David Coleman and the technologisation of the Common Core:
A critical discourse analysis

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ABSTRACT: *Drawing on sociocultural perspectives and New Literacies Studies this study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a tool to closely analyse one way the Common Core State Standards in the United States are being produced, disseminated and consumed. The analysis focuses on a section of the CCSS, a model lesson given by one of the primary architects of the Common Core State Standards, David Coleman, and a group of English teachers' reactions to David Coleman's presentation. Analysing how the CCSS have been produced, disseminated, and consumed demonstrates how policy becomes normalised through discursive events. Coleman's lesson serves as an instantiation of the ideological underpinnings of the CCSS and is illustrative of the ways in which the CCSS is working to position teachers and the teaching of reading in particular ways. Coleman's presentation can be seen as a discursive event in that it shapes what counts as teaching reading. A CDA approach was valuable in that it showed a complex interdiscursivity at play in Coleman's model lesson. Specifically, Coleman's presentation begins by positioning teachers as in conversation with the Common Core, but ultimately condemns and critiques the way teachers approach the teaching of reading. A Critical Discourse Analysis framework can provide a helpful heuristic for both English teachers and English teacher educators to examine the ideological underpinnings of standardisation by considering the production, dissemination and consumption of texts such as the CCSS.*

KEYWORDS: *CDA, critical discourse analysis, common core state standards, discourse technologist, technologisation of discourse.*

INTRODUCTION

Wherever there is a consolidation of knowledge, there follows a consolidation of power; when considering the Common Core State Standards in the United States, therefore, one is compelled to echo the question first posed by Juvenal, "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" or "Who watches the watchmen?" (1918, lines 347–8). The United States has seen a significant increase in the role of federal and state legislation in education. The most recent reform movement, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), has been heralded by both Democrats and Republicans as a way to fully prepare American students to compete in a global economy. Although there have been vocal critics of the CCSS in the United States, and many literacy scholars have critiqued the standards movement, less attention has been paid to how language has been used to normalise the new standards (Collins, 2001). Indeed, some literacy leaders seem not to be examining the CCSS in ways critical discourse analysts would suggest is imperative. For example, in *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement,* a popular book often used in teacher education and teacher professional development, Calkins, Ehrenworth and Lehman (2012) argue that there are two ways of viewing the Common Core State Standards: as a curmudgeon—or as if they are

gold. A CDA framework provides a more productive alternative to viewing the CCSS because it provides a thicker picture of the processes involved in making meaning of how the CCSS have been produced, disseminated and consumed.

The central focus of the analysis in this article is a presentation by David Coleman, one of the primary writers and architects of the CCSS, in which he models how to do a *close reading* of "Letter from Birmingham Jail" written by Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Using Fairclough's (2010) three-dimensional framework, which includes attention to the analysis of text, discourse practices (or how the text is disseminated and consumed) and larger social issues, I will describe how Coleman's presentation serves as a *discursive event* that mediates the relationship between the text of the CCSS and social practices associated with English teaching. I draw on two key concepts—the technologisation of discourse and autonomous models of literacy to identify the way that Coleman can be seen as a discourse technologist—an outside expert with privileged knowledge—who carries the aura of "truth" and works to normalise and standardise certain discourse practices (Fairclough, 1996). At the same time, I document how teachers are both embracing and resisting the discourse practices put forth by Coleman through an analysis of their comments on a social networking website, Englishtopia (all names are pseudonyms).

THEORISING LANGUAGE AND POWER

In this study, I draw on Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Halliday, 1978) and New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2011; Street, 2001). Both of these theoretical perspectives are interested in the relationship between language and power and work from the assumption that discourse (spoken or written language) is not only socially shaped, but also socially shaping (Gee, 2011). In other words, discourse constructs, represents, and becomes represented by the social world (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & Joseph, 2005). Scholars working in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis often draw on the linguistic theories of systemic functional linguistics developed by Halliday (1978). Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is used to analyse the functions of texts—why a text does what it does, and how those meanings are influenced and shaped by the social and cultural context in which they occur (Halliday, 1994; Eggins, 2004). In this way, all texts draw on pieces of other texts, which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth (Fairclough, 1992). This intertextual perspective is helpful in exploring the ways in which texts move from one context to another, as well as the ways in which they are consumed. In terms of consumption, an intertextual perspective stresses that it is not just "the text" which shapes interpretation, but also the other texts that intertextually constitute it (Fairclough, 1992).

Both Critical Discourse Analysis and New Literacy Studies seek to examine how hegemonic forces and ideologies are constructed through discourse. Hegemony is produced when dominated groups begin to accept the worldview imposed by the ruling class as the cultural norm (Gramsci, 1971). In terms of literacy, Street (2002) makes a distinction between *ideological* models of literacy and the more traditional, or *autonomous* models of literacy under which most schools and organisations operate. An autonomous model of literacy conceptualises literacy as a uniform and universal set of "technical skills" to be imparted to those lacking (Street, 2001). An

autonomous model assumes that literacy, in and of itself, will help poor, marginalised, and "illiterate" people improve their cognitive skills and their economic prospects (Street, 2002). However, this model ignores the social and economic conditions that account for the "illiteracy" of marginalised people in the first place (Street, 2002), and "cloaks literacy's connections to power, to social identity, and to ideologies, often in the service of privileging certain types of literacy and certain types of people" (Gee, 2011, p. 63). New Literacy Studies works from the assumption that literacy as a social practice varies from one socio-cultural context to another. Viewing literacy in this "new" way is considered an *ideological* model of literacy because it recognises that there are multiple literacies, and that the meaning of literacy will always be contested depending upon who is in power (Gee, 2011; Lankshear & Knoble, 2011; Street, 2002).

Technologisation of discourse

Building on Gramsci's theory of power, Fairclough (1996) uses the term *technologisation of discourse* to describe how dominant social forces direct major social and cultural changes. He defines *technologisation of discourse* as "the process of intervention in the sphere of discourse practices with the objective of constructing a new hegemony in the order of discourse of the institution or organization" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 137). Increasingly, the technologisation of discourse is characterised by 1) the emergence of expert discourse technologists, 2) design of context-free discourse techniques, and 3) strategically motivated simulation in discourse (Fairclough, 2010). In other words, dominant discourses increasingly become normalised through specific discourse strategies, techniques, and tactics used by outside experts, or discourse technologists. Discourse technologists design *discursive techniques*, such as interviewing and lectures that are designed to maximise effectiveness and affectiveness. These discourse techniques often employ discourses most often associated with social relationships which have "interpersonal" functions to use Halliday's term (1978). In this way, the expert consultant often blurs lines between private and institutional genres of conversation (Fairclough, 2010).

A particularly salient aspect of how texts are interpreted and received in this study is how information travels via technology. Using a combination of SFL (with its focus on textual analysis) and CDA (which focuses on the movement of texts as they are consumed/transformed) is helpful when analysing our increasingly semiotic economy. Specifically, due attention must be paid to the rapidly changing modes of dissemination of information, and the way those modes in fact alter, shape, or otherwise affect the information itself. The video of Coleman's presentation was uploaded to YouTube and subsequently migrated across various listservs and professional networking sites. As it passed through these various networks, it quickly acquired the force of an authority, which in earlier times would have taken much longer to form. In effect, the authority of Coleman's presentation forestalled the possibility of the kinds of critical intervention that come with "slow" information. Luke (2002) argues that conditions of globalised capitalism are enabled by discourse-saturated technology. He writes,

> We might term these semiotic economies, where language, text, and discourse become the principal modes of social relations, civic and political life, economic behaviour and activity, where means of production and modes of information become

> intertwined in analytically complex ways...the next generation of CDA research must contend with blended and hybrid forms of representation and identity and new spatial and temporal relations generated by the technologically enhanced "flows" of bodies, capital, and discourse that characterise economic and cultural globalization. (p. 98)

In the semiotic economy, time isn't money, it is power. At the same time, social media allow for the possibility of near instantaneous resistance. Herein lies the structural ambiguity of the semiotic economy; it is this ambiguity that must be taken hold of by and through CDA. Luke himself says as much, arguing that CDA must

> move beyond a focus on ideology critique and to document "other" forms of text and discourse—subaltern, diasporic, emancipatory, local, minority, call them what we may—that may mark the productive use of power in the face of economic and cultural globalization. (p. 98)

Thus, any discussion of the technologisation of discourse, must also document the productive use of power by examining the ways that the dominant discourse is appropriated and resisted by those who are subjected to it (Fairclough, 2010).

ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

In order to understand how ideologies are produced through discourse, one must analyse how texts are interpreted and received and what social effects they have (Fairclough, 2003). CDA involves a conscious effort to move back and forth between the microanalysis of texts and the macro analysis of social institutions and power relations constructed by texts (Luke, 2002). Fairclough provides a three-dimensional framework for systematically examining the relationships between *discursive events* (any complex social event involving text) and wider social structures. Every *discursive event* (for example, a television interview, a lecture, or in the case of this article, David Coleman's presentation) has three dimensions: it includes a spoken or written *text*, it is an instance of *discourse practice* (the distribution and consumption of a text), and it is a piece of *social practice* (Fairclough, 2010). In any *discursive event*, there are multiple texts produced, and the analyst must choose which texts to closely analyse on the micro level and which texts to analyse at a macro approach level. In terms of analysis, Fairclough suggests that textual analysis focus on the lexico-grammatical level using Halliday's trinocular analysis (1978). To analyse discourse practice, Fairclough suggests looking at discursive events by examining intertextuality or interdiscursivity. Interdiscursivity is a way that prior texts are brought into the present, and can involve analysis at a more meso level.

Fairclough (2003) suggests selecting "cruces" or moments of crisis in the data as an entry point into the analysis (1992). Coleman's model lesson involves an interpretation of the CCSS text, and because of its wide distribution and promotion on many state department of education websites, it is a "cruces" that has become a turning point in the national conversation among teachers about the CCSS[1].

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[1] As an English teacher educator, former English teacher in Boston Public Schools, and parent of school-aged children, I have closely followed the rollout of the Common Core State Standards. When David Coleman's video went "viral" in the spring of 2012, I saw it as a natural entry point into analyzing how the CCSS is being produced, disseminated and consumed.

In order to answer my research questions (see Table 1), I examined different data sources. Data included a small section of the official CCSS standards posted on the official CCSS website, a video (and transcript) of David Coleman's presentation on "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and a selection of representative blog posts written by teachers on a social networking website, Englishtopia (all names are pseudonyms) that focused on a discussion of the David Coleman presentation. Similar to Rogers (2003), I looked across texts to see the ways in which the texts spoke to one another, and looked for patterns of similarity, difference, and tension among the CCSS text, Coleman's presentation, and teachers' responses. For example, after performing a fine-grained SFL analysis on Coleman's presentation, I then moved on to look across the texts of the CCSS and the English teachers' blog post comments about the Coleman presentation. I used interpretive methods to identify thematic issues in the teachers' blog posts, followed by fine-grained discourse analysis methods. In order to examine different aspects of discourse, I used different grain sizes, moving from the micro out to the macro and back again.

Research questions	Data Source	Data Analysis
1. How does David Coleman align or dis-align himself with his audience of teachers?	Video recording (and transcript) of David Coleman's presentation on "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Paragraph of text from the CCSS.	Micro analysis SFL analysis of interpersonal function (dialogically contracting and expansive language).
2. With what models of literacy does David Coleman align himself?	Video recording (and transcript) of David Coleman's presentation on "Letter from Birmingham Jail."	Meso analysis focusing on contradictions between spoken discourse and action.
3. In what ways do teachers take up and/or resist the language of David Coleman's presentation of the Common Core State Standards?	181 comments (100+ pages of text) written by English teachers on a social networking website for English teachers about the David Coleman presentation.	Meso analysis focusing on thematic analysis and intertextuality.

Table 1. Research questions, data sources, and grain size of analysis

I used an SFL analysis in studying David Coleman's presentation in order to examine the ways that Coleman positions teachers and his attitude toward models of literacy. I first broke up the transcript of Coleman's presentation into utterances by paying attention to natural pauses in Coleman's speech. Because I had video as well as the transcript, I was able to divide the speech where natural pauses, such as a breath, occurred. For Halliday (1978), every text simultaneously enacts an ideational, interpersonal and grammatical function. After performing an ideational, interpersonal, and textual analysis on sections of Coleman's speech looking for prominent patterns, I began to see a clear, repeating pattern related to interpersonal positioning, which involves examining the attitude of the speaker towards the audience. The interpersonal stance concerns the stance, personalisation and standing of the speaker

or writer. This involves looking at whether the writer or speaker has a neutral attitude which can be seen through the use of positive or negative language.

At that point, I began to focus my analysis using Martin and White's (2005) appraisal system which builds on Halliday's (1994) grammar of mood and modality. According to Martin, appraisal is "concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved, and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned" (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 22). Appraisal analysis uses three inter-related subsystems to track intersubjective positioning (i.e., the interpersonal metafunction): *Attitude*, *Gradation*, and *Engagement*. I focused on the system of engagement which explores how values are sourced and readers aligned through dialogically expansive or dialogically contractive language (Martin & Rose, 2007; White, 2003). I coded the transcripts for markers that connected to engagement, paying specific attention to how Coleman aligns or dis-aligns himself with his audience of teachers, what concepts of literacy Coleman aligns himself with, and how teachers take up and/or resist the language of Coleman's presentation (see Table 2 for an example of how I analysed Coleman's presentation looking for patterns related to dialogically expansive or contractive language).

Passage	Modality	Contraction	Expansion
What I'm trying to do is to show you what instruction begins to look like with the core in mind.	Gradation-Force: "begins to"	Contract-proclaim-pronounce-"begins to look like	
And, of course, that begins to address the very good question asked me earlier, which was "What's the difference?"	Amplifier-force (very good)	Contract-proclaim, concur, affirm- "Of course"	

Table 2. Example of SFL analysis on Coleman's presentation

CONTEXT: PRODUCTION OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

A cursory look at the CCSS website would suggest that there is wide-spread support and consensus when it comes to how the CCSS were produced (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Screen shot of "About the Standards" via www.corestandards.org

In this excerpt, the CCSS claims authority (by listing all the stakeholders), and solidarity with the audiences (e.g., *developed in collaboration with teachers, to prepare our children*). However, there is little transparency on the website about how the CCSS were produced. The CCSS website itself makes no mention of the primary funders of the Common Core (Achieve, Student Achievement Partners—all funded by Gates Foundation) nor David Coleman, who is essentially the architect of the Common Core. A simple Google search revealed a wealth of articles and links dedicated to examining how the CCSS were produced[2]. In short, the authors of the Common Core are also those who are producing textbooks *for* the Core as well as providing consulting and professional development services. The authors of the Common Core therefore have deep-seated financial interests in the shape of the program. Furthermore, the simple consolidation of so much ideological capital in one corner of the information industry greatly limits local district and teacher autonomy. But the Gates Foundation isn't the only institution attempting to stake a claim, ideological and financial, in the future of American education: several authors of the CCSS are employees of Pearson[3].

Although there is not space here to carefully analyse on a microlinguistic level the entire CCSS document itself, it is important to point out one paragraph that is frequently referenced by English teachers on the Englishtopia site in their discussion of Coleman's model lesson. The CCSS document states the following about teachers' roles in the new frameworks:

> By emphasising required achievements the Standards leave room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how those goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed. Thus, the Standards do not mandate such things as a particular writing process or the full range of metacognitive strategies that students may need to monitor and direct their thinking and learning. Teachers are thus free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the Standards. (CCSS, 2010 p. 4)

Briefly, in this paragraph, there is an attempt to project a professional identity of the standards that is both impersonal and distant. Two features that contribute to impersonality in this paragraph are having objects (the *Standards*) as the actors or agents in the clause (rather than the writers of the standards), and the avoidance of personalisation of the addressees. At the same time, teachers are positioned in a primarily positive way (they *have knowledge, professional judgment, and experience*). As I'll discuss further in the next section, the impersonal and distant discourse in the CCSS contrasts strongly with the discourse taken up by David Coleman in his presentation. This contrast is important to note because the relationship between the

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[2] In 2008, the Gates Foundation announced that it would develop its own set of national standards accompanied by its own national test (Green, 2008). Originally, the Gates Foundation stated that it would make a national test available to states at no cost, but as the Obama administration embraced the national standards, the offer to make the tests available at no cost disappeared.

[3] Several of the major authors of the CCSS are employees of Pearson, including Sally Hampton and Phil Daro, who according to the Pearson website, "not only led the development of the Common Core State Standards, but also helped design Pearson's CCSS services, helping us tailor our professional development, district level consultative services, job-embedded coaching, learning teams for building capacity, and even whole school CCSS implementation services in order to meet your specific needs and interests as you align curriculum content and practices to the standards" (Pearson, 2012).

fixed text of the CCSS and the social practice and implementation of the CCSS in schools is being mediated by Coleman's model lesson. Fairclough argues that "the connection between text and social practice is seen as being mediated by discourse practice: on the one hand, processes of text production and interpretation are shaped by (and help shape) the nature of the social practice (2010, p. 94). In this way, Coleman can be seen as a discourse technologist because he is shaping the interpretation of the CCSS.

FROM CONVERSATION TO CRITIQUE:
DAVID COLEMAN'S MODEL LESSON

As noted in the introduction, Coleman's presentation has been distributed widely through social media outlets and is featured prominently on a number of English teacher resource websites (e.g., PBS learning, Engage NY, Educore, WebEnglishTeacher), State Department of Education websites (Oregon, New York, Idaho, Vermont), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (http://www.ccsso.org). Coleman originally presented his model lesson entitled "Bringing the Common Core to Life" to teachers and administrators in Chancellor's Hall at the New York State Education Department in April 2011. Before David Coleman began his model lesson, he was introduced by the Chancellor of New York State. Both the introduction by the Chancellor, as well as the promotion of David Coleman's presentation on the NY State's Department of Education website position Coleman as an expert in literacy instruction and authority in education reform. The way Coleman is positioned as an expert is characteristic of the technologisation of discourse. These outside "experts" usually hold accredited roles in institutions, and therefore their interventions into discourse practices often carry the aura of "truth" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 138).

Coleman begins his presentation by briefly explaining some key differences in the CCSS, and then moves into a model lesson of how to teach close reading using "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" by Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. There is an interesting interdiscursivity and movement between dialogically expansive and contracting language in Coleman's presentation. On the one hand, Coleman begins his presentation in a dialogically expansive way that would suggest that teachers are part of the process. Dialogically expansive wordings "expand space for the inclusion of alternative perspectives" (Lancaster, 2011, p. 3). Coleman's presentation begins with many moments of dialogical expansion, which are realised grammatically through modality (e.g., *hopefully; I'd like to tell you; what I'm trying to do; what instruction begins to look like with the core in mind*).

As discussed above, dialogical expansion acknowledges alternative viewpoints. The dialogical expansion that Coleman begins with positions teachers as people to be trusted (e.g., people with *very good questions* who have *hopefully prepared* for the *conversation* today). Such a "conversation" would imply a dialogically expansive approach to the discussion of the CCSS and references, or echoes the text from the official CCSS website (e.g., *The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts).* White (2003) writes that: "There are resources for construing engagement by which the textual voice is positioned as being open to, or entertaining, dialogic alternatives. That is to say, by these meanings,

alternative positions are construed as possible or even likely" (p. 268). Coleman begins his presentation positioning teachers as being in "conversation" and "collaboration" with the implementation of the Common Core. In this way, Coleman effectively uses dialogical expansion which is often present in conversational discourse. In addition, Coleman directly addresses teachers (*you*) and uses the personal pronoun (*I*) throughout his presentation. Further, he builds solidarity through his continual use of the word "our". Though there are movements back and forth between dialogical expansion and contraction early on in the presentation, for the most part, the presentation begins by positioning teachers as respected colleagues with good questions and good intentions.

Though the text of Coleman's presentation begins with many instances of dialogical expansion, the text eventually turns toward an increased use of dialogical contraction. For example, in line 30, Coleman poses the question: "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?" Although questions are often seen as dialogic in that they mimic turn-taking in interactive spoken conversation, this question is slightly different, because Coleman is imagining or anticipating the question his audience of teachers has "hanging" in their minds; in this way, he moves into heading off possible objections.

Passage from Coleman's Presentation	Modality	Dialogical Contraction	Dialogical Expansion
This is our shared challenge.		Contract-proclaim-pronounce	
but this is the work of doing it.		Contract-proclaim-pronounce	
And, strangely, I want to suggest to you			Expand-entertain
that while this text is complex		Contract-proclaim-pronounce	
I would dare to argue			Expand
that reading is fairly simple		Contract-proclaim-pronounce	
that there is no reason to make it more complicated than it is the task of teaching reading, of paying close attention, of gathering evidence from what you read.		Contract-proclaim-pronounce	
So I might ask you to forgive me			Expand

because I'm worried that you're going to find what I'm about to do far too straightforward for most experts,	Gradation-		Expand-attribute-acknowledge "straightforward for most experts"
but far more like the core of instruction	Amplification-intensifier and comparison "far more"		
for what we must do when facing something difficult.	Amplification-intensifier "must"	Contract-proclaim-pronounce	

Table 3. Patterns of dialogical contraction and expansion in Coleman's presentation

After posing this question, Coleman increasingly uses dialogically contracting wordings, so by the end of his first introductory paragraph, he uses primarily dialogically contracting language. Dialogically contracting wordings boost our commitment to the proposition being put forth; in so doing, "they contract space for the inclusion of alternative perspectives" (Lancaster, 2011, p. 3).

In analysing Coleman's presentation at the linguistic level, one is able to see evidence of a key connection between how Coleman aligns himself with teachers by invoking the language in the CCSS, but then eventually moves away from the CCSS text and moves to disalign himself with his audience of teachers. Dialogical contraction uses language that acts to reject, counter, confront, head off or rule out actual or potential dialogic alternatives. Thus while still dialogic, they nevertheless act to close down or contract the space for alternative viewpoints. They act in some way to increase the interpersonal cost to those who would challenge the viewpoint currently being advanced by the text (White, 2003). According to White (2003), bare assertions are usually associated with consensual "knowledge" or "fact,"—that is with propositions that are generally "accepted". The bare assertion usually operates "where there is an assumption of ontological, epistemic and axiological commonality between textual voice and audience, where the addressee is assumed to operate with the same knowledge, beliefs and values as those relied upon by the proposition" (p. 263). Under this combination, the textual voice constructs itself as having the status and moral authority to not only pass judgment, but to "pass judgment in a way which chooses not to recognise, and hence would suppress, alternative viewpoints (p. 263). For example, Coleman says that his model lesson will "show you what instruction begins to look like with the core in mind." Note that Coleman does not say that what he is about to do is show what instruction "might" look like or "could look like", he says that it is what instructions "begins to look like". Coleman does not acknowledge the possibility of other teaching practices. Coleman's bare assertion is cleverly declared with the word "begin" because that gradation is very small, but it's the beginning of a movement to much more dialogically contracting language.

Coleman then moves into a much deeper critique of the kinds of teaching practices that English teachers tend to engage in. Coleman begins to disalign himself with his audience of teachers. This disalignment is realised through Coleman's increased use

of pronouncements and proclamations. Here, modality becomes much stronger and there is an increased use of proclamations (e.g., *this is our shared challenge, but this is the work of doing it; this is what college and career readiness demand; this text is precisely at that level)*. Proclamations convey a "heightened personal investment in the viewpoint being advanced and thereby explicitly indicates an interest in advancing that viewpoint, typically against some opposed alternative—hence the term "proclaim" (White, 2003, p. 269). Under proclamation, we have pronouncements which are concerned with intensifications and authorial emphasis. The textual voice, then, conveys the heightened investment.

For Coleman, that heightened investment is what the teaching of reading looks like under the current pedagogy of most teachers, and what the "core" of instruction should look like. It is interesting to note Coleman's frequent use of the word "core" in his presentation. While the CCSS text says that, "teachers are thus free" to make their own curricular decisions in how they will meet the CCSS, Coleman's presentation mediates this text. Drawing on the language of the original CCSS text through his echoing of the word "core" (e.g., *what instruction begins to look like with the core in mind; this is our core challenge, far more like the core of instruction*) helps to normalise Coleman's discourse practices, and in some ways obscures the very different way that Coleman's presentation positions teachers. Coleman has moved from a conversation with teachers, to a direct critique of their role in the teaching of reading. Coleman's discourse confronts teachers determining—based on their local knowledge of students' abilities—what is "worth doing" (line 35). We can see this dialogic confrontation in sentences 30-38.

30.   Finally, I know there's an issue hanging in everyone's mind,
31.   which is for what range of students is this really possible—a letter like this?
32.   These are just my best students who can read King's letter.
33.   And I want to challenge you today
34   that our core challenge as a community
35   and this is hard work but work worth doing
36   is to get all kids
37   so that after 12 years of practice
38   they can read a text like this with confidence.

Here, Coleman uses a parallel deficit discourse in that he assumes both that teachers think of their students in deficit ways, and that teachers need direct instruction on how to teach "close reading." This assumption is realised through Coleman saying that he knows the issue is that teachers are assuming only their best students can read King's letter. The text here contends a) that teachers (his audience) don't want to get all kids reading a "text like this with confidence" and b) that the teachers don't think that this (i.e. close reading) is work worth doing. Coleman's initial "conversation" with the teachers has moved into a lesson that is "far too straightforward for most experts, but far more like the core of instruction" which Coleman espouses.

50.   So I might ask you to forgive me
51.   because I'm worried that you're going to find
52.   what I'm about to do far too straightforward for most experts,
53.   but far more like the core of instruction
54.   for what we must do when facing something difficult.

Coleman then moves on to critique the "most popular ways" of teaching. He begins by "attacking the three most popular ways of beginning to read". Coleman's statement, "Forgive me, but I'm asking you to just read" anticipates teacher resistance to the notion that diving into the "mystery" of the text without activating prior knowledge or setting a purpose is the real business of reading. Coleman further disaligns himself from his audience of teachers, when he accuses them of simplifying text, and becoming overwhelmed with the "power of self love."

67.   What you have effectively done as a teacher when you do this
68.   is you've replaced the letter from Birmingham Jail with a simpler text,
69.   your summary, that now kids will quote back to you.
70.   And because of the overwhelming power of self love, those answers are of course correct.

This then leads us into what Coleman values in "this" kind of work—close reading which shows his own ideologically laden approach, which positions literacy as autonomous and positions teachers as incapable of making curricular decisions. Analysing the lexico-grammatical patterns, specifically dialogically contracting and expanding language, makes clear how Coleman is attempting to naturalise his own particular ideological underpinnings including a deficit discourse of teachers and an autonomous model of reading. In the following section, I move toward a meso level of analysis to examine the models of literacy valued in Coleman's presentation.

Discourses in conflict: Privileging an autonomous model of literacy

A key characteristic of the technologisation of discourse is having an outside expert project context-free discourse techniques (Fairclough, 1996). In the case of David Coleman, there is an attempt to present a seemingly context-free pedagogy for the teaching of reading. In other words, through his presentation, David Coleman positions teachers, and their "ways" of teaching (activating background knowledge, engaging students in reading strategies, setting a purpose for reading) as problematic. In other words, he contrasts teachers' ways of teaching and with "the core of instruction for what we must do when facing something difficult." In doing so, Coleman invokes ways of reading that are aligned with an autonomous model of literacy.

Coleman argues that reading is "fairly simple" and "that there is no reason to make it more complicated than it is" (lines 46/47). Calling reading "fairly simple" aligns with an autonomous model of literacy that advocates imparting a functional set of apparently "simple" skills universally. In Coleman's discourse, canonical "texts" (e.g., Aristotle, Socrates, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Declaration of Independence) are highly valued: thematic patterns of phrases such as "the richness and beauty of [the text] itself", "plunging into…the text", "dare to read the mystery", his emphasis on texts that are "powerful" and "wonderful", texts that "[create] an appetite"—all of these sorts of phrases indicate an essentially aesthetic, even belletristic approach to the text. What is foregrounded in Coleman's discourse is always and ever the text itself as an object of delectation sundered from culture. The text itself is what "motivates" students and "creates an appetite" for learning; it is there to be consumed and students are the consumers.

Brandt and Clinton (2002) write that in the autonomous model of literacy, the decontextualised text is all-important, "representing not only the capacity of written language to break free of the limits of time and place but also the capacity of print to reorient sense-making away from the interactive settings of speech and toward literal words on their own" (p. 340). When we think of this notion in light of the Birmingham Jail letter, the idea of reorienting King's text "toward literal words on their own" seems more than a little morally and politically backward. What gives the Birmingham letter its gravitas is not simply the logical meaning derived from the sequence of its words, but the passionate intellectual force it conveys precisely against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement. To read the Birmingham letter in a vacuum does an immense disservice to students and Dr King alike. The stakes here are not only ideological, but methodological as well, for what proponents of the autonomous view of literacy want and need are essentially forms of assessment that will yield "valid" and "reliable" results. Results of what, precisely? Results indicating what it means to be literate. Of course, in order for those results to have any meaning whatsoever, literacy will have to be first defined in a way that is quantifiable, and empirical. But what if literacy is not, or not solely, a condition defined quantitatively but qualitatively? A sociocultural perspective like that provided by New Literacy Studies allows us to examine that point of contact. Coleman's ideological adherence to decontextualisation breaks down at the level of method.

My analysis of Coleman's presentation demonstrates what Wodak considers the aim of CDA, namely to "[make] contradictions transparent" (1999, p. 186); it shows that there are considerable contradictions between what Coleman espouses and what he actually does during the course of the model lesson. Coleman says he wants to begin by "attacking the three most popular ways of beginning [to read]" (see Appendix, line 59): activating background knowledge, pre-reading strategies, and setting a purpose for reading. He critiques teachers for wanting to begin by providing background information to orient students. Instead, Coleman advocates that the text itself should be the only "source of motivation" (see Appendix, line 252). He argues for decontextualisation of the text, by eliminating background information or providing even a summary of the Birmingham letter. Yet he then brings his own knowledge of Aristotle and Greco-Roman mythology to bear on the text. Apparently some context is fine, provided it is comes from an ancient and privileged source, whereas information about the immediate historical context of the Birmingham letter is out of bounds.

Coleman then advocates doing away with pre-reading strategies such as making predictions, comparing the letter to other texts (with which students might be familiar), and even connecting the substance of the letter to students' own experiences. Instead, he argues that teachers should consider, "dispensing for a moment with all the apparatus we have built up before reading" (see Appendix, line 83). Coleman then compares the act of reading to watching a film, and asks teachers how they would feel if "[he] ruthlessly interrupted [them] as it unfolded?" (see Appendix, line 183). But then Coleman himself goes on to ask a number of questions as he works through King's letter. For example, he asks his audience: "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?" (see Appendix, line 155). He also asks teachers to explore historical connections and allusions as they see fit.

Finally, he argues that teachers should stop setting a purpose for reading, or what he calls "the strategy of the weak" (see Appendix, line 90). Instead, Coleman urges teachers to let "King set the agenda" (see Appendix, line 95). He emphasises that the text itself "creates an appetite" (see Appendix, line 206) in the reader; and that the "mysteries" (see Appendix, line 251) of the text itself will create motivation and purpose. Coleman does not seem to be aware of the many kinds of experience and knowledge he brings as a reader, experience and knowledge that makes the "mysteries" of the text legible as mysteries in the first place. These do not strike him as his own impositions but rather as some impersonal or neutral field of information emerging spontaneously from King's text. He apparently does not see how the kinds of questions and ideas he finds worthy of comment are themselves "activated" in the text by his own training. A reader without that training—one who, for example, had no background in Western philosophy and was therefore insensible to Aristotelian allusions—might instead be drawn to entirely other questions, or at any rate frame them differently to Coleman. What we see Coleman doing in the course of his model presentation is in fact what he has just told teachers not to do: Coleman sets a purpose for reading, he asks questions of the reading, and he brings his own background knowledge to bear on the reading.

An autonomous model of literacy is not necessarily evident or privileged within the CCSS text itself; however, in looking at the discourse practices surrounding the distribution of Coleman's talk, one can see how the discourse of an autonomous model of literacy becomes normalised through Coleman's presentation. Street writes that the autonomous model of literacy "disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it so that it can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal and that literacy as such will have these benign effects" (2003, p. 77). It is entirely possible that Coleman is exaggerating his discourse in response to the social turn in literacy studies. This certainly wouldn't be the first time that focusing on literacy as a local, situated event has been criticised. Brandt and Clinton, for example, suggest that there are limits to a localised view of literacy and that "some autonomous elements might be helpful to look at" (2002). However, as Street (2003) points out, there is no such thing as an "autonomous" element to literacy. Every feature is ideological.

INTERTEXTUALITY: TEACHERS RESPOND TO DAVID COLEMAN'S PRESENTATION

In any discussion of technologisation of discourse, it is important to document the various ways that the discourse is appropriated and resisted by those who are subjected to it (Fairclough, 2010). In order to examine how some English teachers appropriate and resist Coleman's discourse, I analysed a selection of representative blog posts written by English teachers on a popular social networking website, Englishtopia, about the David Coleman presentation. In the spring of 2012, a popular blogger on the Englishtopia website named Robert Kruse posted a blog entry about the Common Core and David Coleman. In his post, Kruse expressed deep concern that David Coleman was modelling exactly "how" to meet the Common Core.

In the week that followed, Kruse's blog post received 181 comments and over 3000 views. Clearly, the blogpost had struck a nerve with English teachers in the

Englishtopia community. The 181 teacher comments on the blog post comprised over 100 pages of single-spaced text. My analysis was thus necessarily conducted at a more meso-level. After reading and rereading teachers' comments, I began by generating a broad list of themes that I refined as I wrote analytic memos. I then looked closely at my data for "typicality and atypicality" among these themes and codes. I categorised teachers' comments on a continuum from least resistant to most resistant to the David Coleman presentation. Upon further analysis, I realised that I could map the resisters, those who were torn, and the embracers onto the CDA heuristic. In other words, the teachers who seemed to "embrace" the CCSS were able to do so fairly unproblematically because they looked at the CCSS text in isolation. At the other end of the continuum, teachers who were adamant about resisting the CCSS refused to look at the CCSS text in isolation, instead focusing almost exclusively on the larger, socio-historical factors.

Several teachers expressed liking the "logic" of David Coleman's arguments and liked the emphasis on close textual reading of the CCSS. In essence, these teachers embraced the CCSS and David Coleman's presentation. What was particularly interesting about this group of teachers is that their responses echoed the patterns of dialogically expansive and dialogically contracting discourse that Coleman used in his presentation. For example, one teacher, Matt, made comments that were representative of the teachers I categorised as being embracers of the CCSS. Teachers in this category tended to view texts—whether that of Coleman's presentation, or the CCSS itself in isolation without considering outside contexts.

Coleman's presentation	Teacher Sample 1 Matt's comment on Englishtopia
Hopefully, some of you	I bow to your expertise in this
I'd like to tell you	you are indeed right
that our core challenge as a community	That's a conundrum that we all face as educators
This is our shared challenge and this is hard work but work worth doing	how to bring everyone on board with a text so that we have a shared literary experience
that there is no reason to make it more complicated than it is	much of the pre-reading is either a diversion or is actually counterproductive
	because it has a sort of teacher stink all over it.
SFL analysis Begins with dialogically expansive language (*hopefully*) Personalisation of addressee (use of *you*) Builds solidarity (*our core challenge, our shared challenge*) Moves toward disalignment of teachers (*attacking three most popular ways of teaching reading*)	**SFL analysis** Begins with dialogically expansive language (*I bow to your expertise; you are indeed right*) Personalisation of addressee (*you*) Builds solidarity (*conundrum we all face; bring everyone on board; our life experiences*) Moves toward disalignment of teachers (*teacher stink all over it*)

Table 4. Intertextuality in Coleman's presentation and teacher's comment

Matt's comments echo many patterns seen in Coleman's presentation. He begins with dialogically expansive language. He "bows" to another teacher's expertise, and builds solidarity with his audience of fellow teachers through his use of the personalisation of the addressee. Matt also uses language patterns and word choices that are similar to Coleman's word choices (i.e. *shared* experience). Like Coleman, he moves to a disalignment of teachers toward the end of his comment, when he says that, "much of the pre-reading is either a diversion or is actually counterproductive because it has a sort of teacher stink all over it." Matt's text is appropriating many of the discursive practices Coleman used in his presentation, even resorting to positioning teachers (including himself and his audience) in negative ways (*teacher stink all over it*).

The majority of teacher responses did not appropriate the Coleman discourse patterns in such clear ways. I categorised teacher comments that included both appropriation and resistance of Coleman's discourse as "ideologically torn". For Fairclough, the responses to the technologisation of discourse can take many forms. He argues that operating under such conditions often places people in "dilemmas" because they are trying to "operate in accordance with divergent constructions of social relationships and social identities" (2010, p. 141). These dilemmas often lead to compromises that are manifested in ambivalence of texts, and are often realised through the interpersonal metafunction, specifically, the appraisal system which is concerned with attitude, the strength of the feelings involved, and how readers are aligned (Martin & White, 2005). For example, in the excerpt below, Robert moved back and forth between quoting the CCSS text and the David Coleman presentation:

> And yet, as an author of Common Core, David Coleman is now completely violating this promise. In fact, part of the only reason so many people are willing to buy into CC is expressly because the documents swear to define the "what" and not tell teachers the "how". It's just that for me, diving deeply into analysing the motivations and politics behind CC is not where I am able to vest my energies. And yet, I do see why many other people do feel that there is a conspiracy afoot to hammer educators. And we are definitely seeing teachers hammered. But to me, the CC is very much like the northern star, a fixed point on the horizon which identifies the academic objectives of an ELA (or math) class.

Robert's dilemma about the CCSS is realised through a frequent back and forth motion between dialogically expansive and dialogically contracting language. He begins almost every sentence with (*and yet, in fact, it's just, and yet, but to me*) which indicates ambivalence. In this movement back and forth, Robert acknowledges the diversity (and even contradictory) viewpoints put forth by the CCSS text and Coleman's presentation, as he works to negotiate an interpersonal space for his own position within that diversity.

One of the most salient questions teachers considered in their comments on the Englishtopia was whether or not one can understand the meaning of the CCSS document in isolation. Robert, for example, repeatedly referred to his desire to look at the content of CCSS document in isolation without all the "baggage" attached to it. He also struggled with how to reconcile the CCSS text, which states that "teachers are thus free" to make their own curricular decisions, with the ways that David Coleman positioned teachers in his presentation.

Robert recognised that the way the CCSS were being distributed through the Coleman presentation was changing the meaning of the CCSS. Yet as he noted, he did not feel that he had the energy to explore the motivations and politics behind the CCSS. Similarly, other teachers I placed in this category agreed with what the CCSS document said, and wanted to read it in isolation from its context. At the same time, they recognised the danger in decontextualizing it as a text. In this way, then, the teachers were torn between reading the CCSS autonomously—outside of context, and reading the CCSS ideologically which would require an examination of the ideological underpinnings of the CCSS document.

A small number of teacher comments showed extreme resistance to the CCSS and the Coleman presentation. These teachers refused to look at the CCSS text in isolation, and instead focused almost exclusively on the larger, socio-historical factors. It is interesting to note that in their resistance, they did not quote from Coleman's presentation, or the CCSS document. Nor did they use similar intertextual lexical patterns. For example, one teacher, Elena, was particularly vocal about her opposition to the CCSS document said. She wrote:

> It does not matter to me what is in the CCSS. What matters is the system of accountability that called for their existence in the first place and that will use it as the basis for standardised tests that will be the basis for withholding funding from certain schools and shaping the "rehabilitation" of SINI schools (now a majority of schools) via test prep. If I fully believed every sentence in the CCSS, I would still reject them because of the way that they are intended to be used and the way that they will be used. This isn't idealistic thinking: this is very practical thinking based on watching, very carefully, how this system of accountability works and from studying the reasons it was erected and understanding the theoretical framework that gives it its shape. Just thought that this position should be part of any discussion of the CCSS.

Elena's resistance to the CCSS in this excerpt is realised through the use of the interpersonal force, which can be seen in the many uses of adverbs of intensification (*very carefully, fully, very practical).* This interpersonal force is also expressed through lexical items in scaling value *(every sentence, majority of schools).* She wrote, "If I fully believed every sentence in the CCSS, I would still reject them because of the way that they are intended to be used and the way that they will be used." Elena goes on to write that she is much more concerned with how the CCSS works, "the reasons it was erected, and the theoretical framework that gives it its shape." Ultimately, Elena and other teachers in this category argued that to only focus on the specific CCSS document in isolation without considering other contexts such as the text production and distribution is actually dangerous. They pointed out the larger sociocultural and economic factors must be part of the any conversation about the CCSS. Elena and other teachers in this category, then, were engaged in a critical discourse analysis of the CCSS because they were examining the ideological underpinnings of why the standards were written in the first place and the ways in which they will be used to evaluate students and teachers.

In analysing the text of the teachers' blog posts and responses, I found that the teachers were dialogically constructing what it means to teach English in response and in relation to both the CCSS text and the Coleman presentation. Documenting the interdiscursive nature of teacher responses to Coleman's presentation shows how the dominant discourse is mediating some English teachers' understanding of what the

CCSS means for their teaching practices. While some teachers aligned with Coleman's hegemonic discourse, other teachers resisted Coleman's discourse and created their own counterhegemonic discourse that encouraged dialogue, valued differing viewpoints, and acknowledged alternative perspectives. The variety of teacher responses to the Coleman presentation on the Englishtopia website shows that teachers do, in fact, have a vast amount of experience and professional judgment and are more than capable of engaging in critical and rigorous dialogue about what it means to teach reading, what it means to be literate, and what it means to prepare and support students for the 21st century.

Growing resistance, growing hope

In this study, I have used Fairclough's (2010) three-dimensional framework to analyse how David Coleman's presentation mediated the relationship between the CCSS and the social practices associated with English teaching. In doing so, I examined how Coleman's presentations was interpreted and received and the social effects it had on a group of English teachers. I have discussed two concepts—the technologisation of discourse and an autonomous model of literacy—to explore how Coleman's presentation normalised and standardised certain discourse practices, specifically in regards to the teaching of reading. Coleman can be seen as a discourse technologist because he uses specific strategies and techniques to normalise an autonomous model of literacy. The discourse techniques he used were related to the interpersonal stance and his attitude toward his audience.

An analysis of Coleman's presentation illustrate the way he aligned and dis-aligned himself with his audience of teachers through the use of dialogically expansive and dialogically contracting language. Initially, Coleman used the affective dimensions of conversational discourse to engage the teachers and build solidarity with them in his presentation. His initial positioning of teachers echoed the way that the CCSS text positioned teachers, which emphasised that teachers are professionals who are capable of identifying the tools needed to help their students meet the goals set out in the standards. In addition, drawing on the language of the original CCSS text through his echoing of the word *core* helped to normalise Coleman's discourse practices and obscure the very different way that Coleman and the CCSS position the role of teachers. As Coleman moved through his presentation, he used increasingly dialogically contracting language, which served to dis-align himself from his audience. Dialogically contracting language serves to increase the interpersonal cost to those who might challenge the viewpoint of the speaker, and constructs the speaker as one having the status and moral authority to pass judgment in a way that suppresses alternative viewpoints. In this way, Coleman was able to engage in a deep critique of how English teachers teach reading. Although an autonomous model of literacy was not necessarily evident or privileged within the CCSS document, the discourse of an autonomous model of literacy became normalised through Coleman's presentation.

Though the policy of the CCSS continues to be distributed through technologically enhanced flows of capital and discourse (Luke, 2002), this study has documented how teachers at the local level are using the same technologies (via the social networking site) as productive sites of power to complicate and resist the standardisation of their profession. Giroux (2009) argues that prospective teachers need to study how language functions to position people in the world since language not only reflects

reality, but also plays an active role in constructing it. In documenting the ways that teachers appropriated and resisted Coleman's discourse, I found that many of the teachers were already engaged in a critical analysis of discourse, and were well aware of the social practices surrounding the CCSS. These teachers refused to look at the CCSS document in isolation, and insisted on exploring the ideological underpinnings of the CCSS; they emphasised the importance of examining how and why the CCSS were created and how dominant forces could use the CCSS to position teachers, students, and schools in certain ways. These teachers, then, were fully aware of the ways that literacy—because it is always associated with power—will always be contested.

Perhaps what is most interesting about the teachers' comments is not just the various ways they took up, complicated, and resisted the interpretation of the CCSS by an outside expert, but the ways they engaged with one another in the online community they created. Using the same technologically enhanced flows of capital and discourse (Luke, 2002) as the disseminators of the Common Core, teachers created a space where they listened to one another, learned from one another, and engaged in professional and critical dialogue about what it means to be a teacher of English. Their vibrant online discussions illustrate the possibilities that always exist for generating counterhegemonic discourses, and are a hopeful example of the possibility of productive power that can be generated when teachers work together.

Elena's predictions that the CCSS would be used to evaluate teachers and schools were prescient. In the last year, the US has seen an increased move toward evaluating teachers based on students' test scores. Yet, in the time since the blog posts were published, there is growing evidence of wide-spread resistance to the implementation of the CCSS; at least 15 states that originally signed up to participate in the CCSS have backed out, parents are opting their children out of high-stakes tests, and political leaders on both the left and right are calling for a moratorium on the roll out of CCSS assessments.

Using CDA as an analytic framework in this study was helpful in tracing the intertextual connections between the text, discourse practices, and socio-historical contexts surrounding the Common Core State Standards. Situating a fine-grained discourse analysis within CDA helped illustrate the ways that policy documents are distributed and normalised. In the future, researchers may want to work together with teachers to examine the different discourse strategies and tactics teachers and other marginalised groups use to resist dominant/hegemonic forces, and investigate or trace the effects of those strategies.

A Critical Discourse Analysis framework can also provide a helpful heuristic for both English teachers and English teacher educators to examine texts by considering the production, dissemination, and consumption of texts. In this way, English teachers and English teacher educators may be better able to analyse the flows of textual production and standardisation in order to better understand—and to help shape—what counts as knowing, doing, and being in English Language Arts classrooms.

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APPENDIX

Transcript of David Coleman's *Discussion of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy and 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Part 6.*

1. Hopefully, some of you who prepared for this conversation today
2. took a look at King's Letter from a Birmingham Jail
3. and I'd like to tell you
4. what I'm going to try to do with you over approximately the next 20 minutes with that letter.
5. What I'm trying to do
6. is to show you what instruction begins to look like with the core in mind.
7. And, of course,
8. that begins to address
9. the very good question asked me earlier,
10. which was "What's the difference?"
11. How does instruction on a day-to-day basis in a way a teacher looks at it,
12. in the daily choices a teacher makes look different when confronted with the core?
13. The time within which we are discussing this, 20 minutes, is highly elusory
14. because I think teaching this letter is at least six days
15. with maybe another week with a comparison we'll talk to you about.
16. But we just did a body of work,
17. a team and I built up an exemplar around the Gettysburg Address,
18. which as you know is three paragraphs long,
19. and it is for three days of instruction on those three paragraphs
20. and that is not by bringing in other resources yet.
21. That's by focusing on the text itself.
22. The first major shift I want you to consider
23. is far longer amounts of classroom time spent reading and
24. on text worth rereading carefully, a kind of diligent close attention.
25. This has several implications
26. It also means that a much wider range of kids are in on the game.
27. It means that you can chunk into smaller parts anything but avoiding the richness and complexity.
28. So while I'll speak to you only for 15 or 20 minutes about the letter,
29. please see it as the beginning of six days of instruction rather than this brief talk.
30. Finally, I know there's an issue hanging in everyone's mind,
31. which is for what range of students is this
    really possible a letter like this?
32. These are just my best students who can read King's letter.
33. And I want to challenge you today
34. that our core challenge as a community
35. and this is hard work but work worth doing
36. is to get all kids
37. so that after 12 years of practice
38. they can read a text like this with confidence.
39. This is what college and career readiness demand.
40. This text is precisely at that level.

41. This is our shared challenge.
42. And there can be intensive support and scaffolding and additional practice to do it
43. but this is the work of doing it.
44. And, strangely, I want to suggest to you that while
45. this text is complex
46. I would dare to argue
47. that reading is fairly simple
48. that there is no reason to make more complicated than it is
49. the task of teaching reading of paying close attention, of gathering evidence from what you read.
50. So I might ask you to forgive me
51. because I'm worried that you're going to find
52. what I'm about to do far too straightforward for most experts,
53. but far more like the core of instruction
54. for what we must do when facing something difficult
55. So the question that faces us when we look at the letter from Birmingham Jail,
56. and I will return by the way to how do we do this for a wide range of students, is how do we begin?
57. This is a great question for an artist when they're beginning something or for a teacher.
58. And I thought I would begin by making myself as unpopular as possible
59. by attacking the three most popular ways of beginning.
60. The most popular way first,
61. I should give you background information and an account of the letter
62. before we begin so you can get oriented.
63. There was a great man, Dr. King.
64. He wrote a letter while in jail because a set of clergymen had sent him a letter saying he should slow down.
65. This is his ringing defense of nonviolence, of the distinction between just and unjust law.
66. We shall read it to together, etc.
67. What you have effectively done as a teacher when you do this
68. is you've replaced the letter from Birmingham Jail with a simpler text,
69. your summary, that now kids will quote back to you.
70. And because of the overwhelming power of self love, those answers are of course correct.
71. Kids are very artful at this.
72. So that's the first escape from the text is to summarize it in advance.
73. You would be stunned in curricular materials
74. how often a text is trivially summarized before it begins.
75. If this is all King had to offer were those conclusions,
76. we should not do the work of reading the letter altogether.
77. Number two, pre-reading strategies.
78. So then there's a lot of work you can try to do before the letter
79. like you might try to predict what he's going to say or
80. where he was or you might try to compare it to other prison letters.
81. You might to try to do several pre-reading type approaches.
82. Forgive me, but I am asking you to just read.
83. To think of dispensing for a moment with all the apparatus we have built up before reading

84. and plunging into reading the text.
85. And let it be our guide into its own challenges.
86. That maybe those challenges emerge best understood from the reading of it.
87. And that maybe we don't have to force a whole set of additional activities
88. that prepare you to start.
89. I'll give further examples of this later.
90. And the third typical introduction would be the strategy of the weak.
91. In other words, we have a purpose for reading this letter,
92. it's to reinforce our understanding of the main idea.
93. Nothing could be more lethal to paying attention to the text in front of you
94. than such a hunt and seek mission.
95. Why not instead let King set the agenda?
96. Why not dare to read the mystery of what's on King's mind?
97. Why not let those strategies emerge to solve real problems
98. rather than constantly interrupting us or setting an agenda?
99. I'll talk more about this later.
100. But one great benefit, teachers, to the core standards is
101. you know how you've been teaching a hundred lessons every year
102. and over the course of years
103. on cause and effect and that's one of the reading strategies.
104. I'll give you one today.
105. I punch you and it hurts, cause and effect.
106. There's no need to do it over and over.
107. When have you read a difficult text ever in your life
108. and said, "I've got it now.
109. It's a cause and effect text not a problem and solution text. Now, I've got it."
110. We lavish so much attention on these strategies in the place of reading,
111. I would urge us to instead read.
112. So Aristotle says at one point of drama,
113. he's talking about drama, that the beginning is more than half the whole.
114. And I think he's right because the opening of a drama is what brings you into it.
115. Just think for a moment of a film and the way we teach reading typically.
116. If I were to go to a film with you, imagine before it started,
117. I want you to do a bunch of pre-film watching strategies.
118. Then I ruthlessly interrupted you as it unfolded
119. and said, There's a train. Have you ever been on a train ride?
120. What does this remind you of?
121. You would kill me before we were five minutes through.
122. Why then is this appropriate with reading,
123. which is also a task of deep observation and attention,
124. where the author's story is the most interesting one to start with
125. whether it's informative or a narrative?
126. So I ask you to let kids into that story and try to talk about what that looks like.
127. So let's open King's letter with that in mind and begin with it.
128. I ask you to please read to yourselves the first paragraph following "My Dear Fellow Clergymen."
129. 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.
130. My Dear Fellow Clergymen:
131. While confined here in the Birmingham city jail,

132. I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely."

133. Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas.

134. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk,

135. my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence

136. in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work.

137. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms

138. are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statements in what

139. I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

140. I want to say perhaps the first question you might ask about this text is,

141. "Based on this text and this text alone, what do you know?

142. What can you make out about the letter King received?"

143. So let's look again at that first paragraph for a moment and

144. we might make out gradually that they've accused him of saying very specific,

145. of being unwise and untimely. We're going to go back to that first question.

146. A clever student might notice that he wrote to his dear fellow clergymen,

147. which reveals something about who wrote the letter and perhaps something about King

148. himself if they understand the construct fellow clergymen which you might work on with

149. them immediately or it will actually come up later.

150. But we can already know at least two things, it's written from clergymen

151. and says you've been unwise and untimely.

152. Let's then move with some speed here because it's a first reading into

153. the next set of arguments, paragraphs 2 through 4.

154. Again I'd love to give you time to look over them with the following question in mind.

155. "What are the three very different arguments King makes for why he's in

156. Birmingham? And what different kinds of evidence does he use to support them?"

156. Now I hope the feeling you're all having is of not knowing the answer in advance.

157. There's no way to answer my question without returning again.

158. Who even knew that he made three arguments? Who knew that they were so different?

159. Who knew that they used different kinds of evidence? But let's look at them together.

160. The first paragraph, I'm accelerating here much faster than you'd ever do with students.

161. The first paragraph has become somewhat bureaucratic.

162. I'm here, as he summarizes in the last paragraph, because I have members of my staff and

163. I was invited here. I have organizational ties here. He describes the core offices.

164. So it's almost a bureaucratic kind of answer. The third paragraph of the letter, he says,

165. "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here" and

166. compares himself to the prophets of the eighth century and to Paul, etc.

167. He makes something of a religious, historical argument.

168. He gives that kind of evidence and information.

169. And that's where it might trigger that fellow clergymen
170. because he is of course comparing himself to those clergymen of old.
171. Now this is a paragraph dense with allusion.
172. You could slow down a lot here to get what Greco Roman means,
173. to figure out exactly who Paul is.
174. I think one's always judging as a teacher when to pause in that way.
175. On a first read through we'll come back to that probably.
176. But as much as they understand that King is comparing himself now to a prophet and
177. making a very different kind of argument, we have enough
178. to keep moving through his argument.
179. But there is nothing wrong with helping kids through that work and
180. helping identify because very few of those words can be determined from the context itself.
181. So at a moment like that it's perfectly appropriate to fill in some of those blanks and
182. not linger too long there and lose the force of the argument.
183. Because his next argument is the one for this letter's most famous is the moral argument
184. and I will read it out loud. You will perhaps remember some of it by heart.
185. What I'd like to begin with with this argument, this third moral argument,
186. is the question of what is the force of it?
187. How does it relate to the arguments that come before? Sounds pretty preachy.
188. How does it relate to these other two moves?
189. One, I've got offices here and I was invited. Two, I'm like a prophet of the past.
190. But third, there's this sudden moral claim instead of statements.
191. Well you see on the study of it that King does something quite remarkable.
192. Being accused of being an outsider,
193. he makes an argument that there's no such thing in matters of injustice.
194. He says there's no such thing as an outside agitator
195. because the injustice that affects you is mine. We are mutually implicated in it.
196. It's very important that kids get time to grasp the force of an argument,
197. the force of the claim. How does this fit in with the argument he's making?
198. How does it fit in with the two arguments before it?
199. But the next question might very well be once you've really thought about
200. that is where's the evidence, King? These are high-flying assertions.
201. It seems obvious that we are not tied together in a garment of destiny.
202. You can walk out this door and you'll be perfectly fine.
203. You get wet; I don't get wet. So where's the evidence to support this claim?
204. In that moment of pause to realize as powerful as these words are
205. that they don't yet have any support or proof is a wonderful one.
206. Also, because it creates an appetite to see if he can pull it off.
207. Because when you realize that question you realize how much of this letter,
208. how much of its beauty is his attempt to answer that very difficult question.
209. So when he goes after the White moderate later,
210. when he makes all these moves in letter,
211. he's demonstrating that interrelation that he does not show yet.
212. Moving on, paragraph 5 is a transition and I'll conclude shortly
213. but I just want to walk you through it a bit further.
214. Paragraph 5 is another transition and notice how it begins.

215. You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham.
216. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions
217. that brought about the demonstrations.
218. Now, remember that first simple question when we began—
219. What can you make out about the letter he received?
220. Now we have more evidence growing around that question.
221. That is, now we know something they didn't say.
222. I noticed you complained about me being unwise.
223. How about them being unwise and untimely?
224. That's what he says here and the social foundation of it.
225. So that same question that was so simple and
226. got us into the letter repays throughout the letter.
227. In understanding an argument it's critical to know what something is pushing against.
228. What's the alternative that an author by making an argument throughout is building?
229. So that simple question in the beginning
230. becomes increasingly powerful as the letter unfolds.
231. Then in paragraphs 6 through roughly 9 is
232. what I like to call the just the facts question.
233. Interestingly, in paragraph 6 enters for the first time in this letter the word "fact."
234. And I'll tell you something very moving.
235. One of the people that works here in New York State told me
236. that this to her is the most moving moment.
237. It is not the ringing moral language I just read to you.
238. It is the moment where he says precisely,
239. "There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation."
240. These are the hard brutal facts of the case.
241. This is a different voice from King.
242. This is now setting out a body of fact in the next two paragraphs
243. to understand its conclusions.
244. Kids gaining command of those facts, seeing how they relate to the case,
245. gives them a further master class in these different kinds of argument.
246. I hope that's begun to give a sense of the kind of instruction I'm talking about.
247. I hope it was concrete enough and the kind of excitement.
248. I want to admit this is extremely difficult work because of a couple of reasons.
249. The text itself is difficult. It is hard work, but work worth doing.
250. There is no apologizing or getting away from that. I used a number of techniques.
251. The first and most important is to let the mysteries that the letter provokes
252. be the source of student motivation and your interest
253. rather than anything about you or anything I presume about you or your history