

Overall Goal

To inspire reflective behavior and questioning; to promote deep understanding and application of what is learned both conceptually and strategically; to lead children to read widely and enthusiastically inside but especially outside of school.

Considerations

1. How will the selected texts promote motivation, engagement, and the continuing impulse to read and learn?
2. How will the texts address different students' interests, capacities, and needs, their varying motivational and strategic "zones of proximal development"?
3. How will the texts help students grapple with engaging problems related to our unit level inquiry?
 - a. What important concepts and ideas will students be asked to deal with by the text?
 - b. How will students be positioned and repositioned by the texts to deal with these issues?
4. What strategies will students have to learn or consolidate to read and respond to the text?

A GUIDE TO TEXT SELECTION

Box 6.1

The group maintained that thinking about texts in these ways helped them put their students at the center, while still considering the qualitative, quantitative, and reader and task considerations of particular texts and how these related to unit goals. This, in turn, helped the teachers think about providing texts that were rewarding in the moment and truly complex for students—and not just difficult for the sake of being difficult.

At their third meeting, the group worked to articulate criteria for their various considerations and ended up with the checklist in Box 6.2.

MOTIVATION AND INTEREST CHECKLIST

The Text . . .

- Provides a motivating and meaningful challenge that is immediately interesting to students
- Is highly engaging, thought provoking, energizing, and compelling to students
- Deals with issues related to student interests and their evolving understandings of themselves and the world, and that they perceive as relevant as related to the unit inquiry
- Will position and reposition the readers so that they deal with multiple perspectives and will therefore deepen understanding
- Leads to practical applications in students' everyday lives
- Provides ongoing and visible signs of accomplishment as readers, learners, and citizens

Conceptual, Strategic, and Ethical Growth

- Elicits personal, thoughtful, critical responses to the unit inquiry
- Promotes dialogic sharing and conversation—with author, characters, and other students
- Broadens student understanding conceptually, procedurally, and in terms of becoming a tolerant democratic citizen capable of taking multiple perspectives
- Connects to and challenges students current thinking
- Promotes nuanced ethical considerations of real issues
- Uses language that is essential to the work and uses it powerfully, responsibly, and thoughtfully for meaning and effect
- Introduces students to ideas and concepts and perspectives they likely have not been exposed to; may confront misconceptions