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A "common" vision of instruction? An analysis of English/Language Arts professional development materials related to the Common Core State Standards

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to describe the stances put forward by a selection of professional development resources interpreting the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, and to analyse where these resources stand in relation to research in ELA. Specifically, we analyse resources written by English educators and/or literacy scholars and by the lead authors of the ELA standards, David Coleman and Susan Pimentel. The visions of "Common Core instruction" forwarded by these resources are sometimes similar, but frequently different. These differences illustrate key tensions between the Common Core authors' interpretation of what current instructional practices are—and how they need to be changed—and the perspectives of others from ELA and literacy. We also consider what these materials imply for teachers' voice and autonomy in educational reform.

KEYWORDS: Common Core State Standards, professional development resources, standards-based reform, teacher autonomy

INTRODUCTION

> So I am saying in a clear voice, the core of instruction, core classroom time becomes the shared encounter of sufficiently difficult text. The proper role for leveled material can be an intensive support for students…but remember that time might also be used for them to have more time with that sufficiently complex work. (Coleman, 2011, p. 13-14)

> Matching readers to texts is not enough. You then need to accelerate readers' progress up the gradient of text difficulty, especially for readers who come into your classroom not able to read grade level complex texts. The most important way to do this is to help readers accomplish vast amounts of minds-on, engaged reading of just-right expository texts. (Calkins, Ehrenworth & Lehman, 2012, p. 96)

As the majority of American states begin to implement the United States' first set of common academic standards, many individuals and groups across the country are trying to influence the form that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) take in classrooms. The examples above demonstrate two contrasting views on how teachers should implement the CCSS in order to help students become better readers. David Coleman argues that students become better readers by experiencing mostly, if not exclusively, complex text, even if it is well above students' assessed reading level. Lucy Calkins and her colleagues argue that students become better readers by reading large amounts of text at or just above their assessed reading level. Which of these

messages do teachers hear, and how do teachers know which voice, if either, should guide their instructional practice? The purpose of this article is to describe the stances put forward in a selection of professional development resources interpreting the CCSS for English/Language Arts teachers, and to analyse where the instructional recommendations made in these resources stand in relation to research in English/Language Arts. Some of the resources we analyse were written by English educators and/or literacy scholars such as Lucy Calkins, while others were written by the lead authors of the English/Language Arts standards, David Coleman and Susan Pimentel.

We argue that many of these professional resources, especially the ones written by the Common Core authors, recommend *how* instruction should look, but often do not explicate the purposes behind these recommendations or make clear: a) how individual authors' beliefs are embedded in such recommendations, or b) how the recommendations in the resources align (or perhaps do not align) with research in literacy/English education. In subsequent sections, we describe the rise of standards-based reform globally and in the U.S. context. We then describe our text selection and analysis methods, followed by our findings. Finally, we consider what these materials imply for teachers' voice and autonomy in educational reform.

Standards-based reform policies in the United States

Standards and accountability policies have become global phenomena with important implications for the teaching profession (Baker & Wiseman, 2005). For example, scholars have noted how standards have limited teachers' professional autonomy in England (Bodman, Taylor & Morris, 2012; Turvey, Yandell & Ali, 2012) and Australia (Comber, 2011; Gannon, 2012), among many other countries. Most standards-based reform policies operate under a similar theory of action. Standards are intended to set clear, common expectations for student achievement, and when those standards are "aligned" with curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development, standards-based reform proponents believe standards can improve the quality of education and the equality of educational opportunities (e.g. Resnick, 1995; Smith & O'Day, 1993).

In the United States, standards-based reform policies have gained increasing prominence over the last 20 years. In 2001, the United State Congress reauthorised the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act with bipartisan support under President George W. Bush. The reauthorized legislation, known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), mandated that each state create a set of standards and measure individual student's progress toward meeting those standards. NCLB also imposed a series of sanctions on schools that did not make "adequate yearly progress" in bringing all of their students up to a standard of proficiency. There have been a number of research-based critiques of NCLB's implementation. Though the purpose of any standards and accountability system is to influence instructional priorities (Hannaway & Hamilton, 2008), one body of research has shown a narrowing of curriculum and instruction to focus almost exclusively on tested subjects and topics (Berliner, 2011; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Palmer & Snodgrass Rangel, 2010; Sandholtz, Ogawa & Scribner, 2004) and documented the heavy use of scripted curricula in urban, low-income districts (Achinstein, Ogawa & Speiglman, 2004). Other researchers have pointed out that the same districts that are penalised for not

meeting adequate yearly progress are often those who have large numbers of students who need additional resources, such as English language learners (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Hakuta, 2011). In the last twelve years, both policymakers and practitioners have increasingly criticised NCLB for these reasons and others, such as incentivising cheating on state tests and supporting the growth of charter schools.

The Common Core State Standards and *Race to the Top*

Given widespread dissatisfaction with *No Child Left Behind* in the mid-2000s and the relative success of a multistate effort to create common graduation requirements (the "American Diploma Project"), groups and individuals who had long pushed for national standards began to see common standards as politically feasible. Former state governors Robert Wise and James Hunt, together with the non-profit Achieve, served as the primary policy entrepreneurs in convincing a diverse range of stakeholders that a set of national standards was in their best interests, despite the long history of local control over education in the United States (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013a, 2013b; Rothman, 2011). In order to marshal widespread support for the standards from diverse interest groups, policy entrepreneurs drew on different combinations of arguments, depending on what argument they believed would appeal to a particular audience (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013a). For example, when policy entrepreneurs appealed to the United States Chamber of Commerce, they drew on arguments linking higher standards to the health of the United States economy and increasing workforce quality. In contrast, advocates for the CCSS relied on equity-oriented arguments with the National Council of La Raza (a Latino advocacy organisation), who ended up promoting the standards to their members as a way to provide a more equitable education "across zip code" for Latino/a students. To the American Federation of Teachers (one of the two major teachers unions in the United States), the new standards and assessments were framed as a way to support critical thinking and decrease widespread "teaching to the test" under *No Child Left Behind* (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013b).

Scholars studying the CCSS policy adoption process have noted the remarkable speed with which the majority of states adopted the CCSS—adoption occurred over a few months versus the three years or more it normally takes for states to consider and adopt new standards (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013a, 2013b). These scholars credit the unprecedented speed of adoption primarily to the financial incentive called *Race to the Top*, which the U.S. Department of Education provided to states in the wake of 2008's financial crisis (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013a; 2013b). When many states and districts were facing teacher layoffs due to severe budget cuts, the Obama administration offered a share of $4.35 billion dollars to states through the *Race to the Top* competition. States were awarded points in the grant process for adopting a specific set of reforms, such as teacher evaluations that included evidence of student growth and a set of "college and career ready standards" (i.e., the CCSS). Of the 45 states and the District of Columbia that initially adopted the CCSS, 32 (or 72% of adopting states) adopted the CCSS between June 2010 and August 2010; the deadline to adopt the CCSS for *Race to the Top* funds was August 2, 2010 (Achieve, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Growing resistance to the Common Core State Standards

As the CCSS have moved from an abstraction to a reality, a large number of parents, teachers, scholars and policy-makers across the aisle have criticised the CCSS for multiple reasons, taking issue with aspects of the development and adoption process, the standards themselves, and/or their implementation. One prominent critique, generally from Tea Party groups and conservative grassroots groups of parents (e.g., Hoosiers Against the Common Core, a parent group in the state of Indiana), focuses on local control. This group perceives the Obama administration's support of the CCSS in *Race to the Top* as an unconstitutional federal intrusion into state and local control over education. Other conservative critiques focus on the content of the standards—some say the math standards endorse "fuzzy math", while others say the literacy standards' focus on nonfiction deemphasises classic American literature.

Another grassroots movement of liberal teachers, parents and activists has grown vocal in opposition to the CCSS. This second group, with Diane Ravitch as a prominent member, has raised concerns over the textbook companies and others who stand to gain financially from the CCSS effort (Ravitch, 2013), the role of the Gates Foundation in the standards' creation (Schneider, 2013), and the way in which the standards have been implemented in the midst of changing assessment and teacher evaluation policies (Burris, 2013). While some prominent figures from this second group (e.g., Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers) supported the CCSS in theory, its implementation—especially coupled with new teacher evaluation systems—has been the source of a great deal of concern.

A problematic aspect of the CCSS for many is the involvement of private foundations in developing and promoting the CCSS. Political scientists have noted the growing power of foundations in setting the trajectory of national educational policy, and influencing large urban districts in particular (Reckhow, 2013). Interviews with those involved with the CCSS at the national level widely credit the Gates Foundation with providing funds and overarching coordination to the CCSS policy effort (though other foundations, such as GE and Hewlett, have supported the CCSS as well) (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013a; 2013b). The Gates Foundation has provided more than 200 million dollars to support the CCSS, funding everything from curricular materials and professional development resources, to research into the CCSS, to public relations (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013b). The foundation's effort to control the messaging around the CCSS, providing funds to local Parent-Teacher Associations and national groups, has been met with particular acrimony (Ravitch, 2014; Schneider, 2013).

Both Republican and Democratic state governors and legislatures have responded to these critiques by signalling their reluctance to continue their involvement with the CCSS. Indiana governor Mike Pence was the first to sign a bill repealing the CCSS (Moxley, 2014). Georgia, Florida, Kansas, Utah, Oklahoma, Alabama, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Alaska have all drawn back from the assessment consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education to create the next generation of CCSS assessments (Lu, 2014). The New York State Assembly has responded to widespread liberal critiques of CCSS implementation by recommending a moratorium on the use of CCSS assessment data for high-stakes decisions about teachers and students for two years (Ujifusa, 2014).

Despite the growing resistance to the CCSS and the pauses in implementation in several states, the standards *are* still being implemented in 43 states across the nation. An open question in CCSS implementation is how the standards will be translated into classroom practice. The language of the standards document itself seems to indicate that the standards outline a set of instructional goals *only*; the standards do not articulate what pedagogical approaches will best meet such those goals. As the introduction to the CCSS explains, "the Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do*, not* how teachers should teach" (National Governors Association for Best Practices [NGA] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSO], 2010, p. 6, italics added). However, many groups—textbook publishers, non-profits, and literacy experts, among others—have rushed to create professional development resources and curriculum materials to influence "how teachers should teach" to meet the standards. As such, it is critical to examine the messages put forth in these resources designed to help teachers understand what Common Core instruction looks like. Our intention is to identify the resources' messages about Common Core instruction, and compare the recommendations for English/language arts instruction that these resources put forth. These resources sometimes offer different recommendations for instruction and align (or do not align) to different research emphases and outcomes within the fields of English/Language Arts and literacy. Understanding the instructional recommendations and their connections to research allows teachers to view such resources as suggestions rather than prescriptive "must-dos".

METHOD

Research questions

Because the purpose of this article is to describe how a selection of CCSS resources represent "Common Core instruction," and to analyse how the positions taken in the resources stand in relation to the field of English/Language Arts instruction, our investigation was guided by the following research questions:

- How do a set of professional development materials representing a range of perspectives advise teachers to enact "Common Core instruction"?
- How, if at all, do the professional development materials represent different stances on the nature of English/Language Arts instruction? What vision(s) of English/Language Arts instruction do these resources present?

Text Selection

We examined professional development resources related to the CCSS from a range of sources: some written by scholars in the fields of literacy and English education, and others written by the authors of the CCSS or individuals closely associated with the CCSS authors. Our selection of professional texts written by literacy experts (described in Table 1) was guided by several criteria.

First, we looked at objective criteria—specifically, Amazon rankings—to get a sense of what professional texts were popular and highly rated. While we recognise that sales are not necessarily commensurate with quality, we felt that these ratings helped

Title	Author(s)	Year of Publica-tion	Grade level focus	Emphasis	Amazon Ranking (as of 1//27/14)
Common Core State Standards for English/ Language Arts	David Coleman and Susan Pimentel, Lead Authors	2010	K-12	Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening	N/A
Revised publishers' criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and literacy, grades 3-12	David Coleman and Susan Pimentel	2012	3-12	Reading and Writing	N/A
"Bringing the Common Core to Life" speech	David Coleman	2011	K-12	Reading	N/A
Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading *Teaching Students to Read Like Detectives: Comprehending, Analysing, and Discussing Text*	Douglas Fisher, Diane Lapp, and Nancy Frey	2011 and 2012	6-12	Reading	#17,833 #16,240
Pathways to the Common Core	Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman	2012	K-8	Reading and Writing	#1,857
Exceeding the Common Core State Standards Series: *Oh, Yeah?! Putting Argument to Work Both in School and Out* *Get it Done! Writing and Analysing Informational Texts to Make Things Happen* *So, What's the Story? Teaching Narrative to Understand Ourselves, Others, and the World*	Michael Smith, Jeffrey Wilhelm, and James Fredricksen	2012	6-12	Writing	#123,048 #266,133 #587,751

Table 1. Description of resources analysed in relation to messages about "Common Core instruction"

to highlight texts that were widely used, thus having greater potential to impact teachers' practice. With these ratings in mind, we selected three professional texts (or sets of professional texts, as some are multi-volume series) that focus on different aspects of the CCSS (e.g., Calkins, Ehrenworth and Lehman's *Pathways to the Common Core* discusses both reading and writing for K-8 students; Fisher, Frey and Lapp's *Text Complexity* focuses on reading for secondary students; Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen's three-book series *Exceeding the Common Core State Standards* focuses on secondary writing instruction). In order to address the full range of professional recommendations for K-12 classrooms, we used professional resources focused on both elementary and secondary levels. In addition to being the most popular book-length text about the CCSS, Calkins, Ehrenworth & Lehman's text addresses critical aspects of the CCSS at the elementary level such as the role of leveled texts in learning to read; these issues are also taken up in the Publisher's Criteria. All of these professional resources try to explain to teachers *how* to implement the CCSS; they are not scripted lessons plans or unit plans. Some include a sample unit or discussion of model lessons, but all focus on explaining what the CCSS mean for instruction in a general way.

Finally, our three sets of authors represent a range of viewpoints and epistemological traditions within the field of English education. Lucy Calkins' workshop approach to K-8 literacy instruction comes from the tradition that Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) term "Piagetian approaches based on the assumption of natural development" (p. 54). This group, including Donald Graves, Donald Murray, James Moffett, Peter Elbow and Nancie Atwell, believes that classrooms should be structured to encourage students' natural development, with teachers as facilitators of student-centred classrooms, where students frequently write about their personal experiences (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995). Michael Smith and Jeffrey Wilhelm, two of the lead authors of the *Exceeding the Common Core* writing series, studied with George Hillocks at the University of Chicago. Hillocks challenged the Piagetian natural development view that Donald Graves and others exemplify. Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) term this group, "Approaches involving the concept of instructional scaffolding", (p. 72); this group emphasises teacher guidance as an important part of student development and—while still encouraging peer interaction—a more structured classroom environment. Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and Diane Lapp, authors of *Text Complexity* and *Reading Like a Detective*, focus on literacy in middle and high school. Like Smith and Wilhelm, they also emphasise the importance of scaffolding, but focus on scaffolding *reading* rather than *writing*.

We also examined two resources interpreting "Common Core instruction" written by CCSS authors: the Revised Publisher's Criteria (2012), written by David Coleman and Susan Pimentel to guide textbook publishers in aligning their materials with the CCSS, and the speech David Coleman gave in 2011 to a group of school administrators in New York state. We felt that these two documents—both of which were widely distributed and widely critiqued—were critical in understanding the views on "Common Core instruction" held by the authors of the CCSS. Further, these two documents are critical in establishing the way that the CCSS authors can appear to contradict the standards' claims of leaving decisions about instruction to teachers.

Analysis

Because our purpose was to understand how messages about "Common Core instruction" are portrayed in professional development materials, we organised our analysis and findings around the dominant policy messages at the national level about "Common Core instruction" in English/Language Arts. These dominant policy messages are encapsulated in a set of three "instructional shifts" put out by Student Achievement Partners, a group founded by ELA CCSS lead authors David Coleman, Susan Pimentel, and math lead author Jason Zimba. The instructional shifts have been used in professional development materials disseminated by the non-profit Achieve, the PARCC testing consortium, Student Achievement Partners, and the shifts are prominently featured on the websites of many districts and state departments of education.

The three instructional shifts for ELA are: (1) Regular practice with complex text and its academic language; (2) Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text both literary and informational; (3) Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts (Student Achievement Partners, 2013). Those associated with the CCSS effort see each "shift" as representing a necessary corrective to what they understand to be current instructional practice. For example, some evidence presented in the CCSS's Appendix A suggests that the complexity of instructional materials declined throughout the 20th Century; therefore, CCSS proponents say that classroom instruction should ask students to interact with complex text.

Each shift can be seen as pressing on long-standing traditions and research in English education and literacy. The first shift, "Regular practice with complex text and its academic language" has raised issues about the appropriate role of "leveled text" in the elementary classroom in particular. The second shift, "Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational" has raised a debate about the best way to support reading comprehension, especially the use of pre-reading strategies and the "close reading" instructional strategy. The final area of debate comes from the third shift, "Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts", has raised questions about the appropriate place of narrative reading and writing in the ELA classroom (for a summary of each debate, see Pearson, 2013 (text complexity); Gewertz, 2012 (close reading); Layton, 2012 (narrative)). Using the three shifts as the guide for our analysis, we first read each of the professional development texts closely, marking any passages where the authors took explicit positions on CCSS instruction. We then re-read each text with an eye to locating its position(s) on the highly publicised "instructional shifts". We gradually collapsed these passages into the positions noted in Table 2, where we summarise each source's stance on the three shifts.

In our analysis, we were not looking for fidelity to the shifts in the materials we analysed. Instead, we aimed to understand how professional resources spoke to—or perhaps spoke *back* to—the shifts. We recognise that using the shifts as an organising tool for analysing messages about "Common Core instruction" is imperfect. This structure provides those closer to the CCSS authors—who wrote the shifts—with the opportunity to frame the conversation. However, given that the shifts represent key points of debate about how to interpret the standards, and the wide use of the shifts to

frame the policy message about the CCSS, we felt they were an appropriate way to structure our analysis. In the findings section below, we include representative quotations and a general description of each source's stance on each shift. Importantly, not all sources took positions on each shift. For example, the Smith, Wilhelm, and Fredricksen series on writing instruction did not take a stance on text complexity or close reading.

	Text Complexity	**Close Reading**	**Narrative Reading and Writing**
Common Core State Standards (2010)	Students should read texts that are either on grade level or within the grade band. Text complexity is defined as a combination of qualitative measures, quantitative measures, and reader/task considerations.	The phrase "read closely" is used multiple times, but standards do not mention "close reading." Standards do not take a position on pre-reading strategies or the degree to which prior knowledge factors into reading comprehension.	Students should read 50% informational texts K-5; 70% informational texts by 12th grade across the content areas; more literary nonfiction in ELA grades 6-12; Narratives should represent 35% of student writing in younger grades; decreasing to 20% of writing in 12th grade across the content areas.
David Coleman and Susan Pimentel **"Revised Publisher's Criteria" (2012)**	In-class reading should be complex text on grade level; leveled text should play a limited role.	Teachers should ask students to "stay within the four corners of the text"; 80-90% of teacher questions should be text-dependent. Teachers should not introduce themes, questions, or summaries before reading.	Students should read 50% informational texts K-5; 70% informational texts by 12th grade across the content areas. Increased emphasis on nonfiction and argument writing to correct overemphasis on narrative reading and writing.
David Coleman **"Bringing the Common Core to Life" (2011)**	In-class reading should be complex text on grade level; leveled text should play a limited role.	Teachers should use the close reading strategy; teachers should not (1) frontload with background information or a summary (2) ask students to predict or compare, or (3) set a purpose for reading.	College and workplace demand greater proficiency in argument and informational writing.
Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Diane Lapp ***Teaching Students to Read Like Detectives* (2011); *Text Complexity (2012)***	On-grade level text appropriate with teacher support; leveled text for independent reading.	Close reading and reader-response can co-exist. When close reading, teacher should not frontload a summary or vocabulary.	Narrative reading can provide an opportunity for students to perform critical reading and have text-based discussion. Literature provides room for interpretation and beyond-surface level reading.

Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman, ***Pathways to the Common Core*** **(2012)**	Leveled text for independent reading with frequent assessment of reading level to ensure texts remain "just right"; more complex texts with instructional scaffolding.	Asking text-dependent questions is an important part of reading; Sees CCSS as consistent with New Criticism but does not critique that position.	Plenty of room for narrative reading and writing in ELA because genre percentages are spread across the content areas; encourages YA books and student choice with lots of time devoted to independent reading; CCSS are consistent with writing process and writing workshop; narrative writing standards more demanding.
Jeffrey Wilhelm, Michael Smith, and James Fredricksen ***Exceeding the Common Core Series (2012)***	No specific stance (texts are writing focused)	No specific stance (texts are writing focused)	Plenty of room for narrative reading in ELA because text percentages are spread across the content areas; Narrative writing just as important as argumentative/informative and perhaps more so.

Table 2. Summary of the stances the Common Core State Standards and Common Core professional development materials take on contentious aspects of the "instructional shifts"

FINDINGS: STANCES ON "COMMON CORE" INSTRUCTION

In the sections that follow, we discuss the resources' positions on each of the debated "instructional shifts," devoting one section each to text complexity, close reading and pre-reading, and the role of narrative reading and writing. We begin by reviewing any relevant language in the CCSS themselves given that the standards claim not to take a stand on instruction and do not generally provide clear instructional recommendations. Then, we discuss how the professional development resources address the shift, first discussing how those close to the CCSS effort address this shift, and then addressing how literacy experts address the shift. Finally, we attend to the area(s) of controversy surrounding each shift, examining how these visions of instruction are positioned within research in English/Language Arts and literacy. A summary of each source's general position on each shift can be found in Table 2.

Controversy over text complexity

The first instructional shift in the CCSS is "regular practice with complex text and its academic language" (Student Achievement Partners, 2013). The controversy with this shift focuses both on whether students should read grade level texts or texts at their assessed reading level, and on how to define a complex text. In this section, we first describe text complexity as described in the CCSS, and then describe the stances that David Coleman; Lucy Calkins and her colleagues; and Douglas Fisher et al. take on

the complexity of the text that students should read. We do *not* include Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen's three-book series on writing instruction in this section, because the authors take no position on text complexity in those books. After describing the range of positions these resources take on text complexity, we analyse where these sources stand in relation to established research on literacy and English/Language Arts.

Text complexity in the Common Core State Standards

The standards use a three-part definition of text complexity, combining quantitative measures (e.g., Lexile levels), qualitative measures (e.g., considering multiple levels of meaning in a text), and "reader/task considerations". "Reader and task considerations" ask teachers to consider the characteristics of their students and the task students will perform in order to use professional judgment about the complexity of a text. The standards also say that students should encounter texts within the appropriate grade level or grade band so that there is a "staircase of text complexity" (NGA & CCSO, 2010, p. 8) leading to the expectations of college and career. The idea of a "grade band" (e.g., students in 5th grade should encounter texts in the 4th–5th grade level) provides some flexibility in the texts that can be considered complex for a given grade level. Still, this raises the question: when students are reading below grade level, should teachers use "leveled text" that students can read with fluency (as elementary school teachers often do), or should teachers exclusively use complex texts on grade-level, even if the level of those texts is well above what students can read independently? Such questions, and others about grade-level learning progressions (e.g., Beach, Thein & Webb, 2012, p. 76–77) have caused controversy around this first shift.

David Coleman's stance on text complexity

The Publisher's Criteria and David Coleman's speech point to a limited role for leveled texts in providing remediation, but overall, both sources recommend using almost all complex texts during class time. Responding to a question from the audience about the use of "leveled text" in the classroom, David Coleman replied:

> One of the greatest threats to a wide range of students being able to read sufficiently complex text with confidence is we keep them out of the game. Far too early and far too often we reduce text complexity for these students rather than giving them the scaffolding they need to embrace and practice that complexity…I am saying in a clear voice, the core of instruction, core classroom time becomes the shared encounter of sufficiently difficult text. The proper role for leveled material can be an intensive support for students …but remember that time might also be used for them to have more time with that sufficiently complex work. (Coleman, 2011, p. 13–14)

Here, Coleman emphasises the importance of complex texts—and diminishes the importance of leveled texts—by appealing to concerns about equity. If students are denied the opportunity to encounter complex texts because teachers ask students to read texts "on their level" instead of providing instructional scaffolding to understand complex texts, he argues that teachers contribute to a vicious cycle whereby the students who are most behind receive the most impoverished curriculum materials. This "opportunity to learn" argument is quite powerful, and indeed, some interest groups (e.g., the National Council of La Raza) support the CCSS precisely because they believe it will expose a broader spectrum of students to the content necessary for college (Kornhaber, Griffith & Tyler, 2013).

Fisher, Frey and Lapp's stance on text complexity

Other CCSS professional development materials interpret text complexity in a more flexible way. Fisher et al. (2012) see text complexity as dependent on reader and task considerations. To these authors, the appropriate level of text complexity depends on the degree of support provided when students encounter a text. If a text is read independently, it should match students' assessed reading level. If students read and discuss a text in a small group, the text can be more complex than their individual reading levels since students will discuss and make meaning of the text in conversation with their peers. Finally, if a text is read in a whole class setting with significant teacher modelling and support, the text can be quite complex without undermining students' comprehension. Fisher et al. (2012) explain, "The text difficulty is not the real issue. Instruction is. Teachers can scaffold and support students, which will determine the amount of their learning and literacy independence" (p. 7). Fisher, Frey and Lapp also pay attention to the "task considerations" component of text complexity in the standards document. Task considerations may include the way a student is being asked to read (e.g., with a class, a partner, individually) and ways students will use the text. If students are being asked to complete a difficult, independent task, then Fisher et al. suggest it may be appropriate to begin with texts best suited to their current reading levels.

Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman's stance on text complexity

Unlike the sources more closely related to David Coleman, *and* unlike Fisher et al., Calkins et al. emphasise finding texts that students can read fluently, even if those texts are not necessarily at students' grade level. Calkins et al. say that the guideline for appropriate texts (both fiction and nonfiction) for a particular student are texts that the student can read out loud with 96% (word) accuracy, comprehension, and enough fluency that it sounds like speech (p. 95). The way to move students up the ladder of text complexity in *Pathways to the Common Core* (in particular, for those who are reading below grade level) is "to help readers accomplish vast amounts of minds-on, engaged reading of just-right expository texts". Frequent reassessments ensure that the "just-right" continues to be optimal. Like Fisher et al., Calkins et al. give suggestions for scaffolding student comprehension of texts that are at the edge of independent comprehension (p. 96-97), but do not recommend that students encounter much, if any, text well above their assessed reading level.

Calkins and her colleagues engage directly with Coleman and Pimentel around text complexity. For example, Calkins et al. note:

> It is clear from the guidelines to publishers and the model frameworks that these individuals [Coleman and Pimentel] believe the best way to help students move up the ladder of text complexity is for teachers to select a small number of "Common Core complex texts" and for the entire class of students to read in unison, with teachers generating text-dependent questions for students to answer through conversation and required writing exercises. (p. 49)

However, Calkins et al. point out that a research base to support this plan is noticeably absent, and highlights that these suggestions come from the publisher's guide—they are not actually a part of the ratified standards. Their concern for a lack of research is also highlighted in their response to ways educators determine text leveling:

> If someone has told you that the Common Core requires that you level books by this or that system, *the truth is* that the standards recognise the limitations of all existing level systems and call for additional research in this area. Meanwhile, they do stress that teachers need to do everything possible to move students toward increasingly complex texts. (p. 34-35, italics added)

Here, Calkins et al. represent themselves as authoritative sources of "the truth" about the CCSS. Further, they engage directly with a limitation of the standards, specifically with the quantitative ways of determining complexity, reminding teachers that all leveling systems have their own drawbacks.

Positioning the resources in relation to English/language arts and literacy research

As literacy researcher P. David Pearson (2013) notes, the requirement that students read complex, on-grade-level texts can be interpreted as a challenge to more than 70 years of reading research concluding that the best way to improve students' reading ability is to match each student with a text that is either at, or just above, her current reading level (e.g., Betts, 1946). As Pearson puts it, the CCSS's goal of having students read complex text stands in contrast to the field's idea of appropriate reading material, where

> The goal has always been to maximize the amount of time that students spend reading in that "goldilocks" zone, where books are neither too easy or too hard, but "just right"—so that they help students achieve growth by always reaching just beyond their grasp. (Pearson, 2013, p. 249)

Pathways to the Common Core reflects this long-standing view, when Calkins and her colleagues write passionately about the best way to move students up the ladder of text complexity: reading "vast amounts of…just-right…texts" (p. 96). Fisher, Frey, and Lapp take a middle ground, when they advocate for reading both leveled texts and on-grade-level texts. However, Fisher et al. describe the kinds of instructional scaffolding necessary to create access points to complex texts for students with a wide range of reading levels. Research into instructional scaffolding that allows students reading below grade level to access texts that the existing paradigm would consider at students' frustration level is understudied, and "the big unknown" (Pearson, 2013, p. 7) is whether or not the CCSS authors' focus on text complexity is even a viable task for teachers. Of course, the challenge of how best to move students up the ladder of text complexity is in addition to the technical challenge of measuring how and why certain texts are complex. Calkins, especially, represents these unsettled challenges in the field, when she speaks authoritatively to teachers about the limited research into determining text complexity (p. 34-35).

There is also scholarly debate over whether or not the text complexity of instructional materials has actually declined over the 20th century—a key part of the rationale presented for the CCSS's emphasis on text complexity. Appendix A of the CCSS, subtitled "Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards," lays out the chain of assumptions undergirding the primary components of the CCSS. For example, Appendix A cites research that supports a decline in the complexity of instructional materials in K-12 schooling (Chall, Conard & Harris, 1977; Hayes, Wolfer & Wolfe, 1996, as cited in NGA & CCSO, 2010). Appendix A also cites research that points to either stable or increasing complexity of college textbooks, scientific journals and magazines, and reading required in the workplace (Hayes and Ward, 1992; Hayes,

Wolfer & Wolfe, 1996; Stenner, Koons & Swartz, in press, as cited in NGA & CCSO, 2010). Given the problem presented in these two lines of research (the demands of college and career texts have increased while the demands of K-12 instructional texts have decreased), the solution proposed as a corrective to this "alarming picture" (Appendix A, p. 2) is increased text complexity of instructional materials. This chain of assumptions provides a logic to David Coleman's instructional recommendations around text complexity. However, this logic is only partially supported by research. Though Pearson (2013) saw some support in existing research for a decline in text complexity in instructional materials, a recently published study on a larger sample of textbooks from across the 20th century calls this narrative of decline into question (Gamson, Lu & Eckert, 2013).

Controversy over close reading

The second point of debate in what the CCSS mean for instruction centres on how to interpret the proposed shift to "reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational" (Student Achievement Partners, 2013). In this section, we first point out that the CCSS remain agnostic on how exactly students should interact with complex text. Then, we describe how David Coleman; Lucy Calkins and her colleagues; and Douglas Fisher et al. take on the complexity of the texts that students should read. Again, we do *not* include Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen's three-book series on writing instruction in this section, because the authors take no explicit position on how students should interact with what they read. After describing the range of positions these resources take on close reading, we analyse where these sources stand in relation to established research on literacy and English/Language Arts.

Close reading in the Common Core State Standards

Other than text complexity, the most hotly debated aspect of putting the standards into practice has been the way that the standards ask students to approach reading and interacting with text. Namely, the standards do *not* ask students to interact with text in any specific way, as the standards are clear about not specifying instructional strategies. However, the phrase "read closely" is used in Anchor Standard 1 to describe how students should read texts when seeking to make an argument that draws on textual evidence. Anchor Standard 1 asks students to "Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text". The controversy in this shift centres around the phrase "read closely" and the extent to which such a phrase connotes a New Critical or formalist stance. A New Critical stance privileges text-based responses, potentially ignoring the ways that readers' backgrounds, abilities and prior knowledge support their understanding of a text. In addition, a New Critical stance is associated with "close reading", a mode of reading in which texts are supposed to be interpreted independent of their historical contexts, connections to the reader, or embedded power relationships.

David Coleman's stance on close reading

The Publisher's Criteria (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012) uses the verb phrase "read closely" and the noun "close reading" interchangeably. The Publisher's Criteria exhorts those developing instructional materials to write text-dependent questions, where students must "stay within the four corners of the text" (Coleman & Pimentel,

2012, p. 4) in their responses. David Coleman claimed to model what such a close reading looks like in his speech to New York administrators, when he said that he would "give a picture of literacy instruction" by modeling how teachers might lead their students through the rhetorical moves Martin Luther King makes in "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" to create an argument (see Johnson, 2014, in this issue, for a critique of this speech).

In both the Publisher's Criteria and his speech in New York, Coleman also took a position on how teachers should introduce texts to students. When modelling close reading as an instructional strategy in New York, Coleman told teachers not to approach texts through the three approaches he considers most commonly used. Coleman specifically instructed teachers *not* to: a) set a purpose for reading; b) engage in pre-reading strategies like predicting or providing background information; or c) ask students to identify the text structure as they read (i.e., cause and effect; problem and solution) (Coleman, 2011). The ban on these instructional strategies is echoed in the Publisher's Criteria (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 8). Instead, Coleman asked teachers in his presentation "...to just read. To think of dispensing for a moment with all the apparatus we have built up before reading and plunging into the text. And let it be our guide into its own challenges" (Coleman, 2011, p. 17). Rather than trying to predict where students will struggle and scaffold their understanding ahead of time by providing a summary or vocabulary, Coleman advocated diving into a text and letting student questions about a text drive instruction.

Fisher, Frey and Lapp's stance on close reading

Fisher et al. believe that close reading can co-exist with a transactional, reader-response approach (Rosenblatt, 1938). Like David Coleman, Fisher et al. (2012) advise that when specifically practising "close reading", teachers should not frontload a summary or vocabulary. However, despite the "read like a detective" title of one of the books we analysed (Fisher et al., 2011) (likely a deliberate reference to David Coleman's frequent encapsulation of the ELA standards as "read like a detective and write like an investigative reporter"), Fisher et al. do not see close reading as the only way that students should interact with texts. The standards, they say, *do* call for using textual evidence, and Fisher et al. point out that "this may be a new expectation for students who are accustomed to making personal connections with the text and to not being required to support their conclusions or justify their opinions" (2012, p. 95). They also contradict Coleman's suggestion to avoid pre-reading strategies by noting that using themes and essential questions to guide reading can increase students' motivation to read, so long as they are not specific enough to lead students to particular interpretations (2012, p. 92).

Calkins, Ehrenwort, and Lehman's stance on close reading

Calkins et al. take a middle ground on close reading. They write specifically about the phrase "read within the four corners of the text" in the Publisher's Criteria, interpreting it as advising teachers not to focus only on personal connections at the cost of defending a claim with textual evidence (p. 39). Calkins et al. describe the standards themselves as pushing aside a reader-response approach and valuing New Criticism (p. 25–26), but the authors do not seem to disagree with this approach. Calkins at al. concur that "something is amiss when readers merely glance at a text and then talk off from it, leaving the specifics of the text behind" (p. 39). However, the authors also note that some strategies—including pre-reading strategies like giving

a "book introduction"—can be helpful for scaffolding reader's work when the text is difficult (p. 46).

Positioning the resources in relation to English/language arts and literacy research

When David Coleman and Susan Pimentel conflated the action of "read closely" (used in the standards) with the instructional strategy of "close reading" in the Publisher's Criteria, many English educators interpreted this message as conflating the importance of drawing on textual evidence with a school of literary criticism called "New Criticism", which is generally considered outmoded in English education (see Gewertz, 2012 for a summary of the controversy). New Critics advocate interpreting texts as *objets d'art,* independent from their historical contexts, with particular focus on how literary and rhetorical devices are used to develop the speaker's argument or contribute to a theme. The literary theory of New Criticism is often juxtaposed with Louise Rosenblatt's reader-response theory (1938), which holds that meaning is made in transaction between the reader and the text. Scholars have pointed out (as did Rosenblatt herself in her later writings) that Rosenblatt has often been misinterpreted as advocating for an exclusive focus on the reader or reader's personal response (Lewis, 2000; Galda & Beach, 2001). Lewis writes that "Rosenblatt views the text as central to the literary experience and finds the focus on the personal advocated by other reader-response critics...too remote from the text itself" (2000, p. 255).

Fisher et al. see the CCSS and close reading as consistent with Rosenblatt. In *Text Complexity* (2012), Fisher et al. *do* support "close reading", at least as one mode of reading to be used in combination with independent reading. In fact, Fisher et al. title a chapter of *Text Complexity,* "A close reading of complex texts". However, Fisher et al. interpret the CCSS as supporting critical literacy, asking students to consider the "sociopolitical and historical context" (2012, p. 107) and to realise that texts are not neutral. Fisher et al. see this as "the balance that we think Rosenblatt was looking for" (2012, p. 108). In *Pathways to the Common Core*, Calkins does not use the phrase "close reading", but indicates that she partially agrees with David Coleman—teachers do not serve students well if they *only* ask students to make personal connections or other text-free responses (p. 39).

Though the sources we analyse have a basic agreement about the importance of supporting a claim with textual evidence, David Coleman's instructions to forgo pre-reading strategies, such as activating prior knowledge as part of "close reading", push against established research in literacy and larger paradigms within education. For example, cognitive theories of reading comprehension developed in the 1980s emphasise teaching students the reading skills that "good readers" do automatically, such as predicting and questioning—strategies that Coleman disparaged (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Reflecting this tradition of cognitive approaches to reading instruction, Calkins et al. defend pre-reading strategies as a necessary scaffold for difficult texts (p. 46). Fisher, Frey and Lapp (2012) walk a fine line between supporting David Coleman's admonition against pre-reading, while still encouraging teachers to use thematic units organised around essential questions (so long as the essential questions do not overly narrow how students interpret a text) (p. 92).

Finally, a claim that is sometimes made in the professional development materials associated with David Coleman and Student Achievement Partners is that answering

text-dependent questions (as opposed to questions that call only on background knowledge) "levels the playing field". David Coleman made a variation of this argument in his statement on text complexity discussed in the previous section, when he said that we "keep [students] out of the game" when we deny them the opportunity to be exposed to complex texts (2011, p. 13-14). Similarly, "close reading" serves as an instructional strategy *and* an equity strategy according to David Coleman and others. Because close reading supposedly asks students to "stay within the four corners of the text" to answer the teacher's questions, this group claims that variations in prior knowledge are no longer relevant to students' ability to answer questions about the text. Therefore, students who are learning English or have not been exposed to a strong base of background knowledge at home have the same level of access to and opportunity with these texts. However, a large body of reading research supports the inseparability of prior knowledge from comprehension (RAND, 2002; Kintsch, 1988). It is impossible for a reader to divorce the knowledge that he or she brings to a text from a reading of that text, as prior experience plays a crucial role in reading comprehension. Thus, the claim that asking students only text-dependent questions "levels the playing field" is an "attractive illusion, but an illusion nonetheless" (Snow & O'Connor, 2013, p. 5).

The role of narrative reading and writing

In this section, we first describe the language related to narrative, informational and argumentative reading and writing in the CCSS. Then, we describe the stances that David Coleman; Lucy Calkins and her colleagues; Fisher, Frey and Lapp; and Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen's three-book series on writing instruction take on narrative reading and writing. After describing the range of positions these resources take on narratives, we analyse where these sources stand in relation to established research on literacy and English/Language Arts.

Narrative reading and writing in the Common Core State Standards

The final CCSS instructional shift is "Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts" (Student Achievement Partners, 2013). The controversy in this shift centres on the proportion of nonfiction reading and informational/argumentative writing students should encounter. The CCSS specify rough percentages of the breakdown between informational and narrative text that students should encounter over their schooling (50% informational texts in grade 4; 55% informational texts in grade 8; 70% informational texts by 12th grade) (NGA & CCSSO, 2010, p. 5). The standards are quite explicit that these percentages are across all content areas, and that literacy is an interdisciplinary, shared responsibility for all teachers within a school. The standards also call for "literary nonfiction" to be "paid much greater attention...than has been traditional" (p. 5) in the ELA classroom. The standards not only specify percentages of text genres that students should read, but also provide a guideline for the percentage of student writing completed for different purposes (to inform, to persuade, to convey experience) (p. 5). While narrative should represent 35% of student writing in younger grades, narrative-writing tasks should decrease to 20% of writing in 12th grade, in favour of increased attention to argumentative writing. Further, the CCSS's Appendix A (2010) argues that argumentative writing holds a "special place" in the standards (p. 24). The standards are clear that the quantitative recommendations for writing are also calculated across the content areas (NGA & CCSSO, 2010, p. 5).

David Coleman's stance on narrative reading and writing

In David Coleman's speech in New York, he emphasised that the nonfiction requirement in grades 6–12 is spread across the content areas, implying—but not directly stating—that this change should encourage content area teachers to increase nonfiction reading, not that ELA teachers should reduce the amount of fiction reading in English classes. However, Coleman's stance on narrative *writing* minimizes the importance of narrative writing for college and career readiness. In David Coleman's now somewhat infamous speech to New York educators, he relies on anecdotes to illustrate the need for greater facility with argumentative and informational writing and the decreased a role of narrative writing:

> The only problem, forgive me for saying this so bluntly, the only problem with those two forms of writing [opinion and personal narrative] is as you grow up in this world you realise people really don't give a sh** about what you feel or what you think. What they instead care about is can you make an argument with evidence, is there something verifiable behind what you're saying or what you think or feel that you can demonstrate to me. It is rare in a working environment that someone says, 'Johnson, I need a market analysis by Friday but before that I need a compelling account of your childhood.' (Coleman, 2011, p. 10)

Coleman also mentions a college professor who complained that students come to college only knowing how to read and write stories, reiterating that writing stories is not the primary requirement for college or the workplace (Coleman, 2011, p. 41).

Fisher, Frey and Lapp's stance on narrative reading and writing

Fisher et al. (2012) dedicate one chapter of *Teaching Students to Read like Detectives* to narrative reading, speaking primarily about the role of literature in schools. In this chapter, they focus on narrative's transformative abilities. Building on Cullinan's (1989) argument that literature may provide both a window and mirror into the world, Fisher et al. argue that literature also acts as a door through which a reader walks, often "at developmentally significant times in the reader's life" (2012, p. 52). They connect this view of literature to the standards, arguing that literature provides an opportunity for students to read texts "across genres, cultures, and centuries" (NGA & CCSSO, 2010, p. 35, as cited in Fisher et al., 2012, p. 51). Fisher et al. provide various strategies for studying narratives in classrooms, emphasising both elements of literature (e.g., features of characters, plot, and/or literary devices) and strategies teachers can use to lead text-based discussions of narrative texts. They also argue for reading with a "critical stance", pointing out the interpretive work required when reading narratives, and noting that "the story you are told is probably not going to be the only story. The reader who looks beyond the literal meaning will find another layer of meaning" (Fisher et al., 2012, p. 64).

Calkins, Ehrenworth and Lehman's stance on narrative reading and writing

In terms of narrative reading, Calkins and her colleagues are not concerned about the quantitative recommendations; they agree that the percentages are spread across the content areas and see this as an argument for the continued place of narrative reading in the English classroom. However, they push back slightly on the canonical nature of many of the exemplar texts noted in the CCSS appendices. Calkins et al. encourage teachers to allow student choice, include books in the young adult genre, and in

general, devote much time to independent reading to build a culture of reading (2012, p. 69-71).

Regarding the narrative writing expectations, Calkins et al. call the narrative standards "ambitious", especially for the younger grades, as the standards expect students to write "well-crafted, tightly structured stories" (p. 114-115). Calkins and her colleagues take the position that there is still ample space for narrative writing in English Language Arts, because percentages are spread across the content areas. This distribution, they argue, "suggests that the CCSS recommend that a large portion of the writing done during ELA be narrative writing" (p. 105). Calkins also sees the writing demands of the CCSS as consistent with the writing process and a writing workshop model. These authors argue that the writing standards allow for cohesion between writing types (e.g., narrative and argument), and could be useful for teaching parts of writing (e.g., beginnings and endings) across multiple writing types. Specifically, they suggest that narrative writing may be a good starting place for teachers to learn more about the other kinds of writing required in the CCSS, given teachers' familiarity with narrative writing

Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen's stance on narrative reading and writing

In their three-book series on writing, *Exceeding the Common Core,* James Fredricksen, Jeffrey Wilhelm and Michael Smith are more explicit about their views on the role of narrative, particularly in *What's the Story?*, the volume dedicated entirely to narrative writing (Fredricksen, Wilhelm & Smith, 2012). First, they are careful to acknowledge the importance of narrative within English and, more broadly, within students' lives. They argue that the study of narrative concepts is important work, and that narratives function as both an object of inquiry as well as a mode of inquiry; that is, narratives are a genre worthy of study and that studying these narrative concepts "might help [students] identify, critique, and ultimately change their world" (Fredricksen et al., 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, they argue that the CCSS anchor standard about narrative writing is limited, because it focuses only on how to craft a narrative, rather than thinking about how stories operate within students' communities and lives. Fredricksen et al., are asking a bigger question than how to "teach to the standards"; instead, they ask what can narratives do for us all in our lives? They present a vision that the CCSS can be used to support progressive practices that go beyond a narrow version of career preparation to support citizenship.

Like Calkins, Fredricksen, Wilhelm and Smith are not concerned by the percentages outlined by the standards, noting that there is still plenty of space for narrative reading in ELA because the text percentages are spread across the content areas (Fredricksen et al., 2012, p. 4). Fredricksen et al. take the position that not only is narrative equally important to the other types of writing (they devote an entire book of the three book series on writing in the CCSS to narrative writing), but that "exceeding the Common Core", as the series title suggests, means using the power of narrative for a higher purpose, to help students "become[e] active, critical, and ethical participants in their communities" (Fredricksen et al., 2012, p. 12).

Positioning the resources in relation to English/language arts and literacy research

Narrative reading, which Fisher et al. often conflate with reading literature, is almost indisputably a part of any English classroom, though approaches to teaching literature may vary depending on the traditions that influence a teacher (e.g., a more

conservative tradition emphasising Western civilization versus a more progressive approach that traces back to Dewey's influence) (Hillocks, McCabe & McCampbell, 1971, p. 138.). The quantitative guidance provided by the CCSS favours informational texts—arguing for a total of 70% informational texts by 12th grade. Although the CCSS authors are careful to note that this recommendation is for all content areas (including social studies, science, etc.), the claim may still be seen as diminishing the overall importance of literature. Calkins et al. and Fredricksen et al. do not contradict the quantitative recommendations provided in the standards, and they agree that reading and writing should be the responsibility of *all* teachers, not just English teachers. However, each of the three authorial teams stress the critical role of narrative in students' lives, as a means of creating a culture of life-long readers (Calkins et al., 2012), as a space for students to engage in text-based, interpretative work (Fisher et al., 2012), and as an important kind of writing that allows students to critically reflect upon their own lives and engage in the lives of others (Fredricksen et al., 2012).

These positions on the value of narrative, especially the value of narrative writing, align well with others in the field of learning and literacy. Hillocks (1995) argues that writing provides opportunities for students to make meaning of things they are learning and that writing is a process of inquiry and discovery. Atwell (1994) has described writing as a process by which students can make meaning from their own lives. While many different types of writing may allow students to engage in this kind of meaning-making, narrative writing has long been an important part of English classrooms—for both civic and intellectual purposes. Bruner (2002) posits story as a means of "helping us explore what is expected of us and how we might want to resist this expectation" and "an instrument not so much for solving problems as for finding them" (cited in Fredricksen et al., 2012, p. 17). Coleman, however, doesn't see narrative as an important means of solving problems, and argues that writing narratives is simply not important for careers or college. Fredricksen et al. directly acknowledge that narratives are important beyond school, arguing that they are "essential" for people across many careers. They offer many examples—from lawyers, auto mechanics, bioethicists, health professionals, and more—where narrative plays a role in helping people understand each other and collaboratively solve problems. They argue, "narrative understanding can help people make sense of what they expected, what went awry or broke that expectation, and what they might see as new possibilities" (Fredricksen et al., 2012, p. 20). While they do not directly take on Coleman's notion that a "compelling account of childhood" is not as important a type of writing as a market report, Fredricksen, Wilhelm and Smith make clear that narratives matter a great deal for life beyond school.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Why interpretations of Common Core instructional shifts matter

That there is a divergence in stances across each of the resources we examined is hardly surprising to those who have followed debates about the CCSS. However, as we looked at a range of professional resources, we found ourselves amazed—and disturbed—by the extent to which the resources developed by David Coleman and partners represented the dominant policy message about what the CCSS mean for

instruction. Not only are the instructional shifts elaborated in the Publisher's Criteria and David Coleman's speeches, but the shifts are the subject of short videos produced by the Hunt Institute (featuring David Coleman and Susan Pimentel) and nonprofit America Achieves (featuring David Liben of Student Achievement Partners). New York has produced its own video series on the instructional shifts, where they interview David Coleman about the meaning of the shifts. The shifts are also prominently featured on many state department of education websites, including Pennsylvania, Oregon, Delaware, Tennessee, Arkansas and Connecticut, among others. In fact, many other state departments of education reference the "EngageNY" CCSS materials created by New York state—which have close ties to David Coleman and Student Achievement Partners—as the source of the instructional shift materials on their sites. Our concern is that messages from this group will become the loudest voice about how to implement the CCSS—if they aren't already.

These professional development resources describe "Common Core instruction"—*how* teachers should teach—but not all resources carefully explain how they arrive at these recommendations, especially those put forth by the CCSS authors. The resources examined here clearly represent different epistemologies, ideologies and overall views about ELA instruction—but, these views are not clear until one examines the resources in the context of existing literacy research. To us, Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen make the clearest connections between their epistemologies and recommendations; each of their three texts includes a section where they explain the foundations of their practice and explicitly connect their work to that of George Hillocks (1986).

We believe that teachers should have the opportunity to understand where these different recommendations come from and how they align with existing English/Language Arts and literacy research. All of these resources, and the CCSS themselves, are ultimately written by people; as such, their recommendations are shaped by the authors' backgrounds, experiences and knowledge. Understanding how those experiences and beliefs are represented in the recommendations is important for teachers when deciding how, if at all, to implement these recommendations in their classrooms. We worry that when teachers are presented only with what to do without a rationale or connection to research, it becomes more difficult to understand the purposes behind pedagogical recommendations. This may lead to misinterpretation or misapplication of well-founded recommendations, or full-fledged implementation of less warranted practices.

Finally, we find the instructional shifts seem to imply a one-sided narrative about existing instructional practices and to project a singular vision about how these practices should be changed. The instructional shifts were put forth by those close to the CCSS effort and assume a particular vision about existing instructional practice. Namely, Common Core authors claim that existing instructional materials have low text complexity, are dominated by fiction, and that teachers overly scaffold students' experience with those texts. The instructional shifts aim to correct these practices. This vision of instruction claims to be research-based, as do the standards themselves, but we question whether these instructional shifts are well supported by the full research base. We find it concerning that the people closest to creating the policy are also the ones to identify what the policy means for instructional practice.

Implications for teachers as independent decision makers

All of these resources, both explicitly and implicitly, take a position on teachers' ability to make decisions about curriculum and instruction. The CCSS take an explicit stance on teacher autonomy with the statement, "The Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach" (NGA & CCSO, 2010, p. 6). Similarly, the standards later say that because they only enumerate goals, they

> ...leave room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how those goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed...Teachers are thus free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the Standards. (p. 4)

The professional development materials put forth by the CCSS authors do not honour this directive.

The Publisher's Criteria seem to echo the CCSS when they say, "These guidelines are not meant to dictate classroom practice but rather to help ensure that teachers receive effective tools" (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 1). However, one cannot help but feel that the message of teacher autonomy is undercut by the stated purpose of the Publisher's Criteria—influencing instructional materials and textbooks. Therefore, the Publisher's Criteria are intended to influence what texts *publishers* choose, what questions and instructional activities *publishers* will include related to those texts, and what assessments *publishers* will write around those texts. If publishers are the ones with the choice, and publishers choose what Coleman and Pimentel suggest, then teachers may very well have little autonomy over their instructional decisions in a time of increasing pressure to standardise curricula.

David Coleman's remarks to New York administrators similarly suggest that Coleman knows what "Common Core instruction" looks like and is modelling it for teachers. He describes his close reading of "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" as an effort to "...give a picture of literacy instruction" (Coleman, 2011). Similarly, when an audience member asked Coleman how teaching should be different under the CCSS, Coleman said that

> What [he is] trying to do is to show you what instruction begins to look like with the Core in mind...How does instruction on a day-to-day basis in a way a teacher looks at it, in the daily choices a teacher makes look different when confronted with the core?. (2011, p. 16)

In essence, Coleman is modeling his vision of Common Core instruction. Similarly, recall Coleman's response about the use of leveled text in the classroom: "I am saying in a clear voice, the core of instruction, core classroom time becomes the shared encounter of sufficiently difficult text" (Coleman, 2011 p. 13-14). While Coleman's point was about text complexity, he also made clear—in a clear voice—what his own vision is for classroom instruction. These quotes imply that, despite the claims in the CCSS that the standards do not intend to set forth "how teachers should teach", Coleman, one of the lead authors for the standards—with no background in literacy education or teaching—does, in fact, have a clear idea of how teachers should teach.

Unsurprisingly, the professional resources from literacy experts seem to focus on the language of the standards themselves as a defence of teachers' professional judgment. Fisher et al. interpret the standards' language about the importance of teachers' "professional judgment" as a move away from scripted curricula that deprofessionalise teachers. Fisher et al. describe how

> In the past, teachers were held captive to the script...and were required to read verbatim from a teacher's manual. Teachers felt like zombies going through the motions of teaching...but the standards change that and place the responsibility on the teacher. What is not negotiable is student achievement; what is negotiable is how teachers get their students to read worthy and complex texts. (Fisher et al, 2012, p. 10).

Fredricksen, Wilhelm and Smith are similarly hopeful about the potential of the CCSS, writing that the standards

> ...offer the greatest opportunity we have seen in our careers for professionalising teachers and for helping our students be more engaged and competent readers, writers, and problem solvers. Consistent with the last forty-plus years of research in cognitive science, the CCSS focuses on the procedures of learning...That means we get to choose what materials and curricular frameworks will best leverage developing the identified procedures for our particular students in our particular classrooms and communities. (2012, p. 3)

Calkins et al. echo these other English educators and the standards themselves when they write,

> The standards themselves are clear that the job of developing teaching plans is outside their province. The document that was ratified by forty-five states says repeatedly and in no uncertain terms that decisions about teaching are to be left in the hands of the professionals—of you, the teachers, and of other literacy experts. (2012, p. 47)

Although these resources suggest that professional decisions be left in the hands of teachers, some districts in New York state have taken a heavy-handed approach to CCSS implementation, asking teachers to implement CCSS units developed by outside vendors as a scripted curriculum (e.g., Cerrone, 2013). The units (on EngageNY.org) focus on what teachers should do, and provide limited explanation about why or how to it. Examples such as this undercut the message about teacher autonomy in the standards and, in our opinion, potentially deprofessionalise teachers' work. While some literacy experts—authors of materials discussed here and others (e.g., Beach, Thein & Webb, 2012; Pearson, 2013) have been hopeful about the opportunities that the CCSS could present, examples like this lead us to question the extent to which teachers will be able to make their own decisions about Common Core instruction.

CONCLUSION

As we have pursued this work, we have become increasingly aware of how individual voices contribute to public views of the CCSS and English/Language Arts instruction.

David Coleman is a clear example of one person whose voice is ringing out loudly. We are also aware that our voice will contribute to the CCSS discussion with this article. One concern we have had during our writing is that someone may use this article to support one "side" of the CCSS implementation. This, however, is not our intention. Our intention is to call attention to the kinds of policy messages that are being sent via a selection of CCSS professional development resources, and to urge those designing resources to connect their recommendations to a full range of existing literature, with clear explanations of how research informs the recommendations. Another concern is that someone may see this article as a personal attack on David Coleman. Despite Coleman's erstwhile title as "architect of ELA standards", we have tried to remember that neither the standards, nor the "instructional shifts" to which Coleman seems closely tied, are his work alone. Like others (e.g., Pearson, 2013), we do find it problematic that the most visible example for what CCSS means in action, however, for is someone without a deep knowledge of literacy instruction.

As this wave of standards-based reform continues, our investigation leaves us with larger questions regarding the "proper" relationship between standards, curriculum and instruction. Is it possible to have national standards in the U.S. context without dictating curriculum or instruction? We wonder if a *de facto* national curriculum will emerge regardless, if certain textbooks gain the most market share, or if the "instructional shifts" materials become the dominant voice about "Common Core instruction". We are also left with questions about the role of foundations in shaping CCSS policy. Though we do not address the involvement of the Gates Foundation in the messaging around "Common Core instruction", a natural extension of this paper would be to more closely follow Gates money to understand the kinds of CCSS-related instructional resources the Gates Foundation supports. Finally, we recognise that, although there may be dominant policy messages, there is not necessarily one "correct" vision of English/Language arts instruction, and we are interested in ways that varying epistemologies interact with instructional recommendations. For example, a subsequent study could focus on how Lucy Calkins' views on instruction, rooted in the tradition of Donald Graves, differ from Michael Smith and Jeffrey Wilhelm's, rooted in the tradition of George Hillocks. Additionally, an in-depth analysis of the visions of English/Language Arts in the many curricular units and lessons claiming to be "CCSS-aligned" would be fertile ground for a follow-up investigation.

In the end, we recognise a strong human element involved in messages around the CCSS; the standards and professional development resources are all written by individuals—individuals who put forth their visions about instruction, potentially shaping teachers' decisions and, ultimately, affecting the field in some way. If we can better understand the types of messages being sent *and* by whom, English educators will be better equipped to effect change at the policy level, and to support teachers, schools and districts in making informed decisions about their professional development, curriculum and instruction. We believe that English teacher educators must support teachers in creating CCSS curriculum that respects their skills and knowledge as autonomous professionals. If English educators do not reach English teachers, they lose the opportunity to have a seat at the table about what, if anything, the CCSS mean for instruction—and there will be no shortage of other "Common Core-aligned" voices clamouring in teachers' ears.

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