



**"Bringing the Common Core to Life"**  
**David Coleman · Founder, Student Achievement Partners**  
**Chancellors Hall · State Education Building · Albany, NY**  
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**Part 1**

**Introduction by Commissioner Steiner:**

Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you. It's a special moment this afternoon, so I'm going to ask everyone to take their seats. Thank you so much.

If you had said five years ago that 44 states in this country were going to come together and endorse a set of standards in their two critical core subjects of English Language Arts and mathematics, you could have had very, very long odds against that assumption. This country after all has a long history of very local educational initiatives. There are some proud parts of that history but there are also deep challenges of inequality of opportunity between different students exposed to radically unequal opportunities when it comes to the material they study and the quality of the teachers who are in front of them. No person in this country can claim to have done more to bring us to this moment than our guest who I'll introduce shortly.

But let me remind us all how this extraordinary enterprise of the common core standards fits into the vision of educational reform for the 3 million students of this state. We speak now of a triangle of educational reform work. One part of that triad are the standards-based curriculum that we will be working on with our guest today. The next part of that triad is a radically new set of models of assessments. We need to move past what we could call assessment 1.0, the multiple choice bubble test that you all know so well. I'd never seen one until I came to this country at the age of 22 when I was asked to fill out in the GRE exam A, B, C, or D and D was "cannot be ascertained by the information given." I just put D all the way through my math exam. I hadn't done math since I was 16. I was not a beneficiary of the common core. But I think the future looks bright. We are speaking of interim assessments that probe for deep understanding through course work that we are going to work on together in the next few years again with our guest. And then the third part of the triad, a really fair but rigorous accountability system for the first time for our teachers and our principals, enshrined in state law and shortly to be acted on by the Board of Regents. This triangle cannot work unless at the core of it are extraordinarily well-prepared teachers and principals, and that's why this state has made a major commitment to a radically different model of teacher preparation based on clinical practice and work on the skills that clearly make a difference for children. Five years from now, I hope that someone in this room can look back and say, "Who could have imagined that we put that triangle in place, that we have



moved the bar for our children in all of the directions that could have only been hoped for and dreamt of five years before.”

When the history of this period is written, I am convinced that David Coleman will be at the very center of the account of educational reform in this country. He has worked quietly through student achievement partners and earlier than that with the Grow Network, quietly but with extraordinary effectiveness as the architect and co-author of the standards he will describe today. It took an amazing act of courage and intellectual achievement to produce something that could be embraced by states across the country, states with proud individual histories--New York, Massachusetts--states that were still looking for their first real standards--north, south, east, and west. It was a pipe dream and now it's a reality. The critical importance of these standards is that for the first time everything else can be built around them. Without standards, we could not build coherent curriculum. Without standards, our assessments could not be compared properly across states. The assessments themselves lacked standards. Without standards, we cannot produce the kind of teacher preparation we need because we're not sure what we're preparing teachers to teach. With standards, we can for the first time do exactly that. Standards, in other words, are the backbone around which we will build the body of our education in the future. This is, therefore, a moment for all of us to look forward to the next steps.

After David has spoken, we will come back and describe just those steps--the network teams and the work in this state that will help all of you bring these standards to your schools and to your students. We know that this is a huge challenge. We know that teachers and principals, parents and students must be brought in as a partnership, as a community of learners, as we put these new standards in place. This is not a two-minute drill. What you're going to hear today is a first chapter, not the last; an inauguration, not an announcement and then a hiding. This Department is committed to working with you in the years to come as you translate these standards into what matters most, the things that are put in front of children in the classrooms across this state.

Without further ado, it is an extraordinary privilege for me to introduce a true colleague, a pioneer of education reform, David Coleman.



**Part 2**  
**Introduction to the Common Core State Standards by**  
**David Coleman**

That was perhaps the kindest introduction I've ever received. My mother lives only an hour from here and I'm hoping she could hear it directly. My name's David Coleman and together with the team that worked together with a much larger team of 48 states and teachers and experts from all fields developed the common core standards that now sit before you. But if you don't mind, I thought I might begin on a slightly more personal note. I grew up in New York City. I went to public school there. I went to PS 41, IS 70 and, yes, the old Stuyvesant building. You always know a New Yorker because they talk about their school names as numbers with affection like PS 41 or IS 70. My brother lived here in Albany for many years and my niece was born here. So you had a real partisan New Yorker in the work of the common standards.

But more important than my private background is the immensely important role that New York State played in building the common standards and I want to start there for a minute. Because one mistake you can make in thinking about common standards is that, boy, this was easy. All you do is take what's common amidst the 48 states that were involved and then you've got common standards, which would be a very bad and ugly thing. What we instead had to do was build on the work on the shoulders of the best work states had thus far done, already revising their standards, already moving towards an agenda of college and career readiness and New York State was a beacon state in terms of having done a great deal of work. There's a great deal of work in this state as you may know on revising the New York State standards towards the college and career readiness level and making a series of innovations which we stole shamelessly. The person in the group whom we stole the most from was Walter Sullivan and his working team led by Regent Cohen and others. But I mean to say to you today that the core standards stand on the shoulders of the work New York State has done. They are an advance, not a departure. And at the same time, they stand on the shoulders of many individual people in this state who contributed to them. That involves most of all the teachers of this state who are heavily involved but also John King and David Steiner himself, who played an immense and essential role in making these happen. And because I've now pointed out all these people who are involved, you can blame them for whatever parts of the standards that you don't find compelling or useful.

What I'm going to do with you today is I'm going to briefly give you an overview of the development of the common core standards, the principles on which they were based, and then go into a little more detail, an overview as it were, of mathematics and literacy. Then, we want to get closer to practice, closer to the lives you lead in making this happen. So what I will then do is give a picture of literacy instruction by looking together with you at King's wonderful letter from Birmingham Jail. And then we'll equally take a



close look at mathematics to get a better sense of what does this really mean in practice. You will have several opportunities to undermine me with questions so I hope that you will prepare them now and after what I've been through, you cannot hurt me. So please ask the most ruthless things that come to mind.

Three critical principles underline the development of the common core. First, the standards must be college and career ready. They must from kindergarten through 12th grade create a staircase for college and career readiness. It is a bargain, almost I would say a wholly bargain, between the students and the schools that if you in fact can achieve these things you are indeed ready for what comes next. The terrifying truth, as you know, about remediation rates in this state is overwhelmingly kids need remediation when they go to college and remediation is a trap from which very few students escape and this happens most of all for the kids we are most concerned about. There are systematic reasons for this gap that we will discuss. But the crucial design principle that informed our work is that we had to build a staircase that kids could follow and if they did so they'd truly be ready in the areas of literacy and mathematics for the demands of college and career. That will underlie a lot of what I'll say next.

The second is that these core standards had to be based on ethics. It was not enough to piously say what we believe all students need to know and be able to do. It was time to support those declarations with evidence that demonstrated that these core knowledge and skills were in fact the critical capacities predicting kids' effectiveness in college and career settings.

And third was a level of honesty about time. Let me tell you the difference between teachers and standards developers. For standards developers time does not matter. Nothing is easier than with the stroke of a pen adding something that now all teachers and kids need to do. But that takes no account of what teachers are constantly conscious of, which is the actual amount of time it takes to master that and for students to practice it. And what's happened in almost every state is an accretion of standards to the point that they're utterly unrealistic in terms of time. All of you know what this means. This makes assessment a Russian roulette system. Since the assessment has to cover too wide a body of material into superficial matter no one can predict what will be assessed, what won't in an in-depth way and there's a situation of distrust.

There is no voice in these standards stronger than the voice of teachers who demanded that we focus on what matters most and provide the time for teachers to teach and for students to practice. That includes formal organizations like the UFT in New York City and the AFT statewide and NYSUT, who are deeply involved in this work, the professional organizations of teachers and the disciplines like NCTE and NCTM and several others that you know of. But it also involved quite wonderfully several other teachers of every stripe from every organizational background who are involved in developing these standards and also of



course the NEA and other groups. But if there's one voice that is loud and clear here, it is the voice of teachers. And let me tell you what we learned as we listened to those voices.

**Part 3**  
**Introduction to the Common Core State Standards for**  
**Mathematics**  
**David Coleman**

I said that the standards dare to focus on what matters most. Let's talk about that in mathematics. When we talk about the East Asian and other countries that are kicking our butts in math, I think while many people won't say it, there's a common image in their minds. It's basically this: we are doomed; they work harder and longer than we do; they work on everything and our kids may be a little bit more creative, but there's no way they'll ever do this much hard work so we might as well fold our tents up now. This is interestingly an illusion. In these East Asian and other countries, actually they focus on fewer things done well. The Singapore Teaching and Learning web site does not say work harder, do more. It says teach less, learn more. To be precise, in the Thai-performing countries in mathematics as measured by the TIMSS study, there are three and only three topics that are common to their curriculum in K-2. They are the addition and subtraction of numbers and operations, that is the addition and subtraction of numbers and the quantities that fulfill them. PERIOD. Addition and subtraction, the operations and whole numbers, and the quantities they measure.

What that means in the core standards is for the first time a set of American standards dares to go beyond the mile-wide, inch-deep approach to really focusing on what the world has found the most vibrant core to deliver higher mathematics performance. In kindergarten through 2nd grade, there is a relentless focus in the core standards on addition and subtraction of whole numbers and the quantities they measure. In 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, multiplication and division enter the picture and the mighty art which most critics your ability with algebra. Does anyone know what that is, that's cultivated at that time? It is fractions--that is the area of mathematics that studies show is least well understood in this country and most inhibiting kids' understanding of algebra is the fraction. And the core standards lavish--and I will go into some more detail in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade--great attention to a full understanding and manipulation of fractions.

When I talk about focus, the companion's ideas are coherence and depth. So when I talk about this level of focus leading to proportional reasoning, geometric measurement and finally linear algebra in 8th grade, and then expanding as I'll describe in high school, it's not just focus. It's that it's coherent. It fits together. But also it's the depth with which you study. What do I mean by depth here? I mean fluency, understanding, and application. Fluency in the sense, let's be blunt about this, you are fast and accurate at the core mathematical facts and operations. Make no mistake about it. We have sometimes been too shy in this country of commanding of our students adequate fluency in their command of these operations. All kids can do it. They just do it at different rates. So you can without fear insist on it in your classrooms that kids gain these fluencies. They are essential for later mathematics but give kids time by



focus to do them over different time periods if that makes sense--fewer things done well. By understanding what you need to do, if you were to say in this room there are 120 windows of which I have washed 40, how many do I have left to go? It is an understanding of subtraction to know that it's a subtraction situation. It is to understand what you're doing when faced with that problem to know subtraction is the tool you look for.

In application math means applying math when you're not asked to do so. So when someone is going to rip you off with the mortgage, they rarely say it would be a good time to take out your calculator and do the math. Rarely in life or in our work are we warned as to when a mathematics problem has arisen. The ability to apply math and have sufficient skill and confidence in your manipulation of it is you can apply it when you are unprompted to do so. And that's what emerges as modeling in the high school which is the application of these core arithmetic terms to a wide variety of situations and powerful uses.

So the in-depth fluency, understanding and application and what I'd like you to see is the development of the math standards are like the trunk of a tree. In K-8 there's this deep focus on what you might call arithmetic. In K-5 make no mistake, this is neither basic nor simple. This is the hardest work deserving of the most practice. Fractions are deep and hard. So if I were to ask you why when you divide fractions do you flip the second one and multiply? How many of you with confidence could answer that question? We'll get back to it but there are good reasons most of us don't know the answer to that question. And it is quite harmful to people's confidence in algebra that we don't know the answer to that question. It is hard work but that focus of arithmetic is the heartbeat of later mathematics, growing in middle school into work with data, with proportional reasoning and geometric measurement, widening but at the same time expanding to a sense of number sense that grows into linear algebra. And then in the high school, what's wonderful with someone with this kind of core trunk, this focus, is they can do a variety of things. They can go into later algebra, towards engineering and calculus, they can do more with statistics and probability, but they can also do economics and other applied math fields where modeling becomes the most important. Think of it like the handle of a fork. If you dare to focus and gain that command, it then exfoliates outward. However, if you don't gain that focus, to be equally clear, this is the essential math with which everything else is confusing and impossible to do. So that's the core of the math standards.

**Part 4**  
**Introduction to the Common Core State Standards for**  
**ELA & Literacy**  
**David Coleman**

Let's talk about literacy for a minute and then I'll go into the more in-depth pictures. In literacy, does anyone know offhand the shape of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 8<sup>th</sup> grade over the last 40 years? So over the last 40 years, what's happened to reading scores in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in this country? A lot of people are doing this--it is flat. There has been no change. During this same period, unfortunately, we have doubled the amount we invest in education. So it is certainly troubling that there has been no movement here. What's obviously troubling about it is if a kid can't read past an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, they are doomed in terms of college and career readiness. We don't have to get fancy about this. They can't read the textbooks in any discipline they encounter. Interestingly, it was once hoped that you didn't have to read so well to succeed in your career, but the evidence has become absolutely clear that with careers changing so much it is no longer safe to narrowly specialize in a single area. So there is no overstating the wall we have hit in 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and how consequential it is to the kids we care about. Less than 50% make it overall and if you break down those statistics by poverty or race they are terrifying. And there is no progress. That is not only a New York problem that is an everywhere problem. We designed the core standards to be a spear or battering ram to break down that wall. That is what is underneath them. So I ask you to consider, there are many people who say, and forgive me for this, they say, "We're already doing the things you're going to say. We're already focusing in math. We're already teaching this way in literacy." That better be wrong because if we don't have a shift, we are not going to change a wall that's been standing for 40 years. So I invite you, many of you who have more experience and intelligence than I, to look towards a shift, to think about what really changes here and I'm going to give you six examples of the fundamental underlying shifts in the literacy standards.

**Number one**, it begins in the earliest grades. We in America in K-5 assessment and curriculum focus 80% of our time on stories, on literature. That is the dominant work that is done in the elementary school and that's what's tested on exams and that's what's in our textbooks. However, the research is overwhelmingly clear and actually Dr. Steiner has been an early proponent of this research at its earlier stages, that in kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the general knowledge that you develop in those years plays a crucial predictive role in not only your performance in those other disciplines, like science and history, but your ability to read more complex text itself. That is, the elementary school's a magnificent place for students to learn about the world through reading. Whoever thought otherwise? So the core standards for the first time demand that 50% of the text students encounter in kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade is informational text, meaning primarily text about science and history, text about the arts, the text through which students learn about the world. That is a major shift and if you think about what's



happening in this country unintentionally literature and stories dominated the elementary curriculum. And then we expanded the literacy block. So we made the literacy block 80% of the time. Guess what that meant? We destroyed history and science in the elementary school.

The core standards are a chance to regain the proper role of the elementary school teacher, to bring their students into the world, to spend equal time on informational and story, and in that way build a real foundation for literacy--that is the first major step. And the standards strongly encourage that the knowledge that's built through this reading and read alouds and then students reading themselves in history and science and the arts—it is coherent both within grades and across grades that students are building this foundation of knowledge. That's the first shift—50/50—informational text and literary text in K-5 required by the standards and required in both the standards and assessments that measure them. We were explicit about this.

**Number two.** It extends that same interest in the broad base of literacy, extends to 6th to 12th grade. We were asked originally to write standards for English Language Arts, college and career ready standards for English Language Arts. The working team refused. We said if we just did standards for English Language Arts they would not be standards for career and college readiness. And at that point it was too late to fire us so we won that standoff. The standards are instead as you know the common core standards for English Language Arts as well as literacy and history and social studies, as well as science and technical subjects. They demand they do not request that the building of knowledge through reading text plays a fundamental role in those disciplines. In history and social studies, the analysis of primary and secondary documents is a core part of building knowledge. And in science, the analysis of reference materials, direct experimental result, debate obviously integrated with other data, but reading sufficiently complex text at the heart of it. To give you a sense of how different this is from what happens today, we have evidence that in kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade kids read informational text 7% of the time. And in later grades, ACT just did a study of how well students could read a complex science text, 24% of the students who take the ACT can read a college-level science text. That's those who take the ACT. We know that the wider group of students we serve many of them don't even take the test. It is that large a gap so the commitment to making literacy a fundamental part of gaining knowledge in those disciplines is the second major move of these core standards.

**The third move** is that text complexity matters. The difficulty or complexity of what you're reading plays the guiding role in guiding literacy performance rather than the skills by which you are reading it. So typical of state standards, not necessarily New York State's—I'm going to try to avoid making fun of any New York State standards during this presentation—but some state standards have a situation like this: in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, you're meant to study a character's motivation; in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, you study their underlying

motivation. Now, in my experience, most motivations are underlying unless someone is mugging you. So it's not exactly the most useful distinction in the world. The real distinction in the growth of reading is of course the level of complexity of the text that you're managing. But for the first time these core standards create a staircase of text complexity, of expectations year by year of the level of text complexity you need to master. And what we found by the research, which is in Appendix A for you eager students who read beyond the required reading, in Appendix A of the standards is the research that demonstrates that the level of text that kids are reading today in high school are systematically beneath what they need to be to be college and career ready. You get what I am saying, right? That is, what they are assigned and what they are required to read is far below what they'll be required for most career work and college work. Guess why there's remediation? So the standards realign the curve from kindergarten forwards towards college and career readiness creating a skewed staircase towards college and career readiness.

**The fourth shift** in literacy is a shift towards focusing on questions that require you to pay attention to the text itself. I call them text-dependent questions. Now, this may seem quite obvious to you, but let me tell you the results of an informal study we did of instruction in Vermont and Texas. Now, we were looking for two of the most similar states possible, which is why we chose those two. And what we found was is a remarkable similarity between those two very different places and it was that 80% of the questions kids were asked when they are reading are answerable without direct reference to the text itself. Think about it, right? You're reading a text and you talk about the background of the text, or what it reminds you of, or what you think about it, or what you criticize or perhaps how you feel or react to it, or all sorts of surrounding issues—kids are genius at this—because anything to avoid confronting the difficult words before them is money. So what's happened in reading instruction, despite our intentions, is an enormous amount of time is spent with questions that hover around text but don't require the close consideration of it. We'll return to this when we look at the letter from Birmingham Jail in a couple of minutes.

**The fifth point** is about writing. Do people know the two most popular forms of writing in the American high school today? Texting someone said; I don't think that's for credit though yet. But I would say that as someone said it is personal writing. It is either the exposition of a personal opinion or it is the presentation of a personal matter. The only problem, forgive me for saying this so bluntly, the only problem with those two forms of writing is as you grow up in this world you realize people really don't give a sheet about what you feel or what you think. What they instead care about is can you make an argument with evidence, is there something verifiable behind what you're saying or what you think or feel that you can demonstrate to me. It is rare in a working environment that someone says, "Johnson, I need a market analysis by Friday but before that I need a compelling account of your childhood." That is rare. It is equally rare in college by the way. So a group of Minnesota professors got together and they very, very wonderfully created a program called "Ready or Not," where they accepted essay submissions from

around the state from high school seniors to see whether they're college ready or not. Ninety-seven percent of what was provided to them was narrative and 97% of that was deemed not college ready. The core standards thus mark a shift. They do support training in narrative throughout K-12 but what they make primary as you grow is the ability to write an argument based on evidence and convey complex information. This is an essential shift.

**The sixth shift** -- and then luckily I am done, there are no more -- is that academic vocabulary is the true language of power and that is particularly true for our English Language Learners and a wide variety of kids we care about most. This replaces the unstated language of power in earlier literacy standards which were basically the buildup of thousands of literary terms. If you look in a high school English Language Arts textbook, you will see pages and pages of literary terminology. The most popular 3<sup>rd</sup> grade standard in America today before the common core, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, is what is the difference between a fable, a myth, a tale, and a legend? The only problem with that question is no one knows what the difference is and no one probably cares what the difference is either, but it's inscrutable. Instead what the standards focus on, there is some literary terminology and I myself have a Master's in English Literature from Oxford so I say this with great love, those terms are very useful when used appropriately, but they are not a separate object of study. In the same way, the core object of study must be the academic vocabulary that pervades complex text of all types. These are words like appearance or consequential or deliberate. Unlike what are sometimes called tier three or domain-specific words like cell wall or amoeba, they are very rarely bolded on the side of the page, helpfully to guide you. They're an underlying language of complexity that pervades everything complex you read. As you can imagine they build a wall around these texts that many of our students cannot penetrate. So what the core standards do is focus their attention while not sacrificing the literary and the core literary terms by focusing that more we have room for far more attention for an academic vocabulary that pervades the others.

Sometimes I sum up the standards by saying they require you to read like a detective and write like an investigative reporter. More and more I feel like I should say, "Read like a detective and write like a conscientious investigative reporter." With that said, I'm going to pause for a minute for some immediate questions and then I'd like to talk with you about Dr. King's letter from Birmingham Jail.



## **Part 5**

### **Questions and Answers (Part 1)**

#### **Moderator Ken Slentz:**

Good morning everyone. For the question portions that we will go through today we'll use what may in fact be a bit of a clumsy format and I apologize for that but we want to generate as much interaction as possible. We will take questions from the audience. We will take questions by phone for those of you in the field. We will certainly take questions to our e-mail address that you've been sending in and I will occasionally take the advantage of the podium and ask my own question and I'm going to do that to start out with. Thank you.

**Q:** David, you noted something that I think that is very critical and that's we do in fact and we learned this from the last time we went through a standards movement, we do in fact have people that feel that they're doing this already. Take that individual versus someone who is in fact teaching a common core-based standards lesson and tell me what, as you walk into that room, what behavioral differences do you observe?

#### **David Coleman:**

**A:** What I think I'd like to do is to answer that through the showing of the letter from Birmingham Jail and then through the deep discussion of math. Let's as we're doing that work together examine the to/from, what the question used to look like and what will it look like. But I'd ask you just because we just did literacy to reflect on those five things for a moment. Number one, in an elementary classroom I'd overwhelmingly see kids reading stories today where as they'd be spending half their time in the future building knowledge through informational text. That's just a clear difference. I'd see teachers of science and history paying close attention to how much evidence and knowledge their kids could draw from a text given because a core part of their aim is that their kids gain more knowledge from the text that they are given and that's a relentless part of their instruction and attention. It would mean that writing shifts in the way I described, that students would rarely on exams or assessments be asked decontextualized prompts as they are today to demonstrate their readiness. They'd be asked to write to sources. So these are the kind of visible changes you could see.

#### **Moderator Ken Slentz:**

Let's take a question that was submitted to the website.

#### **Audience:**

**Q:** If time was considered in the development of the common core standards, how was it considered at the high school level for mathematics? If standards were not placed in the courses, wouldn't one need to at least create courses to gauge whether they are doable within four years?

**David Coleman:**

**A:** That's a very good question. The core standards in their development, there are actually model courses in an appendix to the standards so there was a lot of work done to experiment in design with what these standards could look like in courses. The reason that a single sequence of courses was not proposed within the standards is there is still substantial debate in this country in later grades whether a more integrated approach to later mathematics is more powerful or a more traditional approach of algebra, geometry, algebra II, etc. And rather than trying to end that debate prematurely, because the standards try as much as possible to stay silent on the means of achieving what you need to know, the high school standards present what it is you need to be able to do. But they were often, it's a very smart question, often potential course models were looked at to make sure they were indeed viable. You'll notice that some high school standards are noted with pluses for just this reason. They're at the edge of what is seen as an advanced work. So they're meant to reduce the load and allow you to get to them if possible but not with the same necessity as the ones without the crosses.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

We'll take another question from the website and then we will go to the audience here.

**Audience:**

**Q:** We see the focus on complex grade-level text and the common core standards. Is there also a philosophy within the common core that argues against the use of level text for reading or is there still a place for this approach, the example given is that in helping students to learn how to use comprehension strategies?

**David Coleman:**

**A:** I will get to this question. The question regards what is the right role of level text in comprehension strategies and reading development and when I get to the letter I think we can talk about that in context but I would give the first a couple of immediate reactions. One of the greatest threats to a wide range of students being able to read sufficiently complex text with confidence is we keep them out of the game. Far too early and far too often we reduce text complexity for these students rather than giving them the scaffolding they need to embrace and practice that complexity. It begins as early as K-2. It would astonish you. These level readers give easier vocabulary to certain students than others, sacrificing the academic vocabulary they need to succeed in the future. So I am saying in a clear voice, the core of

instruction, core classroom time becomes the shared encounter of sufficiently difficult text. The proper role for leveled material can be an intensive support for students who then need additional support in addition to their confrontation of sufficiently complex work, but remember that time might also be used for them to have more time with that sufficiently complex work. But the role of leveling where it is most useful and where it is proven to actually accelerate kids has to be in addition to their confrontation of a core set of complex text.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

I apologize. I was just reminded that I hadn't introduced myself. My name is Ken Slentz and I'm the Associate Commissioner in the Office of Curriculum Standards and Field Services and I apologize for that. Let's take a question from the audience with the understanding that if we have a question that is really a Department-directed question I would ask that you give that question to staff or submit it to the website. We'd like to be able to respond to you directly and comprehensively on those questions. So a question for David, there's been a hand in the back if we could get a microphone towards the back here. If you would stand up please; there we go.

**Audience:**

**Q:** I was wondering if you could give us a sense of the shifts in assessment that you would assume the shifts you talked about in the standards around what you think have to change in American assessment practices. Particularly, I was a former math teacher so I'm interested in math but also in literacy.

**David Coleman:**

**A:** It's a wonderful question. The question was what do these shifts in the standards imply about assessment? And I'll say a couple of things. And then just to make the math part more interesting I didn't tell you two things about math that I hope you're waiting for. One of them is you talk about focus but what gets left out, right? That's where the rubber meets the road. Where's the eraser? The pen is a lot easier than the eraser in educational circles. The second point is what does it mean for mathematics assessment? I'm going to go into that in some detail later. So I'll give you a literacy example to start with and then we'll go back to math and what it means for assessment. In literacy as I said today you have prompts for kids to write about that have no source behind them. So of course they have stronger opinions or feelings because that's all the evidence that they can draw upon. You have assessments that test narrowly English Language Arts year by year rather than the literacy assessment that the core standards demand where you demonstrate your ability not just to read literary text but equally text in history and social studies and scientific and technical text every year as you mark your progress towards college and career readiness. So those are the kinds of shifts there but I will get back to you on math assessment.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

One last question and then we will go into the letter if you would. I will do one more question from the website similar to what you're alluding to David.

**Audience:**

**Q:** In consideration of the stairway to high school graduation, it appears that there may be some tension between college readiness and career readiness. If not, why do we continue to include both goals as if they are separate? If so, why are there not two separate paths?

**David Coleman:**

**A:** The research on this subject is actually fascinating. That is, the question here is why say college and career if they're the same or are they different, is there tension between these two goals. I want to underline the word "tension" because that will become a key word in Martin Luther King's letter from Birmingham Jail. So let's remember "tension" for a moment as an academic word that performs our discourse right now. But secondly, the data around reading is actually fascinating. There's been a study done of the text kids need for career readiness and stunningly they hover at roughly the same or higher level of difficulty than the text kids are demanded to read in their first year of college. That is, technical text is hard stuff and the snobbery that has accompanied it has no place in a reasoned view of what's really going on. It actually hovers at the same level. So we're given a gift in that teaching kids how to read sufficiently difficult text to climb that staircase gives them enormous readiness in both domains. Similarly, in mathematics that ready core I described to you, the ability to apply, understand and be fluent in that range of mathematics is precisely what pays off in a wide variety of skills. So that core, that trunk allows you the kind of flexibility that many more people can use math both in their work and in their citizenship. I think the "and" here is a celebration. The "and" is you get more than college readiness. You get career readiness, too. So I choose to see it as a celebratory gesture.

## **Part 6**

### **Discussion of Common Core State Standards for ELA & Literacy and “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. David Coleman**

Hopefully, some of you who prepared for this conversation today took a look at King's Letter from a Birmingham Jail and I'd like to tell you what I'm going to try to do with you over approximately the next 20 minutes with that letter. What I'm trying to do is to show you what instruction begins to look like with the core in mind. And, of course, that begins to address the very good question asked me earlier, which was “What's the difference?” How does instruction on a day-to-day basis in a way a teacher looks at it, in the daily choices a teacher makes look different when confronted with the core? The time within which we are discussing this, 20 minutes, is highly elusory because I think teaching this letter is at least six days with maybe another week with a comparison we'll talk to you about. But we just did a body of work, a team and I built up an exemplar around the Gettysburg Address, which as you know is three paragraphs long, and it is for three days of instruction on those three paragraphs and that is not by bringing in other resources yet. That's by focusing on the text itself.

The first major shift I want you to consider is far longer amounts of classroom time spent on text worth reading and rereading carefully, a kind of diligent close attention. This has several implications. It also means that a much wider range of kids are in on the game. It means that you can chunk into smaller parts anything but avoiding the richness and complexity. So while I'll speak to you only for 15 or 20 minutes about the letter, please see it as the beginning of six days of instruction rather than this brief talk.

Finally, I know there's an issue hanging in everyone's mind, which is for what range of students is this really possible a letter like this? These are just my best students who can read King's letter. And I want to challenge you today that our core challenge as a community and this is hard work but work worth doing is to get all kids so that after 12 years of practice they can read a text like this with confidence. This IS what college and career readiness demand. This text is precisely at that level. This IS our shared challenge. And there can be intensive support and scaffolding and additional practice to do it but this is the work of doing it. And, strangely, I want to suggest to you that while this text is complex I would dare to argue that reading is fairly simple, that there is no reason to make more complicated than it is the task of teaching reading, of paying close attention, of gathering evidence from what you read. So I might ask you to forgive me because I'm worried that you're going to find what I'm about to do far too straightforward for most experts, but far more like the core of instruction for what we must do when facing something difficult.

So the question that faces us when we look at the letter from Birmingham Jail, and I will return by the way to how do we do this for a wide range of students, is how do we begin? This is a great question for an



artist when they're beginning something or for a teacher. And I thought I would begin by making myself as unpopular as possible by attacking the three most popular ways of beginning.

The most popular way first, I should give you background information and an account of the letter before we begin so you can get oriented. There was a great man, Dr. King. He wrote a letter while in jail because a set of clergymen had sent him a letter saying he should slow down. This is his ringing defense of nonviolence, of the distinction between just and unjust law. We shall read it to together, etc. What you have effectively done as a teacher when you do this is you've replaced the letter from Birmingham Jail with a simpler text, your summary, that now kids will quote back to you. And because of the overwhelming power of self love, those answers are of course correct. Kids are very artful at this. So that's the first escape from the text is to summarize it in advance. You would be stunned in curricular materials how often a text is trivially summarized before it begins. If this is all King had to offer were those conclusions, we should not do the work of reading the letter altogether.

Number two, pre-reading strategies. So then there's a lot of work you can try to do before the letter like you might try to predict what he's going to say or where he was or you might try to compare it to other prison letters. You might try to do several pre-reading type approaches. Forgive me, but I am asking you to just read. To think of dispensing for a moment with all the apparatus we have built up before reading and plunging into reading the text. And let it be our guide into its own challenges. That maybe those challenges emerge best understood from the reading of it. And that maybe we don't have to force a whole set of additional activities that prepare you to start. I'll give further examples of this later.

And the third typical introduction would be the strategy of the weak. In other words we have a purpose for reading this letter, it's to reinforce our understanding of the main idea. Nothing could be more lethal to paying attention to the text in front of you than such a hunt and seek mission. Why not instead let King set the agenda? Why not dare to read the mystery of what's on King's mind? Why not let those strategies emerge to solve real problems rather than constantly interrupting us or setting an agenda? I'll talk more about this later. But one great benefit, teachers, to the core standards is you know how you've been teaching a hundred lessons every year and over the course of years on cause and effect and that's one of the reading strategies. I'll give you one today. I punch you and it hurts, cause and effect. There's no need to do it over and over. When have you read a difficult text ever in your life and said, "I've got it now. It's a cause and effect text not a problem and solution text. Now, I've got it." We lavish so much attention on these strategies in the place of reading, I would urge us to instead read.

So Aristotle says at one point of drama, he's talking about drama, that the beginning is more than half the whole. And I think he's right because the opening of a drama is what brings you into it. Just think for a

moment of a film and the way we teach reading typically. If I were to go to a film with you, imagine before it started, I want you to do a bunch of pre-film watching strategies. Then I ruthlessly interrupted you as it unfolded and said, "There's a train. Have you ever been on a train ride? What does this remind you of?" You would kill me before we were five minutes through. Why then is this appropriate with reading, which is also a task of deep observation and attention, where the author's story is the most interesting one to start with whether it's informative or a narrative? So I ask you to let kids into that story and try to talk about what that looks like.

So let's open King's letter with that in mind and begin with it. I ask you to please read to yourselves the first paragraph following "My Dear Fellow Clergymen." Since I'm accelerating, I'm going to act like you've had time to do that and then read it to you out loud:

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statements in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I want to say perhaps the first question you might ask about this text is, "Based on this text and this text alone, what do you know? What can you make out about the letter King received?" So let's look again at that first paragraph for a moment and we might make out gradually that they've accused him of saying very specific, of being unwise and untimely. We're going to go back to that first question. A clever student might notice that he wrote to his dear fellow clergymen, which reveals something about who wrote the letter and perhaps something about King himself if they understand the construct fellow clergymen which you might work on with them immediately or it will actually come up later. But we can already know at least two things, it's written from clergymen and says you've been unwise and untimely.

Let's then move with some speed here because it's a first reading into the next set of arguments, paragraphs 2 through 4. So again I'd love to give you time to look over them with the following question in mind. "What are the three very different arguments King makes for why he's in Birmingham? And what different kinds of evidence does he use to support them?" Now I hope the feeling you're all having is of not knowing the answer in advance. There's no way to answer my question without returning again. Who even knew that he made three arguments? Who knew that they were so different? Who knew that they used different kinds of evidence? But let's look at them together.

The first paragraph, again I'm accelerating here much faster than you'd ever do with students, the first paragraph has become somewhat bureaucratic. I'm here, as he summarizes in the last paragraph, because I have members of my staff and I was invited here. I have organizational ties here. He describes the core offices. So it's almost a bureaucratic kind of answer.

The third paragraph of the letter, he says, "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here" and compares himself to the prophets of the eighth century and to Paul, etc. He makes something of a religious, historical argument. He gives that kind of evidence and information. And that's where it might trigger that fellow clergymen because he is of course comparing himself to those clergymen of old. Now this is a paragraph dense with allusion. You could slow down a lot here to get what Greco Roman means, to figure out exactly who Paul is. I think one's always judging as a teacher when to pause in that way. On a first read through we'll come back to that probably. But as much as they understand that King is comparing himself now to a prophet and making a very different kind of argument, we have enough to keep moving through his argument. But there is nothing wrong with helping kids through that work and helping identify because very few of those words can be determined from the context itself. So at a moment like that it's perfectly appropriate to fill in some of those blanks and not linger too long there and lose the force of the argument.

Because his next argument is the one for this letter's most famous is the moral argument and I will read it out loud and you will perhaps remember some of it by heart.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

What I'd like to begin with with this argument, this third moral argument, is the question of what is the force of it? How does it relate to the arguments that come before? Sounds pretty preachy. How does it relate to these other two moves? One, I've got offices here and I was invited. Two, I'm like a prophet of the past. But third, there's this sudden moral claim instead of statements. Well you see on the study of it that King does something quite remarkable. Being accused of being an outsider, he makes an argument that there's no such thing in matters of injustice. He says there's no such thing as an outside agitator because the injustice that affects you is mine. We are mutually implicated in it. It's very important that kids get time to grasp the force of an argument, the force of the claim. How does this fit in with the argument he's making? How does it fit in with the two arguments before it? But the next question might very well be once you've really thought about that is where's the evidence, King? These are high-flying

assertions. It seems obvious that we are not tied together in a garment of destiny. You can walk out this door and you'll be perfectly fine. You get wet; I don't get wet. So where's the evidence to support this claim? In that moment of pause to realize as powerful as these words are that they don't yet have any support or proof is a wonderful one. Also, because it creates an appetite to see if he can pull it off. Because when you realize that question you realize how much of this letter, how much of its beauty is his attempt to answer that very difficult question. So when he goes after the White moderate later, when he makes all these moves in letter, he's demonstrating that interrelation that he does not show yet.

Moving on, paragraph 5 is a transition and I'll conclude shortly but I just want to walk you through it a bit further. Paragraph 5 is another transition and notice how it begins.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations.

Now, remember that first simple question when we began--What can you make out about the letter he received? Now we have more evidence growing around that question. That is, now we know something they didn't say. I noticed you complained about me being unwise. How about them being unwise and untimely? That's what he says here and the social foundation of it. So that same question that was so simple and got us into the letter repays throughout the letter. In understanding an argument it's critical to know what something is pushing against. What's the alternative that an author by making an argument throughout is building? So that simple question in the beginning becomes increasingly powerful as the letter unfolds.

Then in paragraphs 6 through roughly 9 is what I like to call the just the facts question. Interestingly, in paragraph 6 enters for the first time in this letter the word "fact." And I'll tell you something very moving. One of the people that works here in New York State told me that this to her is the most moving moment. It is not the ringing moral language I just read to you. It is the moment where he says precisely,

There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation.

These are the hard brutal facts of the case. This is a different voice from King. This is now setting out a body of fact in the next two paragraphs to understand its conclusions. Kids gaining command of those facts, seeing how they relate to the case, gives them a further master class in these different kinds of argument.

Finally, let's go for a moment to paragraph 10 because I want to illustrate to you just how rich a discussion of academic vocabulary can be. Paragraph 10 following a relation of the facts asks,

You may well ask: Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches...

and he goes on in this paragraph to describe tension. He says,

My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word 'tension.' I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth.

A wonderful question at this moment for your students is what exactly does King unfold tension to mean and not mean in this paragraph and the one that follows? And it's a wonderful way for them to study academic language and practice and for them to wonder what if he used a different word. Not just what does tension mean here but why did he choose it and lavish so much attention to it rather than so many other words. You could spend similar time looking at exactly what Madison does with faction. There are often master words in what we read that we pay close study, but the author shows us he spends so much time on it here so we ought to follow him. I won't bore you with the rest. He goes on to make three arguments again, three different arguments about why we can't wait and makes magnificent closing paragraph about that.

He then in paragraphs 15 to 21 and following makes a distinction between just and unjust law. And some people have asked me impatiently about this exercise. When do we get beyond the letter? When do we get beyond to the broader issues of social injustice? Whether or not you believe in nonviolence, whether you believe in civil disobedience? I want to suggest a couple of things to you. The first principle is allow first the rich comprehension of exactly what King is doing. I hope for many of you this was exciting to see the delicacy, the range with which he works and constructs an argument and sees it interact. Isn't it much more interesting to talk about what we think about nonviolence with that behind us rather than doing it to replace that study or in advance of that study? In that way we can really illuminate what we see happening in Egypt rather than cheaply avoiding the letter by going straight to Egypt and other revolutions happening before us.

It's a dare to follow King. When we talk about going beyond the letter, what's wonderful is the section on just and unjust law King himself goes beyond the letter. That is, he begins to make analogies to Hitler's power. He begins to make analogies about other laws. He invites us, I'm trying to say, to go beyond it with him. So that's a marvelous section to ask students to apply his principles of just and unjust law and ask them what laws they think might fit in those categories. Get them using the principles, applying those

principles. Do they work? Do they not? What about historical examples? King himself invites you by making that very same winding himself.

And the other thing that happens in the discussion of just and unjust law is enters for the second time in this rather short letter is a hero of King's. Does anyone know who makes their second appearance in the letter at that point? Socrates—that's exactly right. He made it earlier in the discussion of tension and now he enters again. It's his second cameo where King says,

Like him, he began it all with civil disobedience. And it was from him he cites his knowledge of the creative tension.

That to me is the best invitation an author can give you to perhaps in that third week of instruction I mentioned maybe it would be fun to find out who this Socrates guy was and see how he thought about tension in Athens.

This document is part of the great conversation in the United States. It is a letter that bears comparison with our Declaration, with Lincoln's words that follow it. It is in that history but it's also an international conversation. It is a conversation with Greece and other countries. And I think we can both do the letter depth and then also, as I should reveal Dr. Steiner asked me, go beyond it to bring in the conversation with Socrates when we first understand the fundamental role Socrates plays to King within the letter. You don't need it in advance but once you've wrestled with it to then dive in and see that King is not alone in worrying about these things they've been worried about for centuries in different forms. How exciting is that? And then to submit to Socrates and part of the apology where he defends himself at a trial, a trial pretty close to a prison I might add. What a wonderful moment for kids to begin to see that depth at the same time they're reading.

I hope that's begun to give a sense of the kind of instruction I'm talking about. I hope it was concrete enough and the kind of excitement. I want to admit this is extremely difficult work because of a couple of reasons. The text itself is difficult. It is hard work, but work worth doing. There is no apologizing or getting away from that. I used a number of techniques. The first and most important is to let the mysteries that the letter provokes be the source of student motivation and your interest rather than anything about you or anything I presume about you or your history. In other words, what we've done much too much is tried to go outside the text to motivate kids. You should be interested in this letter because of your background. It should remind you of something. We try to sell it almost in advance of reading it where the only source of motivation that's reliable is the richness and beauty of it itself which must come alive through our questioning. That is hard work I admit. It is specific to reach text. There's no great general question that will suddenly illuminate everything. That's what we hope working together with the state to



give you concrete exemplars of how you might read this letter, the Gettysburg Address. We're working together with a great team here and hopefully you will work together with us.

What the world needs most right now is wonderful questions about things worth reading. Things worth read and rereading that don't avoid the text but bring kids into a deeper consideration of it. You noticed I did a lot of chunking and reading out loud, taking a smaller portion and looking at it with care. That allows a much wider range of kids into that process. I am aware that sometimes certain kids will connect to more of this or less of this. Some will see more. But the important deep idea is that they're all part of it. And the wonderful thing is sometimes a kid is behind will notice something another kid didn't. And since you're all looking at the same thing, you have that remarkable moment both as a teacher and as another reader where you say, "Ooh, I didn't see that. I didn't notice that," which is by the way how kids talk about a movie when they've seen it. Did you catch that? Did you see that? Did you watch that? Did you see it when he did this? You notice how lively the academic vocabulary is. While we can explain Greco Roman in other technical terms that are academic, a rich word like tension is so powerful.

And finally the power focus, without six days of instruction, let's be blunt with each other, this is impossible. What I just did to you is gradual. We covered most of the letter in summary. This would take days. So for principals, superintendents and the leaders of schools, please celebrate time spent slowly doing this hard and deliberate work. The research evidence is overwhelming. The only thing we have seen that rapidly accelerates student performance towards reading more complex text is extensive practice repeatedly even with reading the same text. That's the only thing that's been shown to increase fluency substantially.

I'm going to pause but merely to say this is about much more than reading. This is about today I hope for a moment King to some extent himself became alive, that as we paid more attention to him we could see his mind at work. This is not just about reading. It's about thinking. It's also about critical thinking. Critical thinking is not just what do you think or feel about something. It's daring to follow the depth of an author's argument and allow it to really make an impression on you. Then your critical thought follows that in-depth following and work. And then once we do that, they become our teachers. The text is really the master class here. I as the teacher and student and the servant of it and I have a certain reverence for it and that's I think some of the deeper principles that are operating here.

So before I do math, let's pause and talk about literacy.



## **Part 7**

### **Questions and Answers (Part 2)**

#### **Moderator Ken Slentz:**

It would be interesting if we surveyed everyone right now to ask if you would rather spend the rest of the time talking about the letter and picking David's mind on this because I suspect what the answer would be. I also suspect that so many of our colleagues in the field are in the process of writing up their lesson plan for Monday where they are now going to do this because David does it in such a compelling manner. Let's talk about some of the larger questions, David, and some of our friends from central Long Island ask this – and I'll go away from the letter.

#### **Audience:**

**Q:** I love the concept of doing less but doing it better. However, the sixth grade math curriculum is so packed; quickly mapping out the sixth grade standards will take us more than 180 days to teach these topics for understanding. Can you explain?

#### **David Coleman:**

That is a very reasonable and serious question. I'd like to get to it in math, so I'm going to get to in my next section, but hold me accountable to it, because I love the care you're taking in mapping out the work. I think you are precisely right that sixth grade is the most cramped. It is due to the pressure to get to linear algebra by grade 8, which forces some material downwards. That is a great pressure in terms of international competition and other achievement forces. I want to talk about an approach. When I talk about mathematics I think I can handle some of that problem, but you are very astute in finding it.

#### **Moderator Ken Slentz:**

Let's take a question from the audience.

#### **Audience:**

**Q:** We were talking before and I like the lesson you did with the questions, I do agree with that. One of the things I know the beauty of the core curriculum is the staircase that it takes to teach kids to read. One of the things they do agree is that we do read alouds and we do shared readings where the kids could acquire knowledge. But I also think the kids do need, according to research, time on text in order to be able to learn how to read this text the way they do. One thing that I'm not hearing right now is how do we allow the kids at their own levels to be able to grow as learners and readers?

#### **David Coleman:**



**A:** Let me say two interesting things about this wonderful and astute question on your part. There are two levels to it. I should have said earlier there is something quite unique about the structure of the reading standards. There are if you've looked at them 10 anchor standards in reading and then you'll notice, remarkably, there are 10 standards in reading for kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade. This echo of the 10 standards is not due to a strange biblical fetish on the part of the authors of the standards. It is instead, the idea is that you're given years to practice these core competencies. So the first standard in every grade -- kindergarten through 12th grade -- whether dealing with informative text or literary text is read closely to determine the explicit meaning and make logical inferences based on evidence and be able to share that evidence in writing or speaking. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade that is citing evidence explicitly from the text. By 7th grade it is looking for the strongest evidence, making distinctions between weaker and stronger evidence. It's accumulating more evidence. Stronger readers actually read more. What we found by looking at the NAEP 8<sup>th</sup> grade results is that the single thing that marked those kids who got past the 8<sup>th</sup> grade wall was their command of evidence in the text. That's why that first standard in its development is so crucial. At the same time, they're working on the 10<sup>th</sup> reading standard, which is where they read gradually increasing complex text over time. This isn't a one-time hyperspace jump. This is the work of years of practice that intentionally focuses on the same core. They are reading in this way from a very young age.

Now you asked me additionally is there space for both the shared reading people are doing and the independent reading? I want to be clear about the word "independent" because the standards require independence in the sense kids have to be able do what I did with that letter on their own, meaning without the kind of prompting and questioning. They have to gain that independence to be college and career ready. But another kind of independence, "independent recreational reading," is the work they do outside at their own level. I will tell you two things about it. One thing of course it is crucial that students are doing a lot of reading outside of this kind of reading on their own and at their own level as well frankly as material that should stretch them. But I must tell you an alarming thing for those who overly bank on that independent recreational reading. We talked to the leading provider of such tools for children. Do you know what grade level student choice of text levels out at? Overwhelmingly, 90% of the selections stop at this level—5th grade. So while we must encourage that work, we must not overly rely on it as our staircase to complexity sets a balance.

**Audience:**

**Q:** When you get into the middle school ages, then one of the things that we probably should continue is that choice of freedom of valuing what you just did, which I totally value, and the choice of them choosing their own independent books to keep that staircase of learning evolving.

**David Coleman:**

**A:** I think so. I think we have to figure out in the middle level how you prompt kids during that independent recreational reading to grab sometimes harder things than they will naturally spontaneously do. But of course, I hope that the work we're doing as a classroom, allowing kids to jump into a difficult text and read it with pleasure, will be a lot like the way they read outside of class. In other words, I'm trying to create actually less of a gap between the way people read stuff they love, which is they typically don't have a question before they start, they typically get into the book themselves. The way we just read the letter is hopefully a model not only for classroom-style reading but reading you can do with what you most care about.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

We do have another question from the audience.

**Audience:**

**Q:** I really appreciate a lot of what you're saying. My question has more to do with when you talk about these shifts. I'm thinking more or less of the shift that has to happen almost without sounding hokey or organic but the change that has to happen with the heart because I think a lot of this, we as educators we believe in this, it's the reason why we got into teaching, but because of how education has evolved, and some of the demands, we're not always able to do that. I say this because I'm an Rtl coordinator and what I am struggling with is that second order change, that true sustainability. If we really want this to work, there's going to be a whole lot of work that has to be done where people have to really be reflective about their practice, districts have to think about what they think about children, the expectations that we have for all children. I want to get your thoughts.

**David Coleman:**

**A:** I think you say something very profound. This is a change of the spirit. It's a change of what we think about kids and practice every day, of moving from a world where we're trying to protect them from the things we think that are hard, to help them embrace and encounter those things that are hard, to practice them, as an aid to them rather than an attack on them, so it is a moral and ethical move. I'll tell you what's very interesting. I think we live in a world where everyone is sick of what's going on and they're looking for someone to stop the madness. So I just met with one of the three largest publishers of K-5 educational materials. And by the end of the meeting, there was almost a very emotional like you're saying where he said, "We've built up all this pre-reading stuff. We never let kids read everything. There's all this associated material." He wasn't proud of it. He's the publisher of it. He feels he's been forced to do it by the marketplace. The marketplace then feels forced by the standards. There's a thing that we have a chance to break out of here that I think is very exciting. The leading publisher of ELL materials for history



and social studies said to me the following. He said, "We for English Language Learners publish mostly picture books and low-level text. Are you saying that's going to have to change?" And I said, "Yeah." Thank you.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

Let's take a question from the field, interesting question.

**Audience:**

**Q:** If you're arguing that instruction should address text holistically, then why does the language of the standards focus on discrete skills such as using context clues, making inferences, making connections, etc.? The standards seem to lend themselves to the mini-lesson approach of teaching a specific skill or strategy and applying to a text rather than reading a text in fact holistically that you just did with King's letter.

**David Coleman:**

**A:** I think that is a magnificent and fair objection. There is something we are developing to try to fix this but let me first state the opposition. It's a wonderful question; all the questions have been great. That's particularly insightful because what this person is saying is, "David, since you've given us or since the authors of the standards have given us a 1-10 kind of checklist of reading standards, it is so tempting to go through them. Now I've done Standard 2 Main Idea. Now I've done Standard 3, etc., etc." Let me tell you a couple things and then let me tell you something we're doing about it that I think will be quite helpful. First, be not confused about reading research. There is no child who's really good at main idea but really bad at character questions. This is false. Any assessment data you see that divides it by that, like if you have a practice test, someone was asking about changes to assessment, we should no longer publish these false distinctions. What really is driving comprehension is the complexity of the text and a kid who understands something can likely discover a main idea, can talk about the structure or particular words. They all congregate together overwhelmingly--that is the fact. So I'd ask you to look at Standards 2 through 9 all those ways of understanding whether a kid is understood and can gain sufficient evidence from the text. Which of those standards you use depends on the text itself. That is, Standard 9 about argument was obviously used repeatedly here in studying King's argument, but I may have spent less time on the structure of the letter though at times I alluded to it. What I mean by that is use those standards dependent on the text rather than as mini lessons of their own. There are ways of sampling the most important standard, Standard 1, ways of demonstrating understanding and comprehension. In order to make that more clear, because I agree the flat list can be deceptive, something we're working on again with our colleagues here as well as colleagues across the nation is a visualization of the reading standards that show that depending on each text you don't have to cover every standard and it depends



on the text which ones you cover best, obviously. The best questions about a text emerge from that text and you'll gradually cover the range of reading, ways of looking at text by reading several of them. We're going to try to show this in a very clear picture that I'm tempted to draw for you now but I don't have the implements to do it. But I will ask that good person who challenged me I'm offering a promissory note that I will get back to you to quote King who talked about a promissory note in another speech. We will get you that picture and make sure that picture is as widespread as possible to avoid the confusion that you described.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

David, in the interest of time I do want to move on, however, this question is very interesting.

**David Coleman:**

I hope it's easier.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

I will do my best. It comes from a library media specialist in the lower part of the state and it's very interesting.

**Audience:**

**Q:** My question is about the role of teachers of alternative subjects, such as home and careers, library and media, technology, etc. What role do we envision these teachers having in meeting these new common core standards and how will we ensure that they are in fact part of the instructional process?

**David Coleman:**

**A:** It's a wonderful question. The standards are quite explicit about including technical subjects as some of those were in the standards themselves. So please look at the standards for literacy in science and technical subjects and I think you'll find them quite relevant to your work. That is, any of you that have text worth reading whether in a library setting or in a technical setting, that spend enough time strengthening kids' ability to gain knowledge and evidence from those texts is advancing the work of these standards. If you have something that you can teach and gain knowledge from, you are part of the team.

I want to even extend this for a moment to the arts. We have often postponed until far too late the proper and essential role the arts play both in learning about the world but also building the disciplines I'm talking about. So one great thing about your New York team here – David and John and Gladys and the rest of the team here – is they've been insistent that we make the arts central in our discussion of the core from the outset rather than a later, kind of extra credit thing. And when you think about the arts for a minute



you think, “Well, gosh, if there is a painting I love, do I ever look at it once and then not look at it again?” The arts understand perhaps better than English teachers have that it's only through re-reading and looking at things again that things gain value. Such is true also of producing music. The other great advantage the arts have is in the arts we can have a single score with multiple performances. So we can look how various people look and interpret the first act of King Lear and then return to the evidence within the play to look at evidence and interpretation happen before us similarly with a musical score. Rather than looking at how the arts can serve literacy, I want to think instead about the special things that the arts can do that literacy hasn't been as good at today. You might say what the art teachers can teach the rest of us.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

Let's talk about the mathematics.



**Part 8**  
**Discussion of the Common Core State**  
**Standards for Mathematics**  
**David Coleman**

This is a bit of a shift to mathematics. Those of you who would like to leave the room can do so at this point. In terms of getting more concrete in mathematics, I want to try to answer two to three questions that you should have in your mind as we talk about it.

One is you've talked a lot about focus and depth and richness. What then goes away? What does that do in assessment terms to speak very bluntly about it? And what's the difference between that kind of instruction and the kind of instruction we're doing now? So this is a picture as you can see in front of you of New York State 2005 Mathematics Standards. There's a lot to recommend it. One thing that's very good about it and early in its work is the nice integration of the kind of practices or process standards with the content strands that go vertically. That's something really nice about it. However, there is one way where it echoes the great American habit in mathematics which if we go to the next slide it will become clear, which is what I like to call the shopping-aisle approach to populating mathematics instruction in K-12. Do these strands look familiar to everybody? No matter what grade you're in, they're the same, right? And they're like shopping aisles. That is, for every test and for every curriculum you need to fill them in. You need to have stuff in numbers sense and operations, algebra, geometry, measurement, statistics, and probability. That section is to teach standards. So we add standards there and we make the test bigger. You've got to shop in every aisle. Because we are kind of even minded in America, we shop pretty equally in each strand, right? Have you noticed that? You've got the data people working on the data and they're like, "Go data!" And then the geometry people and they're like, "Go geometry!" And then you get the pre-algebra people, and then each of them fights for their stuff getting in. The only problem here is this has no relationship to the true balance of what mathematics and early mathematics in particular is most important. Remember, it was only three topics that marked the high-performing countries in mathematics. And in the core standards they coalesce around K-2 addition and subtraction of whole numbers and the quantities they measure, the units that they measure, moving into multiplication and division and fractions in 3-5, obviously very heavy in number sense and operations. The dominant craft in arithmetic lies mostly here. If you look at algebra, it's very interesting. What does pre-algebra mean? In America, what pre-algebra has come to mean is patterns and patterns are the one area in which America leads the world in mathematics. Patterns problems are problems of this sort: you have three types of cheese, two types of meat, four types of bread, how many sandwiches can you make? I am not saying here, please, that mathematics is not in some deep sense about patterning but I am saying the precursor to algebra is not practicing patterns problems, it is what--fractions. If I say  $3x = 6$ , I hope a fraction is beginning to form in your mind. That command of number is essential for later mathematics performance. In geometry terms, key will actually be at the intersection of both geometry and measurement. That is

precisely not geometry apart from measurement, just knowing this is a trapezoid, but a rectangle as an expression of multiplication and a way to understand units is essential to the command of number. So it's actually not as separate strands best understood but their interaction in K-8 that lends the most powerful support to the core things you're learning.

Finally, statistics and probability I will say unromantically about K-5 mostly just weight. Some sampling here but while it is adorable and wonderful that we have kids making little bar charts all the time and counting things, it is fairly low-level math. And it's evading the more difficult work of number and manipulation and they can do much more data work in middle school when there are vast numbers and amounts of data. And guess what? A lot of that work should be happening in science classrooms where there actually is data and dense data to look at. So we are willing to make hard choices here to focus on the math that matters the most and really build a staircase to college and career. My terrific colleague Sandra Alberti put this to me once and I think it's absolutely true. There's a practice in math we all have to admit, which is when it gets too hard move on to the next topic. This is the game. And because the assessment measures everything, it's an equal chance – they may test this, they may test that -- why not move on to the next topic? To me, the great example of this is the time-honored time and money problem. So much time spent in the early grades on time and money problems. Let me present for your consideration two children, one who is expert in time and money problems and one who is expert in fractions and operations. Who do you think is likely more ready for algebra? No question, right? Because time and money are but a single application of a much broader and more varied set of skills. I am not saying, lest the emails pour in, that you should not mention or do some work on time and money. But let's be honest about how dominant it is and how unrelated it is, that obsessiveness to the core developed in mathematics and flexibility students really need.

Let's keep going. Let me show you a different picture. If you look at this picture of the growth, notice now not all strands are equal on the actual development of algebra, but three things become absolutely primary and powerful in driving that train in K-5--operations and algebraic thinking. By this I mean, what you learn about the operations that persist like the role of subtraction, like the commutative property, like other properties of operations that you learn that will help you when doing guess what--equations and expressions--where those same laws hold true. Number and Operations—Base Ten we've talked a lot about whole numbers here, a lot about their manipulation and that gives you one part of the number system you're going to develop. But crucially, the number and operations surrounding fractions will then begin to fill out the number line and of course the great excitement of 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade is moving into a numbers system that now includes negative numbers in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. But you see how these flow. You're constantly reusing the same concepts in the growth of the staircase, leading to an algebraic ways of thinking that you begin to master linear algebra in grade 8 and go on to a wider set of algebra in the high

school. This is not a complete picture of mathematics. Crucially, in middle school, we're going to do a lot of work on proportional reasoning. We're going to do a lot of work on geometric measurement like I was talking about, so much power in the world to think proportionately leading to functions, of course. In geometric measurement, so much of engineering and also of life is to be able to see how to measure shapes. But, do you see how exciting it is that no longer do we have to act like every strand is equal? We can rather focus on what's most important and let that give us a much more compelling picture of mathematics that's actually descriptive and meaningful, that shows teachers and kids a way from here to there because that's what standards must be at their mightiest which is a clear path to where we're going, not a confusing bureaucratic system.

If we go on now, I would like to get a little more specific by comparing a New York State Standard in fractions to the core standards in math. The second one is unreadable for most of you in the room which helps me because you can't really check me but I'll walk you through it in some detail. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade New York State Standard is multiply and divide fractions with unlike denominators. Now you may remember when I talked to you earlier I said one of those mysterious things about American math education is none of us really know what the heck we're doing when we divide a fraction. Let me begin to explain the mystery of why does that happen because this is the first time in the New York State Standards where the multiplication and division of fractions is mentioned is in grade 6. It emerges suddenly. It is a very clear standard. It is a very important standard, but emerges utterly without earlier focus on multiplication and division of fractions. In my mind it's kind of like an immaculate conception. It's kind of something that has come out of nothing. While there may be a big role for such things, it's probably not in mathematics. What happens here is we're actually asking kids to make a huge leap here. This is a major advance and what the core standards do – I really want to get over the idea that the core standards are just harder -- they are harder and more demanding but they try to build that through an elegance and simplicity and more time to practice. You saw it in the reading example.

There is something simple about getting rid of a bunch of the other stuff and focusing on reading. Just like that in math, let's look at what kids are now doing in 4<sup>th</sup> grade to prepare for that multiplication and division of fractions. The standard reads the following: "Apply and extend previous understandings of multiplication" so building on our understanding of multiplication, we're going to extend it to multiplying first a fraction by a whole number. This whole standard is just about multiplying fractions by whole numbers. It's the simplest case of multiplication of fractions. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, we're going to get to multiplying fractions by fractions but first we're going to master multiplication of a fraction by a whole number. By commanding the simplest case, you create that staircase to further master it. The first point it makes is "Understand a fraction  $a/b$  as a multiple of  $1/b$ ." So it's saying that I have to understand to fulfill the first standard that  $3/4$  is  $3 \times 1/4$ . Who cares? Why do I have to understand anything else? I've got one fraction



$\frac{3}{4}$  and I've got another standard  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Could these math people leave us alone? But if I just understand them as two numbers in that way, what if I have 4 different parts to a car? Are 3 of them  $\frac{3}{4}$ ? No, because they're not the same, right? It has to be 3 times the same  $\frac{1}{4}$  to get the notion of fraction that's operating here. Be very careful. So in understanding fractions use a visual fraction model to represent  $\frac{5}{4}$  as 5 products of the same  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Look what's also happened. All of a sudden multiplication and fractions are not different. Hiding within  $\frac{3}{4}$  is  $3 \times \frac{1}{4}$ . To even understand  $\frac{3}{4}$ , you've got to get enough multiplication to grasp  $3 \times \frac{1}{4}$ . Multiplying fractions has all of a sudden become part of understanding them to begin with. It's not a big surprise that we're suddenly going to move to multiplying them by others--does that make sense?--because it's part of your original understanding of them. Again, "b. Understand a multiple of  $\frac{a}{b}$  as a multiple of  $\frac{1}{b}$ , and use this understanding to multiply a fraction by a whole number." And then it says, "For example, use a visual fraction model to express" this. Finally, it requires that you "Solve word problems" doing this. Look at the attention lavished on this fundamental capacity to do it visually and through word problems and what that gets at is an essential part of the math standards which are the practices. So as you know at the beginning of the math standards there's a set of essential practices that are meant to guide instruction in math, things like kids seeing the structure of the work they're doing as well as moving to solve things, an attempt to celebrate precision and accuracy. In these math standards let me warn you that estimation is the product of several attempts at precision and accuracy rather than the avoidance of it. That is, these math standards do celebrate in addition to word problems and deep understanding, fluency, accuracy, and speed. They can both go together when you do a few things well. What you see here is the practices are not a separate body of material but woven into your understanding of fractions, the ability to visualize and see what you're doing, your ability at the same time to solve it in diverse situations including word problems.

This is not super complicated stuff in that it's just whole numbers times fractions. But by doing it with this kind of care, you're getting ready for that really demanding 6<sup>th</sup> grade move, which is to multiply and divide them with confidence. Is that making sense that it's that kind of slowness and care? If you were going to look at one thing in the core standards after this, I would really invite you to look at the progression of fractions. I think they are quite beautiful actually to look at how fractions unfold from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and the kind of care. You'll notice that the definition of multiplication that actually began earlier in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is consistent here. That's what I mean by coherence in mathematics. Everything you learn builds. It's not like you waste it, like wasting a ton of time on patterns problems that you don't reuse or a ton of time doing all this time on money stuff that you don't really use again or a ton of data stuff that isn't quite reusable at higher levels. You instead focus on the powerful stuff, which is difficult and demanding and requires patience and practice but it's constantly building.

I think the underlying ethics of this are very clear to me. Someone in Louisiana was talking to me about this and he is a psychometrician by training, he's not a mathematician, but a great example of another career that relies all the time on math. He said to me, "You know, there are people who always say that there are math people and there are not math people." Along with their foolish left brain, right brain people friends which I won't even talk about. Let's just say this, what if that is all an illusion? What if there were no such thing as math people or not math people? But there is a group of people that had enough practice with the core of number and operations and the command of it and the quantities that measure and those other things supporting that mastery, enough practice so that door opens? If that door does not open, none of math opens to you. I want to be very clear. I've been hopeful in this conversation, but I want to be equally clear that if you don't adequately practice this core arithmetic and master it, all of later math is beyond you. So it is at the same time urgent and needed but that is what we call a mathematical person. It is making concrete what we talk about.

If we go on for a minute I'll show you briefly what this means about assessment and instruction. So it seems that in key moments in the curriculum, much like in reading, we slow down and that the mile-wide inch-deep curriculum is replaced by a set of intense engagements around things that matter. Let's go on for a minute. This is today's version of the world with the shopping aisles – I mean those colors to represent the existing 5 strands. While number and operations is kind of the biggest thing, you kind of have to do everything. That's basically the measure we keep giving, the kind of do everything, try to do it well, good luck. Imagine another picture which is where we have 70% of our work in areas of intensive focus that pay off remarkably later where we demand and require real competency on the part of students. This is a high level of demand around fewer things. In the middle are things that we rethink and link, remember like geometry and measurement? You don't just teach them like we always do, you teach them in the ways that they most powerfully contribute to the core commands you need. Finally, there are just things that we do just sample and do less of. Some awareness of them, some presence of them on our assessment, but they're not our focus. If you turn the page to the final one, you'll see we dared to get quite concrete about what the core standards look like today in terms of that. So in K-2 you'll notice the addition and subtraction concepts, skills and problem solving is at the utter intense core. Geometry and measurement we're rethinking so it supports that core. At the same time, we're reducing evidence on patterns, probability, and on estimating because remember estimating is not a good precise thing in and of itself but the product of several attempts at being precise and excellent. And then you gain the skill of estimation because you know your way around and you see what's roughly like something. But we've made it instead a separate body of expertise and you can see it pervade the rest of the grades.

I want to pause in a minute but leave you with a few thoughts about what I think this means for you in terms of math instruction. What would I urge you to do? Number One: Dare to focus immediately on what



matters most in mathematics. It will take time. I believe if I understand the state's plans correctly, the assessment will not change this year but it will change the following year. It will approach more closely, we're still working it out, places where these intensive focuses are much more clear and which really aligns with the common core.

New York is very lucky. Through really courageous assessment leadership, it is making an early transition to the demands of this core before the exams in 2014-2015. So that's a wonderful advantage this state has in delivering that early focus but as one man I would advise you to begin focusing as early as possible. Why? I'll tell you a story about Hong Kong. In the international TIMSS study I referenced earlier, Hong Kong has within its curriculum half the subjects studied on TIMSS. We the Americans have them all. Guess who performs better on the tests? Why? Because those core things are so powerful and flexible, you can apply them to novel situations you haven't necessarily seen before. That's at the heartbeat of this. The flex of the masteries allows kids to be more ready. So it's no longer a question of what's on the test. It's what are you ready for? This test might be different from that test but what we're really interested here is the rough and readiness that prevents you from getting ripped off by people, that let's you use math when you're not asked to do so, and at the same time allows you to compute precisely and effectively when asked to do so. As you look forward to the future of assessment, places where David Steiner and John and others are going to be very influential, we're trying to build an assessment system that rewards this range of math that pays attention to fluency, that pays attention to deep application and modeling, that honors this core work that teachers can do.

I would secondly say to teachers it is totally fine to learn this math as you go. None of us have the deep understanding of elementary mathematics. There're very few of us that this mathematics require. I ask you as teachers to enjoy this chance over the next couple of years, to get into it, to spend more time doing it, to practice your own fluency and understanding, to play around with it. It's OK. It'll already help your students just by focusing more on what matters most. You don't have to be expert immediately. You along with your students will become more and more expert as teachers across the world do by focusing on a few things that they learned to do better and better but only gradually and that's perfectly fine.

I will conclude by saying in all frankness that while they may never invite me again I would say that I have no more confidence in any state in the union of teams that I've visited than the team here in New York State and terrifically with their partners in the union who are delighted about this work and doing everything they can to further it in making this happen. This is not a simple road, but there is a lot of good support for it. Thank you very much.

## **Part 9**

### **Questions and Answers (Part 3)**

#### **Moderator Ken Slentz:**

David, if we can, we'd like to do one more round of questions after which time I will ask the Senior Deputy to close out for us. I do have to say as far as ground rules that we do have some innovation in how the questions have come in. We have some text, but for those in the audience who are texting me directly I probably won't read that question even when it's from family members. That said, we'll take a question from the field and then we'll come back to the audience.

#### **Audience:**

**Q:** How do the common core address high school students who need intense supports?

#### **David Coleman:**

**A:** I think that all of us need to do more thinking in this country about why so many kids need intensive supports and we just have to confront this. I know everyone always asks, "What do you do with a kid who is five years behind in reading?" I think we have to ask ourselves what the heck we were doing in those earlier years and begin to get serious, that we have to focus and deliver on what matters most on the way. It is very hard when you reach high school without being able to read science sufficiently complex. It is very hard to make up all that time because you're exiled from the disciplines at the same time you're trying to gain it. So who am I talking to? I'm talking about making academic literacy the heartbeat of the middle school. I am saying the middle school must deliver kids who are academically literate, that is, they can read sufficiently difficult text in science and history and that those are thought of as equally crucial as the specific knowledge that students gain in those disciplines and that that is delivered. But it's not just blaming each other, right? It's each of us focusing on what we have to deliver most. And in the high school setting what I tell you is focus does the most for the kid, interestingly, who is ahead and those who are behind. For the kid who is behind, it allows them to dig in on a core so that it's not that they miss the whole river and mile-wide, inch-deep of math that they have to do all of it allows them to focus and interestingly and beautifully it's what the best students in mathematics do. They focus in almost scary ways to a degree on these powerful tools that they use with remarkable flexibility. But the tools within the core are the same ones advanced students use. So, the lucky thing is that this continual work, practicing what's difficult, is the kind of work that at each stage helps you and also if you are behind most helps you.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:** Question from the audience.

#### **Audience:**

**Q:** I feel that with our President producing STEM and I agree that the arts should be in there so we can make it STEAM if we'd like, meaning that we need vowels, it is very crucial that our students are put through the entire STEAM process from elementary on. I want to know how State Ed is going to work with our teachers to provide professional development for our elementary teachers to teach all these subjects so that by the time we're looking for that literacy in the middle school and the high school it is already there. I want to know how we can do that and I'm sure all our groups here are willing to help but we would like to know how you are going to work with us.

**David Coleman:**

**A:** I will, of course, defer to the State leadership to talk about the State effort. But where I agree with you here is there is a wonderful investment to be made in knowledge in the elementary school as you put it not only in mathematics but in literacy. So that commitment to in the elementary school immediately infuse it with informational text, with knowledge about the world, at the same time that this deeper understanding of the core mathematics we're describing as part of the elementary school is at the core of this work. Beginning there does allow greater things to be done later. But that's as much as I feel is appropriate for me to say so I'll leave it to Dr. King and others to talk more about that.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

There are things, again, as I suggested that are questions that are more staff oriented and we hope that you will catch us afterwards and ask that question or that you'll write it in so that our curriculum folks can get back to you on that. We have another question. For our friends on the webinar we'd like to have the microphone with you.

**Audience:**

**Q:** My question kind of lends itself to the comment that the lady had made over there and remarks made in the beginning by the gentleman with regards to radically changing teacher preparation and her concern that we've been in this system so long. How are we going to support current educators in this incredible change? Speaking from an ELA/math/all curriculum perspective, I guide curriculum mapping in our district and I want my folks to believe that all this hard work we've done and all these curricular conversations over the past five years were not for naught, so to speak. I'd like you to speak to the value of having the knowledge of what we're doing and how it will marry with the new common core.

**David Coleman:**

**A:** Thank you so much for that wise question which is how does this work build on what's been done before rather than just painting a picture. I'm going to tell you a funny story if it's okay. One of the most successful and surprising conversations I had in supporting the common core standards was with one of

the leaders of the Southern Baptists. No one expected them to come along as enthusiastically as they did and he said to me, "What you've captured in these standards are the fundamentals of what remains the same in the 21st century as well as what changes." There is in these and I think you heard it in what happened and what you saw a return to fundamental things that experienced teachers and wonderful teachers have been doing for a very long time. In fact, it privileges some of the best work that has been done and shines a light on it in arithmetic, in reading carefully and closely. Many teachers I'm sure watching this are going, "I've been telling everyone we have to do this stuff for ages." I realize how much this is a recapturing, an archeology expedition to find some of the finest work that's been done and make it the center rather than the edge of our work. Similarly in mathematics there's been wonderful work done in this state to integrate the practices and the practices in mathematics into the understanding of specific content and you see how the core rewards that in the example I gave you. So, let me say in a clear voice, this state is ahead of the game in that it was already revising its standards to prepare for these standards. Many of the mapping work that you've been doing already has been towards that next generation of New York State standards which helped lay a foundation for these core standards. So my message to you is we do need to make a shift to deliver this instruction and we all know that but no state is in a stronger position or has done more work to date than your own.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

David, there have been a number of questions that have come in about the assessments but I think that you sufficiently addressed those and I hope that those in the field would agree with that. We have a number of people in our audience in the field from our district superintendents, superintendents, and even members of higher education. This is from one of our colleagues at SUNY and it's a bit of a nuanced question to one that came before or something that you addressed rather.

**Audience:**

**Q:** When looking at literacy instruction, the comprehension of a complex text, is consideration given to approaching an entire textbook at an even more meta-level? How to learn from different types of textbooks in different ways? How approaching a science text for evidence, for example, to support a paper is different from approaching the same text for applied problems?

**David Coleman:**

**A:** Two things about that. One is that the reason why scientists and historians so supported these standards in a wonderful way is because if you look at the literacy standards for literacy and science and literacy in history and social studies they are not reading standards that were snuck in. They don't ask a science teacher to be focused on the style of a piece or on the order of an argument. They focus on what options does an experimental result exclude or include. They require you to look at the combination of

data and text which is so often numbers and text, so often a part of scientific writing. So the good news for the very smart question by the person who wrote in is that these standards in a new way pay much closer attention to the different sorts of evidence that mark these disciplines and really create a path for kids to master that not only in one classroom but throughout their work in middle school and in high school.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

Another question from the audience.

**Audience:**

**Q:** I have a question about the difference between English as a subject and literacy.

**David Coleman:**

**A:** I am hopeful by college and career ready that we can celebrate the power of that combination. So let's talk about how English Language Arts as a subject changes in the face of these standards. What we're not saying to English Language Arts teachers, to be clear, is they're meant to teach dense scientific or historical text as their own discipline. What we're demanding is that historians and science teachers do that very work. In the English classroom in 6-12, in K-5 it expands to history and science because that's one teacher of course; in 6-12 there's a balancing at the core of literature and a new form, literary nonfiction like the letter that I read to you which of course could also be studied in a history classroom. But literary nonfiction here described as well-wrought arguments and informational texts that are written to a broad audience because many of the mightiest examples of American writing as you very well know are precisely those documents. What this allows is, I don't mean here mainly narrative literary nonfiction like biography or memoir, but rather precisely these rich arguments that we went through are rich and formative pieces because it turns out that allows the English teacher to teach a much wider range of text complexity. So what you're giving the English teacher room to do is teach much wider than the story to encounter the rich range of American contribution of rhetoric and thought. Ideas are now equally part of the bread and butter of daily work as are the fictional experiences of characters. I think it's a wonderful expansion for the English Language Arts teacher in their role and at the same time it strengthens the role of their colleagues.

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**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

David, part of what we've talked about and what the Commissioner and our Senior Deputy will talk about with frequency is that this is in fact hard work. Let's be honest, it is hard work but it is at the end of the day the right work. And if it is the right work it has to be system-wide work and I think that's the basis for this question.



**Audience:**

**Q:** I thoroughly enjoyed the Martin Luther King example. This is rich robust teaching and learning. Here is what I am thinking. We're not seeing this in all K-12 classrooms. I then reflected on my postgraduate work in both undergraduate and graduate level courses and it didn't happen here either. It's probably still not happening. Where is higher education in this conversation? What is being provided to them to enhance their practice?

**David Coleman:**

**A:** I think no one is more fit than Dr. Steiner to figure out how to properly engage higher education in this and I will defer entirely to him on that subject. I think something quite wonderful is let me offer you a strange distinction which is between good education and bad education. That is, something worth doing, really worth doing, like reading in that careful way we did and then widening to additional sources and depth, is wonderful to do at a young age, at an older age, in a college class but we don't have to end up practice, year over year doing. And so, all I want to do is say to you please don't think you need to wait. This can be done in 5<sup>th</sup> grade or 6<sup>th</sup> grade with a kind of care. Kids can read like a detective. It is natural to them to pay urgent attention to the details and discover exactly what is happening and we can cultivate that at a very high level very early. So I think we should move to engage higher education at the same time that we do not wait. And at the same time that we begin this work now and begin the work in teacher education and perhaps take the lead in showing a power of reading that may echo beyond our sphere to theirs.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

And in response to our friends from Oneida County who posed that last question, we do want to demonstrate that higher ed is thinking about these things and thinking about them with some depth and looking even at the structural components of it. This question is from the Buffalo region in higher education.

**Audience:**

**Q:** The structures of math and ELA common core are different. ELA for example has anchor standards. In ELA documents transgrade and other numbers are used to identify grade-specific standards. In the mathematics document we have domains made up of clusters. Why the difference?

**David Coleman:**

**A:** Let me answer in two ways. First, I want to clarify something I said earlier. As you can tell I have a dangerous tendency towards mirth and making jokes that get me into trouble. I want to state to you in a



very clear plain voice for everyone to be clear on that that higher ed has made a wonderful contribution because these standards were not built in the absence of them. So higher education was at the table in designing these standards to ensure that they created exactly what kids need to be college ready. You can't do that by yourself. There's a gentleman named Bob Curry here, he's a wonderful guy who works in higher education here, as well as several other New York State representatives who were recently at a meeting, where what he said to me so intelligently is he said, "The kids come to us and they can only read and write stories." That's how he summarized it. They need to be able to read a range of text and write in this range of ways. So it was a wonderful embracing of the core of the core. So I want to tell you that the people who are doing the work of educating kids in their first year and a lot of the work of higher education are strongly behind this work and that's one of the things that make it special and a chance to make an advance. So that's all joking aside.

In terms of your specific question about literacy and math, I hope I've shown the answer to that question today. In mathematics it's extremely important to focus on the domain level because you saw the domain of number and operations, etc., in early grades understanding that the key critical domains are essential to seeing the shape of that discipline so we can focus adequately on those core topics. In literacy that would be equally deceptive. That is, it is consistently about drawing increasing evidence to the text from a set of rather similar skills that get stronger and focusing on any one of those skills as the special focus in each year would actually be a mistake. We should in fact look to text to guide us here. So that's because of that fundamental difference, the recursive quality of literacy in which the same powerful skills are refined over time roughly whereas in mathematics there is a much more growth of specific topics and domains that give a shape to the discipline.

I am anxious to hear from Dr. King as well.

**Moderator Ken Slentz:**

Before we bring Dr. King out let me take a moment on behalf of the Commissioner and the Board of Regents certainly to thank all of you for attending today, certainly to thank the Commissioner's arms in the field, our district superintendents, our superintendents, all of you who have taken the time to engage in what I hope you see is a critical conversation but again it is the first portion of the conversation in which we move forward to do better things for our kids in getting them ready for college and career.

At this point, Dr. King.

## Part 10

### Conclusions from Senior Deputy Commissioner King

Let me start if I might with a reflection on words from the text that was before us today from Letter from a Birmingham Jail. It's one of my favorite sentences in the English language.

Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.

The work we began today is for me a part of an agenda about the future of our nation's economy, the future of our nation's democracy and fundamentally about civil rights. College and career readiness isn't for some, it is for all. Our obligation is to ensure that that is a gift that we give through our education system to all of our students. So today is not about the end of the work of building the common core but the beginning of our work in delivering the common core to our students. Dr. King's point about human progress is that it takes, as Ken Slentz said, hard work and so that is our work, our work at the Department, our work in districts, our work in schools, and ultimately our work in classrooms. So we have a lot of hard work ahead of us.

We start first with today's conversation, our first opportunity to engage as an education community in New York State with these common core standards and to grapple with them deeply in the form of actual text, actual math problems. We now move into the next stage which is to engage all of our colleagues in this conversation and it won't be a short conversation. It will be a long conversation that will take us many years to move towards real change in how we do teaching and learning throughout the state. The next step in the conversation, we've invited and I will invite again districts and schools and teachers across the state to send us exemplar modules, the good work that is happening in excellent schools across the state and excellent classrooms across the state that reflects the instructional philosophy and approach of the common core. We've asked for those materials so that we can begin to share them with the broader educational community.

In August we will gather our network teams, the field workers of this new civil rights movement of the common core standards. We will gather our network teams in August from across the state to engage in a conversation about three things. One, about the common core standards, about what college and career readiness really means in English Language Arts and math although we know college and career readiness means more than that. We begin with English Language Arts and literacy and math. We will engage those network teams in August in a conversation about data driven instruction and the inquiry process. How do we ensure that teachers and classrooms and schools across the state, our principals, our superintendents, are engaged in a continuous conversation about student learning and how their



work can advance that student learning? Looking closely at the questions students struggle with, the text that they can't quite figure out and figuring out how do we get better at teaching and learning? We will also engage those network teams in August in a conversation about teacher and leader effectiveness. We've spent the last year engaged with stakeholders from across the state in a conversation about how do we evaluate teachers and principals? How do we understand if they are making a maximum contribution to student achievement? Teacher and principal evaluation is a controversial subject but the goal of the evaluation system is to improve teaching and learning and we will engage the network teams in that conversation in August. We will look together at video tape of instruction and ask ourselves how closely does that instruction look like the kind of instruction that David Coleman so wonderfully described today?

And then the network teams will go out. They will be the field workers of our new civil rights movement. They will go out and they will work together, arm in arm, hand in hand with teachers and principals and superintendents and assistant superintendents for instruction and parents and students to change teaching and learning for the better. Again, we have excellent examples all across the state of great work that is going on and we are going to leverage that. And so over the course of the next school year what we will ask is that in every classroom around the state, this is not a mandate but a request that in every classroom around the state teachers try to do one common core aligned unit each semester as a way to really delve into the common core.

And then in 2012-13, we will then align our assessment system to the common core and our assessments will look much more like the work that we did together today. We will also by 2012-13 be able to make available for teachers and schools across the state more exemplar units. So we will start with a small number of exemplar units at elementary, middle and high school levels in English Language Arts and literacy and in math that we'll make available this August, we'll start there. But we'll build on those exemplar units so that by the time we enter the 2012-13 school year, we will enter with rich common core aligned modules in English Language Arts and mathematics and the arts for 2012-13.

And then we will build towards in 2013-14 a second set of modules in science and social studies, again aligned with the common core and aligned more deeply with college and career readiness.

That is the work ahead of us. What we know is that it's a huge challenge for everyone in this room, for every staff member at the Department, for every district, for every superintendent, every principal, every teacher. That is our challenge, but that's the challenge we begin to embark on today.



It is a pleasure to have David Coleman's extraordinary leadership in today's conversation, a pleasure to have the Commissioner's extraordinary leadership in bringing us to this point of embarking on this journey together.

Please use our web site as a source for continuing information. There will be additional resources appearing in the days ahead on how we will tackle this challenge together.

Thank you for your time and attention. It's an honor to work alongside you.