

The Education Trust: Literacy Assignment Analysis Framework

Domain	Indicator	Questions for Practitioners
<p>Alignment with the Common Core: A Common Core-aligned assignment for ELA/literacy has essential features. First, and foremost, it must be aligned to the appropriate grade-level standard. The standard(s) then set the frame for instructional goals and the assignment’s content and tasks. Alignment also means that the assignment embraces the instructional shifts articulated by the Common Core. In ELA/literacy, these shifts require students to have regular practice with complex texts and their academic language; read, write, and speak using evidence from texts, both literary and informational; and build knowledge through content information. Finally, an aligned assignment is clearly articulated so that students can fully understand what is expected of them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assignment aligns to the appropriate grade-level standard. • The assignment clearly articulates the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often do students read, discuss, and write about complex texts in my classroom in a way that honors the spirit of the Common Core? • How do I ensure that my assignments and expectations for student work are clear? What language and guidance do I provide to ensure clarity?
<p>Centrality of Text: Texts hold a fundamental place in the area of literacy. In an assignment, the centrality of text permits students to grapple with key ideas, larger meanings, and the author’s craft and intent. Students must have the opportunity to display increasing expertise in interpreting and responding to a text and draw evidence from a text to justify their responses and thinking. Specifically, an assignment fully reflects this centrality of text when students are required to cite evidence (e.g., paraphrasing, direct citation) to support a position or claim. Such skills are essential to postsecondary success and undergird the pedagogical shifts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assignment solicits text-based responses. Student use of the text is vital to successfully complete the assignment. • The assignment requires students to cite evidence from the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I ask students to interpret and respond to complex texts? When? How often? • Do I require students to cite textual evidence in order to support or develop a claim? When? How often? • How do I select texts for my students to read?

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<p>Cognitive Challenge: The cognitive work required to retell a story, identify facts from a text, analyze a character using textual evidence, or apply knowledge gained from multiple texts to form a new idea ranges from simple to complex. Generally, the cognitive challenge increases through text-dependent questions and assignments that require student documentation of their deep analysis or the construction of new knowledge. Our framework utilizes Norman L. Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Levels. Additionally, as students grapple with complex subject matter, we believe the expectation of an extended written response (multiple paragraphs) — which is governed by the accepted practices of the discipline — strongly supports such thinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assignment requires high levels of cognitive demand. • The assignment is linked to the creation of a piece of extended writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When and how often are students assigned to complete an extended writing piece that includes their original thinking and ideas that are supported by textual evidence? • When and how often are students expected to work through the writing process (plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish) with an extended writing piece?
<p>Motivation and Engagement: For adolescent learners to thrive and achieve at high levels, educators must embrace both the content of the curriculum and the design of instruction. Each of these elements impact student attention, interest, motivation, and cognitive effort and must be considered in the design of assignments. Specifically, we prioritized two key areas: choice and relevancy. Students must be given some level of autonomy and independence in their tasks — with rigor maintained across all options. And the tasks must be relevant as they focus on poignant topics, use real-world materials and experiences, and give students the opportunity to make connections with their goals, interests, and values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have choice in the assignment in one of the following areas: task, product, content, process, or text. Rigor is maintained across all options. • The assignment focuses on a poignant topic, uses real-world materials, and/or gives students the freedom to make connections to their experiences, goal, interests, and values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities for my students to bring their own ideas, experiences, and opinions into the assignments? If so, when and how often? • How do I bridge the known to the unknown for my students? Or, how can assignments in my classroom offer students the opportunity to experience rigorous content — which may be unfamiliar — in a way that feels relevant to them? • When and how do I give students choices in their assignments that support their autonomy?