**Key Criteria for Text Selections**

The Common Core State Standards point strongly toward a text-based approach for teaching students how to read, including those students who lag behind in achieving reading facility. To bring all students up to grade-level reading proficiency, the criteria recommended below emphasize the need to provide *all* students with consistent opportunities to confront and comprehend grade-level complex text.

1. **Texts for each grade align with the complexity requirements outlined in the standards.** The Common Core State Standards hinge on students encountering appropriately complex texts at each grade level to develop the mature language skills and the conceptual knowledge they need for success in school and life. In each grade (beginning in grade 1), Reading Standard 10 outlines the level of text complexity at which students need to demonstrate comprehension. This can start in kindergarten or even earlier with complex texts read aloud to students. (Appendix A in the Common Core State Standards gives further information on how text complexity can be measured.)

   Research makes clear that the complexity levels of the texts students are presently required to read throughout their school careers are significantly below what is required to achieve college and career readiness. Far too often students who have fallen behind are given only less complex texts rather than the support they need to read texts at the appropriate level of complexity. Both these issues must be addressed by selecting complex texts that are grade level appropriate.

2. **All students, including those who are behind, have extensive opportunities to encounter and comprehend grade-level complex text as required by the standards.** Complex text, whether accessed through read-alouds or as a group reading activity, is a rich repository to which all readers need access. Complex text contains more sophisticated academic vocabulary, lends itself to more complex tasks, and is able to support rich dialogue. Because students at these grades can listen to much more complex material than they can read themselves, read-aloud selections should be provided for the teachers in the curriculum materials. Curriculum materials must provide extensive opportunities for all students to engage with complex text as a member of a class, although students whose decoding ability is developing at a slower rate also will need supplementary opportunities to read text they can read successfully without extensive supports. They may also need extra assistance with fluency practice and vocabulary building. Students who need additional assistance, however, must not miss out on essential practice and instruction their classmates are receiving to help them think deeply about texts and gain world and word knowledge. Therefore, remedial materials must be flexible and straightforward enough to be used in alternative settings and times:

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1 A working group is developing clear, common standards for measuring text complexity that can be consistent across different curricula and publishers. These criteria, due out in summer 2011, will blend quantitative and qualitative factors and will be widely shared and made available to publishers and curriculum developers. It is likely that the measurement of some narrative fiction as well as poetry and drama for the time being will have to depend largely on qualitative judgments that are based on the principles laid out in Appendix A and are being further developed and refined.
before and after school, at home, or in after-school programs. In most cases, the persons working with students in such settings will not have as much experience as the primary classroom teachers, and materials must accommodate that fact.

3. **Text selections are worth reading and re-reading.** The standards maintain that high-quality text selections should be consistently offered to students because they will encourage students and teachers to spend more time on them than they would on low-quality material. Texts selected for inclusion should be well written and, as appropriate, richly illustrated. This principle applies equally to texts intended for reading aloud and texts for students to read by themselves. (For samples of appropriate quality of selection, see Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards.) Selections in the early elementary grades must also contain sufficient repetitions of each lesson’s words and spelling/sound patterns and should be complemented with associated spelling and writing activities. To be sufficient, materials should provide abundant — and easily available — opportunities to ensure that all students can transfer knowledge of spelling/sound patterns to words not previously seen or studied.