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Developing a Curriculum for the ELA Inclusive Classroom That Meets the Shifts in the CCSS

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Abstract

Educators of 2019 are required to meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in inclusive classrooms while also engaging students in meaningful connections. The CCSS provide an outline of academic content, knowledge, and skills that students need in order to be college and career ready. Teachers are the connection between the standards, the academic content, and the students. It is up to the teachers to reach and engage their students by creating meaningful connections between the academic content and the real-world. Students who are engaged and making connections to the instructional material are creating learning that lasts beyond the classroom. Learning that lasts beyond the classroom means students are learning skills and strategies that they will utilize in the real-world. Education in 2019 should not be based on the goal of students memorizing academic content to only regurgitate that content on the standardized test. Students must engage in authentic learning activities that align with the changing CCSS while connecting their learning to the real-world. The following capstone project discusses the engaging strategies used in authentic learning that meet the changes in English Language Arts CCSS in an inclusive setting, while also cultivating learning that lasts beyond the classroom.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement: With the shift to Common Core State Standards, teachers continue to struggle to create an English Language Arts curriculum that accommodates and engages students in an inclusive environment.

Teachers are challenged to meet the changes in Common Core State Standards (CCSS) while accommodating the diverse needs of their students. How can teachers engage all students in the curriculum outlined by the CCSS? The answer is by cultivating learning that lasts beyond the classroom. Learning that lasts means incorporating relevant and relatable topics, targets, tasks, and texts into the academic content. These four aspects of learning that lasts should be based on the standards and be connected to the real world. From the students' outlook, the real-world connections make the academic tasks worthy of learning and increase student engagement. Through the regular practice of applying knowledge to real-life contexts and situations, authentic learning is nurtured in the classroom. Learning that lasts results from teachers who utilize authentic learning and encourage their students to engage in meaningful connections that directly apply to the real world.

The goals of the CCSS are for students to become college and career ready through the use of critical thinking skills, perseverance, and self-reflection. Educators meet these shifts by fostering collaboration, reflection, and responsibility in their students. All students must engage in learning that lasts, including students in the inclusive classroom. Inclusive classrooms consist of challenging academic content and diverse learners. The content and the outcome for each student is the same; however, how teachers get their students to that outcome is different. Inclusive teachers must use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies, differentiation,

scaffolding techniques, and Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) to meet their students' various needs. These strategies enable teachers to meet the diverse needs of their students, meet the changes in CCSS, and create authentic learning experiences for all students. The CCSS provide an outline for what the academic content should consist of. Educators must take these standards and make meaningful connections from the content to the real world in order to engage all students and accommodate their students' needs. When students are engaged in and can relate to the content, then learning goes beyond the classroom and builds positive and successful citizens. Learning that lasts cannot be reached without properly meeting the shifts in the standards, utilizing engaging content to reach all students in the inclusive classroom.

Significance of the Problem

Teachers in 2019 are challenged to create academic content that meets the shifts in CCSS while also engaging and accommodating diverse students in the inclusive classroom. The shifts in CCSS directly affects what all students are learning in the classroom and must be understood in order to best teach the curriculum. The law states that all students deserve free and appropriate education. The significance of inclusion is how it is delivered in the classroom. Teachers must adapt their teaching strategies in order to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of their students. Successful teachers take time to learn and understand their students' needs in order to create meaningful access to academic content. Learning that lasts beyond the classroom is created in the inclusive environment through research, flexible teaching techniques, and strategies that create meaningful access to content for all students.

Purpose

The purpose of implementing strategies to achieve learning that lasts is to create engaging instruction that leads to college and career-ready students. Authentic learning engages

students in academic content that relates to and can be applied to the real-world. Students should be inquiry-based learners, who ask questions and find answers through collaboration, research, and reflection. Through the guidance of teacher-led experiences, students collaborate with others and draw meaningful connections from prior knowledge and background experiences in order to answer their questions and build their mastery of knowledge. As a result, students take ownership of understanding the learning targets, tracking their progress, and presenting their thoughts. Without utilizing authentic learning and creating learning that lasts, teachers are simply teaching memorization and promotes students who move on through school gaining no true mastery of content and no original work, therefore, struggle to succeed in academics and the real-world.

Rationale

Teachers have a moral and professional obligation to stay up-to-date on the best practices. Learning that lasts encompasses strategies that meet the shifts in CCSS, tackle the challenges of inclusion, and engage students with challenging content. Educators must adapt to changes and create a flexible classroom as they themselves continue to learn the best pedagogy. Achieving the benefits of authentic learning and learning that lasts is monumental to educators making the next step in their professional career. As our students' needs change, to continue teaching to meet standardized tests is a failure to evolve and grow. Teaching to memorization fails students and detracts from the teaching profession. Every student deserves challenging, engaging, and empowering instruction that encourages them to reach their highest goals. It is through implementing authentic learning and learning that lasts beyond the classroom, that teachers can make a positive impact on students' lives and cultivate successful students and citizens.

Definition of Terms

Authentic Audience—students who interact with real-world audiences such as people and organizations.

Authentic Engagement- students are immersed in work that has a clear meaning and immediate value to them and learn new knowledge through engaging in real-life contexts and situations.

Autism (AU) - a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction.

Checks for understanding—quick, casual strategies to ensure students are making learning progress and understanding content.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—standards establishing clear and consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in math and English Language Arts from Kindergarten through 12th grade.

Deeper Instruction—instruction to improve students' readiness for college, careers, and life by prioritizing what matters most in our society and helping students achieve lives of integrity, joy in learning, and contribution.

Differentiated Instruction—tailoring instruction to meet individual needs, differentiated content, process, products or the learning environment, the use of ongoing assessment, and flexible grouping.

EL Education—an educational system that differs from traditional systems in three ways: In EL schools students learn by conducting "learning expeditions" rather than by sitting in a classroom being taught one subject at a time, EL works on developing the character as well as the intellect of students, and EL changes not only how students learn but also the school culture.

Emotional Disturbance (ED)—an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors as well as the inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. Under normal circumstances, the person exhibits inappropriate types of behavior or feelings and endures a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

Fishbowl strategy—students seated in a circle and participate in the discussion by asking questions and sharing their thoughts.

Fist-to-Five strategy— teachers ask students to rate their learning and understanding from one to five, five being the student understands material and one being the student needs more guidance.

Formative Assessment—a range of formal and informal assessment procedures conducted by teachers during the learning process in order to adapt learning activities and improve student attainment.

Growth-mindset—the belief that intelligence can grow, leading to student motivation and growing achievement.

Hearing Impairment (HI)—an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that affects educational performance.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)- an American law ensuring that students with disabilities are provided **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** that meets their individual needs.

Inclusion- provides opportunities for students with disabilities to learn alongside their non-disabled peers in general education classrooms.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)—a written document that is developed by a team of educators (e.g. teachers, social workers, administrators, parent/guardian, and the student) for a child eligible for Special Education, the IEP is a living document that is reviewed and changed by educators throughout the school year to show student's progress, challenges, and test scores.

Inquiry-based learning— is a learning and teaching method that gives priority to student questions, ideas, analysis, and action.

Intellectual Disability—significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning with also deficits in adaptive behavior during the developmental period.

Learning Disability (LD)— a disorder in one or more of the psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, both spoken and written, that may lead to the struggle in listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or completing mathematical calculations.

Learning-Target Trackers— an intentional process in which student assess their current level of proficiency, set goals, track progress, and reflect upon and communicate results.

Lexile Level-- a tool that measures the difficulty of a text and the student's reading ability level.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—a federal law that held schools responsible for the academic progress of all students.

Orthopedic Impairment (OI)— impairments caused by congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease, and/or impairments from other causes such as cerebral palsy, amputations, fracture, or burns.

Other Health Impairment (OHI)— heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness for periods of time due to attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, or epilepsy.

Ritual Compliance- work has little or no immediate meaning to students, but there are extrinsic outcomes of value that keep them engaged.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)—adapting the content, methodology and delivery of instruction for eligible students in order to meet the unique needs of a student and ensure access to general education curriculum.

Speech Impairment (SI)— a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment.

S.M.A.R.T. goals— a short statement including specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals, that lead a person toward the direction they want to go.

Standard Course of Study (SCOS)—the series of general education courses and academic content that students are required to complete to earn a diploma.

Student-engaged assessment—a system of interrelated practices that positions students as leaders of their own learning.

Syntax—an arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.

Text-dependent questions—questions that can only be answered by referring back to the text being read.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)—an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in a total or partial functional disability that affects educational performance.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)— a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people on scientific insights into how humans learn.

Visual Impairment (VI)—an impairment in vision that, even with correction, affects a child's educational performance.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

To engage students in academic content that meet the shifts in CCSS in an inclusive classroom requires teachers to incorporate authentic learning experiences in the academic content and promote learning that lasts beyond the classroom. Educators that utilize authentic learning, empower students to become leaders of their own learning through collaboration, inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, higher-order questioning, and reflection. In the inclusive classroom, the CCSS challenge teachers to engage their students by implementing flexible strategies in their curriculum, unit plans, learning targets, texts, and lesson delivery. Connecting students to real-world contexts and situations is an essential aspect of building meaningful learning experiences. Teachers who connect their content to real-world topics are able to increase student engagement, practice critical thinking skills, and build students' ability to reflect on their thoughts, work, and progress. These skills are important aspects of building successful students that are college-and-career-ready. The following literature review highlights the importance and essential aspects of meeting the shifts in CCSS in an inclusive classroom while engaging students in lifelong learning.

Meeting the Shifts in the CCSS

Meeting the shifts in the CCSS is both challenging and at times overwhelming. The CCSS contains broad statements that can lack the specifics necessary for implementing them. The shifts in CCSS put a focus on an overall theme of college-and-career-readiness and also teaching students the skills necessary to be successful in the real world. Instructional materials, assessments, and in-class practices are affected by the changes in the CCSS. There are currently three shifts in the ELA standards, implementing these shifts is both challenging and rewarding for teachers and their students.

Berger, Woodfin, Plaut, and Dobbertin (2014) research highlights the following changes in ELA Common Core State Standards:

1. Regular practice with complex text and its academic language,

2. Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from literacy, and informational text

3. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

The first shift directs teachers to incorporate complex texts into their daily classroom and to focus on the interpretation of academic language. The English Language Arts CCSS shifts focus from practicing only reading and writing skills to college-and-career-ready skills that highlight interpreting complex texts. "These standards build a staircase of text complexity so that all students are ready for the demands of college-level reading no later than the end of high school" (Achieve the Core, 2019). The first change in ELA standards requires teachers to determine text complexity and to find worthy relevant texts to utilize in their classroom that challenges students to build their literacy skills in preparation for the real world. When choosing complex texts, teachers must utilize both quantitative and qualitative measures, as well as their own professional judgment, to determine how the text will meet the task and reach their students.

Quantitative measures include Lexile levels and readability formulas as a starting point to determine text complexity. According to Shackles (2012), "Quantitative measures include analysis of word frequency and sentence length" (p. 3). Resources to best select texts using quantitative measures include the websites: Lexile Find a Book, the Accelerated Reader Book Finder, and the Questar Degree of Reading Power (Shackles, 2012). When observing qualitative measures of text complexity, teachers must consider the meaning, structure, and the language of a text as well as the background knowledge needed to comprehend a complex text. With this in

consideration, teachers should pair both literary and informational texts in order to support the prior knowledge necessary for students to fully interpret and understand the text's meaning.

Understanding the task and the capability of your students is important when meeting the first shift in the standards when choosing complex texts. The complexity of a text depends on how that text is being applied to the classroom task. Olga Nesi (2012) states, "For example, a text with a low Lexile Level can easily become more complex if a student's prior knowledge is limited" (p. 20). The final aspect of text complexity is considering the reader and the task. Teachers must consider students' motivation, interest, and background knowledge when considering text complexity. A text that may fit the Lexile reading level for intended student readers, may be too challenging for students who have no prior knowledge about the topic or academic vocabulary used in the text. Teachers in inclusive classroom settings must consider the diverse reading levels in their class and their students' prior knowledge when measuring a text's complexity. In order to best choose a complex text, teachers must utilize their professional judgment of the task and their understanding of their students.

The second and third shifts in the ELA Common Core State Standards promotes using rich informational texts to focus on students using textual evidence in their reading, writing, and speaking to build their general knowledge. These shifts highlight the importance of presenting deeper analysis, well-defended claims, and clear information supported by textual evidence. "Rather than asking students questions they can answer solely from their prior knowledge or experience, college-and-career ready standards expect students to answer questions that depend on their having read the text or texts with care," (Achieve The Core, 2018). Teachers cultivate learning that lasts beyond the classroom by asking text-dependent questions. Text-dependent questions cannot be answered through the application of background knowledge. In order to

answer text-dependent questions, students must utilize close-reading strategies to better analyze the complex text. Teachers build college-and-career-ready students by teaching close-reading strategies such as annotating, answering discussion questions, and making meaningful connections to the text. Students should leave school with the skills necessary to be inquiry-based learners that can successfully analyze and interpret various types of complex texts.

The second shift focuses on students reading complex texts and making meaningful connections. Students are expected to utilize textual evidence, to support their claims, thoughts, and interpretations of various complex texts. This shift prepares students for life beyond academics by asking students to answer questions based on information presented in complex texts rather than prior knowledge. Again, teachers can utilize text-dependent questions to guide students to read carefully and to find text details that support their claim. The second shift also focuses on students' ability to read, write, and speak utilizing evidence from both informational and literary texts. The ability to effectively write argumentative and informational texts are essential life skills that directly relate to college-and-career-readiness. Students must be able to comprehend complex literary and nonfiction texts. Subsequently, they must be able to analyze and grasp both the information and the arguments presented in the text, in order to create claims that are supported by the textual evidence. Students must practice creating claims in an argumentative writing format and also practice using textual evidence and supporting details to validate their reasoning. The ability to read complex texts and to make claims are both college-and-career-ready skills that are highly valued in the real world. Berger, Woodfin, Plaut, and Dobbertin (2014) state:

The authors of the Common Core state that, to be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend,

evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in

order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and

extensive range of print and non-print texts in media forms old and new. (p.19)

Informational and nonfiction texts can be used in the classroom to engage students in current

controversial issues, social justice issues, news articles, and current topics of discussion that

relate to the real-world. Using informational texts that incorporate these real-world topics,

increases student engagement and encourage students to use critical thinking and reflection

skills. In order to successfully meet the standards, authentic learning must include complex

texts, both literary and informational, that are relatable to students. According to Steve Figurelli

(2015), "Newsela is an innovative way to build reading comprehension with nonfiction text that's

relevant" (p. 1). Students make meaningful connections when they read about topics they relate

to or that are relatable to the real world. When there is a recognizable connection between the

tasks or text and the real world, students see a reason to read, write, and discuss the material and

are actively engaged in the content. Teachers can engage students by connecting content to

students' interests and experiences. Asking students to read, write, and discuss significant and

controversial issues in the classroom connects students to material and informational texts. Using

news articles to make connections between the ELA curriculum and the real world promotes

learning that lasts. Kim Haynes (2019) states:

> For example, some news outlets have recently done follow-up stories on Hurricane
>
> Katrina, which hit four years ago. Reading about the storm can make a great connection
>
> for younger students studying hurricanes or for older students who might be reading
>
> books that discuss issues of poverty, racism, etc. These stories can help students

recognize that the concepts they learn about in the classroom really do affect the outside

world. (p. 1)

Students in 2019 connect to social issues and to issues related to improving the real world.

Incorporating controversial ideas and social issues in the classroom gives students the

opportunity to practice argumentative reading, writing, and discussion skills that are a part of the

shifts in the CCSS. Through the use of informational texts, teachers can build on students'

knowledge and ability to make educated claims about meaningful topics and support those

claims using textual evidence. These are skills that students will utilize beyond the classroom

environment.

The third shift in the ELA Common Core State Standards encourages a balance of both

literary and informational reading and writing that is practiced in the classroom. By pairing

informational texts and literary texts together, teachers can increase student engagement through

building students' background knowledge about a specific topic relevant to the literary text. The

push to incorporate more nonfiction texts in the classroom relates to ensuring that students are

college-and-career-ready. In the real-world, students will be comprehending and interpreting

informational texts multiple times a day. In order to prepare students for reading beyond the

classroom, teachers must implement the regular practice of informational texts in their classroom

curriculum. According to Berger, Woodfin, Plaut, and Dobbertin (2014), "The Common Core

Standards recommend that students read half informational text and half literary text. As

students' progress through secondary school, the recommended balance shifts to 70 percent

informational text and 30 percent literary text," (p. 22). Literary texts paired with informational

texts encourage students to make meaningful connections in their thinking process.

Pairing these types of texts can be referred to as "text sets." "The Common Core presents an opportunity to organize texts in a new way, as "sets" organized around a topic or big idea, rather than as a stand-alone resource or experience," (Berger et al., 2014). In a text set, the anchor text can be a classic novel that consists of meaningful themes, characters, and literary elements, all of which are still important for students to analyze and reflect upon. Often times in ELA, students find their own personal voice through literary texts. The supplementary texts in a text set are informational texts that increase student engagement and reading comprehension of the anchor text, by building necessary academic vocabulary and background knowledge. Teachers must strategically organize text sets in order to ensure that students make meaningful connections between both literary and informational texts. For example, when reading the literary novel, *A Long Walk to Water*, a companion informational text can be implemented within instruction to provide background knowledge about the civil war in Sudan. When students apply the content of the informational text to their understanding of the literary novel, they are able to make valuable claims and support those claims with text evidence. Pairing literary and informational texts together allows English teachers to teach classic themes and literary elements through a real-world lens.

The CCSS shifts put the focus on students keeping an open mind and connecting their reading to the world around them and to their own personal lives. Teachers should ask themselves, "What informational texts are worth reading," instead of "Am I teaching enough informational text," (Berger et al. 2014). A wide variety of informational text types that can be used in classrooms across all disciplines, but specifically in the English Language Arts classroom are shown in the table below:

Expository	Argumentative	Instructional	Narrative
Textbooks (science)	Opinion and editorial pieces	Training manuals	(Auto)biographies
Textbooks (humanities)	Speeches	Contracts	Histories
Reports	Advertisements	User guides and manuals	Correspondence
Tourism guides	Political propaganda	Legal documents	Curriculum vitae
Product specifications	Journal articles	Recipes	Memoirs
Product and service descriptions	Government documents	Product and service descriptions	News articles
Magazine articles	Legal documents		Essays
Company profiles	Tourism guides		Interviews
Legal documents	Correspondence		Agendas
Agendas	Essays		
Correspondence	Reviews		
Essays	Memoirs		
Interviews			
Government documents			
News articles			

Source: New York State Education Department (nd).

Seeking out useful informational texts can start with researching the websites of museums, government organizations, and also a nonprofit academic, art, or professional organizations. Teachers should also collaborate with librarians to search for databases and websites that are not readily available to others. Utilizing impactful informational texts in text sets, builds authentic learning experiences and creates learning that lasts beyond the classroom.

Engaging and motivating students is achieved through authentic learning. Students are motivated by accomplishments, meaningful tasks, and appropriate challenges. According to Jill Cole (2014), "The Common Core State Standards explain that some of the ways to bring students and text closer together include rereading, using appropriate but more complex texts, reducing the introductory information before students read, asking text-dependent questions, and focusing on analysis while reading". When teachers use challenging and complex texts that students relate to, then students rise to the challenge and actively engage in making meaningful connections to the content. Engaged students become inquiry-based learners who are inquisitive and who ask

questions, and answer those questions themselves through research and analysis of a complex text. When teachers use higher-order questions, such as text-dependent questions, then students are encouraged to inquire, analyze, and interpret new content, (Berger, Rugen, Woodfin, 2016). When students themselves are engaged in a complex task or text, then meaningful connections are created. These connections transfer from academic success to college-and-career-readiness while, meeting the shifts in ELA Common Core State Standards.

The shifts in the ELA Common Core State Standards put a focus on the regular practice of reading, writing, and speaking skills using textual evidence. In order to meet the standards and also create learning that lasts, teachers must plan and deliver lessons that challenge, engage and empower their students. Students are challenged and engaged in the content when they develop meaningful connections to the daily lesson, and then take ownership of the lesson's learning objectives, (Berger, Woodfin, Vilen, 2016). The goal of the CCSS is to increase academic rigor and challenge students to engage in authentic learning. The CCSS themselves do not actively engage and empower students, the teachers do. Teachers who challenge their students with academic content that relates to real-world contexts and situations student-engagement, authentic learning experiences, and generate learning that lasts, (Berger, Woodfin, Vilen, 2016).

The heart of engaging instruction begins with the daily lesson plan. High-quality lessons that are structured to increase student-engagement are essential to students' learning. A high-quality lesson plan meets the challenging rigor offered by the CCSS, engages students with worthy texts and meaningful connections, and empowers students to be inquiry-based-learners and expands their base of knowledge. Four aspects of a lesson plan that are important to consider when developing the plan are topic, task, targets, and text. The lesson plan topic should be both relevant and relatable to the students' lives or the real

world. The teacher must consider their students' background knowledge and experiences, culture, and interests when attempting to engage students in a task. Utilizing real-world issues as a unit or lesson topic increases student collaboration and meaningful connections to the academic content. The learning targets should be student-centered and can be used as a formative assessment tool throughout the unit or lesson plan. Student-centered learning targets are clear and concise statements that describe authentic learning and the learning outcome of the lesson. They allow the students to take ownership of their learning and track their progress throughout the lesson. Teachers create student-centered learning targets by focusing on *what* learning is being accomplished in the lesson, rather than describing *how* students will be learning throughout the lesson (Berger, Rugen, Woodfin, 2014). The complex texts that are used in the unit, should be both informational and literary and also relatable to students and the real world. Teachers should utilize the quantitative, qualitative, and the understanding of the reader and the task measures in order to determine text complexity and choose a meaningful text for the unit or lesson plan. The task is the ultimate product of the lesson. In the task, students are practicing reading complex texts and using textual evidence to support their thoughts, claims, and ideas. The task is where teachers can implement authentic learning experiences that connect students to learning that lasts beyond the classroom (Berger, Rugen, Woodfin, 2014). The topics, targets, texts, and tasks must be aligned with the standards and should be relatable to the students and their real world.

The shifts in English Language Arts CCSS challenges teachers of inclusive classrooms to engage students in instruction that focuses on regular practice of both informational and literary complex texts, building knowledge through nonfiction, and using textual evidence to support claims. The key aspect of meeting these standards in a diverse classroom is increasing

student engagement, by making meaningful connections from the academic content to the real world. By challenging, engaging, and empowering students with analyzing complex texts, academic vocabulary, text-dependent questions, real-world issues, and argumentative writing using textual evidence, teachers are preparing students with college-and-career-ready skills necessary for life beyond the classroom.

Common Core Shift in the Inclusive Classroom

The integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms plays an important role in education today. The Individuals with Disabilities Act and the No Child Left Behind Act are both recent actions that require students with disabilities to learn in a general education environment. Duffy, Szedia, and Hyer state (2010), "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement (IDEA 2004) ensures that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and aligns the legislation with the NCLB Act," (p.31). This integration is commonly known as inclusion. Teachers are challenged with handling a range of disabilities in an inclusive classroom. Disabilities in the inclusive classroom include but are not limited to Learning Disabilities (LD), Other Health Impairments (OHI), Autism (AU), Intellectual Disability (ID), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Hearing Impairment (HI), Visual Impairment (VI), Speech Impairment (SI), Orthopedic Impairment (OI), and Emotional Disturbance (ED. Meeting the needs of diverse learners challenges teachers to research and evolve their teaching strategies through instructional techniques.

Historically, students with disabilities were not taught the Standard Course of Study (SCOS) and instruction was focused mainly on learning life skills. The SCOS includes the Common Core State Standards and the curriculum that corresponds to those standards. In education today, students with disabilities are learning SCOS and are evaluated annually on their

general education courses. A major aspect of education today is the task of accommodating to meet students' needs. An accommodation is a change in teaching techniques that helps a student overcome or work around their disability. As educators, we accommodate our students by removing barriers, *not* the content. A modification is to change what is being taught or expected from the student. Teachers should first accommodate instruction and material to meet their students' needs before modifying the material. Accommodation strategies include presentation, response, setting, timing, scheduling, and organization accommodations (Morin, 2019). An example of a presentation accommodation is giving a specific student visual aids to a lesson such as a graphic organizer or word web. A response accommodation includes a student using a word processor in class in order to support with note taking and class participation. Examples of setting accommodations include a student taking a test in a small group setting with minimal distractions and preferential seating to support best learning outcomes. Timing accommodations include extra time on tests, projects, classwork, and homework for required students, and frequent breaks implemented throughout the day for specific students. Scheduling accommodations allow a student to take a test at a certain time of day that best meets that students' needs. Organization accommodations help students with time management skills such as moving from class to class on time and prepared for learning (Morin, 2019). Modification examples include assignment and curriculum modifications. Assignment modifications include students completing fewer or different homework problems than peers. Modifications include students completing different tests or alternative projects. Curriculum modifications allow students to learn different material, be assessed based on different standards, and be excused from particular projects (Morin, 2019). Below is a great perspective on both terms.
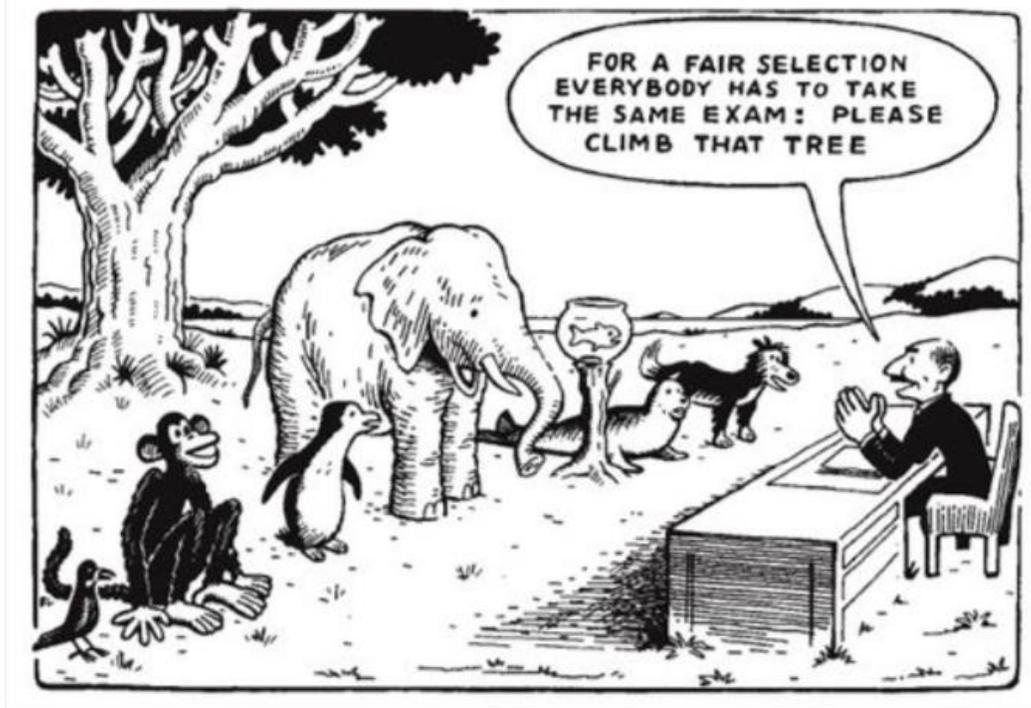
The image depicts both the difficulty of inclusion as well as an understanding of how to teach to all students. The IDEA and NCLB both require all students to learn and be assessed on general education and meet the CCSS. However, some students' disabilities make achieving the common end goal seem nearly impossible. Referring to the picture, how does assessing the elephant's ability to climb the tree seem fair or even possible? The elephant (student) itself could not climb limb by limb up to the tree as the monkey could. The elephant's success is dependent upon the teacher's ability to accommodate the elephant's needs for success. The teacher can build stairs that the elephant can climb, step by step, to reach the same end goal as the other "students." The shift in ELA Common Core State Standards challenges teachers to regularly analyze complex texts, encourages the use of textual evidence and builds knowledge through informational texts. Inclusive classrooms increase the challenge of teachers to meet the goals of

the standards and also to meet the needs of diverse students in the classroom. Teachers in an inclusive environment accommodate to their students through strategies such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiation, scaffolding, and Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). These strategies are shown in the Triangle of Instructional Structures shown below (E. Rossetti, professional communication, November 6, 2017).
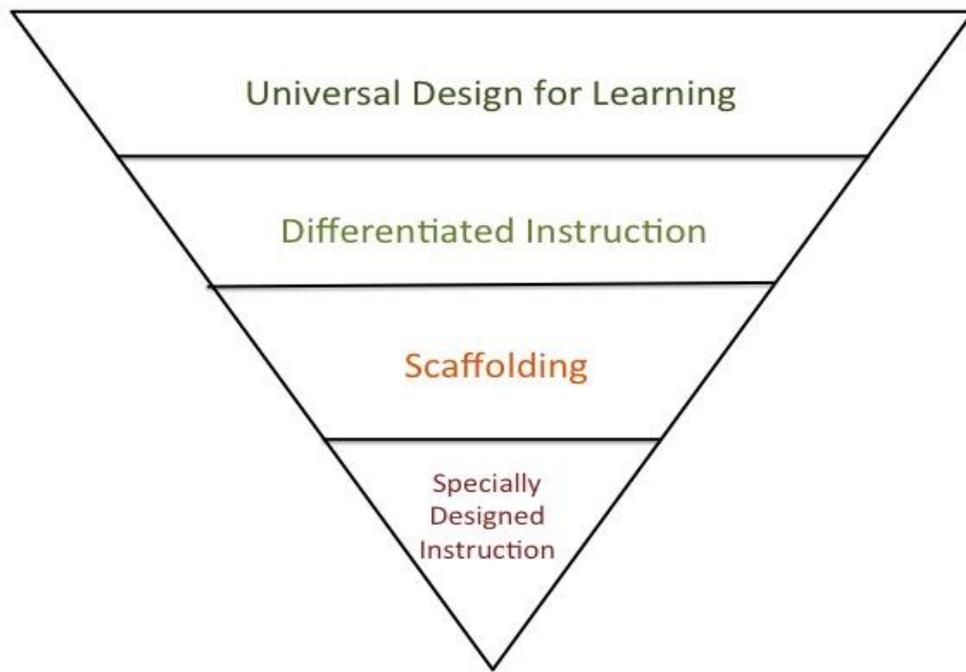
The top three aspects of the triangle are instructional methods for educating all students, while Specially Designed Instruction is specific to educating students with disabilities. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles for curriculum development that gives all individuals an equal opportunity to learn. UDL can be considered as a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for all students. This is not a solution to meet all students' needs, but rather is a flexible approach that can be adjusted for

individual student needs. The what, how, and why of learning is addressed in UDL and is customized to fit the various individual skills, needs, and interests brought to student learning.

Three important aspects of UDL are providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. These three core principles are used to develop accessible instruction that motivates participation from all learners, including students with special needs. Multiple means of engagement leads to purposeful and motivated learners. Stated by Spencer (2011), "Classroom application of UDL includes the use of technology, multiple modalities of instruction, flexible assessment, and group activities to give students choices and provide them with opportunities to empower themselves as learners," (p. 10). UDL in the English Language Arts classroom provides comprehension supports such as vocabulary definitions or highlighted literary concepts in a class text. These supports provide a student with the comprehension needed for cognitive access to the class text. Video captioning is another example of UDL in an English classroom. Video captioning helps students with hearing impairments, struggling readers, or students working in a noisy classroom. Video captioning provides students with a visual representation of a speech. Another great strategy to use to promote UDL in the English classroom is a KWL chart. "Students are asked to generate what they already know about a topic (k) and to create questions about what they want to know (W). At the end of the lesson or unit, students go back and generate a list of things they learned (L)," (Spencer, 2011). This instructional strategy stimulates a connection with prior knowledge based on the current instructional topic. Another commonly used UDL strategy is graffiti walls. This is an interactive strategy that is posted around the classroom. Students circulate the class with markers and either draw or write a response to the prompts given by the teacher. This strategy gets students up and moving which promotes interaction through action and expression. Also, this strategy allows

collaboration on thought and opens the students' minds to a new perspective posted by a classmate. All of these strategies promote the three core principles of Universal Design Instruction: engagement, representation, and action and expression.

Differentiated Instruction is the second aspect of the Triangle of Instructional Structures and was one of the more important aspects of teaching in 2017. "Differentiation is a teaching theory based on the premise that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse students in classrooms," (Tomlinson, 2001). In simple terms, differentiation is meeting the needs of all students and providing all students with curriculum and instruction that maximizes their learning. Some of the ways to differentiate include presentation, process, and product. Presentation is how the content is taught meanwhile the process is the actual activities that the students engage in, in order to understand the content. Product is the students' demonstration of their knowledge of the content. Another aspect of differentiation that the teacher can control is the learning environment. This is how the classroom is set up for learning, from organization techniques to the comfort level the classroom displays.

Differentiating in the English classroom can be done through implicit instruction, however, the best differentiation comes from explicit instruction. Instruction can be differentiation through small groups or work centers. This technique has been used in primary education and at the beginning of secondary education. English teachers can use this strategy to create groups based on students' reading, writing and language levels. Students will know their group members and become used to collaborating within them during center time. These centers can be used during reading a complex text, writing an essay or even in reviewing for a summative assessment. Each group is working on something that the teacher has created to engage students and meet their needs. Some lessons would have the groups rotate, some lessons

would not. The small groups would allow the teacher to move around the classroom and listen to each group and speak to them about any difficulties they are having. The teacher can also create group meet days so that each group meets with the teacher during a lesson and together explore the academic content. This creates one on one instruction in the small group, while also allowing the teacher to gauge their learning. Differentiation does not have to be difficult to create; educators must be flexible and understand they are meeting a wide range of learning types and needs for each of their students.

The third tier on the Triangle of Instruction is scaffolding. Scaffolding is essentially the support system that promotes the learning of new concepts and skills. The type of supports and their amount is dependent on the needs of each student; meaningful scaffolding is flexible and can be removed as needed. When using scaffolding, the instructor can think of the gradual release model of teaching. The teacher provides a student with the necessary supports to promote best learning and meet the instructional goals. As that student meets the goals, the teacher decreases the supports provided until the supports are no longer required. However, scaffolding can also be permanent support for those students who need it; this is commonly shown on the IEP.

In the English classroom, there are ample opportunities to scaffold information to enhance student learning. One way is to create sentence-starters for students. This simple strategy can be used to guide struggling writers at all age levels. When a student states, "I don't know what to write," the teacher can create a few simple sentence starters for the student to expand upon," (Alber, 2014). This strategy helps students develop their thoughts and to organize their thoughts into constructive writing. For example, "I have found some people disagree with this issue because_____" and "Something important to know about this reading is_____."

This is an effective strategy because it accommodates the needs of the student while not changing or modifying the content. Another scaffolding technique is to give students time to talk with guiding questions. Alber (2014) states, "Never underestimate giving students time to talk. As learners, we need to make sense of what is coming at us—new information, new ideas, and concepts," (p. 1). Allowing students to turn and talk or pair up into a small-discussion prompts students to talk through what they have learned and to receive support and information from their classmates. Guided questions in the discussion keep students on task and allow them to clarify the information they have interpreted. These scaffolding strategies create the best learning support for students and can be permanent or temporary, depending on the student.

The final aspect of the Triangle of Instructional Structures is Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). The U.S. Department of Education defines SDI as:

Adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible student, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs that result from the student's disability; and to ensure access of the student to the general curriculum, so that he or she can meet the educational standards that apply to all students, (p. 300.39).

The goal of all educators is to create meaningful access for students both within and outside of the classroom environment. Through SDI it is important to create intentional and purposeful planning of instruction that creates consistent participation and progress for students with disabilities throughout the entire lesson. SDI includes supporting students with IEPs' through enhancing supports in materials, the classroom environment, instruction, content, and assessment. An IEP must be clear and concise in order for any person to read and understand the supports necessary to meet the student's needs.

There are many examples of SDI used across English Language Arts. Some of those examples include assistive technology, accommodations, strategy instruction, modifications, and adaptive equipment. According to Assistive Technology Industry Association (2019), assistive technology is defined as, "Assistive technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities," (p. 1). Many classrooms use classroom-amplification systems to project teachers' voices throughout the classroom. These systems are used to meet the needs of all students in the classroom including students with disabilities. Samuels (2007) states, "The issue, audiologists say, is what they call the "signal-to-noise ratio." The voice of the teacher, or anything the teacher wants the students to hear, is the signal. Anything else is noise" (p. 1). AT systems benefit classrooms where peer collaboration is encouraged and students are engaged in class discussions. Ideally, the teacher's voice should exceed 15 decibels and the background-noise levels should not exceed 30 decibels, (Samuels, 2007). Accommodations as previously stated include students using a test modification room to take an assessment or allowing them to refer to a resource room for further guidance on materials. Allowing students to have breaks or time away from the material, would be an example of strategy instruction. Time away or time delays are two strategies that allow students to chunk the material and learn at their own pace. Modifications change the material and content as an option for students to learn a variety of complex texts and challenging the academic content. Adaptive equipment has become more common in classrooms; one example would be FM systems. "An FM system is a wireless system designed to help someone better identify and understand speech in noisy situations and over distances of up to 15 meters (50 feet)," (Children Hear Better with FM, p. 2). Overall these

examples of Specially Designed Instruction have become common across all content area classrooms.

These instructional strategies are important aspects of meeting the changes in CCSS in the inclusive classroom. Educators must increase academic rigor in their classroom, in order to meet the goals of the standards. This rigor applies to all students in the class, both general education students and students with disabilities. Karten (2019) states, "When schools implement inclusive principles and strategies, they give students with the special need the opportunity to learn the critical skills and knowledge of the CCSS alongside their peers," (p. 1). By using UDL, differentiation, scaffolding, and SDI, teachers reach and accommodate their students' needs without sacrificing content. The standards are goals that guide teachers across all disciplines on what students need to learn; however, it is up to the teachers to create deeper learning and engage students in the content. The Common Core State Standards Initiative states, "These standards establish *what* students need to learn, but they will not dictate *how* teachers should teach," (2019). The shifts in the standards are met in the inclusive classroom by using flexible instructional strategies and authentic learning experiences so that students can relate the content and to the real world.

Chapter Three: Application

English Language Arts teachers are challenged to meet the three shifts in the Common Core State Standards in the inclusive classroom. The shifts in the CCSS build upon existing standards while putting a focus on skills and knowledge necessary for students to succeed in their college, career, and life. In understanding the three shifts in the CCSS, teachers can successfully implement authentic learning and real-world knowledge in their English curriculum.

The first shift focuses on the regular practice of analyzing complex texts in the ELA classroom and interpreting those texts' academic language. The shift moves teachers' focus from strictly reading and writing skills to the importance of students interpreting a range of complex texts that they will encounter in their college, career, and life. Teachers must build and increase text complexity throughout their students' development to increase reading comprehension, increase what students gain from reading, and prepare students for complex texts beyond high school. For teachers to increase reading comprehension of complex texts, teachers must focus on the comprehension of academic vocabulary used in a variety of content areas. Academic vocabulary is words that are used in academic dialogue and text and are not typically used in general conversation. For example, using the term to observe rather than to watch is using academic vocabulary. There are Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 academic vocabulary words. Tier 1 words are high-frequency words that students come across often in reading, writing, and speaking. Tier 2 words are less common and aid in students understanding a text or conversation between student and teacher. Tier 2 words can be used across all content areas and have multiple meanings. Tier 3 words are domain-specific and important to understanding content-area topics. Tier 3 words are often found in informational texts and are less commonly used. Academic vocabulary should not only be read, but also used in a mix of conversation, direct instruction, and writing. The increase in understanding academic vocabulary plays a role in writing, speaking, and listening in students' college, career, and life.

The second shift emphasizes students' reading, writing, and speaking using evidence taken directly from both literary and informational texts. Students must analyze and apply textual evidence in their speaking and writing clearly and coherently to defend their claims. The standards move teachers away from asking students questions that can be answered using prior

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knowledge and encourage students to answer questions that show the further interpretation of a complex text. "The reading standards focus on a student's ability to read carefully and grasp information, arguments, ideas, and details based on text evidence," (Common Core Initiative, 2019). These new questions are referred to as text-dependent questions and should be used along with the regular practice of complex texts. The second shift encourages students to analyze complex texts rather than solely interpret prior knowledge and experiences due to the belief that those skills alone do not readily prepare students for college, career, and life. Students are still expected to produce narrative writing; however, they are now expected to focus on creating clear and coherent argumentative and informative writing. The ability to persuade and inform are skills necessary for the real world, making these skills important to practice and also increasing speaking skills.

The third shift focuses students on building their knowledge through content-rich nonfiction, (Common Core Initiative, 2019). This shift asks teachers to immerse their students in information relevant to the world around them to build strong general knowledge and academic vocabulary necessary for life beyond high school. Students learn content knowledge independently through opportunities to analyze and interpret complex informational texts. Beginning at a young age, students should be reading both informational and literary texts as teachers implement the regular practice of informational texts to build general knowledge and comprehension skills to better read literary texts and succeed in their college, career, and life. The importance of using informational texts to build knowledge and understanding about a topic is critical to students' success and transgression into the working world. Students must be able to successfully research and understand a topic and use the textual evidence found to support their claims and decisions. Putting a focus on the importance of researching topics and utilizing

informational texts to build content knowledge is an essential aspect English teachers today must incorporate into their class content and instruction. These three shifts ask English teachers to build students' knowledge and skills in comprehending various complex texts, deciphering academic vocabulary, utilizing textual evidence, and interpreting informational texts to better prepare students for the real world.

Within the three CCSS shifts, teachers are challenged to create an ELA curriculum that both accommodates and engages students in the inclusive classroom. Teachers must create a curriculum that engages, challenges, and empowers students in learning that lasts beyond the classroom. Through adapting curriculum and creating a flexible learning environment, teachers can successfully meet the standards while also meeting students' needs. Teachers should implement authentic learning and authentic audiences in their curriculum and classrooms to achieve student engagement in learning that lasts. Authentic learning and audiences create student engagement and a meaningful connection from the real world to the academic content and push students to see the importance of their work beyond the scope of academics. For example, educators create authentic learning by fostering collaboration, reflections, and responsibility in their students. Meeting the multiple needs of students in the inclusive, it is effective to use Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiation, scaffolding, and Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) strategies. It is critical that teachers utilize strategies that are flexible and accommodate all their students' needs. While meeting the CCSS shifts teachers must also create lesson plans that engage students in various ways and offer students choices in action and expression. The shifts focus on the regular use of critical thinking skills and self-reflection and are implemented by educators who use complex texts and real-world content to cultivate

authentic learning and make a positive impact on students' lives and fully prepare them for life beyond academics.

First Shift

The term complex texts refer to any printed, visual, auditory, digital, and multimedia texts that complement each standards-based unit, align to curricular goals, and represent an appropriate level of challenge for students (Glass, 2019). Complex texts in the English classroom maybe videos, music lyrics, journals, letters, essays, speeches, newspaper or magazine articles, and fictional work such as short stories, novels, or graphic novels. When implementing complex texts into a classroom, the teacher must consider the texts' relevance to real-world topics. In practicing various forms of complex texts, students will build their skills to interpret and reflect multiple complex messages and information. Students will encounter multiple kinds of complex texts and in practicing these various forms, students will build their skills to interpret and reflect upon complex messages and information.

An example of a complex text in the English classroom is using music lyrics to teach literary devices. Teaching in an urban school district I have seen Tupac Shakur's music lyrics used more than once to teach literary devices in a poetry unit. At the start of the unit, I explicitly defined and gave examples of ten common literary devices including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, repetition, and rhyme. After defining the devices and providing examples I had my students break up into planned groups based on their ability and IEP needs. Each group was instructed to read four quotes taken from four different rap songs and identify each time a literary device was used and what specific device was used. The groups collaborated and shared their findings to the class. Another lesson is comparing and contrasting famous rap songs such as Tupac Shakur's song

"Changes" to classic poetry like Langston Hughes "I, Too." Ask your students to cite specific examples when comparing societal obstacles, the poem or music's influence, and personal connections.

A great book to use with these lessons is the *Rose that Grew from Concrete* by Tupac Shakur the book consists of a mix of poems and doodles done by Shakur himself. My students were engaged and interested in reading poems by Shakur and were able to make meaningful connections to his poems and thoughts. To conclude the unit I differentiated the final lesson by allowing students to write either a poem or a rap and then choose to share their work with the class. Encourage students to reference their favorite poet or artist and use at least three of the literary devices defined in a class in their rap or poem. Overall, the entire unit engaged and challenged the students to make meaningful connections from past, classic poems and relevant, famous rap music. In building this connection, our students began to understand the academic language and techniques used in both forms of text and the significance of the language used. Students that comprehend the significance behind the similarities of past and current texts can understand the meaning of the words and how that meaning relates to and affects them.

Another example of implementing the regular practice of complex texts in the ELA classroom is by incorporating social justice topics into the unit of study by requiring students to use critical thinking skills to reflect and connect to the controversial topics discussed in the text to real-world topics and issues today. These connections and reflections increase student engagement and require students to make meaningful connections to the material. This example is a part of a unit that incorporates students evaluating multiple complex texts that are relevant to a current controversial issue in society. The topic revolves around the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement in both an urban school district and the real world. The unit's topic is both

relevant and relatable to the students in the class; therefore, it increases student engagement and initiates meaningful connections made between the students' lives and the academic material. The unit's informational texts build the students' knowledge about the Black Lives Matter movement and encourage students to analyze the complex academic language within the text as well as create a personal claim about the movement's relevance to society and themselves. My students are interested in evaluating and discussing the complex texts and sources that relate to the Black Lives Matter movement because it affects their daily lives.

In understanding this, I had my class read the last paragraph of "How it Feels to be Colored Me" by Zora Neale Hurston. As a class, we read, analyzed, and annotated the last paragraph of the complex text's meaning and the author's use of syntax. Below is a copy of the last paragraph of "How it Feels to be Colored Me" by Zora Neale Hurston.

> *But in the main, I feel like a brown bag of miscellany propped against a wall. Against a wall in company with other bags, white, red and yellow. Pour out the contents, and there is discovered a jumble of small things priceless and worthless. A first-water diamond, an empty spool, bits of broken glass, lengths of string, a key to a door long since crumbled away, a rusty knife-blade, old shoes saved for a road that never was and never will be, a nail bent under the weight of things too heavy for any nail, a dried flower or two still a little fragrant. In your hand is the brown bag. On the ground before you is the jumble it held--so much like the jumble in the bags, could they be emptied, that all might be dumped in a single heap and the bags refilled without altering the content of any greatly. A bit of colored glass more or less would not matter. Perhaps that is how the Great Stuffer of Bags filled them in the first place--who knows?*
> http://www.casaarts.org/cms/lib/PA01925203/Centricity/Domain/50/Hurston%20How%20it%20Feels%20to%20Be%20Colored%20Me.pdf

After reading the paragraph together I assigned the class a narrative writing assessment that students would display at the scheduled Celebration of Learning for parents, teachers, and peers. This event creates an authentic audience for students to display their hard work and learning progress. The final narrative of this unit is a "How it feels to be _____ Me"

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poem that resembles the syntax used in Zora Neale Hurston's work, "How it feels to be Colored Me". My students were assigned to reflect on a personal aspect of themselves that they want to share in a poem format using the same syntax as Zora Neale Hurston. These poems encouraged students to reflect upon themselves and craft a creative writing piece that explained themselves and their reflections. Allowing students the freedom to reflect and make connections to Hurston's work, real-world struggles, and their thoughts, resulting in students' poems that were impactful and emotional to read. The project challenged and engaged students to think critically about complex texts and to engage in personal reflection, leading to learning that lasts way beyond the classroom for both the students and the audience.

Before jumping into the writing assignment, I provided my students with my own personal "How it Feels to be Teacher Me" poem, shown below, as a reference for their writing assignment.

How it feels to be Teacher Me, by AS

I feel like an elephant, steady with wisdom and strength with passion. Calm, cool, and collected as I carry heavy knowledge with my every stride. Weighed down by little eyes that watch my every step, eyes that throw experiences, hardships, differences, and knowledge at my tall expectations. I remain calm through the storm, and I guide my little eyes to exceed the expectations outlined by our harsh surroundings. A symbol of strength, I challenge my little eyes to defy their surroundings, their norms. Open little eyes! Open to your experiences, use your voice to advocate for who you are, as who you are is more powerful than who you are not.

As a class, we compared my poem to Zora Neale Hurston's. We broke down both poems' meaning and the use of syntax utilizing the following checklist.

HW: Emulating the variety of syntax or sentence structures in Zora Neale Hurston's final paragraph of "How it Feels to be Colored Me", write your own "How it Feels to be _____ Me." You can choose any role that you relate to, examples of past poems include; "How it Feels to be "father-less", "immigrant", "older sister" Me." Your piece should be no less than six sentences and should include the following sentence structures in your piece:
Simple

Definition: A simple sentence, also called an independent clause, contains a subject and a verb, and it expresses a complete thought.

Example: A bit of colored glass more or less would not matter.

Compound

Definition: A compound sentence contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinator. The coordinators are as follows: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

Example: Pour out the contents, and there is discovered a jumble of small things priceless and worthless.

Compound-Complex

Definition: A compound-complex sentence is made from two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

Example: I am a cacophony of sounds, the trombone sings my somber tune, although the trumpet makes you stand and take notice.

Fragment

Definition: An incomplete sentence

Example: A first-water diamond, an empty spool, bits of broken glass

Command

Definition: This type of sentence is used to give a direct command to someone.

Example: Pour out the contents, listen to my song!

Inverted word order

Definition: Reversing the normal order (subject-verb) of a sentence.

Example: *Whose woods these are I think I know.* By Robert Frost (Normally: I think I know whose woods these are.)

The checklist guided the class in analyzing the syntax used in Hurston's poem and my poem and explicitly provided students with a list of the required syntax to be implemented in their narrative writing piece. The checklist was also used as the rubric to assess students' use of syntax and grade students on the required syntax criteria.

This lesson uniquely meets the ELA Common Core State Standard of creating a narrative, developed through real experiences and events, using standard ELA composition techniques. The

lesson also incorporates students analyzing the author's choice of syntax, and how those choices affect the overall structure and meaning of the complex text, (CCSS Initiative, 2019). The lesson's task and product increased student-engagement through authentic learning and the authentic audience. The students made meaningful, personal connections to the task and those connections were displayed and valued by people beyond the classroom. As my students practiced analyzing, and then applying sentence structure techniques to their writing, they were building critical thinking skills that they will utilize in their college work and careers. This lesson promoted the regular practice of a complex text, as the students collaboratively analyzed, comprehended, and discussed Hurston's text. Through their collaborative findings, my students built their repertoire of sentence structure techniques and applied their new knowledge to their narrative poems. The poems my students created were impactful and worthy of being displayed while also being aligned with the CCSS.

The lesson was taught in an inclusive classroom where I utilized differentiation and SDI to meet my students' needs. The differentiation strategy I used in my lesson was meaningful student voice and choice. This lesson allowed my students to use their voice in their narrative writing piece and also gave academic freedom to choose what personal aspect they wanted to write about. I also differentiated complex text reading instruction by utilizing the fishbowl strategy. Students were offered to read the text both online and in print and collaborated with the class as they annotated the complex text and answered discussion questions. I provided a graphic organizer for my students to aid in organizing their thoughts, questions, connections, and annotations while reading the text. The graphic organizer is shown below.

Syntax Example	Textual Evidence of syntax used	Author's meaning/my connections/thoughts

The graphic organizer allows students to break down the structure of the complex text and the author's intentions and tone. Specially Designed Instruction that I utilized in this lesson includes preferential seating, extra time to complete tasks, and a graphic organizer to organize the final poem's structure. These accommodations were specific to each students' IEP and were utilized throughout instruction to best meet the needs of my students.

I met one particular student's needs by scaffolding the poem with sentence starters and ques to stay on topic. This student has experienced a significant amount of trauma in life outside of school which affects their writing and personal connections to the academic content. My student also benefits from prompts to refocus and stay on topic while writing a narrative piece. I used sentence starters to explicitly keep my student focused on one topic and to guide my student through the syntax used in the poem. For another student, I allowed her to write her entire poem in Spanish and then helped her to translate her work to English. Together we worked on utilizing resources to make the English version of her poem translate correctly. Both students required scaffolding techniques to complete their poem.

The lessons and strategies discussed led to increased student engagement and learning that lasts beyond the classroom. I met the shifts in CCSS in an inclusive classroom setting by

creating authentic learning experiences that connected my students to relevant and relatable social justice topics in the real-world today. In both units, the students were engaged in making choices that directly affected their learning, practicing complex texts, citing textual evidence, and building their knowledge through informational texts. All students were involved in learning that prepared them for both college and their careers, while also cultivating learning that lasts beyond the classroom.

Second Shift

The second shift builds on the focus of analyzing complex texts by adding the practice of reading, writing, and speaking grounded in textual evidence from the text. Our students should be regularly analyzing, connecting to, and making claims from both literary and informational complex texts. The second shift puts focus on ensuring that those claims are defended by textual evidence and supporting details pulled directly from the text itself. To encourage students to use textual evidence to support their thoughts, educators must utilize inquiry-based learning strategies in their classroom. Inquiry-based learning strategies allow students to investigate open-ended questions and problems without providing a step-by-step solution. The students' use evidence-based reasoning and their own creative problem-solving to conclude while also gaining critical thinking skills and investigating beyond their prior knowledge. Teachers support the students' process of investigating and problem-solving and continue to encourage conclusions and claims grounded in textual evidence.

An example of inquiry-based learning in the ELA classroom that meets the second shift is the use of text-dependent questions. Instead of asking students questions that can be answered using prior knowledge, text-dependent questions prompt students to closely read and analyze the

texts' meaning and make inferences supported by text evidence. Below is a table of text-dependent questions asked when reading *A Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds.

Text-Dependent Questions	Answers/Thoughts/Connections
Why do you think the author Jason Reynolds uses repetition on the second page?	
What do you think the open stanzas on page 13 symbolize? Why is this text structure effective?	
Why does the author make a point of saying "deaf" and "blind?"	
What does the word beef mean on page 26? What does it mean on page 27? Is there a connection?	

These text-dependent questions encourage students to read the text closely and make meaningful connections to the text's meaning and the author's use of language and tone. When answering text-dependent questions, students must pay careful attention to the text to answer the questions and can make inferences using textual evidence.

The second shift asks educators to practice argumentative and informational writing to prepare students for their college and career. Both argumentative writing and informational writing require students to build a claim and use textual evidence to support their thoughts. An example of incorporating the aspects of the second shift while also engaging students in authentic learning includes students choosing the class novel and defending their choice through an argumentative writing piece. This activity prompts students to be leaders of their learning by giving them the power to decide what novel the class will read. The three novels used in the activity include *A Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds, *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brenden Kiely, and *The Hate U* Give by Angie Thomas. All three novels cover current social justice issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement, police brutality, stereotypes, racism, and discrimination. In understanding how much my students enjoy a good argument and defending

their personal opinions, I assigned them to create an argumentative essay that defended their novel choice using textual evidence from three stations that include visual interpretations of the book, an informational article about the social justice topic discussed in the novel, interpreting the books summary, and watching a short video about the novel and the novel's author. At each station, the students practiced interpreting multiple forms of texts and built their background knowledge about the author and the novel to make an educated choice and defend their choice with textual evidence. The novel that was chosen and defended the most would become the class anchor text for that unit.

Each station encouraged students to interpret the front cover and list three things they notice about the cover and illustrations, analyze the inside cover summary, read the informational article, and watch the author video. While interpreting the various forms of texts, the students developed their claim of which novel they believed the class should read and recorded textual evidence and supporting details to defend their claim in their argumentative essay. Below is the graphic organizer students were provided with to complete at each station. In the second activity, the students referred to this graphic organizer throughout writing their argumentative essay.

Name: _____   Date: _____

Interpret the front cover of the novel. Record three things you notice.

      1.

      2.

      3.

What do you think this novel is about? Explain your answer.

_____

_____

Annotate the author's article. Summarize your thoughts about the author and the texts meaning by answering these questions: why did the author write the novel, what social justice issue is the novel about, what connections do you have to the novel or author.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Watch the short video about the author and the novel. Record textual evidence, the significance, and your personal connections to the novel. These aspects will be your base to choosing and building your claim.

Textual Evidence	Significance	Connection

The graphic organizer prompted students to reflect on their interpretations, make meaningful connections, and highlight important textual evidence. The graphic organizer functioned as a note catcher to capture the students' thoughts and supporting details from the text

and was used by students as a reference for textual evidence while students created and defended their claim. The organizer chunked the material and kept students on track throughout the lesson. At the end of the class, I reviewed the students' organizers and provided them with a participation grade for completed work.

To meet the needs of all students in the inclusive setting, I differentiated the lesson by breaking the students into planned groups that participated in the three stations. I grouped the students depending on IEP's, individual abilities and interests. I differentiated the content and process to best accommodate to my students needs as well as scaffolded the instruction and material. The content was differentiated by offering students various delivery formats such as illustrations, readings, and videos. The content was also differentiated by using the station work strategy which initiated movement throughout the classroom and collaboration between students in pre-planned groups. I often utilize small group work in my classroom to encourage students to verbalize their ideas, collaborate and listen to their peers' ideas, and share authentic discussion (Catapano, 2019). To address the multiple needs of students in the inclusive classroom, I differentiated the process by allowing time to reflect on the information provided in each station along with prompting reflection questions for students to use to make sense of the content. In the inclusive classroom teachers must adapt their learning activities to meet their students' various needs. Incorporating differentiation in the lesson planning process allows teachers to design learning activities that are based on their students' learning styles and creates flexibility in the academic content taught, the delivery of the content, and the end learning product. Flexibility and adapting learning activities using differentiation and scaffolding strategies is critical to impactful learning in the inclusive classroom.

In the second learning activity, students were given time to create their first draft of the argumentative essay using the scaffolded templates shown below to guide them.

PARAGRAPH 1: INTRODUCTION

HOOK _____
_____
_____

BACKGROUND _____
_____
_____

CLAIM _____

_____

_____

PARAGRAPH 2: EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT YOUR CLAIM W/EXPLANATION

FIRST REASON _____
_____

SET UP _____
_____

EVIDENCE _____
_____
_____(_____).

EXPLANATION _____
_____
_____

SET UP _____
_____
_____

EVIDENCE _____
_____
_____(_____).

EXPLANATION _____
_____
_____
_____

PARAGRAPH 3:

CLAIM _____ _____

_____

_____

EVIDENCE _____

_____

_____

EXPLANATION _____ __

_____

_____ _____

PARAGRAPH 4: COUNTERCLAIM

COUNTERCLAIM _____ _____

_____

SET UP _____ _____

_____

_____

EVIDENCE _____ _____

_____

_____(_____).

EXPLANATION _____ _____

_____

_____

_____

RESPONSE TO COUNTERCLAIM: _____

_____

_____

_____

PARAGRAPH 5: CONCLUSION

Argumentative Essay Template

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays,_____

_____. This is an issue

because _____

_____. Some people say _____

_____ because _____. Other people

say _____because _____

_____. In my opinion, _____

_____.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

One reason I think that _____ is

_____

_____. For example _____.

This means that _____ and

shows the _____.

Therefore, I think _____.

Another reason I think that _____

_____ is_____.

For example, _____. This

means that _____

and shows the _____. Therefore,

I think _____.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT and REFUTATION PARAGRAPH

Some people say that_____

_____.

They say that _____

and so they think that _____.

Their idea is right in some ways; however, I disagree with them because_____

_____.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, I believe that _____

_____. I think that _____,

_____, and _____.

It is important because _____.

      Both activities were taught in an inclusive classroom setting. I scaffolded the essay writing for students who need to "chunk" or "break-up" their writing. These supports assisted my students in meeting the required criteria on the NYS Regents Argument Essay Rubric by stating

the correct argumentative writing structure. The first scaffolded template is for students who benefit from an outline and breaking up each paragraph. This template helps students organize their claim, the textual evidence, and their supporting details to create a clear and concise argumentative essay. The second template includes more scaffolding and supports to guide students in organizing their claim and textual evidence. This template encourages students to use textual evidence by providing sentence starters and sentence transitions within the template. The ultimate goal of scaffolding this essay is to support students in understanding the draft process and organization of an argumentative essay, intending to minimize scaffolding needed for the final argumentative essay at the end of the unit.

I provided a copy of the NYS Regents Argument Essay Rubric for students to utilize as a checklist to ensure each essay meets the CCSS. My students are familiar with this rubric as we have practiced and used it throughout the year. One way I have done this is by using a jig-saw strategy where students work in pairs to match argumentative essay examples with the correct rubric score. The activity includes students interpreting multiple essays with scores varying from 1 to 6 and matching the essay with the correct score based on the rubric criteria. This strategy increases student familiarity with the rubric and what criteria they need to meet in order to receive a high-level score. The rubric criteria include content and analysis, use of evidence, coherence, and organization, and control of conventions. It is important to break down the rubric's criteria to ensure my students understand their task and how they will be assessed. Below is a link providing the NYS Regents writing rubric.

https://www.bxscience.edu/ourpages/auto/2017/9/26/63353131/Argument%20Rubric-English%20Regents.pdf

I assessed my students throughout both lessons by using formative assessments such as checks for understanding, the fist-to-five strategy, and learning target trackers (Berger, Strasser, & Woodfin, 2015). The summative assessment of this lesson was the argumentative essay that was evaluated by the NYS Regents Argument Rubric. My students were engaged in both the stations and making a novel choice that directly affect their learning and the learning of their peers. Student-engagement has directly correlated to the three authentic learning activities discussed. My students came into the first learning activity with personal experiences and opinions about social justice topics and further built upon those connections by interpreting informational texts. The students used the supporting details from the texts to defend their opinion and make an educated choice on which novel the class should read. Not only did my students feel connected to the novel choices and social justice topics, but they also engaged in the authentic audience which was their peers. My students made a choice that would be discussed amongst their peers and directly affected their peers and themselves. Through these activities authentic learning and audiences made students engage in the learning activities and prompted students to make meaningful connections to the novels' topics and their personal experiences and opinions. My students engage in authentic learning that promotes them to connect their personal experiences to the topics discussed in class. Often in my classroom, the authentic learning happens when my students begin an activity about a controversial topic which then leads to class discussions and sharing personal connections and opinions about the social justice topic. The social justice issues discussed in the stations and novels engaged students through meaningful connections and real-world issues that my students relate to and created authentic learning that led to outcomes that met CCSS and created learning that lasts in the inclusive setting.

In order to meet the specific needs of my students with disabilities, I used each student's IEP to guide my SDI and accommodations. For my LD students, I provided highlighted definitions of complex academic vocabulary present in the texts and station work. I explicitly taught the academic vocabulary to all students before the lesson to assist in reading comprehension and understanding the texts. I utilized small group instruction to allow for one-on-one guidance between the student and myself (Special Education Teacher), the English teacher, and/or the teacher assistant. One-on-one guidance includes reading directions, paraphrasing directions, reading text content, and paraphrasing text content for a student with these accommodations listed on their IEP. The first lesson's three stations implemented a movement for all students and provided time for students to reflect on the three novels' authors, the novel summary, and their connections. I used the station transition time specifically for my students that have scheduled breaks defined in their IEP without that student missing essential academic content. To meet the need of my Visually Impaired student, I provided that specific student with enlarged print for reading the texts. These examples of SDI supports and instruction are applied in all lessons in order to accommodate instruction and materials to meet the needs of my students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.

Practicing analyzing complex texts and making claims grounded in textual evidence meets both the first and second shift in the Common Core State Standards. Using inquiry-based learning and text-dependent questions in the classroom promote students to be leaders of their learning and become critical thinkers and problem solvers both in and outside of the classroom. The first shift puts a focus on the importance of implementing complex texts in the ELA classroom. Teachers are asked to use both informational and literary texts in their classroom to promote building students' knowledge in academic language as well as their ability to research

and interpret complex topics. The first shift alone increases students' abilities to interpret complex information and build their knowledge using direct textual evidence provided. However, it is the second shift that promotes teachers to not only use complex texts but to also ask students to interpret a text, then make a claim using textual evidence to support and defend their thoughts. It is no longer enough to ask students to answer questions that are easily answered from the text with no further connections or textual understanding. In meeting the second shift, teachers must ask students text-dependent questions that require students to not only read the complex text but also comprehend and make meaningful connections to the text content and topic. When students answer the text-dependent questions they must use textual evidence to support their claims and build upon their background knowledge. Both the first and the second shift should be implemented regularly into the ELA classroom to prepare students for their college and career.

Third Shift

The third shift initiates the practice of building content knowledge through analyzing and interpreting non-fiction and informational texts. In the world beyond academics, narrative and fictional texts are not the reading norm. It is instead, informational texts that people read in their daily lives. Informational texts include maps, advertisements, directions, tax forms, and doctor's notes. These forms of informational texts may not be complex textbooks or academic articles; however, their importance in a person's life is substantial.

Informational texts in the real world build our knowledge about something we need in order to create an educated opinion, make an educated choice, or complete a job. "The CCSS specify four types of informational text: literary nonfiction, expository, argument and persuasion, and procedural" (Young & Ward, 2012). Implementing literary nonfiction in the classroom

includes students interpreting speeches, short essays, autobiographies and biographies, journalism, and opinion pieces. For example, having students connect current social justice controversies to speeches conducted by Martin Luther King Jr. only practices comprehending informational texts and encourages students to make meaningful connections from the text to the real-world. Expository texts in the ELA classroom make it unnecessary to read a book cover to cover. Examples of expository texts include Carolyn Vaughn's *Invitation to Ballet*, Peter Chrisp's *Pirates*, and Stephen Person's *Saving Animals from Hurricanes*. These texts include a table of contents, indexes, and other navigational devices that allow the reader to read portions of the book that interest them, (Young & Ward, 2012).

Argument and persuasion texts in the ELA classroom appeal to a target audience and introduce a claim, evidence, and explanation linking the evidence to the claim. This type of informational text can be useful in sparking class discussion and making personal connections to the text. One example, includes students reading the text "Pro/Con: Standing for the Pledge of Allegiance" by David Jungbolt and Ricky House. After, split the students into pro and con groups, with the groups facing each other. Then, instruct the students to defend their assigned pro or con view with evidence found using resources in the classroom. This activity engages students in analyzing the text and also in building their view on the argument. The final type of informational text is a procedural text. A procedural text provides a step-by-step guideline for completing a task. I implemented procedural texts into my classroom by grouping my students and assigning each group a different set of instructions. Each group read the instructions and completed the task of either building a birdhouse, creating a new board game, or making a recipe. My students were engaged in the real-world tasks that completed and grasped the importance of understanding how to interpret and apply procedural texts in their daily lives.

The regular practice of reading and analyzing informational and nonfiction texts in the classroom are beneficial for students' academics and real-world skills. "At nearly all grade levels, students are expected to develop research skills across content areas with a strong focus on nonfiction, including literary nonfiction; essays; biographies and autobiographies; journals and technical manuals; and charts, graphs, and maps" (Gewertz, 2012). In understanding how to analyze and comprehend the informational texts listed above, our students can build their content knowledge and prepare themselves for their college and career.

An example of incorporating informational texts into the English classroom is by using text sets. Text sets are a collection of resources that focus on one concept or topic and are used as support to build knowledge about specific content or topic. These resources vary from books, articles, charts, photographs, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. In the ELA classroom, text sets are used to support and provide background knowledge about a topic, to increase comprehension and promote meaningful connections. Text sets can be differentiated by format or genre in order to meet students' needs. Offering students multiple views on complex issues through text sets guides students to make claims defended by facts and text evidence provided in informational texts. An example would be using a text set to teach *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely. The novel *All American Boys* is a fictional story based on current social justice topics and controversial issues that have occurred in recent years. By creating a text set that includes information that builds students background knowledge about the novel's content and topic leads to increased reading comprehension and further meaningful connections.

The website NewsELA.com offers multiple text sets to be used with the novel *All American Boys*. The text sets discuss the text's topics with articles falling in the categories of opinion, war and peace, government and economics, US History, law, science and math, sports,

and kids. An example of a text set for *All American* Boys includes pairing the novel with the two articles "Issue Overview: Racial profiling" written by Bloomberg and "The Myth of Racial Profiling" by Heather Mac Donald. The novel revolves around the topic of racial profiling and police brutality as the two main characters show the readers a perspective from both sides of the argument. Both informational articles represent a different side to the topic of police brutality and give students information to build their thoughts and opinions about the topic. Teaching with a text set allows teachers to provide background knowledge about a controversial topic and then guide their students to make their claim and apply their thoughts to the novel's controversies. A text set also opens the door to creating powerful discussions amongst their peers and promotes students to defend their claim using textual evidence.

A text set may include the four types of informational texts to increase comprehension and class discussion about a topic. In my class, I used Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop" as the literary nonfiction text. Then, I used the short essay, "Police Brutality," posted on LawTeacher.com as the expository text and the article "Opinion: New sense of urgency gives rise to many ideas for better policing" by Ken Armstrong as the argument and persuasion text. Finally, I created my procedural text by laying out step-by-step directions for my students to follow as the final activity. I split my students into groups and provided each group with directions to create a timeline, including acts of police brutality starting from the 1960s through to current events of 2019. The directions included events that my students needed to research and find the date the event occurred. Each group was provided with different police brutality events which led to each group having different timelines. My students had two class periods to work with their group on this project and must be prepared to share their timeline to the class. I created my own text set; however, many teachers use NewsELA.com to implement

text sets already created in their classroom. Below is a direct link to NewsELA.com and an example text set made for Jason Reynold's and Brendan Kiely's novel *All American Boys*.

By pairing a literary novel with nonfiction texts, teachers can build students background knowledge about content and topics and lead students to make educated claims about controversial content. Students benefit from the practice of researching information and building their knowledge and opinions about topics as they are both skills necessary for the real world.

Teachers have access to multiple forms of informational texts, some of which include print, non-print, and web sources. Print sources include novels, biographies and autobiographies, newspapers, magazines, poetry, and memoirs. Non-print sources include guest speakers, videos, music, art, and technology. Websites that offer informational texts include CommonLit, NewsELA, Tween Tribune, Lit2Go, and Primary Source Sets. ELA teachers take these various forms of informational texts and utilize them in their classroom by pairing them with literary novels. For example, an ELA teacher may pair the classic literary text *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare with the movie version of the text to increase student engagement and comprehension of the setting, characters, language, and storyline. An ELA teacher can show the students the video first, in order to increase engagement or may break the video up into sections after reading each Act. Utilizing the various text sources allows ELA teachers to increase comprehension and meaningful connections made to the literary novel.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

ELA teachers are challenged to meet the shifts to the CCSS while creating a curriculum that accommodates and engages students in an inclusive environment. To meet their students'

diverse needs and the shifts in standards, teachers must cultivate learning that lasts beyond the classroom. By connecting relatable topics, targets, tasks, and texts to the real world, our students participate in academic content that goes beyond the classroom. Student-engagement increases as students apply knowledge to real-life contexts and situations, known as authentic learning. Learning that lasts beyond the classroom is cultivated by authentic learning experiences, taught in the inclusive classrooms through flexible and adaptable pedagogy while meeting the CCSS shifts.

The shifts are created to prepare students for their college and career through the practice of critical thinking skills, perseverance, and self-reflection. By fostering student collaboration, reflection, and students' responsibility for learning activities, teachers can meet the shifts and also engage students in learning that lasts. In the inclusive classroom, educators must use strategies such as UDL, differentiation, scaffolding, and SDI instruction to create meaningful access to academic content for all students. The content is outlined by the CCSS; however, it is the teacher's professional obligation to incorporate real-world connections and foster authentic learning experiences in their classroom. With these connections, teachers successfully promote learning that lasts beyond the classroom while meeting the shifts in the CCSS.

Teachers of 2019 are expected to meet the shifts in the CCSS to prepare their students for their college and careers challenges. Students must become inquiry-based learners, who ask questions and find answers through collaboration, research, and reflection. Educators guide their students to collaborate with their peers and draw meaningful connections from their prior knowledge and background experiences to successfully build their mastery of knowledge and apply that knowledge to the real-world. Without authentic learning and learning that lasts, students are not stuck learning through memorization and struggle to apply their knowledge to

the real-world. Teachers of 2019 are teaching students more than just academic curriculum, teachers are making a positive impact on students' lives and cultivating successful students and citizens.

The three shifts in the CCSS build upon existing standards, while putting a focus on skills and knowledge necessary for students to succeed in their life beyond academics. Through understanding the shifts both individually and collectively, teachers can successfully implement authentic learning and real-world knowledge in the inclusive ELA classroom.

The first shift puts focus on the regular practice of analyzing complex texts in the ELA classroom and also interpreting those texts' academic language. The shift encourages teachers to focus on implementing complex texts in the classroom and increase reading comprehension to better prepare students for complex texts in their college, career, and life. Increased reading comprehension is directly affected by the increased practice and understanding of academic language and vocabulary. The first shift promotes students to read and analyze both complex texts and academic language that are applicable in real-life. To meet this shift, educators must incorporate various forms of complex texts into the inclusive classroom. By incorporating various texts such as letters, essays, music lyrics, newspapers, speeches, poems, and fictional work into the classroom, teachers can introduce students to complex texts that align with the shifts and also engage students in meaningful reading and comprehension. These texts should be relevant to students as well as real-world topics in order to m increase student engagement while also building skills to interpret and reflect upon complex messages and information. The goal of the first shift is to engage students in complex texts that challenge them to make meaningful connections to the text and apply those connections to life beyond academics.

The second shift also includes analyzing complex texts while adding the practice of reading, writing, and speaking grounded in textual evidence from the text. Students should be interpreting both literary and informational texts in the ELA classroom. Through their interpretations, students must make claims that are defended by textual evidence pulled directly from the text itself. Educators meet the second shift by asking students text-dependent questions that encourage students to recall back to the text to successfully answer the question. In practicing close-reading strategies, students are inquiring skills necessary for their college and careers. In the real world, students must be able to read a text, analyze that text, and make a solid claim about the text topic while defending that claim with supporting details taken from the text. It is not enough to simply answer questions about a text, students must answer questions and defend those answers using textual evidence. The regular practice of analyzing complex texts and reading, writing, and speaking using textual evidence meets both the first and the second shift in the CCSS.

The third shift maintains the importance of analyzing complex texts, but places focus on building content knowledge through analyzing nonfiction and informational texts. The ELA classroom is most often filled with narrative and informational texts; however, in the world beyond academics, informational texts are the norm. Informational texts include literary nonfiction, expository, argumentative and persuasion, and procedural texts. By implementing the regular practice of these texts in the inclusive classroom, teachers are better preparing their students for the real world. To meet the shift, teachers can create text sets by pairing informational texts with literary texts. Text sets allow students to build their content knowledge as well as their own opinion about a topic. Teachers build inquiry-based learners who build their

content knowledge through the regular practice of research and defending their claims with textual evidence.

All three shifts build important skills necessary for students to be successful in their college and careers. By analyzing complex texts our students are building their reading comprehension skills shown by making claims that are grounded in textual evidence and building their content knowledge with rich informational texts. All three shifts individually are important; however, the shifts collectively prepare students to be successful citizens beyond the classroom. Implementing the shifts in the inclusive classroom can be daunting, but are not impossible to meet through flexible and adaptable teaching strategies. I recommend farther research into differentiation strategies, authentic learning, and learning that lasts. Texts that highlight these topics include *Leaders of Their Learning* by Ron Berger, Leah Rugen, and Libby Woodfin, *Learning That Lasts* by Ron Berger, Ann Vilen, and Libby Woodfin, and *Transformational Literacy* by Cheryl Becker Dobbertin, Libby Woodfin, Ron Berger, and Suzanne Nathan Plaut. Websites that are useful resources for teaching inclusive classrooms include http://seriweb.com/, https://adayinourshoes.com/iep-504-accommodations-strategies/, https://www.edutopia.org/topic/differentiated-instruction, and http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.XS896ehKjIU. My final recommendation includes becoming familiar with the Common Core State Standards website http://www.corestandards.org/. This site provides facts about the CCSS, the shifts, and the standards creation process.

Educators must be active learners that are flexible to the shifts in education practices and standards. An inclusive ELA teacher must understand the CCSS shifts and their goals to best prepare their students for life beyond their classroom. By implementing authentic learning experiences and learning that lasts, teachers can make meaningful connections from academic

content to the real world. The days of teaching through rote memorization are over. Teachers today must understand their students' unique background knowledge and experiences to increase student engagement and meaningful connections made to the academic content. Understanding what engages students in instruction allows teachers to implement authentic learning in their classroom. Authentic learning experiences encourage students to use critical thinking skills, analyze information, reflect, and collaborate, leading to college and career-ready students. Teachers have a moral and professional obligation to prepare students for life beyond school. ELA teachers must take on the task of meeting the shifts in the CCSS in the inclusive classroom by implementing flexible teaching strategies that create learning that lasts beyond the classroom.

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