**A Guide to Creating Text Dependent Questions for Close Analytic Reading**

**Text Dependent Questions: What Are They?**

The CCSS for reading focus on students gathering evidence, knowledge, and insight from what they read. Eighty to ninety percent of the Reading Standards in each grade *require* text dependent analysis; accordingly, aligned curriculum materials should have a similar percentage of text dependent questions.

A text dependent question is one that can only be answered by referring back to the text being read. It does not rely on any particular background information extraneous to the text nor depend on students having other experiences or knowledge; instead it privileges the text itself and what students can extract from what is before them.

For example, in a close analytic reading of Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address,” these would not be text dependent questions:

 *Why did the North fight the civil war?*

 *Have you ever been to a funeral or gravesite?*

 *Lincoln says that the nation is dedicated to the proposition that “all men are created equal.”*

*Why is equality an important value to promote?*

These questions require no familiarity with Lincoln’s speech in order to answer them. Such questions are likely to get students talking, but they take students away from considering the actual point Lincoln is making. They seek to elicit a personal or general response that relies on individual experience and opinion, but answering them does not move students closer to understanding the text of the “Gettysburg Address.”

**Creating Text-Dependent Questions for Close Analytic Reading of Texts**

Good text dependent questions often linger over specific phrases and sentences to ensure comprehension of the text— they help students see something worthwhile that they would not have seen on a more cursory reading. The following process is a guide that can serve to generate a core series of questions for close reading of any given text.

*Step One: Identify the Core Understandings and Key Ideas of the Text*

As in any good reverse engineering or “backwards design” process, start by identifying the key insights students should understand from the text – keeping one eye on the major points being made is crucial for fashioning an overarching set of successful questions and critical for creating an appropriate culminating assignment.

*Step Two: Start Small to Build Confidence*

The opening questions should be ones that help orientate students to the text and be sufficiently specific enough for them to answer so that they gain confidence to tackle more difficult questions later on.

*Step Three: Target Vocabulary and Text Structure*

Locate key text structures and the most powerful academic words in the text that are connected to the key ideas and understandings, and craft questions that illuminate these connections.

*Step Four: Tackle Tough Sections Head-on*

Find the sections of the text that will present the greatest difficulty and craft questions that support students in mastering these sections (these could be sections with difficult syntax, particularly dense information, and tricky transitions or places that offer a variety of possible inferences).

*Step Five: Create Coherent Sequences of Text Dependent Questions*

The sequence of questions should not be random but should build toward more coherent understanding and analysis to ensure that students learn to stay focused on the text to bring them to a gradual understanding of its meaning.

*Step Six: Identify the Standards That Are Being Addressed*

Take stock of what standards are being addressed in the series of questions and decide if any other standards are suited to being a focus for this text (forming additional questions that exercise those standards).

*Step Seven: Create the Culminating Assessment*

Develop a culminating activity around the key ideas or understandings identified earlier that reflects (a) mastery of one or more of the standards, (b) involves writing, and (c) is structured to be completed by students independently.