Preparing Secondary Teachers to Support Comprehension of Complex Disciplinary Texts

Presented by:
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and
Mary Fahrenbruck, Ph. D.
University of New Mexico, Las Cruces, NM
Disclosure Statements

0 **Nancy DeFrance**: I have no relevant financial or nonfinancial relationship(s) within the products or services described, reviewed, evaluated or compared in this presentation.

0 **Mary Fahrenbruck**: I have no relevant financial or nonfinancial relationship(s) within the products or services described, reviewed, evaluated or compared in this presentation.
Agenda

- INTRODUCTION of session purpose and goals
- CONNECTION of session topic and context to participants’ knowledge and experience
- DEMONSTRATION of preparation of text needed to facilitate comprehension by engaging students in rich, meaningful discussion
- EXPLORATION of an academic text; its important ideas as well as conceptual, linguistic, and graphic affordances and challenges that present opportunities for students to grapple with ideas via discussion.
- REFLECTION on insights developed during the exploration.
- APPLICATION of strategies for preparing and conducting a text-based discussion as enacted in a real high school social studies classroom.
- REFLECTION on discoveries made during the exploration.
INTRODUCTION

Of session *purpose* and *goals*
Purpose/Goals

Participants will be able to:

1. Describe the architecture of text-based discussion, including guidelines for choosing, segmenting, and determining the essential understanding of a text,
2. Identify elements (conceptual, linguistic, and graphic) of text that present both affordances and challenges; analyze those elements within an example text and create prompts that use those elements to guide learners to discover important ideas,
3. Explain how text-based discussion empowers learners to make sense of text by means of speaking and listening, as well as reading; explain how text-based discussion empowers teachers to facilitate learners’ making sense of text by means of a thoughtfully choreographed interaction.
CONNECTION
Of session *topic* and *context* to participants’ *knowledge and experience*
Educational Context: Students to make sense of complex text

A Three-Part Model for Measuring Text Complexity

As signaled by the graphic at right, the Standards’ model of text complexity consists of three equally important parts.

(1) Qualitative dimensions of text complexity. In the Standards, qualitative dimensions and qualitative factors refer to those aspects of text complexity best measured or only measurable by an attentive human reader, such as levels of meaning or purpose; structure; language conventionality and clarity; and knowledge demands.

(2) Quantitative dimensions of text complexity. The terms quantitative dimensions and quantitative factors refer to those aspects of text complexity, such as word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion, that are difficult if not impossible for a human reader to evaluate efficiently, especially in long texts, and are thus today typically measured by computer software.

(3) Reader and task considerations. While the prior two elements of the model focus on the inherent complexity of text, variables specific to particular readers (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and to particular tasks (such as purpose and the complexity of the task assigned and the questions posed) must also be considered when determining whether a text is appropriate for a given student. Such assessments are best made by teachers employing their professional judgment, experience, and knowledge of their students and the subject.

Figure 1: The Standards’ Model of Text Complexity
Educational Context: Students to make sense of complex text


Educational Context: Teachers to identify discipline-specific literacies, apprentice students.
Educational Context: Teachers to identify discipline-specific literacies, apprentice students


Educational Context: Students to meet challenges


Research context: The potential of text-based discussion to support reading comprehension

Traditional Questions

- Assess
- Elicit specific answers
- Purpose: remember author’s words
- After reading
- Emphasis on individual
- Teacher-student interaction
- Limits interest

Discussion questions, prompts

- Grapple with ideas
- Prompt analysis
- Purpose: clarify author’s message
- While reading
- Emphasis on group
- Student-student interaction
- Facilitates engagement
Research context: The potential of text-based discussion to support reading comprehension


Local Context: Teachers to engage students in thinking deeply with text

- Rural school district in West MI
- Low achievement in literacy
- Sought college course to support them in going ‘below the surface’ of texts
- 20 MS, HS teachers
- Students typically achieving and with special needs designations
- Texts for the course were transcripts of their own classroom discussions
DEMONSTRATION

Of preparation of text needed to facilitate comprehension by engaging students in rich, meaningful discussion.
Step 1: Planning
Planning

1) Select high quality text
2) Determine essential understanding(s) to be constructed
3) Segment text thematically, establishing stopping points
4) Articulate ideas within and across segments that work together to build essential understanding(s)
5) Anticipate potential challenges, resources
6) Develop prompts that lead to building understanding(s)
Step 2: Launching
Launching

0 Develop or activate content knowledge, thinking skills, interest, access

0 Improve the match between text, reader, activity, and context
Step 3: Support student interactions with text
Support student interactions with the text

- Supporting student interactions with the text
  - Use plan
  - Ask questions
  - Respond to students
  - Connect students to each other
Step 4: Exiting
Exiting

- Assess
- Transition
- Summarize
- Highlight
The Architecture of Text-Based Discussions

Planning
- Select high quality text
- Determine essential understanding(s) to be constructed
- Segment text thematically, establishing stopping points
- Articulate ideas within/across segments to build essential understanding(s)
- Anticipate potential challenges, resources
- Develop prompts that lead to building understanding(s)

Launching
- Develop or activate content knowledge, thinking skills, interest, access
- Improve the match between text, reader, activity, and context

Supporting student interactions with the text
- Use plan
- Ask questions
- Respond to students
- Connect students to each other

Exiting
- Assess
- Transition
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- Highlight
EXPLORATION

Of an academic text; its important ideas as well as conceptual, linguistic, and graphic affordances and challenges that present opportunities for students to grapple with ideas via discussion.
Planning

1) Select high quality text
2) Determine essential understanding(s) to be constructed
3) Segment text thematically, establishing stopping points
4) Articulate ideas within and across segments that work together to build essential understanding(s)
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6) Develop prompts that lead to building understanding(s)
## Planning: Select, determine, segment

### I HAVE A DREAM
Delivered by Martin Luther King Jr.  
August 28, 1963, Washington D.C.

**ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING:**  
MLK, a man who’s walked in the same shoes as his audience, is trying to encourage them to take thoughtful, peaceful actions now.

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Setting

Introduction
### Planning: Select, determine, segment

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**Promise made**

**Promise broken**
Planning: Select, determine, segment

Check as metaphor for promise

March as metaphor for presenting check

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ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING:
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We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is not the time to engage in the luxury of cooling off by taking the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to heed the old Negro spiritual of “Get on the bus or get on the back.” Now is the time to make our lives intentionally efficient to ensure that our children live in a world more fit to be called our country.

MLK

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This is the moment to set aside the old and to make way for the new. And we are making a better day for all. But there is something that must be said to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: In the process of gaining our rightful peace, we must not be guilty of wrong doing. Let us not commit the sin of wrongdoing.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must return to the major heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

MLK

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom.

We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead.

We cannot turn back.

MLK

There are those who ask: “How long will this take?” We say: “As long as it takes.” We shall not be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.

We cannot be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, are loaded down with the weight of our soles, heavy with the fatigue of travel, are loaded down with the weight of our soles. We are not satisfied as long as our basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one.

We shall be satisfied when this发生 when our children are given to see the victory of justice and freedom and the right of which we speak.

MLK
Planning: Select, determine, segment

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12 I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come from areas where your quest – your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the victims of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unaccustomed suffering and redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow, this situation can and will be changed.

12 Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. I say to you today, my friends, and so even though we face difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state swarming with the heat of injustice, swelling with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" – one day, that if a little black boy and black girl, holding hands will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today!

14 I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the South with.

15 With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.
Planning: Select, determine, segment

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And this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning.

My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.
Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride,
From every mountain side, let freedom ring!

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.
And let it be said to the children of later generations,
Let freedom ring from theAlleghenies of Pennsylvania.
Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.
Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that:
Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.
Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.
Let freedom ring from every hill and every hill of Mississippi.
From every mountain side, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speak up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!
Articulate ideas that work together to build essential understanding(s)

What is it that learners might say that would be evidence of learning with text?
Articulate ideas that work together to build essential understanding(s)

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Anticipate potential challenges, resources

0 Re-read with close attention to own interactions with ideas: where were you confused, sure of understanding?
0 What was the source of that feeling?
   0 Conceptual information:
      0 Were ideas conceptually complex, unfamiliar, abstract, dense?
      0 Was knowledge assumed?
   0 Linguistic information:
      0 Semantic complexity (vocabulary, metaphors)
      0 Syntactic complexity (nominal and pronominal referents)
      0 Discourse complexity (organization of ideas, repetition)
   0 Graphic information:
      0 Complimentary, readily interpreted?
Anticipate potential challenges, resources

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**MLK** a man who’s walked in same shoes as audience, urges them to take thoughtful, peaceful, immediate actions to demand freedom, justice.

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*References: & Fahornbruck; ASHA, 2012*
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<td>100 years ago Abraham Lincoln gave oppressed black slaves great hope when he promised them freedom and justice in the Emancipation Proclamation</td>
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<td>100 years later, black people are still oppressed - excluded from American society, including jobs, which leaves us poor in a rich country. We march to call attention to this oppression.</td>
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Anticipate potential challenges, resources
Develop questions, prompts (initial)

0 At segmented points, identify ideas to be used in constructing major understanding
0 Initiate discussion with open ended question to get out, clarify author’s words, ideas
   0 What is the author trying to say here?
   0 What is the author’s message?
   0 What is the author talking about?
0 Follow up with more specific questions
Develop questions, prompts (follow-up)

- Productive Questions
  - Lead students to make connections
  - Focus student thinking on specific information
  - Elicit explanation
  - Support students’ inferencing
  - Get at the big ideas
## Develop Questions, Prompts

### I HAVE A DREAM
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MK, a man who's walked in same shoes as audience, urges them to take thoughtful, peaceful, immediate actions to demand freedom, justice.

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<td>Graphics show context, King's relationship to audience, importance of event, urgency.</td>
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<td>I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.</td>
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<td>Conceptual: Straightforward statement. Paul's purpose as demonstration for freedom. Graphic: Words 'join with' consistent with image.</td>
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<td>Let’s examine this image to see the context in which MLK spoke. What do you notice? (V/U) What do you notice about setting, dress around him? What do you infer about emotion, relationships? I wonder why he spoke in this context...</td>
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<td>Conceptual: Straightforward statement; id’s purpose as demonstration for freedom. Graphics: Words ‘join with you’ consistent with image. What’s going on? How are his words consistent—or not—with your ideas about the photo?</td>
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Defranco & Fahenbruick, ASHA, 2012
### Develop Questions, Prompts

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### Develop Questions, Prompts

#### I HAVE A DREAM
Delivered by Martin Luther King Jr.
August 28, 1963, Washington D.C.

**Essential Understanding:**
MLK, a man who’s walked in the shoes as audience, urges them to take thoughtful, peaceful, immediate actions to demand freedom, justice.

<table>
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<th>Text/Figure</th>
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<th>Affordances &amp; Challenges re: important ideas</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>In a sense we’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the “unalienable Rights” of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked “insufficient funds.”</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.</td>
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References: & Helonbrink, ASMA, 2012
REFLECTION on the *insights* gained during the *exploration*
APPLICATION

of *strategies* for *preparing* and *conducting* text-based discussion as enacted in a *real* high school social studies *classroom*.
Discussing MLK’s “I have a Dream” Speech
REFLECTION

REFLECTION on the *discoveries* made during the *application*