

ISU Professor Takes Action with Preservice Teachers

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*Emily Hayden is incorporating new learning into her courses at Iowa State University. After attending a training in April 2017 when presenters Leigh Bellville and Carolyn Glicklich shared resources available through Student Achievement Partners (Achievethecore.org), Hayden enthusiastically began weaving the content into her work with preservice teachers. She shares a description for others and further actions relating to professional learning in February 2020 after attending a presentation led by Mya Baker and Jessica Dirks with *The New Teacher Project (TNTP)*.*

Participation in the Statewide Literacy Leadership Team has helped me prepare teacher candidates for the ways we define text and build content understanding within the Iowa Core. Using resources offered by [Achieve the Core](#) and [The New Teacher Project](#), preservice teachers (PSTs) in my junior and senior-level literacy classes develop text sets that meet the Iowa Core definition: a collection of resources organized for students to build knowledge about a specific topic. PSTs first choose a topic, one that uses literacy skills to deepen learning about a disciplinary topic. Generally, students choose social studies or science topics, including “Seasons” (Why do we have seasons? How do seasons affect human life?), “The Earth and its Ecosystems” (What is an ecosystem? How do the earth’s ecosystems change? In what ways can humans affect an ecosystem?), “Refugees” (Who is a refugee? What challenges do refugees face?), “Disabilities” (How do disabilities differ? How are people with disabilities treated in society? Are people with disabilities given the same rights and opportunities as people without?), and “Hope” (How do people remain hopeful through difficult situations?)

Once PSTs choose their topic and develop compelling questions (in parentheses in the examples above), they must choose an anchor text and five additional texts, with an equal mix of fiction and informational text. These can include narrative fiction, poetry, informational texts, interviews, primary source documents, news articles, maps and charts, interactive websites, blogs, and videos. They use tools from Achieve the Core for qualitative and quantitative analysis, to get to know each of the texts very well. First, PSTs learn the method behind calculating Lexile levels, practicing with the Lexile analyzer found on lexile.com and learning how to find books on the site. Then, we move to in-depth qualitative analysis, using the Text Complexity Guide and Qualitative Measures Rubrics for Informational Texts and Literary Texts to consider each text’s Meaning/Purpose, Structure, Language, and Knowledge Demands. Doing this helps PSTs think about the Reader and Task considerations for using each text, recognizing that the Lexile level alone may not be sufficient for this. PSTs use the Coherence Guide to plan a logical order of presentation and develop a “trail of breadcrumb” questions that lead to greater understanding and response to the compelling questions. Students also develop a Glossary with student-friendly definitions for challenging vocabulary, and the Academic Word Finder tool helps with the identification of Tier 2 and Tier 3 words. Finally, PSTs must plan an activity for each text that helps students capture and express their learning. We use resources from Kyleene Beers, Cris Tovani, and The New Teacher Project (TNTP.org) as exemplars, and include multiple response modes in order to bring equity into the assessment.

Engaging in this work results in several key learnings for PSTs. Not every student in a classroom will be reading on grade level, but that does not mean they should not grapple with grade-level text and concepts. Scaffolding student interactions with text are essential, and the tools provided by Achieve the Core and TNTP are invaluable for framing the kinds of teacher thinking that can support these types of interactions.

Access [Standards Professional Learning Opportunity modules in ELA/Literacy](#), which include learning around Student Achievement Partners (Achievethecore.org) resources. Iowa teachers who are employed by a public or private school can complete the modules for FREE or one license renewal credit (\$105).



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