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# Research Supporting the Common Core ELA/Literacy Shifts and Standards

Research Series

## The Research Supporting Shift 1: Complex Text

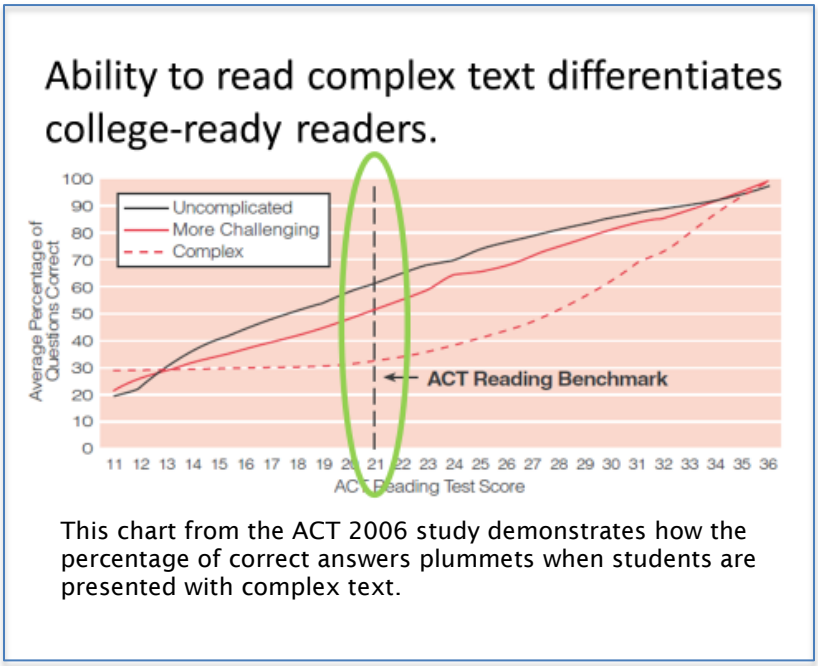
### The Research Supporting Complex Text

**Primary Research**

1. **ACT (2006). Reading between the lines: What the ACT reveals about college readiness in reading. Iowa City, IA: Author.**

   **Relevant findings:**

   - The ability to comprehend complex text is **the factor** that differentiates college-ready readers. (pg. 15-17)
   - Question type (literal vs. inferential thinking, main idea vs. supporting details, etc.) **did not** differentiate college-ready readers (pg. 13-16)
   - Only 51% of students who took the ACT in 2006 demonstrated college readiness in reading, with great disparities between ethnic and income groups. (pg. 1 – 2)
   - Of those students not meeting the ACT Reading Benchmark, only 5% met the ACT Science Benchmark, implying that reading is crucial to success across the curriculum (pg. 25)




This chart from the ACT 2006 study demonstrates how the percentage of correct answers plummets when students are presented with complex text.

2. **Nelson, J., Perfetti, C., Liben, D., & Liben, M. (2012). Measures of text difficulty: Testing their predictive value for grade levels and student performance. *Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington, DC.***

   **Relevant findings:**

   - Analyzed more than 1300 retired state test passages finding that as text complexity increases, student scores decline.
   - Showed that six different tools can be used for quantitative measurement of text complexity, with consistent results.

3. **Williamson, G. L., Koons, H., Sandvik, T., & Sanford-Moore, E. (2012). The text complexity continuum in grades 1-12 (MetaMetrics Research Brief). Durham, NC: MetaMetrics.**

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4. **Stenner, A. J., Sanford-Moore, E., & Williamson, G. L. (2012). The Lexile Framework for Reading quantifies the reading ability needed for "College & Career Readiness" (MetaMetrics Research Brief). Durham, NC: MetaMetrics.**

   **Relevant finding:**

   - Measured median complexity of 12th grade texts as 1130L. (Williamson et al. 2012 pg. 3). College and career texts showed a median complexity of 1300L. (Stenner et al 2012 pg. 3). Thus the difference between grade 12 and post-secondary levels was 170 Lexiles, greater than the difference between 6th grade and 10th grade medians (130 Lexiles).

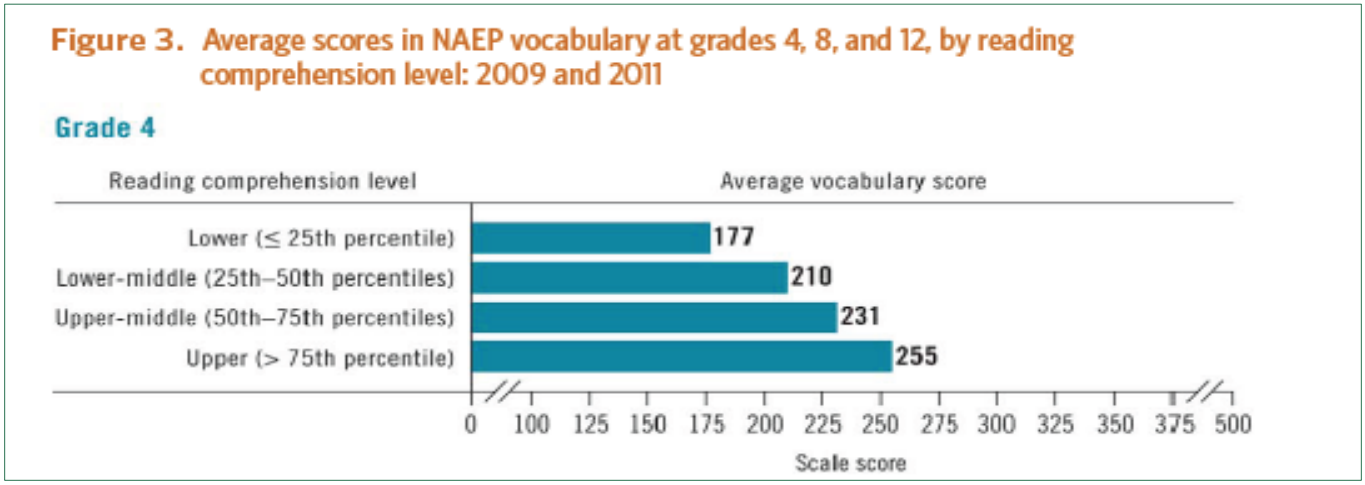
*Please Note: Quantitative measures, while important are not sufficient for evaluating text complexity. Appendix A of The Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy calls for a 3-part model of text complexity, including quantitative and qualitative measures and reader and task considerations. (pg. 4 – 16)*

## The Research Supporting Vocabulary in Complex Text

### Primary Research

1. **National Center for Education Statistics (2012). The Nations Report Card: Vocabulary results from the 2009 and 2011 NAEP reading assessments. *Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.***

   **Relevant finding:**
   - Scores on NAEP vocabulary questions strongly correlated with scores in NAEP reading comprehension, demonstrating a strong link between vocabulary and comprehension. (pg. 5)




2. **Nelson, J., Perfetti, C., Liben, D., & Liben, M. (2012). Measures of text difficulty: Testing their predictive value for grade levels and student performance. *Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington, DC.***

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**Relevant finding:**

- Vocabulary and syntax are the features of complex text that likely cause the greatest difficulty. (pg. 50)

3. **Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3.** ***American Educator, 27(1), 4-9.***

   **Relevant finding:**

   - Before having entered school, low-income children in this study heard more than 30 million fewer words than higher-income peers and had vocabularies half or less the size of wealthier peers.'

4. **Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy.** ***Reading Research Quarterly, 360-407.***

   **Relevant finding:**

   - Presents a framework for understanding the role of academic vocabulary acquisition in "Mathew Effects" in education, i.e., the tendency for the reading gap between stronger readers and weaker readers to grow the longer they are in school.

5. **Adams, M. J. (2009). The challenge of advanced texts: The interdependence of reading and learning.** ***Reading more, reading better: Are American students reading enough of the right stuff*****, 163-189.**

6. **Adams, M. J. (2011). Advancing our students' language and literacy: The challenge of complex texts.** ***American Educator, 34(4), 3.***

   **Relevant finding:**

   - In these two related works, Adams draws on recent research to show how vocabulary growth is essential to academic success.

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## For additional research, see also:

**Complex Text**


- Chall, J. S., Conard, S. & Harris, S. (1977). An analysis of textbooks in relation to declining SAT scores.
- Hayes, D. P., Wolfer, L. T., & Wolfe, M. F. (1996). Schoolbook simplification and its relation to the decline in SAT-verbal scores. *American Educational Research Journal*, *33*(2), *489-508.*
- Sanford-Moore, E. E., & Williamson, G. L. (2012). Bending the text complexity curve to close the gap. (MetaMetrics Research Brief). Durham, NC: MetaMetrics.
- Shanahan, T. (2013). Letting the text take center stage: How the Common Core State Standards will transform English language arts instruction. *American Educator*, *37*(3), *4-11.*
- Williamson, G. L. (2006). Aligning the Journey with a destination. *A white paper from The Lexile Framework for Reading. Durham, NC: MetaMetrics*.


**Vocabulary**


- Hiebert, E.H., & Kamil, M.L. (Eds.) (2005). *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Landauer, T. K., & Dumais, S. T. (1997). A solution to Plato's problem: The latent semantic analysis theory of acquisition, induction, and representation of knowledge. *Psychological review*, *104(2), 211-240.*
- Liben, D. (n.d.) The significance of vocabulary in the Common Core State Standards: An overview of the research base and instructional implications. http://achievethecore.org/page/974/vocabulary-and-the-common-core-detail-pg