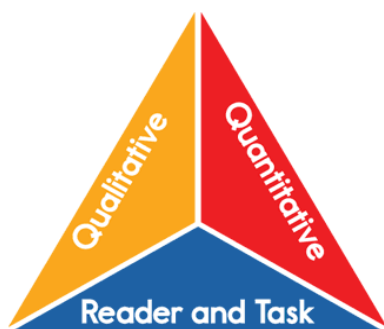


Text Complexity



Complex text refers to academic reading that appropriately challenges students by requiring them to engage with meaning, structure, language, and ideas at increasing levels of sophistication. Complex text cannot be determined by appearance alone. Educators should use a three-part model to measure text complexity: **qualitative** factors, aspects of a text best evaluated by educators through close reading; **quantitative** measures such as word frequency and sentence length; and **reader and task** considerations, including students' motivation, background knowledge, and reading purpose



For many years the formal evaluation of text complexity has often been limited to quantitative measures such as Flesch-Kincaid, Dale-Chall, Lexile, ATOS, and Coh-Metrix. Although any tool for measuring text is certainly useful, each is also imperfect as well. Many prose and dramatic texts, for example, can be measured quite suitably and their evaluations can greatly inform instructional use. However, the very same measures may not be as suitable for poetry or for texts with features to aid students just learning to read and such evaluations may not prove as useful in informing instruction. In such instances, it is believed preference should be given to qualitative measures when evaluating such texts.

Likewise, educators must employ their own professional judgment in matching texts to individual students and tasks. Because different readers bring unique abilities and dispositions to the endeavor, educators must consider these elements as well when planning instruction. In some instances, these reader and task considerations sometimes outweigh both the qualitative and quantitative measures available.

Educators should use the KSDE Text Complexity Rubrics© to gauge the overall complexity of a given text. A text is complex when it has a challenging lexile—the quantitative measure—and has significant reader and task challenges. This means that students work with the text at Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels 2, 3, and 4.