Key Shifts in Assessment and Instruction Related to CCSS-ELA

Webinar Presented by Karen K. Wixson (April 24, 2013)
Guide by Thomas DeVere Wolsey & Elfrieda H. Hiebert

Overview

Listen and Learn
View the webinar (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHYcJAX0AO8) while consulting the webinar slides (http://www.textproject.org/library/presentations/assessment-and-instruction-in-the-era-of-the-ccss-in-english-language-arts/)

Reflect and Respond
Explore terms and definitions
Consider questions for discussion or written response

Analyze and Apply
Articles and resources for additional reading, writing, and discussion

Background

This presentation illustrates what the key features of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) mean for the new-assessments that are being created to assess students’ attainment of the standards. These shifts include: 1) Regular practice with complex text and its academic language; 2) Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from literary and informational text; and 3) Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. Two consortia are creating CCSS-aligned assessments: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). States that have adopted the Common Core have chosen to be part of one of these two consortia (although, as of fall of 2013, several states have decided to create their own assessments). Note that the assessments are still being developed and piloted, so this information may change for the states that are using the PARCC or SBAC (see key terms, below) assessments.
Key Terms

**Shifts**: Dialogue surrounding the development and implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) often focuses on the shifts or changes in learning expectations or instructional emphases within the CCSS relative to previous state standards. The key “shifts” that are identified can vary, depending on the interpretation of the organization or individual describing them. The shifts are important to understand (even with varying interpretations of what they are) in that teachers and educational institutions will need to examine their existing practices in relation to these expectations or emphases.

**PARCC**: Acronym for Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, one of two consortia of states developing assessments to measure students’ progress toward the CCSS.

**SBAC**: Acronym for Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, one of two consortia of states developing assessments to measure students’ progress toward the CCSS.

**Constructed response**: Students compose a response to a question (e.g., such as writing a phrase or sentence) rather than selecting a response from a list of choices (called a selected response—see below).

**Selected response**: Students select a response from a list of choices (e.g., multiple-choice formats illustrated a type of selected response).

**Evidence-Based Selected Response (EBSR)**: An evidence-based selected response occurs when there is a question that follows a selected response which requires students to show evidence from the text that supports the answer they provided to the first question. All selected response items do not have to have an evidenced-based selected response.

**Technology-Enhanced Constructed Response (TECR); Technology-enhanced item**: The first term is used in PARCC and the second term in SBAC to describe a group of items that make use of the unique features of computer-based assessments. Formats for this group of responses include: drag and drop, cut and paste, shade text, move items to show relationships.

**Large-scale assessment**: These assessments are designed to be given to a very large group of students and to assess their progress as a group toward specified or implied goals. Often, the results of large-scale assessments are reported publicly (e.g., internet, television, newspapers) and are used to make policies by boards of education, legislatures, and other policy groups.

**Computer-adaptive assessment**: “Based on student responses, the computer program adjusts the difficulty of questions throughout the assessment. For example, a student who answers a question correctly will receive a more challenging item, while an incorrect answer generates an easier question.” (from [http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/computer-adaptive-testing/](http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/computer-adaptive-testing/)).
The Activities

**Listen and Learn**


**Purpose-Setting Questions**

- How are currently planned PARCC or Smarter Balanced approaches to assessment the same or different than the large-scale assessments you are used to, either as a student in K–12 or as a teacher who administers or supervises assessments?

- What are the implications for instruction as represented by the key shifts in the standards and assessments of the Common Core that Dr. Wixson describes?

- How might you envision using what you have learned about the CCSS-based, large-scale assessments to better inform your instruction? What kinds of information might you need about students at different points during the school year to fine-tune your instruction and support student learning?

**Reflect and Respond**

1. As Dr. Wixson describes in her presentation, the CCSS assessments involve students reading and writing at or near grade-level. However, many students struggle with reading and writing tasks for various reasons. What could be potential outcomes when assessments use challenging texts? How might teachers prepare students for the challenging texts of the assessments?

2. What are the commonalities of the PARCC and SBAC assessments as described by Dr. Wixson? What are the differences?

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3. Examine the summary in #2 above. Are any important elements of language learning left out of the assessment picture?
4. In considering the illustrations of technology-enhanced items from Dr. Wixson’s presentation, what “value-added” does technology have to assessments? What could be limitations of technology as an assessment venue?

5. Slides such as the following ones (13, 24, 36) from Dr. Wixson’s presentation indicate that the students will be reading, using what they’ve read, and writing for extended periods of times on the new assessments. What kinds of classroom experiences might prepare students to maintain their engagement in the assessment tasks, even when the texts are challenging and the time periods long?

**IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION**

- **Information about assessment texts and tasks indicates that students need:**
  - Experience reading “long” grade-level or near grade level texts independently
  - Strategies for dealing with grade level texts if they cannot read them independently
  - Stamina, Motivation and Engagement

- **In addition:**
  - Everyone needs to be exposed to rich grade levels texts
  - Students who cannot read grade level texts independently will need instructional level texts as well to improve their basic skills
SBAC PERFORMANCE TASK: STIMULI & RESEARCH QUESTIONS (Grade 4)

• Students have 35 minutes to:
  ○ read an article and watch a video about what animals themselves from danger (stimuli)
  ○ take notes (note-taking “grid” provided)
  ○ answer 3 CR questions about the sources
    ▪ What does the article “Animal Roll-Ups” tell you about why some animals curl up? Use details from article to support your answer.
    ▪ Think about the armadillo and the hedgehog described in the article. In what way are their defenses similar or different. Explain your answer using details from the article.
    ▪ In the video “Animal Defenses” the puffer fish and the crab were both successful in protecting themselves from sea otters. Do they have the same type of defense? Explain your answer using details from the video.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

• Information about performance tasks on new assessments indicates students need:
  ○ Experience with different types of source materials
  ○ Experience integrating ideas and information from multiple sources of information
  ○ Experience with different types of writing purposes—opinion/argumentative, literary analysis, summary, etc.

• This calls for instruction, not just giving directions
Analyze and Apply

1. Visit the website of the consortium of which your state is part. If you don't know which consortium your state is in, do an online search to establish whether your state is PARCC (http://www.parcconline.org/) or SBAC (http://www.smarterbalanced.org/). (Note: If your state is involved in neither consortium, there should be information on the state’s assessment on its department of education homepage). Examine the sample items for a grade level that you teach or plan to teach. How well does the assessment capture your instruction? What changes might you need to make to ensure that students are ready for the CCSS assessments?

2. Seeing the speaker present can often enrich the content of a presentation. A presentation by Dr. Wixson is available online as part of the Virtual Institute on Assessment and the Common Core on TextProject's YouTube channel at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtk4f7UCnso&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PLwIychIT3ICgqScYP0LWMspjk1B_VqcGC. What information on the key shifts and features of the assessments did you gain from watching Dr. Wixson in the videotaped Institute in addition to what you learned from the webinar?

3. Another presentation in the Virtual institute on Assessment and the Common Core was by Dr. Peter Afflerbach speaking about formative assessment. After viewing Dr. Afflerbach's presentation (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cpFLLVfd6A&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PLwIychIT3ICgqScYP0LWMspjk1B_VqcGC), describe the differences between formative and the summative assessments that Dr. Wixson described.

4. On blogs and listservs (at least in the summer of 2013), many teachers have expressed their concerns about not knowing enough about the content and formats of the assessments to ensure that their instruction prepares students for the new assessments. Read Dr. Freddy Hiebert's post An Inside View of the New Assessments on her Frankly Freddy blog (http://textproject.org/frankly-freddy/an-inside-view-of-the-new-assessments/), where she suggests that we have sufficient information about the new assessments to implement instruction. Summarize your knowledge about the new assessments, based on your participation in this webinar and the accompanying activities.