the temptation to simply stick any unrelated informational text in the slot in order to fulfill the requirement. You will find, however, that a little brainstorming on almost any text will yield exciting and unexpected connections that, far from detracting from the effectiveness of your literary unit, will add spice and pizzazz to the novel study.



What if I Have No Funds to Purchase New Texts?

Budget concerns have been paramount for a few years now and will probably continue to be for a little longer. In searching for informational texts, remember that many books you already have may fit the bill: gaming manuals, instructions, content texts, biographies, etc. Another helpful strategy will be to use the Internet to acquire digital texts. You may want to begin collecting magazines from helpful friends as they finish reading them and compile a collection of articles related to books you plan to teach. Finally, don't forget to partner with your media specialist to exploit the resources that may be sitting on the shelves in your school's library. Good luck and happy reading!

True or False? Myth-busting the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards

Myth: The standards suggest teaching *Grapes of Wrath* to 2nd graders.

Fact: Misconceptions about which texts should be taught in which grade in CCGPS are common. This is probably because of the increase in complexity in texts in CCGPS and the associated changes in suggested Lexile levels. There are two things to remember here: one, texts are never chosen only on the basis of a Lexile level. That is only one of many factors to consider. Two, there are NO mandated text choices in CCGPS. Text choices are entirely up to the systems and instructors.

Myth: Schools will be required to buy all new texts.

Fact: This perception is understandable given that we are hearing that texts are taking on more of an informational focus and will need to be more complex overall. The good news, however, is that you already have many texts that will meet the requirements and creative ways to obtain more. Use our Text Complexity Rubric (see our ELA CCGPS Webinars from last fall for more information on this) to determine the most appropriate grade level for instruction in the texts you already own. You may find in many cases you can continue with what you have (remember, Georgia already had one of the country's most rigorous sets of standards before the adoption of Common Core). Trade, borrow, and move around the text sets you already own so that each grade-level in your system ends up with the books that are most appropriate. See the article on the previous page for more ideas about ways to acquire informational texts.

Myth: English teachers will be asked to teach science and social studies reading materials.

Fact: With the ELA CCGPS, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science. These goals can be achieved by ensuring that teachers in other disciplines are also focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas.

Myth: The standards don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.

Fact: The standards require certain critical content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, America's Founding Documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Shanahan on Literacy

Dr. Shanahan is a Professor of Urban Education and the Director of the UIC Center for Literacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is also one of the primary crafters of the Common Core State standards for ELA. Last month we shared some of Dr. Shanahan's ground-breaking work on Disciplinary Literacy. This month we are sharing a piece from his blog "Shanahan on Literacy" about the debate on the value of pre-reading.

The idea of pre-reading has a long history in American education. In the first third of the 20th century, the reading of literature in the academy was rife with author study; the idea being that one couldn't read and appreciate fine works without a rich awareness of the author's biography. This approach dominated high school and college classrooms and the publishing industry itself (the inclusion of extensive forewords, introductory chapters, and other similar apparatus were the norm). In elementary classrooms, pre-reading became a touchstone upon the publication of the teacher's guide in basal readers. The directed reading activity (DRA) typically introduced the child to some background information, pre-taught the hard vocabulary, and provided a specific reason for reading the first page(s) of the selection. In the 1960s, winds of change (sort of) began to blow with Russell Stauffer's ideas on prediction and anticipation as the basis of pre-reading. Instead of the teacher providing relevant background information and a reason to read, she would now guide the students to preview the material and make predictions (the predictions being the new purposes or motivation—read to find out if you were right). Today, the consensus is shifting again, this time to-

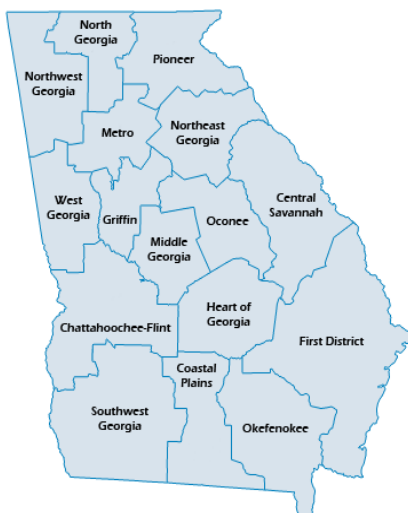
ward doing away with pre-reading all together. With such a venerable history, why would some of us be so disgusted with the practice? Let me suggest five reasons:

1. **Pre-reading takes too much time away from reading.**
I recently watched a primary grade pre-reading that took 20 minutes—the reading itself only took 5. I wish I could say that kind of thing was the exception.
2. **Boring!**
3. **Pre-reading often focuses on the wrong information.**
Unfortunately, we often provide background review focused on information that doesn't actually need to be reviewed. My favorite example is having middle school students read "The Old Man and the Sea." That book is tough for 12-year-olds as they lack the emotional experience of the old man. You can review deep sea fishing, the Florida Keys, and Joe DiMaggio until the cow comes home and it won't improve their understanding of the old man and his human plight.
4. **Previews can ruin the reading experience.** Too often the pre-reading experience tells the student what will be in the text.
5. **Pre-reading activities are rarely purposeful.** Too often I see pre-reading activities that are generic and repetitive.

To Be Continued in April...

Georgia's Secret Weapon in Professional Learning and Resource Development: Explore Your 16 RESAs!

The Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) is comprised of 16 regional educational service agencies strategically located in service districts throughout the State of Georgia. The agencies were established for the purpose of sharing services designed to improve the effectiveness of the educational programs of member school systems. In addition, the RESAs assist the State Department of Education in promoting its initiatives. The RESAs inform systems of innovation and gather research on programs as needed.



Central Savannah River RESA
Chattahoochee-Flint RESA
Coastal Plains RESA
First District RESA
Griffin RESA
Heart of Georgia RESA
Metro RESA
Middle Georgia RESA
North Georgia RESA
Northeast Georgia RESA
Northwest Georgia RESA

Oconee RESA
Okefenokee RESA
Pioneer RESA
Southwest Georgia RESA
West Georgia RESA

For phone numbers and more info:
<https://www.georgiastandards.org/>

Georgia Receives NCLB Waiver

State School Superintendent Dr. John Barge recently announced that the U.S. Department of Education has granted Georgia's waiver of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Superintendent Barge joined nine other state school chiefs at the White House for the announcement. Georgia is among a group of only 10 states to receive a waiver from NCLB.

"This is wonderful news for Georgia's students, educators, and parents," said Superintendent Barge. "No longer will we be bound by the narrow definitions of success found in No Child Left Behind. We will now be able to hold schools accountable and reward them for the work they do in all subjects and with all students."

Governor Nathan Deal added, "This waiver will give Georgia the flexibility we need to pursue our goals of student achievement. We appreciate the cooperation of federal officials as we seek to prepare young Georgians for higher education and the jobs of tomorrow."

As part of the waiver, the Georgia Department of Education will begin identifying Priority Schools, Focus Schools, and Reward Schools. Achievement data from all core content areas and graduation rate data will be used to identify these schools. At the end of this current school year, these Priority Schools and Focus Schools will replace current Needs Improvement Schools. Reward Schools will replace the current Distinguished Schools designation and will be announced in September 2012.

Georgia Department
of Education

English Language Arts
and Literacy

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"Never trust anyone who
has not brought a book with
them."

~ Lemony Snicket