Engaging in a Text Talk

This guide is designed to help educators hold "text talks" that deepen their understanding of a text's complexity and key understandings before they use it in teaching. Teacher teams can use this collaborative process in planning meetings, data meetings, or as part of assessment previews.

1. **Choose a text**—or part of a text—that will be used in upcoming instruction.

2. **Read and annotate the text.** *You can save time by asking team members to read the text before the meeting.*

3. **Pretend you're part of an adult book club** and talk about the text with your peers. Start by discussing the text from your own perspective, not through your students' lens.

   ○ What did you find interesting about the text? Why?

4. **Now, put on your "teacher hat"** and consider the complexity of the text.

   ○ Identify the features that will be easy or challenging for students when it comes to reading the text. Consider the meaning, structure, language, and knowledge. (This [rubric](#) offers a range of indicators for each of these four components of qualitative complexity.)

   ○ Look back to the text for examples of complexity, and use the following table to capture your findings:

Meaning	Structure
Language	**Knowledge**

5. **Identify the key understandings of the text**—the one or two most important ideas or messages for students to understand after reading it.

6. **Review the questions that are part of your curriculum or instructional materials and tweak/supplement, as needed.**

   - With the text's key understandings and complexity in mind, review the questions to make sure they are thoughtfully sequenced in order to help students navigate the complexities of the text and build their understanding of the text.

   - Determine whether you'd like to supplement (or scaffold) the existing questions by writing additional text-dependent questions, using the standards as a guide. (You can learn more about how to do that [here]!)