SECTION 1

Developing Strategic Readers and Learners

Fostering Comprehension of Complex Texts

Picture yourself as a reader. Perhaps you see yourself relaxing in the evening, burrowed into a comfortable chair, relishing a good book. Or sipping your morning coffee and perusing the daily newspaper as you tune in to the outside world before you head to work. Or poised in front of a computer screen as you navigate your way through a progression of enticing websites, quickly inventorying content as you track down a needed snippet of information. It is easy to visualize yourself in a multitude of settings, interacting with a wide spectrum of texts, engaged in the act we call "reading."

Of course, we see people reading all the time, and it is easy to describe the overt indicators of reading—eyes focusing, pages turning, digital texts scrolling—but how would you describe the mental behaviors of reading? What happens in the mind of a reader, the part we cannot see? Pause for a moment and try to put it into words. How would you describe the action "to read"?

Now consider the following "reads":

- The police officer quickly *reads* the situation and decides on an appropriate response.
- The park ranger is always careful to *read* the skies when escorting hikers into the mountains.
- The coach *reads* the opponents' defense and immediately adjusts the next play.
- The child tries to *read* his mother's reaction to see if he will be permitted to play with his friends.

How well did your definition coincide with these "reads"? Very likely, you conceptualized reading as an activity that focuses on the ability to identify written words, recognize their meanings, and comprehend an author's message. Yet, if we consider *read* in its broader meaning, we realize that reading is a process that involves strategic examination of some array of information to achieve an understanding. We read to make sense of what we are observing. Making sense— of human interactions, of weather patterns, of a competitor's moves, of facial expressions, and of course, of written language—is the purpose of reading.

Students in 21st-century classrooms are expected to read from an impressive array of written texts on a daily basis. It is sometimes easy for students, and their teachers, to lose sight of why they read. Students do not read to complete assignments, they do not read to be prepared for tests, and they do not read to meet standards. They read to understand.

Meeting the Challenges of the Common Core State Standards

Of course, as teachers these days, we are buzzing with the implications of the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [NGACBP & CCSSO], 2010a). The literacy standards (*Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*) have been adopted by 46 states and are predicated on the compelling evidence that reading comprehension is fundamental to learning in all the subjects we teach. Students are now expected to grow their capacities as readers, writers, and users of language as an integral component of their learning in all curricular disciplines. Unquestionably, the Common Core's literacy standards are rigorous, ambitious, and not endorsements of the status quo. Several significant shifts in expectations for our students are directly relevant to the focus in this book:

- Students will be expected to read and comprehend texts of much greater complexity.
- Students will be expected to read a higher volume of informational (expository) texts.
- Students will be expected to perceive, analyze, and develop argumentation as readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and viewers.
- Students will be expected to considerably expand their academic vocabularies.
- Students will be expected to regularly communicate their understandings as readers and learners through writing.

In examining these shifts, Fisher, Frey, and Alfaro (2013) eloquently summarized the vision of the Common Core literacy standards:

> They contain a promise—a promise that students will be adequately prepared for life after school, whether that be college or a career. But that promise requires the active involvement of every teacher. Each of us

must take to heart the role language plays in learning. We have to ensure that students have the opportunity to read, write, speak, listen, and view in every class, every day. We have to develop the best possible lessons, based on content standards for our disciplines and the Common Core State Standards for Literacy. We have to ensure that students actually learn the amazing information that schools offer. (p. xiv)

The Common Core outlines 32 literacy standards—subdivided into four strands: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language—that are conceptualized as an integrated model of literacy. As a result, the standards are intertwined, envisioning classroom literacy experiences where students regularly engage as readers, refine their understandings as collaborators, explore their thinking through discussion and writing, integrate their insights from reading with knowledge gained from other media and interactions, and communicate their learning as writers. Although the 10 reading anchor standards are the central focus for this book, the classroom strategies highlighted in Section 2 adhere to this integrated model, and each strategy addresses multiple reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language standards. (See Table 18 in the introduction to Section 2.)

Due to the Common Core, our conversations as teachers are more likely these days to be sprinkled with references to *close reading*, *complex text*, *text-based evidence*, and *disciplinary literacy*. Each of these key terms is explored in more depth in sections of this book, but let's start with reading comprehension. How can we explain the dynamics of what happens in a reader's mind when comprehension becomes the result?

Reading Comprehension: What Do Proficient Readers Do?

Imagine the following episode in your life as a reader: You are spending enjoyable minutes immersed in a national news magazine. As you page through it, you quickly size up articles and make instant decisions about whether to continue on or linger awhile and read. Your eye catches a headline cautioning that killing germs could actually be hazardous to your health. You are intrigued and wonder, Aren't germs harmful? Isn't that why we need antibiotics? Before you realize it, you have launched into reading this article.

The authors refer to microbes, and you briefly ponder what you remember about these microscopic creatures. Bacteria, you think, and maybe viruses. You remember that your body harbors "good" bacteria, so you theorize that the authors might focus on killing the wrong germs. You also recall warnings about doctors overprescribing antibiotics. As you read on, some of your questions are answered, and new ones surface. The authors emphasize that attacks on microbes impel

them to mutate into stronger and deadlier forms. You revise your definition of *microbes* to include fungi and protozoa.

Some paragraphs are stuffed with unfamiliar scientific terminology, and these you rapidly glance over to extract the gist of the message: Serious microbe-causing ailments are on the rise. You are particularly struck by the vivid descriptions of the human body as a colony consisting of tens of trillions of microbes, which help define us as well as facilitate our abilities to function as living organisms. (I should start referring to myself as "we" rather than "I," you whimsically muse.) Images are constantly triggered by the text: bacteria in the teeth, salmonella in the digestive tract, friendly microbes inhabiting our skin.

As you finish the article, you still have questions: How dangerous might some microbes become? What will it take for people to adopt more commonsense practices with their "coinhabitants"? How should I change my behavior? As you pause for a few moments, you realize that your understanding of germs has significantly changed because you now have an image of yourself as a "considerate host" who needs these fellow travelers as much as they need you.

The description in the preceding scenario illustrates a reader thoughtfully engaged with a written text. This scenario parallels what proficient readers do as a matter of habit. Research reveals that proficient readers employ a host of comprehension processes as they read and learn. These comprehension processes provide the bedrock for learning in our classrooms, from the early grades through high school and college.

Comprehension Processes of Proficient Readers

Proficient reading abilities are integral to the literacy challenges and choices we make as adults each day of our lives. Likewise, proficient reading abilities are integral for learning. For students to achieve success in learning in social studies and science, literature and mathematics, in fact, in all curricular disciplines, they need to develop strategic comprehension processes. In their seminal work on comprehension instruction, Keene and Zimmermann (2007) frame the rich vein of research on proficient readers around seven characteristic modes of thinking that are in constant interplay when an individual is engaged in understanding (see Table 1). As you examine these essential components of comprehension, notice how each was integral to the dynamics of reading described in our "germs" example.

Making Connections to Prior Knowledge
Researchers argue that prior knowledge—what a person already knows—may be the most important

Table 1
Comprehension Processes of Proficient Readers

Comprehension Process	Description
Make connections to prior knowledge	Reading comprehension results when readers can match what they already know (their schema) with new information and ideas in a text. Proficient readers activate prior knowledge before, during, and after reading, and they constantly evaluate how a text enhances or alters their previous understandings.
Generate questions	Comprehension is, to a significant degree, a process of inquiry. Proficient readers pose questions to themselves as they read. Asking questions is the art of carrying on an inner conversation with an author, as well as an internal dialogue within one's self.
Visualize and create sensory mental images	Comprehension involves breathing life experiences into the abstract language of written texts. Proficient readers use visual, auditory, and other sensory connections to create mental images of an author's message.
Make inferences	Much of what is to be understood in a text must be inferred. Authors rely on readers to contribute to a text's meaning by linking their background knowledge to information in the text. In addition to acknowledging explicitly stated messages, proficient readers read between the lines to discern implicit meanings, make predictions, and read with a critical eye.
Determine importance	Our memories quickly overload unless we can pare down a text to its essential ideas. Texts contain key ideas and concepts amidst much background detail. Proficient readers strive to differentiate key ideas, themes, and information from details so that they are not overwhelmed by facts.
Synthesize	Proficient readers glean the essence of a text (determine importance) and organize these ideas into coherent summaries of meaning. Effective comprehension leads to new learning and the development of new schema (background knowledge). Proficient readers make evaluations, construct generalizations, and draw conclusions from a text.
Monitor reading and apply fix-up strategies	Proficient readers watch themselves as they read and expect to make adjustments in their strategies to ensure that they are able to achieve a satisfactory understanding of a text.

variable for reading comprehension. A mental search for meaningful connections activates previous learning and taps into past experiences, enabling a reader to understand new information and establish interest, motivation, and purpose for reading a specific text. Proficient readers constantly size up how their background knowledge might be mined to make sense of what an author is saying. Instructional practices that help students bridge their existing knowledge about a topic with the knowledge demands presented by an author, especially before they start to read, can support effective reading of even confusing or challenging material.

Generating Questions

The minds of proficient readers are literally teeming with questions. When readers wonder about something in a text—wonder why, wonder if, wonder whether, wonder what, wonder how—they are surfacing questions that direct their thinking through a text. They also use self-questioning to check their progress: Did this make sense? Do I need to clarify anything in this passage? Did I satisfactorily figure out a probable meaning of this unfamiliar term? Self-questioning, of course, is very different from answering questions prepared by someone else. Rather than relying on others to do the intellectual work of questioning a text, proficient readers raise their own questions, personally interacting with new ideas and using questions to make sense of what they are encountering. Instructional practices that elicit self-questioning are critical for sparking a highly active mind-set during reading and learning.

Creating Mental Images

Visualizing involves linking cues from the author's words with personal experiences as readers mentally

craft their own versions of scenes, events, and objects. When readers are deeply engaged in imagining what a text is describing, it is as if the words disappear and instead a personal DVD is playing in their heads. Visualizing is quite idiosyncratic because no two individuals bring exactly the same set of experiences to draw on when language triggers sensory responses. Students who become bogged down in the words on the page may struggle to visualize and, as a result, have trouble "seeing" what is being portrayed by an author. Instructional practices that stimulate students' imaginations help them picture in their mind's eye what an author represents in written language.

Making Inferences

Facility with inferential thinking develops from an awareness that authors expect readers to fill in the gaps between what they are able to put into writing and what readers themselves should bring to a text. In addition, inferences are necessary to flesh out the beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives that influence an author's message. Predicting—encouraging readers to take stock of what they have read so far to think ahead and anticipate what an author might say—is a particularly critical inferential reading behavior. Instructional practices that assist students in identifying and analyzing implicit meanings in a text enable them to merge clues from an author with their prior knowledge to construct a more complete understanding of a text.

"Given knowledge about what good readers do when they read, researchers and educators have addressed the following question: Can we teach students to engage in these productive behaviors? The answer is a resounding yes." (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 206)

Determining Importance

Comprehension depends on readers' making reflective decisions as to what is worthy of remembering over time. Proficient readers continually evaluate what to take away from their reading—the "need to know" comprehension residue that should remain after details have slipped away. They actively sort key ideas and concepts from background information, focusing on, What is the point of this? or Why is the author telling me this? Students who are not adept at getting the point of a text instead find themselves lost in a maze of factual details. Instructional practices that help students perceive the structure of a text—the relationships between ideas and information—are a prerequisite for determining importance.

Synthesizing

Synthesizing is the culmination of comprehension; to synthesize, learners must connect to their knowledge, raise questions, create mental images, make inferences, and determine importance. Synthesis represents those "Aha! I get it!" moments, when readers develop personal interpretations of an author's message and establish their take on a text's meaning. Because of the transcendent nature of synthesizing, most students find summarizing to be a difficult process. Instructional practices that engage students in summarizing what they read into personal understandings are absolutely necessary if learners are to reduce a mass of material into a manageable distillation: an explanation, a generalization, an interpretation, or a conclusion.

Monitoring Reading and Applying Fix-Up Strategies

When proficient readers encounter breakdowns in their comprehension—difficult vocabulary, unfamiliar references, confusing explanations—they hit the "pause button" to regroup. They decide whether to adjust their reading, to reread, or to use additional strategies to make sense of an unclear passage. Proficient readers do not say, "I read it, but I didn't understand it." They know that reading *means* you understood it. The classroom strategies detailed in Section 2 all model literacy practices for successfully reading challenging texts so students become comfortable with problem-solving options for working a text to achieve understanding.

Constructing Meaning From Complex Texts

An impressive depth of research underscores that readers engage in a fluid orchestration of these strategic comprehension processes to construct meaning from a text. As Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011) explained:

> When we read, we use our knowledge along with our perceptions of what we think the text says to literally build, or construct, mental representations of what the text means. Once those representations are constructed, we can merge, or integrate, the information in those models with the knowledge stored in our minds. When we achieve that integration, we call it learning; we literally know more than we did before the reading. (p. 53)

Comprehension is achieved when readers actively create meaning; they do not passively receive it by merely identifying the words on the page. And no two people will have exactly the same comprehension of a text because no two people will be reading a text under exactly the same conditions. According to the

RAND Reading Study Group (2002), the interactions among the following four conditions determine what meaning a reader will construct from a text:

1. What the reader brings to the reading situation
2. The characteristics of the written text
3. The activity that defines the task and purpose of the reader
4. The context within which the reading occurs

The Reader

Teachers know that every student brings certain skills as a reader to the classroom. Too often, we might attribute comprehension breakdowns to skill deficits: word identification (e.g., "This student does not apply phonics skills."), fluency (e.g., "This student is a slow, labored, or word-by-word reader."), or reading technique (e.g., "This student lacks study skills."). Although each of these is certainly a facet of what it means to be a reader, it is too simplistic to focus solely on whether students have developed specific reading skills. Because comprehension relies on a mental construction that assimilates what is on the page with what is already known, the background knowledge and experiences of the reader are primary determinants of how a text will be understood. The more students already know about a topic, the better they will be able to comprehend texts about that topic. If their background knowledge includes much of the content vocabulary that appears, for instance, in a passage on medieval cathedrals or in an article on creatures that live in arid regions, then comprehension is enhanced correspondingly. Additionally, students may have developed the facility to read materials typical of some academic disciplines but may struggle with texts in other subject areas. Finally, comprehension is influenced greatly by personal reasons for reading a particular text and the willingness or motivation to do so.

The Text

What are students expected to read in our classrooms? A textbook, a short story, a magazine article, a website, a document? Certainly, there is a wide, and growing, variety of print and electronic texts that can be accessed to learn more about the disciplines we teach. And, of course, texts vary greatly in the challenges they present to students. The Common Core, specifically Reading Anchor Standard 10, emphasizes the reading of *complex texts* as a central expectation for students, from the intermediate grades through high school. The Common Core posits that students not only need to read more as learners in our courses but also need to read texts of significantly greater complexity than is currently the norm. The Common Core identifies three categories of factors that contribute to text complexity:

1. *Qualitative factors:* Different levels of meaning, text structure, author purpose, clarity of ideas, conventionality of language, and knowledge demands. Features such as how content is presented, density of concepts, and the text's organizational structure—from the sentence level up through entire chapters or units—influence text complexity. (See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the impact of organizational text frames on reading.) Clearly, some texts are written and organized in more reader-friendly ways than others, as anyone who has struggled through a technical manual can attest. In addition, the author's use of language, particularly the more formal and impersonal academic language that is characteristic of many disciplinary texts, can challenge readers. Knowledge demands—what authors expect readers to already know—are extensively explored in Chapter 2. Furthermore, texts in one discipline, such as mathematics or science, contrast dramatically with texts in other disciplines, such as literature, history, or technology, a variable that is examined in more depth in Chapter 4. Finally, the unique nature of hypertexts presents special concerns because online texts require readers to navigate a pathway through the text according to individual needs and priorities, and such texts frequently contain a plethora of multimedia elements.

2. *Quantitative factors:* Word difficulty, sentence length, and text cohesion. Computerized evaluations of a text's vocabulary load and sophistication of sentence structure provide Lexile scores that signal possible text complexity. A higher density of less familiar vocabulary and more intricate and involved sentences are a hallmark of complex texts. Although seemingly objective measures, computerized evaluations are only one indicator of text complexity. Overreliance on these scores must be cautioned when considering the appropriateness of texts for specific students.

3. *Reader and task considerations:* Knowledge, interest, and motivation of the reader, and purpose and challenges of the task. Basically, a text may be quite complex for some readers and not terribly complex for others due to the reader variables described in the preceding segment, "The Reader." The task required of a reader might mandate an in-depth understanding or instead permit a more general comprehension. Because of its critical impact on comprehension, task is explained more extensively in the next segment, "The Activity."

The Activity

Why does a person read a specific text? Comprehension is significantly affected by the nature of the reading activity. Did students select the reading material, or did someone else? Are they reading to enhance their knowledge about a topic, to discover how to accomplish a task, to experience certain ideas, or to appreciate and enjoy an author's craft? Who determines what constitutes adequate comprehension—the reader or someone else? In the classroom, teacher expectations and instructions determine the way a student approaches reading. Does the assignment require a careful examination for mastery of details, or will a more global understanding of the major ideas suffice? Will the information be discussed the next day, tested a week later, or used to complete a project? After the reading, will students complete a worksheet, answer inferential questions, develop their interpretations, write an essay, or conduct a lab experiment? Are students expected to do independent work, or can they collaborate in their reading with others? Student comprehension of a text will vary considerably depending on the messages the teacher sends through the parameters of a reading assignment.

The Context

Reading, of course, does not occur in a vacuum. A reader's comprehension is influenced by a variety of contextual factors: physical conditions, such as noise level and comfort (e.g., on the bus, in a classroom, in bed); time elements (e.g., early morning, late in the school day, midnight); and the support, encouragement, and attitudes of others (e.g., family members, peers, teachers). In the classroom, a teacher assumes primary responsibility for creating the environment for reading. Is reading emphasized primarily as an isolated, solitary act, or are students constantly provided opportunities to converse and interact as they develop their understandings? How have students been mentored to respect and assist one another as they collaborate on classroom tasks? How are the multiple perspectives that individual readers bring to specific texts honored and encouraged? Are students comfortable with risking the interjection of their ideas and viewpoints into the classroom conversation? Are discussions of text open to a range of possible interpretations as students grapple with their understandings, or are students conditioned to supply a "correct" response?

Working Complex Texts

Let's take a closer examination of a snippet of a complex text, one by essayist Anna Quindlen (2001), targeted by the Common Core as an exemplar for grades 9 and 10:

America is an improbable idea. A mongrel nation built of ever-changing disparate parts, it is held together by a notion, the notion that all men are created equal, though everyone knows that most men consider themselves better than someone. "Of all the nations in the world, the United States was built in nobody's image," the historian Daniel Boorstin wrote. That's because it was built of bits and pieces that seem discordant, like the crazy quilts that have been one of its great folk-art forms, velvet and calico and checks and brocades. Out of many, one. That is the ideal. (para. 1)

Immediately, you are probably struck by the vocabulary demands (e.g., *improbable*, *mongrel*, *disparate*, *notion*, *discordant*, *brocades*) and the elaborately constructed sentences. The Lexile score for the entire essay (1290L) falls in the high end of the new text complexity range identified for ninth- and tenth-grade readers by the Common Core. The author's premise is communicated through the use of figurative language, using *crazy quilt* as a metaphor for America, and obviously the author assumes a great deal of knowledge about U.S. history and culture, as well as familiarity with folk art, particularly quilting. Readers are also expected to place important allusions ("all men are created equal," "out of many, one") as they try to grasp what she is telling them. The author tosses in a wry aside ("everyone knows that most men consider themselves better than someone") that on a second look seems to reveal a very serious undercurrent. And readers have to pick up that the author is embarking on making an argument; they will have to determine the intentions behind this message and evaluate the author's ideas as they compare them with their own thinking.

As teachers, we clearly recognize that comprehension of this complex text would present challenges for many of our students. The Common Core's 10 anchor standards for reading, presented in Table 2, expect students to effectively engage with complex texts like this one in deep and thoughtful ways. Table 2 cross-references these 10 with the comprehension processes of proficient readers. In effect, the comprehension processes define *how* a reader goes about constructing comprehension, whereas the standards determine the results of that thinking, or *what* that comprehension should accomplish. Although arguably each standard would entail application of all of the comprehension processes, some of them seem predominant for individual standards (e.g., Anchor Reading Standard 1 expressly refers to making inferences).

The term *close reading* is increasingly being used to typify these rigorous expectations for readers of complex texts. *Close reading* implies an in-depth study of a text, a careful consideration of what an author is saying, and very likely return trips for multiple looks at various

Table 2
Reading Comprehension and the Common Core State Standards' Anchor Standards for Reading

Strand	Reading Standard[a]	Focus	Comprehension Processes
Key ideas and details	1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	Explicit/implicit meanings	• Make connections to prior knowledge • Make inferences • Determine importance
	2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	Main ideas	• Generate questions • Determine importance • Synthesize
	3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	Text relationships	• Make connections to prior knowledge • Generate questions • Make inferences • Determine importance • Synthesize
Craft and structure	4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	Vocabulary	• Make connections to prior knowledge • Create mental images • Make inferences
	5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.	Text structure	• Generate questions • Determine importance • Synthesize
	6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	Author's purpose/perspective	• Generate questions • Make inferences
Integration of knowledge and ideas	7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	Visual literacy/technology	• Generate questions • Create mental images • Synthesize
	8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.	Argument and support	• Generate questions • Determine importance • Synthesize
	9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	Multiple texts	• Make connections to prior knowledge • Generate questions • Determine importance • Synthesize
Range of reading and level of text complexity	10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	Text complexity	• Make connections to prior knowledge • Generate questions • Create mental images • Make inferences • Determine importance • Synthesize

parts of the message. A key facet of close reading is text-based evidence, that readers can support their interpretations of a text's meaning by citing specific and relevant statements or passages. Perhaps a useful summation of close reading is that the reader will need to work the text to reach a satisfactory comprehension. Working a text invariably means rereading and full engagement of all the comprehension processes described earlier.

To what extent do students currently demonstrate close reading of disciplinary texts? The reality in our classrooms is that many students do not regularly exhibit proficient reader behaviors with school reading tasks. Teachers often feel resigned to a presumed fate that, when it comes to reading comprehension, some students invariably get it, and others don't. Instead of working a text toward understanding, many of our students resort to the following three typical ineffective reading practices:

1. *Skimming for answers:* Much of what we call "school reading" falls into this category. Students are preoccupied with completing an assignment: If a task overemphasizes tracking literal information rather than comprehension, they can in effect bypass reading and skim for details that can be jotted down. Although such "locate and copy" homework might appear acceptable, students have only taken a superficial look at the text, and comprehension has not occurred.

2. *Surface processing:* Another common ineffective practice is reading without thinking about what an author is trying to communicate. Students may dutifully "read" the assigned text but, although their eyes are looking at the words, do not engage in an inner dialogue with the author and themselves. As a result, students essentially read to get done, and teachers hear the familiar refrain, "I read it, but I didn't understand it."

3. *Reading and forgetting:* Finally, students who do not employ proficient reader strategies are unlikely to learn from their reading. Because they have not personalized an understanding of what an author is telling them, new learning is highly vulnerable to rapid forgetting. Consequently, students are able to demonstrate little carryover from their reading to class discussions, follow-up activities, and assessments.

Teaching for Comprehension

It is perhaps easy for teachers to become discouraged with the ineffective reading behaviors they witness in their classrooms. When teachers believe their students are incapable of independently handling reading assignments, they frequently downplay the role of reading in their curriculum. Yet, when students no longer read, even average and above-average students fall behind in their development. Indeed, an extensive study by ACT (American College Testing; 2006) concluded that only 51% of today's college-bound students in the United States have developed the ability to read the complex texts that are central to college learning and the workplace. According to ACT, this alarming statistic is the result of years of teachers neglecting to provide students with sufficient practice and instruction in reading appropriately complex texts in their subject areas. Unfortunately, recent data confirms this trend: only 52% of ACT test takers met the college and career reading benchmark during 2011 assessments (ACT, 2012), and only 49% met the reading benchmark on the 2011 SAT assessments (The College Board, 2012).

The Common Core review of the research on reading achievement concluded that too many students read at too low a level and, as a result, are ill prepared for the increasingly complex texts and tasks of 21st-century life (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010a). As a result, the literacy standards are founded on expectations that all students need to acquire high-level reading abilities throughout their years of schooling:

> Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews. (p. 3)

Classroom strategies can play a significant role in developing proficient reader behaviors for all students. When teachers fully incorporate comprehension instruction into the fabric of their daily teaching, students not only learn more but also continue to develop their capacity as readers of increasingly more sophisticated texts. By integrating classroom strategies into our instruction, we foster the development of individuals who are purposeful thinkers and increasingly confident and proficient readers, capable of informing themselves in a 21st-century world. The classroom strategies presented in Section 2 of this book are each cross-referenced with the comprehension processes outlined in this chapter and with the 10 Common Core anchor standards for

reading. A Strategy Index—displayed on the first page for each individual strategy—provides teachers with a guide for selecting classroom strategies that develop comprehension and meet the Common Core.

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